Mary Barnes • Ripley July 4, 1965 • Philmore Kelley • 1977 Mingo Flood • DePollos

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

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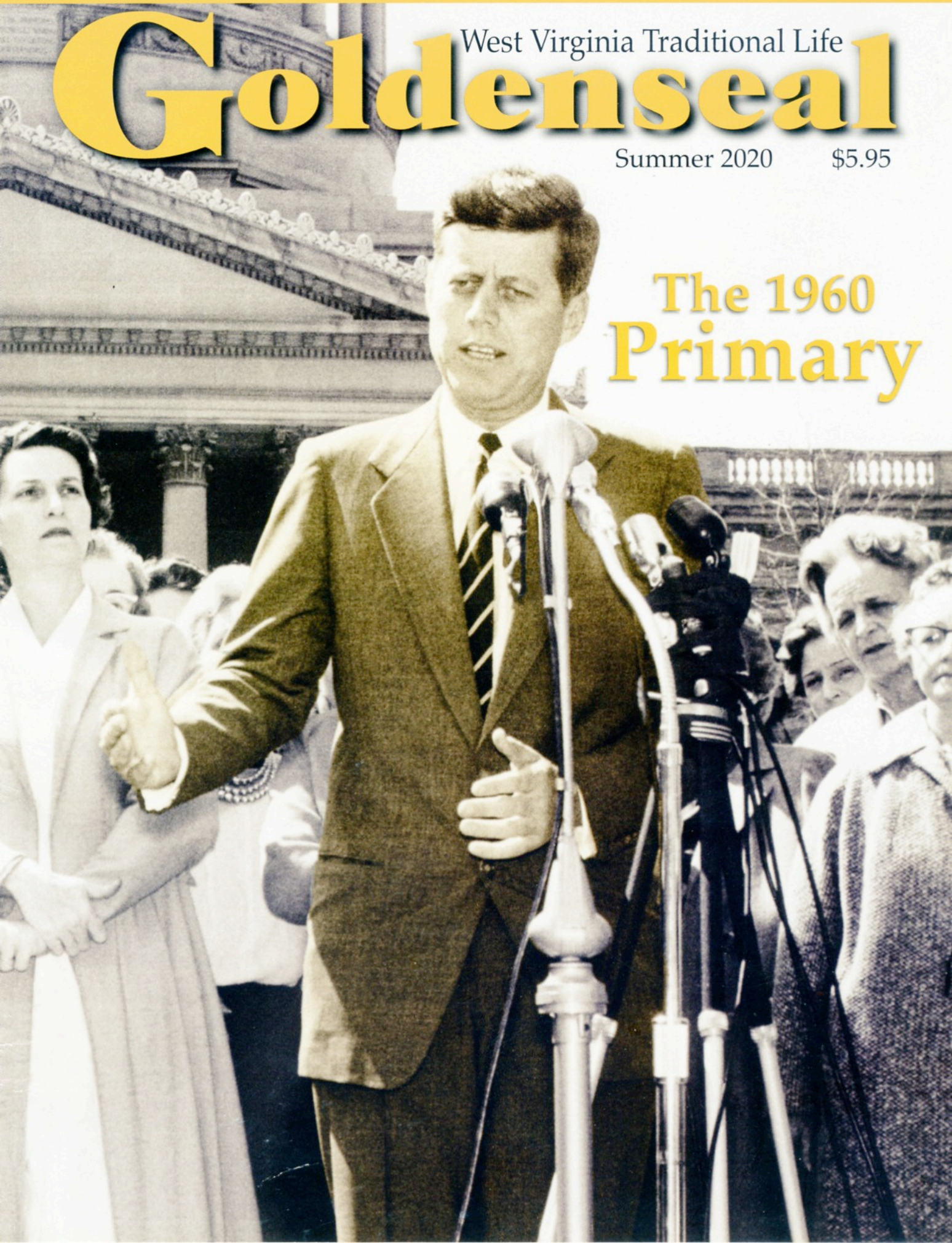

The 1960 Primary

John F. Kennedy talks to the press corps at our state capitol, April 11, 1960. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, David Todd Carden Collection.

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Summer 2020

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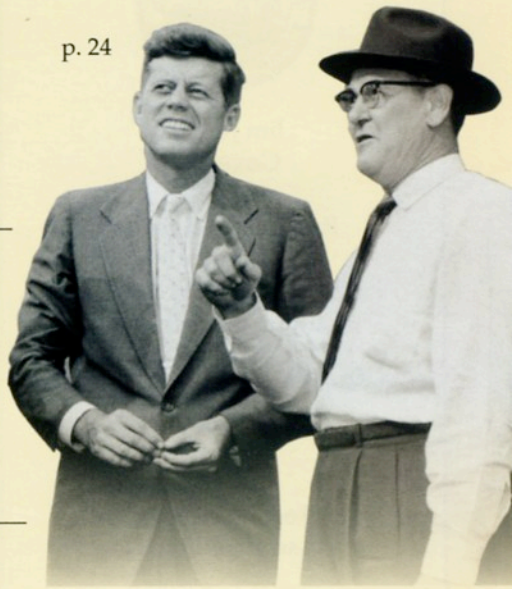

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On the cover: John F. Kennedy campaigns at our state capitol, April 11, 1960. Photo by Frank Wilkin, Charleston *Gazette*, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Frank Wilkin Collection.

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From the Editor

Whenever someone says a problem is easy, it grabs my attention. Problems are problems precisely *because* they're hard. If they were easy, somebody would've solved them already.

COVID-19 has created, in lightning fashion, a healthcare, economic, and educational perfect storm. It's killed and sickened people we love while making us fearful of what's to come. As I'm writing this, Governor Jim Justice and governors across the country are facing life-and-death decisions over how and when to open their states back up. Unlike a typical flu season, we can't just let this disease run its course. It can kill with little notice, and there's no vaccine for it. It may already be circling the world in a second wave, even before the first wave subsides. However, if businesses remain shuttered too long, we could be thrown into another Great Depression. It's not a perfect storm; it's a perfect nightmare.

At times like this, I'm glad I don't have to make many difficult decisions. I'm not a doctor or an epidemiologist or an economist or a government leader. I'm a magazine editor, historian, and sometimes-musician. So, I won't ruminate any longer on what might happen going forward. But one thing we can learn from history is that unexpected disasters, such as the 1918-20 flu pandemic, *will* occur on occasion, but we can't predict exactly when or in what form. For instance, in 1918, a second wave of the flu was much more deadly than the first—because, in part, when things reopened, the public ignored warnings about holding large gatherings and wearing masks.

The past clearly shows what *can* happen if we don't listen to the experts. Very few of us are epidemiologists, and we need to pay heed to them on this.

We've confronted crises before. As we know all too well, West Virginians have faced our share of tragedies, often in the forms of deadly floods or mine disasters. As horrific as these events have been, they come to

The fast-moving pandemic closed even our churches this spring, including this one in Lincoln County. Some churches continued their services either online or by radio. Photo by Roger May.

an end, we mourn those we've lost, and then we try to rebuild our lives the best we can. We never lose those memories, but the events themselves conclude.

COVID-19, as of now, doesn't have an end date. We're all living in limbo, hoping for news that we've finally turned the corner. Moments like these are when I'm prouder than ever to be a West Virginian. Despite our contrariness at times, when there's trouble, we rise to the call.

My parents' generation sacrificed through the Great Depression and then again to win World War II. I still keep my father's family's wartime ration book as a reminder of the sacrifices they made.

My grandparents' generation lived through the first "war to end all wars" and the 1918-20 flu epidemic, which killed more people than the war did. My grandfather Albert Thompson got the flu in Army camp. When he recovered, World War I was over, and he never made it to the battlefields of Europe. Ironically, if it weren't for my grandfather getting the flu, I might not be here today.

My generation has experienced the HIV epidemic, which, to date, has killed millions. We rallied late to the cause

Share Your Creative Responses to COVID-19

The West Virginia Folklife Program, a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council, is dedicated to documenting, preserving, presenting, and supporting West Virginia's vibrant cultural heritage and living traditions, including the lives of everyday West Virginians. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program is collecting and sharing West Virginians' songs, videos, memes, stories, writing, crafts, art, and other forms of creative expression related to their experiences during the public health crisis. You can share them (with proper crediting info) by leaving a voicemail on the program's toll-free hotline 844-618-3747, or by e-mailing hilliard@wvhumanities.org. Thank you! Please share widely, take good care, and as Mothman says, "Wash your hands!" –By Emily Hilliard

As the crisis unfolded, socially distant press conferences became a much-followed daily event. (Left-right) sign-language interpreter Julie Turley; Adjutant General Major General James Hoyer; Dr. Cathy Slemp, commissioner of the Bureau for Public Health; Bill Crouch, secretary of the Department of Health & Human Resources; Governor Jim Justice; Erica Mani, chief executive officer, American Red Cross; and Attorney General Patrick Morrissey. Photo by Steven Rotsch.

because, frankly, it was seen scornfully as a "homosexual disease." Over time, we've become somewhat less homophobic as a society (with a long way to go) and understand the many different ways HIV can be transmitted. Scientists believe HIV may date back to the 1920s but wasn't identified as a contagious disease until the 1980s. While HIV treatments have come far, there's still no cure, and too many people still die from AIDS—in 2018, it took the lives of more than ¾-million people worldwide.

With COVID-19, we must be united, not turn against one another as some did in the early days of the HIV crisis. Like the Great Depression and World War II generations, we must stand together, not apart. It's us against this disease. It cannot be us-versus-us versus the disease.

In our Winter 2019 issue, Cynthia Mullens wrote about Clarksburg nurse Lucinda Rose, who died from the flu in 1918 while serving our country in the Red Cross. I urge all of you to read Cynthia's article, which parallels our current crisis in many ways, such as closing schools and public places. As the Beckley *Raleigh Register* advised more than a century ago, "The most promising way to deal with the possibility of recurrence of the influenza epidemic is, in a single word, 'Preparedness.'"

But we weren't prepared for COVID-19 in any way, shape, or form. Now that it's here, we need to be prepared if it comes back in waves as the flu epidemic did 100 years ago. John Feal, a first-responder from 9/11, observed recently, "Doctors and nurses aren't the frontline of defense. They're the last line. The frontline of defense is the American people."

Speaking of doctors and nurses, whenever you see them—and other hospital staff and emergency responders—please thank them for everything they do. They literally risk their lives every day for us. A kind word of "thanks" means a lot in a time like this.

As a society, we take much for granted. I very much put myself in this category. In our Fall 2018 issue about the Farmington Mine Disaster, I wrote about this attitude in terms of coal miners and how we assume

Concerns over COVID-19 remind some of the race for a cure to the polio epidemic in the first half of the 20th century. Polio killed or paralyzed thousands before Jonas Salk's vaccine was introduced in 1955. In this photo, Dr. M. H. Maxwell administers the Salk vaccine in Hardy County, April 1955. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, *Moorefield Examiner* Collection.

our electricity just magically works, without considering the risks miners have taken to give us this luxury. In our modern world, we presume good healthcare will always be there, until something goes wrong. Then, for a few minutes, days, or weeks, we think about the sacrifices people make for us before going back to our typical thinking. The year 2020 will be etched in our minds and history books as a reminder never to take *anything* for granted again.

If something good can come from this pandemic, hopefully, it will encourage more young people to pursue careers in science and medicine. This crisis has demonstrated how understaffed, and undersupplied, we are nationally in the healthcare field. We need our best and brightest for times like these. The risks our healthcare workers have taken over the last few months have been nothing less than heroic.

We should also thank a few others who are often taken for granted (apologies to all I leave out). For one, those who work at our 911 call centers. Who knows how many lives they've helped save over the years? For

Craig Hammond overlooks a food pantry's stock in Bluefield, preparing to feed those hurt economically by the pandemic. Photo by Emily Allen, courtesy of West Virginia Public Broadcasting.

another, journalists. Weekly, it seems, another newspaper goes out of business or lays off a major part of its workforce. Journalists have been our eyes and ears during this crisis. Thanks to the media, we've been able to follow this pandemic in real-time. We don't have to wait days or weeks as we did in 1918. And they've asked tough but fair questions to help us better understand what's happening. Journalists and good reporting make a positive difference in our world.

This year, when schools closed down—as they did in 1918—we were able to keep the learning process moving forward as a result of technologies that weren't available 100 years ago. But schools are much more than learning centers. One-fourth of all West Virginia children live in poverty, and that rate is drastically higher in some counties. Many West Virginia children rely on schools for their breakfasts and lunches. During the shutdown, school staff helped prepare daily lunches, which were then delivered by our school bus drivers. I personally know teachers who've checked in on families just to see if they're doing OK.

Thanks to the work of the West Virginia National Guard, our state ramped-up testing more quickly than other states did, flew in test kits from Italy, and, based on a design from Shepherd University, molded much-needed protective masks. Likewise, food banks and kitchens have stepped up to help ensure that no West Virginian goes hungry during what has become a health *and* economic crisis. And most non-essential businesses complied with the governor's request to shut down to reduce community spread of the virus. Essential jobs—everyone from food-industry workers, to police, to garbage collectors, to plumbers—have put themselves in harm's way every day so the rest of us could stay socially distant. As we move forward, please go out of your way to support West Virginia-owned businesses, which need your patronage now more than ever.

While they aren't in the life-saving business, the musicians, writers, and artists of our state have made good use of their time, if social media is any indication. West Virginia musicians have been cranking out new songs and paying homage to musicians

who've inspired them. Artists have taken advantage of our gorgeous scenery to bring us brilliant artwork and photography. And please check out the West Virginia Humanities Council's Facebook page. The council initiated "Poetry During a Time of Crisis," a platform for our state's poets to read their works online.

Many West Virginians also have gotten back to their Appalachian roots. The prime season for ramps and morel mushrooms hit in the middle of this, giving us a good reason to get outdoors while making up new recipes for these seasonal delights. The pandemic has interrupted some food-supply chains, prompting some to start planting vegetable gardens again. Many people used their downtime to try old-fashioned bread making (often realizing it's not as easy as our grandmothers made it look). A friend of mine sat at home one Saturday night and listened to the Grand Ole Opry with her father. And we know West Virginia has some of the best textile/quilt makers in the country. Many have put their talents to great use by making masks and other protective wear. These are the types of things that lift our souls and spirits at a time when they're in dire need of a boost.

Just like those who lived through the 1918-20 epidemic, Great Depression, and World War II, we can't see the end of the tunnel yet. But here's one thing we know for certain: West Virginians help one another in times of need. That's what we do. We're the first ones there when someone's hurting, often carrying a platter of fried chicken and a pound cake as tokens of our friendship. As (nearly) 92-year-old Philmore Kelley says in this issue, "The more you do for other people, the better it makes you feel." And just in case you need one, "neighbor Aileen's pound cake" recipe on p. 39 will certainly help.

Right now, some of us can't be there in person for those we love. But please check in on them in some way, especially the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions. Find a way to be there for them even if you can't be there physically. And keep wearing those masks and gloves and practicing good hygiene, even when we get back to a somewhat "more normal" existence. Remember the big lesson of 1918: preparedness. History doesn't predict the future, but it gives us a pretty good roadmap.

Every single one of us has at least one thing we do well (some are blessed with many). Whatever your "good thing" is, we need it now more than ever. If each one of us checks in on just one person every day, we'll make sure our fellow West Virginians are cared about, chicken and pound cake or not. Trust your heart and your common sense. I—perhaps more than anyone ever—lack common sense, but I do have a heart and so do all West Virginians. It's time for us all to think of our fellow brothers and sisters. In other words, it's time for us all to be West Virginians! —Stan Bumgardner

Hope is a black-winged bird

By Erin Beck

Hope is a black-winged bird
And I
Wrote the names of the ones who almost killed it
In the black under my eyelids
So I don't sleep, my eyes just flutter
Hope is each time I close them anyway.
Hope is a black-winged bird,
And I
hear her sing as we cycle from shadow into light
During mourning
No, hope is not a shining star in the night sky
Hope, dear, is in the darkness
In the shadow of black wings that still fly

ERIC BECK is an author and journalist. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Remembrances

By Stan Bumgardner

At the time I'm writing this, West Virginia's COVID-19 death toll is still rising. Please remember the families and friends of these people in your thoughts and prayers. I've been fortunate so far not to experience any personal losses to the disease, but I want to note a few recent passings that have hit me in various ways.

He wasn't a West Virginian, but he touched a lot of our hearts and funny bones. COVID-19 took singer-songwriter John Prine from us. For those of you who aren't familiar with his songs, please take a moment to look up some of his music. His lyrics have been the narration for much of my life, from the saddest to the happiest times. It always seemed to me he had a West Virginia sensibility about life.

The others mentioned here didn't die from COVID-19, but their deaths brought many of us great sadness, beginning with Raleigh County native Bill Withers, who passed from heart disease at age 81. Songs such as "Lean on Me" and "Ain't No Sunshine" were part of the soundtrack of my childhood. Those songs kept getting better as I got older because they were about so many different aspects of life and all very genuine. If you have 80 minutes free this evening (maybe during dinner), pull up his first two albums: *Just as I Am* and *Still Bill*. In addition to great music, you'll hear some great life lessons. And in songs like "Grandma's Hands," you'll be transported to Slab Fork, West Virginia, and see how one person can change a life. Bill Withers' music still changes mine.

Here in West Virginia—in our agency's family—we lost a beloved soul. For years, Beulah Walkup was a cook at Camp Washington-Carver, historically the first statewide Black 4-H camp in the nation and now home to the Appalachian String Band Music Festival. Beulah passed away February 5 at age 93. She was the sweetest person, and I'll always remember her wonderful cooking. Beulah was the type of cook who would very humbly make you the best pot of soup you've ever tasted, and then, rather than eat with the rest of us, she'd stand off to the side with a sly grin on her face as she watched us savor every bite.

Tina Sonis Holmes. Photo by Mark Wolfe.

Finally, a death that hit me and the entire GOLDENSEAL family very hard was the loss of Tina Sonis Holmes. As our longtime proofreader, she caught so many typos, grammatical errors, and general screw-ups by the editor (me) that I commonly yelled out loud, "Thank God for Tina!" But Tina was much more than a proofreader. From the first time I met her, she was like a friend I'd known forever. In a way, I had. When I was a child, we could call up a number just to hear the time (yes, all generations younger than me, this was a real thing). I'm still not sure why we didn't just look at the clock, but I know that for me, it was because I loved the time-teller's resonant baritone voice. Decades later, I found out that lovely voice was Tina's. Our proofreading review sessions often devolved into discussions about the news, Charleston history, or the latest jokes we'd heard. The news of her passing devastated us. What I wouldn't give for one more proofreading session with her. On behalf of all GOLDENSEAL readers and our staff, thank God for Tina!

West Virginia Folklife Program
2020-2021 Master Artists & Apprentices

Text and photo by Emily Hilliard

The West Virginia Folklife Program, a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council, has announced its 2020-2021 class of master artist and apprentice pairs in the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program. In the program's second year, seven apprentice pairs from across the Mountain State will study traditions including old-time banjo of central West Virginia, seed saving, and midwifery. The Apprenticeship Program offers up to a $3,000 stipend to West Virginia master traditional artists or tradition bearers working with qualified apprentices on a year-long in-depth apprenticeship in their cultural expression or traditional art form. These apprenticeships aim to transmit techniques and artistry of the forms, as well as their histories and traditions.

Ed Daniels of Mill Creek is leading an apprenticeship in **agroforestry/forest farming** with **Clara Haizlett** of Wellsburg. A ginseng digger and cultivator since he was young, Ed and his wife, Carole, own and operate Shady Grove Farm in Randolph County, where they grow ginseng, goldenseal, ramps, cohosh, and industrial hemp, among other plants. Clara, who was an intern in The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage's "American Ginseng: Local Knowledge, Global Roots" project, plans to start a forest farm on her family's land in Brooke County.

Kathy Evans of Bruceton Mills is teaching **"Sheep to Shawl: The Art of Raising Sheep and Creating Fiber Arts"** with apprentice **Margaret Bruning** of Elkins. Kathy is a fifth-generation farmer and owner of Evans Knob Farm in Preston County, where she cultivates Certified Naturally Grown vegetables and raises sheep and poultry. She teaches and exhibits her fiber arts in West Virginia and across the country and has been featured in *Modern Farmer* and *Morgantown Magazine*. Margaret grew up on a goat farm in upstate New York and has been a lifelong fiber artist. She and her husband, David, raise sheep at their homestead in Randolph County.

Joe Herrman of Hampshire County is leading an apprenticeship in **old-time fiddle** with **Dakota Karper** of Capon Bridge. Joe is a founding member of the Critton Hollow String Band and has taught old-time fiddle to many private students and at the Augusta Heritage Center. Dakota, a Hampshire County native, has been playing old-time fiddle for 20 years and runs The Cat and the Fiddle Music School. Joe and Dakota apprenticed together previously in 2004 (when Dakota was 11) through Augusta Heritage Center's former Apprenticeship Program.

Leenie Hobbie of Rio is teaching an apprenticeship in **traditional Appalachian herbalism** with **Jon Falcone** of Lost River (Hardy County). Leenie has been a family herbalist for over 30 years, originally learning the tradition from her grandmother, who used both garden-grown and wild-harvested plants at her home in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. She's studied with acclaimed herbalists across the country and taught the tradition within her Hampshire County community. Jon is a novice herbalist who hopes to apply his skills to his future homestead in West Virginia.

Kim Johnson of Dunbar (Kanawha County) is leading an apprenticeship in **old-time banjo of Central West Virginia** with **Cody Jordan** of Charleston. Kim began playing with fiddler Wilson Douglas in 1979 and has played with and learned from many acclaimed West Virginia old-time musicians, including Vandalia Award recipients Frank George and Lester McCumbers. She's taught locally and

Ed and Carole Daniels of Shady Grove Farm in Randolph County. Ed will be leading an apprenticeship in agroforestry/ forest farming with Wellsburg's Clara Haizlett.

nationally and at Augusta Heritage Center, Allegheny Echoes, The Festival of American Fiddle Tunes, and the Berkeley Old-time Music Convention. Cody, who plays guitar in the Modock Rounders with Kim, tours across the state and region and is looking forward to expanding his knowledge of Central West Virginia old-time banjo traditions.

Angelita Nixon of Scott Depot (Putnam County) is teaching an apprenticeship in **home-birth midwifery** with **Christine Weirick** of Fayetteville. Angelita, who's been a certified nurse-midwife since 2003, has been a part of over 400 deliveries and taught multiple students the trade. Christine is a doula and an apprentice student midwife working towards her certification. Through their apprenticeship, Angelita and Christine are excited to explore the creative expression and storytelling aspects of community-based midwifery.

Mehmet Oztan of Reedsville is leading an apprenticeship in **seed saving and related storytelling** with **Lafayette Dexter** of Fayetteville. Mehmet is the founder of the Morgantown Seed Preservation Library and owner of the Preston County-based heirloom seed company Two Seeds in a Pod, which focuses on preserving Turkish, West Virginian, and Appalachian heirloom seeds. He's spoken about his work at local and national seed swaps. Lafayette facilitates a community garden project at New Roots Community Farm in Fayette County and eventually plans to include seed saving in his market garden educational programming.

The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program is supported in part by an Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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.

The 1960 Democratic Primary

By Stan Bumgardner

Sixty years ago, the eyes of the nation turned to West Virginia to decide one of the most momentous election primaries in history. Primaries had been around since Florida adopted the first one in 1901, but they'd played mainly minor roles in presidential party nominations.

That changed big time with the 1960 Democratic primary. Dwight D. Eisenhower was finishing his final term as president, and the White House was up for grabs. The presumptive Republican nominee was Ike's vice president, Richard Nixon. The Democratic field, though, was wide open. Adlai Stevenson II had been the Democratic standard-bearer for the two previous elections but had been soundly drubbed by Ike on both occasions. While he and a few others remained longshots in 1960, the party was looking to move on.

One of the leading candidates was U.S. Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, who would wind up on the ticket but as vice president. Johnson went the traditional route of sitting out the primaries and waiting for party leaders to draft him. So, the primaries came down to the two other prime contenders, both U.S. senators themselves: John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts and Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota.

Kennedy easily won most of the early primaries, which, for the most part, Humphrey bypassed entirely. On April 5, Kennedy pulled an upset of sorts by winning in Humphrey's neighboring state of Wisconsin, placing a lot of weight on the outcome of the West Virginia contest on May 10.

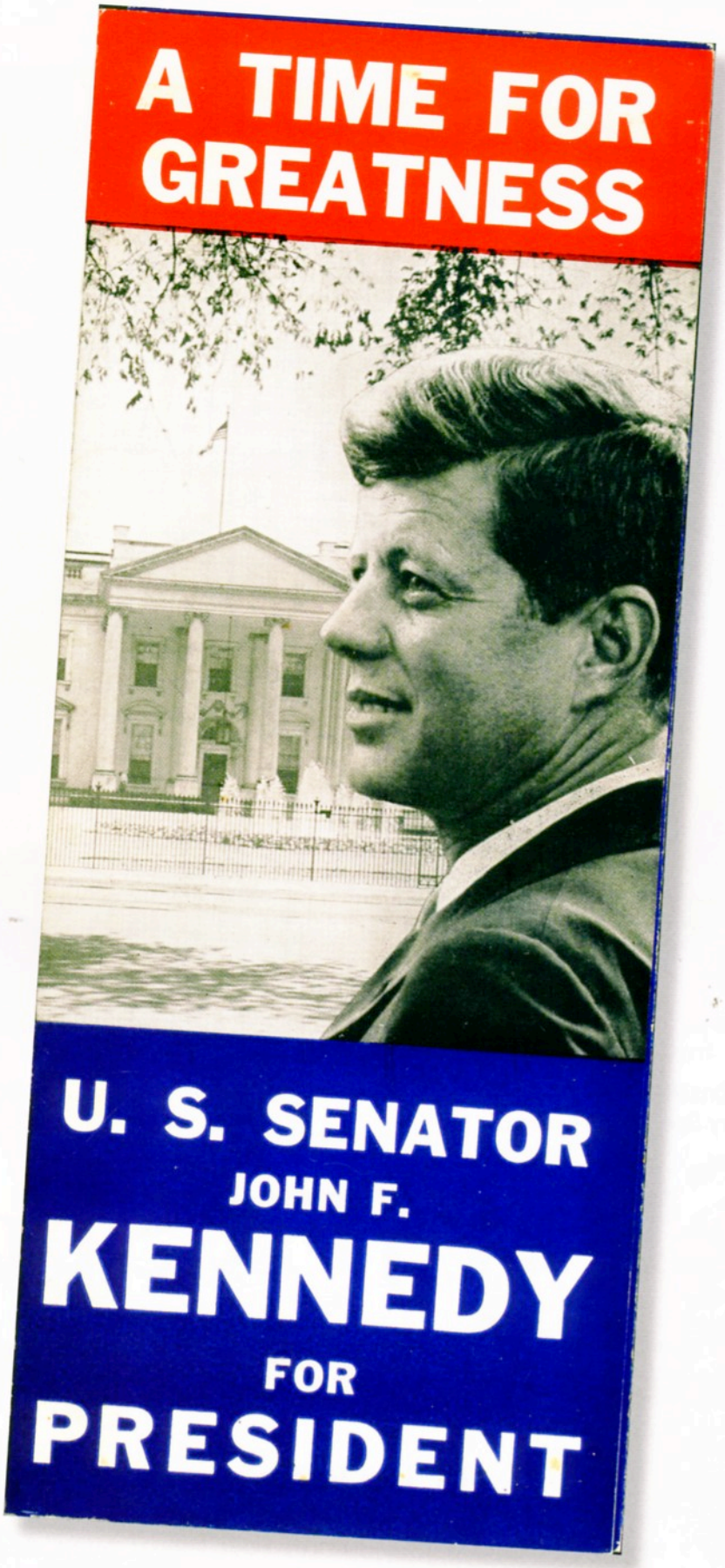
Kennedy filed for the West Virginia election in February, two days before the *Saturday Evening Post* published "The Strange Case of West Virginia: Poverty Amid Splendor," which went out of its way to show images of tarpaper shacks next to photos of vacationers at The Greenbrier resort. While the magazine—and soon the *New York Post*—sensationalized West Virginia's poverty, the articles did underscore the Mountain State's increasing economic woes, showing ghost towns where coal towns had thrived just a decade before. As a result, poverty became the central topic of the primary.

But the 1960 primary was crucial in another way. No Catholic, such as JFK, had ever been elected president. Only one had even been a major party nominee. In 1928, New York Governor Al Smith, a Catholic, had been thrashed at the polls by Herbert Hoover. In 1960, there was a genuine question of whether a Catholic *could* win the presidency. West Virginia—where some 96% of the population was Protestant—would be the test case. A loss seemingly would send a resounding "no" to the nation. But a win, on the other hand, could all but clinch the nomination for Kennedy.

Kennedy's substantial 22-point win here gave him the inside track for the nomination, and he never looked back. The late political columnist David Broder later compared the significance of JFK's West Virginia win to then-candidate Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 Iowa caucus—a state that was 96% white. JFK's triumph in West Virginia was a statement for the ages and proof that a Catholic could indeed become president.

Here are two stories about that race. Tim Reese takes us through a day in the life of the JFK campaign, while Aaron Parsons shares with us the story of the Humphrey campaign, through the eyes of a young campaign worker, Carol Haid.

STAN BUMGARDNER is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.



JFK campaign brochure, courtesy of Marshall University Library Special Collections.

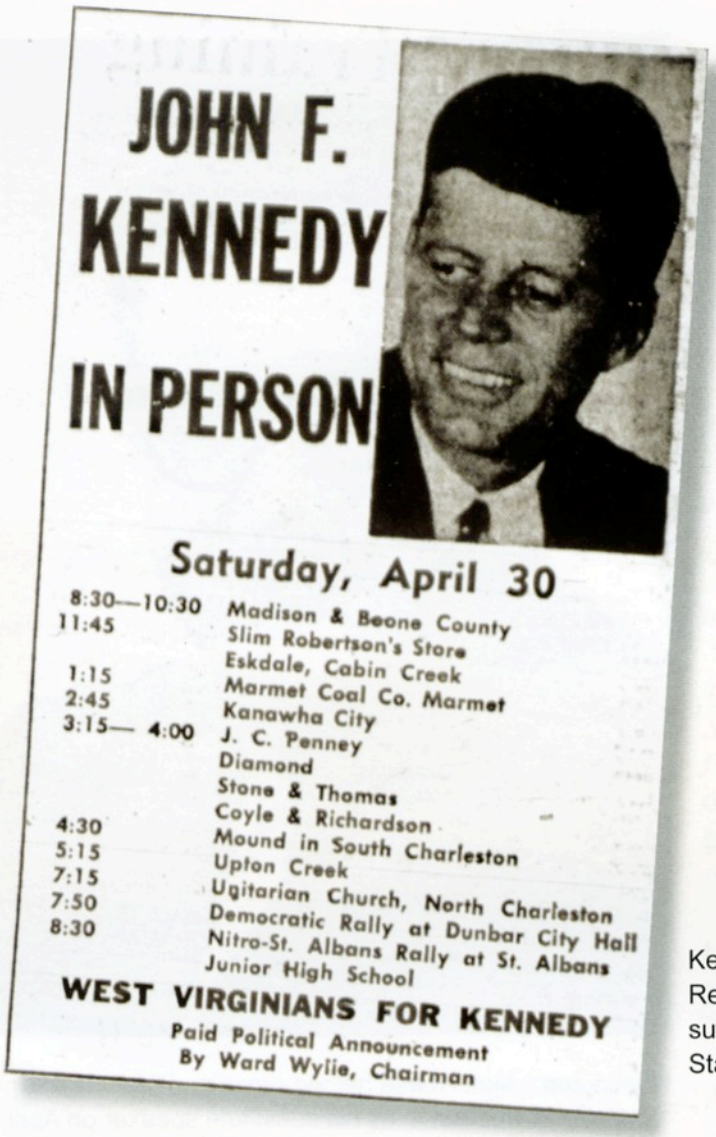
John F. Kennedy campaigns at South Charleston's prehistoric Adena burial mound, April 30, 1960. Courtesy of Marshall University Library Special Collections.

The Day JFK Spoke Like a West Virginian

By Tim Reese

John F. Kennedy's style of speech has sometimes been characterized as "Boston Brahmin" or "Trans-Atlantic," like Katharine Hepburn or Cary Grant. But never *ever* has it been described as a West Virginia accent. That is until April 30, 1960.

On that beautiful Saturday, then-Senator Kennedy was fighting for his political life



Kennedy's campaign schedule for April 30, the day Matt Reese gave stump speeches for the candidate, who was suffering from laryngitis. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA).

in the pivotal West Virginia Democratic primary. With just 10 days until the election, Kennedy was scheduled to make a dozen campaign stops in Boone and Kanawha counties to rally support in his struggle against Senator Hubert Humphrey. The only problem was Kennedy had a severe throat infection, leaving him with little voice to address the planned rallies. That's when my father, Matt Reese, got the surprise of his life. He was asked to speak in place of JFK!

Dad's family nickname was "Sonny." He was born and raised in Huntington and attended Huntington East High School and then Marshall College (now University), graduating in 1950. After serving overseas in the Korean War, he returned to his hometown and to my mother, the former Martha Sedinger. With three young children to support, he struggled to find his niche in the business world. He tried his hand at selling cars with his father at Hez Ward Buick and briefly ran a small breakfast/lunch café called Early Times on Fourth Avenue. He tried selling encyclopedias and then insurance, but his real passion was politics.

By late 1959, Dad had climbed up the political ladder to become executive secretary of the West Virginia Young Democrats. His mentor, Wood County Democratic Chair Bob McDonough, needed help organizing our state for Kennedy. So, when he asked my father to assist, Dad jumped at the opportunity.

"His prime job was to help me continue to set up and enlarge and expand Kennedy clubs in each of the counties," Bob

remembered. "Well, Matt turned out to be not only the very intelligent man we believed him to be but also a man who was able to work unlimited hours and days. The first money that John Kennedy spent in West Virginia was to put Matt Reese on the payroll."

So, after months of behind the scenes work in the campaign, fate pushed my 32-year-old father front and center. Here's how he described it in his own words:

"They told me to meet the plane, the *Caroline*, at 6 [a.m.] at the Charleston airport. I got there early—with great difficulty because I'm not an early riser, naturally. The plane was an hour late and when it got in, [JFK] was still in bed. We had to go from the plane to the hotel so that he could shave. We got a late start on the campaign day.

"The first chance I had to talk about what we were going to do was in the car driving down to Madison, in Boone County. The senator was sitting in the front seat with the driver, and I was sitting in the back seat with [longtime JFK political aide] Dave Powers.

"I asked Dave, 'Where is the speech?'

"He said, 'What speech?'

"I said, 'The speech that I'm going to give for the senator!'

"He said, 'Well, there isn't any speech.'

"I said, 'What in the world? I'm not a platform speaker of renown! What do you want me to do?'

"The senator was listening to this conversation. He had a yellow pad. He took a pencil and wrote down some of the things that he wanted me to say and passed it back. I couldn't read it. He didn't have very clear handwriting.

"So I pushed it to Dave, and I said, 'Dave, what does this say?'

"He said, 'Hell, I don't know—I never could read his writing!'"

Huntington's Matt Reese helped organize West Virginia for JFK and stepped in as his substitute speaker on April 30, 1960. Courtesy of our author.

The campaign sweep began at the courthouse in Madison. My father hurriedly made some notes—first explaining the senator's laryngitis and then launching into his five-point pitch.

First, West Virginia could play a critical role in nominating, then electing, a president. Second, he emphasized Kennedy's World War II record and called him a hero for his actions commanding the PT-109 and rescuing survivors after it'd been torpedoed. Third, he stressed JFK's experience during 14 years in Congress. Fourth, he ticked off specific legislation supported by Senator Kennedy that would benefit West Virginians and our state's economy. And fifth, he recited

Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt campaigns in Gauley Bridge (Fayette County) for JFK during the general election battle, October 19, 1960. Courtesy of the WVSA, Town of Gauley Bridge/Midge Crandall Collection.

a recent Gallup Poll showing that Kennedy was the only Democrat who could beat Vice President Richard Nixon (53% to 47%) in the general election.

Can you imagine the case of nerves my father must have felt as he spoke *in lieu of* and *in front of* perhaps the greatest orator of the 20th century? While my father was hardly as polished a speaker as JFK, he did connect with the hundreds of West Virginians who attended rallies that day in Eskdale, Marmet, Chesapeake, Charleston, South Charleston, Dunbar, St. Albans, and Nitro. While Dad didn't speak at all these venues, his size (6'5" and 340+ pounds) must have made quite an impression. I've unearthed one film clip showing Dad emphatically pointing at Senator Kennedy and saying, "I would like to say that all 340 pounds of Matt Reese is for *this man*

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and His Wife (Jacqueline)

Pictured above is Senator John F. "Jack" Kennedy, Mrs. John F. (Jacqueline) Kennedy, and daughter, Caroline.

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here for the presidency!" Now that's pure West Virginian!

Across West Virginia that day, the larger picture showed a steamroller of activity by the Kennedy campaign. While Senator Kennedy campaigned in a dozen locations around Charleston, Ted Kennedy was in Berkeley Springs, Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr. was in Parsons and Richwood, Bobby Kennedy campaigned separately in Charleston, and future First Lady Jackie Kennedy joined her husband for a nighttime rally in St. Albans. In contrast, Hubert Humphrey's schedule included just three rallies north of Beckley, while his sister Frances Howard spoke in Greenbrier County at Ronceverte. Humphrey's fellow Minnesotan, Governor Orville Freeman, had small gatherings at four campaign stops between Parkersburg and St. Joseph in Marshall County. Humphrey couldn't match the Kennedys' star power or their relentless energy.

In a 1964 interview, after the assassination of President Kennedy, my father reminisced about his experiences on April 30, 1960.

He was naturally self-effacing and said, "I didn't do a terribly good job, but I was a little overawed. I could do a better job now. At the time, I hadn't had a great deal of experience on the platform. I don't know if [JFK] was particularly pleased with my performance, but I did the best I could. It was rather an emotional type thing." Humility runs in our West Virginia genes.

Here's a funny story my father told many times (embellishing it in each telling):

"We had 8 or 10 campaign appearances that day. The senator had to borrow money from me that day to buy some Cokes, which he never returned. I understand, from people who were with him, that he *never* carried any money. He never had a dime for a telephone; he never had a dollar for a Coke or a beer.

"We stopped for lunch someplace in Kanawha County at a restaurant. When he left the restaurant, he had a little Dixie cup with a brownish liquid in it. I frankly thought it was a drink—a bourbon or Scotch drink. He just sipped on it very slowly much of the afternoon. I didn't pay a great deal of attention to it. We stopped someplace, and when we got back in the car, the senator took his yellow pad out and wrote something on the page. I couldn't read it. He wrote it again the way he thought it was clearer. And I still couldn't read it! He was exasperated by this time, so he took it and wrote very heavily, 'HONEY!' I thought, 'What in the hell is he talking about—*honey*?' I said, 'I like you, too, senator!' He chuckled over that."

The election results on May 10 were overwhelmingly in favor of John Kennedy: 61% to 39%. This display of electoral prowess shocked the nation. Not only had a Northerner won in a nominally Southern state, but a Catholic had carried a solidly Protestant electorate. Maybe the West Virginia *twang* in the future president's speeches of April 30 helped turn the tide.

My father joined the Kennedy Administration in Washington in 1961. It was a sad time for me as we left our extended Reese, Willis, Sedinger, and Wire families back in the Mountain State. Dad helped organize get-out-the-vote efforts for Lyndon Johnson's presidential campaign in 1964. But our family returned to West Virginia in 1967, after Johnson purged the "Kennedy people" from his administration. Dad again went to work with Bob McDonough, this time as deputy director of the Department of Natural Resources under Governor Hulett Smith.

But the pull of campaign politics was too strong for Dad to ignore. While we lived in Charleston, he formed Matt Reese and Associates, traveling each weekend to consult on campaigns in Missouri and Indiana. He went on to manage more than 450 campaigns for Democratic candidates for Congress, U.S. Senate, governor, and president. Here in West Virginia, he worked for candidates Jay Rockefeller, Jim Sprouse, Nick Joe Rahall, and John Slack. In many ways, he helped shape modern political campaigning and consulting—a "pioneer in the field," in the words of the *West Virginia Encyclopedia*.

He died in 1998 at age 71. While our family eventually migrated back to the Washington area, my heart (and his) always resided in West Virginia.

TIM REESE lives on Taproot Farm, 77 acres of sanity in Capon Bridge (Hampshire County). He farms, dabbles in building renovation, and is active in his local community. He is a cofounder of The River House, a community arts and music center, and is currently president of the Friends of the Cacapon River. Tim and his wife, Beth, have four grandchildren who live within ¼ mile of their house, so life is busy! This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Hubert Humphrey (far left) prepares to debate John F. Kennedy in Charleston, May 4, 1960. Their questioners are (left-right) Ned Chilton of the Charleston *Gazette*, Bill Ames of Charleston's WCHS-TV, and Dale Schussler of Wheeling's WTRF-TV. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA), Harry Brawley Collection.

An Unexpected Upset
The Humphrey Campaign

By Aaron Parsons

In May 1960, the eyes of the nation were locked on West Virginia, curious to see whether John F. Kennedy could upset Hubert Humphrey. Kennedy, a Catholic, was the underdog, primarily due to our state's overwhelmingly Protestant population. Kyle McCormick, director of the state's Department of Archives and History, noted in a letter to Governor Cecil Underwood (April 11, 1960) that "Humphreys [*sic*] will have a decided victory in West Virginia [and] that Kennedy will be eliminated in this state—he made a tremendous mistake in filing in West Virginia."

The election's outcome is now a vital part of our state's political history. A number of authors have delved deeply into how JFK managed to pull off a substantial victory. On the other hand, relatively little attention has been given to Humphrey's campaign. Thankfully, some Humphrey supporters, such as Carol Sue O'Neal Haid, have vivid memories of that election season.

Carol was born in the coal town of Ronda along Cabin Creek (Kanawha County) to Earl and Maxine Faye Basham O'Neal. She attended several grade schools and was a student at DuPont High School when the 1960 primary took the state by storm. Her father, a big union supporter, was already into politics. Carol, just 16 years old, soon found herself thrown

into the middle of the biggest election story in the nation.

Prior to working for the Humphrey campaign, she'd held a couple jobs, working as a waitress and as her father's secretary at the local International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). When Earl was asked to find a secretary for Humphrey's campaign in Kanawha County, he knew just the person.

Carol "greeted the visitors and dignitaries and answered the phones." She also "arranged to get people places to stay."

She recalls that her father and brother-in-law, who also worked for the campaign, did whatever they were asked: "They would pick up people from the airport and train station. They also drove them around."

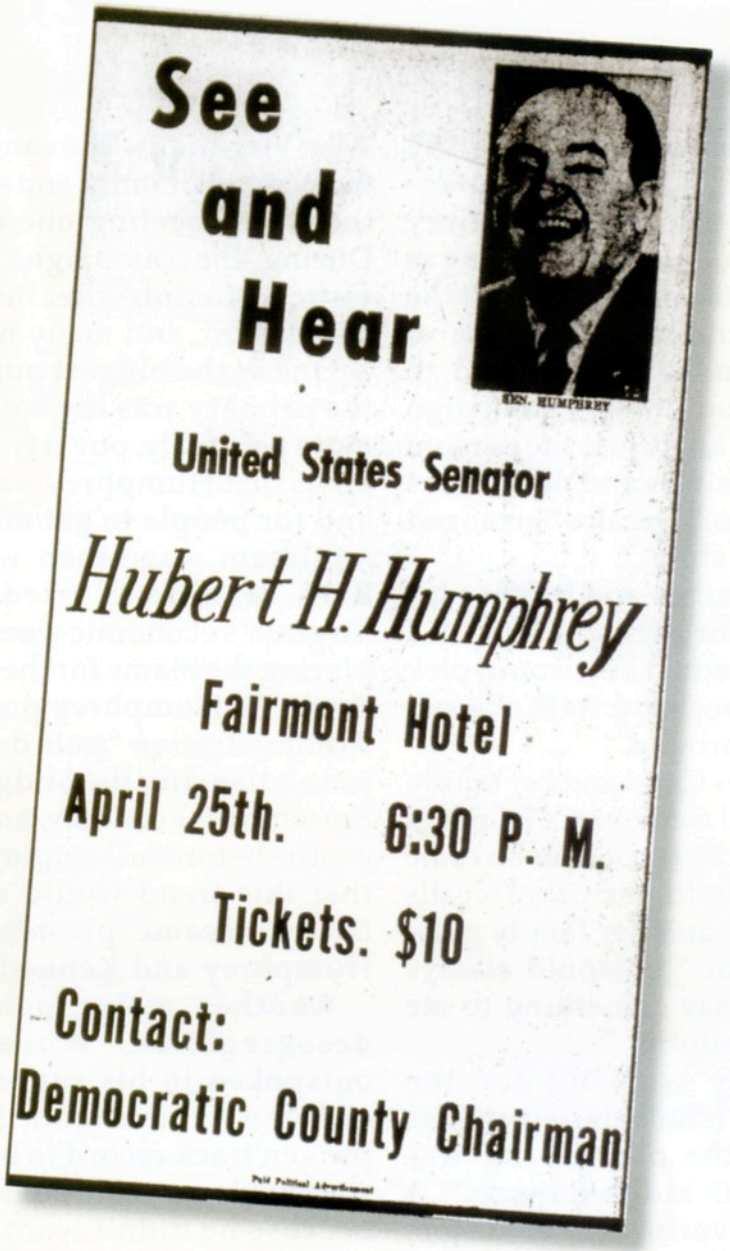
Some of the dignitaries Carol and her family encountered included U.S. Senators Jennings Randolph and Robert C. Byrd. Both even came to her house in Ronda for dinner. Carol recalls that Senator Humphrey and her family grew rather close, noting that "he would always come by my desk and say something to me and ask me what I was doing."

She was constantly working for the campaign. "Busy, busy," is how she remembers it. "I was always on the phones and was interviewed by several radio stations." A hard worker, Carol's favorite part of the job, in fact, was how busy she was. There really wasn't anything about the job she didn't like. "I didn't see any worst qualities in working for him," Carol says. "He always treated everyone with dignity and grace." She adds, "I felt so important because they made me feel important."

As the campaign progressed, the importance of winning West Virginia became more apparent to both candidates. Arguably, 1960 was the first year when TV played a crucial role in a presidential election, as both campaigns ran commercials that would seem very low budget by today's standards. But old-fashioned retail politics—shaking hands with voters and talking personally about their concerns—was still a vital factor for most West Virginians. The candidates—along with their friends, family, and supporters—traveled the state, meeting one on one with voters. During the campaign, Humphrey himself visited Moundsville, Beckley, Martinsburg, Charleston, and many more communities.

One of the biggest political issues during the primary was the nation's economy and, more pointedly, poverty in Appalachia. Carol notes that Humphrey was "for the unions . . . and for people to get more pay because the minimum wage then was, I think, $1.87." Both candidates tried to leverage West Virginia's economic woes to their advantage, placing the blame for them on the Republican Party. As Humphrey put it, the Eisenhower Administration "puts dollars before people, puts balancing the budget before balancing the nation's economy, and puts fat corporate profits before full employment." He asserted that this trend would continue if Richard Nixon became president. On this point, Humphrey and Kennedy agreed.

Another major political matter was desegregation. While Humphrey was outspoken in his support for equal rights and the Civil Rights Movement—with a proven track record to back it up—Kennedy was much more cautious about race relations because he didn't want to distance himself from Southern voters. However, some accused Humphrey of using civil rights as just a political ploy. One such person was Nell G. Yost, who lived in Humphrey's home state of Minnesota. Less than two weeks before the primary, Yost wrote Governor Underwood, labeling Humphrey as a hypocrite on civil rights because of the suffering of Indians in Minnesota: "I would like to say that the Senator of Minnesota has a situation in his own state in which the Indians are tretaed [*sic*] worse than any Negro is treated in the South, but he makes no issue of this matter, because the Indian does not have a vote." Carol, though, thinks that Humphrey was sincere and that "he strongly felt that everybody should be able to be an American and have



the right to vote and not be discriminated against."

Despite their differences on civil rights and how specifically to address poverty, many felt that Humphrey and Kennedy held rather similar views. During a televised debate in Charleston on May 4, 1960, Humphrey and Kennedy often agreed with each other. Reviewer Goodwin Berquist Jr. later commented, "A rather pleasant exchange of opinion took place, but no actual debate occurred. Imagery, instead of clash, was the principal difference between the two men." The reviewer added that the main difference was that Humphrey presented himself as a "vigorous politician who wants to lead the party to victory in November against the 'caretaker' government in Washington" while Kennedy "wants to be president because of what he can do for the people."

Even with 60 years' hindsight, Carol still believes "Humphrey would have made a better president. I thought so then, and I think so now. I always will." On a personal level, she remembers him as "a good and honorable man. He was good to everyone. However, I never met JFK, so I could not form an opinion of him."

Carol's sentiments about Humphrey were shared by many—a rarity in politics. For instance, Senator Randolph once described

Humphrey talks with a coal miner along Cabin Creek, April 8, 1960. Herb Kaplow of NBC News is behind Humphrey. Photo by Frank Wilkin, Charleston *Gazette*, courtesy of the WVSA, Frank Wilkin Collection.

Humphrey as "a man of immeasurable energy and undaunted zeal," noting that he had "become a phenomenon for his ability to express himself with conviction and understanding on a wide range of problems." In today's atmosphere of political incivility, it may be hard for some to understand that even though a significant majority of West Virginia Democrats voted against Humphrey, he was still well-respected as both a person and a politician. It was this feeling of goodwill toward Humphrey that made the decisive election results that much more surprising.

On the night of May 10, everyone watched nervously as the results poured in. By 10 p.m., it was apparent that Humphrey had lost (61% to 39%). Carol recalls that moment quite well: "After he conceded the election, he was very kind and talked to every person. I was crying, and he put his arm around my shoulder and said, 'Don't cry, Carol. It wasn't my time. It will be alright.'" Even though West Virginia had dashed his hopes of winning the White House, Humphrey was gracious in defeat.

So how did this unexpected upset happen? While Kennedy's remembered as one of the most charismatic politicians in history, almost all historians agree that money played a deciding factor in West Virginia and later in JFK's general election victory over Nixon. And it was no secret even at the time. According to Carol, "Daddy always said it was the money."

When the battle for West Virginia began, Humphrey's campaign was already running low on funds. Kennedy, however, was backed by his family's fortune and had no financial concerns. In what's become a now-famous telegram, Kennedy's father jokingly told his son before the primary, "Don't buy another vote. I won't pay for a landslide." Humphrey certainly felt like money cost him the contest, reflecting that he "felt like an independent merchant running against a chain store."

According to political lore, many votes in West Virginia, particularly in Democratic strongholds in the coalfields, were up for sale at the time. In fact, Kennedy sometimes gave more money than was needed. In F. Keith Davis's *West Virginia Tough Boys*, Raymond Chafin, Democratic chairman of Logan County in 1960, recalled dealing with Kennedy associates to place JFK's name at the top of Chafin's slate of preferred candidates. When the Kennedys asked how much money he needed, Chafin responded, "About 'thirty-five' to get things accomplished." Chafin had meant $3,500, so he and his colleagues were shocked to receive suitcases containing more than $35,000. "He must have mistakenly thought I meant THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS!" As many said of vote-buying at the time, that was "just good politics" in West Virginia.

Of course, vote-buying wasn't the only kind of voter fraud. Author and former Gilbert Mayor Huey Perry notes how a vast number of ineligible voters were registered to vote in Mingo County during the 1960s: "And so Mingo, along with its neighboring county of Logan, had a reputation of being one of the crookedest political counties in the whole United States. For example, in Mingo County, there [were] 30,000 people registered to vote. This, almost, was as much as the population, which was 39,000. There should have been only about 19,000 eligible voters in the county. So, they created this Fair Election Committee to purge the illicit voters from the registration books. . . . It required the county clerk to send a registered letter to each of the voters, and so they began to identify hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of voters who were ineligible or who had died and had voted in the last election." The votes of these deceased or otherwise ineligible voters were up for grabs to the highest bidder.

After losing the 1960 presidential bid, Humphrey remained in the U.S. Senate, serving as majority whip from 1961 to 1964. After Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Vice President Lyndon Johnson became president. A year later, Johnson ran for reelection with Humphrey as his running mate and won by a landslide. Humphrey became the nation's 38th vice president. After serving his first full term as president, Johnson—rapidly losing popularity due to the Vietnam War—surprised the nation by declining to stand for re-election in 1968. Shortly after Johnson's withdrawal, Humphrey announced his intention to run for president again. By June, though, he had apparently lost the nomination to JFK's younger brother Robert F. Kennedy. But after RFK's assassination, the Democratic Party awarded the nomination to Humphrey, who finally got his opportunity to face off

Carol Sue O'Neal Haid shares her memories of working in Kanawha County for the Humphrey campaign in 1960. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

against Nixon. In one of the nation's closest elections on record, Humphrey lost to Nixon; although, as a very minor concession, he finally managed to win over West Virginia voters, carrying the state by 9%. Humphrey served in the Senate until his death in 1978.

Since working for Humphrey in the 1960 primary, Carol Sue O'Neal Haid has continued to support politicians on the campaign trail. As she puts it, "I never ran for office, but I helped other people in getting them elected. I think that's my forte—to help other people to do that."

Carol also has donated much of her time to volunteer work with Belle Grade School, the American Cancer Society, and many more. She also was a founder, with former Congressman and Governor Bob Wise, of the United Food Operation and was named Kanawha Valley Volunteer of the Year in 1987. In addition, she is a member of the Southern Baptist Society of West Virginia and has sat on the Kanawha Valley Labor Council. To this day, she reflects fondly on her time working for Humphrey and still feels that he would have been an amazing president.

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 third contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

1960 Primary Scrapbook

JFK chats with Sarah Huffman of Chesapeake (Kanawha County). Courtesy of our author.

Humphrey passes out campaign material in Kanawha County. Photo by Frank Wilkin, Charleston *Gazette*. Courtesy of the WVSA, Frank Wilkin Collection.

JFK and Senator Jennings Randolph (left) with unidentified miners at the U.S. Steel cleaning plant, Gary (McDowell County). Courtesy of the WVSA, Jennings Randolph Collection.

JFK with Sam Solins (left) and Charles W. Conner Jr. (right), U.S. Steel general superintendent, in Gary, May 9, 1959. Courtesy of the WVSA, Rose Marino Collection.

JFK talks with Barbara Phalin and others in Miami (Kanawha County). Courtesy of Marshall University Library Special Collections.

Humphrey campaigns outside the Dry Branch post office (Kanawha County). Photo by Frank Wilkin, Charleston *Gazette*, courtesy of the WVSA, Frank Wilkin Collection.

Humphrey— accompanied (to his left) by his wife and sister— campaigns at Clarksburg's Stonewall Jackson Hotel. Courtesy of the WVSA, Clarksburg Engraving Company Collection.

Humphrey campaigns in a Buckhannon (Upshur County) beauty shop. Photo by Milton Furner, courtesy of the WVSA, Milton Furner Collection.

JFK chats it up with a gentleman in Ona (Cabell County). Courtesy of the WVSA, eBay Collection.

JFK speaks in Welch (McDowell County) at the municipal parking building—the first of its kind in the nation (1941). Courtesy of the WVSA, Rose Marino Collection.

At Logan's Smokehouse restaurant, JFK pays his bill to owner Albert Klele Sr. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Goldenseal Collection.

The gravestone of Mary Barnes Cabell in Institute (Kanawha County). All photos by JaBoy Photography unless noted otherwise.

The Enigmatic Relationship of Mary Barnes and Sam Cabell

By David M. Fryson

One of the most atrocious of the many atrocities of American slavery involved white slaveholders using African-American slaves for non-consenusal relations. Anti-miscegenation laws, which forbade marriage between slaves and slaveholders, added to the problem by making it impossible to establish a sanctioned relationship even when the slaveholder and slave wanted one. It's important to acknowledge and lament the systematic and vicious attacks on the humanity of slaves. Most of these types of abuses occurred to females, but, at times, even male slaves were subject to this exploitation.

This article addresses an intriguing situation involving slaveholder Samuel I. Cabell and Mary Barnes, his slave. The story first came to public attention some years ago because of James Haught's research piece *Institute: It Springs from an Epic Love Story*. Haught is the editor emeritus of the West Virginia *Gazette-Mail*. In a well-researched 1971 article, he uncovered the then-hidden story of how West Virginia State College (now University) arose on the former land of Sam Cabell and how Institute (Kanawha County) became a majority African-American enclave. Importantly, he alluded to Sam and Mary's relationship as a "love story."

A century before the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated our nation's anti-miscegenation laws in the 1967 *Loving* v. *Virginia* decision, Sam and Mary were involved in an atypical relationship. While it wasn't unusual for

slaveholders to be involved with their slaves, this relationship was somewhat unique in its conjugal considerations.

Granted, Mary was a slave, so the relationship can't be considered equitable even though Sam and Mary were open about their relationship. While there's evidence—anecdotal and documentary—that Mary maintained a strong presence, any relationship between a slave and slaveholder must be strictly scrutinized. Due to the enormous imbalance of gender and racial power, the notion of a truly consensual romantic relationship should be viewed as a potential exercise in white patriarchal authority.

Mary Barnes was born in Tidewater Virginia in 1815. Sam Cabell, born about 1802, was a wealthy landowner and member of a well-known Virginia political family. Sam purchased Mary and additional slaves around 1840. He worked some of his slaves in the Kanawha Valley salt industry—known for its harsh labor conditions—and worked others on his farm and orchards in what's now the Institute / West Dunbar area. At some point, Sam and Mary began a long-term intimate relationship that would produce 13 children.

Sam was a known Confederate sympathizer and, from reports of the time, was bitter about the South's impending loss in the Civil War. This makes any study of Sam and Mary's relationship even harder because the head of this mixed-race family not only owned slaves but also was a vocal supporter of the Confederacy. This leads to a key question: Was Mary a victim of this unequal situation, or was there something more to it? It's reasonable to consider whether she was in an abusive relationship since, as a slave, she had no say in initiating it. On the other hand, she had, at the least, some unusual relational privileges.

Arguably, the best-known slaveholder / slave relationship in U.S. history is that of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, which was publicly rumored but never admitted to at the time. By contrast, that of Sam and Mary was, to some extent, open and acknowledged. For instance, for all 13 children born to this illegal-by-law union, Sam risked exposure by recording their births at the Kanawha County Courthouse—stating that he was their father. The mere fact of claiming and officially recording the paternity of these biracial children was unusual but not without precedence in the antebellum era. Significantly, when their biracial children came of age, each was sent north and enrolled in private schools. These actions go against the established antebellum doctrine of *Partus sequitur ventrem* ("that which is brought forth follows the womb"), by which the children of a slaveholder and a female slave retained the status of the slave mother.

Most important to this discussion are Sam's multiple wills directing that his slaves, except for Mary and their children, were to be hired-out then set free upon his death. The fact Sam required his slaves to be leased-out for six years before being set free indicates a chilling comfortableness with the institution of slavery. Reading further in the wills, however, they indicate that proceeds from the work and sale of these slaves would financially support Mary and the children. Although Sam Cabell had an unconscionable embrace of slavery, he ordered that income from it be used to support his mixed-race family upon his death.

The first of Sam's three wills, written on November 24, 1852, ensured that Mary and their children would be set free and receive all his property. He then ordered that proceeds from the sale of his other slaves benefit Mary and her children. In the will, he referred to Mary as "my woman"—a term of legal art indicating that Sam considered her his wife. Additionally, while the first will expressly emancipated Mary upon his death, it also freed "her children" rather than "our children." This might seem to imply that Sam was not claiming "her children" as his own. A subsequent will, though, clears up this ambiguity: "In the event of sudden demise, this instrument of writing is intended to show or make known that Mary Barnes and all her children—namely, Elizabeth, Sam, Lucy, Mary Jane, Sidney Ann, Soula, Eunice, Alice, Marina (or Bobby), Braxton, and an infant

The gravestones of Sam Cabell (left) and Soula Cabell, the daughter of Mary and Sam Cabell.

not named—are and always have been free, as I have every right to believe they are my children."

Upon Sam's death on July 18, 1865, the *implied* marriage between the two became truly evident. The stipulations of his final will freed Mary and the children.

Giving this unusual story an even stranger twist, Sam Cabell lost his life on July 18, 1865—just months after the Civil War ended—under dubious circumstances, when passions remained tense. The night Sam died, seven pro-Union men had come to his estate, allegedly to confront him because of his persistent Confederate sympathies. Eight days later, the *West Virginia Journal* reported, "The community here was thrown into considerable excitement on last Thursday evening, by the report of the death of Samuel I. Cabell, a bitter and open rebel who lived some nine miles below Charleston."

The seven men were tried for murder. Their friends insisted that Sam had repeatedly insulted the men because of their Union loyalties and that they had gone to tell him they would no longer put up with it. The men alleged that Cabell then jumped over his fence brandishing a knife and that they shot him in self-defense.

Family lore suggests Sam Cabell's murder was because the men resented his interracial family, not a general objection to

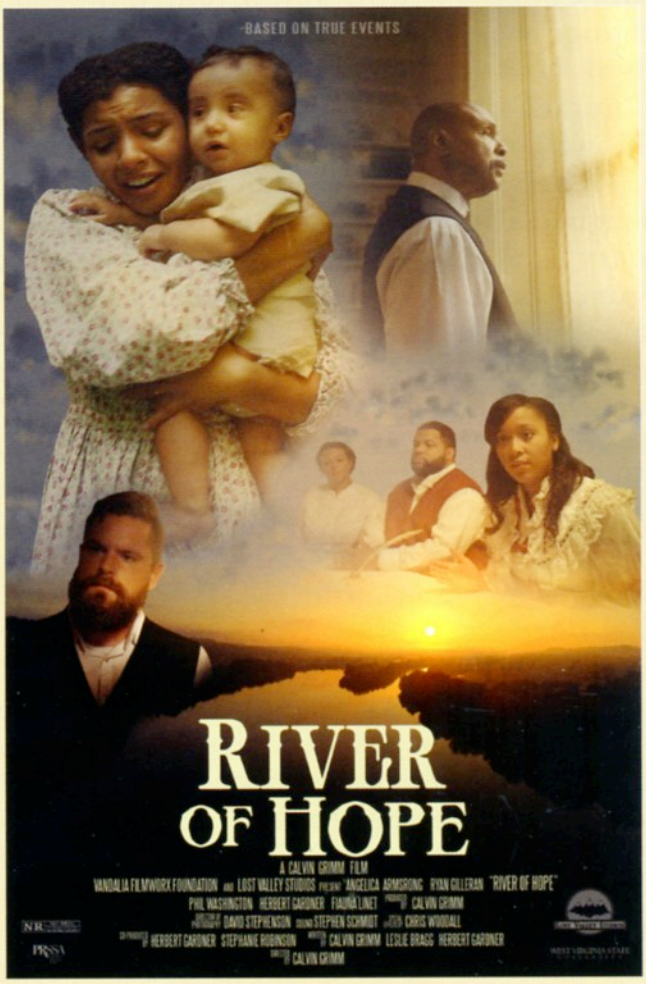
his Confederate sympathies—a widespread sentiment in the Kanawha Valley. Interestingly, during this altercation, the perpetrators didn't attack Mary or the children. The seven men were all acquitted.

After Sam's murder, Mary, in a very bold and almost unprecedented move, personally probated his wills. In December 1865, Kanawha County ruled that the wills were valid. The plot thickens, though, because the court appointed Napoleon Bonaparte Cabell, an influential Charleston banker and entrepreneur as guardian for the youngest six of these biracial children. While it's not completely clear if Napoleon was Sam's brother or cousin, it's significant that a white member of this influential family stepped in as guardian.

After some impressive legal maneuvering, Mary had Sam's substantial estate property and assets bequeathed to her and their children. In 1869, Mary Barnes also petitioned county commissioners to change her and the children's surnames to Cabell. The county allowed the change and divided the Cabell land among Mary and her children, giving each a strip from the river to the hill. In 1871, executors valued the estate at $42,128.00, the equivalent of nearly $1 million today.

So, the question remains, was Mary Barnes Cabell a strong woman, a slave victim, or both? Although her relationship with Sam Cabell had many hallmarks of the abusive, unequal standing of master/slave relationships, a closer review indicates more to this story than first meets the eye.

The name change is an important part of Mary's saga. Interracial marriage was illegal in Virginia *and* in newly formed West Virginia—remaining so until the 1967 *Loving* decision. This makes Mary Barnes' appeal for the name change even more compelling. After Sam's death, she achieved what she was unable to do under the law during his lifetime: assume his surname. While it wasn't unusual for slaves to assume their former slaveholders'



Charleston director Calvin Grimm recently brought the story of Mary Barnes and Sam Cabell to the big screen, with a debut in February 2020 at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center Little Theater. *River of Hope* was filmed entirely in West Virginia, with more than half the cast and crew being West Virginians. Grimm, a graduate of West Virginia State University and an Iraq War veteran, previously directed *37 Fallen* and *West Virginia Standing Together*, both focusing on West Virginia military veterans. *River of Hope* is available through Amazon and its streaming services.

surnames, this case is distinctive because it afforded Mary Barnes the legal status of Sam Cabell's widow. Importantly, the name change wasn't necessary for probating his final will because the Kanawha County Commission had already ruled in 1865 that the will was valid.

There's also other evidence that Mary and Sam had a devoted relationship. For instance, Mary was only 50 years old when Sam died. From all reports, she was physically attractive and a person of great substance, intellect, and now wealth. Nevertheless, she never remarried and lived 35 years after Sam's death as a widow. She died at age 85, the matriarch of a noble family, surrounded by family and friends.

One final evidence of marital devotion became apparent after Mary's death. On the borders of the West Virginia State University campus is the small Cabell Family cemetery, which also contains the graves of early college administrators. One of the most prominent gravestones is a weathered obelisk that belongs to Sam Cabell (actually "Cabble," an alternate spelling). Beside it is a more modern headstone that marks the final resting place of Mary Barnes Cabell. In addition, two of their daughters and some of their grandchildren are buried here—a family together in death even as they were in life.

In closing, human relationships are complicated in the best of instances. In this most unequal circumstance, it's impossible to measure whether this was truly a relationship of love. Sam Cabell was a complicated and rather unappealing figure in history. Some have understandably portrayed Mary Barnes Cabell as a victim.

Through her courageous efforts, Mary Barnes Cabell obtained the land that eventually became a significant African-American community. Mary's progeny later sold much of the inherited land to the state to build the West Virginia Colored Institute, forerunner of West Virginia State College, which became one of the most-respected Black colleges in the nation during the 20th century.

Lottie Prillerman Morris, the great-granddaughter of Mary and Sam Cabell. Courtesy of our author.

I have an inside family perspective because Sam and Mary are my wife Joy Morris Fryson's great-great-great-grandparents. I was reared in the West Dunbar/Institute area but first heard of this story only when Joy and I started dating in the early 1970s. Family matriarch Lottie Prillerman Morris ("Grandmother Lottie") was Joy's paternal grandmother and the great-granddaughter of Mary Barnes and Sam Cabell. Grandmother Lottie, born nine years after Mary's death, often spoke with pride about her great-grandmother and other family members and was thrilled when James Haught published his article about Sam and Mary.

Faculty of the West Virginia Colored Institute (now West Virginia State University). Standing (left-right): President Byrd Prillerman, Austin W. Curtis, unidentified man, Principal Scott of Douglass High School, and unidentified man; seated: Mary E. Eubanks, two unidentified people, and Fannie Cobb Carter. Photo by Albert Grant Brown. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Anna Evans Gilmer Collection.

While it may not be appropriate to label Sam Cabell and Mary Barnes' relationship a true "love story" because of the racial power dynamics, it doesn't do justice to Mary's life and legacy to label her merely a victim. While she may have been victimized because of the circumstances of her life and her relationship with Sam Cabell, she was ultimately a survivor and proved herself to be a strong, proud, and courageous African-American woman and is a *Shero* in the memory of her family and the community she fostered.

DAVID M. FRYSON is an attorney, ordained minister, diversity professional, and civil-rights advocate. He's served on the economic development staffs for two governors, as city attorney for two municipalities, and as national vice-president for Charleston native Dr. Leon Sullivan's OIC of America. He also was the founding vice president for the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at West Virginia University. He is a graduate of West Virginia State University and received a Juris Doctorate from West Virginia University College of Law. He and Joy Morris Fryson, Mary Barnes' third great-granddaughter, have been married for almost 44 years and live in Institute. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The Prillermans

Mary and Sam's children, grandchildren, and beyond became educated, successful African-American leaders in West Virginia and nationally. For instance, Mary's granddaughter Mary Brown married Harvey Prillerman, an influential African-American blacksmith and dentist. Harvey settled in Sissonville (Kanawha County) after he and his brothers had walked to the area from Virginia after slavery. Harvey and Mary Prillerman are Joy's great-grandparents and Grandmother Lottie's parents. Another granddaughter, Mattie E. Brown, graduated from Wayland Seminary and married Harvey's younger brother Byrd Prillerman in 1893. Dr. Byrd Prillerman was a religious leader and an influential educator; together, Byrd and Mattie were an educated power couple throughout West Virginia. Dr. Prillerman was one of the founders of West Virginia State University and a close friend of Booker T. Washington. These are just two of many examples of the family's success.

Nona Farris Bird (left) and her granddaughter, our author, Barbara Burton Grigg, mid-1970s. All photos courtesy of our author.

Memories of Farris

By Barbara Burton Grigg

I first recall Nona Farris Bird whooshing through our front door in a chocolate mouton coat, flinging frigid winter air. She never let us call her "Grandma." Gloriously independent, she brought us doodads from her country store's gumball machine. Leaving for her home in Duhring (Mercer County) in a gray '49 DeSoto, she wore an amused smile, as beguiling as any New York debutante.

Even before Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Farris already was an independent-thinking and –living woman. At a young age, she'd lost a grown son to cancer and a husband to a heart attack in his '40s. Afterward, Charlie Sadler, one of Farris' many friends in Duhring, mowed the grass, planted her gardens, and fixed what needed fixing. She usually paid him back in groceries.

At Farris Grocery, old men's rear ends rubbed imprints into a wooden bench, located just outside the door. Inside, the pot-bellied stove was polished blue, and one of three booths was reserved for playing checkers. A gumball machine stood sentinel over an innocent era.

Grandchildren took turns staying with Farris each summer. Aged pines shaded fish in the cement pond. The fish glinted iridescent orange and gobbled oatmeal flakes tossed by chubby fingers. After chores, we'd head for Aunt Ocie's, over a bridge, up Church Hill, and onto the gravel path past Pittman's apple orchard. The rumored bull never chased us.

Farris' store at Duhring under several feet of water during the 1957 flood.

Ocie's house lay before the church picnic grounds but well past the world of electricity and plumbing. Linoleum flowers covered her floors, a berry patch beside her back stoop. After gobbling up berries and cream from her tiny bedroom icebox, we smoked corn silks.

At Farris', I slept in Jerry's room over the porch. She'd tuck me in with a kiss and then tarry, cackling as we shared a late-evening exchange of the day's doings.

My parents checked on her when the '57 flood hit. A rowboat ferried them to her porch, where Farris stood in overalls that no one ever knew she owned. With her home three-feet deep in river silt, she observed with extraordinary calmness, "Now, ain't this a mess."

After the water receded, neighbors went house to house carrying buckets and shovels. At Farris', they spent a week shoveling silt. Then, like an anthill on a jigsaw puzzle, they glued back together the thick carved legs of her dining-room table.

When her hair turned gray, Farris decided to get baptized at a church in Bluewell. The baptismal pool was in the middle of the floor. Not long after, Charlie Bird began accompanying her when she brought us doodads. Nearing 60, his eyes twinkled like he was 18 when he looked at Farris. He'd pat her arm, pull her close, and yell, "Lawd, lawd!" It was easy to read the handwriting on this wall. Farris and Charlie married, closed the store, and traveled a lot. Souvenirs replaced the doodads, which we'd already outgrown. New family members filled her porch on weekends. Farris cooked for the crowd, always using a wet dishrag as a potholder—to her daughter Libby's dismay.

Expired dates on pantry pudding boxes prompted hilarity. Hot rolls and fried chicken

Some of the "doodads" Farris gave to our author, who still cherishes them.

loaded that dining room table (with the legs still glued together from the flood), surrounded by memorabilia. One table of dried sea creatures sat under a deer head, all gifts from her late oldest son.

Eventually, Farris and Mr. Bird wrecked their car. Suffering a broken hip and head injury, Charlie started watching soap operas, saying "Lawd, lawd!" more in reminiscence than exhilaration. Farris' youngest son, Jerry, came to live with them. Jerry helped Charlie up and down the stairs and stayed after Charlie died.

Jerry filled Farris' home with antiques. One day at lunch, at about the age when his dad (Farris' first husband) had passed on, Jerry died of a heart attack. Farris became preoccupied with her things, displaying more photos of loved ones, living and dead, through blood and marriage. She corresponded with a Black lady she knew from childhood whose letters were peppered with periods between syllables; the woman had taught herself to write from an old Bible.

One summer, I drove Farris to the town of Goodwill, her birthplace. Neighbors handed her homegrown corn and tomatoes through our car window.

Soon, Farris' third son died suddenly of a heart attack, and then Farris got cancer. Libby took her to Roanoke for treatment and therapy, but Farris always insisted on returning to her Duhring home.

During my last visit, Farris sat like a quiet child in the house, which had seen so much life and love. A church deacon stopped by. Reaching into his jeans' pocket, he gently laid the holy communion elements on her coffee table. Then they shared the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ in the long rays of the setting sun. *Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their Redeemer is mighty; He shall plead their cause with thee. –Proverbs 23: 10-11*

Cousin Linda

My brother Doug and I arrived on the train one summer. I remember sitting on the trestle near Farris' house, watching people get baptized in the river. At that point in my life, that was one of the wildest things I'd ever seen. I liked to sit on the back porch with Brownie, Farris' dog, and watch the trains go by. Seems I remember Farris sweeping that porch an awful lot.

Libby brought me a record player. I'd play songs, usually "Hurray for Valleydale"—the jingle for a popular brand of meat. Naturally, we went to church on Sundays. Evidently, Farris had dedicated the bench where we sat to my dad; it said "James Farris" on a brass plaque.

Once, I caught Doug kissing a girl down by the river. Another time, at Farris' store, Charlie Saddler hugged me and rubbed his rough beard on my face. I also remember getting a candy bar there that had worms in it. To say the least, Farris was upset.

My funniest memory of Farris is when she burned a slip she was ironing. I swear she said "sh*t." She slapped her hand over her mouth, said "oops," and laughed. I'm sure Farris got a kick out of the shock on my face. Not that I hadn't heard that word before, but NEVER from her. One final thing: why did she have a two-foot stuffed alligator on the floor of her beautiful dining room?

Cousin Michele

When I was very young, my brother Lee would play an old piano in Farris' den. By the time I learned to play, an organ had replaced the piano. I spent hours teaching myself to play it and still have one of her organ books.

Farris' phone was on a party line. Anytime you picked it up, you risked hearing someone else's conversation. She was very careful to respect privacy and never wanted us to eavesdrop.

Farris had every salt-and-pepper shaker set imaginable. I admired and counted them for hours. I never had a soft drink except when visiting Farris. My dad would pull a little 10-ounce bottle of Coke from the fridge, pop the cap, and divide it between my sister and me. If we were really lucky, we each got a whole bottle, with peanuts in it.

I loved eating in Farris' breakfast nook, until I had to go to the bathroom. I scooted under that table more than once. Farris went to the basement each morning to load coal into the furnace. I was too afraid of those steep stairs to go down there.

I slept in a closet large enough for a twin bed. My oldest son, Michael, used that little metal bed for years after he'd outgrown his crib. I loved that bed almost as much as I loved sleeping in the closet.

One summer, my dad replaced some concrete in Farris' sidewalk. I forget whether we left our handprints or initials in the concrete, but a buffalo nickel or two are along one edge. When we got a little older, Farris sent us to the post office. I walked the train tracks behind her house maybe once, but Lee and Stuart did it often. We also crossed the train trestles. Lee put pennies on the tracks and returned for them later.

Farris had the first color TV I ever saw. I'll never forget watching *Babes in Toyland*, wrapped in Farris' arms, sitting on her Davenport—a brand name that became a generic term for couches. She'd put her arm around me and rub my arm or leg in a circular motion for what seemed like hours. Most of all, I loved being introduced at church as one of Farris' grandchildren. She was always so proud to have us there. We knew we were loved.

Cousin Sandra

Farris married my grandfather, Charles Cromwell Bird. Both had lost their spouses; they were good companions for each other. I loved Farris from the moment I met her, around age 10. She always treated me like one of her own. She was a woman to be admired. She was kind of prissy—I liked that about her.

She dyed her hair and took care of herself. She always wore a dress.

Almost every Friday from '62 to '68, I got off the school bus at their store to stay with them until Sunday. I loved Farris' house. Her front porch was fabulous; she painted its ceiling the color of the sky. She had the loveliest collection of carnival glass, antique bowls, and plates. I loved green. Before she died, she gave me a set of very green dessert dishes with matching cups. I still have them.

When my parents came to get me, Farris always had a pie, especially delicious caramel pies. Her neighbor Aileen would deliver wonderful pound cakes, especially if she knew I'd be there. I still have Farris' caramel pie recipe.

Farris had beautiful linens. She taught me how to make a bed properly. Her sheets were very good quality with beautiful designs. I still have the sheets she gave me 40-some years ago as a wedding gift. My favorite room was the bathroom. Her bathtub sat in a little arched alcove. I'd lie in there and look at her lipsticks and makeup and be totally entertained.

Grandpa and Farris (Nona, as I called her) had lots of picnics and cookouts. Grandpa cooked chickens on his rotisserie grill and raised beautiful flower and vegetable gardens. We'd play croquet in their big yard, oblivious to how happy we were and to the special memories we were making. Farris told me that when the river behind her house flooded, the water was above the piano keys!

After college, I was in a terrible car accident. When I left the hospital, Grandpa and Farris took care of me. It was a special gift to live with them again.

Later, they were in their own serious car accident. Grandpa broke his hip and suffered a severe head injury. After that, he started down the awful path into dementia. Farris was so good to him, but after a while, caring for him became too much. He entered a Bluefield nursing home, where he died. Soon, Farris got cancer. When I found out, I hired someone to keep our three small children so I could visit her for a precious week before she died. I didn't make it to her funeral.

I'll always think of Farris as my grandmother. She was one of the most important influences in my life. She was so strong, overcoming her husband's premature death and raising four children alone. But with enormous heartache came great happiness. I am grateful for all she taught me.

Cousin Laura

When our family returned from Japan in '68, we spent Christmas at Farris'. The house was decorated, with presents for us all under the tree. I still have the Barbie dress Farris gave me. It was the prettiest one I had.

I spent the summer of '73 with Farris. Every morning, she'd fix breakfast for Charlie, Jerry, and me—pretty much the same each day: eggs, toast, and crisp, flat bacon. Then she'd freshen up the house, work in the garden, or iron. She even ironed her sheets. I believe she also ironed her underwear.

I often slept in bed with Farris. She always said her prayers and slept with her left arm up on her forehead. I find myself sleeping that way sometimes; my granddaughter naps like that, too. Must be in our blood.

Farris had an extremely nice home. I loved the way her floors and stairs creaked. I have several of her things, including an antique lawyer bookcase from Jerry. Farris had a great sense of humor and always wore a smile. Her funny bone passed down our family line.

My visit with Farris in the Bluefield hospital shortly after getting married in 1980 is my most precious memory of her. She cried when she saw me. I just wanted to take her place. She was a strong woman, loved tremendously by many people.

In 2004, I drove to Farris' church and still plan to return for a Sunday morning service. I want to listen to the music one more time, even though Farris won't be playing the organ. That's OK. She's playing heaven's organ. And

In back, Charlie Bird and Nona Farris Bird; in front (left-right): our author, cousin Michelle, cousin Lee, and Stuart, our author's brother.

RECIPE FOR: Aileen's Pound Cake
SOURCE: Nona Bird's neighbor, Aileen
PREPARATION TIME: _____ SERVINGS: _____

3 sticks butter, softened
3 cups sugar
5 large eggs
1 cup evaporated milk
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. vanilla
1 can coconut

Cream butter + sugar in large mixing bowl, alternate adding milk + flour. Add vanilla. Add 1 can coconut to greased + floured tube cake pan. Pour cake batter over coconut. Bake at 325° 1½ hours.

Glaze
1 cup sugar
½ cup buttermilk
½ tsp baking soda
1 tsp. vanilla
½ stick butter
Mix 1st 3 ingredients. Boil until forms soft ball in water. Add 1 tsp. vanilla + ½ stick butter. Pour over cake while hot after sticking knife in top of cake.

I bet she's playing "Do You Know My Jesus?" She played it all the time.

Tall Tales and Idle Gossip

Some of the best tales lie with our silent male cousins. Here are some snippets told by my brother Stuart.

Stuart and cousin Doug often went to the river on the pretense of fishing. Sometimes they returned with fish but usually just with snake stories. Stuart, living nearby, had access to reptiles anytime he wanted. Doug, living in coastal Virginia, wasn't so fortunate.

One summer, Doug arrived with suitcases enough for a long stay. Some of them were considerably heavier than jeans and T-shirts would warrant. When Doug began to unpack, out came several jars of snakes, presumably in formaldehyde, as they were–thank God—no longer among the living. Farris quickly invited those jars outside.

One night, Stuart and Doug, or Lee, were sleeping in Jerry's old room over the porch. Duhring, at night, was deserted and pitch black. Farris entered the dark room, shushing them. Outside, someone was snooping around her car. She quietly opened the window, raised her shotgun, and fired. The next morning, nothing was missing.

Thus are the tales of several Baby Boomer grandchildren in Duhring. What a life and legacy Nona Farris Bird developed in that isolated holler! Makes me wonder how well I'm doing with my own.

BARBARA BURTON GRIGG corralled these memories from her cousins. She left Bluefield after graduating from Concord College (now University), enjoyed a federal career, and returned to West Virginia after 9/11 for the scenery and obscurity. She's currently researching Farris' sister-in-law, who was a Pentecostal Holiness tent preacher in southern West Virginia a century ago. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

A float, sponsored by Fisher Chevrolet, in Ripley's Independence Day parade, 1965. All photos courtesy of our author, unless noted otherwise.

Celebrating the 4th of July 1965 . . . on the 2nd & 5th

By Mike Ruben

Independence Day 1965 was a "double date" in Ripley. That year, the town staged a flag-waving mock Fourth of July celebration for a national TV audience on Friday, July 2, and then proceeded to roll out the red, white, & blue carpet with much fanfare again on Monday, July 5.

Don Flesher had been serving as the town's celebration chairman since World War II. He got a good taste of national publicity in fall 1964, when Miss West Virginia, Ripley's own Ella Dee Kessel, traveled to Atlantic City for the Miss America Pageant. She advanced to the finals and made a pitch to legendary pageant emcee Bert Parks for her hometown's patriotic Fourth of July. Kessel finished as second runner-up in the pageant. Dee would later become our state's first lady, in 1989, as the first wife of Governor Gaston Caperton.

A consummate promoter, Don Flesher now had a bigger appetite for showcasing Ripley in the national spotlight. He and *The Jackson Herald* Editor Sattis Simmons met in the newspaper office to devise a plan. The strategy involved Don and his wife, Jessie, taking a springtime trip to New York City.

Equipped with an attaché case, Don stood outside NBC's studios during a telecast of *The Today Show*. At the appropriate time, he opened the case to reveal a poster inviting program host Frank Blair and company to visit "America's Largest Small Town Independence Celebration." Intrigued by the pitch from the man wearing a fedora, the show's producers invited him inside.

Now-retired Ripley Information Director Doug Skeen notes that Don wasn't shy around TV cameras. After all, Don had been filming scenes around Jackson County since the early 1950s. His "On the Road" segment was featured in the Charleston TV market.

"He figured, 'Why not give it a try?' and made the trip to New York," Doug says. "He pitched the idea of *The Today Show* coming to Ripley, and he sealed the deal."

With 1965 technology, broadcasting *Today* live from West Virginia simply wasn't practical. So, the show sent a five-man crew here on July 1, recorded a 15-minute segment in advance on July 2, and then replayed it for TV audiences on July 4. Don pulled off the "double date" stunt with the help of Sattis' newspaper and Ripley Mayor George Jordan.

"It is more than a chance of a lifetime," the mayor was quoted in a front-page article. "We must make the most of it."

The pending TV coverage was Page 1 news, with bold headlines for a month in the weekly *Herald*, and was promoted in several editorials.

"This is an opportunity which any city would covet," Sattis stated. "Money could not buy the publicity which the town and those filmed will get."

With *Today* committed to the concept, Don had to ensure that they weren't disappointed. Ripley's Chamber of Commerce enticed residents to make the downtown look lively on July 2 with giveaway prizes of a color TV, a bike, and a transistor radio. Meanwhile, Don, a former mayor, lined up the all-important greasy pole and greasy pig contests and made sure that concession stands could accommodate the anticipated crowd.

Don Flesher, who came up with *The Today Show* idea, takes film footage as part of the West Virginia Centennial. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Don Flesher Collection.

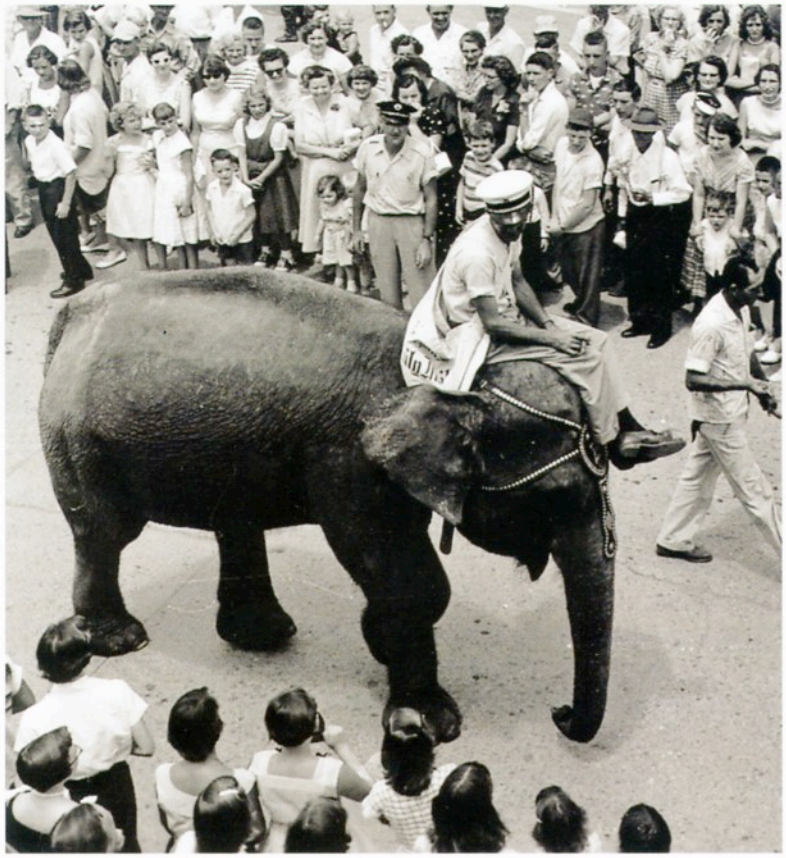
Marion McCoy, a Ripley Jaycees member, recalls preparing a large barbecue pit: "We dug a hole that was the size of a dump truck. We built a fire in it so we could roast three or four pigs, covered the whole thing, and had a two-night party to let it cook for hours. Then, our wives sold pork sandwiches."

Don and friends had been planning the arrangements for months. Only 17 years old at the time, current Ripley Mayor Carolyn Rader recalls staffing the makeshift celebration headquarters in the Fleshers' kitchen.

"Mr. Flesher asked me to be his 'Girl Friday,'" she says. "I did the typing, made phone calls, and ran to the post office for him. He was a very methodical organizer, so everything was well-planned and well-executed."

As head majorette of the Ripley High Marching Band, Carolyn was occupied during the actual celebration. The band marched on Friday for the cameras and again on Monday.

"That was [Don's] day," says Carolyn. "Mr. Flesher relished in the fact that he made things click. He was a unique, creative individual. He saw things in a different light. He had big plans for Ripley, and he wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. He had the connections to get things done."



Independence Day featured an elephant in the parade and Sonny Moore & the Roustabouts, which included dog tricks by this friendly looking German Shepherd.

For instance, he scheduled 12 hours of entertainment on the makeshift stage, consisting of side-by-side tractor-trailer beds adjacent to the Jackson County Courthouse.

Sonny Moore and His Roustabouts was a primetime dog act "as seen on the *Hollywood Palace* TV show." Music included budding garage rock bands such as The Ferraris—teen twins Hector and Victor and brothers Ray and Jim Ferrari from Lansing, Michigan, who performed on the festival circuit until the 1970s. Their band was eventually interrupted by the war in Vietnam, when two of them were called to serve.

The Chessmen were college students from the Dallas area. True to their name, they were apparently as interchangeable as pawns on a chessboard. Musicians would stay with the group for a few years before graduating on to bigger venues. Several eventually performed with well-known acts such as ZZ Top, Stevie Ray Vaughn, and The Fabulous Thunderbirds.

The Wirengards, a high-wire acrobatic act from Sweden, had the crowd pointing, screaming, and then applauding as Ossian and Emmalena made another successful landing on an 18-inch platform perched high above the courthouse square.

A mix of regional talent included The Tignor Sisters, a teenage gospel trio from Sissonville; Ralph Shannon and His Jamboree Gang, regulars on WSAZ TV; Little Miss Katie; and Wayne & Bobby Walters, a duo from the nearby town of Leroy. Between stage shows, the crowd could observe an exhibit of military tanks and missiles or try their baseball-throwing skills by dunking a Jaycee into a large tub of water.

TV coverage was directed by NBC's Al Smith and narrated by Blair. It showcased the town with footage of businesses such as

A one-man brass section!

Ripley's 4th of July is the oldest parade and celebration of its kind in West Virginia, dating back to the late 1800s. You can watch highlights of the 1965 celebration by visiting YouTube and searching for "Ripley 1965."

Rhodes Hatchery, Jo Ellen's for Beauty, and the Alpine Theatre, which was showing Bette Davis in *Hush . . . Hush, Sweet Charlotte.*

Crowd highlights included a glimpse of a three-legged race and a pie-eating contest. The camera crew must have been fascinated as youngsters tried to climb the greasy pole. Parade footage showed a one-man clown band, an old-fashioned big-wheeled bicycle, and Dee Kessel, wearing elegant white gloves and waving to the crowd.

"It was great," says Mayor Rader. "We saw ourselves on TV, and then we got up a few days later and did it all over again."

She led an attempt to duplicate the town's publicity stunt on the show's 50th anniversary. A charter busload of sign-holding Ripley residents made the trek to NYC in spring 2015. They were interviewed live on *Today* but couldn't entice NBC into a return visit.

The late state trooper O. G. Britton says crowd control was a challenge. Adding to Ripley's congestion was the influx of traffic from the nearby Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, in just its third year, at Cedar Lakes.

"I was directing traffic at the corner near the courthouse," O. G. said, reminiscing about a volatile out-of-town driver. With her window rolled down in the heat of July, she took the opportunity to shout a few unpleasant remarks to him about her eight-minute wait at the busy intersection.

Sattis Simmons summarized the episode in the following week's *Herald* editorial: "They have come to a county where grassroots Americanism abounds on every side, to a people who cherish our free institutions, to a county that had the highest percentage of its youth physically fit for military service in World War II of any county in the United States, and whose casualty list led all other counties percentage-wise.

"They have also come to a people who in the hours of need never fail to provide proof that they are deadly serious when it comes to defending liberty. Proof of this was seen in the last war when in three war bond drives, quotas were oversubscribed by a wider percentage than any other county in the country.

"*The Today Show* might have chosen any one of a thousand cities, but we are certain in none of them would they have found a more sincere welcome than Ripley has done for them."

MIKE RUBEN is director of the Ripley Convention & Visitors Bureau. A lifelong Ripley resident, he captured third place in the Best Decorated Bike category of the 1971 4th of July parade. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"Working–and playing" An Oral History

By Philmore Kelley
(interviewed by Margo Blevin Denton)

I was born October 19, 1928. My whole name is Silas Philmore Kelley, after both my granddads. My dad was a carpenter, and my mother worked a little when she could find work. At one time, we lived in Barbour County. Dad had a farm there; when he had work here in Elkins, he'd come do it, and then he'd go back to Barbour County. We finally moved to Elkins when I was about seven. So I've spent most of my life in Elkins, but I spent summers with my grandmother down in Barbour County. I learned a whole lot from all the old farmers there. I'd go out in the hayfields and work for 10 cents an hour. I've always had pretty good health. We grew up playing softball in Bluegrass Park after the soldiers all left. So we just grew up working—and playing.

My granddad was from North Carolina, and his mother was a full-blooded Cherokee Indian. So I'm part Cherokee. But I didn't know much about being part Indian growing up. Granddad left North Carolina at 13 or 14 years old; he ran away from home. He worked his way through Virginia and into West Virginia in the wood-hick days. He met my grandmother, and she said, "I'm not going to marry you until you get in touch with your mother; let her know where you're at." Well, he wrote her, and he got to see her twice in North Carolina before she died. My mother was 8 years old when Grandad went to see his mother for the last time. I was only 10 years old the first time they took me to North Carolina to meet my relatives. That was something, seeing all that tobacco and cotton growing down there. That just put traveling in my blood. I love to go and see the country.

Philmore Kelley of Elkins. Photo by our author.

From the time I was a little kid, I could draw stuff. I could take a knife and whittle. Grandad's knife—I wasn't supposed to have it—there are scars on my hand from that still today. I could carve a gun so it looked like a real one. We used to make rubber-band guns, and I was a crack shot with one. There was a

Philmore's railroad crew in Elkins—Philmore is at the far right. All photos courtesy of our author.

bank by the river where you could dig clay. I'd roll it into balls and lay 'em in the sun to dry, and they would shoot straight as a marble!

I worked in the gardens in the summers and put up hay and stuff when I got big enough. My dad's boss said, "If you want to come work for me, just climb on the truck." And that's how I got started with the cement-block company where Dad worked. I was 14½ or 15, but I was big for my age, and strong. The war was going on, and manpower was scarce. My granddad was a big part of my working capabilities because he loved people who'd work. In his later years, he was the foreman in the CCC camp in Raleigh County. Just think how smart he was: with maybe a third-grade education, he made foreman. And he had worked for the railroad before that. One day, he ran into someone he knew who said, "Why don't you go over to the railroad and ask for a job?" And he said, "I'm too old." And they said, "They need men so bad they won't even ask you how old you are. Just go over there, and they'll put you to work." And sure enough, they did. His hands were so swelled up with arthritis he couldn't hardly work. But the foreman over there said, "Do you know anybody else that needs a job?" and Granddaddy said, "I've got a grandson that likes to have a job," so he said, "You tell him to come over."

So I went over, and they give me some papers to fill out. He was so desperate for men he didn't even wait for those papers to come back from the doctor. The boss was sitting there, and he said, "11:00 tonight, boy." I said, "What?!" And he said, "You're in the locomotives department now." So that's how it started with me and the railroad.

It was December 1947 when I went to work for the Western Maryland Railroad. First job I ever done was operating the roundhouse turntable. I said to the fella that was training me, "Which way do I turn it, right or left?" He said, "Don't make any difference, it'll run just as fast one way as it does the other."

We worked pretty hard in the steam-engine days. You didn't sit down much, and when there was something to do, you did it. But I loved to switch engines on the turntable! They told you which trains were going out, and we would get them ready to go. We got 10 steam engines (800s) ready to go east every day. In 1950, they brought engines from Thomas here. So that made *10* 800s going out of here *every* morning—100-car trains. There was 28 men on each train going out of here. But then in 1953, they switched over from steam engines to diesel, and they only needed seven men on each one. So the jobs just kept droppin' down, droppin' down. I'll tell you something about the steam engines: a steam engine was just the same as something alive because you had to feed it and keep pouring water in it to keep it goin'. If it was a diesel engine, you just turned it on or shut it off.

One thing I am very proud of: when they still had the steam engines, I worked the inspection. They'd pull that engine into the pit; the crew would be there, and Lloyd Simpson was the machinist. It only took him about five minutes, and then he'd say, "OK, Kelley, you can have that engine." So I would drop that engine down to the next place. They changed those 200-class engines every day. Years later, I got to thinking that I got to run every one of those engines just because of working that job there! Every morning at the same time, that Baltimore train left Elkins heading east. When they got to Cumberland, the crew got off and got on the next train coming back west. That's what they done all day—just switched trains. It put those engineers back in their home terminal every evening, see? They'd bring the last train back to Elkins at 7:00 that evening, and the other crew would be at their home terminal in Baltimore. So that's how it worked.

Every so often, they'd bring a private train in here with maybe three or four coaches on it. Private cars were for the big shots: the owners of the railroad. I don't know who else, maybe the train foremen and master mechanics? They had a lodge up on Cheat Mountain, and they would go up to that. I was there just once, years later when I was playing music. We went up and played music for them. But that's the only time I was ever up there.

And later, in 1985, I was working as a temporary car man. This system was set up to build at least 3½ cars a day, but we turned out 5 perfect cars, every day! I know. I saw it done. And they kept on shipping the materials in here and building them cars here. Because then, men really worked! That's the reason they kept that railroad here. It went from Elkins to Cumberland to Baltimore. I don't know how many miles they had, but they had beautiful engines. Beautiful. They took care of them. C&O [Chesapeake & Ohio] was a prosperous railroad, and B&O [Baltimore & Ohio] linked 13 states in the nation; then C&O and B&O merged. They owned the Western Maryland too. They shipped all that coal overseas—a full car every minute—turned it over in Baltimore, brought it back, filled it, and turned it out again. That's the reason why people from West Virginia could go to Ohio and get hired on just like that. Because West Virginia people are good workers. But in 1985, when that big flood happened all over West Virginia, it was a disaster for the railroad.

I worked most of my life for the railroad. You weren't guaranteed five days when they called you to work. They might work you two days and then send you home. I had 427 service months when I retired.

I had learned to cook back when I was working in Cumberland. I had a homemade camper that I made down there. I stayed in it and did my own cooking. We kept saving money, and finally I had enough to buy a ½-ton truck. I made a homemade camper to set on it. I built it myself, and I was very proud of it. The first big trip my wife and I took was to Montreal, Canada, to Expo '67. I ran into a guy there who had a ¾-ton truck, and he said, "I don't want to scare

Philmore scrubs down a Western Maryland railroad car.

you, but those wheels that you have are not made for that load that you're hauling. They can just explode. If I was you, I'd get me a bigger truck." So we traded it in for a bigger truck, and we had it for years and years. I had Wednesday and Thursday off through the summer, and we'd load up and hit whatever campgrounds we could reach. And when vacation time came, we'd head to the beaches and all over. I've been to Yellowstone twice. Then we bought a used 1975 motorhome and put 7,000 miles on it. We were going to make another trip, but then my wife got sick and we didn't go.

My wife was a smart woman, I'll tell you. She never missed a day. From first grade until she finished high school, she had perfect attendance. She loved school. It was the other way around with me! So I didn't stay in school. But my wife got to teach, and she didn't even have a teacher's certificate. She was a brain at spelling, and she taught in the [West Virginia] Children's Home for 20 years, and she worked in a bank for years too. There was some important test that they would give all the kids in the state. She learned how to run it, and they said, "We want you to come to Charleston for three days." Well, she didn't tell them that she wasn't a teacher. And here's all these teachers, and they said, "Mrs. Kelley, will you explain this?" I understand they called the board of education here and said, "That's a smart teacher that you sent down here!"

So that's another thing; maybe I depended on her too much. She took care of the checking account and everything, and I just worked, or went and helped this fellow or that fellow. Didn't hardly take time to sit down and read the newspaper. But after she died, I said, "Maybe I should have done more of that stuff." But finally, some of it came to me. You just had to fool with it.

My mother, she was a good singer; everywhere we went, I'd always get her to sing. And she could chord an organ or a piano. I think that's why I wanted to play music. Well, I got a few dollars ahead and got me a Sears, Roebuck guitar. It wouldn't stay in tune, but I kept fooling with the thing, and finally I got it in tune. From that time on, I was chording and singing and playing. My brother teased me about being Gene Autry, but I kept on playing. Then I taught myself how to play the mandolin by watching the guitar players. I stood on the righthand side of the musician so I could read his fingers. So he's playing a D chord, and I found one, then he went to A, so I found an A chord. There's all kinds of A's on there, you know! So I would jump around, hit one chord, and then hit another. That's how I learned to play mandolin.

Back in 1960, I had helped form the Korn Kobbers band. There was our banjo player, Carl Tallman, and my brother-in-law Dale Carr played guitar and washtub bass, and our fiddler, Ron Moyer, and me. We got

The Korn Kobbers, with Philmore on guitar (second from right).

hooked up with George Brown from Pepsi-Cola—they made their own Pepsi here in Elkins—and he would have us go play for things for them. We played two times at Weston State Hospital. Then Ron left the band, and we got Gus McGee—Woody Simmons' brother-in-law—and he was our fiddle player after that. We played three times in Pennsylvania and at [Pittsburgh's] Kennywood Park twice. We played at Pepsi-Cola Days and got tickets for all the rides and stuff, and you never saw the likes of the food there. We played for weddings. One night, we were supposed to play up at Davis & Elkins College. Well, Carl sprained his hand, and Gus had ran a knife through his finger and couldn't play the fiddle, so he called Woody Simmons. I was playing mandolin by then, and I hadn't been playing much guitar anymore. I said, "Woody, you just play straight songs, and I'll know what to do." So I played the guitar for Woody. There was a lot of playing for this and that, and I really enjoyed every bit of it.

Then the Korn Kobbers got hired for the Mountain State Forest Festival, and for the next 15 years, we played the public square dances for the Forest Festival. That's the largest crowd I ever played for; I'd say there was 30,000 people out there by the stage where they crown the queen, but it didn't pay on account of the weather. They moved the public square dances to all different buildings. Finally, I talked them into cleaning up the floor in the Forest Festival building, where they stored all their stuff, and we

started having the square dances there. It had a rough concrete floor, so they brought a machine in and polished the floor to where they could dance on it.

But then, my wife got sick. Betty got this esophagus cancer, and I spent all my time sitting down next to her bed the whole time she was sick. And then she was in the hospital, dripping chemo 24 hours a day, and she was in radiation every day. She would sleep a lot, and I would sit there next to her and read. I had just got this book on how to build a mandolin. I'm a slow reader, and it takes a while for something to sink in. And I would write out a little outline so I'd remember the main things. I just set quietly there with her and read those paragraphs over and over 'til it got in my brain.

I had repaired an old mandolin of mine; I rebuilt it twice. But I'd never built one from beginning to end. I started to think I could do it. I love to fix anything that needs to be fixed. I can do carpenter work, electric work, plumbing; I built three houses from the ground up. But a mandolin is a really hard instrument to build. When I cut that thing out, I never used a saw. I took a Dremel tool, and I went around it and got that thing cut out. It was all done by hand. There was a man who liked to come hear us play, and he brought me a big piece of maple, and I made a case for that mandolin. You can stand on that case, and it wouldn't collapse. Some guy said to me, "You worked for two years on that mandolin. What would you have done if it didn't sound good?" I said, "I'd have put an electric clock in it and hung it on the wall." I finished it in 1994.

I kept busy building things. I'm still wanting to build a guitar. Reice Brown builds them, and he gave me a pattern to make one. I've got pretty good hands, and I can do manual work. Then I started playing music on television with The Seneca Trail Band. That was the band that I was in with Eloise Mann and Ed Gardner from Pocahontas County—he played guitar and French harp, and sang. Jerry Gibson ran the local TV channel, Channel 3, and sang with us, and he talked us into going on his television program. We were on there for nine years. We'd practice for two hours, and then we played two hours of live music there every week. Besides that, we went out on the road, and we made tapes to sell too. Then I started playing for Augusta Heritage at Pickin' in the Park, and I'm still hooked up with that. We went to play for the heart telethon up there in Beverly. I don't know what I would have done after my wife died if I hadn't had the music. It was something for me to do.

After I quit doing the television show, I started going over to Buckhannon to play. So I got in with a couple of different groups. I went over to the Amazing Grace band, and I played with them for about five years. We played in 27 different churches and at revivals. For 20 years, I played every Wednesday at Nella's Nursing Home. Then I got with the Bluegrass Gospel Mountaineers, and we were on live television in Buckhannon. And I was going to the Ellamore Fire Station playing. Now that's a lot of playing! It just seemed like I had something going all the time. It's all volunteer work, but I found out the more you do for other people, the better it makes you feel. You're giving your time, but it keeps you going. I think it pays off!

I'm almost 92 years old. These days, I play all over Randolph County, Barbour County, and Upshur County. I play the first Sunday of every month at Elkins Regional Convalescent Center, and on every third Sunday at the nursing home in Philippi. I play for the dulcimer classes at the Elkins Senior Center on the second Tuesday of each month. The third Tuesday of the month, I play at Colonial Place, and then we've got 30 minutes to get over to Nella's. Every Wednesday night, I lead the country music jams for Augusta at Pickin' in the Park in the summer and at Davis & Elkins College in the winter. We play all the old country songs and gospel. Sometimes, I go to Weston to play with the Wireless

Connection. Once in a while, we play at the Woodford Memorial Church in Elkins. I play at Holbrook Nursing Home in Buckhannon the second Saturday of every month and at the Senior Center in Buckhannon on the first and third Saturdays. They have another group comes in there sometimes, and if I go over there and they're already up there playin', I say, "No, I'll just listen." You know, sometimes it's just good to sit and listen.

I'll tell you what I believe now: this college here in Elkins is going to keep growing, which is really good. And they got these theaters here now, and this will be known as a music city! And they're running those scenic trains all around here, in the winter and summer. I rode the Cass train one time, and we went up and played music up there on top of the hill. I'd like to see this scenic railroad do more like that.

And I'd like to see more young people get into the music. I was going to make a round mandolin; you could build one really cheap that way. And if there was some kid that was interested in it, I was going to give it to them. From what I can see now, young people are just a-sittin', punching phones and things; they've got those games they're playing on all the time. Back in our day, we had Grandpa Jones—we saw him at the YMCA—and those Grand Ole Opry shows. We used to listen to them on the radio when we could get the signal. After I got to be a lineman on the train, I'd go down there and see the show on a Friday evening.

The kind of music we like to play, it's just the old country music. Some would say it's a little bit like bluegrass. But it's just plain country music. Now when it comes to music notes, I don't know one note from another one. I play it, but I don't read any notes. But I've been blessed. I just listen to the ups and downs of the music, and I know where to go next. Now, when we get together every week for Pickin' in the Park, or Pickin' at the College, I'll say to one of them, "You play two songs." Then somebody else plays two

Philmore Kelley, holding a mandolin made by Gus McGee. Photo by our author.

songs, and we keep going around. So one time, someone brings this instrument in there to the jam session, and it has one of those little power things on it. Well, he didn't increase the power, so I didn't say anything. But one night, someone turned the thing way up. And I told him, "Well, you've got to shut it off." That's a good rule, you know. The thing of it is, leadership is a technique of helping others to achieve a common goal. I learned that in the West Virginia National Guard; I was in there for seven years and made sergeant. And I found out, if there's any way that you can get somebody to do something without chewing them out, you're better off. Because you can win 'em over better that way!

MARGO BLEVIN DENTON has lived in West Virginia since 1976. An artist, art teacher, and writer, she was director of Augusta Heritage Center from 1981 until 2005. She plays old-time and Cajun music and has performed for 13 years with the Elktones. This is her second contribution to GOLDENSEAL, the first being "Echoes of Buffalo Creek" (Winter 2009).

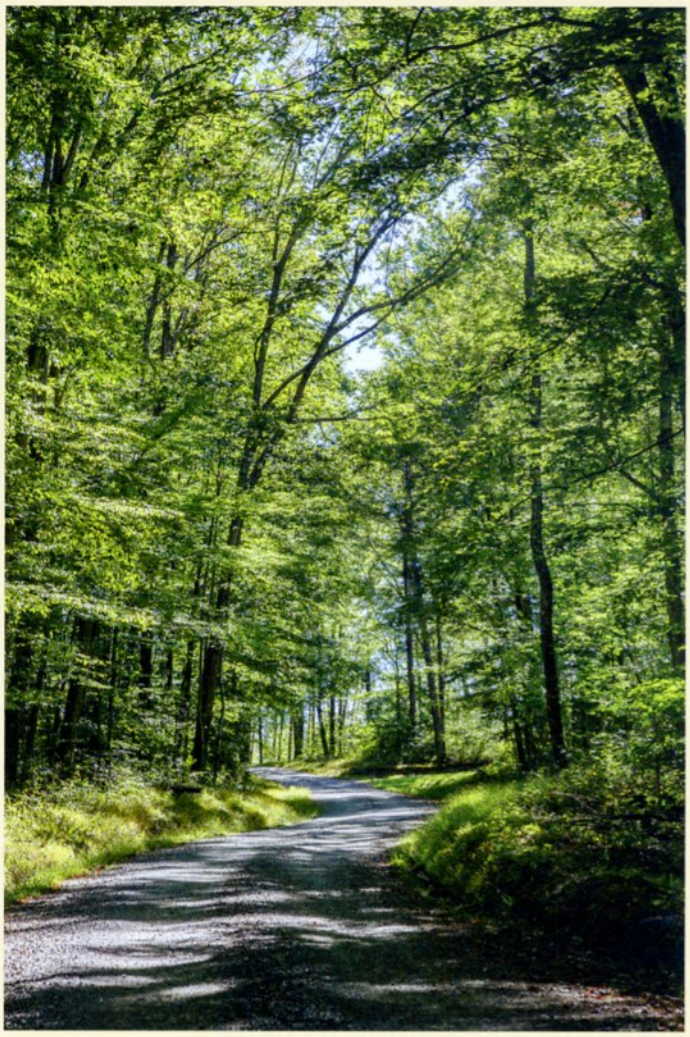
Hinkle Mountain Road

By Ivan Norton Hunter

Up by the Doc Stowers turnoff
Where the mud is as blue as ink
And walking is as soft as
Pie dough where the yellow jackets drink
The stuff that is made by spiders
Blows against the face, and
A quarter moon works wonders in
A field of Queen Anne's Lace.

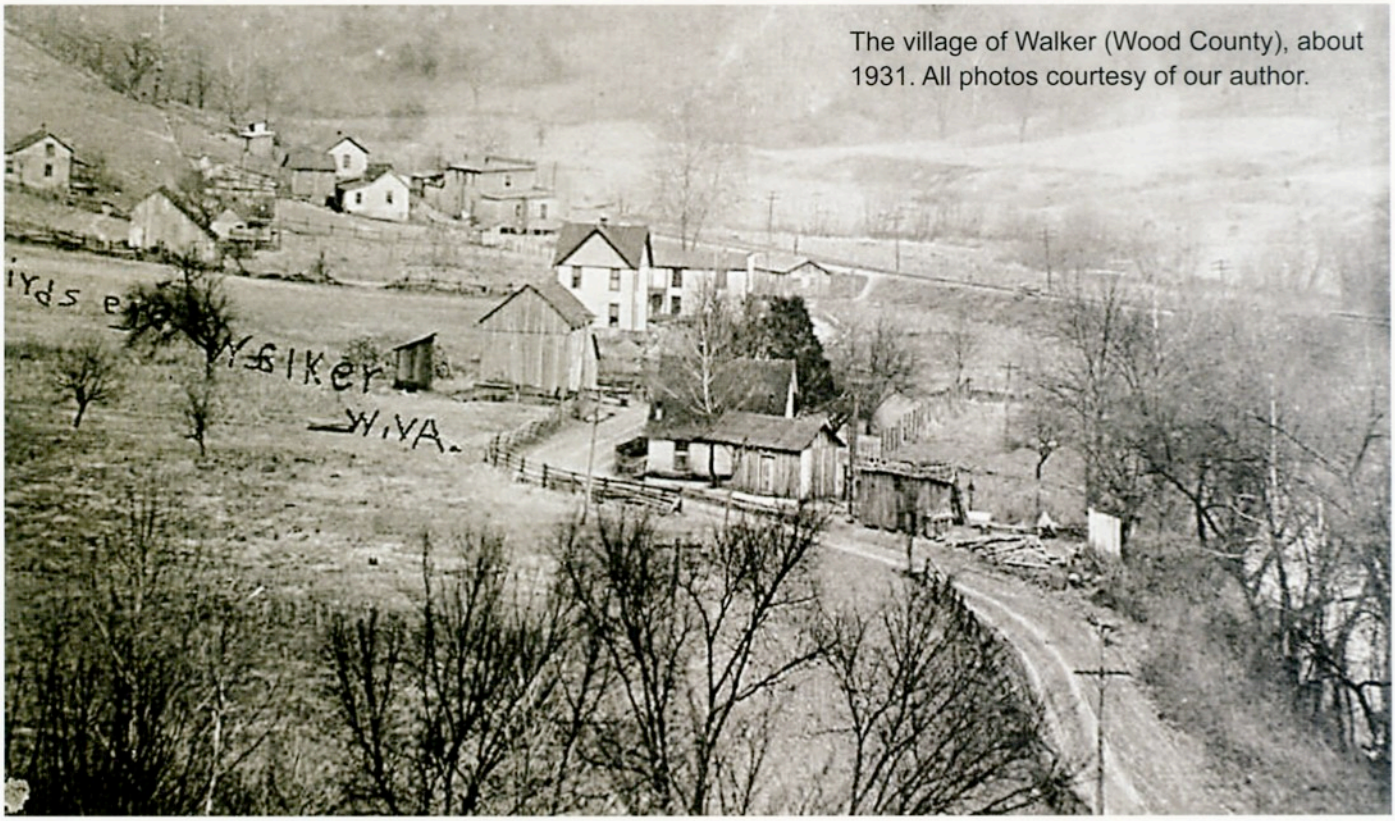
Hinkle Mountain Road, up where the
Blacktop falls away, belongs to
Another people and to another day.
A Hinkle carried in the rifle and a
Spencer brought an axe.
An ox team moved the whetstone
With a wagon box full of flax.
There was whiskey under the blankets
And seed corn under the seat.
A hymn book was lodged between the
Flowers and a tow sack full of wheat.
A flintstone lit the cookfires
A candle gave the light.
And a coon dog made most of the music
That sounded through night.

On the long road up the mountain
After the laurel begins to bud
A thousand ghosts go walking
Through Hinkle Mountain mud.



Hinkle Mountain Road (Nicholas County). Photo by Richwood native Michelle Rose. You can check out more of her work at michellerosestudio.com.

IVAN NORTON HUNTER (1916-1999) was born and raised in Richwood (Nicholas County). He spent much of his career in Nitro, where he served as postmaster. He wrote poetry most of his adult life, returning again and again to his experiences and memories of the people, places, and landscapes of Richwood and Nicholas County. A collection of his poems is due out in fall 2020 from Populore Publishing. For a selection of Ivan's poetry—read by him—and more information on the publishing project, visit bit.ly/Hunter_Poetry. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



The village of Walker (Wood County), about 1931. All photos courtesy of our author.

"55 acres more or less"

By James Pryor

Walker's Creek is a muddy run that's coursed steadily through Wood County for centuries, carrying with it untold stories. That ribbon of water winding through the hills and valleys is deeply intertwined with the heartbeat of the lives once fully lived along its banks.

Located along Walker's Creek were "55 acres more or less" of West Virginia rock and red dirt. It was home and hearth to those who lived and loved within its borders. That old plot of ground was my summer home for nearly 20 years. A lifetime of knowledge of perseverance, challenging work, faith, and honesty were wrapped up in those years spent on that hidden tract of land. There's a strong temptation to flood this piece with superlatives about the people, places, and things related to the farm. In one word, though, the best description would be *heat*. West Virginia summer heat will flash-burn the back of your neck and wring every drop of moisture from your body while standing still. I can remember as the sun rose in intensity, the grasshoppers would scream in concert and then suddenly grow ominously quiet. West Virginia heat is unlike any other; it builds character.

The heat of a summer day brings "strange intimations"—Pulitzer Prize-winning author Louis Bromfield's term for that constant vague yearning of always wanting to return to his "pleasant valley" in central Ohio. I've experienced those same "intimations" in regard to the hills and mountains of my "pleasant valley"—that half-wild hillside farm outside the village of Walker.

In 1930, Frank and Bess Leasure were deeded "55 acres more or less" of hill land by Bess' father, James Vaughn, as a wedding gift. Their humble beginnings in married life

included a cabin, a mule, and a plow. The land would produce corn, a strong stand of timber, a vegetable garden, and an uncanny abundance of copperhead snakes, which received my full attention early in life.

As time progressed, Frank and Bess added a barn, a shed, and a dug well. They never had any children, so the two of them carved a life for themselves out of that lonely hillside. When the workweek ended in Akron, Ohio, my father would loudly proclaim to our little clan that those "hills were a-callin'!" Then we'd all pack in the car and head down Route 21 South, bound for the promised land. Travelers today might never know that sense of excitement in seeing winding roads fade into darkness—or the knowledge of time and place when landmarks appear in the night signaling the nearness of a long-awaited destination, or the strange warmth of a single light piercing the darkness welcoming the weary traveler home. However, this story isn't one of nostalgia. It's a tale of lifelong lessons learned from the land and its people of the Central Appalachians.

As a young child on the farm, I was surrounded by giants—larger-than-life people, animated, and full of life. Amongst these giants, I experienced my earliest lesson: the power of family. I was called "Jimmy's boy," in deference to my father, or "little Jimmy." Each greeting was accompanied with a corresponding emotion of exuberant recognition, and the inevitable comparison in resemblance to an unknown relative.

It was also early in life on the old place that I learned the virtues of work. Our times on those 55 acres were not a vacation. They were more like coming to the rescue against weather, time, and nature itself, which were always plotting against us. We had to keep things going no matter what, as every West Virginia farmer knows.

Often, a day's work depended on the needs at hand, such as a child drawing and carrying water from the well to the house, or tending to the chickens or whatever menagerie of animals were around. After my uncle's passing, I began to see my aunt in a different light. Hindered by a childhood broken hip that had healed badly, she walked with a pronounced limp. Her oak walking stick, worn smooth by years of use, became her trademark, along with her one built-up shoe.

She was my first example of perseverance through pain as I would watch her grab her stick and determinedly hike the half-mile up the access road to the mailbox and return. We learned to appreciate what we had in a way many people today wouldn't understand. On the farm, money was as scarce as level ground. What you couldn't buy, you built with whatever was at hand. More than one tool—and yes, toys—were the product of some of the strangest inventions ever created.

We absorbed the lessons that the land was to be worked, not to be viewed, for it was the land that gave us food, shelter, and security. On that latter point, my mountains were not a prison but bastions against the outside world, and they've never lost their haunting beauty. Poverty is a mean and dirty business. I learned a valuable lesson from our neighbors that even though one may be monetarily poor, you don't need to be spiritually impoverished. My uncle and aunt Albert and Ora Wright lived halfway up the hill overlooking Walker. One of my favorite memories is sitting on their porch at dusk watching the Baltimore & Ohio passenger train as it roared through the valley. Albert was blind, and Ora faithfully took care of him until the end of their days.

In Appalachia, you value your neighbors. I still remember "Mrs. Laura," as she was called, wearing her hat while playing the piano at church, with her son Harold in attendance, and the twin bachelor farmers who always scared me to death, but you knew they'd be there for you in a pinch.

On those 55 acres of hardscrabble, I learned to face fears and, if not conquer them, at least control them. Copperheads had

The entire Pryor family pitches in to help out on the "55 acres." They eventually outgrew their weekend house and bought a small travel trailer for extra space.

settled the land long before people had, and they weren't about to give up their claim. Copperheads are one of West Virginia's two poisonous snakes, the other being rattlers. Long before I was old enough to do chores, I'd heard many copperhead stories, ranging from "they smell like cut cucumbers" to "if you shoot and wound one, it'll follow you," to "copperheads can leap their full body length to strike!" Copperheads were the Mountain State boogeyman.

One morning, I stepped off the front porch without doing my usual ground search, and there he was, lying between my feet. I'd stepped over the beast. As I stood frozen, I looked down; he hadn't moved, just resting there, curled up and relaxed. It was only after I jumped away, unbitten, did I begin to understand that this land was his home and that I was the intruder. If I let him be, he would do the same for me—I hoped.

From others came the example of doing what you must—no matter what. I was sitting on the front porch when Aunt Ora bolted out of the house and hobbled past the porch to the base of an old tree. She reached down, holding herself up by that oak walking stick. In a move faster than I thought possible, she yanked a blacksnake (nonpoisonous) off the ground by its tail. She then commenced to bash its brains out against that tree. She breathlessly returned to the house, turned to me, and simply said, "Kills my chickens."

One lasting lesson I learned was that technology is a necessary evil, and a sense of humor is essential for dealing with it. Electricity found its way to the old house in the early 1950s. Now, if you have electricity, you need to do something with it. Back then, the first item of electrical business was supplying heat. The living room fireplace just wasn't warming like it used to. Since there was no basement, a huge furnace was installed in the middle of the living room linoleum floor. At night, my brother and I slept on the couch, where we were treated to a grand display of an orange-and-red pilot light flame and various ominous noises. It was great fun when the outside temperature would drop and that furnace would erupt in a voluminous roar in the middle of a room full of people.

Another technological advancement was TV. It sat incongruously in the corner of the living room next to the furnace. In the early days of the TV industry, that unique piece of furniture's only real function was to display snow and to screech static, but it was indeed a conversation piece. The one true acceptance of technology came in the form of light bulbs. They were hung everywhere with the greatest effect.

Our author's Aunt Bess Vaughn (second from left) and her sisters (left-right): Ora, Tess, and Norma, and Della Vaughn (his grandmother). Our author notes, "Aunt Bess was ageless in features, but if you looked closely into her eyes, there was a flame of youth, back when she'd ride a Roan bareback around the area."

The years passed, and the seasons changed. By the late 1960s, it became clear that the hills around the 55 acres were growing old and tired. The trees, which once were young and strong, had become knurled and creased with deep lines of age. Their branches were heavy-laden and no longer swayed with vigor in the hot West Virginia summer winds. Like the land around them, the people also grew tired and aged perhaps before their time. Death took most of them by the late 1960s and very early 1970s.

Several years ago, I accompanied my father on one last trip to the homestead. The landscape had dramatically changed. The old familiar landmarks and havens of rest were gone. The clearing where the house, the barn, and the well had been had all but disappeared in a tangle of new growth trees and thick wild bushes. The only evidence of a house was the sandstone fireplace and chimney, still standing defiantly after having been replaced by that furnace decades ago.

Many times, in business and life in general, those lessons learned on the farm have placed me in good stead. You learned to work hard but enjoy life. Perhaps the most important gift was a sense of identity—of having belonged.

The farm and its people are gone now, but that muddy Walker's Creek, of no apparent consequence to anyone, still flows steadily, carrying with it the memories of lives lived and stories, told and untold, for generations to come.

It's been over 50 years since I last truly visited Walker and those 55 acres, and yet, I find myself returning to that place in my heart and mind more so now than ever. It's an age thing, I guess, but those places live on in rising landscapes bathed in the light of a warm setting sun or in that subconscious anticipation of arriving home when you're heading south.

No matter where life takes you, West Virginia, its mountains, and its people will take hold of your spirit. No one ever really leaves. We just keep trying to come back home.

JAMES PRYOR was born in Ohio but is West Virginia bred. He's never lost his love and fascination with all things West Virginia—just ask his wife, children, and grandchildren! He had the distinct pleasure of spending 20 summers on a farm outside Walker. The lure of the mountains and the character of the people among those hills have never left him. As he gets older, his urges to return "home" grow even stronger. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

A Mountaintop Wedding

By Les Peters

Two of my mother's most treasured memories were those of her wedding day and how she happened to meet my father. She loved sharing these stories with my sister, brother, and me.

My mother, Ivory Mullins Peters, grew up on Coon Branch Mountain near Iaeger (McDowell County) in the 1930s and early 1940s. Her parents, Roy and Zella Vanover Mullins, owned about 100 acres near the mountaintop. Grandpa Roy built most of their house by himself. The one-story structure had a big porch that wrapped around two sides with great views of the surrounding ridges. Mom compared the sunrises to those at the beach. She had an older sister, Irene, and a younger brother, Eugene. Although Grandpa Roy's job as a logger took him away from home a fair amount of time, he and Granny Zell (with help from my mother and aunt—my uncle was too young) farmed much of the land. They picked fruit from the apple, pear, mountain peach, and persimmon trees and raised a little livestock, including a few chickens. As a child, I ate the peaches and persimmons directly from the trees. The persimmons must not have been very ripe because they definitely weren't sweet!

This self-sufficiency helped make Mom's family relatively comfortable during the Great Depression. In addition to growing and raising much of their own food, they even managed to sell or barter some produce, milk, eggs, and butter—churned by hand by Granny Zell. The property also had a coal bank, where the coal seam was exposed, making it easily accessible. The coal helped keep the house warm during the cold mountain winters. Water came from a hand-dug well in front of the house. Their lives were far from easy, though. These were still the years when goods and cash were in short supply due to the Depression and, later, by World War II due to rationing. Electricity didn't reach the mountaintop until the late 1940s.

My father, Enos Harvey Peters, lived near Panther, just a few miles west of Iaeger. He was the fifth of 12 children born between 1913 and the mid-1930s. He, his parents, Carl and Rosa Kennedy Peters, and his siblings had an entirely different kind of existence than my mother's family. Grandpa Carl was a coal miner, and his family normally lived in housing owned by the company that employed him. Tenants of this particular company weren't allowed to raise gardens or keep livestock on their property. Almost everything had to be purchased at the company store, more often than not using company-issued scrip.

Life was indeed tougher for Grandpa Carl, Granny Rosie, and their children than it was for Mom's family. However, Grandpa Carl always kept a job because of his expertise as a mine trackman. He and his talents were well-known in the mines of western McDowell County, allowing him to keep working even during the darkest days of the Depression. When he retired, the mine superintendent estimated that Grandpa Carl had installed enough track to cover a triangular path from McDowell County to Chicago, to New York, and back home—more than 1,750 miles! Mechanization at that time was only a fraction of what it would soon become, so rails had to be extended from the mine's opening to all the working faces. This allowed the hand-loaders to shovel coal directly into mine cars to be transported outside.

Dad and Mom didn't live that far apart as the crow flies. However, they usually had to make the trip on foot or by horseback, using roads that wound up and around the perimeter of the mountains in a serpentine fashion. Automobiles were pretty much out of the question due to their scarcity, poor roads, and a lack of gasoline.

Regardless, Dad found his way one day to a small Coon Branch Mountain church near Mom's home. He and some friends were invited to attend a "dinner-on-the-grounds," a popular social gathering where young people could meet friends or potential romantic interests, which was the case with Mom and Dad. After an appropriate period of courtship, Dad asked for and received my grandparents' permission to marry Mom. The wedding date was set for July 8, 1943, when Dad would be home on leave from the Army. It was to be held at my Mom's home.

On the morning of her wedding, Mom was trying on her brand new dress. The dress, however, had come in contact with a rolled-out ribbon of sticky flypaper hanging from the ceiling. Flypaper, rarely used today, was a common household item in the 1940s since most people left their windows and doors open to beat the summer heat. Even with screens, the pesky bugs still found ways inside.

Needless to say, this ruined Mom's dress as the flypaper was now permanently attached. Understandably, she was very upset, and her tears flowed like rain. But Grandpa Roy rode to the rescue—literally. He mounted his horse, rode off the mountain to Iaeger (about six miles roundtrip), and bought Mom another wedding dress.

Somewhat later in the day than originally planned, Ivory Mullins and Enos Harvey Peters were married—with Mom in her second new dress, and Dad in his Army best. The ceremony, conducted by the Rev. Tom Robinette of Iaeger, was attended by Mom's parents, sister, brother, and a few other relatives and friends representing both sides of the family. Although the flypaper ruined Mom's original dress, it didn't stop the wedding.

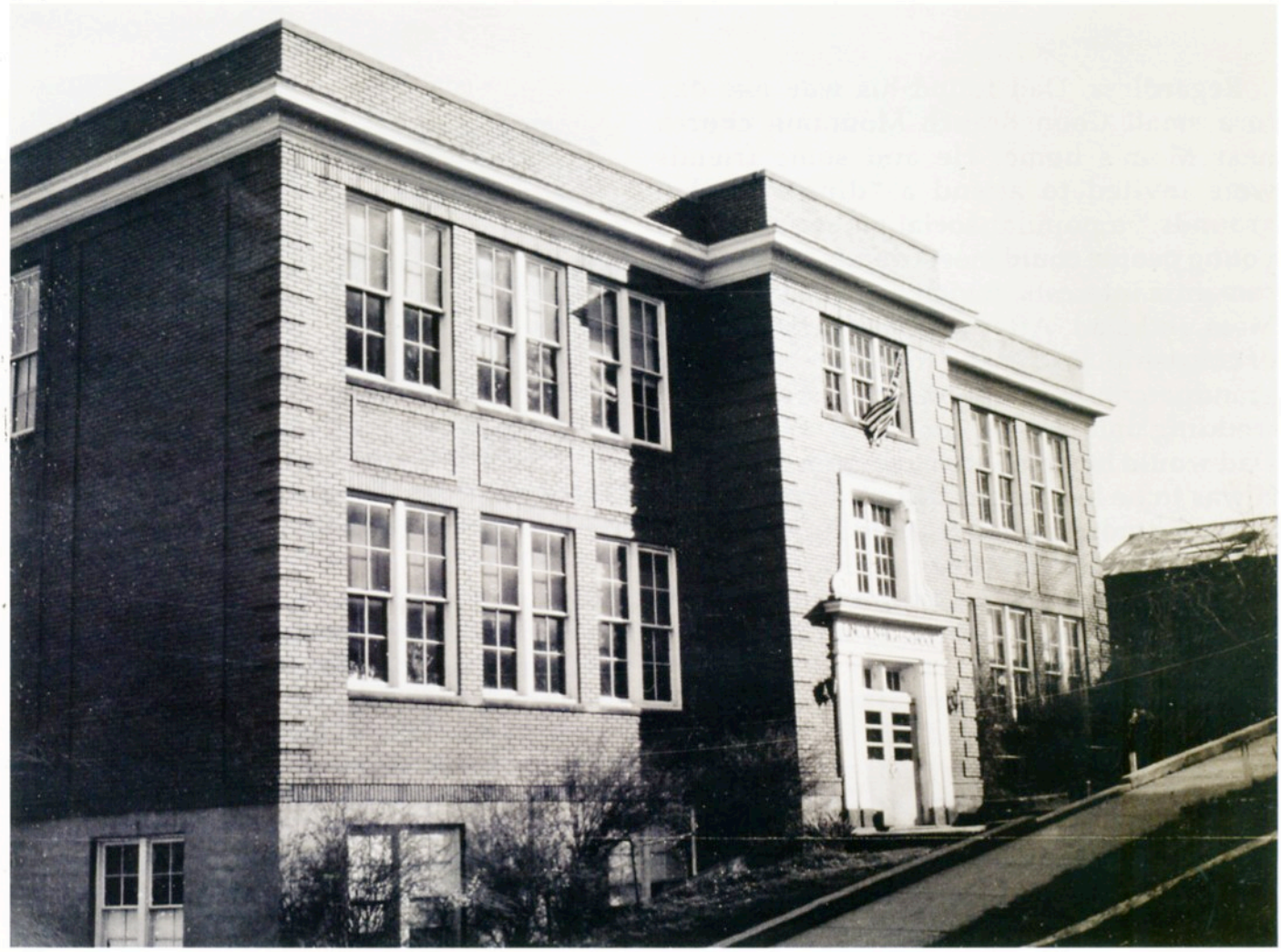
A few days later, Dad left with the Army for England and went on to serve as a combat medic during the Normandy D-Day landings, through France and the Battle of the Bulge, and into Germany until the war ended. During this time, Mom kept living with her parents

Our author's parents, Ivory Mullins and Enos Harvey Peters. Courtesy of our author.

and started making preparations for life with Dad, who returned home in November 1945. Dad had been a coal miner before the war and resumed his underground career operating a cutting machine, which undercut the coal seam so it could be blasted out. Mom became a full-time homemaker.

Over the next eight years or so, they had four children. I was the first, followed by my brother Kenneth (who died as an infant), sister Darnell, and brother Conrad. Although coal-mining employment declined in the 1950s due to a decreased demand for coal and an increased reliance on machinery, Dad was able to keep working. In summer 1961, after having survived World War II and 20-plus years in the mines largely unscathed, he passed away unexpectedly after a brief illness. Their happy marriage ended much too soon. Mom was grief-stricken and mourned for a long time. She never remarried and devoted herself to raising her children—and later adoring her four grandchildren. We lost our wonderful mother in 1999.

A Iaeger native, LES PETERS grew up in McDowell County, graduated from Welch High School, and was a coal miner at Gary for 16 years. He then worked in logistics and later the healthcare supply chain. Les has a bachelor's degree from Bluefield State College and an MBA from Averett University. He and his wife, Sharon, reside in eastern North Carolina. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Hinton's segregated Lincoln High School. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Dr. Buddy Stokes Collection.

Desegregation in Summers County

By Ed Garten

"In 25 West Virginia counties this fall, Negro and white school children saluted their nation's flag together for the first time. '. . . One Nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.' They sit side-by-side . . . study, laugh and play together—because on May 17, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that: 'In the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.' –Harry W. Ernest, Charleston *Gazette*, September 19, 1954

On May 18, 1954, the day after the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* ruling, Governor William Marland, joined by state school officials and African-American leaders, expressed that West Virginia would likely experience little difficulty in desegregating schools. As it turned out, there was considerable public resistance in some counties, especially in Berkeley, Boone, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Jefferson, McDowell, Mercer, Mineral, Monongalia, and Taylor. All schools in West Virginia wouldn't be fully integrated until the late 1960s.

Even when integration occurred relatively smoothly, there were administrative inequalities. In particular, African-American principals and teachers often lost out on better-paying jobs to white educators with less experience or qualifications. The disparity was due largely to the Supreme Court not issuing a *roadmap* for desegregation and the state's approach of letting counties and schools develop their own procedures. One county where this became an issue was Summers.

Hinton is the Summers County seat, located near its geographical center. The town's existence (founded in 1874) was due to the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Railway, which, by 1892, had built a roundhouse there with 17 engine stalls, employing 540 men. The boomtown prospered through both world wars, with its fate tied closely to the fortunes of coal mining and steam locomotives. But, in the early 1950s, employment in the coal industry plummeted, a direct effect of mine mechanization, the closing of older mines, and the abandonment of coke making. The biggest blow to Hinton was the conversion of locomotive power from steam to diesel. The C&O laid off hundreds of workers who'd maintained the old engines. The subsequent reduction in property-tax collections significantly curtailed local government spending, particularly in terms of schools. In 1954, already struggling to address lost income from property taxes, county schools had to face new challenges imposed by *Brown*.

In July of that year, the Summers County Board of Education first tried to address the issue but took a wait-and-see attitude, which can be attributed in large part to the court's lack of a roadmap. Despite that, in September, the board created an Integration Committee "to study the question"—in a county where only 181 of 4,068 pupils (4.4%) were African-American.

That fall, Jeanette Jones became the first African-American to enroll in the formerly all-white Hinton High School, without objection from the school superintendent. That, however, was the extent of the county's integration in 1954-55. A year later, a letter from the state NAACP indicated that the county's proposed "three year plan" was "completely unsatisfactory." The letter noted, "We understand that you had one colored girl attending your white high school, but she was asked to return to the high school for Negros." Jeanette did, in fact, return to Hinton's all-Black Lincoln High but not (as the NAACP insinuated) because she'd been threatened. Jeanette (now Jeanette Burwell) recently reflected back, saying her parents made the decision out of general safety concerns but not because of any specific threats. She speculates that perhaps "outsiders" had circulated rumors she might be harmed but that even on her first day at Hinton High, she was warmly welcomed by several students and by the school's principal at the front door.

During the same 1955 meeting when the NAACP letter was recorded, the board passed a resolution inviting all African-American pupils to attend previously all-white schools during the second term of 1955-56 "in-so-far as facilities, teaching loads, etc. will permit" and to attend any "school of their choice" during 1956-57. The board also recommended integrating school buses but rejected a proposal to begin immediate countywide integration starting with first grade—perhaps allowing time to weigh public reaction.

Anecdotal evidence suggests Summers County integrated relatively peacefully. In 1956, about 30 former Lincoln students enrolled in Hinton High. By the start of the next year, Lincoln's enrollment had dwindled to 22. It appears that some African-American students did change schools on an "entirely free basis," using the board's language. One can only imagine the family conversations that occurred in Black households: "Do we keep our children in an all-Black school or encourage them to attend a white school

with more resources, even if it's farther from home?"

A major question was what would happen with the existing Black schools and faculty. Near the end of 1960-61, a group of African-Americans demanded to know why a former Lincoln teacher with a B.A. degree and 32 years' experience had been assigned to "a one room school enclosed in a pasture," with declining enrollment, more than 20 miles from Hinton while there was a teacher vacancy at an elementary school less than a mile from town. The delegation also wanted to know why Lincoln Principal E. G. Crawford's "desires and expressions" regarding integration had been "completely ignored." The group pointed out how Black schools were an important source of identity and employment in the community, calling Lincoln's decline "a psychological defeat." A local clergyman and spokesman for the group contended that no Black teachers should lose their jobs as a result of integration. One board member responded, "I think you are wrong in saying Summers County is moving slower than some of the other counties. I think we shouldn't be obligated to move any faster than any of the others."

The Charleston *Daily Mail* reported that the board "took no action on the Negro delegation's petition" but did "return the Negro teacher to Lincoln School in Hinton." The board, which made no note of this concession in its minutes, appeared to be dragging its feet in placing Black teachers, responding only when pressured.

Nearly a year later, in a February 1962 meeting, the board finally decided to consider Black teachers "on a level with white teachers," based on highest qualifications, "regardless of race." Three months later, the board voted unanimously to close Lincoln High at the end of 1962-63 and transfer Principal Crawford to a teaching position at Hinton High; notably, one board member who supported closing Lincoln voted against giving Crawford the job.

The board's decision to give Black teachers jobs at Hinton High may have been, in part, due to the legal actions of one educator whose position at Lincoln had been eliminated. Edith Goode had filed suit against the board for "refus[ing] to employ her" in 1957-58 and demanded her lost wages for that year. Although a federal judge ruled against her, the board did agree to hire her for the 1963-64 year.

Jeanette Burwell, the first student to integrate Hinton High School. Courtesy of our author.

Relatedly, the West Virginia Human Rights Commission speculated that some counties were keeping all-Black schools open specifically to *avoid* integrating teachers and principals. The commission observed, "We have no information that new Negro teachers are being hired except for all-Negro schools. It would seem that the Negro teachers are completely bypassed by counties with few or no Negro students despite the need for qualified teachers."

An example of apparent discrimination cropped up at the Summers County board's August 1963 meeting. Two white candidates and Crawford were being considered for the open principal position at Talcott High. After Superintendent Irvin Maddy recommended Crawford for the job, the board voted unanimously to reject him despite the fact Crawford held a master's degree and a state principal's certificate, which the two white candidates lacked. In making its decision, the board reneged on its earlier promise to fill vacancies "with the highest qualified," regardless of race. According to the Charleston *Gazette*, the superintendent had polled Talcott's 12 white teachers prior to his recommendation, and three had voiced opposition to Crawford.

Hinton High School—the day a fire damaged the school, 1951. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Robert R. Keller Collection.

On October 28, 1966, the *Gazette* ran a major headline: "Negro Principals Disappear as Integration Moves On." The article recounted how Crawford had become a classroom teacher at Hinton High after spending 22 years at Lincoln as a principal, coach, and teacher. It noted that "a similar fate befell a number of other Negro principals in Southern counties of the State." It went on to say that Crawford had "been passed over twice by the school board for principal positions at other high schools" in the county—both times in favor of a less-qualified candidate—and that "the misfortune of Crawford has been a source of private grumbling among the Negro community. Negroes seem to take his plight personally. A janitor who asked not to be identified said: 'He has taught so many Negro children that their parents feel insulted by this thing.' A housewife remarked: 'It has hurt all of us bad.'" Crawford added, "I can't say I felt hurt—you are so used to being disappointed and denied certain things because you are Negro that you have become conditioned to it. . . . I used to think that race relations in Hinton and Summers County were the best in West Virginia. That was before school desegregation. I was wrong."

Nonetheless, the superintendent spoke highly of Crawford: "He is very much a gentleman and an outstanding teacher. When I recommended him for principal at Talcott in 1963 I told the board that as a teacher I couldn't conscientiously recommend others since we had the most qualified man in Crawford." He recalled that when Crawford was appointed as a classroom teacher at Hinton High a few years earlier, "there was considerable opposition to the move" and pointedly added that Hinton was "generally Southern" in its racial attitude since much of its population had originally migrated from Virginia to work for the C&O.

One lingering question remains: Why, when Black students had been allowed to attend all-white Hinton High as early as 1956 "on an entirely free basis," did Lincoln continue to operate through 1962-63? Perhaps some Black parents believed their children would be better served in a small school with supportive teachers? Or perhaps it was simply pride in their local Black school? The official records reveal no answers.

Again, one can only speculate, but Nelson Bickley, writing in the *West Virginia Law Review* (2005), made the plausible argument that "the loss of the Black schools left a great void in the communities. The schools had been an organizing factor, bringing people together in a centralized space, crossing religious affiliations, family boundaries, and club loyalties. The teachers were valued

In this photo of Hinton's Canaan Baptist Church, Lincoln High Principal E. G. Crawford stands second from the right. Jeanette Jones (Burwell) is at the top of the steps, near the middle, wearing a white blouse and black blazer. Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

Lincoln High has a Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/LincolnSchoolHintonWV/. Please visit and feel free to share your memories.

and respected in the community and were often turned to for advice and leadership by the adult population of their areas." He observed that many Black parents didn't know how to react to the changed school situation post-integration and generally believed that Black teachers had better motivated their children.

Years later, the Lincoln High building continued to serve as a neighborhood center and remained an object of pride in Hinton's small Black community. Indeed, years after the closing, Lincoln graduates held occasional school reunions there, drawing back former students who now live far and wide.

The post-integration problem with Black teachers wasn't just a local issue. In 1969, the National Education Association (NEA) argued that "school closings [of all-Black schools] are just the excuse that many districts need to fire their Negro personnel rather than transfer them to [integrated] white schools." The NEA argued that thousands of Black teachers and principals had lost their jobs due to integration and the unwillingness of many school districts to place Black teachers in integrated schools.

Today, only 22 of Summers County's 1,448 students are Black (1.5%). The county's overall enrollment has dropped to nearly one-third of its 1954 level, a result of an aging population, lower birth rates, and families moving away due to economic decline.

I close by sharing my own memories of that time. I lived near Talcott, but my mother wanted me to attend what was perceived as the *better* grade school near Hinton, some 12 miles away. But how would I get there? In fall 1955, after Mother gained permission from the school superintendent, I started to ride what folks called "the colored bus," which

In researching this article, I posted a question online about integration in Summers County. Reflecting now as adults, the memories of these primarily white students were mostly positive, but some Black former students shared mixed feelings about their experiences. Here are two representative comments from former white students:

- "As I recall, Talcott [High] integrated the first year I attended [fall 1958]. I don't recall a problem of any kind. In fact, I think that Talcott benefited greatly from it. We had more students, and that may have been a challenge for the staff, but I don't think any of us kids felt any differently. In fact, the Black students in my classes bring back the fondest of memories. I think politicians made a whole lot more trouble out of integration than the rest of us would have."
- "After integration, I met some of my favorite people in high school and wish I could meet up with them again. My favorite thing to know would be how the kids from Lincoln felt and coped/endured during what must have been such a difficult time. I benefited from the new friendships formed with the Black young people who were 'unknowingly' instrumental in being a part of making something very wrong just a 'little' more right."

At the same time, I would be negligent in dismissing the stress and uncomfortableness Black students experienced, including this one individual, who still feels the pain from that period:

- "I was a victim of this integration in Hinton. I went to Greenbrier School in fifth grade, and I hated it. The children, most of them were mean and called you all kinds of names. The teachers didn't quite know how to handle it, so they ignored it a lot. We Black folks didn't have much say so about anything and, as far as participating in anything other than sports, we were left out. You had to be really smart to even be recognized." —Ed Garten

took the dozen or so African-American kids from the outlying village of Talcott to Hinton, a long roundtrip and often over treacherous roads in winter. I look back with a smile at being the first little white boy to ride that formerly segregated school bus. We were all crammed into that small, yellow, and very old 1946 International bus. What fun! Nearly all those kids became my friends! Children know no boundaries of color.

While Summers County may have integrated more slowly than it should have, the deliberateness may have prevented some of the public, and sometimes hostile, clashes that occurred in other counties, such as neighboring Greenbrier, where ¾ of the white students walked out of White Sulphur High in protest of integration. Finally, the following note I received suggests that integration also helped some white students see the world through a different and more-equal lens:

"I too remember when the Black children began attending our school [Hinton's Central Grade School], and one of my fondest memories is of my dad sitting my brother and myself down the night before the Black children were to start their first day . . . in our all-white school. To this day, I remember him saying to us these very words: 'Tomorrow, two little Black children will be going to your school. They are brother and sister just like you two are, and they most likely will be scared, and you both are to treat them very nice. Please smile and say hello to them.' Well, we did exactly as he told us to do, and after all these years, I can still see their little faces and the two of them holding hands as they walked into the schoolhouse. . . . I sure hope life has been kind to them and that they prospered well."

Dr. ED GARTEN grew up in Summers County near Talcott. Now retired, he served over 40 years as a professor and administrator with four universities. His last 22 years were with the University of Dayton, where he is emeritus dean and professor. His research interests continue in the areas of education leadership and social justice issues. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Tug River inundates Williamson, April 1977. Courtesy of our author.

The Mingo County Flood of 1977

By Robert Beanblossom

In 1977, I was a forest ranger with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Division of Forestry, assigned to the southern portion of Mingo County and stationed at Gilbert, my hometown. I was directly responsible for all facets of wildfire control—preparedness, prevention, and especially suppression of any active wildfires in my area as well as other forestry-related activities. Preparedness included recruiting and equipping local fire wardens and crews, maintaining fire towers and access roads, inspecting fire hazards, training local fire departments, and maintaining fire caches. Wildfire prevention involved speaking to school and service organizations, doing radio and TV programs, other outreach, and law-enforcement activities. Although I wasn't authorized to carry a sidearm, I had the authority to issue citations or make arrests for fire-law violations, including felonies such as arson.

I supervised local fire wardens and crews but personally fought fires as well. Fighting wildfires is both an art and a science. In southern West Virginia, we were taught to attack the *head* of the fire—its fastest-moving point. The only exception was where life or valuable property was at risk. Invariably, this meant hiking to a ridgetop. Since Mingo County is composed mostly of steep terrain, it's almost impossible to stop a fire before it reaches a ridgetop. A fire rushing upslope is the most difficult to fight. It preheats the fuel and air in front of it, which, in turn, causes an upsweep of cool air that fans the flames. The steeper the slope, the faster a fire can climb. After hiking to the mountaintop, we'd construct a fire line parallel to, but a distance away from, the *head* based on its intensity and set what was called a *line fire* to burn back toward the main blaze. The objective was to intercept the main blaze, leaving nothing ahead of it and reducing the chance of the main fire reaching an unburned area. The "no man's land" in between would usually burn itself out. The expression "fighting fire with fire" is especially appropriate in controlling a wildfire. After stopping the head of the fire, we'd construct lines that would burn out each flank all the way to the bottom of the hill. Long story short, firefighting is rugged, dirty, dangerous work.

March 1977 had been a rough fire month. Warm, dry, windy weather prevailed across the southern Appalachians following one of the coldest winters on record. My fire crews and I were bone weary. Late one night, around 4:00 a.m., I pulled my truck over by the side of the road, only five miles from home, and went to sleep. I was simply too exhausted to drive further. The fires had been bigger than normal. My first one occurred on February 11, and, all during March, fires raged at Gilbert Creek, War Eagle, Delbarton, Williamson, Kermit, Marrowbone Creek, Laurel Creek, and many other places.

A brief change in weather the third week of March permitted a return to normal duties. I had the pleasure of presenting a Smokey Bear award to *Williamson Daily News* reporter Charlotte Sanders for promoting conservation efforts. Her *trophy* was a plastic nine-inch Smokey mounted to a walnut desk plaque, including a silver pen / pencil set. Charlotte—an iconic figure in the newspaper profession and a talented, devoted reporter—had always strongly supported DNR's efforts to prevent wildfires. [See our author's article about Charlotte, "Writing is Second Nature," Winter 1992.]

The final week of March was again dry, and by April 2, I'd put in 102 hours in a little over a week fighting fires. I was ready for some much-needed rest. The 2nd fell on a Saturday. I finally got home about 9:00 p.m. after returning from a fire on Gilbert Creek. Rain started to fall. Finally, I got a day off on Sunday. On Monday morning, I reported to work to catch up on fire reports, vehicle maintenance, and other neglected chores.

I met with my fire patrolman, Larry Curry, who lived at Rawl, a small mining town upriver from Williamson. Patrolmen were seasonal employees (spring and fall) who assisted with wildfire suppression. Larry's mobile home was set between the railroad tracks and Tug River. By that time, the continual rain had led to flood warnings. I asked him if he was concerned, given his proximity to the river. He replied, "No, even during the flood of 1963, the river never even came near my place." Later that day, I patrolled along Guyandotte River and Gilbert Creek looking for potential flooding.

I woke up Tuesday morning and drove to the overlook near the new R. D. Bailey Dam in Wyoming County. It was the first time the dam—still unfinished—had been used to hold back water. The water behind the dam had risen so quickly that I realized a major disaster was taking shape. As it turned out, this flood would be about 17 feet higher than any on record. Larry's trailer was inundated by water this time. I relayed my findings to

Our author, about the time of the flood, poses with his daughter, Becky. Courtesy of our author.

the district office and said I was heading to Matewan to learn more.

But the road to Matewan was already blocked by flooding along Mate Creek, so I had to park my vehicle and walk the last mile or two. Huge gas tanks were floating in Mate Creek, which was backed up by the roaring Tug. If I recall correctly, they belonged to B&C Oil, which operated near the railroad underpass as you entered town. By the time I hiked into Matewan, Tug River was starting to recede. I found Mayor Robert McCoy and some other individuals standing in the middle of the street. All were armed with guns to prevent possible looting. I asked Mayor McCoy for a list of needs and quickly walked back to my truck. Driving to the top of Mary Tyler Mountain, I radioed the district office again and was told to standby at Taylorville as help was on the way. By then, it was nearing dark.

What happened next is rather humorous, in retrospect. I waited. Waited a little longer, and then waited some more. Finally, about 1:30 a.m., I spotted a state police cruiser leading a 2½-ton military truck. I briefed trooper Glen Ables, and we quickly agreed that the Tug's water level was still too high for us to drive between Matewan and Williamson, but the National Guard's military vehicle might be able to make it. Glen and I parked our vehicles. We spent the rest of the night passing out desperately needed blankets and *frozen* cherry pies to flood victims! That was all the National Guard had available since the

flood had come on so suddenly. Apparently, some well-intentioned citizen or company had donated thousands of cherry pies. I suppose they were eventually eaten but not until after a long thaw.

The rest of the day was a blur. I assisted wherever I could, and by the time I got home, I'd worked 35 straight hours—the most ever for me at one stretch.

By the next day, all available resources were being mobilized. The State Police, National Guard, and other emergency relief agencies were arriving in large numbers. A command post was established at the Williamson airport, and portable radio relay systems were installed. DNR dispatched conservation officers and other forestry personnel from around the state. Crews started preparing cabins at Cabwaylingo State Forest to accommodate FEMA personnel.

My work over the next few days was hectic and varied, with 16-hour days the norm. I staffed roadblocks and issued permits, delivered food, and conducted damage assessments. I also made several medical runs, delivering insulin and prescription medication to people stranded in remote communities, like War Eagle and Beech Creek.

Early one morning, I reported to the command post at the airport. While conferring with another DNR employee, a state trooper marched in and asked to no one in particular, "Does anyone know where Marrowbone Grade School is located?" I told him I did, and he told me to get on the nearest National Guard helicopter and show the pilots where to go. I knew the county very well and had no difficulty navigating from the air. We landed at the school, and the lead pilot asked if I could help get things established. After we unloaded blankets and bulk foods, they took off. I set about getting an organization set up. By that time, a local crowd had gathered. The school janitor opened the building, and folks started volunteering to hand out blankets and to cook and distribute food. The school had no electricity but did have gas cook stoves. Marrowbone Creek itself was cut off from the rest of the county by the floodwaters. Another one of our fire patrolmen, however, lived in the hollow and was at the school with his state vehicle, so I had radio contact.

After I'd been there an hour or so, an obviously distraught young woman walked up holding a baby. Through her tears, she explained that her child was critically ill. I could immediately tell the child had a high fever and needed quick medical attention. I radioed and asked that they both be airlifted to the local hospital. When the helicopter arrived—the same one that'd brought me—I hopped on board with the mother and her baby. We took off for South Williamson, dropped the mother and child off at the hospital, and then flew back to the airport. I got in my vehicle and left for some other forgotten mission and didn't think any more about it. Years later, I happened to run into that same pilot, and he confessed he had no intention of ever coming back to get me. Had it not been for that sick child, I would've had to walk back to Williamson! The pilot wasn't being callous. There were too many critical missions at that point to justify making a special trip to pick up one forest ranger.

Even in oft-flood-ravaged Mingo, 1977 was one of the worst ever. As Rachel Dove would later write in the *Williamson Daily News*, "The Great Flood of '77 forever changed the Tug Valley area." The destruction amounted to more than $200 million and left over 2,000 people homeless. Coupled with the decline in coal mining, most cities and towns in Mingo County have never fully recovered.

On the Friday night following the flood, I staffed the DNR radio until about 2:00 a.m. and then was released from flood duty as critical fire weather returned to the area. Most folks don't realize how quickly a forest can dry—even after heavy rains. On Sunday, I suppressed a wildfire on Four Pole Creek at Isaban, but the real problem

The photos on this page and the next show the devastation from the 1977 flood in Mingo County. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Police.

occurred two days later. A new wildfire had sprung up at Sprigg, and since the flood had disrupted telephone service, it went unreported. I just happened to discover it on routine patrol. By the time of our initial attack, it was already well over 1,000 acres in size and spreading rapidly. Our fire towers had seen it but, because of the unique geography there, had reported it to be in Kentucky. It was difficult to recruit firefighters because everyone was either displaced by or busy cleaning up after the flood. With a very limited crew—only six men—we eventually contained the blaze to about 3,000 acres, but it took us five days, working day and night, to control it. At the same time, I also had another large fire near Matewan, caused by an underground mine fire, which was common in Mingo County and throughout southern West Virginia. Wildfires would ignite exposed coal seams, fueled by years of accumulated leaves. This vicious cycle destroyed countless acres of forest land every year.

Too few people realize there's a direct correlation between wildfires and flooding. Much of Mingo County has burned

repeatedly, accelerating soil erosion and run-off. Burning off the protective layer of leaves greatly reduces the water-retention capacity of the entire watershed. Erosion clogs streams. In a study conducted after a wildfire in Kanawha State Forest, near Charleston, an astounding 256.7 tons of soil-per-acre had been lost just in the first year following the fire.

And remember the Smokey Award I presented to Charlotte Sanders? The *Williamson Daily News*, like most businesses in town, was hard hit by the 1977 flood—it totally destroyed the old newspaper office on Third Avenue. Charlotte's award, however, survived. It floated on top of the muddy water and was retrieved by someone. Charlotte proudly displayed it on her desk for many years afterward.

ROBERT BEANBLOSSOM, a member of the Society of American Foresters, retired from the West Virginia DNR in 2015 with 42 years of service. He started his career in Mingo County, serving as a forest ranger there from 1973 through 1980. He's fought wildfires in 18 states, including such varied locales as Alaska and California. He now does volunteer work for the U.S. Forest Service at the Cradle of Forestry in western North Carolina. This is his sixth contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The old Vandevender family farm at Winterburn in Pocahontas County. All photos courtesy of our author.

The Farm Family

By JoAnn Gilardi

In 1969, Hayward L. Hinzman—county supervisor for the Farmers Home Administration (FHA), headquartered in Lewisburg and serving Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties—announced that my parents, William Mackie and Mary C. Vandevender, my eight siblings, and I had been awarded Farm Family of the Year. We were recognized because of how we'd changed our standard of living and made progress in farming. The award's criteria were based on the farm's and home's appearances and the farm records, documenting the operation's efficiency, the quality of livestock and production, crop production, the preservation of home food supplies, and the family's full participation in the whole farming operation. In addition, the family had to participate actively with schools, churches, and other community affairs.

My father was taught how to run a small farm while living with the Livesay family in Mason County for a couple of years. He learned to love it and wanted to have a farm of his own one day. Since 1949, my parents had been tenants on the late C. R. Beard's farm. They dreamed of owning their own farm and, with the help of FHA funding, purchased our farm on November 20, 1956.

Being a tenant farmer was hard work, but owning a farm required the same hard work plus many new responsibilities and financial risks: buying dairy cows and mechanical

The "Star" of the family—the Vandevenders' favorite cow.

milking equipment, repairing the house and outbuildings, and constructing fences, to name just a few. It was called the Winterburn Farm, named after the Pocahontas County town of Winterburn, which popped up on the map when the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway built its Greenbrier Division through the community in 1905.

On February 3, 1967, my parents also bought the farm of Adam Martin Van Buren Arbogast. His farm surrounded the town of Thornwood, about five miles northeast of Durbin.

Winterburn Farm was a Grade C-milk dairy farm for years; one of our cows, Star, was very special to all of us and produced the best milk ever. But after the milk-processing plant in Monterey, Virginia, went out of business, my father couldn't sell his milk economically anymore. So, in 1969, my parents converted the farm to a beef-cattle business, which cut down on the amount of work and generated more income.

Just because we were a farming family didn't mean we were poor, at least in our souls. The hard work enriched our family in ways money never could. My father and brothers mostly did the outside work: making hay, plowing, milking, and butchering. Dad never liked mechanical round hay balers because, he liked to joke, the cattle never got a square meal.

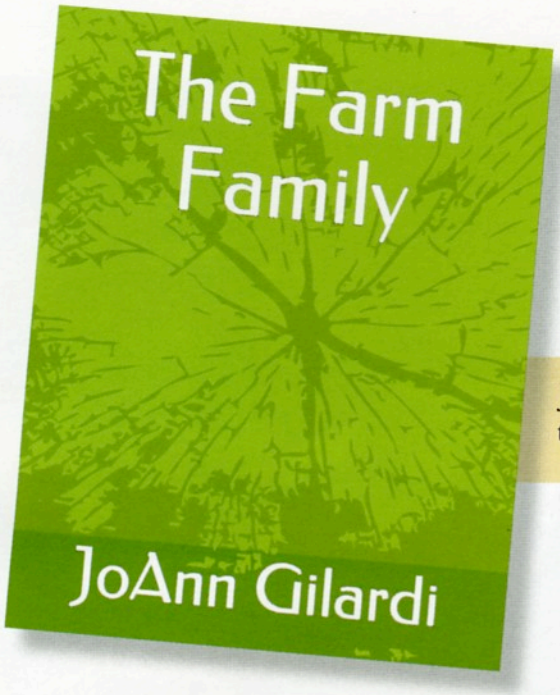
The farm and surrounding environment also kept our freezer full of fresh meat, including nice beef and pork roasts, hamburger, sausage, and fish. Greenbrier River ran from one end of the farm to the other. When my father and brothers weren't working the farm, they could usually be found down by the river. Father liked to fly-fish, and he could really throw a line. Greenbrier River was always stocked annually with trout. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), who Dad worked with, also brought in quail for an experimental project.

We had our own smokehouse, where my father salted our country hams. He'd attended

The Vandevender family, about 1987.

a butchering school after his stint in World War II. While Dad did the technical work, the whole family had farm tasks when we weren't in school. After my father wrapped the meat in paper, it was my job to tape the package shut and write on it what kind of meat and cut it was. My mother, sisters, and I kept busy raising a large garden and freezing and canning a tremendous amount of food. It wasn't unusual to find peaches, pears, beans, beets, applesauce, pickles, apple butter, corn, berries, and meats beautifully canned and placed on shelves in the cellar to enjoy at winter meals. We also had Jonathan, Winesap, and Maiden Blush (to name a few) apple trees in the orchard. We stored the fruit loose in the cellar along with potatoes.

When we won our award, the whole family was no longer together on the farm. Our brother William had already served in Vietnam and was then stationed in West Germany. Our brother David was also in Vietnam, doing his duty to help protect and change the world; he had a wife and young son back at home. Dale, our eldest brother, worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He and his wife, Shirley, lived in College Park, Maryland, along with their first child (and my parents' first grandchild). Judy, our eldest sister, was also married and had a child. Her husband,



JoAnn has published a book about her times on the farm. You can order it through Amazon.com.

Freddie, was in the military and had served in Vietnam. My other brothers, sisters, and I were attending Green Bank High School and Durbin Graded School.

So, whoever was living at home pitched in with the farm work. It was a true cooperative enterprise. By the late 1960s, relatively few West Virginia families could make a living solely from farming. So, Dad worked full-time at the Howes Leather Tannery in Frank. [See "The Howes Tannery" by Laurie Cameron, Fall 2013.] Each evening, he assigned my brothers different farm chores to be completed while he was at the tannery.

Local children often came to borrow money from Dad so they could purchase their class rings, caps, and gowns for high school graduation. He'd always give them the money but expect them to work off the debt on our farm, mostly by helping with the haymaking.

We were taught community service, self-improvement, responsibility, and manners. We felt our futures would all be bright. Even though we worked hard, there were still fun times, games, and the radio. We'd huddle around, listen to the Grand Ole Opry, and dream. My parents encouraged us to read the daily newspaper and books of all kinds. Author Zane Grey—with his fanciful stories of the West—was a favorite of mine. Missing school wasn't an option for our parents, who watched with pride as all nine of us graduated from Circleville, Green Bank, and Pocahontas County high schools. This was a big accomplishment for a large farm family.

Gradually, our family got bigger and bigger with more marriages and grandchildren. We became a large, loving family. Our father was a Thornwood Community Church trustee for many years. He and our mother were active in the church, which was surrounded by the land we owned. We cherished the church (built in 1904), and the congregation made sure it was kept up. We, as a family, all participated in the annual church Christmas play. We never read our parts; we always memorized and knew them by heart. Our family reunion was started in 1984, and relatives came for miles to attend. It's still being held today.

Our father passed away August 16, 2002, followed by our mother on April 12, 2014. The old home and outbuildings are empty now, except for in our memories. Winterburn Farm will always be an essential part of our family and our hearts.

JO ANN GILARDI was born in Bartow in 1959 to William Mackie and Mary Charlene Adams Vandevender (of Dutch and Scottish ancestry). She and her husband, Michael, have two daughters, Lana and Jessica. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, reading, sewing, and watching and attending football games (especially WVU). She has a passion for taxes and really enjoys her customers and their families. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

(Left-right) Bassist Fonso Stalnaker, Joe DePollo, and John DePollo, at the Purple Fiddle in Thomas, 2018. Photo by our author.

DePollo Connections Come Full Circle

By Carl E. Feather

On the morning of August 12, 1993, I wandered into John DePollo's store on Front Street in Thomas (Tucker County) and struck up a conversation with the owner, who was 88 at the time.

Although it was my first in-depth conversation with this Tucker County legend, John's store was familiar to me from childhood. On numerous trips to town some 30 years earlier, I'd visited his store with my maternal grandfather, Clayton Watring, as he filled the shopping list dictated by my grandmother Violet. I usually got a piece of candy but didn't realize the sweetest takeaway from those visits would be the memories: old shops such as Cooper's, Calabrese Brothers, Rebenstein's, and Erhart's jewelry store—my favorite stop because of the large assortment of comic books the sisters stocked. On that morning in 1993, I found another longtime Thomas merchant, 90-year-old Jim Cooper, selling vintage stock from his haberdashery [see Winter 1993 issue].

The experience taught me the importance of seizing the moment whenever I came across an interesting person or place in my travels. I'd never see John DePollo again. Suffering from cancer, John worked his last day on February 15, 1994, and died June 18. In keeping with his wishes, his twin sons, Joe and John, sold the building to help care for his widow, Elsie, who died less than a year later.

The building was eventually acquired by John Bright and Kate Richards, who, in 2001, transformed DePollo's into the Purple Fiddle, a great live music venue. Almost exactly 25 years after interviewing John DePollo, fate and DePollo's store again taught me the importance of seizing the moment.

The annual family reunion of the DiPaolo/DePollo family was held in July 2018 (it's since been expanded to include the Pavone, Butler, Helmick, Watring, Loukmas, Waitekunas, Dilettoso, Bachtel, and Quattro families of Thomas' environs). A scramble up the wide girth of this family tree is necessary to set the backdrop for John DePollo's twin sons—"two peas in a pod."

Guiseppe DiPaolo, later known as Joe DePollo, arrived in the United States in 1891 and became a naturalized citizen June 4, 1904. That summer, Joe and his wife, Agnese (Falabella), welcomed John, their fifth child, to their family, which would eventually number eight children. Most eventually exited the Mountain State for opportunities elsewhere.

The three-story brick DePollo building accommodated the store on the first floor, living quarters (eight rooms and one bath) on the second, and four more bedrooms and two large storage rooms on the third. A back cellar was added for wine production and storage. The DePollo children grew up in this building, and they got their starts in married life by living there with their spouses. All of the DePollo boys worked in the store; their primary tasks were taking orders and delivering goods to the mining towns near Thomas.

John carried the store into the second generation of DePollo ownership after his father died in 1941. Having started working there at age 13, John DePollo would make it his career for some 75 years.

John married Ersilia Michaelena Buccini (Elsie Butch) June 26, 1929. The couple had two children, twin sons Joseph James and John Charles (15 minutes older than Joe). Although the twins worked in the store when they were young, both broke with the tradition of shopkeeping and went into the insurance business: Joe in Elkins and John in Winchester, Virginia.

Joe says that while the store prospered during Thomas' golden era of mining, by the time the twins had grown up, "there was not enough business there for me, my wife, and babies." Further, his father didn't pay family members a salary. "He just gave me money as I needed it."

"Dad lived in his own little world," Joe says. "He wanted me to stay with it and work like he had worked for his dad."

"Joe was working in the store but not getting anywhere," John recalled. "Dad had to have everything his own way."

After seven years of shopkeeping, Joe took his brother's advice, left the business in 1965, and pursued the insurance world. "He had a personality to meet people . . . built up a pretty good agency in Elkins," John says.

Their father, nevertheless, gave the twins a lasting legacy of making music together. When the boys were 12 years old, John DePollo purchased an accordion for his sons and arranged for weekly lessons. "He bought it from the Montgomery Ward catalog; it probably cost $75 to $80," John says of their first instrument.

"He ordered it, and we didn't have anything to say about it," John adds. Joe says that his father enjoyed ethnic music, and having accordion-playing sons would ensure in-house entertainment.

Paul Monda, a Thomas resident, provided lessons; John says Paul was somehow compensated through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for his services. The boys had one hour of instruction a week, and each student was expected to practice an hour a day and log his time into a book, which Paul audited closely. Their father, with his money at stake in the instrument, enforced practicing and lessons.

"He told us that if we didn't take lessons, he would not let us go out for basketball or go outside and play," John says.

However, their father's commitment extended to only one instrument, which the twins had to share for several years.

"At times, we both played the same accordion at the same time," John recalls. "[Joe] would play the top . . . and I'd play the bottom part."

Paul Monda was drafted into the U.S. Army during World War II, and the lessons ended. Not wanting to lose his investment in the instrument and lessons, John DePollo encouraged his sons to continue practicing based on recordings of famous polka bands out of Cleveland, Ohio. "We learned to play by ear," John says. The recordings were courtesy of Louie Royce, a Tucker County native and banjo player who'd migrated to Cleveland for work and found a polka-rich culture there.

John headed off to West Virginia University after high school and left the sole accordion back in Thomas with Joe, who continued to practice.

"I rented an accordion from the music shop in Morgantown so I would not lose all I'd learned," John says. "Whenever Joe and I got together, we would practice. We had this electric drum, and it helped us set the pace."

Working as house painters one summer, the twins made enough money to acquire a second accordion. They began doing variety shows—a combination of magic tricks and music—at clubs in the area. One night, while performing for a Lion's Club event, a man approached them about joining their act. "This guy said, 'I got a set of drums, let's get together and play,'" John recalls.

The man was Ernest Colabrese, and that was the beginning of the Polka Dots band, whose first gigs were square dances at the Thomas City Hall on Friday evenings. The dances were a way to raise money to buy a fire truck. Pianist Carl Pase soon joined the group, which began playing gigs at Bill Slaubaugh's Horse Shoe Run Tavern. The watering hole stood on Route 24 between Silver Lake and Eglon. It was a popular dancing and drinking venue, and the Polka Dots became a Preston County legend for eight or nine years. The Polka Dots also included saxophone / trumpet player Patsy Santangelo, who helped broaden the twin's repertoire beyond polkas, waltzes, and square dances.

"It was a lot of fun, and they had a big crowd every week," John recalls. "But they had these low ceilings, and it got awful hot in there. We had to drink all the time, and by the time we bought all this stuff to drink, we weren't making any money. So we reached an agreement with the owner: [each band member] got $10 and two free drinks, soda or beer."

On Saturday evenings, during the half-hour before Colabrese arrived in his pickup truck to take the band to the tavern, the boys played for their father as he wrapped up another weekend of retailing in Thomas.

"It was just to entertain him. We knew how much he loved the music, and we played the polkas and waltzes," John says.

The Korean War separated the twins for a spell in the early 1950s, but both continued to hone their music skills. John found an old accordion in the supply room at the military compound that housed his reconnaissance platoon. So, John formed a band, The Village Vagabonds, with three other musically inclined soldiers. They entertained visiting nurses and officers. John's commanding officer appreciated their work and tried to keep John from being rotated out of the platoon. When he learned that John had a degree in

The Polka Dots played at Horse Shoe Run Tavern on Saturday nights in the 1940s and 1950s. (Left-right): Patsy Santangelo on trumpet, Carl Pase on piano, Joe DePollo, Ernest Colabrese on drums, John DePollo, and Louie Royce on banjo. Courtesy of the DePollo family.

business management and finance, the officer arranged to keep him in the platoon but in a different, and much safer, role.

"I went from a job that was muddy and dirty to keeping track of the finance records of the battalion," John says. "I thank God every day for learning how to play. It got me places where I'd never been able to go if I'd not learned to play music."

Back in West Virginia, the Polka Dots evolved into The Godfathers, which, over the years, included several musicians from Elkins: Brad Gum, Jack Basil, Jeff Brothschart, and Richard Harris. Aubrey Bailey succeeded Patsy Santangelo on the sax, Morris Kittle replaced Bailey, and Fonso Stalnaker of Fairmont took Jim Kerns' place on bass after Kerns died.

Fonso, a retired state trooper, was working as a security guard for the U.S. Marshal Service when he met Joe at the courthouse in Elkins. Fonso had played for decades and was a member of The Shades out of Elkins [see "Early Bands of West Virginia," Spring 1992]. "He invited me to play with him. That's how it got started. They were pretty good musicians," Fonso says. "Joe would always say, 'We don't have to practice. We've been practicing for 60 years.' Of course, he was just joking. Everybody needs to practice."

Although the twins took their music seriously, Joe says the band was never more than a hobby. "We never played for the money," John says. "It leaves an indelible mark on you. It is great to know that what you've done in your life has made people happy."

Joe and John had successful, separate independent-insurance agencies, which

(Left-right) Joe DePollo and his twin, John, perform at the Purple Fiddle in Thomas. Their parents, Joe and Elsie, operated DePollo's in the same building for decades. Photo by our author.

benefited from their popularity as musicians. The men wove their music into the fabric of their personal lives: Joe and his late wife, Mary Grace (Bachtel), raised two daughters, Janice Ann (Lantz) of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and Karen Louise (Basham) of Charlottesville, Virginia. John and his wife, Virginia, have five children: Denise, John Jr., Deborah, Deanna, and Dawna.

In the 1970s, the twins began playing at their father's birthday parties, which were celebrated on a Saturday afternoon in late August. They'd put an ad in *The Parsons Advocate* inviting John DePollo's friends and family to the party, which offered free beer and music. A sign in the store window announced the store's closure for the event. The twins and other musicians would join in to honor John for reaching another milestone.

"He liked the polka the best. He would dance the polkas, but the other stuff, he'd rest during that," Joe says. "Those women would come in, and he danced with them. . . . You could tell by the way he danced that there were certain songs that got him all worked up."

John says his father's favorites included the "Black Forest Polka" and "Beer Barrel Polka." "If we had a dollar for each time we played the 'Beer Barrel Polka,' we would be millionaires," John says. The twins wrote

The DePollo family reunion, begun in 2015. Photo by our author.

a few polkas of their own, including "The Tucker County Polka."

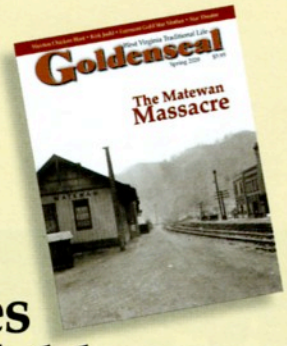
The tradition ended with the August 1993 party—what would be John DePollo's last birthday. The store was sold after John died, and eventually became the home for one of Appalachia's most-revered music venues.

Joe and John continued to play at events in the region while maintaining their businesses. Despite the distance between them, they always got together to practice before a performance.

As the centennial of the DePollo store approached in 2015, one of the Michigan DePollos recognized the need for a reunion. Gary DePollo explains that his grandfather Tony DePollo—the oldest of the eight children born to Joseph and Agnese—and his immediate family had long ago followed his son, William A., and wife, Adeline T. Quattro DePollo, to Michigan for better job opportunities. Drawing upon his years of experience as a project manager, Gary pulled together a reunion for the centennial year. He started by building a family website, DePolloFamily.com, as a rallying point and information center. Since then, Janice DePollo Lantz and Debbie DePollo, the daughters of Joe and John, respectively, have helped Gary run the annual reunion. "They have done a great job," Gary says.

The twins' music was central to these annual gatherings of family, food, and conversation. The first four reunions were modeled after the birthday gatherings for John DePollo. The family would gather at the Purple Fiddle, and owner John Bright would open the stage to the DePollo brothers and their band. However, due to a prior booking at the venue, the Purple Fiddle concert wasn't held in 2019. The gathering was shifted to the Knights of Columbus Park near Thomas. Joe was suffering from some health issues, and a performance by the twins wasn't part of the gathering.

Their performance at the Purple Fiddle on July 28, 2018, was thus the last time the twins played together in their old family



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You can see some of Carl's interviews with Joe and John, and their final performance together at the Purple Fiddle by visiting YouTube and searching for "Reunion: The DePollo Twins."

store; indeed, it was their final performance. Joe died September 13, 2019. His passing once again reminded me of the immediacy of the moment when paths cross, the key to seizing the moment, and the importance of recording people's stories while their voices still have breath.

Joe was being treated for pneumonia in the hospital when he passed. John had visited his brother in the hospital just a few days earlier.

"He told me before I left, 'If you want to get together and practice sometime soon, you let me know.' He told me that before I left. We were like two peas in a pod," John says.

Janice Lantz, Joe's daughter, says her father always looked forward to events at the old store, and the reunion was no exception.

"He loved to get together with his cousins. He was a big family guy. And he always loved to play his accordion, and he really loved to play at the Purple Fiddle," Janice says.

John Bright says that Joe "had a gravitational warmth and brought smiles to the faces of all with his jokes and storytelling. . . . We were so proud to host him and share the family history and stories."

"He'll be missed," Fonso Stalnaker says. "He had quite a personality."

John DePollo doubts if he'll continue to play music without his brother by his side.

"I'm not ready to play, yet," he told me in early October 2019. "I may go up and play at the Purple Fiddle one more time in [Joe's] memory. But I'm not going to go out and play a lot because it would not feel right. I know he'd want me to play, but at the same time, you have to have the desire. I've not touched my accordion since we played that Saturday at the Purple Fiddle."

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.

Registered nurses (left-right) Ashton Carter and Kayla Ward prepare to test patients for COVID-19 in Clarksburg. Photo by Chip Hitchcock, courtesy of West Virginia Public Broadcasting.

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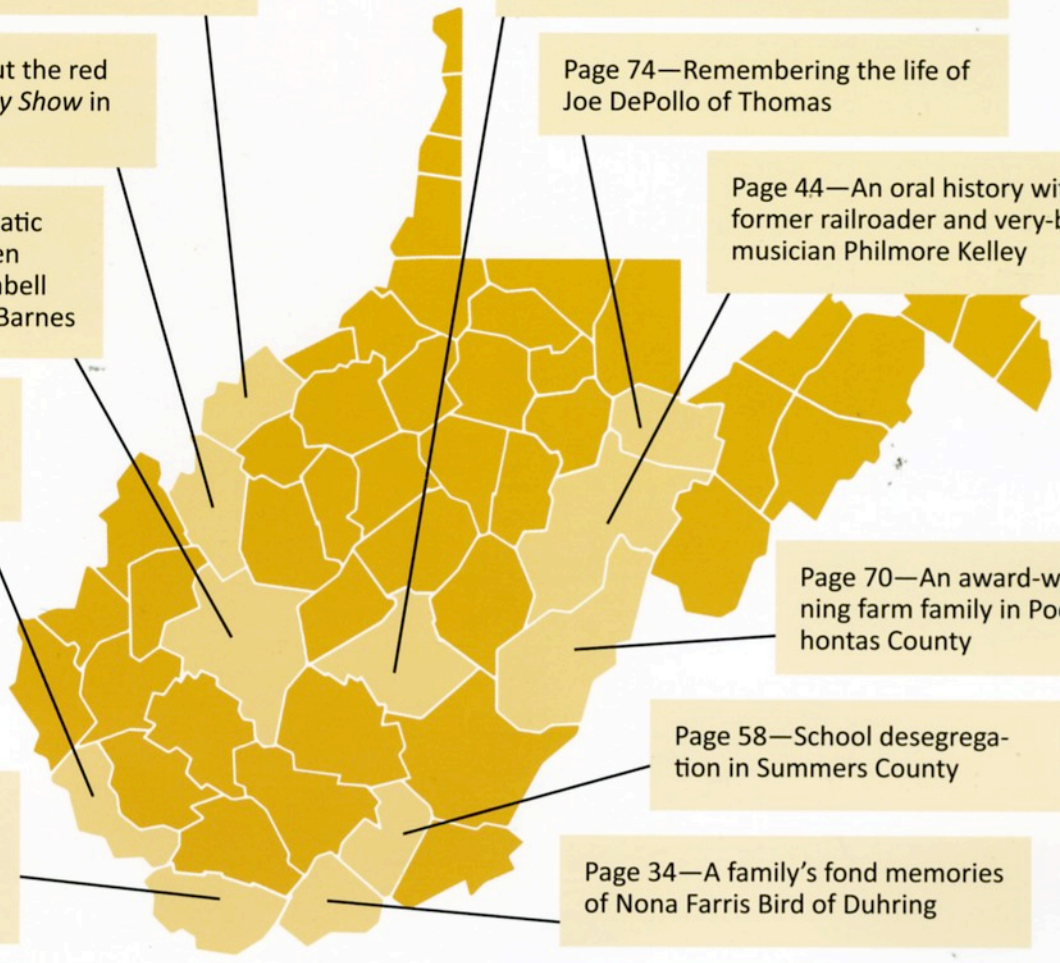

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