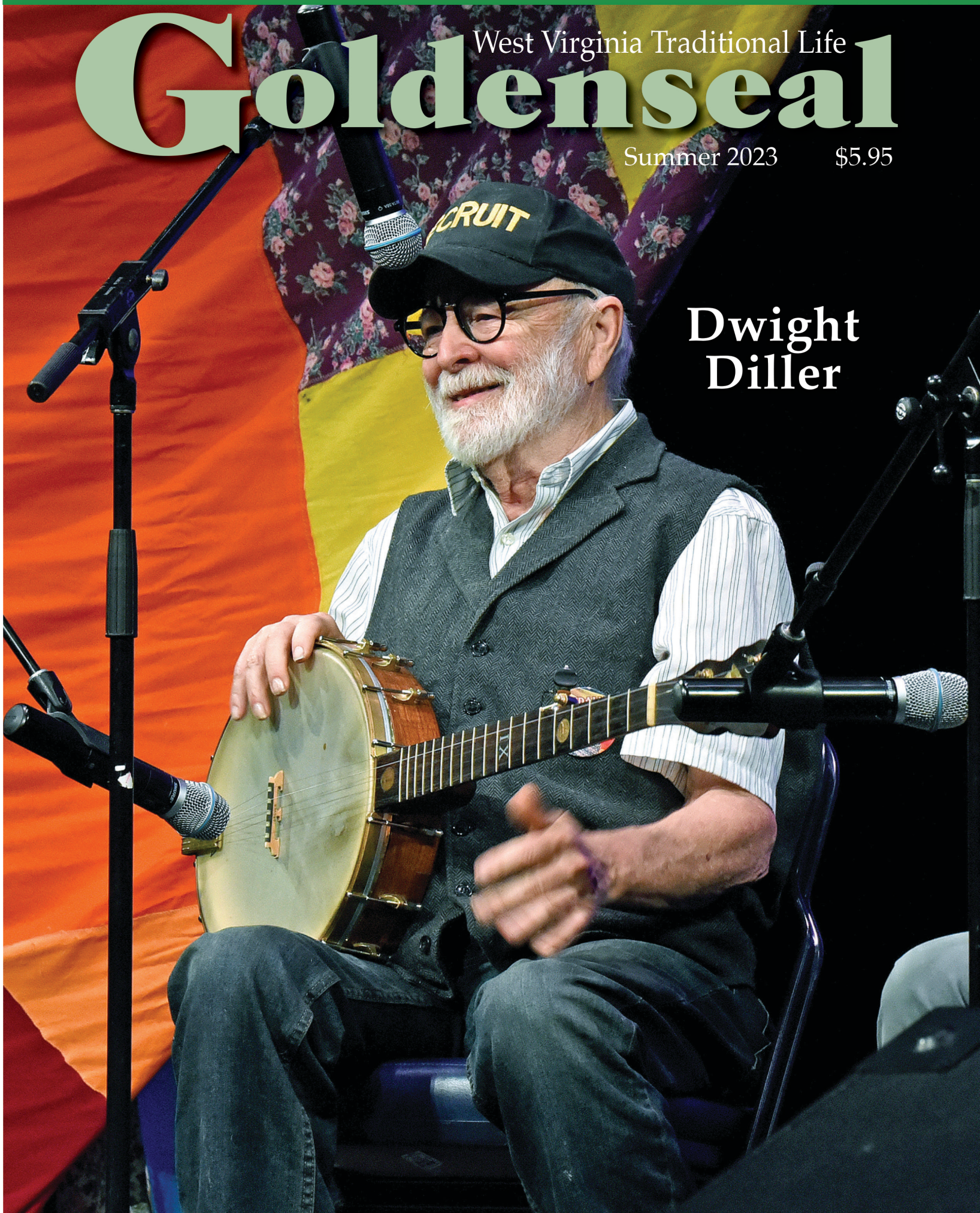
Phyllis Wilson Moore • 1973 Blacksmith's Reunion • Jim Comstock • Aristotle Jones • Greenbrier River

West Virginia Traditional Life

# Goldenseal

Summer 2023 $5.95




## Dwight Diller

Goldenseal Summer 2023 Dwight Diller • Star City • Nicholas County Reflections • Laurel River Club B&B • DuBois on Main • Shorty Anderson's Auto Service Volume 49, Number 2



Dwight Diller c. 1970s/80s. Courtesy of the Goldenseal Archives.

Volume 49, Number 2

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On the cover: Dwight Diller performing at the 2022 Vandalia Gathering. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

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# From the Editor

*"It's just "simple music played simply by simple folks" OR "Deceptively simple but extremely complex music played from the human spirit, not the mind, which contains the fragile, but powerful, cultural messages and heritage of a people who were/ are just as complex as all other humans on the face of this Earth." Dwight Diller*

Every so often in life you receive the news of someone's passing that leaves an indelible impression on your mind. You know the world will be changed moving forward. That it will be slightly less, somehow, without their energy in it. In early February, I received a call letting me know that Dwight Diller had died suddenly. I did not know Dwight personally, and had only met him in passing, but his legacy was larger than life, and has had (and will continue to have, I'm sure) a global impact on the old-time community.

Dwight was born in Kanawha County in 1946, but spent most of his life in Pocahontas County. For those who may not know, he was instrumental in the documentation of the Hammons Family, and preserving their music. His efforts to learn and preserve soon led to the creation of the 1973 Library of Congress album, *"The Hammons Family: The Tradition of a West Virginia Family and Their Friends"* and countless other recordings.

Dwight taught and performed extensively across the Nation, Canada, and England. He has made and shared seemingly endless audio recordings of songs, stories, jokes, and tunes from West Virginia for over 50 years. He continued to digitize, release, and re-release his recordings (both his own, and that of the tradition bearers he recorded in the field) over the years, most recently with the release of the 2018 album (recorded in 2015) *Old-Time From Pocahontas County* which he recorded with Terry Richardson who passed on in 2016. A quote from the liner notes describes their music, and the quality of music that Dwight strove for in his life and teachings, "Dwight and Terry are cut from the same cloth. Two West Virginians whose music embodies the simultaneous beauty and harshness of their beloved Pocahontas County. The music is entwined together. Each in sync and yet filling the spaces left open by the musical arrangement chosen by the other person."

Scan the QR code below with the camera of your phone to hear Dwight Diller play Keep Your Hand On The Plow.

In 2019 Dwight was awarded the Vandalia Award, our state's highest folklife honor.

People who met Dwight, or share stories of Dwight, all share a similar thread in recounting their memories—his firm belief system, and his particular *Rhythm* [see Winter 2014: The Rhythm of Dwight Diller by Allen Johnson]. A quote from Dwight himself explains this nicely "Music, not music, arises from the Musician forming her/his Music around their own personal internal "pulse". As with fingerprints, there can never be any overlaps in playing a tune. And, in fact, a Musician's Music will vary while the tune is being played in response to the change which comes from her "pulse". Thus to claim to teach bow strokes of another musician is faulty at best. Sadly, present day students insist/demand this as a learning technique even from an instructor who knows better. Our dialect is the first place to seek out our personal "pulse". An honest Musician's Music will always reflect his dialect."

As you will see in this issue from the memories and experiences shared by some of the people that Dwight had a profound impact on—Dwight Diller's legacy will not be soon forgotten.

Laitsen J. Blankenships

# Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Thank you for an enjoyable Spring 2023 issue of GOLDENSEAL. All of the articles were fun to read and offered insights into an amazingly wide range of topics. I am shy about singling any out, although I am always happy to see work from Carl Feather. But I want to offer a special note of praise for the cover piece on country musician Big Slim. It was fascinating to follow the authors as they navigated the many legends that Hamilton Aliff (or is it Harry McAuliffe?) used to color (and conceal) episodes from his musical career. His motto must have been, "Don't let the facts spoil a good story!" This special note is especially warranted since, alas, its publication coincides with the passing of co-author Ivan Tribe on April 4 at the age of 82. Ivan has been a great contributor to the history of oldtime and country music, including a number of GOLDENSEAL articles. We will miss him.

Carl Fleischhauer
Port Republic, Maryland

## Corrections

In our spring 2023 issue, the photo located on pg. 20 (from *Marshall Track* by Rod O'Donnell) was captioned incorrectly, please see the corrected caption below. –ed.



Left to right: Chris Parsons, Carl Lee, Rick Reddecliff, Chris Gibson, Jim Brown

# We Can Build Mountains:
## Aristotle Jones and Soul Music in Appalachia

**By Jennie Williams**

"Appalachian Soul Man" Aristotle Jones (b. 1979) is a professional musician and radio personality who is carrying on his music tradition in Osage where his grandfather and extended family have lived. He grew up in Huntington and moved throughout his life, living in Berea, KY, Morgantown, and Point Marion and Smithfield, PA before moving back to West Virginia. His breadth of experience living in Appalachia is reflected in the stories he shares in his songwriting and on stage during his performances. Since 2019, he has released several singles under his name with his band, and in 2021, he released his first album *Appalachian Soul Man*. This article highlights excerpts from an interview Aristotle gave with West Virginia Folklife in which he discusses his relationship with his granddad, Robert Alfonsi Jones. Aristotle credits his love of music to his granddad. Our interview is part of an ongoing project to document living folk and traditional creative practices of the Scotts Run community in Monongalia County. The project is made possible in part by West Virginia Folklife partner organization Mid Atlantic Arts and their Central Appalachia Living Traditions program.

"My grandfather was a coal miner, very conservative Christian man, kind of like, imagine John Wayne if he was a Black Appalachian man. Huge hands, big old knotty knuckles, and my grandmother [Daisy Jones] was a farm wife, but she was the boss." Aristotle's grandfather owned a farm in Osage, West Virginia but when he and his family were displaced in 1971 when I-79 was built, he began farming 102 acres just across the border in Smithfield, PA. Aristotle spent his summers with his grandparents, "bringing in hay, riding horses, four wheelers, learning how to farm, raising pigs… no one that I knew was doing the same things exactly, so it kind of gave me this background where I thought maybe we were weird people 'cause I didn't see any Black farmers, I knew my granddad and that was it." To reinforce Aristotle's confidence, his grandfather would remind him to "just be yourself, you know what you're doing."

Music and his grandfather's influence has helped shape Aristotle's identity as a Black man from West Virginia, and he shares his experiences with his audiences. "I'm telling these stories when I'm out at my shows to let people know that Appalachia is a place of intersectionality, and you can be all of these things." Inspired by the 1885 state song, Aristotle's "West Virginia Hills" (2019) is an embrace of his West Virginia identity. "I'm a proud ambassador of West Virginia so when I travel outside of the state and I'm playing, [I'll say] 'I'm Aristotle Jones, the Appalachian Soul Man, I'm from West Virginia. For those of you guys who don't know what Appalachian soul is, here's a few songs that maybe will give you an idea.'" Aristotle follows in the tradition of Black R&B and soul bands that were prevalent in many rural Black communities in the region during the mid-20th century, including Bobby Nicholas of Morgantown and Al Anderson of Osage. Growing up listening to soul, blues, gospel, and R&B with his grandfather, Aristotle's recordings and live performances with his band feature instrumentation common in these styles including a brass section, drums, bass, and both acoustic and electric guitars to fill out the sound supporting his affective vocals and storytelling.



Aristotle Jones at the West Virginia Humanities Council in Charleston. November 28, 2022. Photo by Jennie Williams

Aristotle's grandfather had a shot at singing and touring professionally, but he had to forgo the opportunity because, like many Appalachians, he was providing for a family at the time and working in the mines. "My grandfather was a singer, and he was a gospel singer, and so we would play music and he gave me my first harmonica… I still didn't know that was a big part of his life, I just kind of heard stories from people." Aristotle explains that his grandfather would encourage him to be creative. "Music was something that always called to me, I kind of knew from a young age. I would sit at the bus stop and make up songs and I wanted to play the saxophone and it was just something that was in me. Nobody really understood it because the only other person that I knew that was any kind of musician was my granddad." Aristotle vividly remembers singing "Tomorrow" by the gospel and R&B group The Winans when he was six or seven years old for his grandparents, and his granddad said, "You know, I can sing too." Aristotle would listen to him sing on his tractor while picking up hay. "You'd sit up on the wheel and we'd ride along just smiling, he would drive, and he'd try not to hit ruts and knock you off, but he would sing while he was working… I knew he could sing, I never even thought about it like as being a singer, I just thought that's what you did." His granddad especially enjoyed singing with his band The Gospelaires. They toured to towns including Pe-

Listen to Aristotle Jones's music, find his tour dates, and listen to his radio show podcast Sounds Good to Me with Aristotle Jones at https://www.aristotlejones.com/

To learn more about the Scotts Run Museum and its history go to http://scottsrunmuseumandtrail.org/

To learn more about the Mid Atlantic Arts' Central Appalachia Living Traditions Program, go to https://www.midatlanticarts.org/grants-programs/central-appalachia-living-traditions

tersburg, Fairmont, and others throughout north-central West Virginia performing for Black coal camp communities in the 1960s and '70s. When his grandmother passed in 2016, Aristotle moved in with his grandad to spend time with him and to help him on his farm in Smithfield.

Living together allowed for their relationship to mature and grow close as Aristotle took on a caretaker role at the farm. Though he felt removed from the lifestyle he had before making music with his band, Aristotle and his granddad spent their time together singing, watching old Western films, and sharing stories. They would often perform together at church services, retirement communities, and at the annual Scotts Run Homecoming Street Fair. The street fair is a reunion for those who have been displaced or moved away over the years to come back and visit Scotts Run and share their stories. Aristotle has attended the event for the past seven years, and each time he learns more about the history of his community. He wrote "Get What you Give" (2021), a song about a couple in love and growing stronger together, reflecting on his grandparents and their generosity towards their neighbors. His relationship with his grandfather and the music they shared grounded his sense of identity and belonging. "Living with my granddad gave me a place where my history was here." Aristotle's grandfather Robert Jones died on November 28th, 2019.

Aristotle now lives on the same street as the Scotts Run Museum, steelpan studio Mannette Musical Instruments, and soul singer Al Anderson's shoe repair shop in Osage. He has inherited an impassioned interest in learning about his family roots in the community, carrying on the regional music tradition he learned from his granddad, and telling the story of Osage. In 2020, Aristotle began exploring musical styles of "what I thought my granddad would have been listening to whenever he proposed to my grandmother, the music my dad would have been listening to when he was living here with my mom, the music that would have been on the streets at any point in time." His album titled *Mountain Doo-Wop in the Streets of Osage* will be released in late 2023. Aristotle writes about love in the midst of struggle. Of romantic love, of love between family and community, and love for a higher power, and love for yourself. Through his music and by working in radio, Aristotle wants to set an example for a younger generation of people who live in his community and to instill in them a sense of pride for living and creating here in West Virginia. "We have everything right here and we have us, and we have anybody who's listening. We have future generations, hopefully what we can do instead of just climbing mountains, we can build mountains."

JENNIE WILLIAMS is our state folklorist with the West Virginia Folklife Program. She writes a regular column for GOLDENSEAL. You can contact her at williams@wvhumanities.org or 304-346-8500.

# GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

## Gina Marie Cruise Schrader
### (1945 – 2023)

**By Alan Byer**



Gina Schrader. Courtesy of the family.

Entrepreneur, photographer, promoter, and lover of West Virginia music and culture Gina Marie Cruise Schrader, of Charleston and Hillsboro, WV, departed this life on January 13, 2023. She was 77 years of age.

For the last 15 years of her life Gina traveled widely with Doug Chadwick as his photographic assistant and, somewhere along the way, the two developed a close personal relationship. She was with Doug when he took his last breath on January 1st 2023 and, the next evening, suffered injuries that would take her life just 12 days later.

As a single mother raising a daughter in the 1970s and 1980s, Gina became an entrepreneur early on, and learned to live by her wits, sales abilities, and innate strength of character. However, her real passions were all genres of West Virginia folk artistry, and especially mountain music. She combined business with this passion when she worked for a time as an agent for the best-known West Virginia bands. Later, she would co-found a bluegrass and traditional music booking agency, and even began a very successful bluegrass festival featuring well known artists, including John Hartford and Bela Fleck. As a West Virginia folklife devotee, Gina became famous for her parties every Memorial Day weekend following the "official" Vandalia Gathering activities at the Cultural Center in Charleston. She was also a photographer, and was known for capturing images of her friends at their best; many of these friends were musicians, and Gina's photographs came to grace their albums and CDs.

West Virginia writer Kate Long described her friend Gina this way:

"Gina Schrader made a big, loving difference in so many people's lives. Kind, generous, unassuming, she was never one to draw attention to herself, but she quietly documented decades of traditional music events with her photography and provided a place for music to happen. I'll never stop missing her, and I know a lot of others feel the same way."

Gina loved all things West Virginia, and found a way to combine that with earning a living when she went to work for the Midland Trail Scenic By-Way Association, an organization of business owners along the 189-mile Federal Scenic Highway (Rt. 60, from Kenova on the Kentucky border to the Virginia border just beyond White Sulphur Springs, WV). Members of this organization came to describe Gina as "a hummingbird", and she devoted herself to the association's success.

Gina is survived by her daughter, Michelle Schrader, and grandson, Corey Hardie, both of Palm Beach Gardens, FL, and by cousins in West Virginia, Virginia, Florida, and New York City. Friends and family will announce a memorial gathering in the future, and suggest that donations in her memory be made to The Greenbrier River Watershed Association, greenbrier.org; the Friends of Old Time Music and Dance, FOOTMAD.org; or Manna Meal, mannameal.org.

ALAN BYER has written several articles for GOLDENSEAL over the years, most recently in Fall 2021.

# Doug Chadwick
## (1952 – 2023)

**By Alan Byer**

Photographer Doug Chadwick departed this life on New Year's Day, January 1st, 2023 in Charleston, West Virginia. He was 70 years of age.

Doug was there when GOLDENSEAL Magazine was born in 1975. His first contribution to West Virginia's magazine of culture and history appeared on page 5 of the Summer 1975 issue—only the second GOLDENSEAL ever published. Over the course of 47 years, more than 130 of his photographs, depicting a wide variety of subjects, would grace the magazine's pages. Stated another way, his photographs appear in more than 70 issues out of an estimated total of 187 published issues of GOLDENSEAL.

According to Dr. Ken Sullivan, GOLDENSEAL Editor from 1979 to 1997 and retired director of the West Virginia Humanities Council:

"We published dozens of Doug Chadwick photos during my years at GOLDENSEAL, but for me the best of it was directly collaborating with Doug on GOLDENSEAL articles he and I partnered on both before and after I joined the magazine as editor. I was proud to write those pieces while he, as a photographer, told the parts of the story that words can't touch, and we never let a good one get away. I cherish the memories of rambling the southern coalfields and along the ridges above New River, or heading off to Richwood to beard Jim Comstock in his own den.

And Doug's association with the magazine went back before my time, to 1975 and the very second issue ever published. As one of the earliest participants in the enterprise, he helped to set the pattern. This is particularly true as regards the use of quality photography. GOLDENSEAL has showcased the work of many outstanding photographers over the years, and Doug was the first of them. He was a great one, as an artist and as a person, smart, laid back, and wryly witty. All-around good company, and we lost him way too soon."



Doug Chadwick. Courtesy of the family.

Doug was best known for his panoramic photographs, which he created using an antique Cirkut camera, an ingenious clockwork device that rotated slowly to capture uniquely sharp images on long lengths of film. He was motivated to take this path when he purchased large-format panoramic negatives of groups of West Virginia coal miners taken by Rufus "Red" Ribble from the 1920s to the 1950s. For decades, Doug traveled widely with his Cirkut, photographing state legislatures, family gatherings, political conventions, and other large groups all over the world. In this age of digital photography, he purchased and stockpiled the increasingly rare large-format film and paper whenever he could find it. In a Pocahontas Times article, Doug noted: "I have a freezer full of film, but the paper is hard to find…"

Doug's resume also includes a number of highly regarded documentary films. In 1979, he co-produced the movie «True Facts in a Country Song» with Susan Burt. This film told the story of West Virginia musician Everett Lilly and his Lilly Brothers band, and aired on West Virginia Public Television. Doug also co-produced four documentaries with B.J. Gudmundsson: «Out of the Storm» (2001), in which a West Virginia lumber company travels to New England to salvage timber after a 1938 hurricane and the two communities form a bond; and three films documenting America›s last newspaper produced using hand-set type, the Marlinton, West Virginia Pocahontas Times ("An Evening with Cal



Doug Chadwick in WV Legislative Chamber, Photo courtesy of Goldenseal Archive.

Price,» (2002), «Cal Price and the Pocahontas Times» (2004), and «Look What They›ve Done» (2006).

Doug was born in Durham, North Carolina to Union (Monroe County) West Virginia parents, Donald and Betsy Chadwick, and his family returned to the state for good in 1970. He graduated from Evergreen State College (Olympia, Washington), where he studied photography, and then spent a semester in Rome Italy studying filmmaking. Following completion of his studies, Doug worked as a photographer for several West Virginia newspapers and, in 1984, he moved to Pocahontas County for an artist-in-residence fellowship. Doug settled in Hillsboro, where he designed and built a house overlooking the Greenbrier River and, for nearly four decades, traveled the country, and the world, taking panoramic photographs. Gina Schrader, his photographic assistant for the last 15 years, traveled with him, and the two developed a close, personal relationship that ended only when both left this life within two weeks of each other in January 2023.

ALAN BYER has written several articles for GOLDENSEAL over the years, most recently in Fall 2021.

# Edelene Clara Wood
## (1922-2022)

**By Paul LaPann**

Edelene Clara Wood died October 17, 2022. Born in Roane County to the late Ira P. and Hazel (Watkins) Wood, Edelene was a well known natural wild foods expert and served as president of the National Wild Foods Association until the time of her death. She presented her wild foods programs to classes, garden clubs, and other civic organizations, along with helping to start wild foods events in other states, such as North Carolina. She invited people to her home for a lunch or dinner that might include wild violet cake, pickled purslane, wild asparagus, and dandelion jelly.

Wood's introduction to wild foods came at a young age as her mother, Hazel Wood, gathered wild foods to help feed her family. Edelene Wood, who was born April 2, 1922, read books on wild foods and learned about foraging for wild foods from Euell Gibbons, author of *Stalking The Wild Asparagus.*

Through the efforts of Gibbons, Wood, and others, wild foods grew in popularity from a "poor person's" or "make-do" food to a delicious delicacy prepared by chefs and enjoyed by city folks. Wood tried to highlight the value of wild foods. In her books and talks, Wood described which plants were safe to eat and how to identify them.

Wood is the author of *A Taste Of The Wild, Favorite Wild Foods of the Fifty States,* and *Dining With Nature.* She also compiled a book about the Little Kanawha Regional Council, which worked to bring economic growth to a nine-county area in the Mid-Ohio Valley. She served as assistant secretary/treasurer of the Little Kanawha Regional Council.

One month before she died, a trail was dedicated in honor of 100-year-old Edelene Wood. The wooden marker along the trail-

head at North Bend State Park in Ritchie County carries the inscription: "Edelene's Way: In Honor of Edelene Wood A foraging pioneer, teacher, leader, and inspiration." The dedication occurred on Sept. 17, 2022 during the 53rd annual Nature Wonder Weekend at the state park. Wood, working along with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, started the event in 1968 to bring visitors to North Bend State Park and generate economic benefits for the region. The event was not held in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Wood, of Parkersburg, later added a wild foods element to the North Bend event, which then became known as Nature Wonder Wild Foods Weekend. Wood noted in her book *A Taste Of The Wild* that the wild foods segment of Nature Wonder Weekend started slowly with participants taking sips of dandelion coffee. A few years later attendees were requesting more wild foods to eat, she said. The nature weekend also features hikes, speaker programs, workshops, contests and a banquet. Many of the attendees arrive from out of state.

At Wood's invitation Euell Gibbons, author and wild foods expert, was the guest speaker at the first Nature Wonder Weekend. Gibbons returned every year for the event until his death in 1975. After their initial meeting in West Virginia in 1968, Wood visited with Gibbons and his wife, Freda, at their home in Troxelville, Pa. *Edelene's Way* now accompanies The *Gibbons Nature Trail* at North Bend State Park.

Wendy Greene, deputy director of Legislative Affairs for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, has been attending NWW for nine years. She calls Wood an "inspiring lady."

Although in failing health last September, Wood rose from her wheelchair as she was acknowledged at her trail dedication, Greene said. Wood was thrilled so many people attended, and she thanked everyone who had helped her put together the Nature Wonder Weekend for more than half a century. It was a moment of pride for Wood, who was described as a humble person. Edible wild plants will be planted along *Edelene's Way* in time for this September's Nature Wonder Wild Foods Weekend. A kitchen in a shelter near Wood's trail is used to prepare wild foods during the event.



Edelene Clara Wood

Wood also had an interest in Vitrolite—a thick opaque structural glass used to decorate kitchens and bathrooms in homes and the outside of businesses. Her father, Ira Wood, worked at the Vitrolite plant in Vienna [Wood County]. Edelene's house in Parkersburg has Vitrolite on the bathroom walls. Wood's story on Vitrolite appeared in the Fall 1992 issue of Goldenseal magazine.

A friend described Wood as being "tireless." She served in the Civil Air Patrol during World War II and retired from Monongahela Power Company. She was a member of St. Andrews United Methodist Church and a positive, inspiring role model to countless people over the incredible 100 years of her life.

Wood's message to others was that they should pursue their dreams and goals in life, Greene said. Nothing was impossible in Wood's way of thinking.

PAUL LAPANN retired as managing editor of The Parkersburg News and Sentinel after 40 years of working at the Parkersburg newspapers. He also worked at newspapers in Welch [McDowell County] and Mullens [Wyoming County].

# Julian Martin
## (1936-2023)
### By Dr. Charles B. Keeney III

Julian Martin Contributed...2019, Summer 2021, and Fall 2021. – ed.

In his memoir, *Imagonna: Peace Corps Memories*, Julian Martin described a seminal moment in his life, when he left his job as chemical engineer making sidewinder missiles to become West Virginia's first Peace Corps Volunteer:

"It was August 1961 and I was about to go from the dangerous job of making a weapon designed to blow up planes and kill the people inside to a wonderful mind-opening experience in Africa. I jumped from a job in modern, industrialized America to high school teaching in the rain forest of Eastern Nigeria, where subsistence farming was done with ancient hand tools. It was an exciting time. I wanted to be the best teacher I could possibly be…"

Julian Martin is rightly remembered by West Virginians for a number of worthy reasons. He was known widely for his work with organizations such as the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the West Virginia Labor History Association, and the Kanawha State Forest Foundation, among others. Some knew him for his antiwar activism, publicly demonstrating against the Vietnam War and the US invasion of Iraq. Others recall his environmental activism. Julian fought surface mining as early as the 1970s and continued to fight mountaintop removal coal mining through the early 2000s. "You can't call yourself a mountaineer if you don't protect the mountains." He once told me. But for all these worthy reasons mentioned, I mostly think of Julian as being the best teacher he could possibly be.

From 1977 to 1998, Julian taught earth science, chemistry, and physics at Duval High School, in Lincoln County. He was my teacher for two of those three classes. Aside from preparing me and my fellow students for college, Julian encouraged his students to think, to question, and to demand answers. In between chemistry experiments we listened to tales of San Francisco in the 1960s, track meets in Nigeria, his work building missiles for the US military industrial complex, and even tales of his grandfather fighting as a union miner at Blair Mountain. He made students look forward to learning and gave them confidence that they too could come from a backwater Appalachian county and still accomplish things in life.


Julian Martin

Julian Martin did not stop teaching when his tenure at Duval High School ended. He taught with his hands, running a YMCA gardening program in Charleston, teaching underprivileged children how to raise a garden. He taught with his feet. When environmental activist Larry Gibson began marching across West Virginia to protest mountaintop removal in 1999, Julian was the only one who joined him. In 2011, when I helped organize a protest march to save the Blair Mountain Battlefield, Julian attended the first public meeting and supported our march to its conclusion that summer.

Finally, he taught with his voice. For years, Julian helped conduct labor history tours of the coalfields and he wrote numerous editorials for newspapers and publications. He also wrote three memoirs: the aforementioned Imagona (2012), The Soviet Union and Lincoln County USA (2014), and Morgantown to San Francisco (2018). In 2019, the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum awarded Julian its annual Red Bandana Hellraiser Award for his lifetime of activism and advocacy.

Judy Bonds, another grassroots activist from West Virginia, while reflecting on West Virginia history predicted, "There will be a wall of fame and a wall of shame." There is no doubt that Julian's life as one of West Virginia's great teachers—in and out of the classroom—is deserving of our state's "wall of fame."

DR. CHARLES B. KEENEY III is an associate professor of history at Southern West Virginia Community College. See his most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL in Summer 2021.

# Ivan M. Tribe
## (1940–2023)
### By Jake Bapst

Ivan Tribe, Ph.D. —frequent contributor to *Goldenseal*, prolific author of well over 300 articles primarily dealing with Appalachian culture and bluegrass music, author or co-author of 14 books, retired professor emeritus of history at the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College in southeastern Ohio, volunteer radio host for 40 years at WOUB (Athens, Ohio), holder of the highest degrees of Freemasonry, and my friend and colleague of almost 40 years passed away on April 4th due to complications from a fall. The old adage that "History repeats itself" has been proven wrong. There will never be another Ivan Tribe!

Ivan was born in Albany, Ohio. He was the holder of a bachelors and masters degree from Ohio University and a Ph.D. from the University of Toledo. His teaching career began in the public schools of Meigs and Vinton Counties in Ohio, and in 1976 he began his long-distinguished career at Rio Grande. One of my favorite stories about Ivan took place when he was in my office talking. A somewhat nervous freshman student peeked in the office and walked to the secretary's desk. I heard the student say, "They told me to come here to get a schedule, but there are two old guys in there talking about baseball." The secretary replied, "Go on in—the one guy is the smartest person you will ever meet, and the other is Jake Bapst"

Ivan married Deanna Tripp on December 23, 1966. Deanna is retired from Ohio State University where she worked as a county extension agent. An author in her own right, she is also recognized as an Appalachian scholar. Together Ivan and Deanna presented numerous presentations and lectures throughout the years. They also hosted—as volunteers—a weekly radio show "Hornpipe and Fugue" on WOUB at Ohio University for 40 years. Everywhere we would go to do book signings or presentations, we were always approached by fans of the radio program. "We are so sad to hear about Ivan's passing," said WOUB Director of Radio Rusty Smith. "He was a fixture on WOUB Radio for four decades and will be greatly missed."


Ivan M. Tribe

Ivan's articles were published in *Goldenseal*, *Bluegrass Unlimited*, and various other scholarly journals and magazines. The website Hill-Billy Music.com has over 200 entries contributed by Ivan. Richard Thompson posted in *Bluegrass Today* a quote from Italian musician and historian Matteo Ringressi, "In the past several years, we corresponded at length, primarily for my research activities. He was always extremely gracious and willing to help–even praising my expertise on the history of early bluegrass music… I don't know that I deserve such accolades, but knowing I had his respect means a whole lot."

Ivan co-authored a book *Meigs County* with former student Jordan Pickens and *Rio Grande*: *From Baptists and Bevo to the Bell Tower* with former student Abby Gail Goodnite Ehman. Jordan reflected upon his last visit in the hospital with Ivan "Towards the end of my visit, Dr. Tribe mentioned that he'd like to have a last picture together and asked if I would mind. I fought back tears because I did want one and I assumed it would be the last one we took together, but I didn't expect him to say that." As I stood by Ivan's casket with Abby, I told her how much Ivan thought of her and she replied "He was like a second father to me!"

Ivan and I worked together as colleagues at Rio Grande and have written 4 books together and numerous articles, including four for *Goldenseal.* Our work sessions usually consisted of coffee—me—and soda pop—Ivan, mixed with snack cakes, discussions of the day's events, some Rio Grande gossip, usually listening to 3 or 4 bluegrass songs, a discussion of Cincinnati Reds baseball, tales of old students, and long talks with anyone who happened to stop by to visit. Looking back, I wonder how we ever got so much done, and looking ahead, I realize how much I am going to miss that process and Ivan Tribe.

JAKE BAPST is a retired administrator/instructor from the University of Rio Grande/Rio Grande Community College, where he serves as volunteer archivist.

# Remembering Dwight Diller



Linkous took this photo of Diller at The State Folk Festival in 2022.

**By Sam Linkous, Blacksburg, VA**

I first met Mr. Dwight Diller during my days working at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins. I wasn't sure what to expect because his reputation preceded him and those of you who knew him then know exactly what I mean. His reputation depended on who you asked on any particular day because Dwight's personality had varying degrees and levels, I say with much love.

The Dwight I knew was the one who I had some sort of special connection with, though, I can't really describe what that was. We didn't see each other very often, hardly ever as a matter of fact, but when we did, it was two old friends coming back together. Once, very late at night at Augusta, more accurately very early in the morning, I ran into him on the way to the dorm and mentioned to him that I had been trying to learn a particular ballad that he sings and that I'd like to get a few minutes with him some time to go over it. He grabs me by the arm and we head to my room and suddenly it's 4:00 a.m., but I knew all the words and could, sort of, sing it to his satisfaction.

He was the one we made a special badge for at Augusta that said, "Banjo Police," and he'd better not catch you with a sock or rag or anything else stuffed in your banjo with the purpose of dampening the sound. You'd better not wiggle your thumb around too much when you played clawhammer either. Anyone who had his class may relate to that one.

Once I let my hair grow out and get curly. He ran up to me at Vandalia, ran his hand through it, and proclaimed with a grin, "that's kinda cute."

The Dwight I knew was my friend. He always asked about my music. Once at Glenville, he stopped playing and looked over at me and said. "sing that old ballad you used to sing." Of course I tried something, don't remember what and his only comment was to say "thank you."

Dwight, I say to you, thank you for being my friend, for giving me these memories, and for the honor of being able to say that I was your friend.

**By Jamie Loveloy, Randolph County**

I met Dwight during a dip in my life right after my father died. A mutual friend and longtime student of Dwight's, Darin Gentry, put us together. I was just learning fiddle at the time but because I am from a founding family in Randolph County, Dwight made me a priority. He loved to teach natives. Dwight and I be-



Dwight shares some banjo wisdom with Jamie's son.



Dwight and Pug, Photo by Jamie Lovejoy.

came instant friends despite our age difference and we talked back and forth online daily until I met him at his house in Stillwell. That was something. I drove from Beverly, WV to Dwight's house and ended up staying 7-8 hours. He talked about the Hammons family, Jesus, his struggles, and the surrender to rhythm—all the while in a cramped study with piles of water bottles and canned goods all around. His dog, Pug, sat on his lap with his tongue hanging out the entire time, even when Dwight played fiddle. When he wasn't on his lap, Pug was laying in Dwight's banjo or fiddle case.

I was struck by Dwight's authenticity - never have I met a person who truly lived for Jesus the way Dwight did. He ministered to me first and then taught me Greasy Coat and Greasy String that day. Shortly after that, he came to Beverly and stayed with my family. He even taught my son how to do clawhammer rhythm on banjo. He had my son hold on to his arm lightly while he played with the strings muted so he could feel the "flick" and the "galloping horses." That same year my husband, Chris, ended up backing him up on guitar at Vandalia. As they were about to play God Gave Noah the Rainbow Sign, Dwight winked at him. Chris said that one wink put him at peace. The set was awesome by the way.

Dwight was stubborn, sometimes, but most times he laid it out simply, felt deeply, loved West Virginia, the Hammons family, and above all was completely "sold out to Jesus"—something he valued more than his music. I like to think Dwight took his place with the Hammons family—Maggie, Sherman, Burl, Edden, John and others...and they are all together jamming in heaven.

## By Bob Heyer, Ohio County

Our paths first crossed at the Morris Family Festival in Ivydale, WV in 1973. I didn't really get to know Dwight until much later. I am now proud to consider him a friend, and like many others will miss him. We would see each other from time to time over the years at the WV State Folk Festival in Glenville, the Stonewall Jackson Jubilee, and at the Augusta Heritage Center and Allegheny Echoes. He was always generous with his time. I particularly remember sitting knee to knee and learning some of the old ballads from him. The last time that we spoke was through a video visit in February of 2022.

We got caught up a bit and he asked me to sing him some songs. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to say goodbye even though I didn't know it at the time.

## By Richard Hefner, Pocahontas County

I knew Dwight Diller while we were in high school. He went to Marlinton and I went to Hillsboro. When he was in for break from WVU, I talked to him about




Hefner and Diller LP album cover and advertisement

music. Just another side of Dwight, he had his head shaved and wore white shirt and white pants. He looked like "Mr. Clean" on TV. Not long after our talk, Dwight came to my house for a visit. Not only was he into old-time music, but he liked old bluegrass, especially the vocals. He had an old flat back bass with part of the top missing.

Shortly after, he joined our band, The Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys. He played all through the 1970s, playing bass and old time banjo, and helping do three albums, many shows, bluegrass festivals and almost two years on the road all over the North East.

Dwight introduced me to all the great old time musicians, many who were guests on our weekly radio program. Dwight was fun to travel with. We ate our share of home made Granola & Powdered Milk!!! His favorite saying was, "If you're gonna play Bluegrass music, you've got to put the POWER in it."

## By Ron Mullennex, Upper Dry Fork Valley, Randolph County

Dwight Diller was a true crusader for West Virginia's traditional music and culture, with an intensity that continually grew over all the years I knew him. I met Dwight in either late 1971 or early 1972, at West Virginia University. I was just a mountain kid who had grown up with old-time music and dancing in my home community and had been playing it in some fashion since my early teens, but had no idea that there was a wider interest in that music and culture by others, especially many from outside our region. I can't recall exactly how we first met, but I do recall our "trading" penciled notes and comments on the liner notes of LP albums of traditional music that we were checking out at the WVU library listening room, before we actually knew each other. When we finally met, our mutual interest quickly drew us close. I was impressed with Dwight's focus on and attention to the older, less commercially-influenced style and repertoire.

His direction was strongly influenced by his early recognition of the musical and

cultural heritage of the Hammons families of his home area. Upon meeting Sherman Hammons through a mutual acquaintance, he sought them out and began documenting their music and their way of life, and brought them to the attention of others who would further that documentation and make it accessible to interested people throughout the country, and indeed the world. It was Dwight who first introduced me to the Hammonses of the Marlinton area, initiating an important influence on my own musical journey. It was through travels with him that I was first exposed to the old-time music festivals and informal gatherings going on in our region at that time, and that opened me to that wider community of like minded musicians that have been an important and appreciated part of my life ever since. As I got to know him, I found that he was a searcher—searching for a guiding light in his life as well as delving intensely into the music. He dug for the core of whatever he was pursuing, be it philosophy of life, reli-

## Jeff Haynes, Kanawha County

*"You're not using your thumb, you are only playing the melody and that is only 3% of it. Banjo is 85% rhythm…"* You were kind and patient enough to sit with me for an hour and a half before your performance to share your clawhammer style, and for that, I am eternally grateful. Rest easy, Dwight.

gion, or old-time music. In the former, I saw him transition from astrology (!) to Carlos Castenada's "Teachings of Don Juan" and finally to a devotion to Christianity which he pursued intently, becoming an ordained minister in the Mennonite Church.

As in all things, Dwight had his own unique style in how he did things, for better or for worse. In the music, he became a highly-influential teacher of not only banjo technique, but more importantly taught his students the relationship between West Virginia's traditional music, and its land and people. He did so with a religious fervor that has made a deep, lasting influence on many folks around the world. A Teacher, Preacher, and Pilgrim. Rest in peace, Dwight.

### By John D. Morris, Clay County

Dwight Diller was my friend for more than 50 years, and our time together was about friendship and the ties of family, friends, art and culture. Dwight was often a member of the Morris Brothers Band, formed by my brother David and I. Dwight played at our festivals, toured with us and we became close friends. I taught at Dwight's banjo camp, and we even made a movie together. We consoled each other through divorces, brought down the house taping for Mountain Stage, and in between times I'd fix Dwight's vehicle. Our connection superseded our love of music; Dwight became as much of a brother to me as my brother David.

Dwight became a cultural preservationist, as he ventured into the hills of Pocahontas County searching for West Virginia's musical roots. He unearthed the traditions of the Hammons family, learning their music and stories, works that are now in a collection at the Smithsonian. He has been recognized many times for his creative passion in preserving West Virginia's musical and cultural heritage.

Dwight's music was a gift to us all, but for me, Dwight was a gift all on his own. Rest in peace, my brother.

### Ginny Hawker, Randolph County

"One of the first people I hired years ago for Vocal Week at Augusta. Ballad Singing. I peeked in on day 1 and he had all 8-9 students holding their heads, many crying. That was Day 1. I knew I had the right person teaching old ballads. Always loved his singing and the rocking rhythm of his banjo. What a loss."

Note: Dwight Diller and John D. Morris recently contributed to the recent CD of Blind Alfred Reed's music, "Always Lift Him Up."

### By Paul Gartner, Lincoln County

Dwight Diller was a character. I cannot say I knew him well, although I did watch his dog for him while he played a stage set at the Vandalia Gathering in 2015. I mainly saw him at festivals like Vandalia or Clifftop. At events like these, I always figured that someone of Dwight's standing who had so many friends, fans, and students approaching him, plus performances to give—that it must have been tiring. But he always made time for people. Like back in 1996, when I was at the Mount Airy festival in North Carolina. The grounds inside the gate were packed with tents and elaborate campsites. But there was Dwight, outside the gate, nearly alone in the field, sleeping in his car. A friend put a band together for the contest that weekend (entrants got ticket money back. I played guitar.) I can still hear that solid clawhammer banjo on 'Jimmy Johnson'. This was probably the last thing he wanted to do that hot Saturday, but there he was. And in 1987, right before I played in my first banjo contest at Vandalia (not knowing anybody and only two tunes), Dwight looked up and said, "give 'er a good one." It meant a lot. And more recently, before my losing battle with fiddle came to an end, "Paul, I like your fiddle playing. Don't back down from anybody."

Dwight was a teacher of fiddle and banjo, obviously, but there was more than that. He showed his students the way, as difficult

as this must have been at times. "Listen to the older players", he would say, "listen to the rhythm, and no chukka chukka on the banjo." Dwight is best known for the music, songs and stories he collected from Burl, Sherman, Maggie and Ruie Hammons, and other Pocahontas County musicians. (In 2013, Dwight distributed these landmark recordings for free, under the name Across the Yew Pines Project). My guess is he traced down every old-timer he could. His musical path led him to Clay County, where he met Wilson Douglas, Lee Triplett, Ira Mullins, Gruder Morris, and younger musicians like John and David Morris. One of my favorite music stories concerns Dwight and John Morris, who were visiting Gruder Morris. Gruder sent his wife to the store to get some chicken to prepare for dinner. This prompted a question from either Dwight or John—why didn't he cook one of the chickens in the yard? Gruder replied he could never eat a chicken he was acquainted with!

Dwight lived his music; you could hear it in his playing. He told me once that sometimes people paid a price for their gifts. This thought has never left me. This was around 1992, I was interviewing him about his then most-recent recording, 'Piney Woods.' This recording was my introduction to his music, and I still recommend it. His banjo, along with the late Tom King's guitar and John Gallagher's fiddle evokes the Pocahontas County landscape perfectly. So what is my takeaway from Mr. Diller? Know your history, your local stories. The music and the land and the people are all one—and we are better for having known Dwight.

**By Mike Burns, Pocahontas County**

In October of 1972 I attended the West Virginia banjo and fiddle championships being held during the Forest Festival in Elkins. At the time I was interested in playing bluegrass banjo. I had an old banjo my father had picked up in a pawn shop and a beginners banjo music book. I was really



Diller and John Morris at Jackson's Mill 2005. Photo provided by Kim Johnson.

impressed with all of the different versions of Foggy Mountain Breakdown I was hearing. Then two young guys came on the stage with a banjo and harmonica. I thought to myself "Look, hippies". It turned out to be Dwight on banjo.

As soon as Dwight started playing, it immediately struck me that this was the style of banjo (clawhammer) I wanted to play. The inspiration from Dwight's playing to pursue old-time music was not only a turning point for me, musically, but life changing. The friendships formed out of the old-time community have been invaluable.

After returning to Morgantown for classes, I found two of Dwight's banjo students, Ron Mullenex and Jack Ramsey, living on the same street. Dwight had already finished college and moved back to Pocahontas County. Jack started teaching me clawhammer banjo and we often traveled to Frost to stay with Dwight, so the influence remained strong in my early banjo playing. During these visits Dwight served as a sort of ambassador into the world of the Hammons family of musicians and other local folks. This enabled me to form my own connections to this older generation of musicians and learn their music and hear their stories firsthand.

The old-time music community will miss Dwight Diller, but his legacy will live on indefinitely. His banjo students, and their students carry on with influences from his distinctive style. His knowledge and promotion of the local music traditions of Pocahontas

# A "One Off," It Ain't
## Raleigh County's Historical Marker Program

**By Merle T. Cole**

*I would definitely say that we see more activity out of Raleigh County than anywhere else in the state, especially in terms of a specific sponsoring agency/group… I'm not sure who would be considered 'next in line' as most groups do markers as a one off, so to speak.*

— Matt McGrew, former Cultural Program Coordinator for West Virginia Archives and History, September 9, 2020.

West Virginia developed official state highway historical markers in 1937, during the Great Depression, as a tourism lure and an inexpensive but effective public education tool. The program is run by West Virginia Archives and History (WVA&H), based out of the Culture Center in Charleston. Its goal is to "commemorate places, events, or persons prominently identified with the history or prehistory of the nation, state or region, and possessing some degree of unique significance in West Virginia in terms of history, architecture or cultural life." The Raleigh County Historical Society (RCHS) Historical Marker Program (HMP) grew from my sister Pat's suggestion we donate a West Virginia Wildflower Program plot in memory of our parents. I took the idea a step further and donated two adjoining plots in 2013. (The program was, unfortunately, terminated in 2022.)

I then tried to get an official state marker for my great-great-grandfather, James Bird Cole—first person (1842) to purchase a lot in Alfred Beckley's "paper town" later known as Raleigh Court House, then Beckley. Cole also established the town's first business, a forge and blacksmith shop at the junction of the Giles, Fayette, and Kanawha Turnpike with the Logan, Raleigh, and Monroe Turnpike under the landmark 23rd Mile Tree. I received my introduction to WVA&H's demanding standards when my marker application was rejected for "insufficient impact." *Every town*, it seems, has a first resident and business owner. They may be important, even crucial, in local or county history—but very few generate the impact or uniqueness required to justify a state-level marker. WVA&H suggested I pursue local signage authorization. That tack proved more successful, and the Raleigh County Commission authorized affixing a bronze plaque to the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Building—site of Cole's residence and across the street from his blacksmith shop.

I returned to the challenge inherent in the WVA&H standards, and in April 2017 brought off *two* successes! RCHS president Tom Sopher was always griping, "Someone should do a study and get a marker for the ancient Indian fortification on Big Beaver Creek." My idea of an "Indian fort" was John Wayne and Fort Apache! But I gave it a shot and, using recent archeological studies, satisfied state criteria. [Figure 4]

Totally unrelated, but equally satisfying, was winning approval for a state marker to memorialize the 1922-1933 West Virginia State Police (WVSP) training camp at Haywood Junction. David Houchin of the Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library provided invaluable assistance. Under the auspices of the Harrison County Historical Society, the marker was installed just south of Shinnston.

Buoyed by these successes, I suggested to President Sopher establishing a *perma-*



On the frigid morning of December 2, 2016, Jim Rowlands of Beckley Public Works (right) makes final adjustments to the James Bird Cole plaque, recorded for posterity by Annie Moore of WVVA-TV and Don Davis.




A Pomeroy Legends and Lore marker (right) shares a sunset with an older WVA&H official state marker at Wildwood House Museum.

*nent* marker program, with me in charge. He agreed, and the program was formally launched in February 2018. Since then, we have partnered with WVA&H on markers covering a wide variety of topics: City of Beckley (reinstallation); Beckley Mill Site; Glade Creek Reservoir, WVSP radio station/ Company D barracks and Shady Spring (all in one month!!); Camp Prince Army Station; Bill Withers; Governor Clarence W. Meadows; Logan, Raleigh, and Monroe Turnpike; and Little Jimmy Dickens.

In 2019, RCHS added the National Coal Heritage Area Authority (NCHAA) to its marker partnerships. NCHAA was created by the West Virginia legislature in 2002 as an economic development agency. One of its missions is to preserve the history of coal and related industries and community sites in a 13-county area via interpretive signage.

By law, NCHAA pays half of project costs. That is a major attraction for a small membership, low-dues outfit like RCHS. We have also been successful with community grants through the Beckley Area Foundation, and much of the balance of our project funding has come from individual donors or the City of Beckley.

Our third program partner emerged in June 2020—the William G. Pomeroy Foundation of Syracuse, New York. Pomeroy grants are highly competitive and strictly juried, and marker inscriptions are tightly limited. These constraints are more than offset by the fact the foundation picks up fabrication and transportation costs—and even tosses in the mounting pole! Our first Pomeroy, in the Legends and Lore category, commemorates the Ferguson Rock and is also mounted at Wildwood House Museum.

One of our major program goals has been increasing community involvement via dedication ceremonies. We achieved this with the Shady Spring (September 2019) and Camp Prince (July 2020) events. The most recent example was dedication of the Bill Withers marker in May of 2021. Music and plaudits in the morning were paired with a free afternoon concert at the city's intermodal gateway facility.

A second Pomeroy Legends and Lore application, for Fay-Ral Airport at Maple Fork, was rejected as being more "purely historical" than legendary. But there was a very positive upside! Pomeroy invited RCHS to resubmit Fay-Ral as a pilot (pun intended) under a proposed new grant category. We did so. Fay-Ral Airport survived a tough documentation review, and made it to the foundation trustees, who voted favorably.



Local musicians render a Bill Withers tune during the marker dedication ceremony. (Becky Leach photo)

The Fay-Ral Airport marker illustrates a second major program goal—to "get out into the county more," rather than continuing the past RCHS focus on Beckley. A quick review of our entries on the Historical Marker Database website shows we have attained that goal. Just under half of all projects are situated around the county. RCHS has definitely left its mark.

The closing months of 2021 saw an unprecedented surge of requests for new markers, most notably in support of the Raleigh General Hospital's centennial observation, and a unique bilateral project with the Summers County Historical Society to memorialize the homeplace of William C. Richmond, the county's first permanent white settler. The year ended on a high note with the formal dedication of a plaque to commemorate the birthplace of West Virginia Army National Guard Special Forces (Green Berets), initially headquartered in Beckley in 1959.

Surely, 2021 will go down as "Year of the Marker." Almost half of all RCHS markers were installed during that twelve month! We look forward to pursuing a range of projects in coming years, to provide a baseline for continuing education of county residents and heritage tourists.




The distinctive West Virginia old gold and blue color scheme of the Fay-Ral Airport marker mounted at Maple Fork Baptist Church, which was constructed beside the former runway. It is currently awaiting a community dedication ceremony.

MERLE T. COLE was born and raised in Raleigh County, graduated from Marshall University, and worked for various federal agencies before retiring to his native county. His most notable service was as director of the USDA Agricultural Research Service Research Position Evaluation Staff, and as a commissioned officer in the Maryland State Guard. He has made numerous contributions to GOLDENSEAL, most recently in our Winter 2022 issue.

# The House of Campbell

## Black Death, Wealth, and Discovery

**By Samantha Stephens**

Perhaps we aren't our ancestors' wildest dreams? This question recurred to me throughout summer 2020 as I watched the racial upheaval unfold across an America set ablaze by the media amid an ongoing global pandemic. The more stories I saw of Black families grieving their unjustly killed loved ones, the more I thought of my great-grandfather James Cubert Campbell. He also lived through a pandemic and was the first Black undertaker and first Black city councilman in Charleston. At the time, those little-known facts and pieces of family history were all I knew about my late ancestor. His work as an undertaker in a segregated market made him one of the richest Black men in Charleston. Until summer 2020, I'd never considered the significance of my great-grandfather—known by friends simply as "Campbell"—his role in the community, or the care he provided for grieving Black families.

Inspired by these few details, I started digging into my family history, beginning with my great-grandfather's obituary, which my mother's cousin, Nicky, keeps framed in his study. Though he didn't grow up knowing Campbell, Nicky shares the few stories passed down to him with immense pride. The obituary mentions that Campbell worked as a newspaper columnist before he went to mortuary school. With the assistance of some very helpful archivists and librarians in Charleston, I found an overwhelming amount of articles written either by him or about him from 1902 through 1956, when he died. Reading my great-grandfather's words in print felt like oxygen.

James Cubert Campbell was the first free man born in his family. His father, General James Alexander Campbell, was a slave from Virginia who fought in the Civil War when he was about 20 years old. "General" Campbell was likely an honorific title since no Black officer in the Civil War achieved a rank higher than lieutenant colonel, but the name would stick with him the rest of his life. After the war, General Campbell settled in the new state of West Virginia, where he worked as a barber. During Reconstruction (1865–1877), Black barbers cut both White and Black men's hair. Establishing himself as a business owner, General Campbell flourished as a wealthy and respected entrepreneur.

His son James Cubert Campbell (hereafter "Campbell") was born around 1876, just as Jim Crow laws came into effect, stifling the business potential of people like his father. Under Jim Crow, Black people lived with the constant threat and reality of disenfranchisement and violence. Despite these obstacles, Campbell worked his way through school and graduated from Howard University Law School in 1904. He understood the importance of being an educated Black man and uplifting as many other Black people as possible. However, he encountered another obstacle—most Black folks couldn't afford lawyers, and most White folks wouldn't hire a Black lawyer. To supplement his income, he began writing a newspaper column in Washington, D.C. He was a fervent supporter of the Republicans, the "Party of Lincoln." He encouraged Blacks to vote straight Republican tickets to combat disenfranchisement and Jim Crow laws. He often traveled back to West Virginia to campaign for various Republicans. On November 22, 1902, *The Colored American* magazine wrote, "Mr. James Cubert Campbell . . . made one

of the best speeches of the West Virginia campaign at the final rally at the Court House in Charleston. It was a complete and logical presentation of the issues from a republican [sic] standpoint, and contributed largely to the success of Congressman Joseph H. Gaines, who received a heavy vote at the hands of the colored people of the Charleston district."

In summer 1908, Campbell returned to Charleston—a trip that changed the course of his life. One late afternoon in July, he and his friends Arthur Jackson and Thomas Nutter attempted to save a neighborhood boy, Roy James, from drowning. The *Advocate* reported, "Jackson, Nutter, and Campbell plunged [into the Kanawha River], the last named [*sic*] without disrobing. [Roy's] body was found . . . fastened in the mud, which was very deep at that point." Despite their efforts to resuscitate him, Roy sadly perished. Moved by the incident, my great-grandfather enrolled in the Cincinnati College of Embalming around 1909. In 1912, he returned home and opened his undertaking business, The House of Campbell, the first in Charleston, and the capital city's first funeral home owned by and for Black people.

A traditional African-American funeral is called a *homegoing*, which emphasizes dignity for the deceased and celebrates the person's life. Homegoings originated in African tradition and still occur today, with pageantry playing an essential part in the ritual. They're characterized by silk-lined caskets, ornate floral arrangements, elaborate programs, and mourners garbed in colorful or white outfits instead of the typical black attire. Throughout 2020, as the death toll of unarmed Black Americans climbed, my heart broke thinking about the family members who couldn't have homegoings for their loved ones due to the intense but necessary COVID-19 restrictions.

To understand the impact of my great-grandfather's role during his time, particularly within Charleston's Black community,



James Cubert Campbell, the author's great grandfather. All photos are courtesy of the author.

I reached out to Dr. Suzanne Smith, author of *To Serve the Living: Funeral Directors and the African-American Way of Death*. She explained how a funeral director facilitated the arrangements for a homegoing. Undertakers acted as grief counselors for the deceased's family, garnering respect, wealth, and a stable business. Being an undertaker also served as a launching pad for many men into influential political positions. Ironically, segregation played an essential part in securing wealth for Black undertakers due to their guaranteed client base. Dr. Smith writes that this was common, "Black funeral directors were perhaps the most successful entrepreneurs in America's segregated economy."

Another irony for undertakers is that tragic times can generate immense profits. Campbell's business boomed during the

1918-1920 Spanish Flu pandemic, which claimed about 675,000 American lives and 50 million worldwide. My Uncle Bill told me Campbell poured all of his money back into the business after the pandemic.

Based on family descriptions, it seems my great-grandfather did quite well for himself. He constructed a new funeral home from the ground up with a chapel attached. According to my uncle, the funeral home's design was inspired in part by the Parthenon, complete with enormous white columns in front. Campbell even commissioned a custom Cadillac ambulance and hearse to be shipped from Ohio, adding to his prominence in Charleston.

Campbell drew a lot of attention as a prominent community member, though not all of it was positive. Around the same time his business was growing more prosperous, First Baptist Church—one of the first Black churches in Charleston—kicked him out. He'd been moved by the spirit one too many times during worship—he enjoyed singing and dancing during the quiet services—and was asked not to come back. In retaliation, he funded construction of St. James Episcopal Church in North Charleston. I asked my mom's cousin Murtala if 'St. James' was a way for Campbell to name the church after himself. He replied, "I wouldn't put it past him."

In the 1920s, Charleston was a different city than it is today. It was a booming city—its population had grown from 4,000 to 40,000 in the previous 40 years. Situated like Washington, D.C., on the border of the North and the South, it was a stopping point or destination for southern Blacks moving northward in massive numbers during the Great Migration. As a result, several politicians and civic organizers across the country looked to West Virginia as an example for legislation regarding race.

Bordered by brothels and considered undesirable by many White citizens of Charleston, the Campbell family lived in a neighborhood known as The Block [see Spring 2017]. Restricted from living in certain areas of the cities, many Blacks and immigrants took up residence in the area. They created businesses, headquarters for fraternities/secret societies, public schools, and an elite hotel with a ballroom and theater. Though they lived in a thriving, prominent neighborhood, residents knew everybody else and their business. Neighborhood kids played in the streets, and community events bustled with energy and life. These institutions made Charleston a cultural hub for entertainers and intellectuals.



Charlotte Campbell, daughter of James Campbell, and the author's grandmother.

Everyone from W. E. B. DuBois, a personal friend of my great-grandfather's, to Duke Ellington, and Ella Fitzgerald stopped in Charleston. From the 1910s to 1950s, The Block was a lively area for Black enterprise and entertainment.

In 1922, Campbell married my great-grandmother, Mattie Marie Martin, about 20

years his junior. She's the reason our family still calls him Campbell, though it's uncertain if using his last name was because of her schoolteacher background or because she became his employee once they married. At the funeral home, she was known as the "First Lady." Her duties involved bathing, doing the hair and makeup, and dressing the corpses. My Uncle Bill recalled my great-grandmother being a very religious woman, so much so that when funk music came onto the scene in the later 20th century, she thought the name was blasphemous. As the last person to offer the deceased any physical sense of tenderness, I imagine her taking a lot of pride in her role as First Lady. Each morning, Campbell went over "Mattie's To-Do" list for the home and the business while she administered his insulin shots.

Despite the family's outward success, there were problems not seen by everyone. As a father, Campbell held high expectations for his children to excel in school and become independent. For example, he taught my grandmother Charlotte and my great-aunt Marjory to drive because he didn't want them to sit in the back of the bus. As my great-grandparents' marriage went on, Mattie became resentful and felt unacknowledged for the work she put into the business. Murtala said she would often lament, "Everyone always talks about Campbell," in a tone loud enough for anyone within earshot to hear.

As his business thrived, Campbell held to his convictions about advancing Black folks' lives. He sat on several committees that sought to protect and uplift the Black and immigrant communities of Charleston. These groups successfully blocked the showing of D. W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation*, desegregated the public library, implemented a statewide anti-lynching law, created West Virginia's first Blacks-only nine-hole golf course — all before 1935. Campbell's community involvement grew over the years, and by 1931, he became Charleston's first




1946 Christmas card from the Campbell family.

Black city councilman, a seat he held for 25 years.

While balancing his funeral business and his political career, Campbell groomed my great-uncle James Jr. to take over the House of Campbell. However, as racial tensions grew throughout the 1940s, my great-uncle and his siblings lived in fear of the future. Murtala said it was difficult for them as educated Black people to be told that they had to "know their place" in society. African-American historian Ancella Bickley writes, "I think West Virginia has a kind of mixed history. I believe that Blacks were encouraged to move in certain directions, but they would bump into that invisible wall if they stepped outside of the things that were supposedly correct."

When my great-grandfather died in 1956, the family closed the House of Campbell after 44 years of service. The funeral home and other prominent Black-owned businesses on The Block were sold to the state and razed flat due to redlining and "urban renewal" projects like an Interstate Highway, similar to other Black cultural centers like Tulsa, OK, and Detroit, MI. My great-uncle moved his family to Ohio. My great-aunt Marjory followed. My grandmother Charlotte took her inheritance and built a family home in rural New Jersey. My great-grandmother Mattie moved in with her beloved younger brother, John, and his wife, Sarah.

She spent her remaining days as a socialite while the Black high society in Charleston faded away alongside decades of hard work and Black history, the exact opposite outcome my great-grandfather had centered his life around.

During conversations with my family members lucky enough to remember Campbell, they each came to the same conclusion—he was born at the wrong time. Although my great-grandfather led a remarkable life, he never felt like he accomplished enough. Despite his wealth, respect, and prominence in his community, he was frustrated that he could not take his political ambitions beyond his city council seat. He always felt resentment from the White businessmen in Charleston, whom he knew would not elect him to a higher office. Despite his tenacity in business, he was oppressed by Jim Crow laws and the ideology of the time.

With so much Black history lost because of slavery, racism and the whitewashing of American history, I never knew I had the right to search for my family history. I didn't think there would be anything to find. As a young Black girl living in the suburbs of Philadelphia and attending predominantly white school systems, the Black history I learned was limited to Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks. I'll never forget the in-class essay assigned in elementary school about what day-to-day life would have been like for me pre-Civil War. While my white classmates worked diligently on the prompt, I wrote through tears that I would have been a slave. When I got to college, I met someone whose ancestor signed the Declaration of Independence. I was so envious they knew their ancestor's name; they knew names beyond their grandparents. Discovering the rich details of Campbell's life has been profound.

I believe Campbell's remarkable insight into the power of the press was one of his greatest assets. His intimate relationship with the media allowed his story to be preserved and now passed down through our family. On March 21, 1907, my great-grandfather wrote in *The Advocate*, "The people, those who own the press, have the arms that rock the universe. And it is such cogent arms as these that the colored people in this country, today, need and need badly. In other words, these people are sadly in need of newspapers to create public sentiment in their favor and to fight adverse sentiment which is submerging them beneath a relentless contempt and merciless caste hatred."



Marjory Campbell, James Cambell's daughter, and the author's great-aunt.

It saddens me that the America I live in is not drastically more progressive than the America he was trying to change—that Black people are still combating relentless contempt. Though the tragic events of summer 2020 made me skeptical that our country is making progress in dismantling systemic racism, I don't think my great-grandfather would want me to feel that way. Instead, I think he would encourage me to use my voice, build community, and challenge my oppressor—maybe then I'll realize my ancestor's wildest dream.

SAMANTHA STEPHENS is an actress and writer based in Los Angeles, CA. She grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA. Her mother hails from Charleston, WV. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

# Back to the Land:
## Homesteading in 1970s Lincoln County

**By Paul Salstrom**



Paul Salstrom in 1972, all photos courtesy of the author.



Log raising for second floor of a cabin in Lincoln County.

Back in 1958, a large-scale survey in Appalachia sought to discover the region's "household attitudes." In-person interviews were conducted with a statistically weighted cross section of 1,500 Appalachian residents. One of the survey's questions was, "Do you and your relatives call on each other for help?" To that, 95% of the interviewees answered yes. A follow- up question asked, "Do you think a person has an obligation to help relatives even though he does not feel real close to them?" To that, 83% of the interviewees answered yes. Then the interviewers asked, "If you were in trouble, would you be more likely to turn to your close friends or to your relatives for help?" To that, 67% answered to relatives, and 26% answered to close friends.

Soon after that survey, Senator John F. Kennedy's famous 1960 presidential primary trip through southern West Virginia inaugurated an era of heightened media attention—not all of it edifying. At the same time, but less reported, an Appalachian cultural renaissance started coalescing in West Virginia. During the1960's, folk festivals, craft fairs, and storytelling events started expanding in size, and new ones were being founded.

By the early 1970s a back-to-the-land movement became noticeable in West Virginia, a movement I was part of. Thankfully, the "household attitudes" which Appalachian people had revealed back in 1958 were still basically the attitudes they adopted toward young newcomers in the 1970s. Since we came to live there, not to publicize a shocking story, they didn't suspect us of having a hidden agenda. In Lincoln County anyway, most of our



Cabin of John & Jan Salstrom during the winter season.

neighbors seemed to view us as potential friends and conceivably even future relatives, and in the meanwhile they began training us in their neighborly mutual support networks.

Not that most of us were very useful trainees at first. We tended to be bookish. At first many of us were more interested in the idea of "localism" than we were in the locality where we now lived. Appropriate technology and human relationships were all around us but at first we were more interested in ideas about them than we were in their Lincoln County actuality. At night by our kerosene lamps we were reading books like *Living the Good Life* by Scott and Helen Nearing, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* by Euell Gibbons, *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappe, and of course_*Night Comes to the Cumberlands* by Harry Caudill.

That was how we started out. Lincoln Countians probably wondered if we were mad about something—like many coal miners were. Our neighbors' lives were embedded in a working culture but not in a working-*class* culture. They weren't mad—not at any category of people anyway, and mostly not at all. They were willing to trust anyone, up to a point. Trade-offs were pervasive and no one seemed to mind that the people who were poorer usually made their trade-off contributions in work, whereas those who were better off were more likely to contribute supplies or to lend out equipment.



Seoka Salstrom, the author's niece, feeding a lamb by a wood-burning stove.

Let's fast-forward to the year 2020. After the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, an upsurge of "buying local" was reported in West Virginia. Assuming "buying local" continues to trend, today's back-to-the-land aspirants will have an advantage that we 1970s homesteaders lacked. Today's aspirants will have a market for the crops they grow, and for the products from the animals they raise on their small farms. By customers "buying local," and farmers selling local, they will help provide West Virginians with food security into the coming years. "Live and let live" was the prevailing attitude during my years spent in Lincoln County, and I have the impression it still is.

PAUL SALSTROM is Professor Emeritus of History at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College near Terre Haute, Indiana. His book Appalachia's Alternative to Mainstream America: A Personal Education appeared from University of Tennessee Press in fall 2021. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Madison Bolyard, of Preston County. All photos courtesy of the author.

# Madison's Hillcross Farm

**By Candy Thompson**

Just as the sun comes up over the horizon, Madison awakes, gets dressed, pulls on her boots and heads out across the yard. She is heading down to the field, where her herd of farm animals are patiently waiting for her arrival. Her farm includes sheep, baby lambs, chickens, heifers, and her prize show steer. She is the sole curator of "Hillcross Farm".

Being a young teenager, Madison Bolyard has been taking care of her family of livestock and poultry animals for the past six years. Her first animals were baby chicks. She takes her responsibilities seriously and to heart. Madison feeds her farm family twice daily, every day of the week, and gives extra time unselfishly when any of them need it.

She is continuously growing in knowledge concerning their welfare, by belonging to various organizations like Little Sandy Superstars 4-H and Preston High FFA. She has even visited nearby Amish farms to obtain different insights.

I have enjoyed my visits with my niece. I have watched and learned a lot about how to care for various types of farm animals. Plus I follow her posts on her "Hillcross Farm" facebook page, concerning her newfound experiences with them. During one spring visit with her, we walked down to the barns. At Madison's side is Lucy, her canine companion.

Lucy is only 2 years old and a border collie. She's great with herding the sheep together and keeping them in formation, when they are grazing across the field. In fact Lucy has a favorite sheep pal, a ram named Timmy.

Before Madison gets in sight, the sheep recognize the sound of her footsteps and



Madison is solely responsible for her farm animals, feeding them twice a day every day.

they begin to eagerly gather by the fence. A few even standup on their hind legs, throwing their front hooves over the fence. Like they are waiting to say good afternoon, upon her arrival. Madison first grabs a bucket of grain for the ewes. As she enters the gate, the ewes swiftly gather around her. Each one she calls by name. She proceeds, pouring the grain into the trough. The ewes lineup and begin to feed. In the summertime, she has sheared them. Madison tells me, "So they have time to grow their wool back for the cold winter".

She then fixes a bottle to start feeding the baby lambs. The lambs are jumping all around her. She tries to give the little ones extra nourishment. It helps with their early development. She picks one up, comforting it, as she feeds it. She then takes turns with each lamb, talking and smiling at each one. It's like they understand every word she says. She caringly pets them while brushing their wool with the softness of her hands.

The last lamb is finished feeding. But before she puts the lamb down, there is a display of love. The lamb takes its tiny wobbly legs and hugs her. Then gives her a light kiss on the cheek. Even the baby lambs can sense the warm affection Madison has for them.

When the baby lambs were due, Madison spent many long nights  awake, awaiting their arrival. She has even gone down to the pen on a chilly wintery night, carrying her blanket for warmth, awaiting the birth of a lamb.

On a particular experience, one of her ewe's was in distress and delivery time had come for her twins. Madison reacted calmly and swiftly to her aide. She reached inside of the ewe and pulled the first rather large baby lamb out, then the other one, which was breached. Both the lambs and the mommy ewe made it just fine, thanks to Madison's perseverance and knowledge.

Madison is soon finished feeding all the sheep and lambs. She then walks over to the square hay bales. She picks a haybale up with one arm, like it weighs no more than a bag full of groceries would. I don't know how she does it. She is petite in size, but has the endurance and strength of a well trained adult athlete.  We proceed



The sheep eagerly line up as Madison readies their feed trough.

to walk over to the field where the three heifers are. Madison picks up the hay and throws it over the fence. Engaging in light conversation and a show of kind gestures towards them. As though she was talking to some of her school age friends.

She decided to run a new fence line for her flock that day. Explaining to me how important it is to change the grazing pasture fields regularly. It enables the grass to grow and provide more nutrients for her herd. Plus it helps in the prevention of worm growth and other parasites that are harmful to her animals. She goes walking along, running the temporary fence line, with precision and speed. All the way across, then up and back across. Making sure it is tightly strung and sturdy.

Some of her other responsibilities are cleaning inside the covered barns. This includes raking and laying down new hay on the floor area. Making sure her heat lamps (when in use) are all in working condition and placed at the proper tilting angle. She keeps a record of expenses on various needed supplies. She also maintains inventory checks on grain and other materials used on her farm.

Madison has developed a disciplined, conscientious and resilient personality, way beyond her years. As her farm family grows, she grows also. Sharing in the joys and sorrows of raising them, from the days of their births to the days of their passing deaths.

She wants to pass her ongoing experiences and her in-depth knowledge on to others. She hopes to bring an awareness and improvement to the breeding, nurturing and cultivating world of agriculture.

Madison explains why she embraces her farm family, "The happiness is almost overwhelming. The love I have for my animals, and the love I know they have for me, is one of the greatest things. Yes, we have our hard days, but there is still happiness found at the end of the day".

You can follow Madison Bolyard on her facebook page at: "Hillcross Farm."

CANDY THOMPSON is a sixth generation resident of Preston county. She's a U.S. Army veteran, member of the Cheat River Chapter DAR, and member of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. She is happily married to her husband, Larry, and enjoys baking, working her flower beds, photography, and writing. This is her second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

# A Craftsman's Path

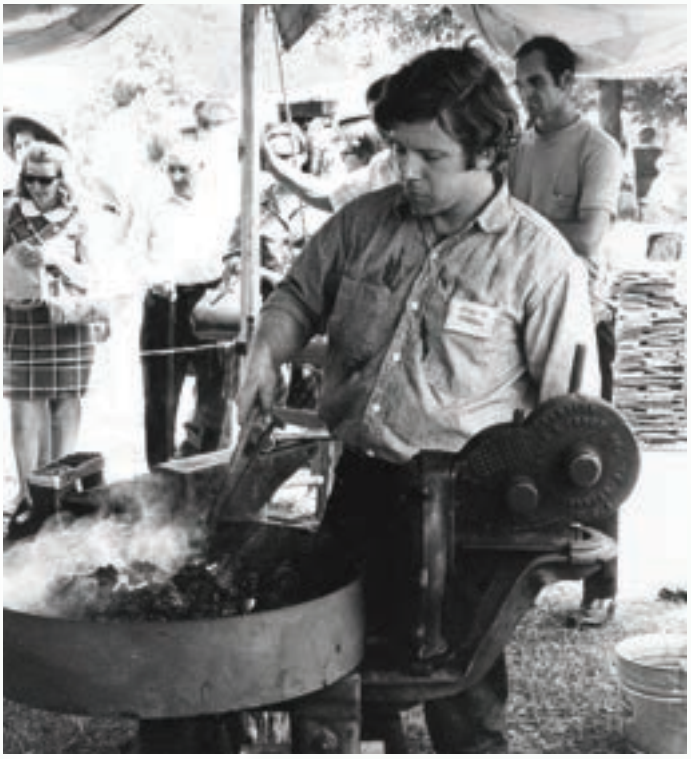
**By Michael Evans Snyder**

West Virginia was 100 years old in 1963, our state's Centennial birthday. It was a time when the state started looking back on its history and heritage as well as its future. That year, the state Department of Commerce established an Arts and Crafts Division. The point man on that effort was Don Page, a smiling, amiable redhead with the love of our state stamped all over him. Don and I became co-workers in 1965 when this writer went to work for the Department as travel editor. I had a keen affinity for promoting our state and its many assets and enjoyed the opportunity to write about them. I was two years out of WVU with a degree in history.

One of the most publicized events of the Centennial centered around the annual Mountain State Art and Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes. Don was deeply involved in locating the diverse artisans, crafts people, and old time musicians who would become the heart of the fair. In covering and helping publicize the event and the incredible West Virginia spirit that flooded it, my participation awoke something deep inside me. Little did I know what effect it would have later on my life.

Our family's (West) Virginia roots go back to the French and Indian War period, but I did not know it growing up because of the disconnect when my great, great grandfather Elias of Pruntytown (Taylor County) was killed in the Civil War. His son Enoch was a blacksmith in Boothsville and later in the Monongah mines.

My mother Eleanor, valedictorian of her class at West Monongah High School, went on to graduate as a registered nurse from St. Mary's nursing school in Clarksburg during the height of the Depression. Her father, Harry Hay, a Spanish-American War veteran, was a blacksmith at the Carolina mines in Marion County.



Mike Snyder demonstrates the art of blacksmithing at the Mountain State Art and Craft Festival. Photo courtesy of Goldenseal Archives.

My dad, also named Enoch, apprenticed four years to become a skilled mould maker for the booming Hazel Atlas glass company in Clarksburg. It operated 24 hours a day. Glass making was a giant West Virginia industry in those days. He once suggested that I become a metallurgist. But other than that, he wanted me to get a college education, so I did not have to work with my hands as he and his father Hayward, who had been a mining machine operator in the Monongah mines.

From the late 1950s through most of the 1970s, the Cold War was at its height and the draft was in full force. WVU was a land grant institution and all males had to participate for a minimum of two years in Army or Air Force ROTC. College students were deferred from the draft. I was suspended from the University for low



Hayward Albert Snyder [the author's great grandfather] 1888-1977, on the left, standing with an unidentified miner in Monongah shortly after WWI.

grades and became draft eligible for two years active military service. My best pal, Fred Dunham, was in similar straits, so we signed up for six years in the USMCR with six months active duty and 5 1/2 years in the reserves. I profited greatly from my time in the Marines in terms of duty, motivation and maximum effort. When we returned to WVU we knuckled down seriously and earned our degrees.

I only had the vaguest idea of what I wanted to do after the University. I just knew I wanted to find a deeper meaning to life. I sold my car and with that money, traveled throughout Europe with a knapsack, via trains and youth hostels. My sojourn lasted for four rewarding months from Norway to the Strait of Gibraltar and Morocco. Except for learning of the tragic assassination of President Kennedy while I was in Spain, I loved every bit of that adventure—with Norway and the Austrian Alps being my favorites. When I came back to Clarksburg on the B&O passenger train, I didn't have a dime in my pocket—but I have wonderful memories to savor and look back on, and see I was blessed to have experienced that in my youth.

I left the state for several years after my Commerce editor's job, with periods in New York City, San Diego as a reporter, and Aspen, Colorado where I was a ski and trout bum. I was accepted into WVU law school in '67, but never showed up. The following year, Bill Bright of Summersville made a visit to Aspen where we hooked up. He offered me a good position with his prospering Bright of America printing company. When Bill and I reconnected, I was driving a taxi and living a lonely life in an old trailer with a Mexican dog. I took his job and when I crossed the Ohio River at Parkersburg, I pulled my faded red '52 Coupe Deville over, got down and kissed the ground.

Bill and I soon learned I was not cut out to be a businessman and I moved on. He and I remain friends to this day. Not long afterwards, I became a reporter for *The Charleston Gazette*. Along with Andy



Mike Snyder at work at his forge. Photo courtesy of Goldenseal Archives.

MacQueen and Arnold Miller, who later became the president of the United Mine Workers, this writer became involved in the anti-strip mining fight during and after my days with the *Gazette*. Being a reporter for the state's biggest newspaper sharpened my writing skills, but I was canned because of my hot temper. It was a great job, but not my final calling.

The next move could best be described as returning to our family circle of working with one's hands. My old pal Don Page awarded me a grant to study blacksmithing in Santa Fe and bring that skill back to West Virginia because it was dying out. It only covered tuition, but I gladly accepted and headed West. I figured smithing could get me back to the land as refuge from all the turmoil in the mainstream at that time: civil rights demonstrations, anti-Vietnam War protests, urban riots, and the hippie-drug scene.

During that six-week course, I developed callouses from my hammer and learned to eat with coal-blackened hands, to love the smell of coal smoke from the forge and the ring of the anvil. I worked for another smith briefly there. My next stop was Cedar Point Resort in Ohio to work in an authentically restored pioneer log village. Ken Snyder, who was locating crafters for it, hired me because we knew each other from our state commerce department days. My job was to blacksmith in the old-time smithy with hand-pumped bellows, amid one of the largest collections of amusement rides and attractions in the U.S.

This was in 1971, and I returned home and married Jill Smith of Charleston. We had met the previous year during the Billy Graham Crusade at the Charleston Civic Center which I was covering for the *Gazette* and she was singing in the large choir. We fell in love just staring into each other's eyes night after night. We lived at the resort and took a break to spend a week at the Mountain State Arts and Crafts Fair where I demonstrated smithing—something I did there for the next nine years.

The coal smoke from the blacksmith forge

The Mountain State Art and Craft Festival will take place Friday June 30- Sunday July 2 from 10am-6pm. Admission is $5 for 12 and older, Children 11 and under are free. Find more information on their website: https://msacf.com

and ringing anvil added to the cacophony of the fair. Along with the loud put-puts of the "hit and miss" engine driving the grist mill; the smoke from the soap and apple butter making; the smell of the Glenville FFA sugar cured hams and hand churned ice cream; the potters' wheels and pounding maul splitting white oak shingles—so much blended together. The lively banjo and fiddle music and the folk songs performers such as Genes Cottrill and Sylvie O'Brien, Aunt Jenny Wilson and Billy Edd Wheeler floated from the microphones into everyone's ears, proclaiming—*THIS IS WEST VIRGINIA.*

The next year at the fair, I met master smith Ern Dillon of Beaver. He was invited by the Smithsonian to demonstrate blacksmithing for the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial Celebration, with me along as his assistant. We traveled to D.C. in my VW bus where visitors from all over the U.S. and the world smelled our coal smoke and heard our anvil ring on the National Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Norm Fagan, commissioner of the Culture Center, later arranged for me to smith on two occasions at the Vandalia Gathering.

Jill and I lived a challenging life for eight years on a Laurel Fork sheep farm in Randolph County where I tended the flock, and we raised large gardens and kept chickens and honeybees. The hand-forged ironwork that I sold through commissions and various fairs and festivals was our livelihood. Our children, Enoch and Joy, were born during this period. I also started the Fastwater Flyfishing School, the state's first, which we operated for a little over thirty years. My final career move was earning a master's degree from WVU enabling me to enter my most rewarding occupation—school teaching in Randolph and Tucker counties. I taught full-time and as a substitute for the next 35 years—and I've never stopped smithing.



Circa 1900 photo of two Monongah blacksmiths with hammers, Enoch Evans Snider is on the right. Photo courtesy of the author.

This is how my life as a craftsman and the Good Lord brought me back to the mountains of West Virginia where I belong. I am just one link in the generations of artists and crafts people that are proud to call this state home. May we always celebrate this heritage and carry our traditions forward to those yet to come.

MICHAEL EVANS SNYDER, A.B., M.A.,WVU, is a writer and blacksmith-sculptor who lives on the Dry Fork near Harman (Randolph County). This is his fifth contribution to GOLDENSEAL, most recently appearing in Winter 2019.



Snyder (standing center), flanked by two unidentified smiths. In front: two apprentice smiths Byron Johnson (left) and possibly Mack Scott.

# 1973 Blacksmith's Reunion

This photo was taken at Mike Snyder's heritage blacksmithing demonstration site at the annual Cedar Lakes Arts and Crafts Fair. It was the second and last year for the reunion. Snyder is shown standing in the center flanked by two older West Virginia smiths whose names have been lost. Two fair smithing apprentices kneel in front: Byron Johnson of Wayne County is on the left.

"He was a natural. He soon forged a flintlock hammer after some sessions at my shop. He was an art major at Marshall," Mike recalled. The other apprentice is believed to be Mack Scott, son of Charles Scott, the widely known potter and Glenville State professor.

All craftsmen at Cedar Lakes then were required to actively demonstrate their crafts and apprentice-helpers were selected to work with craftsmen who wanted them. "I demonstrated and sold my wares at a lot of fairs and festivals, mainly in-state, but Cedar Lakes was my biggest by far," he stated.

On one occasion in 1972, a group of West Virginia traditional craftspeople traveled by bus to New York State University at Buffalo where they demonstrated their skills and handiwork for several days. "My apprentice there was a young fellow named Mick Suiter, who soon afterward moved to Randolph County and continues to make a living here as a folk musician. We certainly were a big attraction up there and everyone got to smell real West Virginia coal smoke and hear a ringing anvil. We got to meet the president, and his lovely wife sent a Beatrix Potter book home with me for our newborn son."

The visit was sponsored through the Augusta program at Davis and Elkins College. "I remember that Dwight Diller of Pocahontas County, a noted old-time musician and chronicler, was with us as was one of the Ward sisters of Beverly. She and her sister owned the beautiful Victorian home on top of the hill in Beverly, which is surrounded by Civil War trenches still visible today. We had a whole bus full of good folks from here," Mike added.

# Fielden "Arthur" Childs
## The Village Blacksmith

**By Nancy S. Hoffman**

*Under a spreading chestnut tree*
*The village smithy stands;*
*The Smith, a mighty man is he,*
*With large and sinewy hands;*
*And the muscles of his brawny arms*
*Are as strong as iron bands....*
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The chestnut blight, caused by a fungus accidentally introduced from Asia, changed everything. By the 1940's the blight had killed an estimated four billion American Chestnut trees nationwide. Loss of the American Chestnut tree was hard felt in West Virginia, the only state completely within the tree's natural range. American Chestnut trees provided West Virginia with 118 million board feet of lumber in 1919, not counting the vast quantity of lumber cut for telephone poles, railroad cross ties, tan bark, wood pulp and fuel. The nuts were a valuable crop, providing feed for wildlife and domestic swine. They provided a tasty treat for humans, as well as an income and joy of "chestnutting" for many rural families. As many as 155,092 pounds of chestnuts were shipped from one railroad station in West Virginia in 1911. Today, there is hope for recovering at least part of our lost heritage as the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation distributes seedlings that have a potential for blight resistance.

Keeping in mind "The Village Blacksmith" recitation leading into this piece of work, an interview with a former School Teacher reveals today's plans of study for students do not require memorization. However, in comparison, my Mother who was born in 1912 quite often could be heard reciting "The Village Blacksmith" even to the fifth verse where Longfellow describes the "smithy going to church, and sits among his boys; He hears the parson pray and preach, He hears his daughter's voice, Singing in the choir, And it makes his heart rejoice…" Then going further with the interview, I noticed a "Chestnut" tree growing in her yard and upon inquiry the School Teacher told me the tree had been planted approximately twenty years ago having been a little shoot from a buried chestnut in her father's yard and she removed the little shoot to her yard here in Preston County. She went on to explain about her father planting chestnut trees approximately 60 years ago at her home in Marion County.

When you first picked up this article to read, you probably thought the writer would get right into language to describe a smithy. It is felt that we often look around and do not smell the roses because we want the answer now. When writing, or even talking on some subjects, it is good to know what else may be happening in the background. Well, it would seem to this writer that a Blacksmith was a most necessary laborer in the pioneering of a community. It has been said and written that, "A community may exist without a church, but a community could not exist without a Blacksmith." Blacksmithing is nearly as old as the hills that yielded the first handful of iron ore. The rural blacksmith working at his forge and anvil attracted the attention of both young and old—and that is how it was for Jim Carney right here in Terra Alta, West Virginia. Jim Carney lived on a farm at the end of Sanders Street near the edge of the Stockyard land. Each day on his walk to and from school he would stop by Arthur Child's Blacksmith shop.

*...And the children coming home from school*
*Look in the open door*
*They love to see the flaming forge,*
*And hear the bellows roar,*
*And catch the burning sparks that fly*
*Like chaff from a threshing floor.*
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Arthur Childs, one of eleven children, was born "Fielden Arthur Childs", August 23, 1872 in Preston County, West Virginia. His father, Esias, was 30 and his mother, Sarah, was 25. He married Sarah Belle Rhodes in 1896. They had two children during their marriage. He died in 1958 at the age of 86. Arthur loved his grandchildren as evidenced by a picture in which his large strong arms are encircling his grandson, Jimmy Childs. Arthur learned the Blacksmithing trade at an early age and as such he had an idea of how his "smithing" would work on repairing playground equipment. It was mentioned in the interview with James Carney that Arthur Childs made the basketball hoops for the basketball court in the Terra Alta Community Park. Also, Arthur used his skill in leveling the Merry Go Round there in the Park with chains he fashioned at his Blacksmith Shop in order to keep the seat from tipping. I can remember, as a child, going to the Park during the July 4th Celebrations and riding on the Merry Go Round. I can still hear those chains clanging and today I have realized it was a nice gesture on Arthur's part to make the ride safe.

Upon making a trip to the Park to see if the basketball hoops and chains were still on the Merry Go Round, I found there were four practically new basketball hoops on the court and the Merry Go Round was minus the chains. The sentiment was there. You may wonder how Arthur was able to fashion the needed parts for the playground equipment. The following information is being related to explain the laborious deeds of a Blacksmith.



Fielden "Arthur" Childs holding James "Jimmy" Childs (Grandson)

A smith is someone who works with metal and in rural America that metal was mainly iron. The main tools of the blacksmith were a forge, the bellows, a hammer (sledge) and an anvil. The blacksmith heated metal (iron) in a forge which contained coal. He pumped the bellows and forced air through the coals in the forge. The more he pumped the bellows, the hotter the fire became. Once the metal was red-hot, he would use tongs to hold the metal on his anvil. Then he would hammer the hot metal into different shapes with his sledge. The metal was then cooled in a tub of water. It would get very warm from the heat of the fire, so the blacksmith would open the large doors to let the heat escape. Other blacksmith tools included shears, files, metal saws, grinders, and metal bending



Fielden “Arthur” Child’s placing shoes on a horse while his son Arthur “Daily” Childs holds the reins.

equipment. Some of the items a blacksmith made were: plough shares, sickles, scythes, metal parts for wagons and carriages, wheel rims, tools, axe heads, hammers, shovels, hoes, pitchforks, nails, screws, bolts, hooks, knives, forks, spoons, pots and pans, fireplace tools, door hinges, chains, cowbells, and horseshoes.

Some farmers had their own blacksmith shops on their farms and performed the laborious tasks of a blacksmith, however there were other farmers who relied on the “village blacksmith” to repair broken plowshares and other farm implements including metal parts of carriages and wagons. The blacksmith also sharpened the

plowshare blades and other blades (axe, saw, sickle, scythe). It was very interesting to me to discover an amazing fact during this research. John Deere actually started out as a blacksmith and as such he developed the most famous plow, "Deere's Improved Clipper". With this plow, he launched a company bearing his name. This fact is mentioned as it was very common for the farmer to need a blacksmith to repair the moldboard or even make a clevis for a plow.

Arthur Childs performed a number of services vital to the Terra Alta Community, a primary one being to keep horses' hooves in good condition. Horses were essential for both work and transportation. They needed to be shod on a regular basis. A horse with sore feet could not work. Good horseshoes, when properly fitted, contributed to the working life of the horse. Arthur Childs would measure the horses' hooves, prepare the forge, and with the aid of the bellows, kept his fire hot. He also had an anvil, which was a solid iron bar on which he would hammer the horseshoes fresh from the fire. Once the shoe was the right shape for the horse's hoof, it was put in a bucket of cold water to temper the metal and cool it off. Next, Arthur would hold the shoe with tongs in one hand, step to the horse's side and slide his other hand over the horse's rump and down his hind leg. He did this to find out if the horse was a reasonable beast. If the horse was a reasonable beast, he would then catch hold of the long hair of the fetlock, the horse would raise his foot, the blacksmith would bend it up, cradling it between his knees on the leather apron. With sure accuracy he lays the hot iron on the hoof; instantly, a spiral of thick white smoke rolls up. A pungent smell rises—strong, yet delicious and exciting. With the bottom of the hoof burned to an exact fit with the surface of the shoe, the smith plunges the hot iron into the nearby water tub. Steam hisses from the angry, bubbling water, and the iron comes out gray and cold. The blacksmith drags his toolbox nearer with one foot; in it are his hoof-paring knife, nails and rasp.

Picking up the horse's foot again, he lays the shoe in place and sets the nails, twisting off the ends and clinching them tight. The smithy finishes off with a rounding stroke of the rasp, smoothing the hoof even with the iron shoe. Then he releases the horse's foot and stands up straight again. The horse tries out the feel of the new shoe, by picking it up and setting it down on the floor a few times. In some instances, it was necessary for the Blacksmith to first make sure the horse was at ease before the attempt was made to place the horseshoes. In order to assist in the peacefulness of the horse, the Blacksmith would try to make the owner of the horse pleased, make the horse pleased, and make himself pleased.

And so, dear reader, in closing it warms the heart to have reminisced over the importance of the Chestnut tree as it related in Longfellow's poem to the association of the Blacksmith. It also has left a soft spot in my memory of Arthur Child's shop as it corresponded to a "gathering place" for free time—time to exchange stories about the family, to catch up on what the neighbors were doing, and for young children to learn about the Blacksmith's trade.

Thus, Longfellow ends his poem:

*Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,*
*For the lesson thou has taught!*
*Thus at the flaming forge of life*
*Our fortunes must be wrought;*
*Thus on its sounding anvil shaped*
*Each burning deed and thought.*

NANCY S. HOFFMAN is a third generation pioneer and lifelong resident of Preston County, retired health information management administrator, and graduate of West Virginia University, with a bachelors in General Studies. This is her fifth contribution to GOLDENSEAL, see Spring 2022.




The storefront of Bowman's Country Store. John and Charlotte Bowman suspect the blue Suburban in the photo may have belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Hamburger who were regulars at the store. All Photos Courtesy of John and Charlotte Bowman.

# Barnes Bowman's Store

**By Ethel Hamburger**

Barnes Bowman's Store was an interesting place,
That was just the place to go
To get what you need, meet with your friends
And "chaw" with the folks you know.

The store had everything from soup to nuts,
Whatever you'd run out of or need,
Baking flour, eggs, cheese or milk
Rat powder, rope, nails or seed.

You'd get there by car, twas not very far,
Just down the road a bit,
Most folks just walked, they mingled and talked
After getting what they'd come to git.

Barnes and Louise were a happy couple
Always available at their popular place
Forever trying to please everyone
With a splendid smile on their face.

The men would talk about hunting,
Come check out a new rifle gun,
The women about canning their pickles,
Dozens of glass jars and then some.



Barnes and Louise pictured near the checkout counter of Bowman's Country Store.

S. Barnes Bowman and his wife Louise opened the store on March 1, 1950. For 37 years they worked at the store while raising a family in the four-bedroom house above the store and farming. You could find most anything you needed including dry goods, meats, guns, ammo, hardware, clothing, work boots, and gas. Barnes and Louise were good neighbors who delivered groceries to folks that didn't have a vehicle and opened the doors after hours to someone needing gas, food or supplies. Barnes made sure there were plenty of benches for everyone to gather to visit, tell hunting stories and fish tales, and catch up with their neighbors. During hunting season, hunters came in to check their game, restock their supplies, and enjoy the friendly atmosphere.




The grocery and dry goods section, looking the length of the store.

There was plenty of candy for children
Some took suckers or caramels by twos
Big jars from which they made a selection
It was tough to pick from and choose.

The store was smack on the highway,
Right on Route 55,
A painted white wood building
Welcoming folks from far and wide.

ETHEL JACOBSON HAMBURGER, a lifelong teacher, died on April 23, 2020. She was a devoted wife, sibling, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She and her husband of 60 years, Irvin Hamburger, were the former owners of Locust Lane Farm in Needmore (Hardy County). Ethel loved writing and reading, and her poetry was compiled in the book *"Essentially Etty: A Treasury of Poetry and Prose."* Ethel had fond memories of Bowman's Country Store, which opened in 1951(Mr. Bowman passed away January 21, 2021 and is fondly remembered by his friends, family, and community). This was Ethel's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

# Jim Comstock, the Quintessential West Virginia Hillbilly

**By Peter M. Wallace**

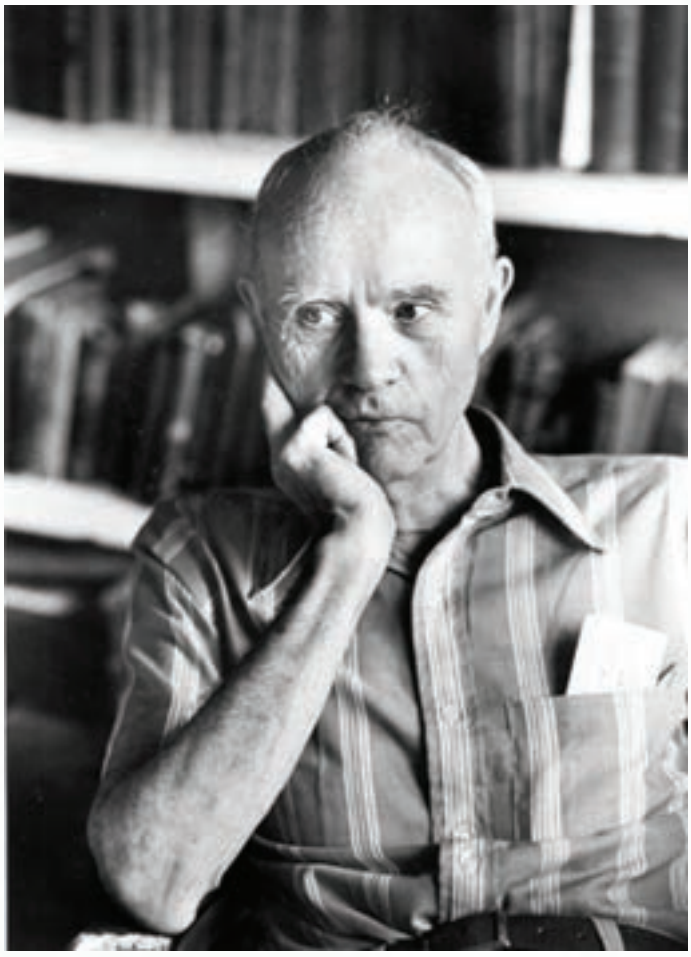
*What is the definition of a newspaper?*
*"Well, you take so many sheets of nice white paper and you mutilate them with printer's ink so the paper is really of no particular good anymore, and you have ruined that paper. But can you do one little thing with that paper which is good? That is what I try to do—to make this state better, to make people more cognizant of their heritage and so forth. And I've had results, but I've lost more than I've won. But that's the name of the game."*

– Jim Comstock, in an interview with the author for
The Parthenon, Marshall University's student newspaper.

He was a Republican in a state full of Democrats (well ahead of his time). He was a Baptist who abandoned the faith of his childhood, but appreciated and honored faith in others. He was brilliant, belying the condescending moniker of the newspaper he created. He truly loved his state and its history and culture, and sought to celebrate it and keep it alive, yet he nevertheless found it necessary to raise funds for his various projects through some innocent yet potentially (according to the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Internal Revenue Service) troubling. He had a wicked sense of humor, and yet was one of the warmest human beings I've ever known.

He was Jim Comstock, the legendary editor of the weekly *West Virginia Hillbilly* newspaper, the *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, and so much more—and he was my boss for three glorious years in the late 1970s.

I started working for Jim Comstock in May 1976 fresh out of Marshall University. I was one of a long line of assistants that included such luminaries as the immortal Melvin Miller, Peter Burmeister, Shelby



Jim Comstock, seated at his desk. Photo taken by Doug Chadwick, courtesy of Goldenseal Archives.




Front page of The West Virginia Hillbilly, September 3, 1977. Photo courtesy of the author.

Young, David Nershi, Andy Prutsock, and many others before and after me. I worked for Jim for three years and two months before leaving with loads of wonderful memories to attend seminary. (By the way, a writer and photographer [former editor Ken Sullivan, and photographer Doug Chadwick] from GOLDENSEAL came to Richwood to interview Jim on what happened to be my last day, and attended my going away party; their interview with him was published in the Spring issue of 1980.)

Some forty-five years later it is apparent that much has changed in my life. But I still fondly recall the years I worked with "Mr. Comstock," as I always called him. He was, after all, several decades older than I was. He seemed ancient, his balding pate grasping on to wisps of white hair. And yet when I met him, he was three years younger than I am now.

Working with Jim Comstock was an awesome experience, especially if one enjoyed living on the edge. When I woke up every morning in my bedroom (a back room of the building that housed the newspaper offices and bookstore), I would have no idea where I might end up that night. That's fun. But it can also drive one crazy, which may explain a good deal about me now.

**James Franklin "Jim" Comstock** (February 25, 1911 – May 22, 1996) founded the weekly *West Virginia Hillbilly* newspaper (1957-1980) and compiled a 51-volume encyclopedia of West Virginia history and culture. He graduated from Marshall College (now University) (B.A., English) in 1934 and taught high school English. With the outbreak of war, he joined the U.S. Navy as a lieutenant and was assigned to Guam (1944-1946). Afterwards he was a correspondent for the Clarksburg *Exponent Telegram*. In 1946 he co-founded the Nicholas County *News Leader* weekly newspaper with Bronson McClung, a former pupil turned businessman.

In 1957 Comstock and McClung launched a new "weakly newspaper," *The West Virginia Hillbilly*, offering folklore, history, culture, and humor. Comstock called it "a newspaper for people who can't read, edited by an editor who can't write." His "Comstock Load" column filled the back page and was a must read on current events each week, full of wit and satire. Circulation peaked at 30,000 in the 1960s and '70s. His West Virginia Heritage Foundation published seven volumes of *West Virginia Heritage* with reprinted and original material.

Comstock devoted twenty years to compiling the *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*. He campaigned to preserve the birthplace home of Pearl S. Buck, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist. He worked to rescue the historic Cass Scenic Railroad. He also started the Mountain State Press to publish books of West Virginia interest, responsibility for which eventually was given to the University of Charleston; it's now an independent enterprise.

Comstock died at St. Mary's Hospital in Huntington, W.Va. at age 85.



Comstock checking an issue of the Nicholas County News Leader. Photo courtesy of the Charleston Daily Mail.

Each morning I'd enter Comstock's front office—a room filled with intriguing piles of ancient books, months of opened and unopened mail, and piles of *Hillbilly* back issues, its walls covered by immense blow-ups of Thomas Fowler's gorgeous historical prints of West Virginia towns—and I'd report for duty.

"Pete!" he'd bark in that energetic, husky, high-pitched voice of his, "Here's what I want you to do today." And I'd be off on another adventure.

Perhaps it was to cover the coal miners' march in Washington, D.C.—or get his 200-page Bicentennial edition of the *Hillbilly* printed at the Charleston Newspapers printing facility—or attempt, usually futilely, to sell ad space to some dubious business owners—or fill in for him as grand marshal in a parade in Shinnston, certainly leaving parade-goers stymied—or give a living history speech at a Pearl Buck Birthplace Chautauqua—or be interviewed by "D.J." Schroeder on her morning TV show in my hometown, Huntington—or typeset headlines and lay some newspaper pages out—or investigate the old, overgrown railroad ghost towns near Beckley—or chauffeur him to a speaking engagement while he sat in the passenger seat with a yellow legal pad on his knees scribbling the latest "Comstock Load" piece—or check out the latest exhibit at the state's newly built Cultural Center—or spend a weekend hobnob-




For more about Jim Comstock, read Peter M. Wallace's new memoir, *Comstock & Me: My Brief but Unforgettable Career with The West Virginia Hillbilly*. Available in print or Kindle book on Amazon at *https://www.amazon.com/Comstock-Me-Unforgettable-Virginia-Hillbilly/dp/B087L31FQB/*

bing with a "chickened-out West Virginian" as Jim put it, a man who made it big as a manufacturer in central Florida—or cover Phil Donahue's local television show taping at the University of Charleston campus, and get thrown out of his dressing room (along with the other press; Phil was still in his boxers)—or preside at a board meeting of the Mountain State Press, which Jim founded and then donated to the University of Charleston—or autograph copies of *The West Virginia Picture Book*, the coffee-table-sized coffee-table book for which he graciously gave me coauthor credit.

My mind overflows with memories. Jim was a genius. A bundle of energy. A combustible cauldron of creativity. A renaissance man who had come down from Hinkle Mountain to get that possession most rare in his family: a college degree. He was kind one moment, cantankerous the next. Generous to a fault one day and incredibly penurious the next. In other words, he was human. And yet, he was so much more.

When I started working for him, he was sixty-five and dreaming of retirement. He kept coming up with one wild-haired scheme after another to enable me to buy the paper from him. I think he sold the paper three times after I left—one new owner turning the *Hillbilly* into a quickly failing magazine—only to get it back one way or another. Sandy McCauley finally bought it. And kept it. At Sandy's invitation, I wrote a weekly column about my memories of working for Comstock for his version of *The West Virginia Hillbilly*, and I was thankful for the opportunity—before the paper was finally put out of its misery for good.

Jim Comstock was a one-of-a-kind phenomenon. I know of no other state with a comparable personality who worked so tirelessly to shepherd the state's heritage and history. Jim was one of God's greatest gifts to the state of West Virginia and, yes, to America. And yet he never fully received the honor and respect he deserved, a loss that seemed to haunt him. I suppose his own cussedness was to blame—he had angered one too many higher ups. Books could be written about Comstock, and should be. I put together my own memoir of my years, but that captured only a mere snapshot in the full-length motion picture of his life and career.

Many years ago, Jim wrote his own "autobiography of a kind" entitled *7 Decades*, but even that only gave mere glimpses of his jam-packed, highly productive, epic life. You could read that book, the scores of other books he published, the fifty-one-volume encyclopedia he produced, and the thirty-odd years of *West Virginia Hillbilly* weekly issues, and still never fully grasp who this man really was—but it would be worth the effort.

PETER M. WALLACE is the executive producer and host of the national "Day1" radio program (Day1.org), an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Atlanta, and the author or editor of 15 books (including "*Comstock and Me: My Unforgettable Career with The West Virginia Hillbilly*," available on Amazon.com). Visit his website at PeterMWallace.com.




Star Bus Company Buses c. 1920-1930. Photo Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

# Star City

**By Norman Julian**

"Star City is a small town with large pride," said former mayor and councilman for 29 years, Merwin Davis, when he visited my home not long after I moved to his town in 2005. "People who live here love it here. It's a great place to raise kids," said Merwin. Known as 'Merve' to the locals, he is also known as 'Mr. Star City,' a title given to him by a city councilperson. Merwin died at age 85 in 2008. He was an out-and-about public official. You'd see him at the Municipal Building—housed in the former Star City Grade school. Council meetings take place there in a chamber named for him. You'd see him at the modernly-equipped Star City Volunteer Fire Department, which he helped pioneer when it was in an earlier building.

In 1945 Merwin's dad, with friend late Emmett Lynch, started the Davis-Lynch Glass Factory, the only one of thirteen glass factories that once operated here still in business. Star City is one of 37 towns in West Virginia that had glass factories. If anything characterized this town of currently 1,779 souls—it would be the glass industry. Everything needed was here or nearby: gas, silica sand, lime soda ash, river and rail transportation, inexpensive available land, and a multi-faceted skilled labor pool.

Typical was the late Tony Cheslock, originally from Krakow, Poland. He came to Star City in 1922 to work at Scotts Run and mined coal for five dollars for an eight-hour day—or 57 cents a ton for hand-loaded coal. New arrivals were regarded with suspicion and were referred to by disparaging nicknames such as Dagos, Hunkies, and Polacks. Only a minority of the mostly Anglo-Saxon "old timers" welcomed the newcomers as adding richness, variety and utility. Typical of the workers would be



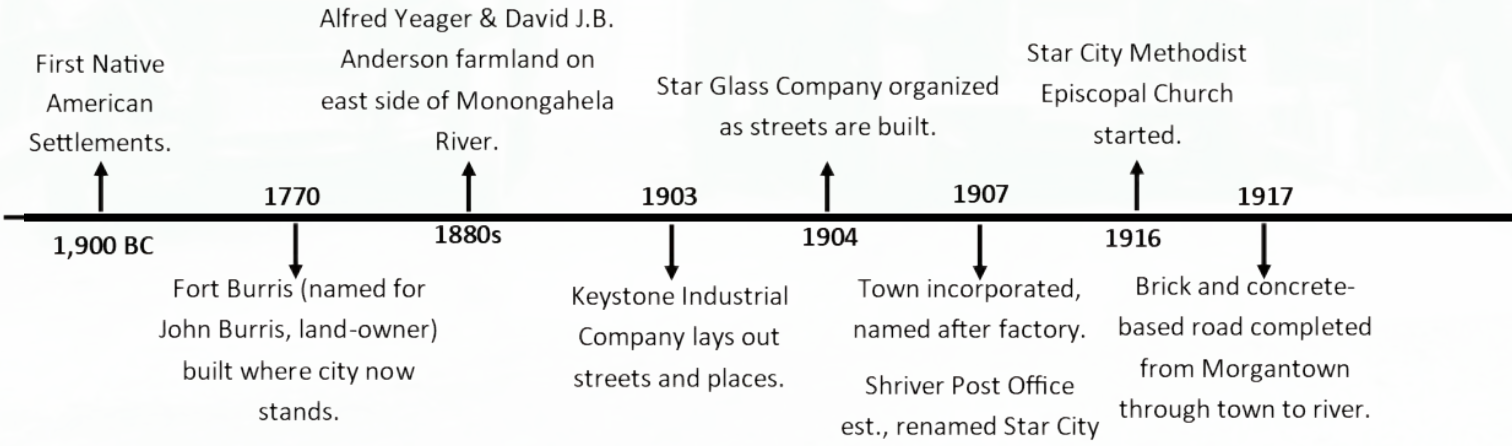
Star City Glass Factory, date unknown. Photo Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

those in the family of Dominick Claudio, a business owner and a nine-year former member of council. His relatives have called Star City home for four generations. "Star City was the first stop out of the Pursglove Mine Camp after their journey from Italy to the U.S.," Dominick said. "They came to work in the glass factories, and the mines, and to set up businesses." Most worked in mines at Scotts Run, reachable then by a ferry across

the Monongahela River. "I have heard about the rich history my entire life," Dominick continued. Like most small towns in West Virginia, it has lost a lot of the multicultural influence from the immigrant culture of the industrial revolution. "It is a great place to live, next door to Morgantown. Continued commercial growth will give the town a new character. Long-term residents need to share with the new generations the things that make Star City a special place to live and grow up in."

The latest example of that growth is the substantial multi-use building on University Avenue called the Glass Factory. Its architecture reflects the heritage. I was working for *The Dominion-Post* in adjacent Morgantown when I profiled Merwin, who said, "Most factories were locally owned. Owners who lived near were more likely to return profits to benefit residents than operators from big national conglomerates."

Davis-Lynch Glass still produces some of



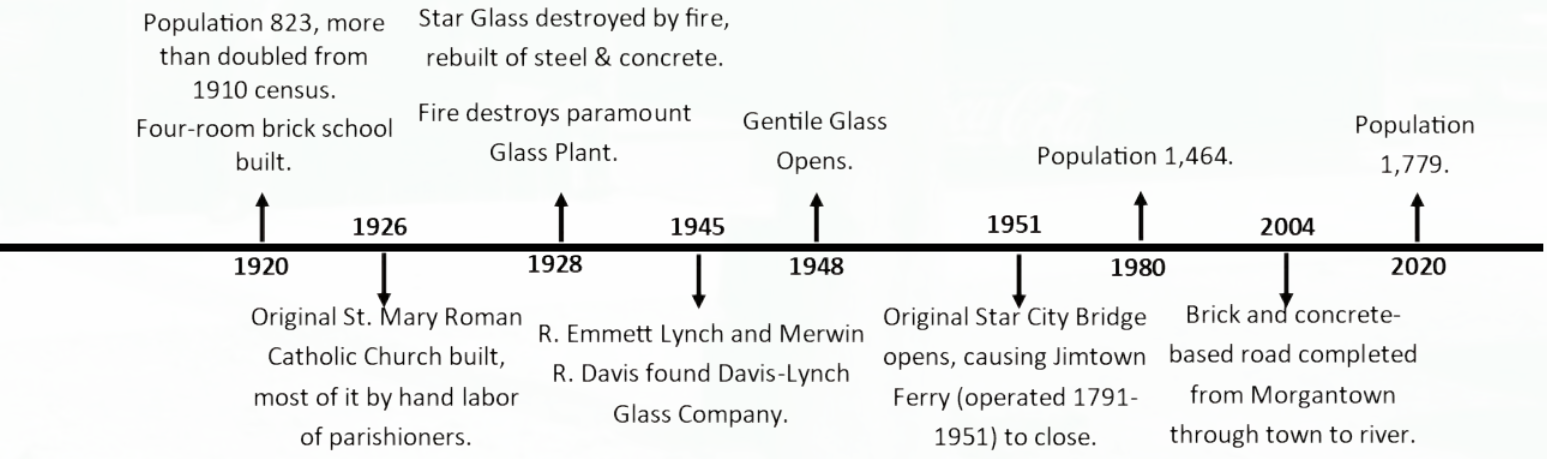
the best lamp shades in the country and the world, but Bob Lynch, the son of Emmett, notes that not as many competitors still exist. Nationally, glass is in decline, too. "Back in the 1960s, we had 15 blow shops operating, but now we have only two," he said. "We hope to add another, but are having difficulty finding the right workers." I visited Bob and his brother John at their factory. The brothers keep their business vital against the odds. Both live within a mile of the factory and grew up with some of their workers. "I used to play basketball with Dick Gregg, one of our fine foreman." The late Dick Gregg was an all-state athlete and Hall of Fame member at Morgantown High and served on Star City Council, as does his son Todd today.

Historically, the work force included many European immigrants. Southern Europeans in particular often entered the industry with the hardest and least-paying menial jobs but many, like Pete and John Gentile, worked themselves into leadership positions. Pete started Gentile Glass and son John further developed it. It had a national reputation of excellence for hand-blown paperweights and other curiosities.

One of the glass blowers there, the late Steve Britvec, told me that Pete started working in a glass factory at age five, as did my own glass-blowing grandfather, the late Frank Dillinger. Like the Gentiles, Britvec became an excellent glassblower at several stops. He was in the factory in 1941 at age fifteen. After service as a Marine in World War II, Britvec learned the artistic glass blowing skill and his home was filled with one of a kind gems made of glass. Even this municipality's name emanates from the Star Glass Company that began operations in 1906. In 1920 Star City's contributions helped make West Virginia the second highest glass-producing state behind Pennsylvania. That leadership was maintained for decades. John Gentile said. "West Virginia in general, and Star City in particular, used to produce the highest quality artistic glass in the country."

For some years, a glass festival attracted visitors. It became so big that in the 1960s it moved from Peace Hall, in the St. Mary Church complex—the largest of the town's churches, to the West Virginia University Coliseum, which better accommodated the wares and skills on display. *The Dominion Post* provided a magazine-style supplement in conjunction with the festival. But the festival now, like most of the exquisite skills of master glass workers, is a matter of record.

John Gentile, echoing what was said by Mervin Davis, asserted that owners who lived in Star City took special pride in their products while "absentee owners tend to take their profits and use them elsewhere."





Star City Glassworkers. Back row: Rom Rigby; Wm. Hoenstem; Moocher; Calvin Martin; Joe Burkhart; John Werline; Unknown; John Bezner; Burns and Ed Shay. Front Row: Warner Martin; Zearley Wallot and Pat McDonald. Photo Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

He lamented the decline of the glass industry here and throughout West Virginia. "Now the competition comes from big conglomerates," John said. He named China as one competitor. Brivtec, too, noted that glass, along with other natural resource extraction like coal and gas, reigned supreme. He said other countries subsidized the glass industry and that helped pull business away from the U.S., which didn't.

Current mayor Herman Reid grew up here, and when just out of high school in 1971, worked for Davis-Lynch before joining the Air Force during the Vietnam War. "Just about everyone in town worked for Davis-Lynch at one time or another back then," he said. Later he worked in law enforcement for several municipal and state agencies.

When I began to learn about Star City in the 1960s, I sensed the layers of culture and ethnic history. I got to know deceased mayors Joe Straface, who was Reid's uncle; Edith Barill, for whom the bridge over the Monongahela and a Waterfront park and trail are named, and Allen Sharpe, my next door neighbor for fourteen years. Though Star City had a Socialist past, today free enterprise reigns with new and old businesses. Reid, whose Italian ancestors were among the early residents, said "My grandparents and uncles and aunts, mostly from Italy, made for many fond memories. Most of the old Star City is gone. My parents Herman Bailey Reid and Rose Ann Barile are gone as are members of their near neighbors the Cook family, the Mollohans, the Marras, Mrs. Edmond, Kenny and Betty Fox, the Haddoxs, the Stabenes, the Perry families. These were my neighbors and this is only one block. Though the town has changed, the descendents of those past citizens have pride and keep it nice."

In a 1941 election, various smaller communities in Monongalia County voted on whether to join much larger city of Morgantown, and some did. Star City voters chose not to, as a result, Star City remains a distinctive town even as it provides a welcoming gateway to adjoining Morgantown.

NORMAN JULIAN is a graduate of the WVU School of Journalism whose career on five newspapers spanned more than a half century. In 1999 he was named a History Hero by the State of West Virginia for his contributions to its culture and past [see Winter of 2013 for more about Norm]. Norman has contributed frequently to GOLDENSEAL, most recently in Winter of 2020.

# Social Star City

**By Norman Julian**

Star City with its rich amalgam of people and culture is unique today but more than a century ago it might have been moreso. It was ripe for a government sympathetic to labor.

On June 17, 1918, Mary Harris Jones, affectionately known as Mother Jones, rallied miners in town to support a union. *The Morgantown Post* reported about six hundred attended and two-thirds wanted to join. It called her speech "profanely eloquent."

She had the citizens' ear and many in the crowd were socialists. Star City was incorporated in 1907. A few years later, citizens chose to follow a way of government not much used in America. Socialists predominated for nearly a dozen years starting in 1911 when the town elected a mayor, recorder, and four of five councilmen who were Socialists.

To do so was rare in West Virginia. Adamston, now a part of Clarksburg, went Socialist in 1912 and in that era Hendricks (Tucker County) and Cameron (Marshall County) did the same briefly.

A new town, Star City, had no prevailing political power and the Socialists and Citizen Parties—not Democrats and Republicans—vied for control.

Many felt that Socialists better represented the large number of blue collar workers. The party was mostly in control until 1917 when national sentiment was split about entering World War I and socialism took a hit.

According to Dr. Ron Lewis, a past chair of the West Virginia University history department, "The Socialist trend reflected the strong industrial worker constituency.

"Socialism sometimes put down roots in America where the residents came from countries in Europe that were primarily Democratic Socialists." That would describe early Star Citizens, whose original families came here with a background in the glass industry in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, and Slovenia.

That way of governing took root in glass towns in America. Several towns in West Virginia got ample votes for Socialists and their platforms but Star City, Adamston, and Cameron for a time were run by them.

The appeal of a labor-favorable Socialist Party led to the establishment of the Young People's Socialist League and the American Flint Glass Workers Union Local 26.

The Star City Socialist Hall hosted square dances and Christmas parties. The skilled glass workers felt the Socialists labor more voice in industry.

Among the Socialist' achievements was to establish a co-operative store, owned by the citizens, to reduce costs on foods and commodities that were more expensive generally at privately owned businesses.

In 1914, roads and sewers needed work and Socialists tried to sell bonds to pay for them. They could not sell them, maybe because Capitalists were reluctant to back Socialists. World War I was underway and with it came political tensions. Socialists opposed America entering the war and paid a price for that at the ballot box. With the bond failed, the Star City Socialists took out a bank loan and repaired the infrastructure.

To defray the Socialist stigma, they renamed their party the Independent Citizens Party. They were out of office in 1917-18 but regained superiority the next year and control lasted into 1923. In 1924 The People's Party took over and the Socialists never again led the government.

Morgantown, with its own large glass industries, contained Socialists too, but its government was never in control.

# President John F. Kennedy and Star City Share a Special Relationship

**By Norman Julian**

A handsome memorial plaza to President John F. Kennedy at the Edith B. Barill Waterfront Park and Trail is the physical reminder of that relationship. To build it was the idea and effort of former Monongalia County clerk, the late Mike Oliverio. Sr.

For 20 years, Oliverio enlisted and solicited among his friends with Star City ties to get the funds to build. The 27-foot-wide, $80,000 memorial was dedicated to fatherhood on Father's Day in 2007 and features life-sized bronze likenesses of JFK and his son John.




JFK memorial, located in Star City, Monongalia County. Photo by John H. Hardy II.

Star City mayor Allen Sharp and WVU official Billy Coffindafer helped direct the project. It is one of the focal points of the park named for Barill, the mayor from 1990 until her death in 2001. The $20 million five-lane bridge over the Monongaheal River in Star City is named after her, too. It opened in 2004 and replaced a two-lane bridge built in 1951. The wider bridge speeds up traffic between I-79 and the Star City/Morgantown growth areas. Barill pioneered the development of that recreational area along the Monongahela River.

Kennedy made many friends and acquired their votes and backing when he visited during the 1960 presidential campaign. The Mountain State was key to his ambitions to defeat Hubert Humprey in the primary and show that a Catholic could win in a predominantly protestant state. Walter "Bill" Hart, then editor of *The Dominion News,* advised Kennedy by telephone— "If you want to be elected president, you better not neglect the little people. You better hire a special plane and come down here to West Virginia tonight and speak." And JFK did, at the Star City Volunteer Fire Department. The rest is history.

After he took office in 1961, he wrote a letter to the late S. J. (Sam) Angotti, head of the Monongalia County Democratic Party, saying his win in West Virginia was key to his victory, and the visit Hart called for "the crucial weeks of the West Virginia campaign." The letter is exhibited in the office of Sam's son, an attorney with the firm of Angotti and Straface.

"JFK got off to a great start in Star City," said the late Nick Oliver, a former Marine who attended the dinner where JFK spoke and was part of the honor guard at the memorial's dedication.

Senator Joe Manchin recalls that during 1960 "all the Kennedys" enjoyed a spaghetti dinner at "the little table at my mom's house."

Attached to the memorial are the names of citizens who contributed to the memorial, and nearby is another memorial plaque engraved with the names of military veterans from Star City.

# Greenbrier River
## What It Survived and How It Thrived

**By Chris Chanlett**

The Greenbrier River possesses a rich and colorful history. Nowadays, thousands of people a day float its gentle rapids with and without fishing poles. For decades its shoreline has attracted camps, second homes that often became retirement refuges. The 78 mile repurposed rail bed known as the Greenbrier River Trail sports walkers, bikers, and horseback riders year round.

The headwaters arise high in the Monongahela National Forest. The East and West Forks converge at Durbin and flow freely across Pocahontas, Greenbrier, and Summers counties southwestward to the northbound New River at Hinton. The Greenbrier's watershed of 1,630 square miles constitutes almost a quarter of the New's 6,981 square mile basin.

Back in the era of White settlement and development this river was the highway for all the farms, mills, tanneries and cottage industries in the region. It provided water and power to businesses and communities. To dispose of byproducts, people flushed anything and everything downstream. Then let gravity do the work.

Although it trenches an ancient well-worn channel, the river handled the burdens remarkably well. Plate tectonics continue to thrust upwards the Appalachians, rejuvenating the river's rocky impetuous character. During the period of deforestation, (1880-1920) it funneled tremendous amounts of debris down to the Mississippi. In the last hundred years sewage has become the major problem as more people populated the watershed.

Early on in the country's history, George Washington and others in the Virginia Tidewater eyed the Greenbrier as a part of a water route to reach beyond the mountains to the Ohio River. The state commissioned the sitting Chief Justice John Marshall (at 57) to lead a survey to pole a batteau up the James and Jackson rivers, portage with oxen over the continental divide, and make it down the Greenbrier and New to the completely navigable Kanawha River. Launching their batteau in the low water September 1, 1812, they could identify the cataracts they intended to blast open. They put into the Greenbrier at the mouth of Howards Creek (Caldwell) 18 days later. They reached the confluence with the New (now Hinton) on September 28. They negotiated the white waters of the New River Gorge in eleven days to reach the Kanawha. No matter how daunting and costly, Virginians believed this passage could be created with canals, dams, and locks. If not for the development of rails, it probably would have. And that corridor would have permanently redefined the Greenbrier and New. (The Chief Justice survived the journey.)

The White settlers to the region regarded the virgin forest as much an obstacle as a resource. An early appraisal declared the trees too big to clear in order to grow crops. Native Americans had already opened up some areas with fire. Mountaineers hacked and sawed enough trees for their farmsteads and local needs. Grist, saw, and woolen mills abounded. Steam powered mills appeared in the 1830s. In the 1850s, Ronceverte became the site of the first technological leap with a steam powered circular saw followed later by the band saw.

This facilitated the harvest of the white pine climax woods of the eastern Greenbrier Valley. Pine logs were skidded off the hillsides and corralled along wa-




Log drive of 13,000 ft. Marlington, Pocahontas County. Photo courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

terways to be herded downstream with Spring high water. "River hogs" coaxed and prodded the branded and chained inventory with acrobatic finesse and daredevil athleticism. Large crews rode "arks" with bunkhouses and a cook shack sleeping, eating, and doing their business on board. It took twelve days to cover 55 miles from Watoga to Ronceverte where a log-lined "boom" pond stockpiled the timbers.

The last of these legendary drives occurred around 1909. By then the railroads had penetrated the backcountry. The final assault of the upland forest of hardwoods and evergreens was already full steam ahead. The hemlock was prized for its bark to make tannin. The spruce forest that dominated over 2,500 feet was coveted both for its enormous trunks for boards and even more for its pulp used in papermaking. The booming newspaper industry demanded a lot of fiber. Pulp was the fate of the forest.

In 1872, the C & O crossed the continental divide and plunged through the Big Bend Tunnel in Talcott. John Henry took one last stand against the steam engine. The railroad reached the mouth of the river and the newly created town of Hinton. The Greenbrier Division upriver from Ronceverte was anticipated for decades. The Panic of 1893 postponed it. The accumulated demand exploded in 1899 with 1,500 men, many Italian, grading and laying track. The first train was celebrated in newly created Marlinton October of 1900. Two months later it chugged into Cass where the WV



Greenbrier River near Alderson, Greenbrier County. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives

Pulp and Paper Company (WVPPC) had already prepared the mill.

Reluctant Mountaineers were recruited off their farms and into the mills. Self sufficient homesteaders became wage earners. Women and children worked in the less hazardous roles. The timber and rail industries required more manpower than Mountaineers could provide, especially because many people still wanted to work their land in the growing season. So other ethnic groups migrated into the region to supplement local labor. The WVPPC craved the spruce fiber. Initially it wanted the paper mill to be in Caldwell, closer to the supply. The bustling rail center of Hinton knew its water was already fouled by sawmill and tannery waste upstream and that the WVPPC paper plant in Cumberland, Maryland had polluted the Potomac to the point of a major court battle. When Hinton threatened to sue, the company relocated the operation to Covington, Virginia.

Paper production put thousands of people to work but at a high environmental cost. Covington's curse was the Greenbrier's salvation. If the mill happened at Caldwell, the retreat and recreational future of the river would have been preempted. The whitewater industry and New River Gorge Park and Preserve could have never unfolded. The regional timber industry at the turn of the century proceeded in a hellbent frenzy. In 1906 the company cre-



Arks Tied on Greenbrier River Near Cass, W. Va. 1898. Men generally did not live in towns when they worked timber. Instead, they came in from outlying areas, lived in groups in barracks, and went home over the weekends. Here they lived in arks on the river. Photo Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

ated the town of Spruce atop Cheat Mountain at 3,853 feet, the highest village in the eastern US. Hundreds of workers peeled spruce bark to relieve the fly ash raining in Covington and ruining the paper. At its peak 480 men worked there. As soon as its namesake was clearcut, Spruce was abandoned in 1925.

They cut the biggest and best first, damaging smaller trees suitable for pulp, never leaving trees to regenerate the forest. They left a widespread tinderbox of the slash. When a particularly dry year happened in 1908, one-tenth of the entire state caught on fire.

The sawdust and tanneries had already decimated the fish. The fires finished off the wildlife. The most catastrophic effect of the fires was the incineration of the forest floor that had built itself over thousands of years. The scorching earth consumed the topsoil and erected huge stumps with their flaring root systems exposed. Just the siltation from the hilltops clogged waterways to the final mouth of the Mississippi. Without the earthen floor the forest could not stand back up. Over a hundred years later the effects remain.

However, it did produce a reaction. President Theodore Roosevelt convened the Conference of Governors on Conservation in 1908. His successor President Howard Taft signed the Weeks Act in 1911. This led to a federal focus on protecting headwaters.

The National Forest Service established the Monongahela National Forest (the "Mon") in 1920. New Deal public works performed a lot of environmental repair.

The Greenbrier gradually cleaned itself up, even as thousands of residences and second homes fastened onto its river banks. In the 1930s Lewisburg proudly advertised itself as featuring "nature's own sewage system." This involved flushing into the karst cave system with outflow at Davis Spring next to the river. Naturally downstream communities like Alderson and Hinton felt rather differently about the solution. While the grossest aspects of waste disposal have abated, according to Stephen Trail, Summers County sanitarian for 31 years, the sewage problems persist and evolve on the Greenbrier. "Some residences still straight pipe into the river. Municipal treatment plants require constant upgrading. The phosphorus from human waste is hard to capture. It and agricultural runoff set off algae blooms that clog the water, dissolve the oxygen, discourage fishing and swimming, and can foul intake pipes." Hydrocarbons from vehicles, plastic microfibers from washing clothes, and drugs passing through our bodies are among the invisible insidious consequences of modern life that end up in waterways and in what comes out the tap downstream.

"While the Greenbrier has a history of negligence, today it has mostly recovered. It is still impaired with bacteria, but restoration efforts and the protection of its headwaters have gone a long way to returning it to its former glory," says Autumn Crowe, Program Director for WV Rivers Coalition and treasurer for the Greenbrier River Watershed Association (GRWA). "It's important for residents and visitors to protect this precious waterway to enjoy it and because it supplies drinking water to communities downstream. Groups such GRWA, WV Rivers, Friends of the Lower Greenbrier River, and Friends of THE Second Creek have hauled many tons of trash out to preserve it for future generations."

Proctor "Jerry" Kirk of Hinton grew up playing and fishing in the river in the 1950s. Before he was a teen, he was riding his bike to clean his parents' Dairy Queen overlooking the New. In the seventies they built their own restaurant, Kirks, which Proctor took over. He recalls the river teeming with life. "We gathered hellgrammites, fished, and we went bullfrogging. At night we followed their croaks and grabbed ones big enough to dine on their back legs. I knew a family up near the tannery at Durbin that made a living harvesting the crawdads and selling them for fish bait. Those crawdads loved the flesh and hair that the tannery dumped in the river and it fed the fish on down. I really believe the cleaner river has less species in it." That is a surprising irony.

In the 1970s an explosion of black fly drove people off the water and onto the screened porch if you had one. After a lot of study and controversy the state began spraying Bti (Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis), a bacterium that kills the bug in the rapids where they propagate. Although it is expensive, the program is popular with the public. Kirk, an avid fisherman, says, "Spraying the black fly has not diminished the fish because it is targeted at the pupa stage of the bugs."

Gigantic floods in 1985, 1996 and 2016 taught people to move back and raise up buildings. The massive '85 flood killed dozens of people, launched houses down river, and took out a bridge at Pence Springs. Learning from these situations, homeowners and towns have slowly decided to secure their buildings and confine and treat their waste before it pollutes the next town. It is expensive and ongoing work.

For the better part of a century, the free flowing nature of the Greenbrier has cleansed its own corridor. The rail line up the river from Caldwell to Cass was decom-




Sixteen people with the Greenbrier River Watershed Association picked a load of litter off the river during annual spring cleaning, April 2023. Photo by Louanne McConnell Fatora.

missioned in 1978. Its rebirth as the Greenbrier River Trail embodies the transformation of values from its purpose in 1899 to extract the timber at breakneck speed. Now the gentle grade that was so furiously cut allows leisurely exercise along a clean lively waterway where people fish and float. One of the healthiest forms of exercise is participating in trail maintenance.

"Being able to volunteer on the Greenbrier River Trail is an honor and a privilege," declares Nancy Harris who coordinates these efforts. "It allows us to be where we love to be, with a productive purpose. It provides us with a way to give back. And volunteering is contagious. When people see us doing simple maintenance tasks, they join us, and then do it on their own. We all have something to offer, whether we are tossing rock or tree debris off the trail, pulling old tires out, building a new shelter or a bathroom, repainting a mile marker, or taxing our brains out for a new grant…When we have group projects, we're all impressed and inspired by the fact that we come from differing backgrounds and political persuasions and yet have a common goal and feel a closeness, belonging and commitment that goes beyond our differences. When we volunteer, we share a dedication to make our little corner of the earth a better place and in the end that makes all the difference," Harris concludes.

People should know that, once, a quilt of forest cloaked the region. It was an irreplaceable web of life forms. The woodland now has many fewer species. The clearcutting destroyed a system of carbon sequestration that we are only now beginning to appreciate. Deforestation exploded a carbon bomb that is still radiating. The massive release of carbon during that extraction rush continues to blanket the planet and imperil the renewal of the region's ecological richness. Patiently, tirelessly the river flows on, and so does the commitment of its many lovers.

CHRIS CHANLETT lives on the same farm in Summers County, a mile from the river, that he moved to in 1975. With his wife Torula he ran Groundworks Nursery for 30 years with a garden center on the floodplain of the Greenbrier just above Hinton. He has served for many years on the boards of the Greenbrier River Watershed Association and the Friends of the Lower Greenbrier River. This is his first publication for GOLDENSEAL.

# The DuBois on Main

**By Lisa Shrewsberry**

*"And herein lies the tragedy of the age: not that men are poor—all men know something of poverty; not that men are wicked—who is good? Not that men are ignorant—what is Truth? Nay, but that men know so little of men."*

— W.E.B. DuBois (1868 – 1963)

W.E.B. DuBois, a Harvard-educated African American scholar, writer, activist and one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), believed the pathway to equality was education. A museum organized to honor memories from the All-Black School bearing his name in Mount Hope (Fayette County) was opened in 2012 by graduate Jean Evansmore. Mostly, she wanted to connect those descendants within the town, owning the family features and names she recognized, with the stories of those who went before. A donor wall just inside the entrance boasts a mural of painted-on bricks acknowledging original benefactors. Lately, Jean's "baby" is open by appointment only. COVID-19 could be blamed if attendance were regular before social distancing, but a fragmentation of place, and, among the stories of that place, existed long before. Still, she accepts responsibility, citing her shifting interests from municipal to national matters as a leader of the WV Poor People's Campaign.

"The marker for DuBois High School is the first marker of a historical space in Mount Hope," Jean points out, emphasizing the significance of the school's history to her town. The first organized DuBois High School opened in 1906 in the old MacDonald First Baptist Church. The eight-room brick building, erected in 1917 on Colorado Street, burned to the ground after a mysterious explosion in 1950. "People all the way from Beckley could see it," Jean said.

The new DuBois school was rebuilt during a tumultuous time in America, 1954, the same year the U.S. Supreme Court decided "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional and that both sides, White and Black, would unite. Jean, enjoying for the first time in her public-school experience necessities like a cafeteria and lockers, wondered, why us? Why now? But this novelty lasted just two years before DuBois became Mount Hope High School in 1956, being one of the only Black schools in the nation to welcome White students instead of the reverse.

Prior to integration, Black schools bore up under a paucity of resources from traditional public-school funding. What was given that was run-down or piecemeal was pulled together by grassroots efforts within the Black communities. This did not mean, however, that they lacked learning or that records were not broken, despite substandard support systems. Instructors were often overqualified for their positions, like Mrs. Laura Griere Dudley, for instance.

Griere taught English and Journalism at DuBois, but she also wrote for *The Pittsburgh Courier*, a Black newspaper printed on brownish paper, as Jean recalled. "This put DuBois High School from Mount Hope, W.Va. often in *The Courier.* People along the east coast knew about DuBois." Students excelled at both academics and athletics, borrowing fields and courts upon which to play, but their victories were theirs alone, storied feats with newspaper clippings like those collected by Jean to reaffirm their existence.

Today, Jean questions many things. It is in her nature to do so. Like the specious concern she recalls from the all-White, all-male Board of Education who funded not only a new school to replace the dilapidated one that burned but outfitted it meticulously. "This, to us, was amazing," she said, recalling times learning in other buildings, church basements, private homes she points to all along the city. It was in the cafeteria two years later, her 10th grade year, that she learned about the upcoming plans for integration.

"I won't call it integration because integration is this…" she showed, weaving the fingers of both hands together. She pulled them apart. "This is what happened." Her hands barely touch fingertip to fingertip. "It was desegregation, not integration."

Kathleen "Kat" Scott remembers well growing up in Mount Hope, daughter of a coal company bookkeeper, whose parents and community sheltered her from the unjust effects of segregation. General apathy for the history of DuBois covers her town like an old ragged quilt, and calls out to it like the plaque hidden behind a Mount Hope High School trophy case. Her experience, she admits, is different from that of others. But she did play in the streets down the hill from the DuBois school on Colorado Street, where a curious stream of soapy water would find its path of least resistance at her feet and she would splash, not realizing at the time that it was a convergent stream of division (the Black school did not have showers for its athletes) and provision (someone fashioned a makeshift shower with hoses, recognizing the need).

"The way I was raised and the home I was in provided me with things a lot of my peers did not have, and that makes a difference," she said, recalling books, experiences. The same day as Jean—one of her last in DuBois—when she was told her school would become Mount Hope High School, she raised her hand and asked, "'Integration? What's that?' They said it meant, as they called us then, the Negro [sic] and



A Mural on the outside of the Museum depicts former students, and moments from the school's past, as well as DuBois High School itself in the background. All Photos Courtesy of the Author.

White students would be going to school together. This, for me, meant the loss of one of my closest friends and of my boyfriend at the time, both of whom would be going to Oak Hill High School."

There were other losses upon what Kathleen, like Jean, refers to as 'desegregation,'—not integration. "I had been a cheerleader since 7th grade. None of our girls qualified to take part," she recalled. By explanation, this was because of the school term ending and cheerleaders having already been selected from the White school. But the lack of diversity on the cheer team lasted much longer than that. Several years later, one girl of color had made it onto the team. "She was very light-skinned," said Kat, adding, "she looked like a White girl."

Tensions rose, infecting the innocence of children as they played together in Kath-

leen's mostly White neighborhood. "That summer before we started school, a White boy who came over to our house and played all the time was sitting on our porch when he asked, 'Why do you want to go to school with us?'" Kathleen responded to him that she didn't necessarily. "I just want to go to school," she said. "You're not going to be able to make the grade," he said, to which she answered, without hesitation, "Watch and see."

Kathleen's story is filled with loss tempered by gain. "My father was also a union representative—John L. Lewis's union. I remember him going to Cincinnati for meetings." Her grandfather and his twin, both African American Methodist ministers, educated her on matters of geography. "I was able to know about the work they did in Africa, and that it had cities and they didn't live in the jungle." A lively culture promoting social opportunities right in Mount Hope, hosted mostly by local Black churches, headlined storied artists like Duke Ellington, who came to play for the whole community. She gained friends at her "new" school, including Jean Evansmore. "I remember a White girl approaching me. Her name was Margaret Darnell. I had no clue who she was, and she had no clue who I was, but she invited me to her home." The two became lifelong friends.

Kathleen, a Special Education teacher, worked in New York after graduation and later taught at Mount Hope High School. "I started as a student and I was there when it closed," she said. Kathleen remembers when she first came back to the school to teach in 1981. "I was looking for the plaque," she said, referencing a marker that had acknowledged the history of Mount Hope High School first as DuBois, along with its original status as an All-Black school. "The students didn't realize the history in those days. (Administration) had put a cabinet of trophies in front of the plaque." She noticed curiously that the plaque was movable, with no need to be hidden, so she took it. "I know it was the times," she said, "but they didn't absorb any DuBois."



Jean Evansmore.

Still, what stands out from behind the cabinets and the adult decisions is a piece of history left unrecorded, except in Kat's mind—an occurrence she will never forget, one of young imparting a lesson to old. That year, the year of desegregation, there was a popular local hangout called The Sweet Shop. "We'd go there for ice cream. There was a jukebox and tables," she recalled.

In her memory, Kat sees the White kids getting up to dance. "When the Black kids got up, the owners said, 'Hey! You can't dance in here!'" Kat watches as the White kids stop dancing. "They said, 'If they can't dance here, then we won't dance here' and 'If they can't be here, we won't be here.'"

And so, they all leave. Together. "This is something I'm quite sure their parents didn't know about," said Kathleen.

Back in present day, from the vantage point of Giuseppe's, the area's historic Italian restaurant, Jean points across Main Street to a "what-not" shop, as she calls it, holding the detritus of an area and an era—particles of the places and people long since surrendered to memory. The shop is strangely devoid of anything from the DuBois School. "I had a ring in here once," the owner told her, "A class ring..." The ring, like the history preceding it, was long gone.

At the DuBois on Main Museum and Community Center, Evansmore has carefully organized private family collections and donated materials to make the exhibits. She went from encouraging her fellow alumni in what they had accomplished in life, to building a place to honor such accomplishments, but some intimated that she had overstepped her bounds.

Conditioning, as it turns out, is the real contagion. Jean's talkative nature might come off as intimidating to anyone uncomfortable in their own skin, no matter the color. She attended the annual DuBois School reunions from 1972 on, and upon hearing for decades of the tremendous successes and adventures of graduates and their family members, in her retirement years, she decided to act. Why not a museum? Some within the Black community thought of it as self-aggrandizing. It was then that she realized, "They're used to not mattering."

There are artifacts of both the old DuBois and the "new" DuBois that became Mount Hope High School, which itself closed in 2011. An investigation neglected to turn up answers about the burning of the original DuBois school—conflicting rumors include hearsay of the sighting of a car fleeing the scene, many who reported the driver as an unidentified White man; another, of frustrated Black families, perhaps resolving an injustice disguised as equality. A more benign explanation is that chemicals in the chemistry lab may have exploded. Regardless, the preservation of the stories of the people who taught and learned there called out to Jean. "Bring it to me. Tell me. Let me brag about it!" she implored her fellow alums. People will come, she thought. If not them, then their predecessors—and leave knowing they matter—they always mattered.

However, support for the museum came mostly from Jean's own finances, from the Beckley community, and from out-of-state supporters, many with a connection to the school. "I had a couple from Minnesota to donate. He was from the coal camp of MacDonald in Fayette County; that is where the Black folks lived. The coal companies made a point of segregating people. Black folks caught it, and so did the Chinese, more so than others. They were not the same complexion, they looked different."

There is an old Singer sewing machine donated by a family in the entryway of the museum; it belonged to the mother of former students at the school. There is a typewriter donated by the Valedictorian of the last graduating class, Janice Muse Thomas. Her grandmother, Cordelia Toles, Class of 1935, was a former principal, Jean noted. "When I think of her name, I stand up straight. I can see her in this black fitted dress, women were thin in those days, telling us to 'Walk like there's a book on top of your head.'"

West Virginia is not vetted in education because it has a history of ignoring it, according to Jean. She offers as evidence a time when, shortly after returning to the area from Maryland, she decided to get involved in a school bond issue for education. "Fayette County had not passed a school bond in 40 years. Education obviously was not a big deal here. But I want to stay here, I want to stay in West Virginia. I must get involved because someone must know how to read to take care of



A close up of a photo featuring former DuBois students, that can be seen on display at The DuBois on Main. The African-American History Museum houses photos and artifacts commemorating DuBois High School and the students and faculty who attended.

me, rather than me taking care of myself!"

Yet within her collection from the All-Black school—carrying the name of one who believed unwaveringly in the power of education—it becomes clear that it mattered to some.

"All of this that you're seeing was brought to me in a black plastic bag years ago," she said, pointing to a display within the conference room named after her late second husband, Stewart Frazier, a veterinarian. There are courses listed for the certification of the mother of the family, Annie Margaret Bowles, a teacher at an All-Black School whose class requirements included physiology—just to teach 1st grade. The antique seller who brought Evansmore the bag with the Bowles' family artifacts told her, "This was a good-looking family, educated, and somebody said I should give it to you." Even though the items were mostly paper and would not have brought $25 from the picker set, their contents, to Jean, were pure gold. "It took a long time to figure out what to do with this stuff. It is fascinating, though," she said, admiring her display.

Little remains but fragments of the former school building itself, the cornerstone, the steps. The remaining chunks of rock are sold as relics at the DuBois Museum, with all proceeds going to keep the museum and Jean's mission going—even if by appointment only.

LISA SHREWSBERRY is a nature-loving, trail-running, West Virgninian-born-and-raised mother, writer, editor, and 10th-grade English/language arts teacher at her alma mater, Woodrow Wilson High School. She owns a small business called Fine Lines, writing and editing mainly privately commissioned nonfiction projects. She's completing her first short-story fiction collection. She has one foot on the mountains, the other in the sand—her happiness depends on spending time in both extremes. This is her second contribution to GOLDENSEAL, see winter of 2021.

# Nicholas County Reflections

**By Anna L. Campbell**

The central West Virginia town of Summersville in Nicholas County has been my home for 90 years. Early jobs in the area were mostly in farming, coal mining, logging, and wood products. In 1930 there were about 536 people listed on the Census and most families knew each other. People felt safe to walk to Main Street where the Farmers and Merchants Bank, the Nicholas County Bank, and the Nicholas County Courthouse were located. All three of these structures were built of native stone. Nearby were a hardware store, grocery stores, clothing stores, and a post office. Also, Arbuckle Elementary and Nicholas County High School were within walking distance of Main Street.

At the time of my birth people still were recovering from the Depression. My parents, James Ralph and Alice Cavendish Murphy, began their family on Duffy Street in Summersville.

My brother James was born in 1930, I (Anna Lee) was born in 1932, and my sister Julia was born in 1933. The twins, Jeannean and John, were born in 1943. During my early childhood in town, we had electricity, but a bathroom and running water came later in the 1930's. We learned to be careful and recycle many things. My Mother was creative, sewed our clothes, and made me a princess style coat from an adult coat. I was proud of that coat.

As a young girl about 6 to 14 years of age, I delighted in visiting my maternal grandparents during the summer. They lived on a working farm in Nicholas County. Sometimes my sister Julia went with me. We had fun exploring the farm buildings, the barns, blacksmith shop, the cool cellar partly built into the hillside, and going to the flowing creek close by.

My Grandparents were pioneers in many ways, living off the land, raising gardens, growing apple trees, and harvesting blackberries which were plentiful in season. They preserved food by drying, pickling, and canning. Vegetables and apples were buried under leaves, straw, and soil to keep for winter food. In the spring young lambs arrived and cows had calves. Sheep were sheared for their wool which was in demand for warm clothing after being carded, spun into yarn, and woven into fabric. I learned a lot from my Grandparents, also storytellers, about their pioneer way of living. They had no modern conveniences such as electricity, running water, or bathrooms. Grandma had a gas powered washing machine and wash day started early by heating water in tubs over an open fire. It was an all-day job usually done on Monday—weather permitting.



The Murphys in 1938. Back row - Alice, J. Ralph, Front Row- Jim, Julia, Ann.

I remember the front porch on our small home where kinfolk, friends, and neighbors gathered to visit while the growing children

played outside. Older boys played marbles and ball in the street. There was little or no traffic, as few owned vehicles. The older girls played hopscotch or jump-the-rope. The gatherings on the front porch were of much interest to me as I listened to family stories of early pioneer life told by adult women. I enjoyed hearing about creative ways of domestic chores achieved with no conveniences and found that both men and women performed amazing feats in order to recycle and not waste anything. I learned about our Irish and Scottish culture as stories were passed down among generations.

By reflecting on my early life experiences, I became interested in history and family genealogy. Spending some enjoyable weeks in the summer with my Grandparents on their farm offered me insights of pioneering ways. They also told stories of their ancestors. I learned to appreciate how amazing women were and continue to be, as time welcomes them more opportunities.

Visiting with older people who lived in the neighborhood was always enjoyable. Each person had a story to tell about his or her life experiences. I recall a neighbor lady who served as a nurse during World War I and participated in the World War II practice Black Out Raids. Those raids were done to alert citizens to have total darkness in the home at night to prevent an enemy from visibility of any life signs. I didn't like the practice raids because they were frightening to children.

As WWII progressed, the rationing of everything prompted creativity and recycling and wearing mended shoe soles during that time when most goods were scarce. Gasoline, tires, sugar, and food items were rationed. People had to "make do", repair, or go without if stamps issued by the government weren't available. After WWII some new things were created such as plastic rain gear.

In the spring of 1949, when Nicholas County High School closed for the semester, students were happy to be free for other



The Campbells, 1959. In back is Robert Sr. and Anna. In front Martha, and Robert Jr.

events. My close friend, Carolyn Campbell, graduated and planned a "wiener roast"—a big celebration for her friends. She invited me to assist at her parents' home. I had just completed my junior year and was excited to be included among "the graduates". Carolyn's brother, Robert, was home from West Virginia University for the summer. He offered to prepare the location and build the fire for the Saturday roast. I was introduced to Robert or "Bob" as he was known. Carolyn didn't invite her brother to the celebration, so he left to attend to some other chores for his parents.

The next day, Sunday afternoon, I received a phone call from Carolyn who invited me to go to the famous "swimming hole" near Hughes Bridge, south of Summersville. She stated that her brother, Bob, would drive us and would pick me up soon. I quickly changed clothes to a swimsuit with a coverup. They arrived at the Murphy house on McKees Creek Road and we were off to the Sunday gathering place in the black 1949 Ford Coupe. A large crowd was gathered on the sand and rock areas of the Gauley River. Carolyn jumped into the water to swim, while I chose to remain dry and visit with others who were seated on the rocks. Bob mixed with others he knew but didn't go swimming. Later I learned that I was being watched. When we returned from the swimming hole, I thanked Bob and Carolyn for the trip.

Sometime on Monday, I received a phone

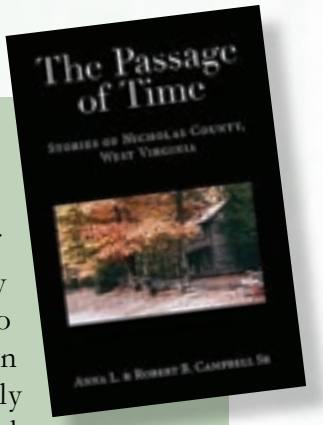
call from Bob Campbell who asked me for a date to attend a movie. It was a big surprise and a thrill to hear from a college student. After we exchanged a few words, I accepted the offer. However—I already had a date for the same evening with another college student from Georgia Tech. I decided to phone Raymond and decline his date, so I could go with Bob. I never heard from Raymond again.

Prior to our meeting, Robert B. Campbell served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-45 in the Pacific area on the USS Teton Communication Ship which sailed to Japan for the signing of the Peace Treaty with the Japanese. The communication was carried by ship to the rest of the world. After his discharge, Robert used the G.I. Bill to attend West Virginia University.

On the day of our first date, Bob drove into the driveway in the '49 Coup and walked up the steps to the front porch. Mother invited the handsome young man to have a seat and indicated that "Ann" would soon be ready. I opened the door and spoke to Bob. When we went to the car Bob opened the car door and assisted me. He was very mannerly and seemed happy. We went to Wards Theater on Main Street to see "The Snake Pit" which neither of us could remember much about. The cost was 25 cents per ticket.

I remember the wonderful feeling when Bob reached for my hand. Somehow, we both knew there was a special chemistry present. We dated for six weeks and realized we loved each other very much. We were "pinned" (Kappa Alpha Fraternity) to go steady. Neither of us ever dated another person from then forward. September 15, 1950, we were married at the Summersville Baptist Church by the Rev. Bruce Cooper. Following our marriage, we retired to Morgantown (Monongalia County) for Bob's Senior year and graduation. After graduation we returned to Summersville to live and later purchased our first house—a fixer upper. My marriage to Bob, the love of my life for 65 years, gave me the most important titles of wife and mother. We shared the interest of family, history, storytelling, and community service.

Our much-treasured love grew to include our children, Martha Jane (Born 1952), and




Bob was asked by the local newspaper to write for the weekly Nicholas Chronicle some of his family stories of Grandfather William Henry Campbell's invention of a dynamo to produce the first electricity in Nicholas County for the family business on Mumbley Peg Creek near the town of Summersville, WV. The Town of Summersville issued a fifty-year franchise to William Henry Campbell when he enlarged his operation to furnish electricity for the town. The first light was turned on in the Nicholas County Bank in 1923. Bob replied that he was "a storyteller" and wife Anna was the historian and writer. After much consideration, we agreed to the request and wrote a weekly column, The Passage of Time from 2008 through 2012. As my husband's health declined, we were unable to continue writing the weekly newspaper stories. Many readers asked us to publish a book of our stories. The newspaper editor stated that business had increased for them while our weekly stories were included. The City of Summersville did several videos for local television on the Campbell Hydro Electric Plant. People asked Bob to tell the story many times for various group and school functions and by others as only Grandson Bob Campbell could tell with accurate details. The town of Summersville was deeply saddened to know that the Storyteller of History, Robert B. Campbell, passed away in 2015 at age 89. In 2020, my daughter Martha Campbell Larkin, PhD and her husband Richard Larkin, PhD arranged the stories Bob and I had written for The Nicholas Chronicle with pictures into a published book. The book, *The Passage of Time Stories of Nicholas County, West Virginia* is available on Amazon.com.

Robert Burns Campbell, Jr. (Born 1957). It has been a great life raising a family, watching, teaching, and supporting two successful, educated, and caring adults. There were some bumps and sleepless nights along the way, but with strong faith in God, we were active Christians who worked together to solve problems and issues.

Bob had a successful career with Peters Creek – Peerless Eagle Coal Company, working up from Accountant to President in 36 years before retirement which lasted 27 years. Summer hobbies for Robert were vegetable gardening and playing golf.

Flower gardens and plant propagation were my passion. In 1965-66, I was a charter member and first President of Mountain Lake Garden Club and remained an active member for several years. A large street tree planting sponsored by the two local Garden Clubs, Mountain Lake and Mt. Azalea, along with Monongahela Power Company was undertaken in 1967-68 in Summersville. A pictorial article I authored was printed in the Jan.-Feb. 1969 issue of The National Gardener Magazine. The West Virginia Garden Club Council appointed me as World Gardening Chairman to work with CARE. West Virginia Garden Clubs led all other states in the National Council's World Gardening projects in 1969. The money raised was used to send agricultural tool kits and seeds to 332 Nations around the world under my direction in 1970.

In 1983-84, Bob and I were busy planning a Bicentennial Celebration for Memorial United Methodist Church. I served as chairman of the yearlong event with help from committees. There wasn't much history available which required research for documents, pictures and contacts with older members, and even an attic trip for artifacts. We established a room on the second floor of the church to house our historical research and archives. The room needed to be cleared of boxes, painted, as well as other preparations. I submitted a list of archives that were desired. I have continued since 1983-84 as chairman of Archives and History for 40 years to date. In 2016 the room was named in our honor as Robert and Anna Campbell Archives and History.



Anna Campbell, 2018 West Virginia History Hero.

I was awarded the honor of West Virginia History Hero 2018 at the West Virginia Culture Center which was presented at the West Virginia Legislature in Charleston. I was nominated for this award by the Nicholas County Historical and Genealogical Society in which I had been active for several years.

Little did I know that I would become a published book author at age 88 years. In addition to the book, my research in genealogy and local history has produced 52 large notebooks and 36 plus binders of information. In 2020 I stayed busy sewing face masks for Covid-19 prevention. The Pandemic of 2020 changed our lives by wearing face masks, canceling gatherings, and following stay at home orders. It gave me time to read and reflect back to the 1930's and beyond.

ANNA L. CAMPBELL is a lifelong resident of Summersville in Nicholas County. Throughout the years she has been an active community and church volunteer. Her interests include local history, genealogy, writing, and flower gardening. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL. Her book, The Passage of Time Stories of Nicholas County, West Virginia was reviewed in our Winter 2021 issue.

# Laurel River Club B&B

## Historic Home is the Perfect B&B Getaway in the Mountains

**By Helen E. McKinney**

Marsha and Kendall Waybright are caretakers of the last house still standing from the original town of Jenningston. They have lovingly turned the historic home and its surroundings into a bed and breakfast and preserved the heritage of a once booming logging town."We felt it needed the proper care so the history of Jenningston would never be forgotten," said Marsha of the Tucker County landmark. "The Salovaara family, who own the property, felt the same way."

Nestled into the surrounding hills, the Laurel River Club B&B has become a popular destination in a short time for those looking to get away and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere found in this small community. "People leave feeling refreshed and rejuvenated," she said.

The Waybrights are the property managers for the Salovaara family, who own the farm surrounding the B&B. Mary Katherine (aka PK) and her husband, Jorma Julius (J.J.) Salovaara, settled in the area in 1990. PK, who was originally from Bellefontaine, OH, had retired the previous year from her job in Chicago as a law librarian with Baker McKenzie. Her father, Malcom Lewis Pratt, M.D., was killed on Okinawa during WWII.

Her husband, a native of Chicago, IL, died four years after the move to Jenningston. Their son Mikael and his wife Beth originally bought the farm and his parents moved there upon retirement and became caretakers. In 2019, PK moved to Greensboro, NC to live with her daughter Kate and that is where she passed away the same year.

PK cared for the house and grounds at her Jenningston Farm until she no longer could. She was known to be an advocate for literacy, education, and reforestation through her many volunteer activities. She even oversaw the planting of thousands of red spruce and balsam fir trees at Jenningston, was active at the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, participated in a wide variety of community organizations, and attended Grace Episcopal Church in Elkins.



Left to Right: Michelle Knight (great-great-granddaughter of Cortez H. Jennings); Molly Knight (g-g-g-granddaughter of Cortez H. Jennings); Nancy Bomboy (great-granddaughter of Cortez H. Jennings). All photos provided by Michelle Knight unless otherwise stated.

"She did not know of our plans to open a B&B; in fact it was a surprise for us too. Had you asked us six months prior to opening we would not have known!" said Marsha, who grew up 15 minutes away in Middle Mountain. Her husband's family farm adjoins the B&B property.

"A coat of fresh paint throughout the three stories and a few repairs made it ready for guests," she said. The official opening date was Memorial Day 2020, in the midst of the COVID pandemic.The COVID-19 pandemic did not discourage the Waybright's. "Actually the pandemic and our business kind of started together," Marsha said. "I'm glad we didn't let it deter us. So many people have gotten the peace they need by coming here."

Nestled into the heart of what was once a boom town is now a tranquil oasis lying along the banks of the Dry Fork River, not giving the slightest hint to its rich and industrious past. PK, who camped with her family in Jenningston as a child, once said that the trees were completely stripped off the valley in the mid-1920s, which erased all traces of its heyday as a logging community. While this is often what happened to many Appalachian logging or coal mining towns, what was left behind has become a hidden gem for those wanting to get away from a hectic lifestyle.Guests often say they feel refreshed after a stay at the B&B. It's the perfect rejuvenation spot for those who love the outdoors and are looking for a friendly clean place to sleep, hot breakfast, and modern conveniences after exploring the mountains of West Virginia. Located on a 200-acre farm nestled in the middle of the Monongahela National Forest, the Dry Fork River runs along the edge of the property and affords fishing and swimming opportunities.

The Waybright's encourage visitors to bring their mountain bike, horse, kayak, fishing pole, walking stick, binoculars, snowshoes/cross country skis, camera or drone, metal detector, or whatever suits them for the activities they like to do in the great outdoors. With access to over 900,000 acres of nearby national forest, this is a natural paradise for outdoor lovers and the outdoor activities are limitless.For any traveler who wants to spend as much time outdoors as possible, but doesn't want to camp in the traditional way, the LRC B&B also rents a glamping dome. This is a fun alternative for enjoying nature at its finest and being able to experience the outdoors in comfort. "The glamping dome is clear on the top so people can sleep under the stars, it also gives that rugged outdoors feel that so many people want with a tent, but not the hassle," said Marsha



Stairwell of Laurel River Club B&B.

In the main house, Marsha has created four spacious bedrooms for overnight guests, decorated with simple antique country charm. Guests are treated to special meals using products grown on the farm. The property can also be rented for weddings, reunions or other small or large gatherings. A fun new addition to the B&B's offerings includes Country Cooking classes and demos. Marsha believes that teaching the farm-to-table concept is a way to preserve the past and look ahead to the future.

Long before the B&B opened, 7,200-acres lying in the mountains of nearby Parsons, WV were acquired by the federal government in 1915 and named the Monongahela Purchase. The Monongahela National Forest was officially designated five years later on April 28, 1920 and incorporated the original purchase tract. Additional lands were acquired within the 1.7 million-acre proclamation boundary of the forest so that today the forest includes more than 919,000 acres in ten counties. To add to the amenities at LRC B&B, nearby recreational sites include Canaan Valley State Park, Blackwater Falls State Park, Seneca Rocks State Park, Dolly Sods Wilderness Area and Spruce Knob.

"We love to provide the food for the B&B and teach people about food production and farming," she said. Marsha began giving the classes and demos at the B&B for guests as a way to enhance their stay and take in all that the farm has to offer. A variety of classes teach guests "how to grow, harvest, cook, and preserve your own food," she said. Seasonal and year-round classes include how-to classes on making your own jelly, butter, sour dough bread, cheese, biscuits, pies, teas such as kombucha, and planting and harvesting a garden.

A stroll around the farm affords plenty of spots with a captivating view. Guests are encouraged to sit by a nightly bonfire (weather permitting) and enjoy each other's company, sit for a spell in a rocker on the front porch, or take a Hawk Walk or catch a Bird of Prey Demonstration with her son, Collin Waybright, known as the Laurel Fork Falconer.

The B&B is surrounded by a working educational farm. Visitors of all ages have the opportunity to watch cows being milked twice daily, bottle feed a calf, gather eggs, pick fresh berries, take a guided nature hike, experience the opportunity to buy into a herd share, and even taste fresh warm milk straight from the cow.

The entire Waybright family is involved in the running of the B&B in some way. Each member contributes their own talents to enhance a visit to LRC B&B. Marsha is a certified dog trainer and trains service and therapy animals. "We have all kinds of therapy animals here at the B&B, such as Piper the Labradoodle, and four cats."

In addition to farming, Marsha's husband Kendall gives guided hunts. "People enjoy following us around just doing our normal chores, and we enjoy hiking, fishing, and hunting so much I figured they'd like to follow us around doing that too," he said. "It's nothing fancy, just real hunting in the West Virginia mountains. No promise of a huge buck or record fish, just enjoying the hunt for food."

Oldest son Collin, 22, is the youngest Master Class Falconer in the state. When called upon to do so, he gives educational presentations at the B&B. He is in the midst of his 2023 Inspiration Tour of West Virginia, giving engaging educational presentations for schools, libraries, organizations, state parks, and public events. Last year Collin logged over 10,000 miles of presentations all across West Virginia and surrounding states.

Younger sister Kendra, 18, is an herbalist and likes to educate guests about her passion. This self-labeled country girl makes all natural products for the B&B's gift shop. Her goal is to "help people work towards better health and wellness through a way that honors God." Her interest in wildcrafting has led her to learn how to make herbal medicine, cultured foods, and healthy recipes for herself, the family, and others. Wildcrafting is the term for the age-old practice of collecting plant materials in their natural habitat for food, medicine, and craft. With a 200-acre farm to roam, Kendra has plenty of space in which to explore her hobby. Kendra loves sharing her knowledge of herbalism, natural farming and self-suffi-



Collin and Hardy, his red-tailed hawk. Collin is the youngest master falconer in the state.

ciency. She also has a few Jersey cows she milks and uses the milk (which is pasteurized for guest use) to make products such as butter, cheese and yogurt. She makes lip balms and bath bombs as well.

Her most recent venture involves a herdshare program. In 2020, "I purchased two pregnant twin Jersey heifers. I purchased them to produce milk for me and my family," Kendra said. "Before they calved, I realized with two cows we were going to have a lot of extra milk! I heard about herdsharing, but I really didn't know anything about it. I decided to do some research and I found that there was a large demand in our area and so I decided that it was something that I wanted to do." Visitors to the B&B can find out more about how the program works from Kendra.

The youngest Waybright, Josie, 9, is known as the "kitty whisperer." She works with and trains the four therapy cats at the B&B and "people are amazed at what she can do with the cats. They all love her. She most definitely will find a way to incorporate cats into her adult profession!" Marsha said.

A future goal Marsha has is to make homemade soaps for the B&B. "I'm a West Virginia master artisan in soap making and a master gardener. We also do salves. One is our Aunt Barbra salve, a drawing salve handed down in Kendall's family for over 150 years. We do a secret recipe for salad dressing the West family entrusted us with. You can only find it here at the B&B, but we are not allowed to share the recipe."

To say this family is talented and self-reliant is an understatement. Each brings a necessary quality to the B&B, and just as in bygone days, each has a job (or jobs!) to do to contribute to the whole experience. For more information, contact the Laurel River Club B&B at http://lrcbnb.com, (304) 402-7095 or visit the Facebook page at Laurel River Club BnB.

Helen McKinney is a freelance writer based in Shelbyville, KY with over 20 years experience. She has written for local and regional publications. She specializes in history and telling the stories of the people who settled the Appalachian region so that they will never be forgotten.

# Laurel River Lumber Company is Born

**By Helen E. McKinney**

The Laurel River Club B&B is a historic gem in the heart of the small valley of Jenningston (Tucker County). The house was built in 1905 for Bishop Worth Jennings and his wife Ella Castle. Jennings was the company superintendent for what would become the Laurel River Lumber Company.

A bright future lay in the logging business for brothers Bishop Worth (B.W.) and Cortez Hicks (C.H.) Jennings. At age seventeen, Bishop began working for his father, William Navarre Jennings. He worked in his offices learning business skills from the bottom up. Under his tutelage, Bishop learned to manage several different types of businesses, predominantly the lumber business. For a time, he worked under his uncle, Joseph Tuttle Jennings, in his lumbering operation around Jenningsville, Wyoming County, PA.

Cortez had spent three years at West Point Military Academy. Deciding a military career wasn't for him, he went into the logging business in 1881. At that time, Cortez, struck out on his own to establish a lumber business. He bought tracts in Cherry and Colley townships in Sullivan County, PA, and constructed a mill, hired workers, and began operations in early 1882. Extremely close to Bishop, Cortez asked his nineteen year-old brother to join him in the new business as a partner. The firm was named Jennings Brothers and the Jennings Brothers Lumber Company quickly became very prosperous, installing the most modern saw mill equipment. So high was demand, the mill's capacity could not keep up and in the fall of 1887, operations were transferred to Lopez, PA.

This was about the time the idea of Jenningston, WV sprang up, conceived in the minds of the Jennings brothers while working in the small logging town of Lopez.



Bishop Worth Jennings, undated. All photos courtesy of the author.

The brothers, natives of Luzerne County, PA, expanded a mill, built a large store and several houses, and purchased additional businesses in Lopez. The town experienced a boom until 1905, when the brothers began to foresee an eventual end to their business venture in that town. Looking to new horizons, they expanded their interests toward Maryland and West Virginia.

On November 29, 1899 they signed an agreement with William Rosendorf, president of the Middle Mountain Boom and Lumber Company. He sold 20,000 acres to the Jennings brothers for $11,000. The deal included a sawmill, dam, machinery, and a railroad running from the Dry Fork Railroad to the mill. In 1900, the brothers purchased an additional 30,000 acres and were well on their way to establishing a prosperous town and timber business.

The town of Jenningston was officially founded in 1905, at a location west of the Dry Fork below the mouth of the Laurel Fork. The Jennings' brother's first step was



Ella Castle Jennings around 1895.



Cortez Hicks around 1920.

to charter a railroad from Pocahontas to Randolph County. In August of that year the company store was opened. In November the post office opened with B.W. Jennings as the first postmaster, appointed on Dec. 8 1887.

The superintendent's house (now Laurel River Club B&B) stood in the main square of the town. To the left of the mill were four double houses and a single house. Houses between the mill and the square were painted red and used by laborers; houses beyond the square were painted white and used by skilled help. The superintendent's house was painted yellow. The town also contained a two-story school and hotel, the Laurel Inn. By 1907, the saw mill was producing 125,000 feet per day.

On July 1, 1909, all property was sold to the newly formed Laurel River Lumber Company for $1,400,000. This included 18 miles of railroad, 400 million feet of uncut timber, the mill, store, hotel, all houses, and animals. The new owners of the Laurel River Lumber Company were E.W. Mealy of Hagerstown and J.A.G. and E.M. Allen of Darlington, Maryland.

Several years before, on October 20, 1906, Bishop Jennings had died unexpectedly. His wife Ella, both of whose parents were born in Ireland and lived in New York, lived until 1942. At the time of his death, Bishop's only son, William Worth Jennings, took over for his father. The couple also had a daughter named Ethel who died in 1896 at age 6.

Cortez was greatly affected by his brother's death and he tried to sell the company but wasn't successful until 1909 when Mealy and Allen bought it. Cortez and his wife, Mary Bowman, moved to Towanda, PA in 1906 residing on a 1,000 acre property near Towanda Creek. Cortez died at his home in 1916. He and Mary had a son, Paul Bishop, a daughter, Sarah Jennings Kizer, and a son that died in infancy, Donald Hicks Jennings.

By 1911 Jenningston had a church, two restaurants, a barbershop, a doctor by the name of C.A. Willis, and one bootlegger, Bob Cobberly. Competition also came in the form of the Perley and Crockett Lumber Company, but they went out of business the following year due to severe flooding. With this closing the population of Jenningston plummeted from 600 to 400. On May 11, 1916, fire completely destroyed the Laurel River mill and 1,000,000 feet of lumber. The mill did rebuild but a year later fire completely destroyed the Laurel Inn. By 1919 the mill employed 300 men with a monthly payroll of $25,000 to $30,000, nothing close



Mary Louise Bowman around 1918.

to what it had once been.

Once all of the trees were cut, the logging industry died out. As logging was the only industry in Jenningston, there was nothing left to sustain the community. Even the railroad left. The mill closed for good in 1921 and its equipment was sold. The remaining lands and company store were sold on January 22, 1922.

One month later, the houses were sold and torn down for the lumber to be used in neighboring towns. With no employment, the population slowly drifted away. Today all that is left of the area where many of the houses were located is just an open pasture field for cows and horses to graze upon in front of the house. The official end of the Laurel River Lumber Company took place on January 18, 1923. The last company house was destroyed in the flood of 1985. All remains of the lumber town, except the Superintendent's house (Laurel River Club B&B) are long gone.

Michelle Knight's ancestor was Cortez Jennings. She said her ancestors were very good about documenting their history and passing down family treasures and information. "Without it, we wouldn't have such widespread knowledge of all their activities. Keeping our family history alive was just as important to our ancestors as it is to us today." She is descended through Cortez's son, Paul Bishop Jennings. Paul's daughter was Mary Jennings Hawke, Mary's daughter was Nancy Hawke Bomboy, and Nancy's daughter is Michelle Knight. Last year Michelle and other family members attended a Homecoming at the Laurel River Club B&B.

It was in Towanda, PA that Cortez "pursued other business interests such as large-scale farming and established the Jennings Stock Farm," said Michelle. "This farm was massive and advanced in technology for the time. The farm was located on the Towanda Flats, an area where Mary Jennings' third great-grandfather had built a cabin as the first permanent white settler of Bradford County in the late 1700's. The soil was rich there and the farming was good."

After Cortez died in 1916, Mary sold the property to Farm Bureau agents and the lands have since passed on to other local families. Most of Cortez's descendants stayed in Towanda including some that still live there today.

Michelle attended the first annual Jenningston Homecoming last year. Michellesaid, "I love connecting with folks that have some historical connection to one of the towns or our family. I have also helped others search for information on their family that might have worked for the Jennings Bros. or were connected in some way. As much as this is my family history, it is neat to see how it is part of someone else's family history as well." This year the Second Annual Jenningston Homecoming will be held June 10 – 11, 2023.

The Waybright family strives to preserve this logging history by displaying many photos of the area and its history in relation to the B&B. Marsha is only too happy to tell visitors about the days when Jenningston was a booming logging town. From the pictures she has displayed it's easy to imagine oneself living in 1905–1019 in the midst of the town.

Marsha said, "People like visiting our B&B because there is a peace found here that is very rare these days."

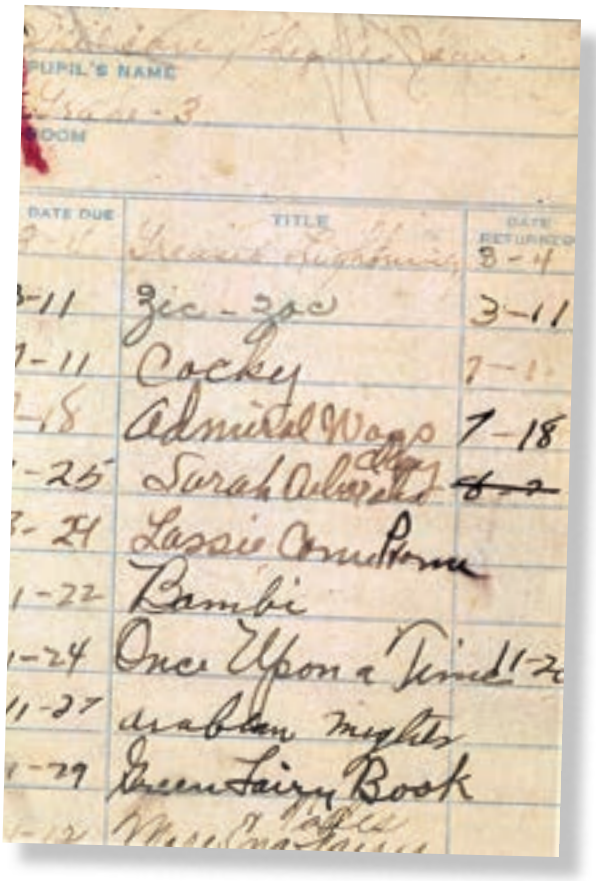
# Phyllis Wilson Moore
## Heroine of West Virginia Literature

**By Edwina Pendarvis**

The person I'll wager knows more about West Virginia literature than anyone else in the world wasn't even born in West Virginia. Phyllis Wilson Moore has lived here since 1953, though, and has spent most of the years since then reading and promoting our literature, which she thinks is often overlooked and underrated. An avid reader since childhood, Phyllis still has her first library card. She was six years old when she got it from the public library in her hometown of Waynesburg, Pennsylvania.

In Waynesburg, her family lived for several years in a neighborhood called Redbird Hollow, a diverse neighborhood with African American and immigrant families. Her neighbors engendered Phyllis' concern for injustice and interest in cultural differences. As a child, she was fascinated by hearing people speak entirely different languages than her own. One of her most vivid memories is of an immigrant woman many people in the neighborhood considered "the crazy lady." Not able to pronounce her name, people just called her "Mrs. K." when they spoke to her. Not too long ago, Phyllis wrote a true story about a surprise visit from Mrs. K. As the story goes, one Christmas morning there was a knock on the door, and eleven-year-old Phyllis answered it. There stood Mrs. K. Behind her stood her disgruntled looking grown son.

In Phyllis' story, "The red-cheeked Mrs. K. said words none of us understood" and stepped into the foyer. The strange woman looked around, smiling. Clapping her hands, she pointed to the Christmas tree and went over to inspect it close up. After that, she got down on her hands and knees




Phyllis' first library card, from the 3rd grade.

to look at the family's Christmas gifts. She examined each one, delightedly pointing to the likely recipient in an implied question, "For you?" She put all the gifts back under the tree but one toy, a small-sized miner's lunch bucket for Phyllis's brother. Mrs. K. hugged the lunch bucket to her chest. Her son, who had followed her in and watched the proceedings unsmiling, shrugged apologetically and said, "She take. . . . No keep." Phyllis' mother shushed her little boy's wails and picked him up.

At the end of the visit, as Phyllis writes, "A smiling Mrs. K., lunch bucket in hand, stepped out into the snowy night. A few feet down the hill, she turned to wave.

Mother waved back." Phyllis never forgot that immigrant woman or the many others who moved to Appalachia to make a new home far away from their old one. And, yes, the son returned the toy lunch bucket the next morning.

Such empathy for others must've influenced Phyllis' decision to become a nurse. When she finished high school in 1953 she was awarded a full scholarship to Fairmont General Hospital School of Nursing. She left her home in the Appalachian region of Pennsylvania and came to West Virginia, where she met and fell in love with Jim Moore, a Navy veteran from Mannington, and a student at Fairmont State University (then Fairmont State College). Her first date with Jim was a way to win a bet with another nursing student. Phyllis and her roommate were competing to see who could get the most dates in one semester. I don't know who won the competition; but Phyllis won out over all because she and Jim have been happily married since the day after her graduation in 1956.



Phyllis Wilson (now Moore) at age 18. 1954. Photo taken by Nell Baxter.

Jim had taken a job in Wooster, Ohio; but within a year of their marriage, the two were back in the mountain state. Jim's family has been in the state since before the Civil War, and several members of his family have attended Fairmont State since 1881 when his great-grandfather, Ira Corwin Moore, enrolled in Fairmont State Normal School. Phyllis has roots here, too. Her grandparents and great-grandparents lived in West Virginia. During the Civil War, her great-grandfather, John Harris, enlisted in the new state's Union Army.

Phyllis' interest in the state's literature includes learning more about the conditions of slavery, that "peculiar institution" which West Virginia's statehood protested. She has read numerous books on the subject, such as *Swallow Barn* published in 1832 and set near Martinsburg. Her story "The Murder of a Child Named Hannah" credits John Reuben Steeler, whose dissertation, "The Negro in West Virginia before 1900," completed in 1954 at West Virginia University, informed Phyllis' account of the torture suffered by an enslaved girl. The man who killed Hannah considered her to be his property—chattel he could treat any way he chose. Neighbors, learning of her death, reported it to the authorities. As Phyllis notes at the end of the story, this case of White persons taking a White farmer to court over the murder of a slave, "weighs little, of course, in the balance of justice; and Hannah's death can never be vindicated. She has been beyond anyone's assistance for over two centuries; but thanks to John Reuben Sheeler, her life is remembered and honored."

Phyllis' reading, research, and writing honor Hannah, too, along with Mrs. K, and other West Virginians who suffered pain

and hardship. Her long career as a registered nurse offered many opportunities to make some people's lives a little easier. She was at various times a head nurse, nursing instructor, emergency room nurse, operating room nurse, pediatric nurse, and psychiatric nurse. After thirty years in nursing, she went into another helping profession, first becoming a certified vocational teacher and later Director of Marketing for Summit Center for Human Development, where among other projects, she coordinated a popular drug abuse awareness program, "Project Charlie," for West Virginia schools. All the while, she continued reading.

Her enjoyment of reading and writing led her to attend local library programs, and at one of those programs, she met Harrison County author Meredith Sue Willis. Not long afterward, she joined West Virginia Writers, attending one of their conferences to hear more from their guest speaker that summer: Meredith Sue Willis, who had this to say about her long-time friend:

The last time I was in town, Phyllis gave me the tour of Clarksburg's literary sites and then bought me a spaghetti dinner at Minard's restaurant. I'm a writer she supports, and a friend, but, honestly, it's almost impossible to describe Phyllis's precise combination of vast knowledge and uplifting enthusiasm. She makes you feel valued for your work, but also for your plain old everyday self. I can only pity regions who don't have someone even a little bit like her.

Over the years, Phyllis read and collected so many books they outgrew her home. She and Jim have donated most of them, along with photographs, dissertations, interviews, and letters to West Virginia universities, museums, and libraries. Among the books is one with an odd autograph from Mary Lee Settle, perhaps West Virginia's most highly acclaimed author.

When Phyllis met Settle years ago, she was surprised that the notoriously crotchety author was willing to autograph every one of her novels Phyllis had the temerity to bring with her. Maybe it was because Settle liked that Phyllis' favorite character from the Beulah Quintet was Johnny Church, the main character of *Prisons*. Settle told Phyllis that Johnny was the character most like the author herself. As they chatted, Settle autographed Phyllis' copy of *Fight Night on a Sweet Saturday*, penning, "I did not write this book. Mary Lee Settle" and telling Phyllis the editor's changes to the novel were awful.



Phyllis J. Wilson, and James H. Moore at Phyllis' graduation. August 31, 1956.

Phyllis' obvious interest in their work made authors confide things they might not tell others. Consequently, Phyllis' knowledge of the authors is almost as surprising as her knowledge of their books. Referring to such inside information, author Pinckney Benedict once said to her, "I'll bet you know my collar size."

In the mid-1980s, Phyllis' interest in the literature of the mountain state caused her to embark on two educational experiences




Phyllis, in the midst of planning. Photo taken by Jim Moore. 1985.

beyond the many characterizing her professional career. The first was her attendance for several summers at the Appalachian Writers Workshop at Hindman Settlement School. Hindman, Kentucky, where the workshop is held, sits on the bank of Troublesome Creek in Knott County. There Phyllis got to know another West Virginian—Barbara Smith, poet, novelist and, *professor emeritus* at Alderson-Broaddus College [see Winter 2022 for Barbara's most recent, and final contribution to GOLDENSEAL]—who drove from Philippi every summer for years to emcee the workshop's evening readings.

The person at Hindman who influenced Phyllis most was Dr. Jim Wayne Miller, a professor from Western Kentucky University. Miller encouraged workshop participants to promote the work of their own state. Phyllis took the message to heart; and Miller, whom Phyllis found "knowledgeable, humorous, and wise," became her mentor. In one of his classes she introduced her acronym for outsiders' stereotype of West Virginians—PIWASH (poor, illiterate, white, Anglo, shoeless hillbillies). Her promotion of West Virginia literature is dedicated to the concept that West Virginians, like people of other states, come in all sizes, hues, and backgrounds.

The Hindman experience encouraged Phyllis to return to Fairmont State to study literature, and there she met faculty members who influenced her greatly. Among them were Drs. Jack Wills, Judy Prozillo Byers, and George Byers. George Byers remembers telling his wife Judy about the impressive new student he had. When Judy put down the papers she was grading to ask why the student was so interesting, the first thing he told her was that she was a nurse. The second thing was that she had a license plate on the front of her car proclaiming, "BOOKWORM." The third was that she made his evening Children's Literature class fun. He said she was a devoted, insightful student, and she was also full of high spirits. She enthusiastically played Long John Silver when the class enacted a trial of the murderous pirate from *Treasure Island*. As George put it, "She talked, she wrote, and she romped, and the whole class laughed along with her." He says Phyllis is a delight to know and to learn from, adding, "I consider her our leading expert on West Virginia writers."

For nearly seventy years, Phyllis has tracked down and read even the most eso-



Phyllis Wilson Moore, meeting Henry Louis Gates Jr. Undated.

teric literature of West Virginia, hung out in libraries and bookstores, helped plan local literary programs, and talked with teachers and authors while Jim built more and more bookcases and became adept at photography and creating PowerPoint slides to illustrate and augment her talks. Together the two have created programs on West Virginia's literature for audiences of every size, from garden clubs to high school auditoriums filled with teenagers. They've spoken to members of the Appalachian Studies Association Conference, the West Virginia Black History Conference, Mid-Atlantic States African American Heritage Conference, West Virginia Reading Council, West Virginia Library Association Conferences, West Virginia Writers conferences, Mountaineer Week visitors at West Virginia University, and the Norman Jordan African American Arts and Heritage Academy, among others near and far.

Twenty years ago, in the course of reading, writing, and making presentations, Phyllis began a campaign for the development of a West Virginia literary map for use in schools, universities, and libraries. In 2004 the WV Humanities Council awarded funds for development of the map, the first official artistic representation of the state's multicultural literary history. Phyllis' research formed the basis for the map, and she served as project director. Released in 2005, entitled *From a Place Called Solid: West Virginia and its Writers*, the map highlights authors and their works dating from 1863 to 2003. Phyllis didn't put herself on the map—she rarely talks about her own writing; but she has written many stories, essays, and poems.

"On the Eighth Day," her award-winning poem about West Virginia's natural beauty, was chosen as the epigraph for the *West Virginia Encyclopedia.* The same poem was performed as an interpretive ballet by the Charleston Youth Ballet of West Virginia along with work by Colleen Anderson and others. The same poem is featured in a 1996 WV calendar. Not only that, the poem has a distinction few poems can claim. It was published as a place mat! Another poem, "We Have Some Writers," written

for teacher Karen Morgan's English students in Shinnston, was performed as a readers' theater piece in Harrison County and Monongalia County schools. "Is Your Cat Like That?" , yet another poem, was rendered as an illustrated children's book. Other creative works are in anthologies such as Mountain State Press's *Voices on Unity, Coming Together, Falling Apart*; in journals such as *Traditions: A Journal of West Virginia Folk Studies and Educational Awareness;* and in newsletters such as Meredith Sue Willis' on-line *Books for Readers*.

Because Phyllis is well known in the region and has won many awards, including the 2018 Women of Appalachia Project (WOAP) and the Appalachian Advocate Award sponsored by Ohio University Multicultural and Women's Center, she's almost a celebrity, so I asked her a couple of questions from the "By the Book" interview series published by the *New York Times*. The series asks celebrity authors about their reading tastes and habits. Here are two standard questions and Phyllis' answers:

*What books are on your night stand?* "I have three specific places for books I plan to read. I don't read in bed but keep my 'next' on a stand beside my reading chair. On it now: *Potted Meat*, a novel by WV native Steven Dunn; *The Hill We Climb: An Inaugural Poem for the Country* by Amanda Gorman; *Fake Accounts*, a novel by West Virginia native Lauren Oyler. A taller stack awaits on a bench but out of sight. I feel pressured if I can see too many unread books. I know where they are and that works for me."

*What three authors (dead or alive) would you invite to a dinner party?* "If I hosted an intimate authors' lunch for three WV authors my guests would be Henry Louis Gates, Jr.; Breece D'J Pancake; Jaimy Gordon; Jayne Anne Phillips; and Matthew Neil Null."

Notice she didn't stop at three authors. Phyllis hardly ever pays attention to rules,



Phyllis seated with husband, Jim Moore. Jim used a tripod to capture this publicity shot. c. 1980s.

and she wanted to know, "Why am I having the dinner? To meet those I admire? To learn from the wise ones? Have a good time with fun authors? Should they be compatible?"

Phyllis couldn't just answer the questions, and that's not a surprise. Coming up on her ninth decade of life, she's still the curious, high-spirited girl she was in Waynesburg. In a state known for its egalitarian spirit, it seems fitting that this heroine of West Virginia literature is more concerned with what moves her and others. She has not cared to spend her time meticulously annotating esoteric scholarship. Her grasp of what is important in the state's literature is grounded in that empathic sensibility—evidenced years ago in her attention to her mother's kind response to Mrs. K. She recognizes that good literature nurtures the most humane elements in our make-up, not through naïve, sentimental art, but through art that realizes the contrast between the way things are, and the way things should be.

EDWINA PENDARVIS is retired from Marshall University where she taught for 30 years. Eddy lives in Huntington, where she continues researching and writing. She currently serves as book review editor for Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel, journal of the Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative. This is her second article for GOLDENSEAL [see fall 2021].




# Fueled by a Good Name

## Shorty Anderson's Successors Build on Reputation

**By Carl E. Feather**

Travis Rowan stands 6 feet 2 inches, but by virtue of the business that he and his brother Shawn own, he'll always be "Shorty."

"There were a lot of people who thought my Uncle Ernie was Shorty …. there are even people now who call me 'Shorty.' I tell them my name, but they still call me 'Shorty,'" Shawn tells me as we sit in the office/customer waiting area of his business, Shorty Anderson's Auto Service, Inc.

Their uncle John Rowan, who does woodworking [see fall 2022] and was a partner in the business for more than a decade, faces the same misidentification. "Even when I go to a craft show, people will walk by and say, 'There's Shorty,'" John says.

Travis doesn't mind customers calling him 'Shorty,' for it is one more affirmation of their faith in the landmark shop at 908 Stewartstown Road, Morgantown. Its late founder and Morgantown native Albert B. "Shorty" Anderson moved his business to this block building on Stewartstown Road in 1949.

"He bought an old house and garage that were sitting there and tore them down and built that garage new," Ernie says. Ernie, senior pastor of Living Faith Church near Kingwood, is the only subsequent owner of the business with a memory of A.B. Anderson.

"When Shorty came here, across from us was a big field and a few houses," Travis says, repeating the stories he's heard. "A large field was behind us, there were no houses." Now, townhouses and single-family residences squeeze the shop and its small parking lots from all sides. Stewartstown Road buzzes with traffic ranging from motorcycles and SUVs, to semi-tractors and city buses. Indeed, the shop is a bus stop, as if it does not have enough traffic congestion around its front door with customers dropping off their motorized problems and reclaiming the revitalized versions. Ten second-floor apartments above the shop add to the parking headaches.

Despite being short on parking and long on traffic, moving to a less congested location is not on the owner's agenda. Travis and Shawn would no more think of relocating than they would of changing the name. "This is almost like a historic spot in Morgantown," Travis says between taking phone calls from customers and vendors. "Being so close to (West Virginia) University, we are in a convenient spot because a lot of people can leave their cars and walk home." Of even greater value than its convenient location is what the Shorty Anderson name represents. As the Bible says, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches," Proverbs 22:1. "This place is a landmark and the reputation of the business was a selling point for us," Shawn says.

Previous owners "told us they made their name by being honest, treating people right," Travis says. "If you look at their car and they don't need anything, tell them

they don't. And if you look at it and it is too bad to be fixed, tell them as much."

Shorty's sets a high standard for the industry in Morgantown. Once again in 2023, the business won the reader-driven "Best Mechanic" category for Best of Morgantown (BOM). "Seven wins in, Shorty Anderson's just about owns this category," notes *Morgantown magazine, which praises the owners for "their straight-talking, timely service.*

Albert B. "Shorty Anderson, the son of William C. and Flora (Baker) Anderson, established the business at a Chestnut Street location in downtown Morgantown circa 1920. Anderson's obituary of March 21, 1974, in Morgantown's *Dominion Post*, dates the business to 1920, however, a later owner who said he saw the original articles of incorporation, dates it to 1924. Both could be correct, with Anderson perhaps starting out small and incorporating the business as it and the associated risks grew.

A photograph in the collection of West Virginia &Regional History Center at West Virginia University, depicts several young men standing outside Shorty's business, an "auto laundry" that offered cold steam equipment, grease jobs and oil changes" out of two garage bays attached to the rear of a house. While the annotation on the back of the photo dates it to circa 1930, the identities of the men were not noted. If one of them is Shorty Anderson, said to have been all of 4 feet and 10 inches, it is probably the man on the far right of the image and is the sole image of Anderson that could be located.

What we know of Shorty's early years in downtown Morgantown comes to us second-hand from Shorty 's late nephew, David, who worked there from the shop's infancy. Ernest "Ernie" Rowan, who owned the shop from 1979 to 2017, recalls Dave as "the best carburetor man in the world."

"He'd put a glass of water on the (flat head) engine and adjust the carburetor until there was just a little ripple on the (water surface)," Ernie says. "He was good, and he taught me a lot." Few anecdotes from Shorty's Chestnut Street days survive, but Ernie says, "Dave told me they used to be open 24/7 because there was no way to lock the building."



Owners and mechanics at the Shorty Anderson Auto Shop, Morgantown, pose outside the shop in the fall of 2021. From left are Shawn and Travis Rowan (owners) and Jerry Radocay, Aaron Sausen and Jammie King.

The shop specialized in recycling moonshiners' vehicles that had acquired damage, including bullet holes, in the process of outrunning revenue agents. "They had a man by the name of Jimmy Miller who fixed the bodies and painted them," Ernie says, recalling what Dave had told him. Shorty had connections to a Ford dealership in Point Marion, Pa., that helped grow his business. Those connections to the north of Morgantown remain to this day—A.B. Anderson is buried in Evergreen Memorial Park, Point Marion.

Ernie says that the shop survived The Depression by trading auto repairs for chickens, eggs, and other farm products. One of the anecdotes that illustrated the vehicle owner's trust in Shorty involves a prospective client who was sizing up the operation when an established customer came in, dropped off the keys to his vehicle and a blank check, and told Shorty to do whatever needed done in his professional opinion. The novice customer knew at that point he'd found an honest mechanic. To

this day, Shawn and Travis have customers who operate in the same manner, with credit cards replacing the blank checks.

Shorty's wife, Lillian (Cox), who served as the shop's bookkeeper, also owned a beauty school in Morgantown and was well-known in the Morgantown service-club scene. They had no children. The Andersons lived across the street from the garage, which made it convenient for Shorty to walk home for lunch and a nap. He took his last post-lunch nap on March 20, 1974, and was pronounced dead at Mon General Hospital that afternoon. Aside from a short death notice announcing service and burial details, little was made of his passing until several weeks later, when *Dominion Post* columnist Mickey Furfari, in his "Around Town" column of April 5, 1974, wrote a tribute:

"We did not know Shorty Anderson, who died recently, but we knew of him and were well aware of his excellent efforts in touching the lives of many Morgantown residents. He was a master mechanic of his trade—automobile repairing—to whom his numerous patrons looked with respect and admiration as a man. One of those offers this belated but stirring tribute:

'There is something about us which will not let us say the things we should to a man when he can savor it and know. It seems that we must wait until it is too late to say to each other what each of us yearn(s) to know. Late as it may be, what is written must be said simply because it is true and due Shorty Anderson. Over the years Shorty held the safety of our family in his hands and he never failed us. When he went over the old family car and pronounced it fit for a trip, it was ready to go. How many thousands of miles we covered I cannot say, but of this I am certain: We never suffered the discomfort, inconvenience of expense of a breakdown, or accident due to mechanical failure. To acknowledge the excellence of Shorty's work without recognizing the character which it expressed would be thoughtless and unjust. Pride of craftsmanship, honest, responsibility, integrity were hallmarks of this man!'"




Travis Rowan (left) and his uncle John Rowan stand outside the shop with the hand-lettered sign that a customer made for Shorty decades ago. The mantra appeared in the February 1949 Rotarian magazine is credited to the London, England, Rotarian. The sign transferred with the shop when John Rowan became part-owner in 1990 and when John sold it to his nephews, Travis and Shawn Rowan.

Shorty Anderson's, whose address was given as 174 Chancery Row, Morgantown, discontinued business as a corporation and surrendered its charter to the state in September 1975. Lillian C. Anderson was listed as its president. A customer, Fred Marseiller, purchased the shop and its assets that same year, and his son, Don, ran the business. Without Shorty and his years of expertise in auto mechanics, the business sputtered. In the early fall of 1978, Don called upon his friend, Ernie Rowan, to as-




A group of boys pose outside of Shorty Anderson's Auto Laundry. c. 1930.
Photo courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

sist him in the shop.

Ernie had picked up a great deal of mechanical experience working for his father, Howard, at his junkyard in Westover. "I just tore stuff apart to see how I could make it work again," Ernie says of his work at Buster's Auto Wrecking. It was a no-risk opportunity for learning, although it ran counter to dismantling vehicles for their parts. "My father had a theory, that if something was already broke, you can tear it apart and if it couldn't be fixed, it hadn't cost him any money," Ernie says of his tinkering. "I used to drive my dad crazy. I could fix a lawnmower or bulldozer, and everything in between."

Marseiller wanted to sell the shop and was quick to let Ernie know as much. The transition from helper to owner came "fast and furious," Ernie says. As he pondered the opportunity, Ernie brought his childhood friend, Rodney Blehschmidt, into the discussion. Rod's sister-in-law was Shorty's niece, but the relationship was coincidental and Rod had not known Shorty. But he was very familiar with Ernie, his mechanical abilities and trustworthiness as a friend.

"I love cars, I love people, and I love Ernie," Rod says. "We've known each other since we were kids. The Rowans were my family."

"He'd walk into our house and say, 'Hi! Mom,' and I'd walk into his and say 'Hi! Mom.' That's how close we were," says Ernie's brother, John Rowan.

Rod also came into the business with a background in auto maintenance and had already acquired Shorty's way of doing business. "I started working in Star City when I was 11 years old," Rod says. "I worked at a service station washing mail trucks. It taught me how to work and whatever you do, do it right, no matter how long it takes. We learned how to tear cars apart, back in those days, and what each part did, and we learned how to put them back together."

Despite their experience and aptitude with all things mechanical, owning and running a business was a new game for the men, both of whom were ready for a new career. "Rod and I talked it over at Thanksgiving Day," Ernie says. "We each had $10,000 to invest, and they wanted $125,000 with the equipment. Rod and I came up with $20,000, and the bank was willing to loan us $70,000. Mrs. Anderson had become really attached to us, and she

gave us (the balance of the sale price) with the condition she could run the (accounting side) of the place. She stayed on with us and was a great lady."

Rodney and Ernie became the new owners on Jan. 1, 1979. Both men say the shop needed updating and equipment. "There were no overhead lights in the shop, just a couple of 40-watt bulbs on the walls. It had horrible lighting, and they just had trouble lights and floor jacks." They upgraded as finances allowed and re-built the business the same way Shorty had, one satisfied customer at a time.

Ernie cites an example of how the men always went the extra mile to meet the needs of their customers. The challenge involved a Corvette that was to be used for prom transportation on a Saturday, but the "rear end went out of it" a day before the event, says Ernie. He and Rob worked on the vehicle through the night to get it ready for the owner, a regular customer of the shop.

"We had great customers, they were awesome, awesome people. And we took care of our people," Ernie says. "They were more like family to us than customers. We had an awesome bunch of people." Ernie says he followed his father's philosophy of taking risks. "He said, 'If you don't take a risk and try something, you'll never get ahead. And if it fails, I know how to live on nothing,'" Ernie recalls. Rod, however, was conservative when it came to new ventures and investments. By 1999 he'd grown tired of the relentless shop upgrades and learning required to diagnose and repair modern vehicles. Ernie bought out Rod's share of the business and approached his brother, John, about becoming a partner.

Rod had this advice for John, also a dear friend from childhood. "I said, 'You are going to work your a— off for a while, for a little bit of money, and put in a lot of hours. But it will catch up with you and you'll start making money." With two progressive owners in the driver's seat, the garage was updated and the property's income potential maximized with construction of 10 second-floor apartments and a storage-buildings sideline. Their Unlces owned the shop until 2018, when Travis and Shawn purchased it following a yearlong apprenticeship. Ironically, Tom Rowan, their father, never owned the shop or expressed interest in auto mechanics—he made his living in the coal mines. And so did his sons, where they learned a great deal about repairing machinery. "If you can work on the rusty junk they got down there in the mines, you can work on anything," Travis says.

Shawn, who spent six years in the coal mining industry, says he learned auto mechanics from his father and by just watching things work. "I started doing this stuff when I was a kid, helping my dad," he says. "I never had any formal training, just some mechanical training in the coal mine's classes. It really comes down to common sense—watching the moving parts and seeing how something works."

In the interim between high school and their tours of duty in coal mining, the brothers tried their hands at construction. The effort lasted about eight years before they closed the business for a lack of work and the lure of better money and regular paychecks in the coal mines. As the years passed and coal mines in the region closed, Travis and Shawn realized they needed something more reliable for their livelihoods.

"We wanted a career we could get excited about," Shawn says. "We knew our uncles had talked about hanging it up, retiring, and we started talking about the idea and started the long process of buying the place."

"We knew our uncles didn't want to see this place go to a stranger," Travis says. They could not conduct business as their uncles had, however. "There were no com-




Shawn and Travis (right) Rowan purchased the Shorty Anderson Auto Shop in 2018 from their uncles John and Ernie Rowan. They take a break in their Stewart Street location, which the business's namesake, A.B. "Shorty" Anderson, moved into in 1949.

puters here," Travis says. "Everything was hand-written. That was the first thing we did; I got a computer for the office. My uncle did everything the old-fashioned way, with a hammer. He used a vise to press bearings."

The brothers expanded the number of lifts in the shop, as well, and added tools that made the operation more efficient and provided better service for the customers. The things they refused to do were just as significant: no advertising and no social media presence. As Morgantown magazine notes, "They don't spend valuable garage time posting on Facebook."

"We have never, ever advertised," Travis says. The owners say they have customers whose patronage goes back to the days when Shorty Anderson owned the place and gained their lifelong trust and business.

"There are a lot of customers here who are like family," Shawn says. "That sense of unity, it is kind of a thing of the past. You don't get that sense of family anywhere else."

Neither brother sees that trust as an entitlement, however. Both have worked seven days a week, 12 hours a day, to bring the shop up to modern standards while maintaining the trust and reputation established by the founder and perpetuated by their uncles and Blehschmidt, all of who still stop by the garage occasionally to shoot the breeze and check up on the operation.

"Rod's the oldest thing in the shop," John says during one of those visits, when asked about what remains of the original Shorty Anderson garage there. Rod's not offended. "John and I are closer than brothers, closer to anybody else in the world," Rod says as John gives him a parting hug.

CARL E. FEATHER is a longtime contributor to GOLDENSEAL. He and his wife, Ruth, live in Bruceton Mills (Preston County). Check out his blog at thefeathercottage.com for videos, stories, and photos from his beloved West Virginia.

# West Virginia had Another "Famous" Shorty Anderson, in the Southern Section, During the Early 20th Century

**By Carl E. Feather**

According to the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, Shorty Anderson was a star baseball and tennis player in the sports' early days in Bluefield. A 1912 photograph of the semi-professional team on which he played suggests that Anderson lived up to his moniker with his diminutive height. Then again, all of Bluefield's memorable players from that era had colorful or memorable names, including Red Hawley, Spittoon Potts, H.P. "Horsepower: Walters, Bugs Beatty, Newt Kee, Boots Williams, Windy Turner, Cotton Carter, Skinny Bruce, and Flip Looney.

Born Sept. 22, 1883, in Dublin, Va., Walter Stuart "Shorty" Anderson was the eldest child of Ferdinand and Dorathula Ann Minnich Anderson. A brother, Lee Farmer Anderson (1891-1961), also lived in Bluefield. Other siblings were Frederick Trinkle, William French, Olin Price and Claude Johnon Anderson, and a sister, Nellie Anderson Williams.

According to his obituary in the March 11, 1947, *Charleston Daily Mail*, he was assistant cashier at the First National Bank of Bluefield, where he had worked since 1906.

Prior to his semi-professional baseball career, Shorty Anderson played on the Bluefield Stars basketball team, whose other players included Frank Douthat, Ray Prince, Harry Shepherd, John Mecher, Frank Looney, Buck French, Fred Hawley, Howell Gibberson, Hubert Baldwin, and Bob Gibberson. "Jetter." William Jones managed the team.

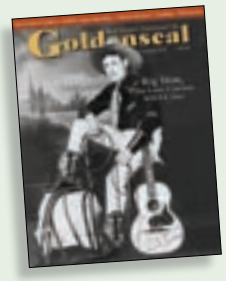
W.L. Otey, a Bluefield resident and baseball fan, organized in 1906 the paid, semi-professional Bluefield Ball Club, which played against Pocahontas, Bramwell, Princeton, Gary, and other teams in the coalfield league. A ballfield was built for the team on Adams Street (later College Avenue) at the East River. The field included a grandstand and bleachers, built in 1912, that could accommodate 1,500 spectators and required more than 40,000 feet of lumber.

Ray Prince eventually came to own the team, which drew talent from both Bluefield and Virginia. It swept the section in its first year, "bowling over all opposition," including chief rival, Princeton. "Shorty Anderson secured three singles out of four times to bat and scored three runs, a very good record for a man who has not played regularly for some time," reported the newspaper of a match against the Rialto Specials, September 5, 1906. Reporting on a match between Bluefield and the team from Richmond, Virginia, the newspaper praised the work of Anderson, "who ate up everything that came anywhere in the neighborhood of second base." Bluefield won the contest 1-0.




Portrait of Baseball Player 'Shorty', Raleigh County, ca. 1909-1910. From "Beckley U.S.A." by Harlow Warren. Taken at Washington and Lee University. K. A. 'Shorty' was captain in 1910 and a possible Beckleyan. Photo courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

The Bluefield Ball Club did not fare so well the following season. On May 18, 1907, Shorty scored his team's only run in a match with Gary, which won the game 16:1. Kentucky, which was defeated in eleven strenuous innings—Shorty evened the score in the ninth inning with a clean single that made necessary the extra innings. Writing of the team's 1907 organization, the newspaper noted that "Shorty Anderson is still in town and was down to the baseball park yesterday taking off some



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surplus flesh, so as to be in the best of condition for the games … everyone remembers Shorty. He is the man who was always there with a two base hit when Bluefield needed about two scores to tie the game, or one score to win."

By 1911 Anderson was playing for the city's Kiwanis baseball team. On July 19 of that year, he was seriously injured in an automobile crash while enroute to a match in Princeton. The crash was attributed to a front tire falling off of the four-seat Buick as it was descending a grade. The rear tire was pulled from the rim, pitching the car over and pinning Anderson, the chauffeur, and another player under the vehicle. Anderson was the only one to suffer injuries of consequence—a torn ligament and slash on his leg. While the other three players went on to Princeton for the competition, the loss of Anderson was felt. The game ended in a tie after 11 innings; darkness forced the end. Anderson recovered and returned with the semi-professional team in 1912, playing second base.

In 1920 the "Smokehouse Giants" baseball team was reorganized as a preliminary step toward organization of a semi-professional Bluefield team. Ray Prince was coach, and Shorty was signed on, along with Frank Douthat, Boots Williams, and Ernest Looney. The following year, Shorty played on the Kiwanis team, and there are references to him being on the Methodists Men's Club team in the early 1920s, as well.

Shorty was still in the game in September 1924, when he played on the Kiwanis team in a benefit for the Community Christmas Tree. "…Shorty Anderson behind the bat, is making such a record that no doubt Manager Griffith, of the Nationals, will have one of his scouts on the job looking him over for the next season," the newspaper reported, tongue in cheek.

Two months later, Shorty "batted like Babe Ruth" in a rematch with the Rotarian Lions, who lost 9-32.

As late as 1930, Shorty's exploits on the baseball field were being reported by the newspaper. In 1932, he was among the community's "old timers" who gathered at the Colonial Theatre for a special showing of the film, *Madison Square Garden*. He dropped out of view after that season, but in 1951, "Press Box" columnist Stubby Currence selected Anderson and Bill Adair for the second-base position in a fictional "all-time, all-Bluefield baseball team."

Shorty's athletic abilities went beyond second base. In the 1920s, when tennis was played on an independent scale, Shorty Anderson was a top ranker in the Bluefield tennis circles. And in 1909, he was making a name for himself in the Bluefield Bowling League, winning the $5 prize for highest individual score, 257 pins. In 1940, he ended one up in an 18-hole match at the Club Championship golf tournament held at Bluefield Country Club.

Shorty Anderson died of a heart ailment, March 12, 1947, and is buried in Monte Vista Park Cemetery, Bluefield. He had no children.

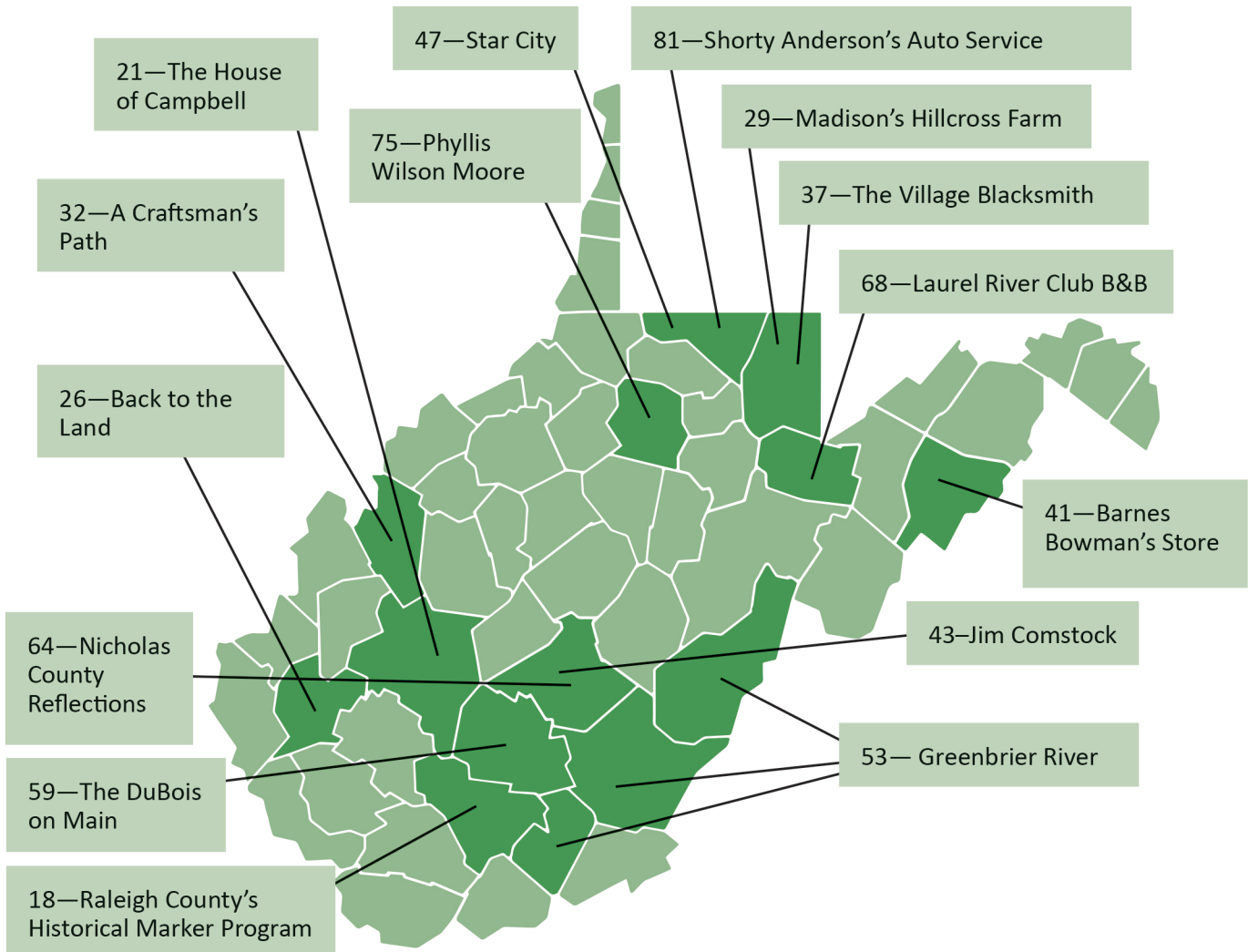


Fiddle display at a Clifftop vendor booth, 2015.
Photo by Steve Brightwell

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