Goldenseal

Volume 5 Number 1 January-March 1979


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Goldenseal

A Quarterly Forum for Documenting West Virginia's Traditional Life

Volume 5, Number 1 ❧ January-March 1979

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40 Fairmont Printing Company

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305.

San Antonio, TX
August 31, 1978

Editor:
Our folklorist fell heir to a couple of copies of GOLDENSEAL, and is very interested in receiving copies of your publication. . . .

We are really looking forward to receiving your journal; it really is quite tasteful. Thank you so much for including us in your circulation.

Sincerely yours,
Judy Ranney, Director, Library Services
Institute of Texan Cultures
The University of Texas

Johnson City, TN
September 26, 1978

Editor:
As Chairman of the Department of Geography and Geology at East Tennessee State University, and a native of West Virginia (Parkersburg), I would like to ask that my name be put on your mailing list to receive copies of your quarterly publication of GOLDENSEAL.

I had the pleasure of reading a copy of this publication recently and was much impressed. If there are back issues available I would be happy to receive them.

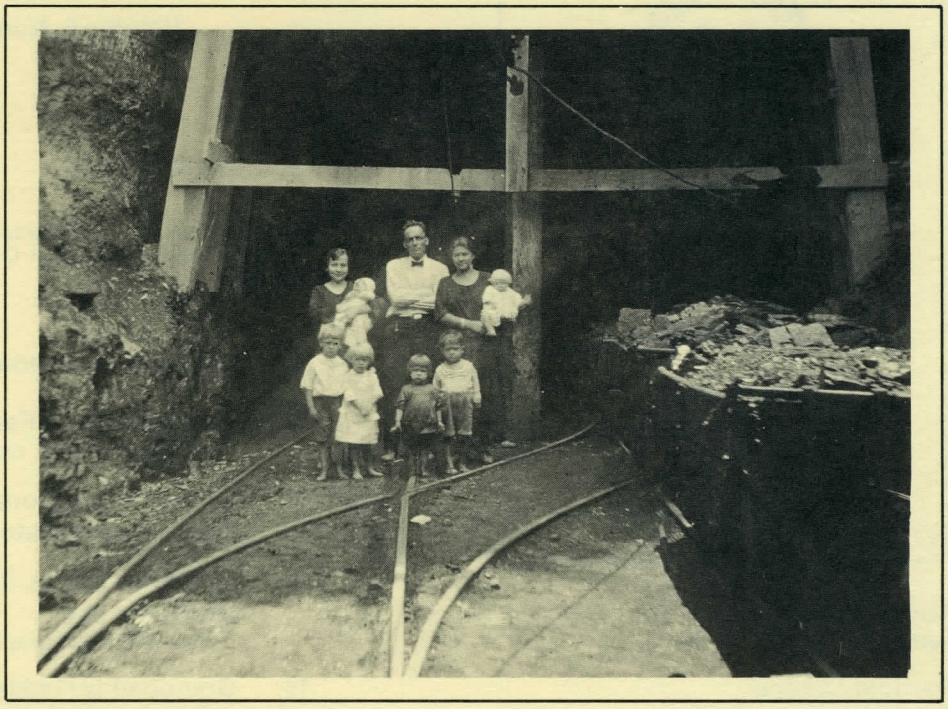
Sincerely yours,
Donald H. Poole
Chairman
Department of Geography & Geology
East Tennessee State University

Cumberland, MD
November 2, 1978

Editor:
As a subscriber to *Hillbilly* and *Wonderful West Virginia,* I thought I was getting good coverage of my native state (b. Newburg, Preston County), but I discovered GOLDENSEAL when visiting with another West Virginia native and find I've been missing out on something good. It was the January-March, 1978, issue—not only interesting, but I've made note of the books I want to order.

How can one become a subscriber?

Very truly yours,
Mary V. Acre



Fayetteville, WV
October 22, 1978

Editor:
I am enclosing a photograph of the main entrance to South Caperton mine which was owned and operated by the late Caperton brothers (Mr. Harry Caperton, Charleston, WV and W. Gaston Caperton of Slab Fork, WV).

Identification of the people in the picture is back row left, Mrs. Jack Estep (with baby in arms and her two children directly in front of her) Dallas W. Stotts, Madeline J. Stotts (deceased) with son Alfred Stotts in her arms, directly in front of Mrs. Stotts are two more Stotts children, Virginia and Frank.

Mrs. Stotts was a native of France and was married to Dallas Stotts November 11, 1918. Dallas W. Stotts was General Mine Foreman for approximately six years of the South Caperton Mine.

Please return the photograph.

Sincerely,
Dallas W. Stotts

El Dorado, AR
September 28, 1978

Editor:
An "Arkie" wants to say thanks for the memories that you brought in your volume 4 GOLDENSEAL. The "shape notes" were used by my father in teaching singing schools years ago. I have the old Sacred Harp Song Book with only four shaped notes.

My ancestors came by way of your part of the country, on to Georgia; then part of the Carter family moved to Arkansas and Texas about the turn of the century. I think most of the Cohrons stayed in the East, except a few moved to Mississippi.

You have the most outstanding forum for documenting traditional life and your photographs are very interesting. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Ruby Carter Johnstone

Ithaca, NY
November 20, 1978

Editor:
Thank you for your great helpfulness and thoughtfulness in photocopying the GOLDENSEAL article on Carl Martin and Howard Armstrong for me. It is the first detailed interview with them I have been able to find. All the others that I have seen references to are printed in unobtainable magazines —as this one would be if you had not so kindly taken the trouble to copy this article.

Thank you also for sending me the two issues of GOLDENSEAL. I am very impressed with the magazine, which seems to me to take an admirably broad view of its scope and thus to be valuable both to West Virginians and to people interested in American traditional culture in general. I, for one, would like to be put on the mailing list, and, if possible, to receive any of the back issues.

I will send you a notice about the University of Washington's film of Martin, Bogan, and the Armstrongs when it is completed. In the meantime, in case anyone needs to know beforehand, it is a film of their performance in Seattle on April 12, 1975, at the Old Time Music Festival. In the film they perform "The Barnyard Dance," "Carl's Blues," and "If You's a Viper." The film project will also include a film on the autoharpist Kilby Snow.

Yours sincerely,
Philip Yampolsky

Winchester, VA
November 21, 1978

Editor:
I have read and enjoyed your fine magazine during my frequent visits to the Hampshire County Library in Romney. I am impressed with its quality and the comprehensive nature of reporting on the many facets of life in West Virginia. Giving notice to the many and varied cultural achievements of its people is well worth the time and effort you obviously put into GOLDENSEAL. I would like to personally thank you for providing such a worthy service to the residents of West Virginia.

I am a counselor at Timber Ridge School in Cross Junction, VA. Timber Ridge is a residential school for boys (ages 11 - 17) who come mostly from the D.C. Metropolitan area and have never been exposed to life outside of their immediate home environment. It has been my experience that these boys are very responsive to new and different people, places and things. GOLDENSEAL provides that information on the events and opportunities that West Virginia affords to all who want to learn more about its history and culture. The addition of your magazine to our resource library would be a definite asset and would serve as a resource material unequaled by any other publication on West Virginia that I have yet encountered. Thank you.

Yours Truly,
Leroy James, Counselor
Timber Ridge School

A Fond Farewell

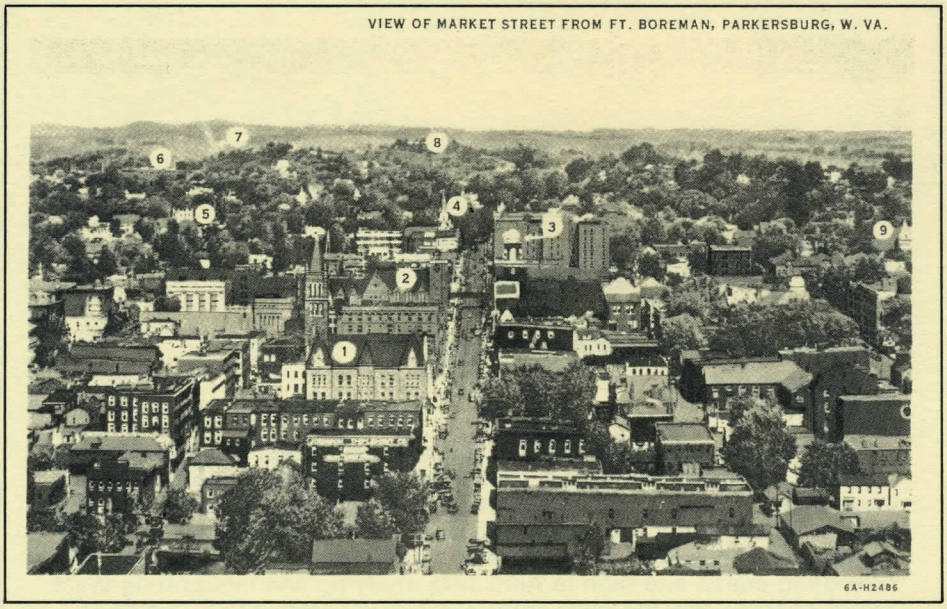
By Tom Screven, former editor GOLDENSEAL

By the time this issue reaches you, your editor will be established in a new residence in his native state Alabama. On December 15, 1978, I leave West Virginia and the Department of Culture and History. It has been a decision that took many months to make. My ties with this fascinating State have become extremely close in my seven years here, first promoting crafts, and then in April 1975 studying and interpreting West Virginia's traditional life while entrusted with your forum GOLDENSEAL.

Many, many people have been important in building this publication. Quite a number must necessarily be unmentioned here, yet to the friends, colleagues, and other readers who have offered support and expressed encouragement over these years I extend my warmest thanks. A few most certainly deserve my special gratitude. They are, or were, mainly public officials, while at least two are simply supremely talented citizens. Donald L. Page, Arts and Crafts Division Director of the erstwhile Department of Commerce, was my boss who helped instigate our first effort, *Hearth and Fair,* GOLDENSEAL'S parent publication. Lysander Dudley, our boss and then Commerce Department Commissioner, backed both projects, as did our governor, Arch A. Moore, Jr. Of course GOLDENSEAL'S main granddaddy, angel, and booster has been present Commissioner Norman L. Fagan. When Governor Moore brought him back to West Virginia in 1974, Mr. Fagan was thoroughly supportive of the idea of a State traditional life magazine. But of course GOLDENSEAL is just one of many feathers in the cap of your ever creative, sensitive head arts administrator.

Two others contributed immeasurably to the development of this magazine. Colleen Anderson was our first designer and invaluable editorial assistant. We always coveted her broad talents as she pursued several other interests. The most valuable single person in this project during its first couple of years was Carl Fleischhauer, then a reporter and cinematographer at WWVU-TV in Morgantown. Carl has always made his remarkable photographs available to us, but he has assisted in so many other ways, especially in the early months by offering perceptive, always highly constructive criticism. His present work at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress allows his services to be available to folk cultural documentarians over the entire country, a plus for the nation that outweighs our loss of his generous, while unofficial, services.

I part with gratitude to and affection for many West Virginians. My dearest hope is that GOLDENSEAL will continue and thrive as a means for documenting the State's awesomely rich traditional culture. Commissioner Fagan is scouting for a new editor as this is written in mid-December, and he hopes to select my successor in January. I urge former and prospective contributors to submit material for publication whenever possible. GOLDENSEAL will thrive only if many of you readers who are as yet strangers to us come forward and share what you know of West Virginia's past.



Sent from Weirton to San Francisco, California, in 1928, the card's printed reverse key reads: 1. Wood County Court House. 2. City Building. 3. St. Francis Xaviers Catholic Church. 4. First Baptist Church. 5. First Methodist Episcopal Church. 6. Central Junior-Senior High School. 7. W. Va. Route 2. 8. Reservoir. 9. Washington Junior High School.

Former Editor Donates Post Card Collection to Archives and History Department

The post cards seen on these pages are from a group of some 60 West Virginia scenes I have collected over my seven years in the State and, before departing, donated to the Archives and History Division of the Department of Culture and History. This selection is accompanied by little researched information, but they were selected, first, because of their unusual qualities, and, second, in order to stimulate others to donate such artifacts to the State.

The importance of every citizen's striving to donate print materials in their possession to the State cannot be stressed enough, for far too much of this matter ends up in smoke and in garbage dumps. Future historians and other scholars will benefit immeasurably from the artifacts we are able to channel into the State Archives. Below is a statement from the Archives and History Division about their policy and focus regarding donors. If readers have questions about donations to the State, they may contact Ms. Ellen Hassig, archivist in the Division.
—T. S.

Photo and Print Collection: Policy and Scope

I. The objective of the collection is to collect, preserve, and make accessible for research the visual images of West Virginia's history and culture.

II. The scope of the collection covers the history of the State; visual images about West Virginia, and those by and about West Virginians. Of particular interest are images portraying various scenes: coal mines, coal mining towns, the coal, lumber, chemical, or glass industries in the State, specific buildings and views of towns and cities, events such as parades, political campaigns, and views illustrating the life or culture of the State and the surrounding Appalachian region. Broader images sought are about the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, the World Wars (to a lesser degree), national events and their application to the State, such as the Great Depression, the campaign of John W. Davis for President, etc. Other subjects of interest are the State's religion, folklife, music, and views portraying general life-styles.

III. Types of materials on West Virginia collected are photographs, stereographs, engravings, etchings, lithographs, woodcuts and wood engraving, tintypes, ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, glass plate negatives, and art prints. The Department is interested in acquiring tintypes, ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, and glass plate negatives on any subject.

IV. Policy
A. All items are unconditional gifts to the people and State of West Virginia.
B. All such gifts are tax deductible.
C. If the donor wishes to retain the original photo or print, the Department will produce a copy of that print for its collection and return the original to the owner. There is no tax deduction available under these circumstances. The Department retains the right to refuse to copy any images it does not consider of sufficient historical importance. This applies mostly to family portraits and photo albums, especially if the portraits are unidentified.
D. If the donor wishes to donate an original image and wishes to have a copy of the item, the Department will furnish a copy to the donor.
E. The Department retains the right to utilize the images in any way necessary, in accordance with its policies of promoting historical research and disseminating knowledge of the State and its history.

V. For more information contact
Archives and History Division
Department of Culture and History
Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305
Phone: 304-348-0230

(Continued on page 65)

'A Whole Lot to it, Buddy, A Whole Lot More Than Meets The Eye'

Text and Photographs by Elaine Eff

ANY list of the most valued resources in the State of West Virginia would of course feature coal, oil, natural gas, and lumber. My ramblings the month of July over much of the State, however, has lead me to top that list with perhaps the most accessible and priceless natural treasure, West Virginia's people, and in particular the native artists and commentators whose collective expressions derive from no other source than the fertile West Virginia earth.

Traditional visual artists often cater to a private audience, engaging so limited a following that the pursurer must ferret him and his works out of a living room, store, or garage. The artist who produces for his enjoyment alone and generally for a local market frequently hesitates to call himself by such a grandiose term as "artist." "I never took a course in my life," or "I've been doing this stuff all my life," are standard responses to the mere mention of the term. "An artist is someone who *knows how* to paint," I was once told by a truly gifted former waterman and carnival promoter turned painter; "and I just *like* what I'm doing," he commented, discounting his own work as too enjoyable!

My mission this summer was to locate and document folk artists in West Virginia, those working in any medium from the conventional oil on canvas to the unexpected—hubcaps and other scrap. My travels took me to dozens of front porches across the State, to hospitals, prisons, and graveyards as well. Painters and carvers, as might be expected, were most commonly found, perhaps because they are most easily identifiable as "artists" and in that sense are universally understood and accepted. Carvers abound in areas where native wood—the tools, and therefore the inspiration—is abundant, and where working with one's hands is valued.

H. R. Baker's grocery store at Sprague.

It is no coincidence that the three men whose lives and work I chose to focus on here are retired workers who have used their leisure time for the release which creative endeavors provide. They use their time that would otherwise be claimed by required acts to produce objects of unquestionable artistic merit. The youngest of the three is 74 years old. Their careers have included nearly every conceivable labor executed by a West Virginian: work in coal, railroads, logging, bridge and building construction, food supply, entertainment, mechanics, and burial. Together these men could probably

Top. H. R. Baker.
Bottom. On the right at the rear of Bakers Grocery is the grocer-artist's "studio-gallery."

write as comprehensive a story of the State as anyone.

It is important to note the relationship of West Virginians to the land, a terrain they both love and curse, and might never own below the surface. This bittersweet romance has nurtured a core of stalwarts whose lot it is to either condemn or improve. The following discussion records the attempts of three men among many who respond to their personal landscapes and have either documented it as history or assembled it for the future, literally using it to make meaningful, colorful statements about their positions as both artists and observers in a world of change.

H. R. Baker

Raleigh Countian H. R. Baker is probably best known to folks near Sprague as the fellow who runs Baker's Grocery on Rural Acres Drive. On his next birthday he will turn 76, and if his appraisal, "I was born with a brush in my hand,"[1] is correct, it is no wonder his work is such a natural extension of his life. As a schoolboy in Kanawha County, he was the student chosen to execute pictures on the blackboard for his classmates to copy. He has long been sought out by neighbors and strangers alike to copy special scenes they know only he can do. The secret of his personal style of painting, which he calls "soft work," as compared to the "masters in art" whose work "you can't make heads or tails out of," is in what Mr. Baker calls "bouncing out a picture." In getting every part placed just right in relation to the center, he uses an elaborate system of little marks and scales that assure perfect "bounce." "And that's been my main object," he contends, "to learn how to bounce out pictures that way. You know, if you get out of bounce in one way and then make something bigger than it oughta be . . . well, there's a whole lot to it buddy, a whole lot more than meets the eye." His art is as much science as it is visual delight.

Walking into Baker's Grocery, you sense at once this is no ordinary market. The highly colorful, neatly crammed shelves tell you the owner's eye for design and color is special. Easily overlooked due to the surrounding rainbow is Mr. Baker's "studio-gallery" in the rear of the store where there is a constantly changing exhibition featuring the artist and his work. It is worth noting that Mr. Baker credits the source of many of his works

[1] Taped interview July 17, 1978, at Beckley.

as "pictures that come across my mind."

In his early years, Mr. Baker, who was born in Gauley Bridge, worked as a carpenter for the C & O Railroad on sites along the New River. A painting he did of the New River Gorge reads like a visual history of his travels along that body of water, where he found work in lumbering and later as a ventilating man in the mines—as well as a wife and a home. Since 1951 his store near Sprague has been his chief outpost and point of departure for the New River some ten miles east.

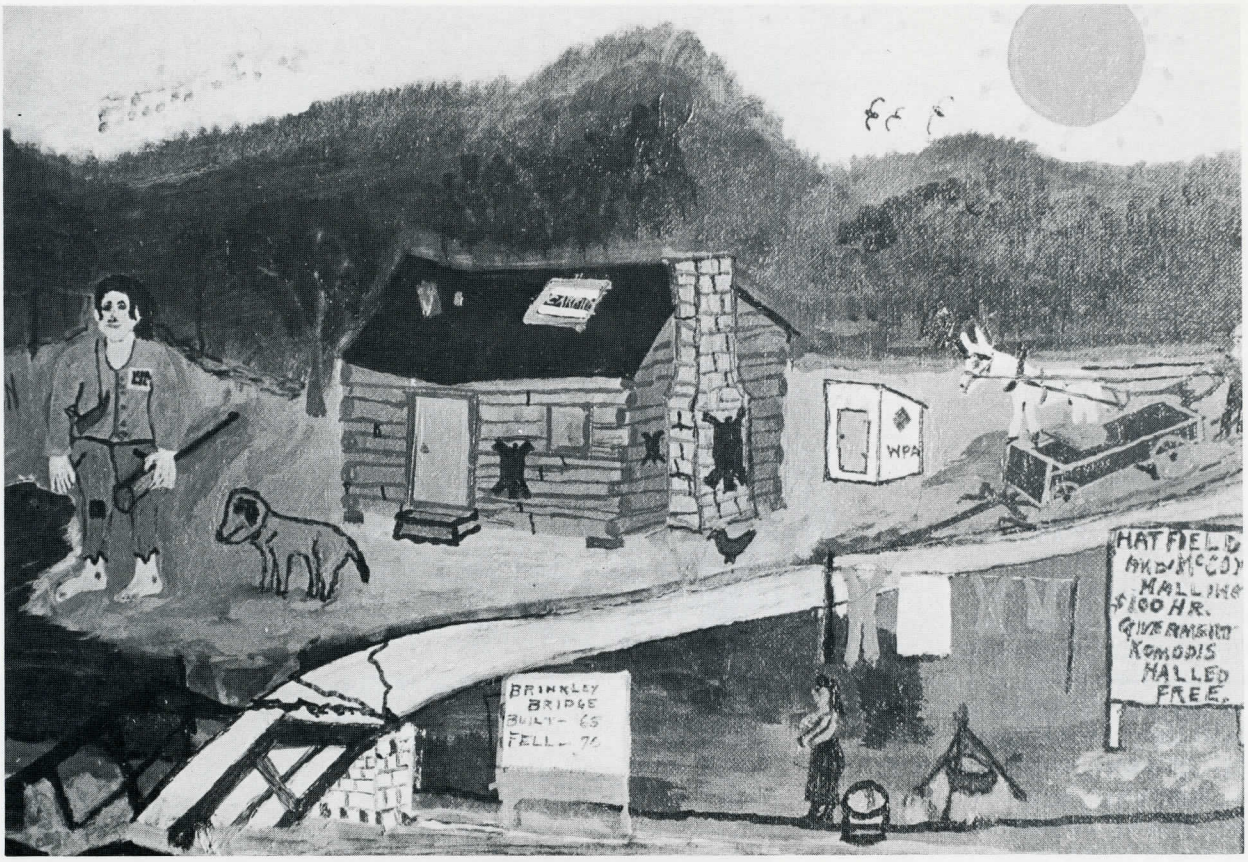
A good part of his *art* (his term) is taken from photographs and other printed materials. One of the talents he has become noted for around the Beckley area is taking a black and white photograph, changing the scale, perhaps adding cropped out parts, and converting the original to a full color rendering. Business is particularly brisk at Christmastime when he is asked to do portraits and copy work by a growing list of patrons who value his work.

His pictures are scattered all over the country now. He hardly remembers where any more, though he knows that one he did of the coal loading process went to the United Mine Workers of America offices in Washington, D.C. His work has wide appeal and it is no wonder. Much of the man, soft and warm, yet sharp and bright, is contained in each work.

Baker commented that "you don't really get famous until you're 500 miles under or 500 years dead." He continues to paint, however, because, "I just think art is a wonderful thing, I really do, from beginning to ending," and his work is evidence enough.

Top. One of Mr. Dave Tamplin's West Virginia landscape paintings.

Bottom. Holding a pan of food for his "pet" fish, Mr. Tamplin heads down to the edge of the Kanawha River at Boomer.



Detail of Mr. Tamplin's painting, "W. Va. Son 1963 in the Eyes of David Brinkley."

Dave Tamplin

A resident of Boomer for all of his 84 years, Dave Tamplin is intensely proud of his "foreparents' " role in the founding of the town, "right after the roadway was built from Richmond to Point Pleasant."[2] He tells the amusing story of how his people on his mother's side came from Virginia "in 17 and 85, and there was three cousins, all of them named John Huddleston. They traveled through the wilderness and when they got to Kanawha Falls they decided they would start settling. Since they all had the name of John, each took a middle name or a nickname. So one took the name of John Boomer and that's where Boomer got its name." The land they owned once numbered in the thousands of acres, "everything from here to Gauley Bridge." Needless to say, it was all sold off over the years, coal found, fortunes made and lost. The only link to those days are Mr. Tamplin's stories, tempered over the years by his good sense, his love of a good tale, and the pictures he paints of subjects that once again survey the land over which the three Johns from Virginia once traveled.

Dave Tamplin is proud of his past and of his present. He is pleased he never worked in coal a day in his life. His labors instead focused on serving the men who did—as a mechanic, a service station owner, and later as the local movie house proprietor. Every bit as active today, he has turned to painting scenes of places he knows, remembers, and just "gets in [his] mind."

And more importantly, he attends to his pets who live in the Kanawha River, running just behind his house. Those fish, a school of carp who answer to names like Big Boy and King, have kept April to November dinner dates with him at 6:30 P.M. for seven years now. Mr. Tamplin's unique pastime was recognized when the nationally syndicated newspaper cartoon "Ripley's Believe it or Not," featured him and his pets in a Sunday column.

His matter-of-fact relationship with his peanut butter sandwich-eating pets is indicative of how he casually responds to some of his 84 years of collected experiences. He numbers among them the witnessing of the Hatfield's last stand in Boomer in 1911. His memory is acute and complete, an embellished encyclopedia. "You take an educated person, he'll see one of those things and he'll write it all down, and if he ever needs to remember he'll go back and look where he wrote it all down, but people like myself, we have brain cells up there and when we see anything, it goes up there and it stays there until we want to use it. Just go up there and open one of those cells and there it is."

Turning to Mr. Tamplin's artistic pursuits, we can assume that many of those brain cells were summoned into use. He refers to some 40 framed paintings that hang in his "gallery-den" as "just pictures." Because he's "never had a lesson in [his] life," he insists he is therefore not an artist, and, further, "Real artists don't use the color that is really the color of the scene," to him the basic distinguishing factor between the two types. When

[2]Taped interview, August 3, 1978, at Boomer.

Mr. Tamplin ran a theatre he "used to paint signs of pictures we were gonna show. That's where I got to using brush and painting. So I just took a notion after I painted two numbered [paint-by-number] pictures, I said, well, I'll just paint my own pictures. Ain't no sense in painting someone else's pictures. So then I started painting out of my mind or scenes I'd seen."

It is not uncommon for octagenarian artists like Mr. Tamplin to receive paint-by-number sets for gifts, often after an illness, and soon determine that the medium is right but the restrictions are wrong. The need to break out of the predetermined lines, colors, and subjects has fortunately loosed numerous artists on the road to their own creative milieu.

The pictures on the painter's walls at home are primarily landscapes, each one accompanied by a story from the annals of West Virginia history or geography or from Mr. Tamplin's lively mind. One picture that stands out for its inclusion of people is titled "West Virginia Son 1963 in the Eyes of David Brinkley."

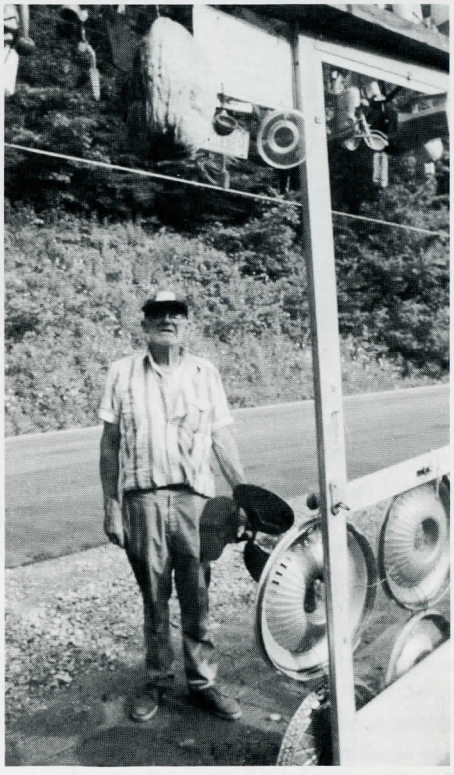
"That's the one I like best of all. About nineteen hundred and sixty-three this David Brinkley . . . Every evening him and Chuck, newscasters, was on television. Every evening he had something to say about the poor people in West Virginia. And he was visiting Logan County and those counties over there, McDowell and some of them little counties that was in bad shape. Well, I claim that he wore out six cameras taking the same picture over there of a man laying on a railroad track until he wore a hole down in the tie, and he was too lazy to go somewhere and get him a job. So, anyway, every night he had something to say about the poor people in West Virginia and how they were starving, and I set down and I painted that 'West Virginia Son in 1963 in the Eyes of David Brinkley.' Now, that's what West Virginians looked like in David Brinkley's eyes. Then over here I painted Hatfield and McCoys, that's after they became friendly. 'Hauling, $1 an hour. Government,' That's when the government's givin' commodities. 'Government commodities hauled free.' So over here we paint one of Roosevelt's little offices he's putting out all over the country. 'WPA: We Piddle Around.' And down here the damn fools, they built a bridge and they called it the Brinkley Bridge, but anyway after a couple of five years it fell, and I put the bridge in there falling. And this was the old mother begging the son not to go hunting, and he's got his dog and he's fixed to go. There's a carbide can. They shipped carbide from here in cans and that's a picture of the way the cans looked when you's open them up. So he patched his roof with a carbide can and over here was a piece of duPont where he patched it over there. And there's his bear skins and his other little skins and his couple chickens. So that's how I come to paint that one."

There may not be "anything fancy about the pictures," Mr. Tamplin insists. "There's no real artist's work in them. I just painted them." But as he himself says, "Every picture has a story behind it." And without these visual documents to stand behind them, Mr. Tamplin's memories plucked from inert brain cells would remain lost forever. It is people like Mr. Tamplin, known to all the folks around Boomer as the "little guy with the big cigar," who endow our lives with humor and color we might otherwise miss.

Omehaw Kessinger

Color comes into our lives in unexpected ways—not always from a work on canvas reflecting experience or vision like Messrs. Baker or Tamplin. The environment, a strong and enduring feature, can be interpreted for two-dimensional enjoyment or otherwise converted for aesthetic or more practical use. In the same way the painters discussed above evoke their realities and memories, Omehaw Kessinger, a retired jack-of-many trades, is in the midst of a project, a dream, a business, work of art, if you will, which is as much a product of his Boone County surroundings as are any painter's more conventional works. If you have traveled Route 3 south of Racine within the past three years, you have no doubt noticed the work in progress at Seth, an 110-foot long, 11-foot high fence from which are displayed baubles and necessities, treasures, and discards. Over 700 objects hang in the ever-changing exhibition of architect-curator and trader, Omehaw Kessinger.

He began building The Fence in his seventy-first year. At 74, he sees no end in sight to his art object, conversation piece, store window, and road barrier. The Fence started with "just a bunch of little old toy soldiers, just eight or ten on each post. Well, they looked pretty good. Got them on there, and then I put on a four-inch board plum around the top, decorated it plum full . . . Then I kept going on up just with anything I could get hold of. People carrying the stuff in, leaving it off on the yard, paper bag and all. Hardly a soul passes by without donating something to The Fence. Just about everybody stops and looks, and most of the people will always go back to their car and dig out something to hang on that Fence before the leave."[3]



Omehaw Kessinger near The Fence at his home at Seth.

For Mr. Kessinger, a retired construction worker, logger, and rambler, who has "visited some 37 of these United States and more towns than I can remember," The Fence has become a full-time job. He never knows

[3]Taped Interview, July 27, 1978, at Seth. "Little bit of everything about it, you know. Seven-hundred and some different things on there. I can go over and count them," Kessinger offers.

The front of Mr. Kessinger's fence.

The back of The Fence.

who will be coming by or what he can expect to find lying in his yard when he gets up in the morning. "I'm out there at that old fence hanging things up, replacing things. I'm trading all the time, you know." He is continually exercising his skills at tale-spinning and trading, the latter a vocation he hasn't practiced for some 40 years since his horse-trading days in Lincoln County. He is able to pass along his knowledge to the schoolchildren who pass by on bicycles or on foot, never failing to buy or sell an essential article.

One young fellow in particular who was short on funds was only able to pay half of the required 50 cents for a coveted piece. Mr. Kessinger let the lad take home the item and trusted him for the other quarter. A man who probably loves talking to children as much as anything suspects that this indebtedness has caused his customer to walk on the other side of the road now whenever he passes. "The next time I see him," Kessinger claims, "I'm going to call him over to take the quarter *I owe him.* I'll tell him that he gave me two quarters by mistake. Poor kid will probably never go into debt again." The Fence acts as teacher as well as adornment. It also blocks off the highway which would otherwise be a distracting and harried front porch vista some 15 yards from Mr. Kessinger's door.

The Fence has added an artistic dimension not only to its creator's life but to the lives of all those who pass by. It serves as a pleasant memorial to the mobility and also to the waste in American life. It causes hurried travelers to stop and find pleasure, amusement, something to buy, and conversation. Mr. Kessinger, who says he spent the time between his nineteenth and thirtieth years rambling by freight train from place to place, is more than happy for his viewers, donors, customers to take away a momento or leave a part of themselves on The Fence.

The Fence has interesting parallels with other works of monumental scale like the Watts Towers in Los Angeles. Built of bottles, ceramic fragments, and cement, the Towers were an Italian-American's attempt to show his pleasure with his country of immigration. Alternately considered an eyesore and a treasure, the Watts Towers are presently under consideration for the National Register of Historic Sites. A commentator wrote, "If a man who has not labeled himself an artist happens to produce a work of art, he is likely to cause a lot of confusion and inconvenience."[4] For the moment, Omehaw Kessinger continues to build with the help of his friends, strangers, and the elements, allowing us to enjoy and ponder the future of his masterpiece, of art, and of the roadsides of West Virginia and the nation.

[4]Calvin Trillin. "I Know I Want to do Something," *The New Yorker,* May 29, 1965, p. 72.

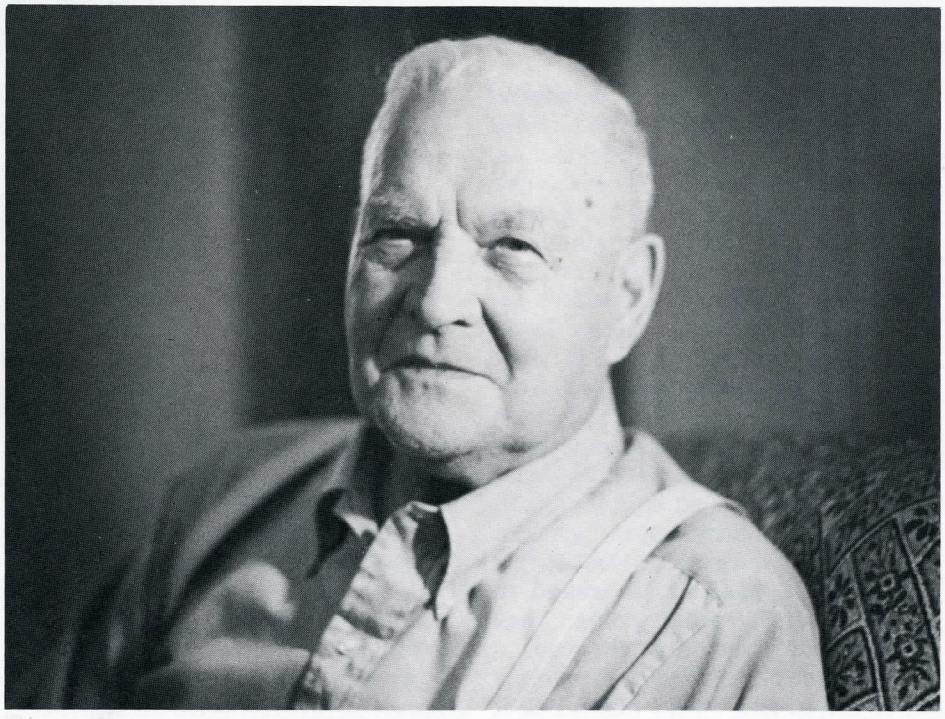
Granddaddy Hinkle and the Age of Technology

The Recollections of Upshur County Octogenarian Ralph Hinkle

By Andrew Lee Hinkle
Photographs by Gary Simmons

STIMULATED by an interest in our family history, I began to tape record my Grandfather Ralph William Hinkle in the early 1970s. While listening to his reminiscences, I became impressed with how his birth and life span have closely paralleled the birth and development of technology in America. The following narrative, taken from excerpts of these recordings, portrays this era through his eyes. He has been most interested in taping his remembrances and has remarked on one occasion what a wonderful thing it would have been to have had a tape recorder in his days so he might have captured the stories of his father and grandfather.

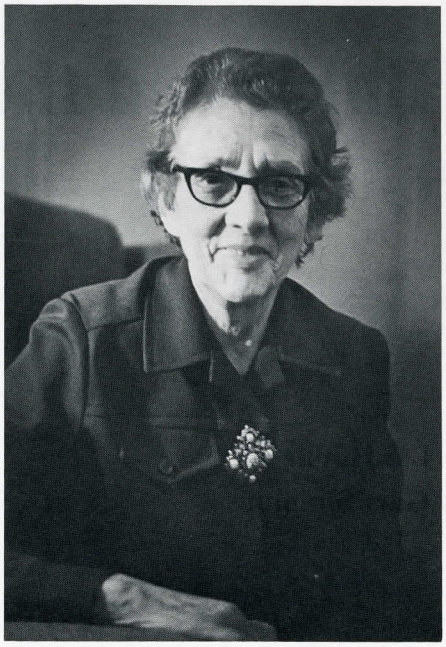
As of this writing, Granddaddy is 85 years old and lives with his wife of 58 years, Bertie Belle (Corley), at Junior. In addition to his almost 32 years as a coal miner, he was a skilled carpenter and, as a young man, worked in the lumber woods. He served as Justice of the Peace at Bemis, and later as Mayor of Junior. He has always been active in his church, serving a long tenure as choir director, and he still loves the old-time hymns.

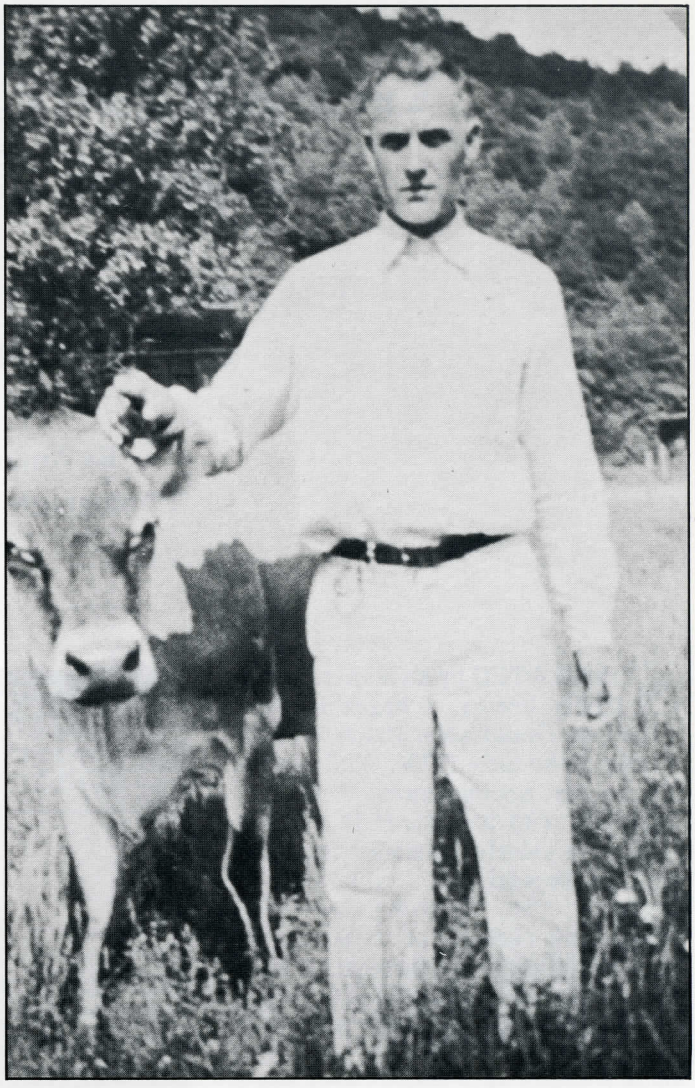


Ralph William Hinkle at home in Junior in October 1977.

Ralph Hinkle. I've seen an awful change since 18 and 93, the year I was born at Hemlock, Upshur County—1893, February 21st. My father said the snow was just up level with the top of the palings 'round the yard, which was four feet. Four feet of snow. I growed up there and went to school—we had to go to school and walk two mile on the country road. Big rail fence on each side of the county road, and that would snow full, that road, and just now and then you could see the top of a fence rail stickin' out. And it would get a crust on it, and we'd walk on top of that crust, clear over top of those fences and go to school. That's how deep the snow was back them days.

And then, well, I've seen a lot of changes in my time. I've seen the passenger trains go. I've seen the country schools go. I've seen the country blacksmith go. I've seen the country doctor go. All of them in my time, and which you never expected to see go, but they're all gone. They aren't no more. And I seen the automobile come. I seen the hard roads come. And I seen the telephones come, and the radios and the televisions and the airplanes and the fast transportation line now in the cities that they're buildin'.





And it certainly is a wonderful change from back in when you traveled mud roads, 15 miles to Buckhannon from where we lived. We'd have to ride horseback, and go one day and stay the night down at my grandfather's at Buckhannon, and back the next day. Roads was muddy, you couldn't get down and back in one day on horseback. And so that surely is some change from the horse and wagon day.

The old farmers used to get up at four o'clock and load their grain in their wagons and go to the mill—leave at four o'clock and get back midnight, maybe, with their grain ground. Wheat, corn, buckwheat. And they'd aim to get a wagon load ground so when rough weather come, they wouldn't have to go out on the road.

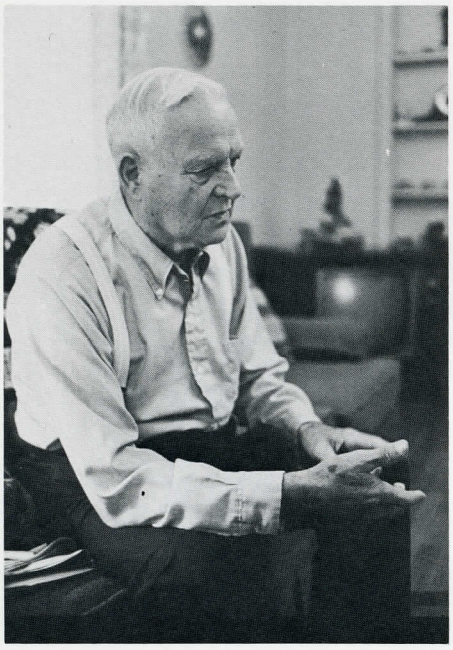
And farmers would have to cross a lot of creeks and watery places and it was hard to keep their grindin' out of them creeks, from gettin' wet. And they made them "Yankee jumpers," they called 'em. And they put their sacks up on the pole, about three feet from the runners—course they had the horse hooked to the front end to pull it. And they'd throw their sacks across it, maybe four sacks of feed or grain that they'd get around—throw them across there and they'd get on top of them and they'd sit and go to the mill and back that a way, on what they called the "Yankee jumper." It's been a long time since I seen one of them. One fellar, he had a big pole, big enough up there on top and he took his saddle and put on the front and rode in the saddle, the sacks back behind him. Had a saddle on it, and settin' in his saddle just like he's ridin' a horse. "Yankee jumper" they called 'em.

Andrew Hinkle. Did you drive the horses on the river when the ice froze?

RH Yes, there was about 11 of us teams there at Been's Mill. We crossed the Buckhannon River there every day a-haulin' props. Eleven of us teams, we hauled about 100 props to the team. And there was at that time no bridge across the Buckhannon River at Been's Mill. That was in 1917 and '18. And the ice got 18 inches thick, and we'd have to break it every day when we came down there to cross. And finally, one man said, "Its deep enough, froze thick enough that we can cross it on the ice." And we did. We crossed with them big teams and them big sleds with a hundred of them ten-foot props on there for six weeks and never broke the ice. Never broke the ice. Eighteen inches thick!

AH Did you saw some of that ice and save it for the icehouses?

RH Well, they used to put up a lot of ice here at Junior. My father-in-law was a big man in that. He had his icehouse down there and Clell Blake and him and Cliff Saunders here at Junior, they all three had icehouses. And they'd go down here to the river back about 1910 to 1918, they'd put up ice. The ice would get heavy on the rivers then. It would get as high as 18 inches. They'd saw it out with big saws in blocks and take tongs and lift the chunks out and haul it on sleds to their icehouses. They'd put about two foot of sawdust on the ground and put about two foot of sawdust around the walls in their icehouses. And then put their ice in there. And then they'd haul



Center. Mr. Hinkle a number of years ago with a Jersey cow. Photographer unknown.
Left. Mrs. Bertie Belle Hinkle and her husband have been married for 58 years.
Right. Ralph Hinkle.

some water and put on that ice so it'd all freeze and set together. Then they'd cover over the top with sawdust. Bertie's dad had an icehouse, even after we was married, he had ice down there. And we'd get it out and make ice cream for the 30th of May. And sweet cherries would get ripe and we'd pick cherries and make ice cream and put cherries in the ice cream. And they'd keep ice all summer, all through August, sometimes up to September, before it'd all be gone. 'Course, that's all past anymore. Nobody puts up ice anymore 'cause they could go to town and buy it where they make it at the icehouse.

AH Did you have the old-time icebox to put the ice in?

RH No, we'd just take it out daily, every day or two and use it as we'd want it, to make ice cream and have it fer to make lemonade and to make ice cream and to put in sweet cherries and raspberries and stuff like that when they was ripe. And that's the way we took it out. We had no refrigerators or nothing to keep it any.

AH Do you remember when you got your first refrigerator?

RH Yes, we never had a refrigerator till we moved to Junior. Even all the time we lived at Bemis, we had no refrigerator. There wasn't no electric back them days, didn't have none. And when we moved to Junior, the house here I live in—the people had a refrigerator there but it was hooked up to the gas. We had a gas refrigerator—just a little wire in the house them days. So, after I got here, Don Lee and his brother-in-law, Hobert Henline, they come down and rewired my house all over with heavy-duty wire. Then I could put in refrigerators and wash machines and dryers and all that stuff after the house got rewired.

AH Can you remember when they first started using electricity?

RH Oh, yes. There's no electric back in my boyhood days. Oh, you'd go to Buckhannon—why, they had some electric there. But, so far as in the country, anywhere. No electric! No electric to operate anything with. Women washed their clothes on the washboard in a washtub, and yer cidermill and yer windmill and everything was hand-cranked. There was no electric to do anything with like they are today.

AH Did you have kerosene lamps and candles back then?

RH Oh, we had candles and kerosene lamps, but we burned one light in the kitchen while they's gettin' breakfast and eatin'. The rest of us'd sit by the light from the fireplace and then after supper's over and the dishes washed, they'd bring the light in. And between the old oil light and the fire in the fireplace, that's what we had to study by.

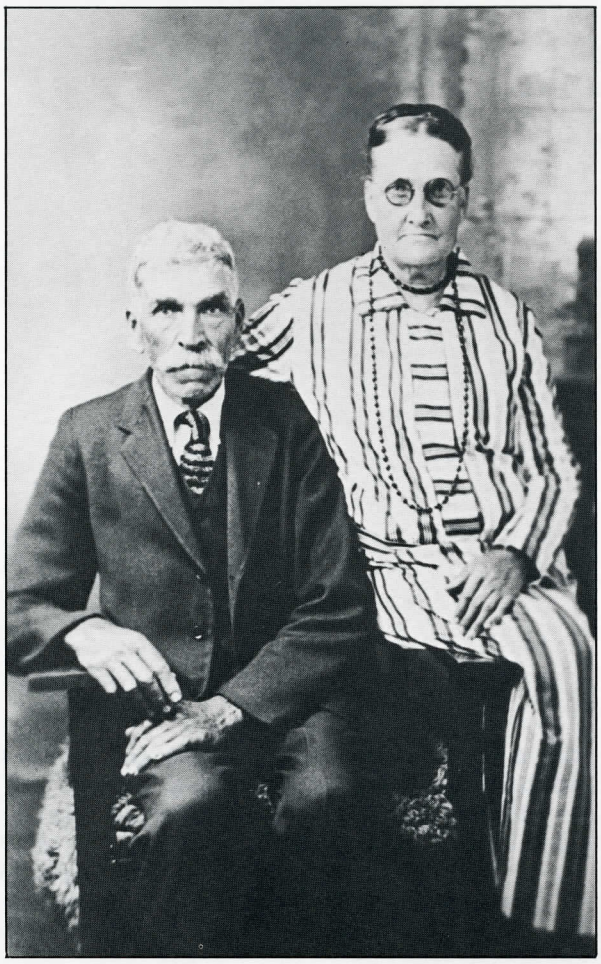
AH When did they start putting electricity into the farms?

RH Well, not very much 'til the 1930s. Wasn't very much electric anywhere in the farm sections. Oh, 'bout 1930, '32, they commenced puttin' electric in rural districts. That was the first in West Virginia that I know of, 'bout '32, under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration.

AH What about in the mines?

RH Now, you take in the mines. When I worked in the mines, you loaded coal by hand. I've loaded 20 ton a day and shoveled lot of it double shovel—be so wide that I couldn't throw it to the car. Double shovel, and I had to shovel 20 ton. All right, today you go in the mines. They don't work any more in them. It's all electric to press. Electric's doin' the work. Just you plannin' how you're a gonna lay out your mine and work it and start pressing electric buttons and lettin' them do all the work.

And that's a great change we see. And we seen the old coal lamp, that you put coal in and you put oil in, coal oil and a little lard in it. And that's all you had to dig coal by. And after that come the carbide light. You put carbide in it, then you put water in it, mixed it and made your light. Now, got the electric battery light. All you do is carry it on your hip and you have a light and then you take it up when your shift's over—light man plugs it in and charges it overnight and you're ready to take it out again. And all such things as that. Now, we used to haul coal with horses and mules and flat road loaders and gatherin' motors. And now it's



practically all done by conveyer and belts and things like that. Everything is comin' to a new mode and a easier mode. Less work to it.

AH Another thing I was interested in was the old farm machinery.

RH Ah yes, yes. Yes, we used to plow with oxen and make hay with oxen. Hook 'em to the sled and haul in the hay with oxen, yokes of oxen. Most of my boyhood days was spent with a team of horses behind the plow. Turn plow and shovel plow and harrows—spiked-tooth harrows and one-horse hay rake. And, finally, we mowed our grass with a scythe, cut our grain with our cradles and stacked it, and then thrashed it of a fall. And we'd gather buckwheat in and build a pen, put rails across it and take sticks with short sticks on the end of 'em—we called 'em flails. Beat the buckwheat out of the chaff and then run it through a windmill to take the dirt out of the buckwheat. That's the way you had to thresh your buckwheat because it was too late when the threshin' machines had done come by and threshed our wheat and oats. So we had that to do by hand, our buckwheat.

AH What was the old threshing machine like?

RH Fred Spiker, the Dutchman, used to have one—come to our place and thresh. And it runs on wheels around and steps. And you start down here at the ground, you put a horse in there and you loosen that brake and that starts to runnin' back and he goes to steppin' up, you know. And he keeps steppin' up and that's treadin' his weight, runs that threshin' machine and grinds the grain. I seen that. Yes sir, the old tread-power threshin' machine.

AH How old were you then?

RH Oh, about 12 years old. Yeah, he threshed for years with it and he finally traded it off and got him a gasoline engine and ran his thresh box with a gasoline engine. But he had that tread-power mill mounted on steel wheels, you know, little wheels. Pulled it from place to place, two horses a-pullin' it. He'd put one horse in there about a half hour and he'd set the brake and stop it and back that horse out and run the other one in and thresh and go right ahead. Change 'em about every half hour.

Then I recollect, I don't know if I ever told you this or not, Barney Sloan lived up here in Randolph County. His girl married a man, lived way off. And so they decided in the summertime—it was pretty—they'd come home. And they bought a automobile to come in. Well, there wasn't no automobiles up in the country at that time, they was just beginnin' to come 'round.

So they'd eat supper early, the old man and his wife and the children, settin' on the front porch. All at once they heard an awful rumblin'. The old man said, "Thunder," and the old woman said, "No, there ain't a cloud in the sky." So, they got out in the yard and looked all around and said, "No, not a cloud in the sky."

But directly, they heard that thunderin' again and it kept gettin' closer and closer. Finally, the old man hollered, "Kids, you run to the woodyard and carry in the wood right now." It's

Left. Ralph Hinkle's parents, Abraham Lee and Evelyn Dell Hinkle. Photographer unknown.

Center. Ralph Hinkle, as a young man, sat while his friend Homer Dean stood for a portrait. Photographer unknown.

Right. Ralph and Bertie Hinkle about a month after their April 19, 1920, marriage. Photographer unknown.

over the hill, topped up to the house and here it was their automobile. They was runnin' with the cut-out open, you know, and it made an awful noise. That's the first automobile they'd ever seen. They thought it was a powerful storm a-comin'.

AH Do you remember when cars first started coming around?

RH Yeh, Henry Tenney over at Tenmile, he went to Ohio and he bought two carloads—he had a store there at Tenmile—he went to Ohio and he bought two carloads of baled hay out in Ohio. And he shipped it to Tenmile and sold it out that winter, and he said he made him enough to buy an automobile. And he went and bought him an automobile. That's the first one ever I seen and I guess was the first car in Washington District in Upshur County. He had it and he come up there—we had a little hill right below our house in the county road, don't amount to anything now days with cars. But he stalled up and had to go back and take a runnin' start. Finally, he made it over that little bank. People thought that was a powerful car, that it would go up over that little bank. That was about 1915, the first automobile that ever come by our place.

AH What kind of car was it, do you remember?

RH No, I don't. It wasn't a Ford, it was some other one. I believe it was a Star, but I ain't sure. I know it wasn't a Ford. I reckon the next automobile—my brother bought a model T, one you had to crank by hand. Didn't have no battery in it, nor no lights on it.

AH What were some of those old cars?

RH Well, the Ford and the Star and the Dodge, they was the most prominent cars back when they first begin to come out. Then, of course, they got the Buick. There wasn't no General Motors then, and anything like that, like there are today. Very few, four or five different makes of cars, I'd say. I think there was one higher price car come out, but just a few rich in the city had it.

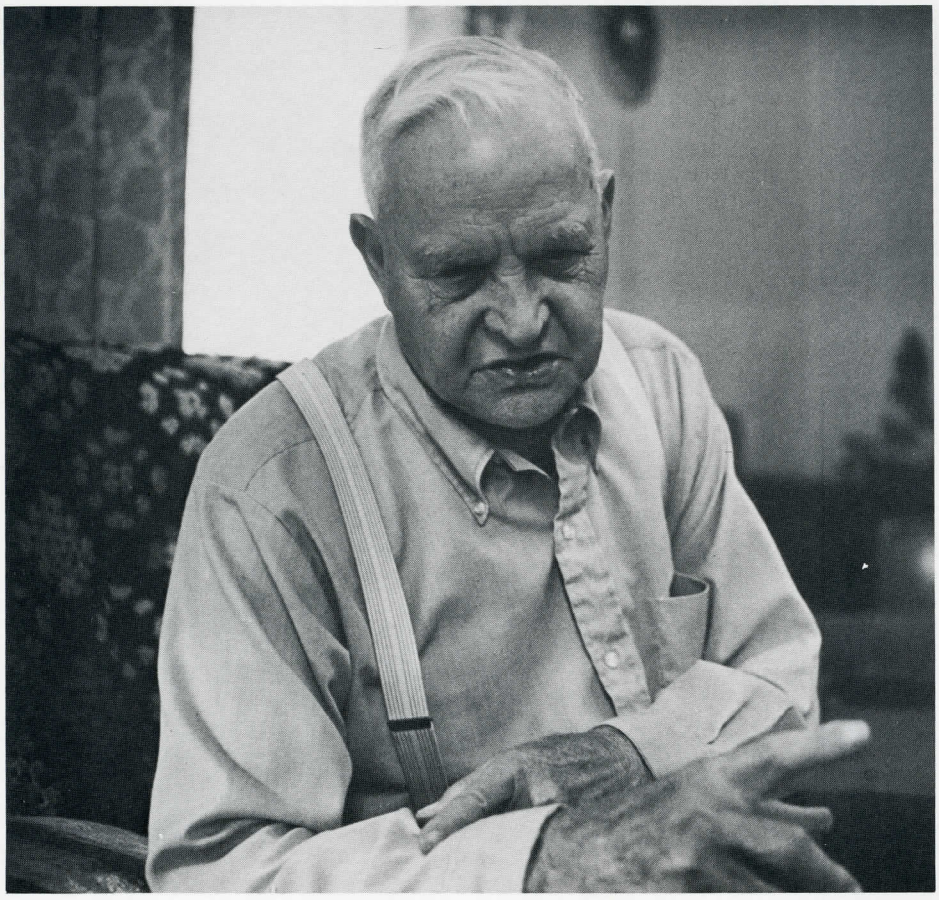
I recollect a story that came out in the paper. Two brothers, they inherited a fortune, $5,000 apiece. The first thing they did was went to get two cars. One bought a Ford, it was $500. The other bought him a Pierce Arrow, and they was $5,000—he spent all of his money. And a-comin' back, they stopped and the one in the Pierce Arrow said to his brother, "My land, that 'Tin Lizzie' makes an awful lot of noise." "No, no," the other brother said, "that's the $4500 in my pocket that you hear."

AH What did people think of cars when they started coming out?

RH Oh, they told all kinds of tales on them. Had to crank the Ford by hand, you know. One man said to the other, "You see that black spot way up yonder on the mountain?" He said, "Yeh." He said, "I was crankin' that old Ford and it flew out of my hand." He said, "That's where it landed."

AH It was pretty dangerous to crank those things, wasn't it?

RH Oh, law, people got their arms broke, you know, crankin' it, crankin' them Fords. You had to keep your



Left and opposite. Ralph Hinkle.

thumb on the same side of your hand. If it kick back and you had your hand thataway, it would break your arm every time. People put their thumb same side of the hand and crank them. Then if they'd kick back, why, it would generally kick out of their hand without breakin' their arm. But if you put your thumb across it like that, take a-hold and crank it, it kick, and break your arm every time. Yeh, there was a lot of people get their arm broke crankin'.

And you'd crank sometimes till you was wringin' wet with sweat, to get one of them started. Spark plugs get dirty, you know, or something. They wasn't made like they are today, cars, you know. They was pretty cheap. They'd get hot—you'd run up again a hill—and they'd get hot and quit and you'd have to stop and let 'em cool off. And if you could find any water, carry new water and put in the radiator, get him cooled down and he'd start to run awhile again. If you had a very long hill to go up, why, they'd get hot and quit on you.

AH What about gas stations? Where did people get their gas?

RH Gas stations were pretty far apart but there was generally one somewhere where you could get to. And some would carry a five-gallon can with them, fill up the car and then fill up the five-gallon can. Take it home with them and have extra gas.

AH They didn't have very good roads back then did they?

RH No! Dirt roads! They had them high wheel cars, wheels were high and little bitsy cars on the wheels. And sometimes, the running board would drag on the mud, mud was that deep. Them old Dodge cars, first ones that come out, they was the best cars for the dirt roads. They had great big high wheels and they would pretty near go in any kind of mud.

AH Could people run their cars in the winter?

RH No, they didn't know anything about runnin' these cars in winter. They'd freeze up, you know. They didn't have no antifreeze or nothing to put in the radiator. And, uh, if they did go out in the mud roads, why, they put chains on all four wheels. Front wheels as well as the back runnin' with chains on them. Yep, though they had to have chains on the front wheels as well as the back. Course, they did help some 'bout slidin' sideways, but, as fer as the pull, it didn't help any.

AH Do you remember when telephones first started coming in?

RH Telephones? Yeh, yeh. I remember when, ah, they first begin to put telephone lines in and, they put the People's Line, the People's Party Line, over in Upshur County. Every person that got a phone had to put up 15 poles and a half-mile of wire. The wire cost $4 for a half-mile and they had to put in 15 poles. Dig the holes and put them in, put the insulators on, and put up that half-mile section.

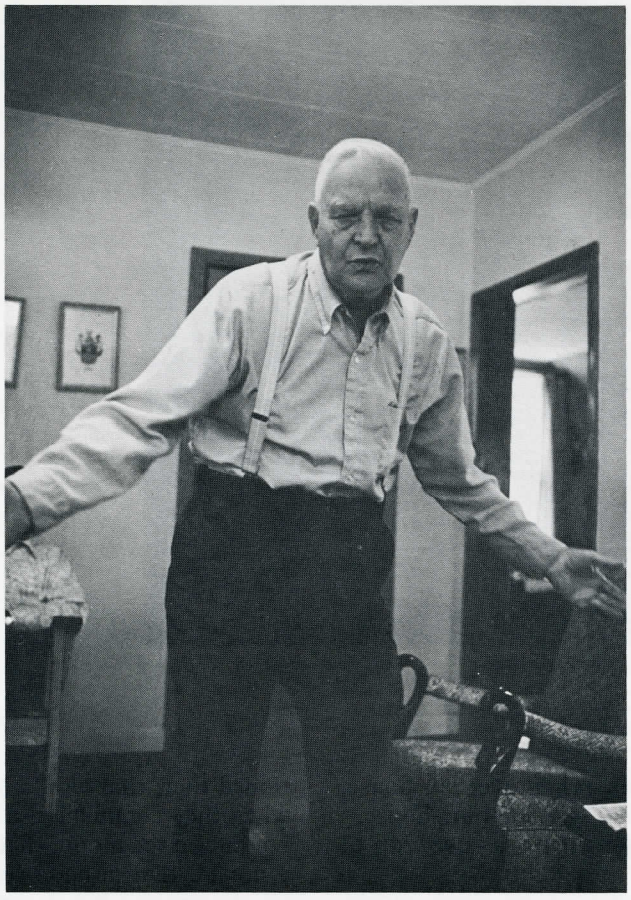
AH You mean the farmers had to do that themselves?

RH Farmers had to do that themselves. Well, then you was a stockholder. They gave you a certificate then, tellin' you that you was a 50-dollar stockholder in the company. And you paid $2 a year switchboard dues. That's all it cost you a year, you could phone anywhere in the country. Go through the switchboard anywhere. Two dollars a year, that's what it cost you. But you had to keep up your own half-mile of wire. If it broke, why, the field manager called you and told you there was a wire broke on your section. You had to fix it or hire him to fix it. But it was pretty cheap, pretty cheap telephone operation. Pretty cheap, $2 a year, goin' through the switchboard and all.

AH Was that the old crank phone?

RH Yeah, you put the phone up again the wall and you cranked it. And long and a short or two shorts and a long, or whatever their number was. You had a list marked there of the names and them two long marks and a short mark or whatever there was for every number. And all the other fellers' numbers too.

AH When did the phones start coming in? About what year?



RH That was 1910 and 1911 when they put that in. I took a 50-dollar stock and put up a section and then they went pretty good for about 20 years, thataway. Then they finally had a meeting at Jane Lew and decided that people wasn't keeping their sections up and that they'd sell it out and charge $5 a year and that's all we'd have to do. They sold the company out and we paid $5 for a couple of years and the company went out of business and that was the end of it. We lost everything. Our 50-dollar stocks didn't amount to 50 cents. And that was the end of the People's telephone system. Then the Bell System came in and went to puttin' in the phone system. 'Course it was a lot more expensive, but you had nothing to do with it, only to put in your phone and pay so much a month or a year.

AH When did radios start coming in? Was that about the time of phones?

RH No, a long time after that.

AH Can you remember when you heard your first radio?

RH First radio ever I recollect, Charlie Yeager had it. And we'd go down there of a Sunday. He lived across here in the Valley District. That's Bertie's aunt and uncle. We'd go over there on Sunday afternoons and—that's been about 50 years ago. He had one of the first radios, and he'd get tuned in and get a song program on Sunday afternoon from somewhere. And we'd go over there and we thought that was wonderful to hear that. That was the first one that I ever did recollect seein'. And then they commence from that time on—more people commence gettin' them. But he had a little more money than the average feller. I think he was the first one in that part of Barbour County that had a radio.

AH In the 1930s?

RH Little before that. I expect he got his around 1928, I say when he got his'n. There was no plug-in then, no electric lines to plug into to get electric. It was battery operated, you know. Had to get your juice from a battery.

AH Television hasn't been around too long has it?

RH We got our first television about 20 year ago, I reckon. And they put in a system here, and, ah, commenced to operation. They put in a—town put in a private line here, and we put in a television system. Paid a dollar a month. We had fairly good television. Oh, it wasn't closed cable, if it rained hard or stormed, your wires got wet and you didn't have much television. But part of the time you had about as good of television that you have now on the cable system. But you couldn't get but a few stations. Now we get eight or ten stations on the closed circuit television.

AH How did you get the news back before radio and TV?

RH Well, mail carriers or drummers or salesman, where went from store to store to sell goods, pass the word along. It got out before you knowed it. My dad took the *Toledo Weekly Blade,* they called it, a paper out at Toledo, Ohio. *Toledo Weekly Blade,* pretty newsey paper, come every week, cost 25 cents a year. Give all the news every week. And then, some of the fellers would get other papers and the farmers would haul it to one another and tell them anything they heard a-happenin'. If any deaths was in the neighborhood, they'd holler to the neighbors and tell them about it.

Maybe sometimes, church bell—way off, like over to Indian Camp, a long ways, would get the air drawed this way and you'd hear it—you could hear the old church bell a-tollin'. Get up in there some way and toll that bell. And if he was 80 years old, why it struck 80 times. You'd figure out from how many times that bell tolled, how 'bout who that man was and how old he was, you know, a person. And that's the way they communicated with one another.

Mail carrier would go along the road and he'd holler down in the field and tell you any news that he'd learnt, you know, from the next day and the day before. It got around faster than you'd think fer, yes, sir.

AH What about passenger train service?

Ralph and Bertie Hinkle at home in October 1978.

RH Well, there used to be a lot of passenger trains. We used to have two passenger trains a day run from Buckhannon to Pickens and back. And now, there is none. They used to have two trains a day run from Elkins to Durbin and back and now there ain't none. And used to have passenger trains run from Elkins to Cumberland and back, two a day, and they're all out of operation. And we used to get on the train here [Junior] and go to Grafton, and from Grafton to Clarksburg, twice a day. You could go from here to Clarksburg. Now, that's all done away with. No trains to ride no more.

Used to have a bus system here. You could go about every two hours from here to Elkins or back, one or the other. And, uh, about three or four trips a day from Clarksburg, through Buckhannon to Elkins and back. Now, there hain't even a bus of any kind on the road. Only way to travel is to in your car. So, I've seen a big change.

AH Do you remember when you first heard about airplanes?

RH Well, about Lindbergh's time was when they first begin to talk about airplanes. Occasionally you could hear one and once in a while you could get a glimpse of one up in the sky. And the funny thing about it. People lived about a mile apart would get together and talk about that a-comin'. Everyone said, "Come right over our house, right over the top of our house." Everybody thought it was over top of theirs.

AH What did people think of airplanes?

RH Well, they thought they was a dangerous thing, you know, very dangerous. They wouldn't never get popular and never be very much in use. Be like the old woman over in Pocahontas County. Her husband was dead and she had a son, and he was in the service. And she couldn't read or write but when she'd go to her mailbox—her neighbor had a mailbox right beside her. And she'd get a letter from her son, her neighbor woman would open it and read it. And this day she got a letter from her son, and among other things, she read to the old lady, and said, "Well, Mother, I'm comin' home on a furlough." And she just stiffened herself and stood there. And when she got through, she said, "My land, that boy's got reckless since he's got in the service." Said, "Comin' home on a furlough." Said, "Why didn't he come in a train?"

AH So they thought airplanes were just a novelty then?

RH Yeh, yeh!

AH Do you remember about ten years ago when we landed on the moon?

RH Oh, yes, yes. Everybody questioned that, that would be impossible, when they commenced a-talkin' about landin' on the moon, that that was just a dream, that nobody could ever land on the moon. But I seen it come to pass. I watched it on television and seen it come to pass. And I've about come to the conclusion that I won't disbelieve anything I hear anymore about our scientists today. They're doin' wonders. And I believe that we're just now beginin' to scratch the surface on really what's to come in our world and in our nation.

They say, from the beginning of time up to 50 years ago, we've went forward, advanced forward with science in the last 50 years, more than we have since the beginnin' of time, up till 50 years ago. And in the morning, you'll pick up your newspaper and say everything is invented that can be invented. But when you pick up your mornin' paper, you'll see where somebody has invented something new. I just seen last night where this feller here at Morgantown made him a motorcycle, a electric one, now. Operated about a cent a mile. That was on the Morgantown news last night. And that's goin' to continue. And our scientists claim that we hain't seen nothing yet. We're just beginnin'. We ain't seen nothing yet of what we're gonna see. I believe that's true, too!

Historical Overview of the Upper West Fork River and Skin Creek Valleys

By Bob Swisher

One of the many log structures in the upper West Fork and Skin Creek valleys is the Woody Perrine farm on Canoe Run. Photograph by John C. Weisblat.

MUCH of this issue of GOLDENSEAL is about the West Virginians who live in the upper West Fork and Skin Creek valleys. The upper West Fork River and a principal tributary of that river, Big Skin Creek, flow through southern Lewis County. For about 40 years the people there have lived fearing that their farms and homes could be destroyed for a massive reservoir proposed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Over recent years the push for the reservoir, which would be called Stonewall Jackson Lake, has intensified. The mounting threat has caused the people who would be moved out not only to unite to fight the Army Corps, but also to reflect upon their interesting history and their rural way of life, things that in a previous, less worrisome time generally were taken for granted. There is a new appreciation of the numerous log houses and other old buildings that form the architectural heritage of the area. There is a renewed and deeper appreciation of a way of life, inherited unbroken from the past, that would be destroyed if the community of people were dispersed. That their way of life is something good and of value to the future, a way of life that should be nurtured and not destroyed, is a belief of most people who live along the upper West Fork, Big Skin Creek, and their tributaries. Talks with

A pre-Civil War log house on the Cutright farmstead between Vandalia and Roanoke on River Road has a particularly notable hand-hewn stone chimney. Photograph by John C. Weisblat.

some of those people follow this introduction.

The natural setting of the upper West Fork and Skin Creek valleys is not unlike that of other rural areas in the Allegheny Plateau, the region in which the bulk of West Virginia lies. The area is defined by the hills surrounding its several meandering valleys and the numerous winding hollows that give onto those valleys.

The names of the creeks and runs that drain the valleys and hollows of the upper West Fork are part of the lore of the area. Streams in the area were named by scouts or hunters or came to be called for the families who lived along them. Those stream names are to modern ears colorfully descriptive of the past. Such names as Wolf Fork and Wildcat Run recall the variety of wild animals that flourished in the region. Other names commemorate modest or amazing events of the pioneer past. Several places in Lewis and Webster counties were named by John Hacker in 1770 during his vengeful pursuit of the buffalo herd that had destroyed his corn crop.[1] Hacker's second-night camp on that hunt was on a tributary of the upper West Fork which he named Crane Camp Run for the bird he shot there.

Several tributaries of the upper West Fork were named by scouting and hunting parties led through the region by Jesse Hughes in the early 1790s.[2] Canoe Run was so named because an Indian canoe was found moored under some willows near the mouth of that stream. Cap Run (formerly called Indian Cap Run) was named for the Indian cap found near its source. After skinning the 40 deer they had slaughtered during the previous day, a party led by Hughes named the scene of their great hunt Skin Creek in celebration. Other place names memorialize the settlements of early families. One is reminded of the German influence in the area by the names Hershman Run, Linger Run, and Rohrbough Hollow. Those family names are still familiar in Lewis County.

As is the case in most of the Eastern United States, there probably are no stands of virgin trees in the upper West Fork area; but large, mostly deciduous, trees cover most of the ridgetops, the hillsides of hollows, and other lands unsuitable for farming or houses. Oaks, hickories, and yellow poplars predominate. Maples, beeches, walnut trees, ashes, cherry trees, and basswoods also are found. Wild nature, in the initial form of young trees and brush, has been allowed to reclaim the bottomlands of the narrower hollows, where in the not too distant past cattle grazed and vegetable gardens were tended. That phenomenon, not unique to the West Fork area, is the result of abandonment of unprofitable family farms. As a consequence, many of the hollows today have an appearance wilder and more isolated than they had in the recent past.

The valley of the upper West Fork River was once called "Egypt" because of the magnificent crops produced there. Farms still thrive there and on the bottomlands along Big Skin Creek. The Army Corps of Engineers names the Skin Creek valley "the second most important dairying area in Lewis County" and the West Fork River basin "one of the most important agricultural areas in northern West Virginia."[3] In many places in the upper West Fork area pastures extend up slopes and, in some places, onto the tops of hills. Such hillside pastures, dotted with gnarled old white oak trees, when viewed from a distance

have the appearance of English country parks.

A winding drive through the area will reveal strip mine scars as well as unspoiled, inviting vistas. Strip coal mining is taking place in the upper West Fork area, as it is throughout the Allegheny Plateau. Yet visitors are impressed by the general lushness and greenness of the area during the warm months, especially after periods of plentiful rain. Unlike more arid and less fertile parts of the United States, in the West Fork area nature is quick to soften the lines created by man. Too, nature has not been strained to accommodate large-scale developments. Growth there has been compartatively gradual and on a smaller scale.

Early History

Settlement of the upper West Fork area by whites started in earnest after the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, which ended the threat of Indian attacks. The earliest settlers who came were of German, Scotch-Irish, and English ancestry. Those of English ancestry apparently were the minority.

Much of the early history of the area, and indeed of the State and of the nation, is a story of poor people who sought available, cheap lands upon which to create farms, to rear their families, and to provide for secure futures for their progeny. Most of the Germans and Scotch-Irish who helped settle the region were children of farming families who lived along the upper tributaries of the Potomac River (such as the South Branch River), streams that flow from the eastern slopes of the Allegheny Mountains. Others were children of families in the Tygart Valley, which is just west of the Alleghenies. Not surprisingly then, such West Fork surnames as Hevener, Hyre, Rohrbough, and Stalnaker are also familiar in the region drained by the upper Potomac tributaries—the eastern panhandle of West Virginia and contiguous Highland County, Virginia—or in Randolph County, West Virginia, in which the Tygart Valley lies.

Those four surnames are examples of German names that became "anglicized." Many of the Germans in the eastern panhandle, especially, lived in ethnically homogeneous communities where second- and third-generation Americans spoke German exclusively and where a distinctive culture was retained. That culture is called Pennsylvania German (or, more popularly, "Pennsylvania Dutch") for the place whence West Virginia's early Germans came. Likely many of the West Fork's first partriarchs and matriarchs were German-speaking. However, not enough is known about the State's early Germans, partly because their culture has not interested historians as much as the activities of the principally Scotch-Irish Indian fighters.

The very first settlers of the upper West Fork and Skin Creek valleys naturally acquired the broadest bottomlands for their farm sites. Clearing land for family farms progressed into the hollows until the mid-nineteenth century when the region largely was settled. Of course, since the pioneer era, people have continued to come into the area, though not in very great numbers. Other people have moved out of the area. Some young people have recently moved to the area expressly to enjoy its special rural quality and to become part of the community there.

A few people in the upper West Fork area still occupy lands first cleared by their ancestors, while many others there today have lived on their places for four or five generations. Many families are of kin to one another, however distantly. Despite the fact that many people of the upper West Fork area bear surnames traceable back to pioneers of the Allegheny Plateau, there is no "old family" snobbery, such as is practiced elsewhere.

Roanoke

Five villages, Roanoke, Brownsville, Walkersville, Crawford, and Vandalia, are located in the area of the proposed reservoir. One of those, Roanoke, would be totally obliterated for the project.

The Mary Conrad House, built *circa* 1845 and now part of a State roadside park on Route 19 at Roanoke, is actually two log houses connected by a covered walkway. Photograph by Bob Swisher.

The genesis of Roanoke was a large mill, built of logs around 1825 on the West Fork River by Michael Bush. Men from surrounding farms brought to Bush both corn to be ground and logs to be sawed, and Bush's Mill became the natural focus in the area for other commerce as well. Bush bought and sold cattle and horses and he ran the area's first store and first post office in his mill. The neighbor-

hood's first school was held in his nearby house. The Weston and Gauley Turnpike was constructed *circa* 1851-57 and passed by Bush's (now Waldo's) Mill. Though primitive by our modern standards, the turnpike was a segment of a major north-south route through western Virginia. The prospect of increased trade from travelers motivated Joseph Hall to open another store and an ordinary near Waldo's Mill. The village that grew around those businesses continued to be called Bush's Mill long after Bush had sold his mill. The name of the village was changed to Roanoke in 1874.

When William Rohrbough became the local postmaster in 1849, the post office was moved to his house, which is about three quarters of a mile below the site of the Bush-Waldo Mill. The first portion of Rohrbough's house was built *circa* 1845. The house later was owned by the Conrad family, several generations of whom were postmasters or postmistresses for Roanoke. The Conrads also collected tolls from travelers on the Weston and Gauley Turnpike which passed in front of their house.

In 1961 Mary Conrad gave the historic house and a surrounding parcel of land to the State of West Virginia. She stipulated that the house was for the use of the Roanoke Farm Women's Club as its meeting place. The land surrounding the house is a roadside park for the use of motorists on Route 19, which passes behind the Rohrbough-Conrad house. The house is the best-known landmark in the upper West Fork area, partly because it is the only log house there whose log walls are exposed to view, rather than covered with weatherboards.

Roanoke grew rapidly from 1870. After the advent of a railroad into Lewis County in 1879, Roanoke became a place for transporting either logs or sawn lumber downstream to the rail head at Weston, the seat of Lewis County. After the coming of the West Virginia and Pittsburgh Railroad through Roanoke in 1891, the village's freight depot became the central point in the upper West Fork area from which sawn lumber was shipped to markets. As was the case throughout West Virginia, the early railroad era was a time of furious activity, and it was the era when the upper West Fork area was denuded of its virgin forests. During that time the town of Roanoke

A Capsule History of Planning for the Stonewall Jackson Dam

By Skip Johnson

The Stonewall Jackson Dam, a multi-purpose project scheduled to be built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the West Fork River about five miles upstream from Weston at the village of Brownsville, is an old story with a modern rebirth. Talk of a dam started in 1937 after major flooding occurred in West Virginia, including on the West Fork. The Army Corps of Engineers proposed a West Fork project, but it failed to get congressional authorization at that time.

The project lay dormant for almost 30 years, but a revival effort led by Weston businessmen, Senators Jennings Randolph and Robert C. Byrd, and Representative Robert Mollohan resulted in the project being authorized in the 1966 Flood Control Act passed by Congress. Even with that, the Stonewall project did not get past the talking stage for several more years. The major roadblock was that West Virginia's Constitution prohibits one legislature from obligating future legislatures for debts, and that had to be done in the case of Stonewall.

In addition to flood control, another purpose of the project is recreation, and the Corps of Engineers required the State to enter into a recreation cost-sharing contract. Without recreation as a benefit, the cost of the dam could not be justified. Senator Randolph came to the rescue in 1973, introducing an amendment to the Rivers and Harbors Act which specifically authorized construction of the Stonewall Dam without an ironclad State guarantee that its share of the recreation contract would be forthcoming in the future. The Rivers and Harbors Act, including the Randolph amendment, was passed in 1974, and again the project was a going concern. But again a hitch developed.

Arch A. Moore, Jr., then the Governor of West Virginia, declined to sign the recreation cost-sharing contract with the Corps of Engineers. Instead, in 1975 Moore authorized a State study to determine if small watershed dams could provide adequate flood protection in lieu of the Stonewall project.

It was during this period that the Upper West Fork River Watershed Association, an organization of dam opponents, was formed. This group contended that a series of watershed dams would provide adequate flood protection for the Weston area, but would not result in large-scale displacement of people and taking of private property. The association has mounted several legal challenges to the dam, all unsuccessful thus far. The first was in 1976 when U.S. District Court Judge Robert Maxwell of Elkins denied a request for an injunction on the grounds that the environmental impact statement filed by the Corps of Engineers for the project was faulty. The association turned to the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, but in 1977 that court upheld the Maxwell decision, and in 1978 the U.S. Supreme Court rejected, without comment, an appeal by the association to hear their case.

Meanwhile, Governor Jay Rockefeller, who came into office in 1976, had decided to settle the Stonewall issue once and for all, and he settled it in favor of supporters of the dam. Rockefeller held a public meeting in Weston on March 19, 1977, and listened as a steady parade of dam opponents and proponents argued their cases. Earlier, he had toured the area to be flooded by the dam. Nine days later, Rockefeller announced his decision; he would sign the recreation cost-sharing contract that would give the project the green light. He cited the flood control the

project would provide, and contended it would also alleviate projected water shortages in Weston and Clarksburg. Rockefeller also labeled the dam critical to industrial development in Lewis County. The State's share of the recreation contract will be $10 million, Rockefeller said, and will be paid over a 50-year period. Last year the Corps of Engineers awarded a $126,000 contract to a Lexington, Kentucky, firm to develop a master plan for recreation facilities at the lake.

The State's share of the recreation cost and the overall cost of the dam are controversial figures, just as the project itself has been controversial. State Agriculture Commissioner Gus R. Douglass, an opponent of the dam, believes the State's recreation share will be $15 to $16 million, not $10 million. Douglass also estimates the overall cost will wind up in the $140 million to $150 million bracket, not the $112 million forecast by the Corps of Engineers. Douglass bases his larger estimate primarily on increased land values and constuction costs. He says the value of land in the dam take area averages between $600 and $1,000 per acre.

According to the Corps of Engineers, the project will result in the dislocation of approximately 1,000 people and the acquisition of 19,000 acres of private land. Dam opponents are using higher figures, saying 1,800 people will be displaced and 21,000 acres of land taken. Squarely in the path of the dam backwaters are the Lewis County communities of Roanoke, Vandalia, and Crawford, as well as part of the Walkersville community.

The project's vital statistics are as follows: The dam itself will be 95 feet high and 620 feet long, and will be constructed of concrete; storage capacity available for flood control will vary from 26,500 acre-feet in summer to 38,600 acre-feet in winter; and the summer pool will have a surface area of 2,650 acres.

Land acquisition by the Corps of Engineers has already begun. That agency held a public ceremony on February 6, 1977, on the Lewis County Courthouse steps to present a check to the first landowner to sell his property. As of early fall, the Corps had acquired 2,000 of the 19,000 acres at a cost of $2 million plus.

The issues involved in the Stonewall Dam have been debated for years, and basically they have remained the same. It will provide flood control, additional water for domestic and industrial consumption, and recreation. On the other hand, it will take the homes and private property of at least 1,000 residents of Lewis County. Proponents include Weston residents whose homes have been flooded over the years, Weston businessmen who see the dam as a boon to industry and tourism, and West Virginia Water Company.

Opponents include representatives of agriculture and environmental groups, and, of course, most of those who will lose their homes and land. Kenneth Parker, president of the Upper West Fork River Watershed Association, said the building of the dam will "end a way of life that cannot be bought and paid for." Parker also argues the project will not be the economic boon to Lewis County that its backers claim, pointing to neighboring Braxton County which he says has not benefitted economically from a dam on the Elk River at Sutton.

At the insistence of the watershed association, the Corps of Engineers commissioned a study of cultural resources that would be lost to the building of the dam. Late in 1977, a private consulting firm, Gilbert/Commonwealth of Jackson, Michigan, said the project will affect 82 historical sites. It recommended that 22 of these sites be recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, among them a gas compressor station at Brownsville, 17 houses and farms, a store, and two bridges. The study showed that 81.8 percent of the 82 sites will be acquired by the Corps and 72.2 percent will be destroyed by flooding or road relocation. It said mitigation actions necessary to preserve them would be extensive and costly.

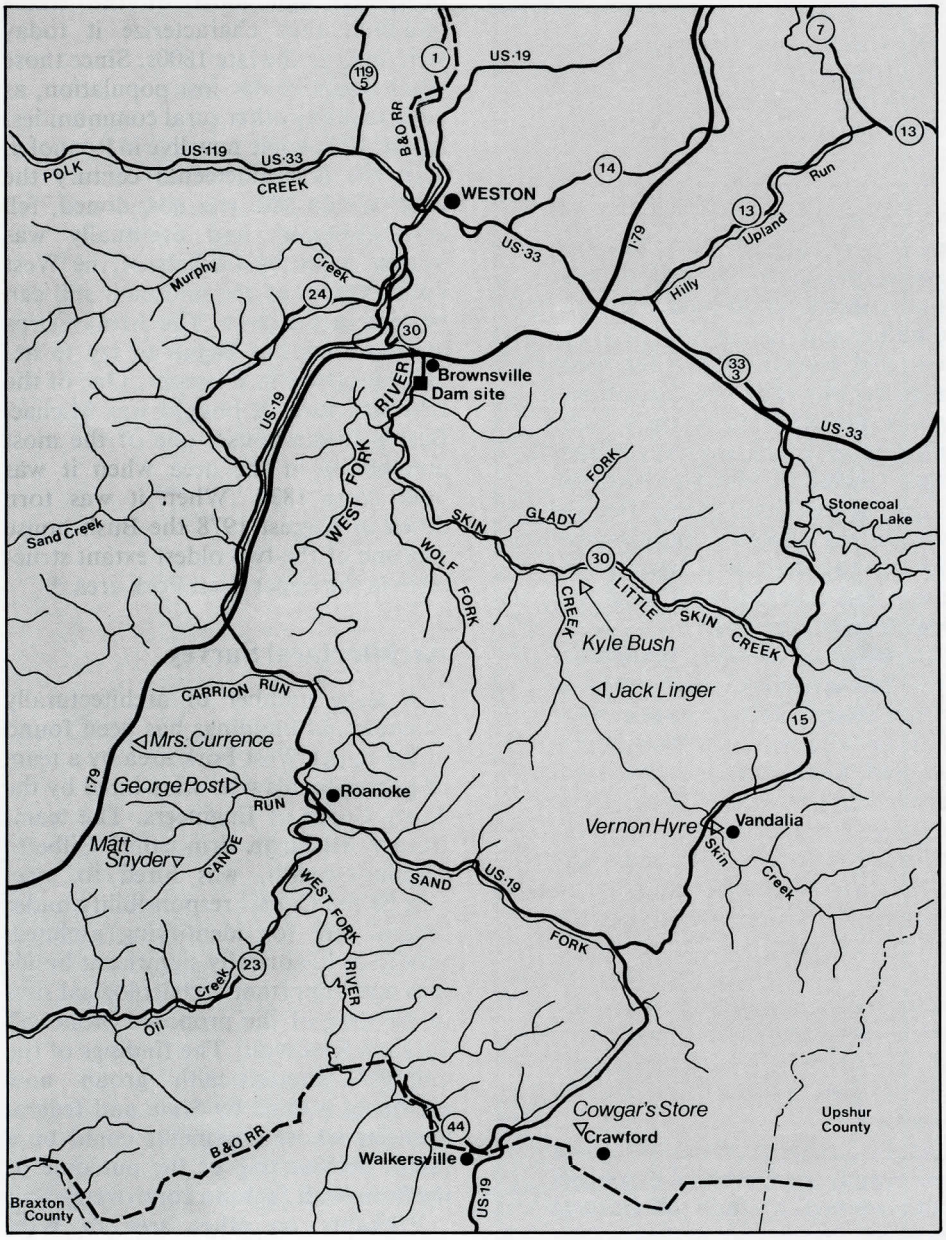
prospered and most of the frame buildings that characterize it today were built in the late 1800s. Since those years Roanoke has lost population, as have so many other rural communities. About 100 people now live in Roanoke.

In the late nineteenth century the Bush-Waldo Mill was abandoned, fell into disrepair, and eventually was washed away by freshets of the West Fork. Traces of the mill dam still can be seen in the river. The Army Corps of Engineers has begun to try to acquire property in Roanoke. One of the first structures it bought was Michael Bush's frame house, one of the most pretentious in the area when it was built *circa* 1830. When it was torn down in August 1978 the Bush house was one of the two oldest extant structures in the upper West Fork area.[4]

Architectural Survey

A large number of architecturally valuable old buildings has been found in the upper West Fork area by a team of professionals who were hired by the Army Corps of Engineers. The team, from a Michigan firm called Gilbert/Commonwealth, was hired to meet part of the Corps' responsibility under federal law for identifying architecturally or historically significant buildings and important archaeological sites in the area of the proposed Stonewall Jackson Reservoir. The findings of the Gilbert/Commonwealth group now are being studied by State and federal agencies whose comments could be a factor determining of the outcome of the Stonewall Jackson controversy.

Probably no other area in West Virginia to date has been as systematically and intensively searched for old structures as was the upper West Fork area by the team from Gilbert/Commonwealth. While one thus cannot compare the historic remains in the upper West Fork area fairly to those in other areas, it does appear that the upper West Fork is unusually rich in structures of interest. The area seems to have an exceptionally large number of surviving log buildings. Twelve log houses and numerous log outbuildings were found. The area has a wealth of vernacular structures, or structures built by local craftsmen in their own, simpler interpretations of prevailing high styles. Identified were several outstanding Victorian farm complexes and a highly styled Geor-



gian Revival mansion (Annameade, the Davisson-Blair house).

The Skin Creek Compressor Station is called in the report to the Army Corps " . . .significant . . . because it contains equipment, boilers and steam engines in continuous operation since before World War I . . . The Skin Creek Compressor Station with its irreplaceable steam-powered machinery . . . played an important role in . . . the boom years of the area's [Lewis County's] natural gas industry. . . . "[5] Gilbert/Commonwealth recommends that the station be documented by detailed measured drawings for the Historic American Engineering Record.

The team noted the covered bridge near Walkersville and numerous suspension footbridges. Of the 476 structures they looked at, the Army Corps' consultants have suggested that 22 individual structures or farm complexes and three entire villages, Roanoke, Walkersville, and Crawford, might be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. If all or any of those places subsequently are declared eligible by the Keeper of the National Register, then the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will have to contend with new difficulty in its plan for the Stonewall Jackson Lake.

Notes

[1] Lucullus Virgil McWhorter, *The Border Settlers of Northwestern Virginia From 1768 to 1795* (Hamilton, Ohio: Republican Publishing Co., 1915; reprint ed., Richwood, W. Va.: Jim Comstock, 1973), pp. 82-84.

[2] Ibid., pp. 178-181.

[3] U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District; "Final Environmental Statement: Stonewall Jackson Lake: West Fork River, West Virginia;" July 30, 1971, p. 3.

[4] Gilbert/Commonwealth, *Historic Resources Evaluation: Stonewall Jackson Lake Project: West Fork River, West Virginia,* draft report made June 30, 1978 to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, vol. I, p. 3.12.

[5] Ibid., vol. II, appendix D, pp. 3-4.

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Peterson Family Papers 1858-1913. Among these are the Civil War-period letters of the Aaron D. Peterson family who lived at the head of Big Skin Creek. The entire collection of original papers was microfilmed

The Peterson farm at the head of Skin Creek was the home of Aaron D. Peterson (1813-1876), a founding father of the State. Photograph by Bob Swisher.

for the West Virginia University library where a film is in the Archives and Manuscript Section of the West Virginia Collection (no. 2028).

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Sprigg, Clark. "Walkersville: A sketch of the early settlement of Walkersville and the Southern end of Collins Settlement District in Lewis County, W. Va." N. d., but early 1930s. Mary Holt, clerk of the Lewis County court, has a copy of this manuscript. Sprigg was a keen observer of his nineteenth century surroundings and this manuscript is a treasure trove of descriptions of old-time farming methods, domestic chores, the logging industry, etc. In his old age Sprigg recorded the local ways of doing things that he had known in his younger years. His 59-page manuscript is especially valuable today because few other local historians anywhere, contemporary with Sprigg, recorded in such detail the more mundane occupations of their subjects.

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Bringing the Kids Back Home to George

By Kate Long

Photographs by Kate Long and John C. Weisblat

"Significant numbers of upper West Fork residents inhabit lands which were explored, cleared, and developed by their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. The history of this land and the surviving physical record of its development—its cabins, houses, churches, cemeteries, schools, stores, mills, and bridges—provide Lewis County with a distinctive legacy, a heritage important to understand and to preserve."

Gilbert/Commonwealth Historical Resources Evaluation: produced for the Pittsburgh District, U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, June 1978.

THE possibility that the upper West Fork area might be flooded has made the people who live there sharply conscious of how their lives are affected by all that the area has to offer. As one area farmer commented, "There's nothing like thinking you might lose it to let you know how much it means to you." Whatever the future of the area will be, this situation has emphasized the need to understand more about the communities involved, in terms both of the legacy from the past and the present way of life. This article and the following companion article hopefully show what the rich heritage of the area means in the lives of people living there today.

The word "tradition" appears frequently in descriptions of the upper West Fork area, maybe because an unusually high percentage of the people living there come from families that have been in the area at least four generations. Tradition is a living thing, of course, something that is passed from older generation to younger, not something in a museum but a part of people's lives. With this thought in mind, I paid close attention to the relationships among the generations while I talked with people of all ages in the area. I wanted to find out, over a period of weeks, what is available to a child growing up there that might not be possible in other places.

The weeks I spent putting together these two articles was a warm, thought-provoking time for me. Among other things, being in the upper West Fork area helped me understand a great deal more about what the words "community" and "tradition" can mean. During that time, I had a conversation with John Alexander Williams whose perceptive comments supported my findings and feelings. Dr. Williams is Professor of History at West Virginia University, a prolific writer about West Virginia life and history, and author of *West Virginia: A Bicentennial History.*

"Community isn't just a group of people or a group of buildings with people in them," Dr. Williams said, "even though we often use the word that way. Community in its best sense has to do with the relationships that exist among the people who live in a particular area, built up through years and circumstance. It has to do with mutual support, trust, and caring, and it also has to do with the people's relationship to their surroundings.

"People all over the United States are looking for this kind of community where their children can grow up in close contact with active people of all ages. The magazines and commentators talk endlessly about 'loss of community' and about alienated youngsters and isolated old people. The search for roots is a nationwide phenomenon. We are finally beginning to realize that we are in danger of losing the very things our society needs most to sustain quality of life and to give people a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves, but small enough to relate to in an immediate sense.

"Millions of dollars are spent annually in the attempt to study and create community. We know we need it, we can recognize it when we see it, and yet we still don't know how it happens or how to create it. Under circumstances like these, places where a strong sense of community does exist are especially precious in terms of what we can *all* learn from them. When you add strong historical value and continuing tradition, such communities become very special, invaluable in fact. Luckily, West Virginia still has such areas left. They are among our most precious possessions, more valuable every year."

Any community is complex, so the picture presented here of traditional living in the upper West Fork area is only a glimpse, a partical record. These articles contain a series of portraits of area residents, whose reflections and stories, I feel, provide a better picture of their community than an outsider's narrative would. Their thoughts and attitudes toward life are valuable far beyond their community.

The second article, "An Area Full of Teachers," concentrates mostly on the older people, those who have the most to pass on to the younger generations. This article contains the thoughts and

Ten-year-old Matthew Snyder's sister Missy, 5, caught a hay wagon ride one day late last year when he was on his way to feed the calves. Photograph by John C. Weisblat.

perspective of a young area couple, ages 30 and 32, who are on the receiving end of the chain of tradition. Coming from longtime area families, Matt Snyder owns a small contracting firm and is a part-time farmer. He and his wife Francine, a Weirton native, are both graduates of West Virginia University. Their children are Matt, Jr., age 10, and Missy, age 5. The Snyders are one of the many younger couples who love the upper West Fork area well enough to invest their resources, build their houses, and raise their children there, despite the threat of the dam.

Kate Long. Matt, your family has been in this area six generations on your mother's side now and seven generations on your father's. Not very many people these days live in a situation like that. Could you tell me some of your thoughts about living on this particular farm, what it means to you?

Matt Snyder. I lived in this area when I was a child, until I was seven years old, and I never stopped wanting to come back. My family moved to Clarksburg several years after my mother's grandfather, Grandpa Matthews, died in 1951. When he died, nobody had a clear title to the place, and there were divided interests. So the farm went into heirship and they auctioned everything off.

I was just a kid, but I remember when they had that auction in 1952 how badly I felt about it. They took everything out of the house, laid it out across the yard, and just auctioned it off. I watched all the things I'd seen and loved being packed into somebody else's truck and taken away. Then everybody went away and left a big empty house just sitting there.

Francine Snyder. Matt had to sell his goats too when his family moved to Clarksburg a couple of years later. His dad bought him a toy farm with the money, but his mother says he had a real fit when they left here.

MS Oh, I wanted to scream and kick. Back then, this place was right out of a storybook. The buildings, the livestock, the location. It was a good grassland farm, a little steep in parts, but good pasture and soil, like most of the farms around here. The land where we're now living had first been cleared by my great-great-grandfather Mullinax in the 1830s. Mullinax was a Frenchman by ancestry, by all reports an unusually capable manager and farmer. He built the place up in the "root, hog, or die" tradition.

FS That saying, "root, hog, or die," has been around here forever. It means you have to make do with what you have on hand. In Grandpa Mullinax's case, it meant the stone and timber he had on hand, along with his tools and what help he could get from neighbors. Back then, people would let their hogs run wild after they notched their ears. They had to root up food or die. "Root, hog, or die."

MS Anyhow, when we came back to Lewis County a few years ago, the Mullinax place was so overgrown you could hardly see the old house from the road. The Mullinax place, of course,

Left. Matt and Francine Snyder with their children, Matthew and Missy, standing in front of their home they built in 1974 onto the chimney of the old Mullinax home. Photograph by Kate Long.

Above. Matt Snyder's maternal great-great-grandfather Mullinax's 1830s house before it was dismantled down to the chimney. Photographer and date unknown.

belonged to my mother's side of the family. But the Snyder farm is just over the hill on the river, and it actually comes closer to being a producing farm. It was cleared, with river bottom land, so I originally figured that we would live down there. The Mullinax house was in too bad shape to restore, so I had planned to dismantle it and use the materials to build the new place on the Snyder farm.

Well, I went ahead and took the house down to the sills, leaving the floor and the chimney still there. The chimney is two stories high, made out of large hand-cut stones, taken from the rock ledges up on the hill and carried down here in Grandpa Mullinax's time. It was just standing there by itself, a beautiful thing. I didn't want to hurt it. So I went to talk to a couple of the older farmers around here about how to take it across the hill without ruining it.

While we were trying to decide what to do, I'd sit and look at that chimney. I got to thinking about Grandpa Mullinax cutting those big stones by hand. And then about the other generations that have had their fires there. And the more I thought, the more it seemed that the thing to do was to chink it up and restore it, rather than move it. So one day I put a ladder up against it and just started patching. That was how the decision was made that we would build our house in the same place Grandpa Mullinax built.

FS I told him that Grandpa Mullinax had been talking to him from that chimney.

MS Well, maybe he was. However it happened, there's no other place on earth where we could have what we have here. My son is the sixth generation of my family to live on this particular farm. You probably can't imagine what that means without experiencing it.

FS Preserving the things past generations have left means more to us all the time. We'd feel that way even if this farm hadn't been in the family, maybe because we've both lived in places where there was very little sense of roots or continuity with the past. So we value whatever we can know and preserve of the people who were here before us. It's hard to explain. But some of the other families around here feel the same way and they're not even related to the people who had the farms before them.

MS Not everybody feels it. Some of the people who came to help when we first got here said, "Get a machine in here, smooth everything off, and clear all the brush off the land." Well, we knew we'd be losing so much from the past that way, so we basically did it all by hand.

Matt Snyder, Jr. Dad and I took the slate off the roof a piece at a time. I

helped carry, but I can only carry two pieces of slate at a time, they're so heavy.

FS It's been like an archeological expedition. You clear the brush away and find the roses that Matt's great-grandmother Idella planted. We've cleared a little at a time, and the older neighbors have told us what to watch out for. The first year we were here, for instance, there weren't any flowers in the yard. But when we cleared some more, Idella's white and yellow lilies came back up the second year, bordering the front yard in straight rows. The bridal wreath bush in the front yard would have taken ten years to grow back to where it is now if we'd cleared it all away.

MS It's all been worth it. The old paths are there, and now my kids are running on them. You can go back up on the hill and look at the big rock piles, find the old gates, pieces of split rail fence, and you can find out exactly who made them, because some of the people who helped do it live just down the road. George Post, on the next farm, remembers Mullinax. He walks around here and tells me who built what. Tickles him no end.

I did some work for a fellow a while back over here at Arnold. He was telling me about hoeing corn for my great-grandfather, about filling silos and hauling things. He worked for my great-grandpa for a dollar a day. "But he fed me good!" he said, "he fed me good."

FS When Matt's mother comes, she can tell us, "Over here was a corn crib, and here's where my brother and I used to sit in the apple tree and throw apples to the hogs." It's so real for all of us. It tickles the kids to death to hear those stories. The time the hog chased them. Grandpa used to have a mean hog.

Living here gives all of us a sense of stability. You feel good when you come home. Not just the little things like lack of traffic and not having to worry about prowlers. Not just those sorts of things. It's much more than that, a quality to life here you can't really describe. It has something to do with the fact that you know these people and they know you, and you're all glad about it, from the kids on through the great-grandparent generation.

The people whose families don't go back in the area say the same thing. But it is true that the family connection adds so much richness to our lives. If we go to a covered dish dinner over at the community building, somebody will say, "Why, you're old Tom Snyder's grandson." And that person will look at little Matthew and he'll say, "Why, I remember your great-granddad," and then he'll start telling Matthew tales about his great-granddad. Well, that's *real* to Matthew. That gives him an added sense of his place in the continuity of life. When we go to the cemetery, he can see where all of these people are buried. And he knows about the man who built the fireplace in our house. They're real people to him. It's not something he has to go look up in the genealogy someplace in Washington.

We work hard on this farm, all of us do. Don't ever get the idea that farm work is easy. But it's worth it. The kids are proud that they're part of all this. Little Matthew will come home from school and tell me, "Hey, I talked to Mrs. Kerns [his teacher] and she said that she was related to us!" It matters to him.

MS It affects the way we relate to the land, too. We're conscious that we're only one link in a continuous chain of people who have been and will be on this land. So I can't quite come to terms with the idea that I could actually own it. Actually, I feel more like a caretaker when you get down to it.

FS That's a pretty common feeling around here, realizing that the land's always been here, and we're only one generation to work it. I think that's one reason why the idea that anything might happen to it upsets people so.

KL Your feelings about your homeplace are so strong, so clear. What about the community around the farm?

FS Now, I'll tell you. All our family ties to this community wouldn't mean half as much if we didn't feel so good about the people who live around here, and the way of life they represent. There aren't many areas left like this in West Virginia, or, I suppose, elsewhere. Even if the family ties weren't there, I'd feel very lucky to be here. It has to do with community, tradition, history, the way of life . . .

You mentioned the historic sites, the ones that have been nominated for the National Register. Well, we care a great deal about the history they represent. We're proud of them and we're telling our kids about them. But as far as I'm concerned, the most valuable parts of life around here aren't structures that you can nail a plaque onto. The structures are only a reflection of the way of life that's been carried on around here for generations. The way of life is the thing that gives them meaning.

You know, my children and I have access to living history and tradition through the people who live around here, if you want to look at it that way. We live in an area full of teachers, people who are glad to show you how to do things. We don't have to go outside ten square miles to learn everything we need to know about the old ways and tools the farmers used, about caning chair bottoms, quilting, cutting stone, ways of preserving food. I asked Ruth Post about ways of drying beans the other day and she gave me her opinion, then she called another woman who told her how the "old folks" used to do it. That tickled me, because here that woman is in her seventies. When she says "old folks" she means people who are long dead.

MS You can go in a person's tool shed and see the very tools that were used to make the first buildings around here. People save them. And use them. Broadaxes, froes, drawknives, different styles of hatchets—kent hatchets, broad hatchets, a foot adz. Some brought across the Alleghenies, others that were made in local blacksmith shops. I'm in hog heaven when I get into one of those sheds. And like I said, the best part of it is that they're still being used, or the man can show you how to use them.

FS I'll tell you something else important. The children are growing up in a place where they see people of all ages working constructively. Not just people their father's age. Little Matthew goes to work in the hay field with his dad and George Post down the road. George is 77 and you really have to be fast to stay ahead of him. You'll be hoeing potatoes ahead of George and he'll be right up there behind you, poking you and wanting to know if you can't go any faster.

MS Now, you just stay around George and you'll learn something. George is just one of any number of older people around here who can show you how to do the things you read about in the *Foxfire* books. But you don't just ask him to show you,

Francine Snyder at last year's harvest in the garden with Matthew and Missy. Photograph by John C. Weisblat.

you help him do it. Everything's a trade around here. It's not a free ride. Working with George is definitely a work-study program, no doubt about it. You work now and study on it later. You work and you learn.

George cuts his hogs up the old way. Now, the modern way, you split them down the back and you make pork chops. Now, that's just an outlandish waste as far as George is concerned. You ruin the backbone, the boil [pronounced *burl*]. "You won't have anything to make boil out of," he says. George takes an ax, and cuts either side, the ribs. Thay way, he takes the tenderloin out, and just cuts with an ax right where the ribs are attached to the backbone. He says that's the best part and he doesn't want to waste it on porkchops. You boil it with potatoes and onions and carrots. And it's a boil.

And look at the weather sense the man has! George knows exactly when to make his hay. By making the hay, I mean cutting it, drying it, and baling it. There won't be a cloud in the sky, everything will look perfect, and you'll say, "Well, George, let's knock off for the day," and he'll look at you and tell you it's going to rain, and the hay'll be ruined if don't keep on going. Well, you never can tell when George is serious or not, but he'll keep on going, and, by God, we'll get the last bale in the barn, and it'll start to rain. That happened last week.

Ask George how he knew it was going to rain, and he'll tell you that there wasn't any dew on the grass this morning, and that he could hear sounds from further away than he usually can. "When you hear the wippoorwill hollering at night," he'll say, "listen to how long he keeps it up. If he hollers very long, it isn't going to rain. If he hollers just a few times, then quits, better watch out." Tree frogs too, George says that when they holler, it's a sign of rain. Increase in the number of spider webs, red sunrise. "All those things just add up, doc," he'll say.

FS Ruth and George gave Matt Eric Sloan's book on barns and old buildings a few Christmases back. Little Matthew looks through it, and he sees a picture of an old-timey grain cradle, and he says, "George has one of these," or "I've seen George cut hay with that." He's not growing up feeling mystified by the practical matters of getting along in life. When Matthew reads that Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin, he understands immediately, because there's one down the road. It's comprehensible to him, it's not fantasy.

You know, Matt and I went to the University. Well, Matt'll be working with George, and he'll make a mistake, and George will look at him and say in that slow talk he has, "Did you learn that at that there university?"

MS I can't argue with the man. He knows he's got a point. I was in landscape architecture when I was there, and they used to teach us how to lay out cities, plan for new parking lots, and generally get us to the point where we could figure out how to move New York City five miles to the east, with blueprints, pictures and maybe a couple of site visits.

Well, in the meantime, I was visiting back here, noticing how different the Lewis County approach to building is from some of the approaches we were studying. If you build something around here, it's intended to serve for many lifetimes. You're going to have to put up with it, so you take time to study it out. When a person is deciding where to lay the foundation, for instance, you spend an awful lot of time on the actual site in various weather conditions and seasons if possible, checking out the way the sun travels and hits that location. That's the traditional way. At school we were learning to decide how to lay the house out after a single site visit. I told George that and I thought he'd fall out of his chair laughing.

I know a person needs to know about a variety of approaches, but I used to wonder why we'd talk about Japanese architecture and ignore our own native people and what they have to teach us. I'll tell you what, the University ought to be down there at George's. You know what I mean.

The people my age in the community as well as the younger ones have a lot of respect for what the older people can teach us. The old people in this community for the most part aren't

hidden away in a rest home. You see them out functioning in a useful way. Old Mr. See's in his nineties, and he still sharpens the tools and so forth. It's nothing unusual to see an 80-year-old fixing a fence with a 20-year-old.

FS The kids see this and as a result I've noticed something growing in them that I think is unusual for the average child. They love old people and will seek them out. I know that little kids often develop a fear of old people if they're seldom around them, or a distaste for old people if all the old people they see have been forced into idleness or uselessness.

Well, around here, Missy and Matthew see 68-year-old Mr. Linger fixing tractors. They see that 87-year-old Mrs. Currance turns as many tomatoes out of her garden as we turn out of ours. Vernon Hyre's in his seventies, and he's still out in the hay field like everybody else and has a toolshed full of fascinating machines. So, seeing all this, Matthew and Missy naturally think that old people are great. They see them as people who can teach you something, for the most part. They don't have to call them "senior citizens." They're old people, and that's not a derogatory comment. They're the old ones, people they look up to and respect.

MS Now, if that's not a traditional Appalachian value, I don't know what is. And this is one place where you can still find it.

KL I've noticed during the past few days that a lot of trading goes on among people around here, trading of all sorts of things. When we visited the Sees, for instance, she gave you some tomatoes, Francine, and you insisted that he walk down to the car so you could give them some melons. Ruth Post sends up cottage cheese and eggs, and you send down peaches and bread, each sending up what the other doesn't already have. You and George do a lot of trading of work, Matt. You helped him with the hay, then I noticed he was up here the next day helping to dig potatoes. And yet I never hear anybody say, "If you do this for me, I'll do this for you." It seems to just keep happening.

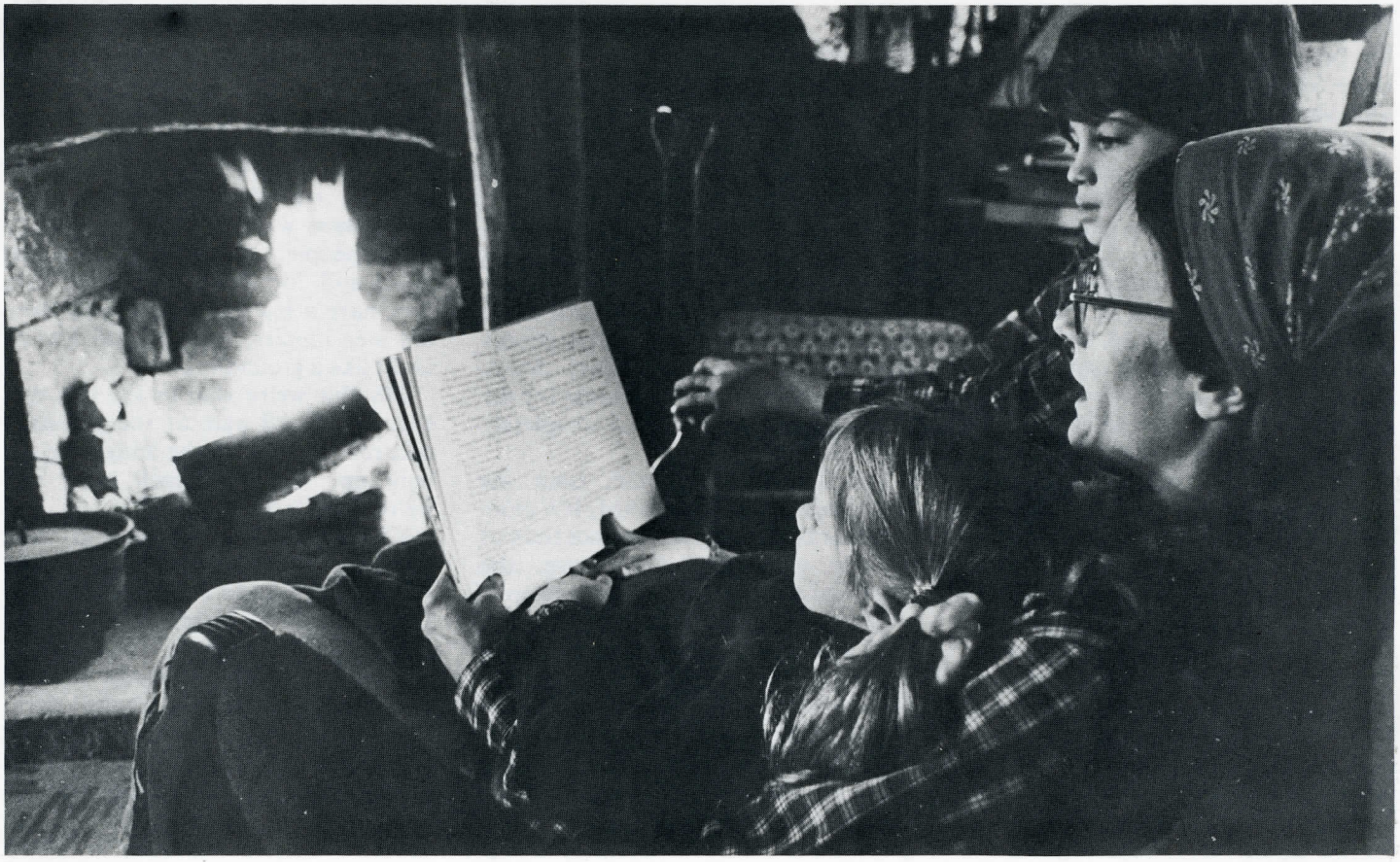
MS Well, you've put your finger there on the heart of life in this community, as it is now and as it's always been. You're right. People do for each other, and you won't hear anybody spelling it out too much. It's not something you have to talk about, it's a way of life. It's understood. If you get, you give. If you want somebody to teach you something, you go help them with it.

You don't go say "What can I do for you?" as much as you just start doing it. You come by and somebody's vaccinating hogs, why, you get out of the truck and go help him do it while you talk. It's a natural thing.

It's been that way since the first people settled here. Back then it was a matter of survival. But even now, living back here in the country is hard work, and you realize that you're going to need your neighbors' help and goodwill over the years if you're going to live comfortably—get your hay in, get out of the ditch, keep the operation running smoothly. So you do need other people, and yet we all still have that well publicized Appalachian characteristic of needing to feel that we're making our own way and not taking a free ride off of anybody.

FS Now, I know that that attitude

Francine Snyder at the fireside with her two children. Photograph by John C. Weisblat.



Matthew Snyder at the tree house he built on their farm. Photograph by Kate Long.

has broken down in other parts of the State for various reasons. But it's still alive and kicking here.

MS You don't want to be beholden. And so the only way you feel right about having your neighbor do something for you is if you can do something for him in return.

FS It's not a cold bartering. It's not trading hour for hour, or "She gave me five pounds of cheese, so I have to give her five pounds of something." Somebody does something for you, so you look and you see what it is that that person needs or likes. You enjoy doing it, and after you've been doing it for a while, it becomes the fabric of your relationship, a balance, a harmony that allows each to feel comfortable about asking for and taking help. And having these kinds of relationships also helps us look beyond the surface differences we might have, like length of Matt's hair. That just becomes one more thing to joke about.

It's actually fun trying to think of what the other person could use now. It keeps us close and makes the things we do mean more, knowing we can share them.

KL What kinds of things get traded?

FS Oh, Lord, what doesn't get traded? Things you can see, things you can't see. In the seeing department, all kinds of food and work . . .

MS Jack Linger gave me a handyman jack this morning, and I'm going to fix his son's roof.

FS But then there's visits, and keeping an eye on things, letting people use what you have that they don't. Sometimes people will do things for the kids too. It's impossible to completely describe it.

MS But, like we said, once the relationship gets established, it's more a matter of keeping the balance than of specific exchanges. Of course, the Posts are our nearest-to-hand example.

But I'll tell you something. If you look on this kind of back-and-forth as part of the process of building your life in this community, you don't just come repair something or drop off something and then leave, without sitting down to talk a spell. You need to visit a while too because, after all, that's what gives warmth to the whole process. That's as important as the roof you fixed, especially for people who don't or can't get out much. It means the world to have somebody stop by every now and then and show a genuine interest in you as a person, maybe kid you a little bit.

FS When you get down to it, that's what makes the whole process feel good. Otherwise, it'd be a pretty cold exchange, and you might as well pay money for it. We do it because it's of mutual benefit, but we also do it because we care about one another. The goodwill just keeps on building.

MS Oh, we could go on and on, talking about this subject. Another thing we do for each other that doesn't maybe seem to be that much on the surface is to tease and joke around with each other in the country way. Now, that's as important as anything could be. Work's hard and this joking lightens things up. The kids love it as much as we do when George starts telling one of these wild tales he tells. The idea, you know, is to see if you can get the other person to believe it.

FS And you ought to see one of these 80-year-old men light up when Matt asks him if he wants to fight. "Want to step outside?" Matt'll say. "I think I can whip you today." And that old man will perk up and get right into the game. "What are you going to tear up today?" Matt'll say. And one of them'll say, "Matt, I want you to help me." Matt'll get over there ready to help, and the other fellow says, "I've been wanting to learn how to shave people, so why don't you just stand still for a few minutes?" Oh, they have a big time. Matt calls those old men hippies, and they tell him he looks like a groundhog.

MS But we're able to kid like that because it's all part of the give-and-take relationship, all the things that are built up. We know each other and we're glad we do.

KL What about people who can't carry on their end of the exchange in an equal way? Maybe they've gotten old and can't do as much any more as they'd like to? I know, for instance, that there are several women in their eighties living alone around here. You've said they're able to do that because people stop in regularly to carry wood, make repairs, and so forth.

MS Well, you see, most of those

Matthew Snyder rounding up the cows for milking. Photograph by Kate Long.

people have been here for years, carrying on in the way we've been describing. And they've built up a stockpile of what you might call IOU's.

It's true, there comes a point in life when an equal trade isn't possible any more. But we have that at both ends of our life, don't we? When you're born, nobody really owes you anything and you can't pay back in kind for what you get. But by the time you reach the other end of it, if you do it the way it's done around here, you've had all those years to build up, to do for and with people, so that you don't need to feel bad when the time comes that you can't do as much any more. Because your neighbors and family remember all the years that you've done for them, when you've kept the balance.

You see, it's different here than it is in most places. When you relate to somebody, you can generally figure you're going to be relating to them 20 years from now, they aren't picking up and moving in two years. That's a completely different thing. Those long-term relationships are one of the most valuable things we have as we get older. There are several women over 80 living alone in the area. Most have two or more younger generations living nearby. When Mrs. Currance's kids take care of her needs, for instance, over and beyond what she can give now, they're just paying back. It's still not a free ride, you see, it's a balance.

FS I think that's one reason why people get to feeling so frantic when they think that the dam might scatter this community. You've gone through life building up all these relationships that carry you on through to the end. And then what if everybody you've related to has to move away? The fabric of the community gets torn. In some areas, people can say, "Well, I'll just get another house." But not around here. The house is the least of it. It's like losing your life savings to lose these relationships with community.

MS "Community" is a word you hear a lot these days, usually following the words "loss of." We hear them talking about it on National Public Radio all the time, how sad it is for our society that we've lost our sense of community and links with the past.

FS And it's true, it's gone in a lot of places. But it's all still here in this area, if you're willing to work for it. And do we ever work! Don't let anybody ever tell you farm work is easy. Matt and I could both have it a lot easier in terms of money and amount of work. But that's not what we're after. We both feel that life is—just more real here. We think that we've found what a lot of other people are looking for, and we feel like we're earning it, rather than having it fall in our laps.

MS But we get so much in return, we're always having the chance to learn. And that's what's so beautiful about it. I'm watching my kids grow up in the middle of all this, learning all kinds of practical things and a beautiful way of relating to people and life. When I see little Matthew and George Post working together, it feels like full circle. And that's one of the main reasons we came back here. To bring the kids back home to George. And to all the other Georges. And Ruths. And even if we end up losing it all to the big dam, they're going to have that much.

An Area Full of Teachers

By Kate Long

Photographs by Bob Swisher

THE young people living around the upper West Fork River seem to have an unusually high degree of respect for what they can learn from the older people in the community. "My children and I have access to living history and tradition through the people who live around here," Francine Snyder explained. "We live in an area full of teachers."

This kind of attitude seems to occur naturally in the upper West Fork where men and women in their 70s and 80s are commonly seen out fixing fences, working in the hayfields, tending store, gardening, or otherwise active. In our transient society, these closely knit communities are unusually stable. Many families have been in the area at least five generations. People of all ages do work together, and perhaps as a result the gap between generations does not seem to be as noticeable as in other parts of the country.

The preceding article presented the point of view of a young couple raising children in the area. Following is a sampling of the older generations' lives and lore in the upper West Fork area. Each of these people has specific skills and know-how to pass on. Many are great sources of the tales and history of the area. Their lives have been spent in occupations vital to the area, farming, railroading, milling, and storekeeping. As an area mother said, "We feel very lucky as parents to see our children exposed to these people's attitudes toward life and living. That's the glue that holds the way of life together, these attitudes and values. So you might say that there's nothing more valuable they have to give us."

The George Post's farm late in 1978 on Canoe Run near Roanoke. Photograph by Kate Long.

Ruth and George Post

George Post still lives in the house where he was born in 1904, on Canoe Run near Roanoke in Lewis County. "I remember when they weighed me," George said. "Somebody yelled out 'Twenty pounds! It's a whopper!' "

"You can always tell when George is storying," advised little Matthew Snyder. "His lips pucker up."

"I was the baby of the family," George remembers without a pucker. "But, oh, I did the work too. My job in the hay fields as a little fellow was to put the chain around the hay shocks so they could haul them with horses, you know. We'd work all day, us kids, then go to the river and go swimming.

"My dad always called me his little jockey. I'd get up behind him on old Charlie. Pap'd be in the saddle, and I'd be bareback, you know. I'd stand up behind him, holding onto his shoulders, and get down to open and close the gates when we'd go through."

When George was 16 his pap died and he took over the operation of the 200-acre farm which had already been farmed by his family since the 1880s. By that time, George was a jack-of-all-trades, like so many other boys of his generation. He could make hay, raise stock and hounds, do carpenter work, butcher animals, and maintain tools, among other things. "Of course, I did all my farming by horses, everything by horses back then."

When he was 32, George married Ruth McCray, who lived a mile outside Roanoke, and brought her to his family home. "When I first visited this house as a young girl," Ruth remembered, "the Post household was much more complicated than it is now. A lot more help was needed to farm the place, so they made ends meet by having tenant farmers. Mother Post

had three 100-pound barrels in the pantry, one for flour, one for white meal, and one for dog food. The three big dough boards covering those barrels were constantly in use in those days. Mother Post had eight children, and two of the tenant farmers got three meals a day. Relatives and friends from Weston were constantly coming and gathering. The family would butcher eight and ten big hogs a year, at least one beef, and raised as many as 400 chickens for the table. The cellar was always full of canned goods and potato bins. A lot of apples, potatoes, turnips, and other roots were buried in the hills and garden. That was most of our year's supply of food."

Both George and Ruth will testify that running a household like that without a lot of economic resources meant a lot of plain hard work, especially in the days before mechanized farming. There were the children and tenant farmers, all working. "But we'd never have been able to make it without help from the community, of course. We all helped each other out, we always have, in the community."

If the word "community" keeps coming up in George and Ruth's conversation, it's because "community has been our way of life." "Before we had reapers and tractors," George said, "We used to raise a lot of wheat, and cradled it by hand, you know. Bind it by hand, haul it, and stack them up in the barn. But the threshing took too many hands for the people on one farm to do alone. So all the people in the community would help one another thresh. There'd be 20, 25 people there, you know, from six or eight farms. We'd work at one farm till we finished, and if we happened to be there at mealtime, why, we'd eat there, over 20 people. When we finished that set, we'd move on to the next farm."

"Oh, it was busy," added Ruth, "but we'd have such a good time too. My sister-in-law got married in the middle of silo-filling time, another occasion when people would gather to help. You can imagine all those people working, then eating, then getting ready for the wedding and having a reception. It was wild."

"Well, we've always been close to neighbors in this part of the world," George said, "part out of necessity, part because we kind of like each other." "We even used to have a community phone, just for the Canoe Run area. It was the people's phone, is what it was."

"It started out when a farmer from Sand Fork decided to start a telephone business," Ruth explained. "There wasn't any back here, so he set up a line. If you wanted to call anywhere off Canoe Run, you'd ring up Roanoke and tell them who you wanted to call, and they'd carry on for you. Well, for some reason, that telephone service went defunct after awhile."

"So we decided we'd just keep the Canoe Run part of the line for ourselves, instead of letting it go," she continued. "We took turns maintaining the lines. Each of us had one of those crank phones on our home. And when you'd ring up, everybody's phone would ring. No telling who you'd get. Sometimes the whole community. When the community phone rang, everybody went to the telephone to see what was happening. It was a neighborly thing, not particularly nosy. Everybody knew each other, everybody felt close to each other, everybody wanted to know who's sick now, who needs help now, who's hurt now, or maybe who's having a corn roast or a chicken roast."

"I remember one time I had a sick horse," George added. "I got one man on the line, asked him to help me with this horse. He said he'd be down after awhile, after he finished up his work. Well, it wasn't long before here come Mr. Matthews, Matt's great-grandfather, to help. Then Berlin Matthews showed up too. And I looked over the hill and here come Shobe Swecker too. They'd all heard about it over the line. With that one phone call, I got four or five, and they stayed all night, a-doctoring that horse. Then I'd help them out too, when they needed it, of course."

Years after the Bell system replaced the community phone, the relationship between the Posts and their young neighbors, the Snyders, continues on in the same spirit and pattern, keeping the balance, making life more comfortable, secure, and lively for one another. "I don't know how this way of relating to one another got lost in most places," pondered Francine. "It takes time and effort, and maybe people feel like they're too busy. But I can't imagine living without it."

Some aspects of this kind of relationship can be seen in the quantities of eggs, melons, peaches, and cottage cheese that get passed back and forth between the two houses. And you might spot Matt up on the barn roof helping George repair leaks. Or George showing Matt how to doctor one of his cows. You can see Matt or Francine stopping in at the Posts' several times a week during the winter to make sure everything's all right, "no pipes frozen, nobody got the flu."

And you can see the American flag waving on the Post mailbox whenever the Snyders have a phone message. "Now, I think they think it's an imposition for me to take their messages," said Ruth Post, "but it isn't. It's a pleasure, because then I get to see them that much oftener, don't you see? One time the Snyders were selling pine to a florist in Clarksburg, and he called wanting to know when I'd see Matt. And I said, 'I don't know, but I'll put out the flag.' And that man thought that was really something to chuckle about. But what better signal can I have? In rainy weather, I put out a plastic State flag, so Old Glory won't get wet. And it stops them every time."

It soon becomes evident that the tangible items and services that are traded have become symbols of a deep underlying concern for one's neighbor. "That's country trading," Ruth said. "Matt has a little library up there of history books. I like to read them, and I like to show that I appreciate it, so I send up some things he might like to eat."

"Of course, she wouldn't mention all the time she spent making me a geneology of my family from her books and mine last Christmas," said Matt. "She traced it back to before the Revolutionary War on both sides, finding all sorts of characters."

The exchanges go on and on, a part of life, but always with a consciousness that it's important to keep the balance, to give when you get. "Little Matthew sits on the Posts' porch to wait for the school bus, so we don't have to worry about him," said Francine. "Then he drops in to make sure everything's OK at the Posts in the afternoon."

"Those children are growing up in the spirit of this place," Ruth said. "It tickles me the way Matthew is always saying, 'Now, let me do that,' trying to get a-hold of whatever work he thinks he can take off my hands while we're visiting."

"Well, Ruth tells me good stories and shows me how to do things,"

George Post showing Matt Snyder and his son Matthew how to hold and cut with a grain cradle. Photograph by Bob Swisher.

countered young Matthew. "Yesterday, she showed me this tin soldier her father used to have. You wind it up, and it pushes a cart." Matthew will show visitors the copper penny Ruth gave him for his birthday in 1977. "Ruth's great-grandfather carried it all through the Civil War for good luck!" Matthew says with considerable excitement. The note that came with the penny reads, "These are old, old coins, which have been in my family for more than 100 years. They originally belonged to my great-uncle, John G. Rohrbough. The large copper cent he carried all through the Civil War. He was in Co. B, 15th W. Va. (Fed.) Infantry, while your great-great-grandfather Samuel Bryce Mullinax, was in Co. D of the same regiment. I would be pleased if these three coins were in your Mother's custody."

Both George and Ruth share a wide variety of experiences with their young neighbors. Matthew explained, "Now, George, I watched him dehorn a calf last week, and he told me about when he was my age and had to drive the cattle all the way down to the railroad at Roanoke, just walking them. That's three or four miles! I know that part was true. But then he told me that one time he held out his arm and four big men jumped on it to take a ride!

"And I'll tell you what else. I read in the history of Roanoke about how Canoe Run got its name. The first explorers found an Indian canoe hidden at the mouth of the run, you know, and they named it Canoe Run. Well, George told me he was the one that hid that canoe, back when he was three years old! He couldn't have done that, could he?"

"George has got the fine old country tradition of storying down to an art," said Ruth. "You know, back before they had cars and when people first came to this area, storying was a frequent pastime, a form of recreation. But you had to practice to get good at it. Sometimes the stories would be so outrageous nobody would think of believing them. They'd just be for fun. Other times, part of the idea would be to see if you could get somebody to believe it for a while. But it always had to be a little outlandish.

"Now, these kids are catching on to how this storying works, so it gets harder to fool them. I'll tell you a story on little Missy. She's five years old, you know. Well, two years ago, George gave Matthew and her a lamb. And they all had a circus rearing that lamb, the children and their mamma too.

"Well, one day last summer, I was canning applesauce here in the kitchen. It was a bit wet underfoot, and George was sitting on the back porch. Francine and the children were out on the back porch with him. George thought he would have some fun out of Missy. So he said, 'Melissa, I'm hungry for lamb.' And she's smart, she knew what he meant.

"We had two hogs out there in the lot across the fence. So she said, 'Well, out there's some hogs. Butcher them.'

" 'No,' said George. 'I don't want pork. I'm hungry for lamb.'

"Then Missy looked back up here on the hill where all the herefords were, and said, 'Well, up there's some cattle. Butcher one of them.'

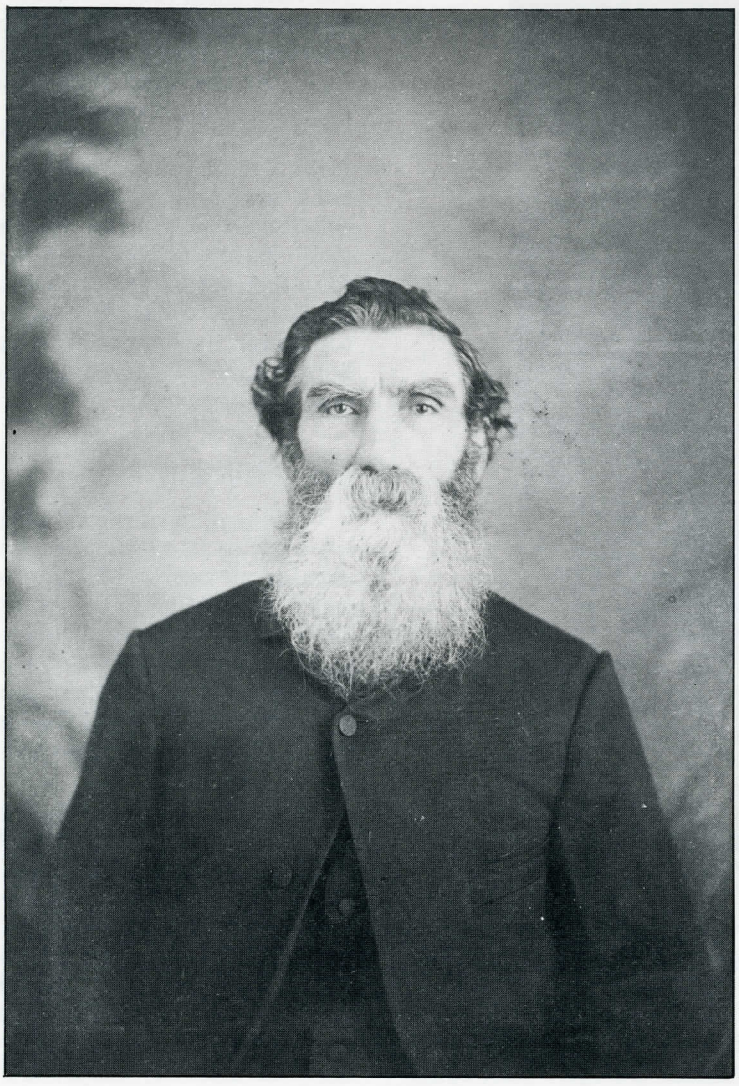
"But George said, 'I don't want beef, Missy. I'm hungry for lamb.'

"Melissa looked up and studied his face, she was trying to be diplomatic but she could see it was going to take a more direct approach. So she kind of straightened up a little bit, and said in that little high voice of hers, 'Well then, butcher your own damn sheep!'

"I heard her mother say, 'Melissa!' and when I looked out there, George was about to bust, trying to keep his face composed. Missy got him that time and he deserved it!"

"Oh, we work a little, and we laugh a little," George added. "That's the way it goes."

"You have to understand how this country way of talking goes," Ruth said, "or you won't know what to think sometimes. George and Matt'll tease each other over anything. They'll go on for a half-hour over the size of their ears. They talk rotten to each other and love it. That's just the way people banter around here, for fun, you know. You wouldn't do it to anybody you didn't like. George is



Charles Post (1827 - 1922) is the grandfather of George Post and great-great-grandfather of Matthew Snyder. Immigrated from Germany at age seven, apprentice seaman on the LEVANT at age 13, then misdshipman on the CONSTITUTION ("Old Ironsides"), he returned to Lewis and Braxton Counties to farm, living part of his life on the farm now occupied by George Post.

A favorite Lewis County tale concerns the time this gentleman with the striking beard rode off on his horse to town, leaving his wife to mind the farm. Post had a dray route at the time, hauling merchandise from Weston to Braxton County, so his wife never knew when to expect him back home. The evening after he rode away, a clean-shaven gentleman came riding in, and asked the children if they would ask their mother to put him up for the night. At that time, it was common custom for strangers to ask for room and board wherever they ended up in the evening.

Mrs. Post was reluctant to put the stranger up, since her husband wasn't home; but when he insisted, she agreed. She had many children to attend to, and so did not pay much attention to him through the dinner, especially since he did not talk much. When they had eaten and settled down by the fire, he spoke up and corrected some child who was misbehaving. She recognized the voice and realized that she had been entertaining her own husband, who had gone into town and gotten his beard shaved off.

always telling Matt that he's going to run him out. By that, he means he's going to outwork him."

"Oh, that's the way we'd always work together back when I was a boy," George explained. "Eight or ten of us together, we'd work, and try to run the other fellow out while we did it. Outdo him, put him in the shade. Get his shirt. Oh, it was a lot of fun, a lot of fun. Didn't matter what we were doing, carrying the oats, pitching hay, cutting filth, doing a little carpentering. It just made it more fun, working thataway. 'Course, this old man here [meaning Matt] can't keep up, I leave him miles behind, look back and he's just scratching his head."

Ruth reflected, "With all the many things we do for each other in this part of the country, I suppose the best we have to give each other is just our company and what little we know about life."

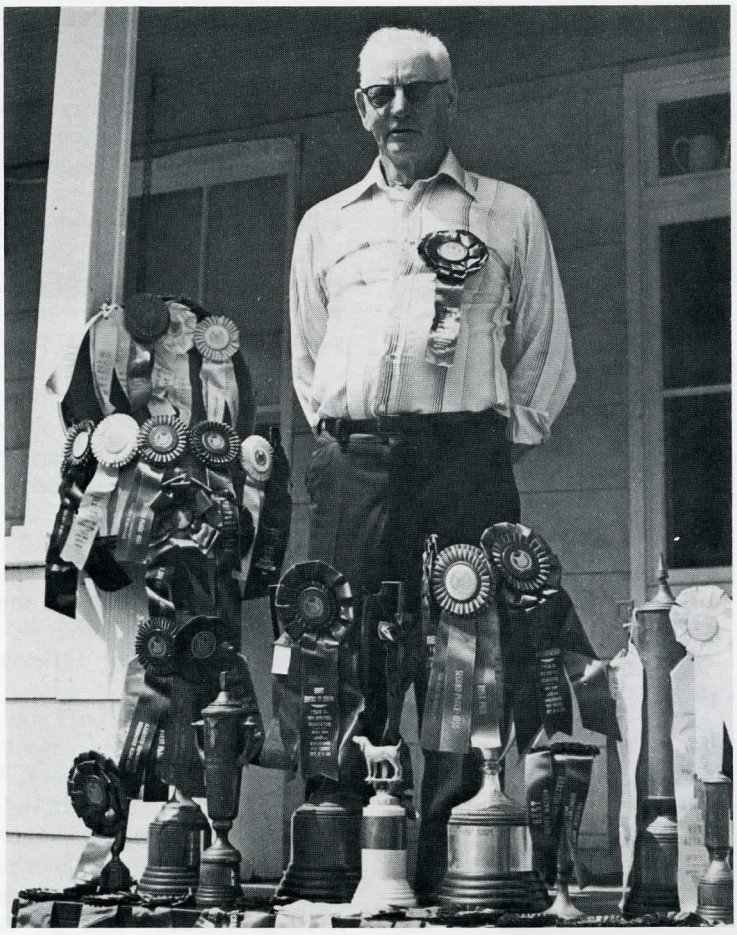
But George was off on another story. "First time I ever went on a fox chase, I was two days old. Reason I remember it, Pap come in the morning after I was born, you know, to see how I was. I said to him, 'Where you going, Dad?' He told me he was going fox chasing. I said, 'You got any good hounds?' He allowed as how he had, and I said, 'If you'll wait till the morning, I'll go with you.' So he waited till the next morning, and I got on behind him on old Charlie. And we went out fox chasing, and, oh, we had the biggest there ever was!"

"Aw, George!"

"It's true, 'cause Pap says so!"

George Post entered the hounds he raised and trained in fox chase competitions in neighboring counties and states during the 1930s and '40s. At that time, there were active fox chase associations in many West Virginia counties, as well as a State association. During much of that time, George was either president or director of the Lewis County Fox Hunters Association. Well-known for his way with animals, he is credited with introducing the beautiful, rugged Baldwin strain of the Walker hound to West Virginia.

"Up till about the 1950s," Ruth recalled, "fox chasing has been a very enjoyable part of life throughout central West Virginia for as long as anybody could remember. We didn't do the Virginia-style hunting where you ride after the hounds on horses. This was West Virginia-style."



George Post on the front steps of his home with his fox chase ribbons and trophies. Photograph by Bob Swisher.

"We'd take the hounds up on the ridge of an evening," George continued, "and while the hounds were cold trailing the foxes, looking for a fresh scent, why, we'd all build a big fire and begin roasting some potatoes or corn, sometimes chicken. And pretty soon, the hound'd find a hot trail, and they'd begin to bellow. People would sit around the fire and listen to the voices of the hounds back on the hill. You know the dogs' voices, each one. Whichever dog would pop up over the hill, leading the chase, you'd recognize that voice and say, "Oh, that's my dog!" or "That's so-and-so's dog!"

"Mostly young men would go fox chasing," said Ruth. "But the women would go too, sometimes, usually on a Saturday night. We'd have a party and take food. But the men might take off almost any night, if it were a good night, if the scent was right. If the atmosphere was right to convey a strong scent, oh, you'd hear those men begin to talk when they'd come in from the fields. 'How those hounds could run tonight!' And they'd get their supper and go."

"And, oh, the lies that were told while we were sitting around that fire!" continued George. "And sometimes we'd sing some till the fox would go to hole. Then we'd get ready to go home. Sometimes the dogs'd pick up another fox after one had gone to a hole. Eleven hours is the longest chase I remember. Sometimes you'd move from one point on the ridge to another if you couldn't hear the dogs any more. But we'd always build a big fire wherever we were.

"It was very rare for the dogs to catch the fox. Why, the fox would just go to hole when it got tired of the whole thing. Those foxes seemed to love the chase as much as anybody. They'd run right by their own hole many times, crisscross back and forth over the trail, anything to fool the dogs. They'd walk a fence or walk a log, and when they'd get winded, they'd go to hole.

"We'd still be fox chasing yet," explained George, "but there got to be too many highways and too many deer. Dogs'd run after the deer instead of the fox, and when they did chase the fox, the whole crew would run across the highways. Those foxes would use highways like they used streams, to shake the dogs, you know."

"But we all enjoyed it," added Ruth. "As much as anything, it was a good way to get together with your neighbors and have fun. Back then, we didn't have television or much money for other forms of recreation, so we would enjoy each other and our surroundings, make our own fun, you know. And there was nothing better than fox chasing."

Clara Currence

"By the time you finish with a quilt, it's a bit as if it has a life and a personality all its own. They're personalized." Mrs. Clara Currence, 81, smiled shyly, and continued, "And I do hate to part with them." She has parted with over 200 quilts in the past 70-odd years. The delicacy and fine quality of her hand stitching is well-known in her part of the world.

"After I finish a quilt, I generally look at the pieces in it to recall whose dress that piece came from, whose pants that piece came off of—mostly from family." Three younger generations of Mrs. Currence's family live within ten minutes driving distance. "A lot of the quilts are made out of your family's clothes. You always think of that. My children, I've seen them laying on the bed, pointing at little pieces in a quilt and picking out whose clothes that was, where it came from, and all that. They have a lot of fun doing that. All my kids have quilts of mine. And I imagine they tell their kids where some of those little pieces of cloth came from. It's like a piece of history for the family, in a way of thinking."

Mrs. Currence hardly remembers a time when she didn't quilt. "Since I was ten years old, I've made quilts by myself. My mother made quilts, and she had a loom to make carpets on. And she had spinning wheels. My parents sheared sheep, and they made wool, and my mother, she made all our clothes. I tried what I could, but quilting was what I loved."

Like many farm women, Mrs. Currence was generally too busy with the farm work to quilt during most of

the year. But during the long winter hours, "when you eat up what you've put up during the rest of the year," she generally finished up two or three quilts a year. "The process of making a quilt involves a lot of studying," she explained. "You have to study it out. I study out a whole quilt before I ever sew a stitch. Sometimes I'd make up my own pattern, and sometimes I'd get one from somebody else. Getting your colors arranged right is just about the main thing on a quilt. If you get two or three colors just about alike together, it can ruin it. I don't go by any rules. I just look at what I've got and work it out myself, just the way I feel them.

"There's so much more to a quilt than most people see. A lot of people think there's not any work to them, but there's an awful lot. But if you like it, you don't mind. For instance, you'd think a Postage Stamp quilt would take more patience than a person could manage, with hundreds of little pieces no bigger than postage stamps. But it doesn't take as long as you might think. Every time I'd sit down, I'd make a block, and so it would grow.

"I've made lots of comforts too. My husband always helped me knot those comforts. The winter before he got sick, he helped me knot one. He and I played together when we were children, you know. We only lived about four miles apart."

Mrs. Currence's quilting seems to have been a part of all the dear relationships of her life. "When my sister got arthritis in her fingers," she remembered, "I pieced her quilts, I don't know how many, for her. Sometimes she'd do my washing, and I'd piece her quilts. We'd trade work thataway."

Mrs. Currence's quilts have been exhibited in shows. Her Lone Star quilt won first place at the 1978 Appalachian Arts and Crafts Festival in Beckley. But she is very reluctant to sell one. "Yes," she said, "a quilt is something you've done yourself. I make them for my children and grandchildren, and a few I have myself. But mostly I've given so many away to people I cared about. When I didn't have anything for Christmas or a birthday or a wedding, I'd give a quilt. And everybody liked that, of course. But, you know, I don't like to sell a quilt. My daughter-in-law tells me they get such big prices for them these days, but they're too personal for me to sell. I've sold a few and always felt bad about it.

"And I've told my kids at different times that I didn't want them to sell theirs after I'm gone, but to keep them in the family. I just love to give them to family and friends, but, you know, I do hate to sell them. If you start out making something knowing you're going to sell it, it's not the same to me. I like to know who I'm making it for, if I can and think, well, this is going to make them happy, while I'm making it."

Like several other women her age in the area, Clara Currence "manages very well" these days living alone. She and the younger generations live under a system that benefits everybody. Mrs. Currence's son-in-law and grandson farm the land around her house. In the wintertime, when somebody comes to check on the stock each day, they bring in coal for Mrs. Currence, empty the ashes, and visit a bit. Mrs. Currence keeps watch over their stock. When they go into town, they bring back her groceries too, along with milk from their milk cow. She raises and cans most of her own vegetables and baby-sits for her great-grandchild.

This kind of balance, even with one's family, allows a person like Mrs. Currence to avoid many of the unpleasant dependencies that many people her age have to deal with. "We do for each other," she says happily. "You know, I'm just like that. I can't sleep if I know I owe anybody anything and they might need it. Everybody that works for me, if they'll take it, I'll pay them when they go home. And, as for my family, well, we've been doing for each other for so long that I can't imagine it any other way."

Selena and Clyde Cowger

A little boy about four years old came into Cowger's Store in Crawford to buy quart canning jars. The little fellow told Mrs. Cowger, with some

Missy Snyder sits on Mrs. Clara Currence's porch swing with her. One of the maker's Drunkard's Path quilts is across their laps. Photograph by Bob Swisher.

confusion, that his mother had already scalded lots of tomatoes when she discovered she didn't have enough jars. Taking the little boy's hand, Mrs. Cowger told us to go ahead and talk with Mr. Cowger while she walked a couple of blocks back home with the child. She wanted to make sure his mother got the message that she didn't have the jars then, but would have them that evening. Even though Mrs. Cowger is having trouble walking these days, she just seems to see that sort of consideration as part of her normal daily work. "I know his mother would worry," she explained, "with no car and no place else around here she could buy some."

Open generally from 7:00 to 7:00, Cowger's store is one of those old-time country stores where just about anything might turn up for sale. The benches by the potbellied stove are well-worn from years of good use by five generations of Crawford residents. Dry goods, overalls, rugs are piled on the counter behind the benches. The shelves circling the room are stocked with buckets, moccasins, canned goods, penny candy, water pumps—whatever a small community needs in a general store. Mr. Cowger discovered a couple of the old-time starched collars and some button-legged pants last summer. He decided to retire them himself.

"I was never very big," Clyde Cowger, 82, said. "but what the Lord didn't give me in size, he made up in energy, as far as I'm concerned. And he called me to work, not to preach!" Any day you will see Mr. Cowger loading 50-pound sacks of feed or fertilizer into pickup trucks out front, hefting sides of bacon and other items most people his age wouldn't even try to pick up. Because of the particularly low prices the Cowgers charge for fertilizer and dog feed, they have accumulated customers from several adjoining counties. "This is a general store," Mr. Cowger says, "and we run this store for the service of the public!" The warmth and enthusiasm of his speech are a delightful combination with the slight formality of his words. "This is a wonderful place for us to meet our friends that we've made over the years, friends that we wouldn't have had the privilege of seeing if we didn't have this store. And they meet each other here too. And we aim to give them quality merchandise at a price they can afford to pay, without robbing the people. That's been our motto and attitude ever since we've been here.

"This is a very old building, built before 1884. There was a post office in this store in 1884. It's built of poplar lumber, and there are boards in there two feet wide or more without a knot in them, about an inch and a half thick. The ceiling is hand planed, and there is no studding in the walls because it is planked up and down and weatherboarded. It's nailed with square nails, the only thing that was available in those days. It stands up, and it's a warm store because the upright pieces are tongue and groove. And I can tell you that the first store owner was named Monroe Morrison."

"And he had a big black bear in the back room there," added Mrs. Cowger. "A real bear! Maybe he had it to show to people. That's what I can't understand. What would anybody want with a bear in their back room?"

When Mrs. Cowger says, "We've been here for 56 years," her tone of voice conveys the idea that she took great pleasure out of every one of them. She speaks with a slight Swiss accent, since her Swiss parents spoke German at home in Webster County when she was small. Her remarkable attention to detail, shows up in her recollections of the past 56 years in Crawford.

"Well, Clyde and I were married on the 22nd day of April in nineteen hundred and twenty-two," she said. "And my brother married Clyde's sister on the same day! Clyde had already bought the store in Crawford, so after we made enough money from working in the timber and the hayfields, we came down here on the train. First thing we did was clean our house!

"We put the store in on the first of September 1922. I tended the store, and my husband worked at jobs wher-

Selena and Clyde Cowger, both 82, in their general store at Crawford, just next to Walkersville. Photograph by Bob Swisher.

ever he could get. Different jobs. He worked on the road, he worked on the bridge down at Allender, and he helped do cement work on houses, and he worked in the hayfields. He did all of that, so we could live.

"Then on the 24th day of May, the next year, our first child Elsie was born. On the fifth day of June, Clyde started working for the B and O as a trackman. He worked for them for 38 years and one month.

"Clyde wanted a store, but he didn't get to stay in it. Oh, he worked! He worked in the day, and then delivered feed of a night, oh, my goodness. And then we'd get up at four and do a laundry. We didn't have a washing machine, you know. He would help me with it, on the board. That way we would do our work at home, he could work on the railroad, and I could tend the store. We couldn't live on what we made from the store without him working. He got $1.90 a day from the B and O when he started. But we lived on it, and on what we raised. We raised our potatoes and all our vegetables, and we raised our five girls.

"Just like then, I still do my washing in rainwater in the back room of the store in the summertime, and now I use my washing machine in the winter. We still heat our water in a kettle, and I use rainwater the year around. At the store we put up about four 50-gallon barrels for the rainwater."

The Cowger's store has been a very typical general store to the town of Crawford through the years. "Oh, you know, the people have come into our store to meet one another for so long," recalled Mrs. Cowger. Soon after we opened it, they began to come in and play dominoes of a night. We always had benches, and they would come and pass the time anytime. And they'd come and loaf. Sometimes we'd just have a lot in there. They would talk over the war news when we were in World War II. And we've had a good many evening gatherings here of young people. It has been a place to meet and just have a general good time.

"And the section men, when Clyde worked on the railroad section, they were cold, and they would all come in the store and eat dinner in the wintertime. They had their lunches with them, and it was nice to sit by a fire. Otherwise, they would have had to start a fire out along the road."

Looking around the store as Mrs. Cowger talks, it's easy to conjure up images of domino players, war brides, and chilled railroaders. The visible symbol of Mr. Cowger's days on the railroad stands on the back counter—a big brass bell from a B & O locomotive. Mr. Cowger explains that he got it "for writing a letter to the railroad company concerning safety. In the early days," he continued, "the railroad wasn't a safe place, and many men were crippled, some died, and some not so bad. The system of getting people the money that was coming to them from their claims wasn't what it should be. The president of the railroad company used to write out a letter once a year concerning this sort of thing, and one year I decided he could use a letter concerning safety, written from experience. So I sent him one, and he just must have thought it was pretty good, because he had that bell sent on to me."

The letter that got Mr. Cowger that bell was definitely written from solid experience. "I started work on the railroad in the middle of summer in 1923, and the weather was warm enough then. But in the wintertime, the temperature would go ten, 15 degrees below zero. But we'd go out just the same. During the course of the years I worked on the railroad, they had naturally a good many wrecks. Most of those were of a night, and you'd have to go out and clean up the wreck. Maybe you wouldn't get back for a couple of days. The section would have to help fix up and clean up the track in very severe weather, rain or shine. The railroad had to be put back into service and we were expected to get that work done so they could operate trains normally."

The section men kept the track clear, cut nearby brush, and did any repair work associated with the track. "I didn't mind it too much because in those days, even though it was awful cold lots of times, I was a good deal younger and I could stand it a lot better.

"I stayed until I was 65 years old, then retired. I wasn't sorry to leave them, because I got to stay in the store for awhile and relieve the missus."

These days, both Cowgers relieve each other when there's canning to be done or a roof to be fixed. And this is still a store where just about anything might turn up. There is a stack of *Wall Street Journals,* for instance on the bench among the farm bulletins. Mr. Cowger allows as how it's a "pretty informative paper. We've learned in these later years how to make some money from the stock market. Not much, but enough so we don't have to choose between making a living and robbing the people! We can keep our prices where people can afford to buy."

A fellow came in to return some soft drink bottles and cash his payroll check. Mr. Cowger figured his bills up on rat poison advertisements. Kids came in wanting grape and orange pop. While people waited their turn, the talk turned to hunting, canning, and worries about the dam. "If you'd come any earlier, I'd have given you your dinner," Mrs. Cowger said. "We did get one fellow in to eat his dinner. A fellow unloaded his fertilizer trailer here, drove all the way from Columbus, Ohio, and he ate with us."

Out on the store porch, as I was leaving, Mrs. Cowger remembered, "Yes, they've loved to come sit on this bench in front of the store in the summertime, and, oh, they'd talk about farming and politics. All this has happened here and now we are still here. I love it. It's just home. All the children were born here."

Mattie and Vernon Hyer

Mattie and Vernon Hyer used to sell watermelons in their store—50 or 60 a season. They could always tell if the watermelon was ripe, by putting a straw on top of it. If the melon was ripe, the straw would spin around. "Now that might sound like a bunch of foolishness," laughed Mattie, "but, you know, we never did sell a melon that wasn't ripe!"

According to their neighbors, Mattie and Vernon, both 73, never did sell anything that wasn't in top condition. They are retired now, retired from public work, that is. The complex of buildings on their three-acre homeplace contains ample evidence of a lifetime of service to the Vandalia community. The big front room beneath their home contains the large glass cases and barrels of the country store they ran during the 1920s through the 1940s. A slate hanging on the wall lists bacon at 53 cents a pound. A small outbuilding on their land serves as the office of the Upper Westfork Watershed Association. The Vandalia com-

munity building is located next door to the Hyer home on land Mattie and Vernon donated to the community.

The large outbuilding behind the house can keep a person busy indefinitely. The old stone mill where Vernon ground cornmeal for almost 20 years stands at one end of the shop. In the tool side of the shop, you can find a forge and anvil, all the blacksmithing tools a person needs, a hand drill press, buggy axles, wood carving blocks, hackles for breaking down flax, a foot adz, various froes, a go-devil (a kind of splitting maul with a blunt ax on one side and sledge hammer on the other), grain cradles, various crosscut saws and hoists. You can find "B" wrenches and "A" wrenches for Model B and A Fords, as well as the original owner's manual for the Model A, a hardware catalogue from the Depression, a 100-year-old logging chain, an old wooden wheel cart Mattie used "to haul babies in."

Anybody who likes tools, history, or good people couldn't help but feel delighted to see all this accumulated in one place. And it's hard not to want to see those machines and tools in operation. Apparently, many of the younger people in the community felt the same way about the old mill. In the fall of 1978, almost 50 years after the Hyers first moved into their home, a group of young families in the area helped the Hyers put the mill back into operating order. "We took it on because we were always talking about wanting to see it run, not as a money-making venture," explained Louie Linger, 28, who did much of the mechanical work on the project. "We get a kick out of it, and so do the kids around here. Not to mention Vernon and Mattie!"

Small local mills like Vernon Hyer's were an important part of community life in the days before the roads were paved, or packaged meal and flour were easily affordable. Hyer ground meal with the buhrstones that were commonly used before the roller process of grinding came in at the turn of the century. In the early 1930s Lewis County native Clark Sprigg described the basic process by which these small buhr mills operated. "By a buhr mill is meant one which grind the grain between two buhrstones the best of which came from France, and were known as French Buhrs. They were perfectly round, and from 36 to 42 inches in diameter, and the lower buhr (they were used in pairs) was usually from ten inches to 1 foot thick, the upper one somewhat thinner. They were called the upper, and nether buhrs. These buhrs were on a shaft, the upper stone revolved on top of the lower, and crushing the grain into meal or flour, as the case might be, and depositing it in a trough which conveyed it to a bolt cloth the best of which were of strong, heavy silk, and were rather expensive. This bolt cloth was agitated by the machinery, and the flour or meal passed through the bolt, while it retained the bran. These stones had small trenches from edge to eye, and cut on an incline."

When I visited the Hyers in September 1978, the group of interested families were talking with Mr. Hyer about getting the mill operational again. The following conversation between Vernon Hyer and Matt Snyder tells much about the operation of this mill, as well as its history in the community.

Vernon Hyer. Oh, this old mill is covered with flour, a little moldy after 20 some years. But it's all here. You fellows want to see how it works, you say?

Matt Snyder. Big stones here.

VH Those are the buhrs. A fellow would stand up on that box next to them and pour the corn into the hopper. I don't remember how old it is, but if you sweep some of that flour off the buhrstone, it says the date.

MS "Edward Harrison's patent of June 1854, manufactured by patentee, New Haven, Ct."

VH Yes, I'd hate to think how many hundreds of bushels I've run through here in the 20 years I was operating this mill. Now, look in the hopper here, at this metal strip that slides up and down into the bowl. You'd regulate the corn there by sliding that piece up and down while the corn was feeding down through. That way you could control the amount of corn feeding in. Up above here is where you put your corn to measure it.

Yes, I ground the corn, and I have ground a lot of wheat. Just for home use, mainly. Some buckwheat, not much. Upshur County raised a lot of buckwheat, but not much here in Lewis.

MS Vernon, how long has this mill been here?

VH Well, let's see. Mr. McCue moved the stones here. He moved the meal buhrs here from over here on Little Skin Creek. Before Little Skin Creek, they were at Georgetown. Over on Little Skin Creek they used to be run by a steam engine. You know where that was, right up that hollow there across the road.

When I was just a little fellow, I went to mill there, rode across from my home, three miles up here, across the hill. Rode of course, on horseback. I wasn't big enough to—well, if the sack would of fell off, I would have had to left it, wasn't big enough to lift it, you see. These same buhrs you're looking at were over there then. I was born in 1905, so you can figure it out.

When I came down here in 1929 the mill was all set up here, just where you see it. But I never run it for about six months after I came down here. But some fellow around, they got after me, wanted the mill started back up. Well, I said, "I don't know a thing about this hopper." But I said, "I can always learn." So they helped me. And we started her that evening, and I ground some corn.

Those fellows showed me how old man McCue used to do it. 'Course, they had never done it themselves. They had just watched him do it. We'd all been around a mill all our lives. It was just something you had to go to. The neighbors, they'd all watched and helped too.

This steam engine, when it went wrong, I bought that power unit over there. That power engine was a Wittie, 12 horsepower. There it sits over there, a one-cylinder engine. We used to have a couple of teakettles sitting here to get that engine started on a cold morning. I'd pour that hot water down around the big cylinder to start it. Two teakettles of water, and it would take right off! One of those teakettles was here when I got here, and one was my mother's.

But I wouldn't have a Wittie now. They're a lot of trouble. It blowed up. The crankshaft broke, I expect. I was working with the crusher, and that belt wrapped around a two-by-four, and I left the mill. When I came back, there were pieces everywhere. That's when I quit milling.

MS Is this crusher right here? Looks like you could put corn down in it.

VH Yes, you put the whole piece of corn through this, corn cob and all. I run it from the same engine. You see,

the engine had a flywheel on both sides. You could only run one machine at a time, of course, the crusher's not as old as the buhr wheels.

MS Well, Mr. Hyer, do you think a person could get this thing running again if they wanted to?

VH Oh, I suppose they could, but I don't think anybody'd would want to do it. There's no money you can make with it now.

MS Oh, we wouldn't want to do it for money. We make all we need, going around charging people for our services. We've just all been saying for so long that we'd like to see it running, and our kids'd get a lot out of it, that several of us decided that we'd like to do it, if that would be something that would interest you. We'd enjoy it. You're right, it's not a money-making thing, though I talked to a fellow down at the State Fair who was selling milled cornmeal in little bags for $2.00 a pound. But's that's the State Fair.

VH Why, I used to sell ten-pound sacks, all made up, for 50 cents. Look over here on this blackboard. "Mixed feed, $3.35." That's for 100 pounds. "Feed mill, $3.50."

MS When you were running the mill, how much business did you have?

VH Oh, I had all the work I wanted to do, I'm telling you. Of course, I wasn't running one of those big mills like they had over at Crawford; this was a local mill. But most of the time, I'd grind two or three hundred bushels in a day, and then sell it. Well, I wouldn't sell it all. A lot of people paid their toll. It was 15 cents a bushel for meal and ten cents for crushed corn. They'd bring in the corn and I'd grind it up for the toll.

I've had this room stacked up so full I couldn't get through it. I ground on Saturday, then on Monday, lots of days, and Tuesday. And I'll tell you something else. When the engine was running on natural gas, it'd take up all the gas for this area. The gas pipes were small back in the '30s, so a limited amount of gas got through. On milling days, everybody around here knew the mill was going to take the gas, so the women would plan to do their baking and cooking on Fridays and days the mill wasn't running. The small local mills ran as needed, in contrast to large commercial operations like the Moore, Mick, and McCetchan Mill at Crawford which operated every working day in two shifts of 12 hours each.

Top. Mattie and Vernon Hyer in front of their home, a center for community activity in Vandalia since 1900. The building on the left is the old grain mill. The complex of buildings has been recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Photograph by John C. Weisblat.

Bottom. Vernon Hyer, foreground, shows a neighbor how to bag cornmeal at Hyer's Vandalia mill, which is now restored and is operated by the commission for educational purposes. Photograph by Bob Swisher.

'. . . To Put Back More Than I Take Out'

The Future Farmers of America from Lewis County high schools come out to Jack Linger's 400-acre farm on Skin Creek near Vandalia to learn about practical matters: dehorning calves, castrating, shearing, and so forth. At the same time they have the chance to be exposed to some positive attitudes about farming and the land. "I always thought when I was younger and started farming," explained Jack Linger, "that I was going to leave this country in better shape than I found it. That's my goal as a farmer, to put back more than I take out."

Jack has won numerous State farming awards, including the 1975 West Virginia Stock Farmer of the Year and the 1955 F.F.A. Established Farmer Award. His farming methods are updated to suit the needs of the modern farm, but he feels his present experience of farming is immeasurably enriched by his years of farming by muscle power. "It helps a person understand what he's doing with the mechanized baler and tractor if he has pitched the hay with a fork and plowed behind horses, so close to the ground. I love that. When you're working close to the ground, with something alive, it's altogether different than when you're up on a piece of equipment."

"Land is so alive and personal to us around here," explains Eleanor Linger, who's 68. "We just grew up in the hills and around the creeks. We ranged all over and knew where all the yellow violets grew or the wild columbine. The kids'd meet and we'd go chestnut hunting. The boys would hunt ginseng and may apples to sell. And sometimes we'd peel the bark off a big birch tree and scrape the soft bark off the inside to eat. It's delicious, did you know?"

The sharp eye that helped Eleanor find the small plants as a child has helped her assemble an unusually fine collection of Indian artifacts from the land around her present home. "When Jack would plow, I'd come along the fresh rows," she explained, "and they'd often just be lying there." Her collection, which has been exaluated and recorded through the U.S. Geological Survey, includes over five dozen arrowheads, a two-holed pendant ("goret"), and an egg-shaped "celt," stained at one end from grinding berries. The collection dates back to the archaic and woodland periods.

"This land has a history," comments Jack Linger, "and now it's our turn to be its caretakers, so to speak. We do try to use each part for the purpose for which it was intended. The bottomland is for farming and planting, the slope is for pasture, in my situation, and the land that's too steep for pasture can be used for timber.

"We're lucky here in that we don't have to plant on a steep angle," he reflected. The rich farmland in the area is capable of impressive production, as demonstrated by the fact that the Lingers have gotten well over 150 bushels of corn per acre, as compared with the national average of 101.2 bushels per acre.

The Linger family has been farming in the area since 1835, when their farm was bought through a deed written on a sheepskin. These days, Jack's son Louie farms the land with him. Along with their crops, they raise 250 head of cattle and 100 head of sheep. Their farm is one of approximately 25 self-supporting farms in the area, although many other people farm part-time. If the dam is built, their entire farm will be under water.

Like many local residents, the Lingers have been involved in the fight to stop the dam since the 1930s, when the dam was first proposed. The long struggle has naturally left deep marks on their lives and attitudes. "I've always tried hard not to let it get me down," said Jack Linger. "I remember one incident that tells it as well as any. It happened back in the 1930s, shortly before I went to Washington for the first time as a member of the local delegation to protest this dam. Dad and I were building some fence along the road. I had gotten some of that two-point barbed wire to do the job, the kind that wouldn't last for any period of time. I was thinking maybe it would be all right to do a half-baked job, if this dam was coming in. But my father stopped me and said "Jackson, that dam's not built yet! So you build this fence right!" That was some 40 years ago, and I've tried to live by those words ever since."

Now, look here, this bin is where the corn would come out. There's nails poking out of the inside slats of the sides. You'd hang the flour sacks on them. The meal came out at the other end of the bin, and you used a scoop to scoop it into the sack. A lot of them used to put the sacks right where the grain come out, but I didn't. And I would use this sieve hanging here on the wall to sieve every bit of that meal before I'd bag it up. But I did it by hand. Some of these bigger mills had machine sieving, but I did it by hand.

Now, that hookup there on the ceiling. You'd put a chain-hoist on it and use it to hoist that buhrstone up if you needed to. It took four good men to carry that top buhr out of here. It weighs six or seven hundred. When the mill's working, the bottom one runs, the top one doesn't. The top one's the heaviest. A fellow came by here and told me this old mill is worth a lot of money.

MS I'll bet I'll trade you that little boy over there for it.

VH You would? Well, I'd like to see it run with steam again.

MS Where would you have to put the engine?

VH Well, now, we'd put it right back there. The pulley would run through the wall, and the belt would run on the pulley. It would run clean around in a circle.

MS Well, there's six of us to help you do it, and Jack Linger's boy's an ace mechanic, you know.

VH Well, that just might work. Of course, to really get it back the way it was, you'd have to find some way to get all those people, kids, dogs, and wagons going through here like they used to.

A few miles down the road from the Hyers' house lives the grown-up version of one of "those kids" that used to be underfoot 50 years ago on milling day. Friel Horner gets a gleam in his eye just thinking about it. "That mill used to be a great attraction around here every weekend," he recalled. "I've seen that mill grind hundreds of tons of corn myself. Why, everybody'd go and take their corn to get it ground. And the men'd stand around and swap lies, and trade horses and knives. And all the kids would go to play marbles and trade knives and dogs and fight, and all that kind of stuff. Vernon had a big domino board made out of poplar, and there was usually somebody sitting around playing that too. The women didn't hang around the mill that much, but a lot of farm women brought their corn there to get ground if their husband was sick or busy or what have you. And Vernon would help them unload it and take it in and help them load it when it was ready to go. And they'd usually do their week's shopping out at the store for groceries and things they didn't grow.

"Oh, that mill was a real social gathering place. And I'll tell you a story: When I was about ten years old and five feet high, we'd go over there when Vernon was grinding meal and feed for people. He'd have that grinder going, just making a racket. It was just a one-lung, one-stroke engine, and it would make a funny noise. Us kids'd go out back when Vernon wasn't watching, and every so many strokes, why, the engine would put out a big long stroke that would be followed by a backfire. And we'd stick a tin can over the exhaust pipe. When it would backfire, it would blow that can way up in the air and on back through the orchard. Of course every once and a while Vernon would notice that the thing wasn't sounding right and he'd come out and catch us. He'd run us off and that would be the end of the can game for a while—till he got his back turned again. Oh, it was great fun!"

All the emphasis on the mill, past and present, might lead an outsider to believe that Vernon Hyer's work life has been mainly spent as a miller. But Vernon will tell you that he's a mechanic. And a farmer. He generally doesn't mention milling. "Having the mill helped us out, but we got started in milling because it was here, and the community needed it, so we went along." Vernon always worked several days a week, out fixing things on other people's farms. Mattie mostly ran the store and helped out at the mill when needed. "But we do lots of things. Of course, we're retired from the mill and the store now, but there's plenty to do. The mill was just one thing we did. But then, so many people around here occupied themselves at more than one trade. You had to."

These days, Mattie and Vernon Hyer are pleased with all the interest that other people are paying the mill and store, but the center of their own activities is, as always, the work at hand. After talking with me, Vernon rode off in the truck with his chain saw to help cut brush on a neighbor's farm. Mattie sat on the porch, talking about the activities of the Vandalia Home Demostration Club.

"I was one of the charter members," she recalled, "and, oh, we've done a lot through the years. The usual things, teaching the young women anything they needed to know, making breads or ice cream, baking, drying, and canning foods, doing over old furniture. And we paid for this community building, bit by bit, through our dinners and sales. All kinds of things go on there, baby showers, wedding receptions. And community meetings are there too. And every now and then we'll have a little show there of things from the garden, things we've made.

"Mainly the group is there to help if somebody needs it. That's the way it goes. Not too far back here, a family got burned out, and that same day, people came together and got three quilting frames and three sewing machines set up in the community building. We got three quilts done for them that day. We knotted them, of course, we didn't quilt them, since they needed those bedclothes in a hurry. Some women pieced and some sewed. We're close around here."

Mattie Hyer nodded her head and looked out toward the shop. "There wasn't anything fancy," she added, "but there was something warm."

A Legend of the Horner Family

If you can find an area where a sizeable number of families have lived for five or more generations, the chances are high that you'll also be able to hear some good local legends, or legends-in-the-making. If those accounts have been handed down in the community by word of mouth, you can probably find several versions of the same story within a few square miles. Such stories have added meaning for the people who live in the area, of course, since the characters are likely to include the ancestors of friends and neighbors.

In this sense, the number of local legends available is a good indicator of the stability and continuity of a community. The upper West Fork area is full of such tales. One of the most frequently repeated ones concerns the great-great-grandfather of Friel Hor-

ner, proprietor of Horner's Grocery Store, which is located between Vandalia and Roanoke. Friel's great-grandfather, Brightwell Watson, was murdered under unusual circumstances during the Civil War. The actual event took place in 1864, 114 years ago. Since that time, the story of Brightwell's death has taken its place in area folklore.

One of the versions is recorded in the historical account of Walkersville by Clark Sprigg, who was a small boy at the time of Brightwell's death. "Brightwell Watson was murdered by Confederate raiders in 1864. Tradition has it that the morning of the day he was murdered, having heard that these Guerillas were coming through the country, he took an iron cookingpot full of gold, and buried it in the woods somewhere on the farm." Sprigg's account supplies a basic structure, upon which many different versions of the tale have been built during the past century.

Friel Horner's version is more detailed. "My great-great-grandfather Watson had a large amount of gold. So when he heard that the carpetbaggers were coming through, he took that gold and left the house. He told his wife that he was going to bury it, and that she should not watch him, since they would kill her if she knew where he went or even which direction he took. They just might kill her anyhow, of course. But he didn't want anybody but himself to be in the position to answer in case they tried to beat it out of him.

"Well, he evidently went and buried the gold and silver and was on his way back home. That was when he ran into the carpetbaggers. They knew he had that gold and were looking for him, so the story goes. They tried to make him tell where he had buried it, and he wouldn't. The general belief is that they shot him when he wouldn't tell.

"He managed to make it home, but he was mortally wounded and couldn't tell his wife where he'd buried the gold. All he could do was mumble. And he tried to scribble out a map, but he died and they never did know where the gold was buried."

A third version of the same story was supplied by Helen Horner, Friel's wife. "Some of the older people in the family said that when Brightwell went to hide the gold and told his wife not to look, she went to a place in the wall where she could push the mud chinking out from between the logs. And she watched the direction he went. That's how people have had a general idea of where the gold might be buried."

"And of course," added Friel, "all of us kids and some of the adults have been out digging around looking for it, at one time or another. But if anybody's found it, they've kept their mouths shut."

The fourth version of the story, not substantiated by historical facts, but generally circulated in the community, says that after Brightwell buried the gold, he went to his corn patch, located above Walkersville, just a little way from the present site of the covered bridge. According to this version, Brightwell was shot while he was hoeing his corn. He got on his horse and managed to get home, where he fell off the horse and died soon after. That night, the story goes, three Union soldiers came to Brightwell's house and actually spent the night there. The family was having a wake because Brightwell had died. Those soldiers admitted they were the ones who had shot him. But they said they thought the hoe was a gun. Somebody had shot at them, so they said they assumed it had been Brightwell. They stayed all through the wake, maybe hoping to find out if he had told where he hid the gold before he died.

Brightwell's wife was pregnant at the time. When the child was born, she reportedly never was able to talk. People at the time said she had been marked when her dad fell off the horse, a superstition surviving today.

The contradictions in the different versions are typical for any such tale. Sometimes the reasons behind the contradictions are interesting in them-

Three generations of Horners, all living within three miles of each other in and around Roanoke, surround the hammered dulcimer that came across the Allegheny Mountains in the Horner covered wagon in 1835. The wagon train from Culpepper, Virginia, also included Matthew Snyder's great-great-grandparents. When the weary settlers finally arrived at the foot of Rush Run Hill in Lewis County (then Harrison County), they took the Horner dulcimer out of the wagon and celebrated that night. Elizabeth Snyder played the now-rare instrument while the rest of the party square danced beside the trail, only miles from their new home. Photograph by Peg Ormsby.

selves. For instance, each of the versions related above names different killers, Confederate soldiers, carpetbaggers, or Union soldiers. Asked about this lack of agreement, Friel Horner speculated, "It was right at the peak of the Civil War. There were brothers from this area fighting on different sides, so things got confusing, not to mention emotional. People told the story the way their sympathies were, Union or Confederate. Now, I myself say carpetbaggers when I tell the story because it's well-known that in these parts, the war was being used as an excuse by a lot of bushwhackers who just wanted to be able to go around and rob people.

"But that's the way these stories go. It could have been the soldiers, or somebody who could be classified as a carpetbagger, or even somebody local that knew Brightwell had the gold. Whoever it was, or course, he amounted to a plain damn thief! But we'll never know, and there'll probably be several other versions of this story by the time my grandchildren are grown. Probably will be, because the kids around here love these tales. It adds something to your feeling about the place."

Kyle and Icie Bush

Kyle and Icie Bush, 79 and 81, both grew up within five miles of their present home near Vandalia, where they have lived 29 years. Kyle will say he's "not from the area." When you question him a little further, he will explain that he grew up four miles away "on the other side of the hill."

The Bushes live in one of the loveliest of the watershed area houses nominated for the National Register. Complimented on the beautiful upkeep of their house and grounds, Icie chuckles, "It didn't always look this way! When we got it, my brother and sisters were wailing, 'Oh, poor Icie!' because it had fallen apart so bad inside. But we restored it. We fixed it up, every bit by ourselves!"

It doesn't take a visitor long to realize that the people who live in the house are at least as precious to whatever we call our heritage as their house is. Details of the restoration work demonstrate the fact that the Bushes are people who have learned to produce fine quality with the resources at hand. Their ingenuity shows in small items like the rugs Icie hooked or the chair bottoms Kyle caned—"figured it out by looking at one." When they speak of their earlier years, you begin to realize the Bushes deserve their local reputation as people from whom you can learn a lot.

Kyle is a storehouse of stories and descriptions of railroading in central West Virginia during its heyday in the early part of the century. He worked for the B and O Railroad for 24 years, from 1922 to 1946. During most of those years he was a fireman, shoveling coal on the old steam locomotives, sometimes as much as 25 tons a day. In various capacities, he worked the Weston to Camden-on-Gauley line until serious injury forced him to retire.

Kyle Bush agrees with State historians who feel "the coming of the railroads" was one of the most significant developments in the history of central West Virginia. Before the railroads came, for instance, the various ethnic groups in the area pretty much stayed to themselves. The process of building and maintaining the railroads and the subsequent growth of the logging industry broke down many social barriers by throwing all groups together in employment situations and by making it easier to get from place to place. It was reportedly during this period that the smaller groups in the upper Westfork area blended into the larger more cohesive community that exists today.

Growing up in an atmosphere in which the railroads held a great deal of allure and importance, Kyle naturally approached railroading with a great deal of zest. He remembers that the coming of the railroads in his boyhood also meant the coming of "the white houses." Before the railroads made the lumbering industry possible in the area, all the homes and structures were made of logs. Kyle Bush recalls that as planed boards became readily available, it was quite a status symbol to have a board house painted white instead of a log one. It wasn't unusual for a family to hold a celebration or dance when they were about to move up in the world—into a white house.

Kyle and Icie tell detailed, charming stories of that period, yet their storytelling is at its most colorful for accounts of railroading and life on the rails. "If I had the right tools, I'll bet I could build you accurate wood models of all the engines I fired," Kyle said. "Oh, I liked to fire those big steam locomotives! The fireman had to shovel that coal to keep the steam on, you know, and I did that job for every type of engine there was at that time.

"The first engines I fired were the old 1200s. They started running in West Virginia about 1900. You'd shovel the coal by hand into the boiler. I expect it would measure six feet or six feet three inches in height. It had flues, several flues in it for your smoke to go up through. There was a big firebox back of those flues, arched brick over top of them inside. The fire'd get the bricks hot and that'd keep the metal crown sheet hot. The crown sheet was in contact with the water in the tank overhead, and that's what'd boil your water. The engineer sat on one side of the boiler, and I sat on the other.

Kyle fired the 1200s on round trips from Weston to Camden-on-Gauley, with stops in Roanoke, Burnsville, Cowan, and Buckhannon on the way back. "One of those trips just from Weston to Camden-on-Gauley generally took about 15 tons of coal," he recalled. "You shovel 15 tons in a day and, now, when you lay up of an evening, why you were tired!" He worked 26 to 28 days a month, many of which were overtime, sometimes up to 16 hours. "When 16 hours come, why, they had to lay us up. A man can't work that kind of work over 16 hours. They'd lay us up for eight hours, and then were allowed to call us right back out again. And they did!"

The engines became progressively bigger and more sophistocated as the years went by. "In the 1930s, of course, I worked the big Snappers at times. There was a big engine, run between Weston and Clarksburg! The big Snapper had two fire doors. You had to turn around and shovel left-handed on one of them. I've done that. They were much bigger than the 1200s. One of those Snappers would gobble up anywhere from 20 to 25 tons a day, with only one man shoveling! Let me tell you, the Snapper kept you busy! You didn't play!"

The freight trains Kyle worked were hauling mostly lumber and coal at the time, hauling out full, coming back empty. Kyle preferred firing the freight trains to the passenger trains. "Fact of the matter was, the passenger trains whipped along so fast that you could hardly stand up in the gangway while you were trying to fire. You had to

watch yourself or it could pitch you clear outside!"

Kyle often fired the wreck train that went out to the rescue when a train derailed, was stuck in snow, or had any other kind of trouble. He tells lively tales of operating the big boom on the wreck train that picked up the derailed cars and set them back on the tracks. He tells of winter nights when the train was forced to back up repeatedly and charge ahead into high snowdrifts, trying to break them up with the cowcatcher. In situations like these, it was essential to have a good fireman. Kyle Bush speaks of his experience with pride.

The big 4800 engine, introduced in the Lewis County area in the 1920s made a big difference in the job of the fireman. An innovation called a stoker caused the fireman not to have to shovel nearly as much coal as he formerly had to. The stoker had a big auger which ran through the water tank into the firebox, where it ground the coal up into a powder. The fireman would set the valves so that the stoker would blow a fine coal mist into the boiler all the time. "And that fire would just dance!" Kyle said. "On one of those 4800s, I could sit on my seat, adjust my valves, and make fun of the engineer. He had the most work to do then, and that was a real change!"

Kyle Bush worked several different jobs during his two and one-half decades with the railroads, so he has a wide perspective on railroading that brings considerable richness to his reminiscences. His stories are numerous and entertaining, but none captures the imagination and attention of his listeners more than the story of the injury that took him from the rails.

"It was 1945 and I was a hostler at the time," he began in his deep voice. "When the engineers would bring their engines into the yard at Camden-on-Gauley, we hostlers would take them over, clean the tires and see that the sandbox was full of sand. Then we'd keep water in them until they were called out, after eight hours. That's what they called hostling engines. And there was no more important part of the hostling job than keeping that water in the tank. If the tank were let to go dry, why, the engine would blow up and you can't imagine the damage one of those things could do if it blew!"

Hostlers weren't allowed to take the engines out onto the road unless it was absolutely necessary. "Well, one night it was necessary," he remembered, "and I was the only man on the job! Eighteen degrees below zero it was, snow drifted waist deep, when I went out to work at 12 at night. Checking over one of the engines, my heart about stopped. The tank was almost dry. I don't know how it got that way, but there it was, with hardly a gallon of water in it! If the thing had sat there much longer, I'm not sure but what it would have blowed Camden-on-Gauley clear off the map! And of course, it would have killed me and other people too.

"I ran to the depot and asked the dispatcher if there was anything coming into Camden-on-Gauley from Weston or Buckhannon. They said no. And I said, 'Well, there's a dry tank down there, and I'll have to take it down quick to the water tub on the main track.'

"He said, 'Go ahead and get going! You're safe on the track. But be quick about it.' So I made it down to the water tub.

"Well, the water tub had a big spout that could be swung around to fit into the manhole on the train's water tank. You had to climb up a ladder on the tub to get a-hold of a rope that would swing the spout around. Well, when I got there, it was pitch dark and everything was frozen up on the big tub. The ladder was iced over so bad you couldn't climb it. The only way I could see to get to the spout was to climb over the coal pile next to the tub. That was against the rules because it was dangerous. But I was so afraid all the time that the engine would blow up any minute.

"So I went ahead and climbed up on the coal pile. I got to the rope and swung the spout over to the tank on that engine. The water was getting lower and lower, I knew, but I suddenly realized that if I poured cold water onto that hot crown sheet, that would have blown it up too! I'll tell you, it would have busted wide open!

"My heart was really pounding by then. But I knew there was one way to get the water in safely. If you put on the throttle in the engine, it raises the water level, and in this case, it would have raised it high enough to cover the crown sheet. There wasn't any time to waste, so I set the brakes so the engine couldn't move, and then pulled the throttle wide open. Don't think I wasn't praying that those brakes would hold! Well, I watched the water rise up to where there'd be no danger of cracking the crown sheet. As soon as that happened, I shut off the throttle quick.

"Cold as it was, I was bathed in sweat. But I've never felt so relieved. I figured the problems were over and me and everybody else was safe." So Kyle Bush climbed back up onto the coal pile to finish filling the tank and to put the waterspout away. During this whole process, some of the cold water splashed onto the coal pile and froze there. As he finished up with the waterspout, the big heavy coal gates of the locomotive down below were open, swinging back and forth.

He took a wrong step on the coal pile as he worked. Before he knew what was happening, a big frozen chunk of coal under his feet broke loose, and he was thrown over the top coal gate below him. And then the coal gate swung and slammed him against the boilerhead, "just like I was a rag doll!"

"That blow caved the side of my chest in. It broke four ribs on my right front side and four ribs down through the back. I passed out, and when I come to I still remember the way my breathing sounded, so ragged, so rough."

Kyle Bush's behavior in this desperate situation tells much about the personal courage and integrity of the man. It was about one o'clock by that time. After coming to, he pulled himself up on the engine seat and actually finished taking care of the boiler. Then he managed to get himself off the engine and down over the bank beside the rails. His supervisor lived in a house within shouting distance. Kyle woke him by shouting and told him he'd been hurt. Evidently not understanding the extent of the injuries, the supervisor told him to go back home, that he would get dressed and take the train back to the yard.

Kyle had to walk about a quarter of a mile back through the snow to the railroad yard. "Then I walked up what they call Coon Creek and over across the run to where we lived. I really thought every step I'd take was going to be my last one." Hurt as he was, he still seemed determined to fulfill all his job obligations. "I couldn't go home right away. I had to go up above where

Icie and Kyle Bush, ages 81 and 79, favorite area storytellers and beloved citizens, sit in front of their 19th century cellar house. Photograph by John C. Weisblat.

I lived to call another man out to work my turn. Then I could go home.

"We had no gas heat at the time. We had what they called a Heatrole, a coal stove. She [Icie] got up and fired the Heatrole up and got the room warm. I had been so cold that I hadn't felt the pain so much. But as I got warm it just washed over me."

Asked why he didn't go directly to the doctor, Kyle explained that he couldn't afford to because of railroad regulations at the time. "That would have meant that we'd have had to pay all the doctor bills ourselves. To be covered by the company, you had to get somebody from the company to call the doctor." So Icie bundled up and went down the hill and got a company man, and he went to get more men. They came up to get Kyle, with the idea of making a packsaddle to carry him down the hill. "With all that snow, it wouldn't work. So I got up and walked, one of them on each side of me. We walked down the hill, step-by-step to the yard, and then up two flights of stairs to the doctor's. I've never in my life seen such a long flight of stairs."

Kyle's injuries were so bad that he could not work the railroad after spending six months in bed. He contracted penumonia and he weighed only 100 pounds. "But we got through it together, Kyle and me," said Icie. They moved back to their home area in the upper West Fork and lived for four years in an empty one-room schoolhouse on her brother's property. During most of that time, Kyle was unable to do any heavy work at all. As soon as he was able to get about again, he and Icie worked as a team, doing a little carpentry work and a lot of painting. "Oh, we painted for our neighbors. And we painted the posts around the cemetery. We painted the whole church, inside and out! I painted down low, and Kyle painted up high. And we sold milk and hauled hay on sleds too!"

They went on working together after they bought the Butcher house, restoring it, putting the farm in order, gardening, canning, maintaining the grounds. "We'd put up the hay, the two of us," Icie recalled with obvious pleasure. "I hauled the shocks, and he hitched. And then, when we'd build the stack, he would pitch the hay up to me. I'd step on it, tromp it down in the center, and stack it till I got near the top. Then he'd go up and top it off. And, oh, we'd build pretty stacks, the most beautiful stacks!"

"We always hoped to have a home like this," added Kyle, "though sometimes we were afraid it would never be. After all that life has brought, we want to stay here where we know the land and people, you see. There's no way we could get another farm like this. We worry about the dam coming, that it could maybe all be gone. We don't know where we'd go."

"Oh, we love to be here by the side of the road," Icie agreed. "Our relatives and friends go by. And we have the best neighbors a person could ask for. Melvin Langford and his kids up the road here, they tell us they've adopted us. Last winter after Kyle had a gallstone operation, do you know what those Langfords did? Melvin and the boys would come down here every other day and carry in wood, coal, and some spring water for us."

"And they wouldn't take a penny for it!" added Kyle. "And one of their daughters stayed over with Icie while I was in the hospital, and the other one would drive her down to the hospital every day to see me."

"And, oh, you should hear how that Melvin will carry on with us!" laughs Icie. "Why, I'm likely to have a stroke laughing at some of his foolishness!

"But, you know, I don't know why they are so good to us. We're just glad they are. That's the way people are around here. Kyle and Melvin were carrying on the other day, and Kyle was pretending like he was jealous. He asked Melvin why he was paying so much attention to me, an 81-year-old woman. And do you know what that Melvin said? 'Oh, I don't know,' he said, 'I just kind of like the little old thing!' "

They both burst out laughing at the thought. Watching them and knowing their stories, it was good to see how much they are appreciated in the area. And it's natural for a visitor to hope that life and home stays this good for them the rest of their days.

Andrew F. Boarman, the Banjo Man from Berkeley County

By Peggy Jarvis and Dick Kimmel
Photographs by Dick Kimmel

THE Hedgesville barber shop, painted a quiet pink with white trim, is misleading. The man in charge, Andrew F. Boarman, called Andy by most, no longer trims sideburns. He fixes banjos. The animated barber always did play music and work on instruments in between hair cuts, but in 1974 he moved the barber chair out and devoted his time exclusively to music.

The walls of the shop are a pale green, over which are scrawled names and phone numbers of past visitors searching for a guitar or mandolin. Pictures of bands and singers are taped here and there. Only the fluorescent lights, the porcelain sink, and the wide mirror attest to the previous status of the workshop. A cabinet contains dentistry tools with which Andy does the intricate inlay work on his hand-crafted banjos he calls Dixie Grands.

Above the sink, next to the diploma from West Virginia Barbers College, is a clock advertising Samsell's Watch Repair and from a former shop in Marlowe [Berkeley County]. On the adjacent wall in large print is the warning: "Not responsible for instruments left over 90 days."

The rack of old banjo necks and the scattered mandolins, fiddles, and banjos suggest the small shop's current purpose. The lively musician who used to cut hair is proud of being the personal repairman for musicians the calibre of Don Reno. Since he opened the shop in 1962, it has been a gathering place for traditional musicians and novices, as well as the center for Andy's instrument repairs.

Andy's shop and his playing have attracted a great number of people to his home near Spring Mills in Berkeley County. Senator Robert Byrd spent one afternoon playing music and chatting with Andy. Earl Scruggs and other professionals have listened to Andy's unique arrangement for tunes such as "Home Sweet Home." The native West Virginian has been featured in the Winchester *Evening Star,* the Hagerstown, Maryland, *Morning Herald,* and *Grit.* An article in the magazine *Bluegrass Unlimited* referred to Andy as "the guru of the five-string banjo."

The alert 68-year-old man tells of the conflicts that grew from barbering and repairing in the same place. "There was a [health] inspector from Charleston and I was outside. I had instruments strung all over that shop. I come out and locked the door and there he was. I knowed what he was. I says, 'I don't know whether to leave you in there or not.' He says, 'You have to leave me in.' I says, 'I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to take a shot at you. I'm going to let you in that door, but you're going to find the biggest surprise you ever found in barber inspecting.' He says, 'O.K.' I opened the door. He looked around and seen them music instruments. He says, 'I've found *one* guy in West Virginia who wants to work. Just keep it up.' "

Andy did keep on working as a successful barber. "Some days I had as many as 26 setting out there waiting for me and, boy, that's awful." He has lived most of his life in the apple orchard country around Falling Waters and remembers living along the Potomac River.

"I used to barber when the bush bobs come out in 1928. They was famous for the girls," he remembers. "I used to barber over along the river. No shop, just set on a chair over along the river. I was the one who cut the hair. There is nine boys up in that family and five down in this one and somebody had to learn to cut hair." He says when he started barbering, no one had money. "I was barbering and they'd give me eggs and I'd get so many eggs—you couldn't sell them at the store—that I had to dump them over the river bed.

"The house burned down. We were living in a toolshed over there, my wife and I, when we first got married. There were big wide cracks in the building and you'd get up in the morning and shake the snow off the blanket."

As successful as he was as a barber, Andy is even better known for his music. His banjo playing is unique. Lloyd Longacre, a well-known classical banjo player, describes Andy's style on the five-string banjo as "a blending of early classical banjo and folk music of his youth with the bluegrass music of today."

"I like my own style and classical," Andy says. "If it don't suit my sound, I like to change it. I blend my chords and make it fit in." He plays his own

Andrew F. Boarman's Hedgesville birthplace on the far right. He now lives in the house in the center, and his shop is just to its right in the trees. (December 1977).

arrangements of familiar tunes such as "Buffalo Gals," but also plays traditional tunes like "Soldier's Joy," which he can play four or five different ways. He performs difficult classical arrangements of tunes like "Darktown Dandies" and "Dancing Waves Schottische."

Andy admits there is never an end to what anyone can learn about playing music, although he has been working at it for almost 60 years. "There is never no way. You can't learn it all. You can't learn all about music—it and religion," he says with the energy and freshness of a beginner. The banjo expert can switch effortlessly to the fiddle, guitar, or Autoharp. He does not read music. "I started out but I got away from it. Notes look like a bunch of blackbirds setting on telegraph wires to me."

He disappears into a room off the kitchen of his house and brings out a Martin guitar made in 1952. He begins to discuss the guitar, but starts playing instead, as though he would rather play than talk. The concentration shows on Andy's face, but his hands are relaxed. Andy plays the guitar in the alternating finger and thumb style. "That's old-time playing," he says. His picking is even and the broad fingers with flat tipped nails move loosely along the neck.

As a rule, classical banjoists have always used nylon strings. Andy prefers to play in the classical style without finger picks, but has opted for the more modern steel strings on a crisp sounding banjo, a setup similar to that used by many of today's bluegrass stars.

"These nylon strings is fine but they drive me about wild. I can't get them to note out true for me. I don't know whether my ear's too keen or I'm too dumb. A lot of people likes them. I can't get along with finger picks as well as I can with just the balls of my fingers. My uncle learned me to play with the balls of my fingers.

"I like a good solid tone. You can tell a good solid tone whether the sound is blowing up on your face or whether it carries and leaves you. Like throwing a little pebble in a still puddle of water and you can see them little waves leaving where you throwed that. The music leaves practically the same way." He makes a fluttering motion with his arms, opening them wide to indicate the ripples.

Andy is always on the lookout for quality woods for constructing banjos. Necks are made of mahogany or sometimes walnut with a fingerboard of choice ebony. The resonator and neck of one of his special Dixie Grand banjos are decorated with designs of pearl and abalone. The fifth Dixie Grand Andy made has an eagle on the resonator. The banjo he is now completing has an intricate design of West Virginia on the back.

"I named my banjos after the Southern states for the simple reason that's where the five-string banjo really started from—Lynchburg, Virginia. Joel Sweeny built the first one in 18 and 43, I think," says the craftsman.

The pearl position markers between frets of a Dixie Grand are distinctive. With a jeweler's saw and a small file, Andy cuts the pearl to his own designs. He explains where the idea for the designs come from. "Just in my mind. That's just imaginary markers. I'd look at frost on the window. I've been in old houses where it's cold. I look at the frost. You watch them sometime. You watch them formations that ice makes. I get them in my head." The outcome of what he translates from those sources is detailed and most attractive.

One of his more recent Dixie Grands has metal parts of gold plate engraved with a Kentucky fern pattern. At the top of the banjo, above the tuning pegs, three letters "A.F.B." are inlaid. Andy once said that represented "A Fine Banjo," but it could also indicate the skilled craftsman, Andrew Forrest Boarman.

Although the instruments are valued at thousands of dollars, Andy is not interested in making great profits. "When I was in the hospital, I promised the good Lord I'd help people out and that's what I've done." Andy does not state the exact amount of time he puts into one of his Dixie Grands. "I made it between haircuts and hunting and fishing. I didn't hunt and fish but I was thinking about it."

In addition to the skilled work he does on these banjos, Andy also repairs instruments. He makes special spruce and ebony banjo bridges which

Top. Mr. Boarman's former barbershop, now his workshop, with his home in the background. *Bottom.* The inside of the barbershop before the barber chair was moved out in 1974.

have been used by such well-known bluegrass pickers as Sonny Osborne, J. D. Crowe, and Little Roy Lewis. Andy cuts a bridge out of wood with the grain of the wood extending the height of the bridge so it runs perpendicular to the strings on the instrument to improve the sound. He sets up and adjusts banjos for Bill Runkle, Jim Steptoe, and Darrell Sanders. It's been said that at one concert intermission, Andy set up a banjo for Little Roy Lewis and people thought the musician had a new banjo during second half of the concert. Andy responds to that story unaffectedly. "Yes, maybe Little Roy would back that up and maybe he wouldn't." Bill Harrell, a popular singer and guitarist, wrote to thank Andy for his repair work saying, "You're the Rolls Royce of repairmen when it comes to instruments."

Andy feels that instrument repair work is demanding. "A good repairman is better than the man who builds them. You take a man who builds them, he's got a mock to build them in, everything cut out ready to put together, but you take one and set it under an automobile wheel and let somebody run over top of it and let the repairman put it back together, and that separates the men from the boys."

Andy has had a lot of experience with instruments, and got started at an early age. He was born October 11, 1911, to William McGary Boarman and Ada Lee Stump Boarman. His uncle Charles Cleveland Stump was an expert classical banjo player. "I started making banjos with my uncle. He got to showing me a lot of things. Started me working on them back in 1928, though I was really playing a banjo, tinkering around with one, before that. My uncle, he showed me a lot. And there's a fellow by the name of Vizelle; he was a painter by trade and a [wood-] grainer. Graining is like putting grain in a door, wood grain . . .

"I get a lot of my wood ideas from this violin maker. He'd made violins all his life. His name is Art Velardo over there at Hagerstown, Maryland. He's made about 15 upright basses, 30 or 40 violas, a couple of cellos, and about 65 violins.

"We had five in our family, two girls and three boys. All of the Stumps on my mother's side and the Stokes from my grandmother is where the music part of it was. None of the Boarmans that I knowed of played music. My uncle, Charlie Stump, and Uncle John Stump and Uncle Harry Stump and my Aunt Suzie and Aunt Mary and my mother Ada had a band. My mother played a five-string banjo, clawhammer style. She played upright bass and the organ. Uncle Charlie Stump played a five-string banjo only. Uncle Harry Stump, he played a violin and guitar. And they played for a lot of church doings and square dances.

"Getting back to me, I was 11 years old that I can remember of when I used to sneak my brother Bill's five-string banjo that my mother bought for him. They would go to town with the horse and buggy. When they would, I'd take the ladder and put it up to the window and get in his bedroom and play the banjo."

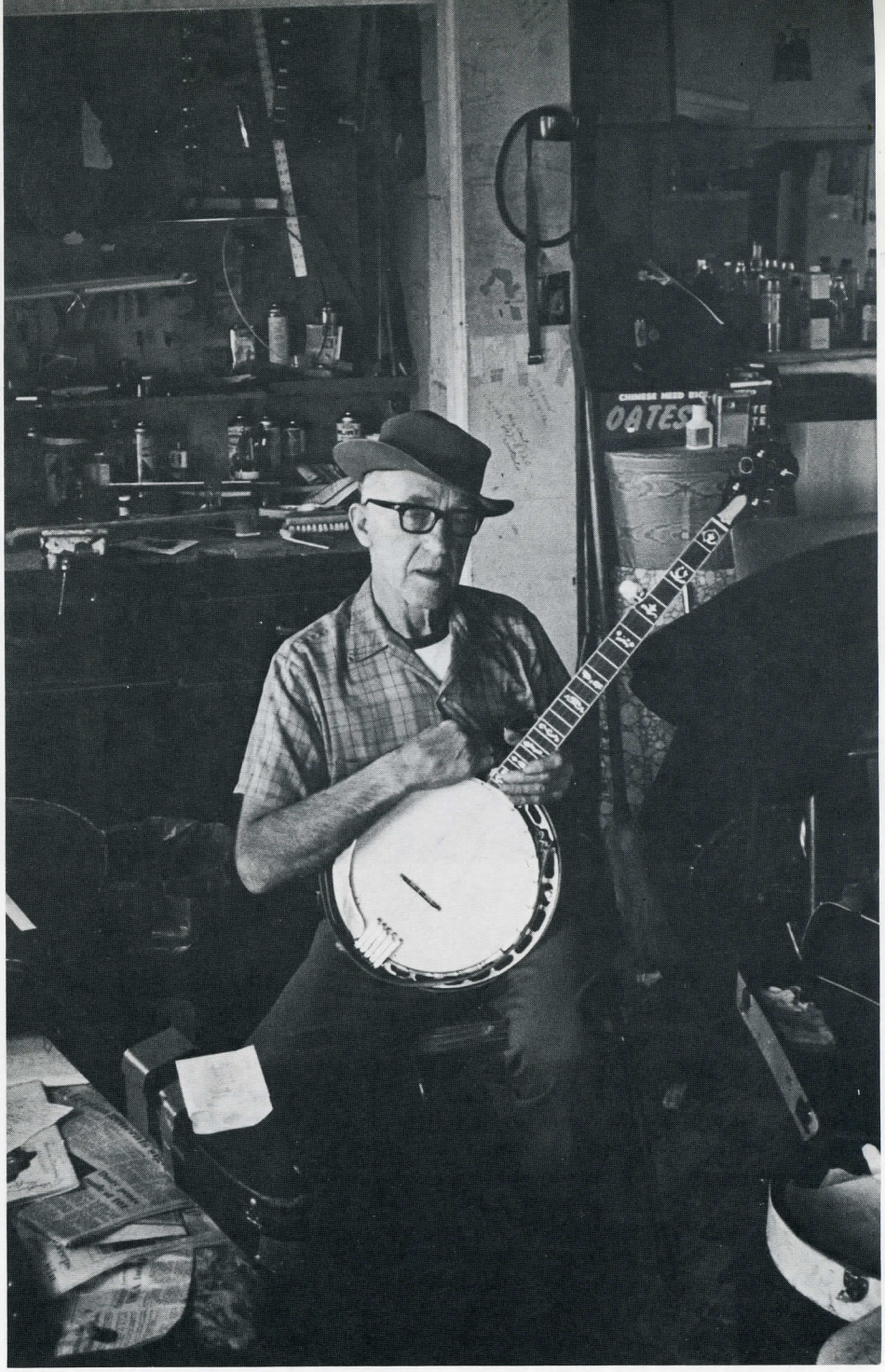
Andy also says that he started scratching around an old Autoharp when he was about six and that he would play just about anything he

could get his hands on. "Every opportunity I got, I'd go out with the boys around Falling Waters. My mother died when I was about 11. I left home when I was 16 or 17, and went on construction work. I was playing the five-string banjo and the fiddle for square dances down around Conowing and Peachbottom, Maryland. I was playing with a boy by the name of Andy Jones. He played the ukulele most of the time. After we got through paying our board and working 55 hours a week, we had $11 left. Well, they'd come off the job—we worked there a year back in '29 and '30. We'd go back up in them mountains, and they was really rough people. A lot of moonshine whiskey up in there, and I got to work out just playing the banjo by myself, or the fiddle. Sometimes they'd take a collection up down there. Wasn't much money floating around then, but they'd take a collection up. I've got as much as $65 for one night."

In 1930 Andy moved to Virginia to live with his uncle C. C. Stump. "When I came back from construction work I went to Vinton, Virginia, six miles out of Roanoke, and was up there and learned more about the five-string banjo from my Uncle Charlie Stump and old old 'Fiddlin' ' Arthur Smith. He was up there with my uncle in the starting of the '30s. Things got a little tough there, and Arthur wanted my uncle to leave and go to North Carolina with him but my uncle wouldn't go. So Arthur went on down there and he was playing the fiddle advertising for that checkerboard feed, Purina, or something like that. I never did get to see him any more after that."

While in Virginia, Andy had the opportunity to hear and play with other string musicians including two important classical banjo players, Bacon and Van Epps. Andy played with Billie Edwards and the Neighbors family. "The boys' names was Roy and Tad. Mr. Neighbors was also a fine clawhammer banjo player. That's where I really fell in love with clawhammer playing even though I was up there with my uncle and Arthur Smith playing classical music and ragtime music."

Andy moved back to Berkeley County with his uncle in 1931. He played in a band with his cousins. James Boarman played the fiddle, Joseph the plectrum banjo, Harry the guitar, with Andy on the five-string banjo and Autoharp. "I played some old-time music at home. There was a bunch of us Boarman boys. They was seven boys in one family and three boys in the other one, and we picked enough out of the both families to have a band. We called ourselves the "All Night Ramblers" and we played for square dances. These barn dances we used to go to, we'd take lanterns for lights, and sometimes we'd get outside of the barn and play if it was pretty nice.



Mr. Boarman in his shop in November 1973.

"When we played for them square dances we drove a Model T Ford sometimes 15 miles. You would end up playing for a ham sandwich probably, and a couple cups of black coffee. We'd have house dances, old-time house dances, and we'd have great big pots; we'd take one of these lard cans, and make black coffee in there . . . And sure, there was a lot of moonshine

floating around then. Home brew beer. We played, we traveled in snow two and three feet deep to get to play for a square dance. We'd play and drink a lot of hard cider. We'd have a bunch at a farm; a farmer would come up and say, 'We want you boys to play over at my place this coming Saturday night.' And over there we'd set another place for the next Saturday night. It was always on a Saturday night, so if anybody had a big head, he had all day Sunday to try to get rid of it." When he was asked why people no longer have the local house and square dances that were once so popular, he explained, "People's got too fast a way to travel. Everybody's trying to go too fast."

Andy remembers how the town of Falling Waters used to look. He can point out where houses have replaced the old post office and the two dance halls. With enthusiasm he points to the wood left from the wheel of Sherer's Mill that began operation in 1775. Water from the spring runs into the Potomac a few hundred feet away where the Boarman boys used to play on a riverboat from 1931 to 1933.

"We had square dances right on a boat. The White Swan, it was 38 feet wide and I believe 80 feet long. We played on there for two years. Every Saturday night, we'd get on the boat at Falling Waters, and go down the river 12 miles to Dam Number Four and back, which'd we'd get off maybe five or six o'clock in the morning. We'd play down and back. There were about 30 or 40 couples on there. We'd have a figure caller: 'Up the river and around the bend/Six legs up and going again,' or 'Swing Ma, swing Pa, swing the old man from Arkansas.' " Andy changes from conversation to quoting calls as quickly as he can change a chord on his banjo. "This big freeze come up and the river froze over. It got to raining a whole lot, and ice raised up in there and it just took our boat down over the dam and busted it all up."

Andy says his aunt Mary's son taught him a lot about the Autoharp. "Charles Boarman, he's the one that I really learned my Autoharp playing off of. He was one of the finest fiddle players that's in the country, but he'd only play with me. He was shy." Andy also learned from Conley Hoover of Falling Waters.

In November 1933 Andy married Lois Tyson from Sleepy Creek. "When we first got married I learned her to pick a couple of schottishes on the banjo, but after the first boy was born she give up." The Boarmans had four sons and a daughter, Vincent, Forrest, Donald, Robert, and Beverly. "We got hit in hard times in the Depression time and I was living three miles from work, walking to work in the orchard for 11 cents an hour. Not only me but a lot of us, and I worked many a day in the Depression just for my dinner and supper. There was plenty of work around but no money."

After working in the orchard, Andy worked on structural ironwork. He was a journeyman rodsman and worked in Altoona, Pennsylvania, while his wife maintained their home in West Virginia. In 1947 he began working at the Fairchild plant in Hagerstown, Maryland, where he worked until he had a heart attack in 1958. When he recovered, he began work as a barber in the shop behind his home.

"I give the banjo up for a long, long while, some 20 years, back in the Depression time. Things got tough. I just lost interest some way or another in the banjo, but when these bluegrass festivals started up down at Water-

Opposite, top. Mr. Andy Boarman in 1928. Photographer unknown.

Opposite. The musician's hands at the banjo and Autoharp.

Right. Mr. Boarman in May 1975 showed off a banjo he made for Joe Payne of Martinsburg. The back of the resonator, neck and peghead are inlaid with cut pearl and abalone.

melon Park, I forget what year, I went down there, and the first time I ever seen Bill Monroe, him and I ate watermelon together up under a big sycamore tree. After I seen how the music was blooming I said to him, 'Mr. Monroe, it's really a fine thing you did to get the five-string banjo back to life again.' You got to give Earl Scruggs and Bill Monroe a whole lot of credit for bringing the banjo back."

Andy is doing much on his own to promote five-string banjo playing. "I've seen it leave and the tenor take over. In them days when you was learning to pick a five-string banjo you had to learn on your own. But my style that I play is partly my uncle's style and partly my own. I guess God give it. I know God give it to me."

What natural talent he had, Andy has developed, and he is quick to encourage others. He has taught several hundred young people to play the fiddle, Autoharp, banjo, and guitar, but he is modest about his accomplishments. "I can give them a big push and they take it from there," he says, emphasizing the vowel in "push." Andy started Darrell Sanders on banjo, and he is now playing with Bill Harrell. Andy taught Blaine Sprouse, who has fiddled with the Monroe bands. He has received many sincere letters of thanks from people he has met and helped at various festivals. One letter came from a beginner on the Autoharp who pledged to pass on what she learned. These kinds of letters are numerous but Andy doesn't dwell on them. "Oh, I've bushels and bushels and bushels of them."

In 1978 Andy gave concerts in Berkeley and Morgan County public schools with the help of a grant from the West Virginia Arts and Humanities Commission. After his performances the children asked for autographs and advice. "They'd ask you, 'How long did it take you to learn to play this fiddle?' I'd tell them, 'Well it just depends on how much talent you got. It takes maybe some people three months or three years to pick something up. The other guy can pick it up in four or five hours.' "

He recommends quality instruments even for beginners. "Anybody that's going to start their kid to play a guitar,

they should not have no cheap junk, because you're whipping them to start with. If you get a good brand of guitar, if they decide they don't need it, they can still sell it for what they've got in it."

Andy has a bright and lively manner, but is serious about learning to play an instrument. "If you want to play one, I'd tell them when they started, you just didn't buy it across the counter like you would a Coca Cola. You really had to work for it. It's like a fellow said to me—Paul Chaney was in my shop playing the banjo and I was cutting this guy's hair. He says, 'I'd give anything if I could play a banjo like that.' I asked Paul how long he'd been playing the banjo. He said he'd been fighting the banjo for 20 years. The fellow said, 'I wouldn't want no part of that.' I said, 'Well, that's what the man had to do.' "

Andy thinks it is easier to learn to play a banjo today than when he began, because there are more musicians around. "Maybe that's helping them out. I imagine it would because they can steal licks off of each other and learn different ways of doing it."

His uncle C. C. Stump taught classical banjo in Vinton, Virginia. "He had a studio and a blackboard and as many as 68 students and he'd teach them all at one time. He'd mark it down on the blackboard and after he give them a half-hour lecture, he'd have 68 or 69 chairs and he'd set them all down and let them get fooling with their instruments and after a while one would look over and say, 'How do you get that,' and he'd get them to teach each other."

Although the musical influence in Andy's life came from the Stump side of the family, the Boarman side has its own legends. The house next to Andy's is a stone one called Rosewood where his grandfather John Boarman lived. A family legend says Andrew Jackson stayed in the home for several days during the Civil War. Andy's great-grandfather was Rear Admiral Charles Boarman who served in the Navy for over 60 years. He served on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812 and commanded a frigate in the Brazil Squadron for 11 years. From 1861 to 1865 he was on special duty, and retired in 1876.

Andy has inherited more than a rich family history. The banjo he plays is a Clifford Essex Concert Grand made in London in the early 1900s. It was one of the banjos his uncle played. "My uncle bought it from Harry Bowman in Martinsburg. Harry got it from the Banjo Fraternity in Lewistown, Pennsylvania. I like it because I've played it so much and because it's got a good deep sound."

Impatient to play, it seems, Andy lifts the instrument out of the case he was given by Don Reno and begins to play. The head has the faded signatures of most musicians he has played with. He picks with his thumb and two fingers, accentuating the notes clearly. He has a smooth rhythm he maintains, even as he double picks. He usually plays different styles and his pieces are remarkably complex. In some of his arrangements he chooses to drop or add a beat; the "before and after notes," as he calls them, are regular features of his versions of tunes.

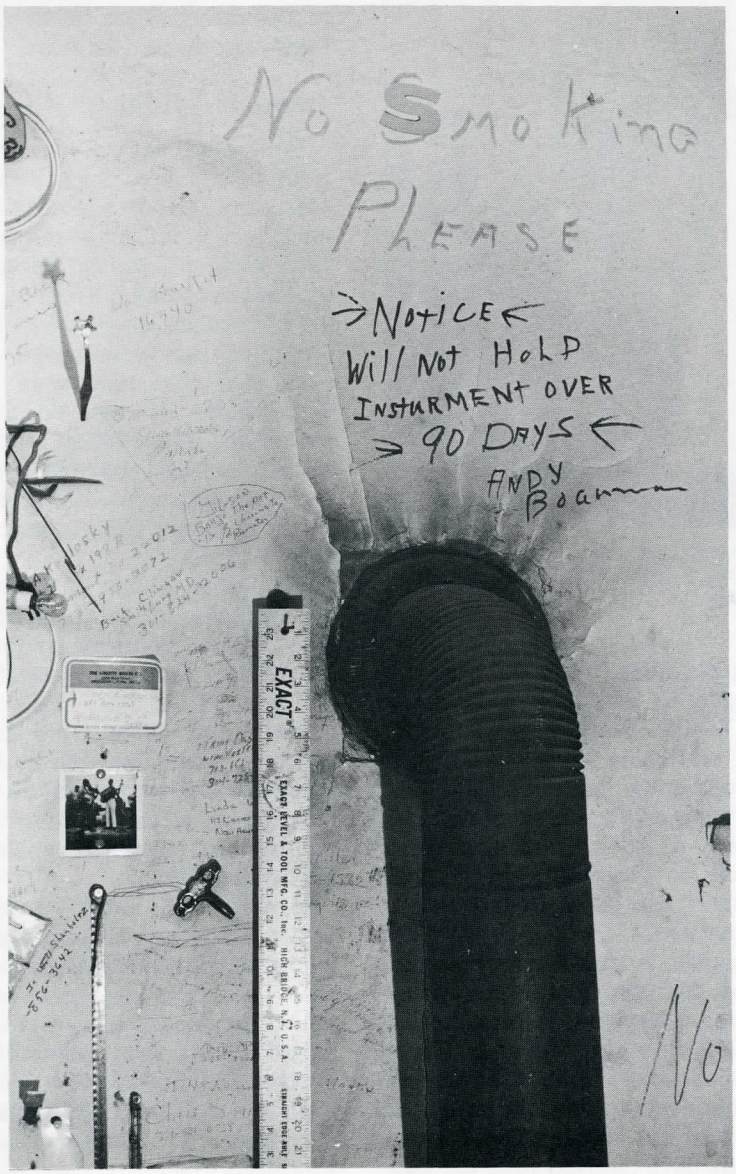
Andy has performed for innumerable informal audiences but also for the Heritage Arts Festival in Harper's Ferry and H. L. Wilson's festivals in Moorefield. He keeps a letter from Governor Rockefeller that thanks him for contributing to Vandalia Gathering at the Cultural Center in Charleston in 1978.

Dr. William J. Canady of West Virginia University recorded Andy's first album, *Mountain State Music-Andrew F. Boarman* (June Appal 027). It features his Autoharp and banjo playing. He arranged most of the tunes, and they represent his uncle's

Center. Mr. Boarman's uncle, Charles C. Stump, in 1924 with his Vega-Fairbanks Tubaphone No. 9 banjo.

Opposite. The musician with his wife, Lois Tyson Boarman, at the bluegrass festival near Indian Springs, Maryland, in September 1976.

Top right. Mr. Boarman played informally in September 1974 at the Indian Springs, Maryland, festival for a group including banjoist Bill Runkle, seated closest in chair, and editor of *Banjo Newsletter* editor Hube Nitchie, seated on ground.



influence. One song is his original composition, "Somewheres in West Virginia." He recorded this tune for a television segment with former reporter Carl Fleishhauer for the "Mountain Scene Tonight" shown on WWVU-TV on September 29 and October 3, 1975.

Traditional and bluegrass musicians regularly fill Andy's shop. They return to practice and to hear his engaging stories. He takes a personal interest in all musicians who visit. "The Southern Sounds of Grass," a group formed at the barber shop, has made its own record. Andy cautions his musician friends, saying, "A band is like a baseball team anymore, they're hard to keep together."

Andy has a way of bringing people together and delighting them with his music and his talk. "I love music and I love people," he says. "I love bluegrass, but I don't go to them festivals just to hear bluegrass. I go there to meet people. You meet some of the best people in the world at the festivals. Fine, fine people, fine musicians."

There seems to be a lot of Andy Boarman reflected in what he says of others. He is a master craftsman and musician with a genuine and ebullient personality. With the barber chair now gone from his shop, by all signs Andy is more "The Banjo Man" these days than he ever was.

Conversations with the 'Ole Man'

The Life and Times of a Black Appalachian Coal Miner

By Reginald Millner

In 1912 at Sagamore, Henry Millner and his family posed for a portrait. Left to right, James E., six; Howard, three; Joseph, one; their mother Letcher M.; and the elder Millner, whose artificial leg rests on a rock for stability. Photographer unknown.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;—

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

from "A Psalm of Life"
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

IN 1951 when I was born, my father James Efferson Millner was 45 years old. Though over half of his life had already been lived, he was still quite an energetic man.

As I grew older I observed how the years began to take their toll on my father's health. Black lung, arthritis, diabetes, and being "just plain tired" were constantly deteriorating his health. However, he was never without kind words of advice and interesting experiences to share, or just general conversation. He loved to talk and I learned to listen.

This article, a small tribute to the man and his struggles, transcribed from taped interviews, is intended to give insight into the life of a Black Appalachian coal miner. I hope this interview conveys to you, the reader, a fair share of the information I most fortunately have received since the day I was born.

One day after this article was completed, on June 11, 1978, James Efferson Millner paid his final dues. He died in Princeton where he lived with his family for the past 28 years.

James E. Millner

Well, as far back as I know and from what I have been told, it began with Matt and Henry Millner, my great-uncle and grandfather respectively. In 1869 when the Millner brothers came into Henry County, Virginia, there was great speculation as to where they came from or if they were on the run. It has been said that they were the slave descendants of the Patrick Henry plantation. Nonetheless, the brothers Millner settled, married, and began sharecropping on separate 40-acre farms in Henry County near Martinsville, Virginia.

My father, Henry II, born January 28, 1882, was the third son of Henry I, who was the youngest of the original two Millner brothers. Henry I had nine children by his wife Sally Hairston Millner and three children out of wedlock. Henry as well as Matt recognized and supported all of their children as a matter of principal, a quality that was passed down through the Millner lineage.

Henry's sons were Moses, Matt, Henry my father, Efferson, and Tom, who is the only remaining member and who now lives in Martinsville, Virginia. The daughters were Anne, Judy, Amanda, and Eve. Henry II married Letcher Hairston in 1904 and she gave birth to a son, James Efferson Millner, on October 25, 1905, in Martinsville, Virginia.

Letcher Hairston was a strange blend of Spanish-Indian and African, as was Henry, except the Indian was more dominant in Letcher, especially in her temperament. I remember like yesterday an incident that happened with my mother when I was about seven years old. I came home from school and told her about my teacher whipping me, which I probably deserved. But my mother obviously didn't see it that way. She walked five miles to the school carrying my baby brother Joe in her arms, with me and my other brother Howard tagging along, whipped my teacher, and walked back home, all in time to prepare dinner for Poppa when he came home from the mines that evening.

She was a strong woman and Poppa was a very determined man. Sharecropping never agreed with my father. So he tried his hand on the railroad for a while before leaving Henry County in 1908 for the coalfields of southern West Virginia.

Eckman in McDowell County was where we first lived before moving to Mora—now called McComas—in Mercer County. I remember they had a saloon there where they made their own whiskey in the back. Mora was a boom town then where at one time over 10,000 people got their mail at the post office. Well, we finally settled in Berwind, also in McDowell County. Because of the terrible working conditions of those time—strikes and layoff—one was almost always looking for another job, and we, like most mining families, moved from one coal camp to another.

Poppa hadn't been working long at Berwind—braking—when 11 coal cars piled up on him December 24, 1911. The accident occurred as a result of a trapper not being in position on his job. A trapper is a man who opens and closes metal doors across the tracks in the mines which section off various compartments inside the mine. My father, who was the brakeman riding the front car, and the motorman on the last car had expected the door to open. They rammed into the door, cutting one of Poppa's legs completely off and crippling his other leg. The motorman was not injured.

We didn't live too far from the mine entrance on that Christmas Eve morning 1911, and I can vividly remember hearing Poppa scream at the top of his lungs as they brought him out of the mine on a stretcher. My mother was screaming while some women were holding her back and screaming too. The doctor walked alongside the stretcher injecting Poppa with a needle while a nurse soaked up blood and added bandages. The doctor stayed with Poppa all that day and late into the evening until the train came to carry him to the hospital in Welch.

Poppa stayed in and out of hospitals for a couple of years. When Momma died suddenly in July 6, 1913, of "overheating," Poppa had to be carried to the funeral in a chair. He couldn't walk for three years, during which time the Pocahontas Coal Company gave us a home to live in and $90 a month. Pus still oozed out of Poppa's crippled leg and he had to dress it twice a day, until one morning in 1922 when a piece of coal popped out of it. For 11 years the doctors had failed to detect the lump of coal in my father's leg.

"We didn't live too far from the mine entrance on that Christmas Eve morning 1911, and I can vividly remember hearing Poppa scream at the top of his lungs as they brought him out of the mine on a stretcher."

After the accident, Poppa first got a job picking slate at the Sagamore tipple near McComas because the tipple boss there was also the foreman at the job where Poppa got hurt. The tipple boss said he had always felt responsible for the accident. Poppa had one wooden leg and the other was stiff. He walked on a crutch and a cane and carried two pearl-handled thirty-eights in his back pockets. He was always present and outspoken at all local union meetings, sold moonshine liquor but didn't drink, and did whatever else was necessary to provide for his family.

In 1915 Poppa was remarried to a cousin of my mother's. "Cousin Sara," as we called her, was very antagonistic toward her three stepsons and eventually I had to leave in order to avoid the conflict between us. I first "shanied around"* with some other young miners in the McComas area. It was cheaper and easier to live that way rather than alone.

At the age of 17 I started working at the Grand Creek Mine in McComas loading coal and later as a brakeman. In those days a coal loader's job was about as rough work a man could do. This particular job required men working in pairs to first hand drill about ten or 12 holes in the facing of a wall of coal. The hand drill used was very similar to a large wooden hand drill. The two men would then set the holes with a half to a stick of dynamite, go about a hundred feet away to a seemingly safe area, and fire the charge. After waiting about ten or 15 minutes for the smoke to clear, the pair would then move in cautiously to first set the timber posts used for roof support and then with the use of a pick and a shovel load the large lumps of coal into coal cars.

Because of the low ceilings of from three to five feet in most mines, the work was always done with a bent back or while on the knees. On top of this, a coal loader was then paid according to the amount of coal he loaded. Man, it was really rough work. These conditions didn't change until the early 1950s when machine operations replaced the hand loading and hourly wages were also set.

One observation I want to make here is that the coal companies have always tried to further punish the old miner, who struggled so long and hard under such adverse conditions to give the miners of today the rights they deserve. One can easily view this through the inequality in the U.M.W. separate pension funds. Also, the fact that time and time again old miners are unduly denied their black lung benefits, because coal companies have destroyed records and company doctors won't acknowledge that a claimant has contacted the dread disease.

*_Shanied around_ refers to a shantey, a small one- or two-room shack usually owned by a coal company or simply abandoned, but used by various working miners as they migrated from coal camp to coal camp.

In many cases—a few close friends of mine have suffered the same fate—an old miner will die as a result of pneumoconiosis [black lung] before he has had a chance to use the money awarded him, and often before his claim has even been processed. The miner's family would then receive the benefits, but as usual his struggle as a miner has carried him to his grave.

After working about two years, I left the Crane Creek Mine and got a job at the Sagamore Mine across the road, also in McComas. This was a much better job. I went on as a brakeman in the mines and later I worked at the cleaning tipple which was cleaner and safer work than on the inside.

There were few Black motorman in the mines at that time, so braking was about as good of a job as one would expect to get. I was a damn good brakeman. A good motorman would like to work with brakemen like me. I could cut loose eight or ten cars at a time, let them shoot into a section of the mines on their own momentum, run ahead of the string of empties, as they were called, and break, and set them so they could be loaded. Then I had to catch my motorman on up the main line and repeat the maneuver. Otherwise, the motorman would have to push the cars off on to their individual sections, and my job would only have been to get off, cut them loose, and get the brakes. Therefore, a good brakeman like me, could save quite a bit of time and money for a coal company.

The coalfields were virtually a melting pot of various cultures. There were

A Tribute

By Ken Sullivan

"Conversations With The 'Ole Man' " first came to me as an oral history paper when I was teaching at Antioch College's Southern Appalachian Center in Beckley, which is now closed. With its publication in GOLDENSEAL, Reginald Millner joins other Antioch/Appalachia students who have seen their work published in various places. I believe such work is the finest monument to that freewheeling Beckley approach to education, which at its best encouraged students to pursue their own interests and which often meant just such an examination of family roots as in this remarkable father-son interview.

I met Mr. James Millner only once, at the Appalachian Center some months before his death last spring. I had heard a great deal of him, for he was well-known as a leader of the southern West Virginia black community. The family itself was honored as one of the older black families, which had clung stubbornly to the region through hard times that drove neighbors of both colors to exile in Northern cities.

In other ways, the Millners appear to have been typical of local black families. Like many others, they came from Virginia in the years after the Civil War, drawn from an unrewarding agricultural life-style by the lure of industrial jobs. Tired of sharecropping for the benefit of former slave-holders, James Millner's father Henry first tried his hand at railroading, and then moved his family to the booming turn-of-the-century coalfields of McDowell County.

There, the Millners joined West Virginia's largest and most important black community. Republican politicians, eager to balance the new black vote against native white Democrats in the southern counties, had made it their business to stop Jim Crow legislation at the state line, and blacks in West Virginia were never disenfranchised. Consequently, the sizable black population gained local political influence and enjoyed rights unavailable to them elsewhere in the South. In many ways it was a good time, and older blacks still recall the McDowell County of that day as the "Free State of McDowell."

For all that, as he came of age, James Millner found rampant discrimination against black people in the McDowell coalfields. If politicians and coal operators defended the black vote for their own motives, they showed little concern for equality in other areas. As they introduced blacks and immigrants into a previously homogeneous mountain society, they imported a segregationist model of race and ethnic relations. Black and "foreign" areas were customarily set apart from white neighborhoods in the new company towns, thus fostering a sense of apartness among the newcomers and encouraging whatever prejudices native mountaineers may originally have held. A similar discrimination prevailed in the distribution of mining jobs. Suffering thus together, blacks and immigrants, Millner recalled, socialized more with each other than either group did with white natives.

James Millner's first reaction was to make the best of the situation. He went to work in the mines at 17, but, like other Appalachians, drifted in and out of the coalfields as first the Depression and then World War II rocked the region and nation.

Travel and the struggle to make a living were politicizing experiences for Millner. As a boy he saw his father dragged mangled from the mines, and as a man in the depressed coalfields he saw the inability of the coal barons to provide a decent living for their subjects. Questioning the status quo, he came to flirt with groups as far left as the American Communist Party. He gradually became disillusioned with communism, however, and settled into a nonsectarian activism.

Millner continued in this activist vein for the rest of his life, fighting for Civil Rights in various places, but especially at home in southern West Virginia. As in his baseball career, he won some and lost some. But he clearly considered himself a winner at the end, and there is no trace of bitterness in these recollections for his son. Reginald Millner's interview captures this fighting spirit well, and will stand as a fine obituary.

Spanish, Hungarians, Italians, Blacks, and native whites working and intermingling in and around the McComas area during the 1900s and 1920s. In my opinion there was more interrelating between the four immigrant groups and Blacks than between the native whites and any other single group. This is probably because there was more trust between the non-English-speaking people and the Blacks as opposed to between the whites and the non-English-speaking people. As a result of the mutual trust as well as the language barrier, Blacks were oftentimes chosen representatives of the immigrant community. There was a large concentration of Italian miners in these southern coalfields. As a result the Italian "Black Hand" was an active force in the area.

One of my most outstanding memories is of the time I was about 11 years old when we lived in Piedmont in McDowell County and I was on my way to the company store for Poppa. It was winter and there was snow on the ground. A man ran down the hill from a house above the company store, but before he reached the bottom another man came out of the same house, pulled a gun, and fired three shots into the fleeing man's chest as he turned trying to pull his revolver from his pocket to defend himself. The man on the porch put his pistol back into his coat pocket and walked back across the hill. The other man lay dead in the blood-red snow at the bottom of the hill. I immediately learned the rule of the three monkeys: see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil. The police questioned me several times about the killing but no one was ever identified.

There was a Black detective from Welch, in McDowell County, named Joe Possums, who was famous for having gone all the way to Italy to bring back two members of the notorious "Black Hands." Possums successfully apprehended the two men, contacted Italian authorities and had the men extradited back to McDowell County where they were tried and convicted of murder and sentenced to Moundsville.

Poppa was a good friend of Joe Possums. He once hired Possums to look for me when I ran away from home to avoid a beating from Poppa, because of something my stepmother had told him. I had gone across Northfork Mountain to Northfork Hollow and first lived with a couple of "shaney guys" from Georgia. I told them I didn't have a home. They had planned to take me home to Georgia on the next trip and leave me on their farm. They treated me very good—bought me magazines and clothes—but I soon left them for another family.

James E. Millner (1905-1978) about 1938 when he was check weighman for the union. Photographer unknown.

My new family consisted of a man and a woman who didn't have any children. They too were good to me, and it was about three or four months after I had run away that I was finally discovered. I was setting on the porch reading a magazine when a woman who was an old friend of Poppa's came by. When I saw her, I jumped up and ran and hid in the toilet, but the woman followed me to the door and ordered me to come on out. I remember her words. "James, your Poppa is about to go crazy looking for you, come out of there, boy!" Poppa had hired Joe Possums, who had searched down home in Virginia and all around the area for any sign of me. Possums was unsuccessful and only charged Poppa 50 dollars for the three-month search.

Poppa was also a good friend of the Black Sheriff Calhoun of McDowell County. During the 1920s the Black county of McDowell, once called "the free state of McDowell County," was in its heyday. Not only were there Black law officers and public officials but also doctors and judges. Poppa had known most of these men from the 1900s before his accident. He had spent time drinking and socializing in the company of these men. Of course later Poppa never drank alcohol, though he sold it as well as made wine every spring, which he usually gave away as gifts.

In 1925 I moved to Raleigh County, primarily because Alec Tabb, a friend from McComas, had wanted me to play ball with them. I started braking at the East Gulf mine and started second and third base for the East Gulf Red Sox. Whites and Blacks played in two separate and unequal leagues. The Black league definitely had the superior ball players. And the McComas Monarchs definitely had an overall superior ball team. When we beat the Bluefield Smart Sets in 1928 for the

championship, I played catcher and second base. Roosevelt Carter, from Crystal, West Virginia, was also in the McComas area, pitched that game. He was one hellava pitcher. He could put more stuff on a ball than you could come up with names for.

Roosevelt once stood in as a pitcher for the Smart Sets against the well-known Sachel Page and the Homestead Grays of the old Negro League. Roosevelt won that game, and each team split a doubleheader that day. Roosevelt had a well-deserved reputation as a pitcher, as did Alec Tabb who was famous for his fast ball. I used to catch for Alec, and, man, was he fast! I was also always a hell of a hitter. I hit quite a few home runs for the Monarchs but started striking out from overswinging when I was hitting most of my home runs. My batting was better when I just tried to get a good hit.

Some of the other outstanding teams in the coalfields were the Elkhorn Red Sox, who finally beat us for the championship. The Raleigh Clippers were also one of the best teams around, and the Bishop State Liners were plenty good—they were the best around for years.

However, in 1928 I was married for the first time to Lucille Graves, after which I returned to Martinsville, Virginia, to work pushing bricks in a wheelbarrow at a brickyard. I fell off a scaffold, broke three ribs, and ended up back in the West Virginia coalfields.

My youngest brother Joe died suddenly in 1929. It was said that he was poisoned by a second cousin over a mutual girl friend they had. Poppa had three children by his second marriage. They are Melinda, Francis, and Lee, all of whom Howard and I loved very much and helped in any way we could. However, they were never as close as Howard, Joe, and I, and now there was only Howard and I.

In 1929 when the bottom fell out of the stock market, I was braking at the Sycamore Mine of Pocahontas Fuel Company and had just received a raise. Of course I was laid off immediately like most men, and I went to hoboing. I hopped a train going to Portsmouth, Ohio, and rode as far as the outskirts of Columbus. There were men hoboing all along the tracks and hobo camps were everywhere. Sometimes I would see whole families hoboing. Conditions were unbelievable.

There was no work to be found in Ohio, so another fellow and I caught a drag of empties back into West Virginia. I came through Vulcan and Iaeger, where I bathed and shaved in the Tug River. After sleeping all night on a pile of crossties, a fellow hobo gave me some cornbread and piece of fatback. It was one of the best meals I ever ate. Man, I was hungry!

A train once stopped in a tunnel near Cedar Bluffs and as a result of me being too close to the engine I nearly suffocated. I was green when I first started hoboing but I became very good at hopping trains. I had some good teachers. There, amongst those wandering hobos, were some of the most intelligent men you ever wanted to meet. Many had traveled across country several times, had an abundance of knowledge and compassion, and gave it up readily. It's strange but I felt very close to those men who I never would see again, at least in this life.

"In 1929 when the bottom fell out of the stock market, I was braking at the Sycamore Mine of Pocahontas Fuel Company and had just received a raise. Of course I was laid off . . . and went to hoboing."

After barely escaping with my life several times and avoiding railroads "dicks"* all the time, I finally came home to my wife Lucille who was working for some big shots in Bluefield, Virginia. She occupied one small room above a garage belonging to the people she worked for. I began to get one or two days of work a week in the mines. One Christmas Eve I worked and drew $5.00 in scrip. I borrowed $5.00 from a friend and put on my only pair of bibbed overalls. We bought a quart of homebrew. It was Prohibition and times were hard, but we had one hell of a Christmas.

After Roosevelt came to office things began to pick up. Roosevelt also gave us, the miners, the rights to organize under N.R.A. [National Recovery Administration, 1933-1935] and we grew strong. Poppa was always involved in the Mine Workers Union, but I became active in about '30 or '31. I was first chosen as recording secretary for the United Mine Workers Local 6031, Sycamore. I gave that position up after two terms to serve as check weighman for the same local.

This was the heyday of the U.M.W. and we became strong under John L. Lewis's leadership. In the strike of '36 we provided for the striking miner by taking all the funds from the Union Treasury and buying the necessary goods, which miners would then sign for and repay back into the fund when work continued. Only as a result these Union stores, known as "jot 'em down stores," a lot of people were able to make it until the strike was over. I served six terms as a check weighman and several terms as a committee man, and I've seen the company do some awful things to some people.

I remember while I was acting recording secretary for Sycamore 6031 when the local president came to me to borrow some union funds. I declined, but the man was in bad shape and his family had no food. I gave him $15 out of my own pocket and had him sign a paper that the funds came directly from me and not the union fund. The Pocahontas Fuel Company had pressured the man into this situation by not allowing him credit at the company store and by working him in the worst areas in the mines.

I could get credit at the company store only after I became a check weighman and they knew I was making good money. Some men would draw checks with a yellow snake on the envelopes which meant that funds, sometimes a man's entire wages, were taken out for debts owed at the company store. Grown men would stand there and cry after receiving a check that had been so tagged. In some cases coal companies would even pay men in scrip that could only be cashed at the high priced company stores.

It was virtually slavery!

However, it was under Roosevelt and N.R.A. which gave miners the right to collective bargaining that

*Railroad "dicks" is a term used by hobos for the railroad detective, who posed a daily hazard for the hobo.

James E. Millner, seated on steps, in 1950 with his three oldest children and his half-brother Lee Banks Millner. They were at his father's home in Henry County, Virginia, near Martinsville. Photographer unknown.

enabled the U.M.W. to grow strong. Lewis had been head of the U.M.W. in the '20s but didn't have the tools until N.R.A. in '30s gave him clout to come back and build the strongest union in the nation.

In 1939 my father, like all the old and crippled miners, was cut off by the coal company. In the same year, while I was check weighman, Derrick Stamper, a few more local union officials, and I were investigated by the F.B.I. for communist activities. Of course none of us were guilty of anything more than reading the *Daily Worker,* the communist paper. The same thing occurs today and probably more frequently.

In 1943 I left West Virginia after failing the draft intentionally for the third and last time, because of high blood pressure. A couple of fellows, my brother Howard, and I all went for induction at the same time. We drank moonshine and took aspirins, and rubbed lye soap under our armpits, in order to raise our blood pressure. It worked for all of us except Howard, who was inducted and luckily survived the service and the War.

I first landed a job reserved for whites only, at the shipyard in Wilmington, Delaware. My identity was never discovered to be "coloured." Later I got a job in Philadelphia at the Buds Machine Plant. It was here that I became most aware of the communist movement in the United States. I attended meetings and carried a membership card for a while, and again I was investigated for communist activities. One morning I came downstairs from my apartment onto Opal Street where I lived in Philly. There was a young blond-headed man with a light colored overcoat on the doorstep. He asked for me by name and when I identified myself he flashed his F.B.I. identification and told me he would like to ask me some questions. We talked briefly about my communist activities and he left. I found it all quite amusing.

> "Paul Robeson could move people like no one else. His acting, his singing, his words, and particularly his deeds were always outstanding."

I remember when Henry Wallace was nominated for President of the United States on the Progressive ticket at Shide Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1948. A crowd of 18,000 people rose to their feet as a man rode in, standing up in the back of a convertible Cadillac. We thought it was Henry Wallace but we were not a bit surprised to see Paul Robeson, with both hands clinched and raised in the victory salute—coming in standing in the back of a Cadillac.

Paul Robeson could move people like no one else. His acting, his singing, his words, and particularly his deeds were always outstanding. Black union men like Richard L. Davis, who also became the victim of institutionalized attacks directed against those seriously involved in the struggle for the betterment of the masses.

The communists, like the unions, have always been quick to use Blacks for organizational purposes but have deserted them, like rats leaving a sinking ship, when they came under fire. This is the greatest hypocrisy of the struggle. Along with Paul Robeson at the Progressive Party convention was singer Frank Sinatra, who was a communist sympathizer. But look at where the two men are today!

Another example is John L. Lewis, who sold us out by making no provision for protecting the workers he already had when mechanism came in. As a result, mostly Blacks were laid off while whites were trained to operate the machines. Again Blacks felt the blunt of the change caused by another curve in the road to industrialization. I

In 1950 at his father's home near Martinsville, Virginia, James E. Millner posed with his son Frederick Louis. Photographer unknown.

know a lot of old miners at least felt let down by John L. Lewis after we all worked so hard and sacrificed so much to get the union where we did.

Lucille, my first wife, and I never really made it very well together. At first our marriage was fine, but she started to get on the bottle pretty heavy as time went on. We spent most of our 20-year marriage separated. We finally got our divorce finalized in 1943 and I never saw her again. In 1955 they found her body chopped up in a bag at a Cleveland garbage dump. She was a very beautiful woman and I loved her very much but we probably married too young. Luckily, we never had any children.

I was remarried in 1944 to Lucy Hodge and we started a family. Now, we first lived in Wilmington, Delaware, and then in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I never liked the atmosphere of the overcrowded city, so we returned to West Virginia in 1950. I worked in a punch mine for a while and then I worked on the building of the West Virginia Turnpike. We worked 12 hours a day for $1.50 an hour, and many violations in construction were overlooked in the hasty work that was half-done on that turnpike. I injured my back while working and received compensation for a while. When my compensation ran out we were in the mid-'50s depression. I had sold moonshine in the '30s, so I returned to my old craft in order to support my family, while working part-time washing cars.

In 1959 on Thanksgiving Eve, I was arrested by Federal revenuers while bringing 48 gallons of moonshine out of Virginia across Pocahontas Mountain. It was an obvious setup. I received three years probation because I had a family. I returned to Philly to work construction with my brother Howard, who maintained a little position in his local union. After a year and a half in Philly, I returned to West Virginia and landed a bullshit political job as a custodian at the State Road office building in Princeton, I also became very involved in the N.A.A.C.P. and the Community Action Program; the Civil Rights Movement was still pretty big then.

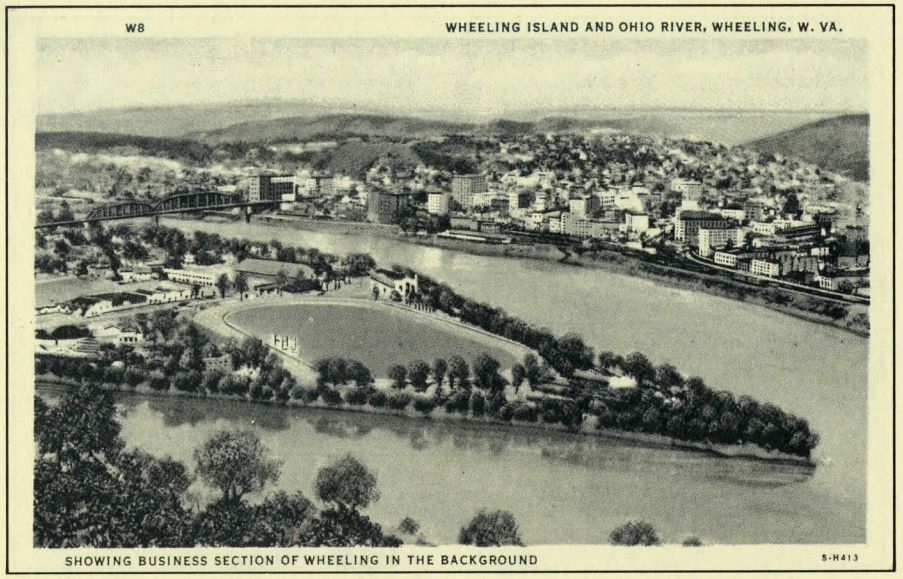
We integrated schools and school activities, the Y.M.-Y.W.C.A. in Bluefield, City Park, and park facilities in Princeton and demanded equal hiring and firing practice throughout the area. We also sued the State and city police for civil rights violations, as well as the well-known Shotts of Bluefield, West Virginia, for monopolizing the media. We won most of it, and that is only a fraction of the fight we've fought here in Mercer County area.

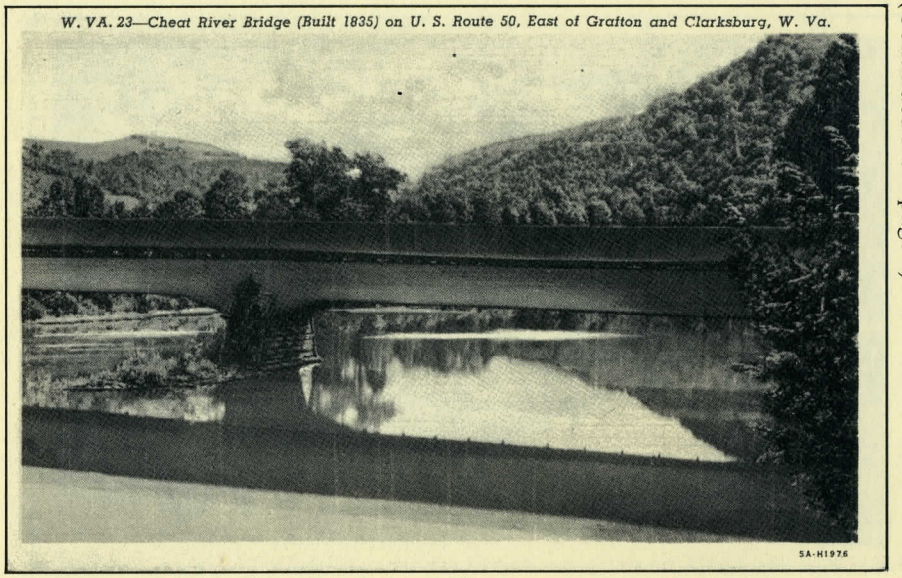
My greatest personal satisfaction came in winning a $20,000 black lung settlement after fighting the coal companies I worked for, the lawyers I hired, the doctors, and the courts—but after five long years I won.

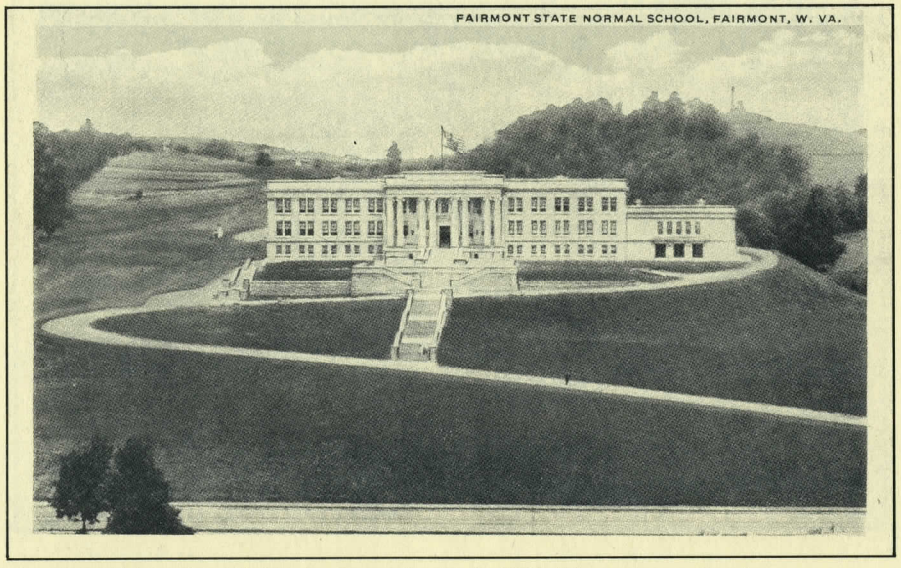
One factor I have to recognize here is the fact that on the final appeal in my black lung case I was delighted to see a Black judge hearing my case. I was proud to see the man in that position. I was also sure that his ears would be more sympathic in my cause than his previous colleagues'. My delight proved right. Twenty thousand dollars is a meager amount to receive at the cost of one's health, but if I had to do it all over again I think I would do it the same way, except for a few minor changes viewed through wiser eyes.

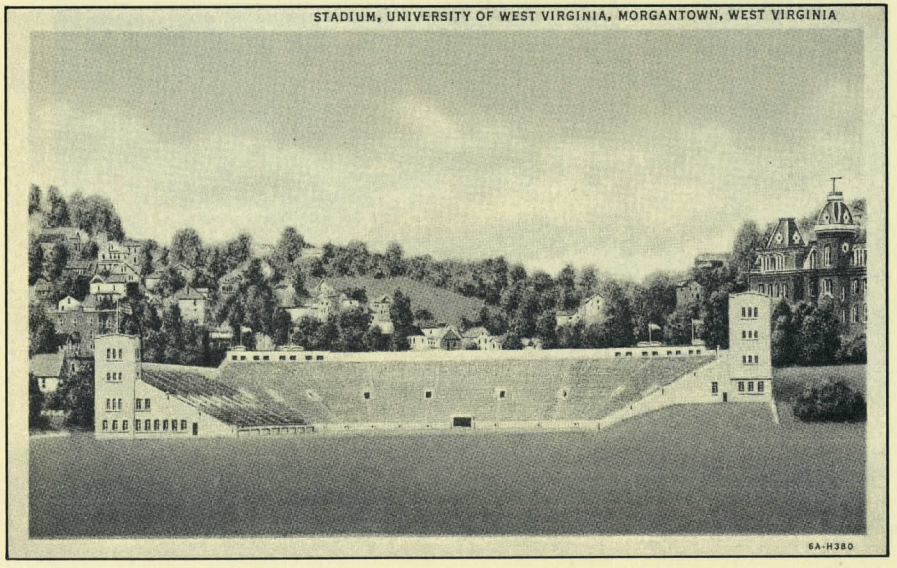
You see, it was basically the principals my father laid down before me that guided me to where I am today. I had no recourse or desire to do anything except to step in those footprints —that my father left imprinted "in the sands of time"—and to always continue in the struggle.

(Continued from page 4)

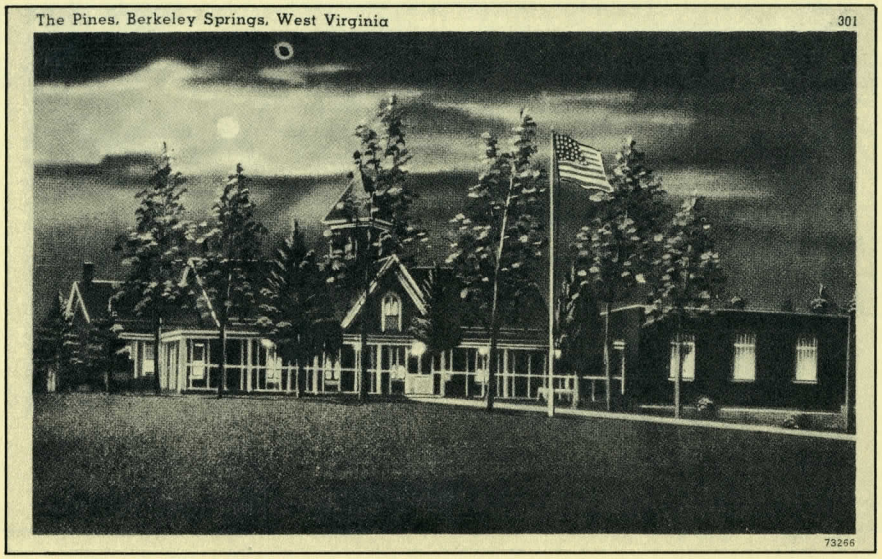


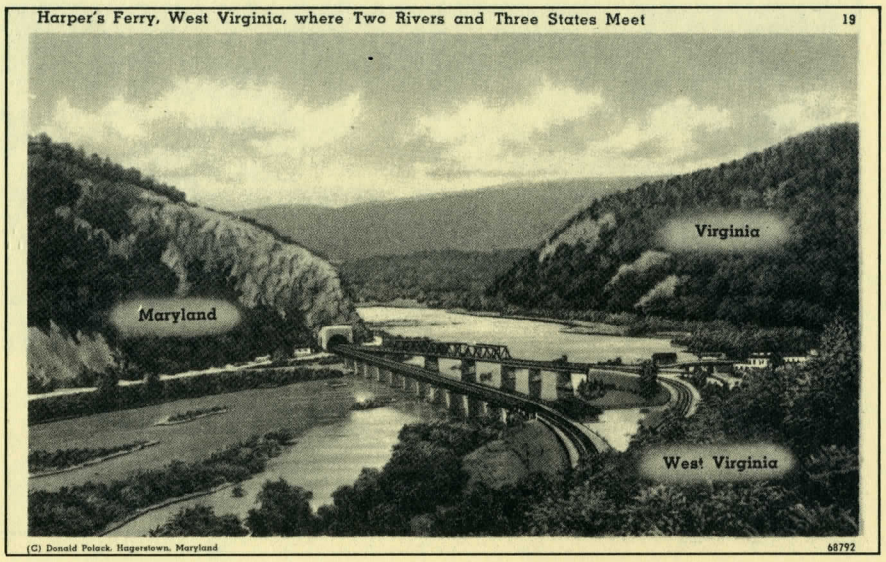




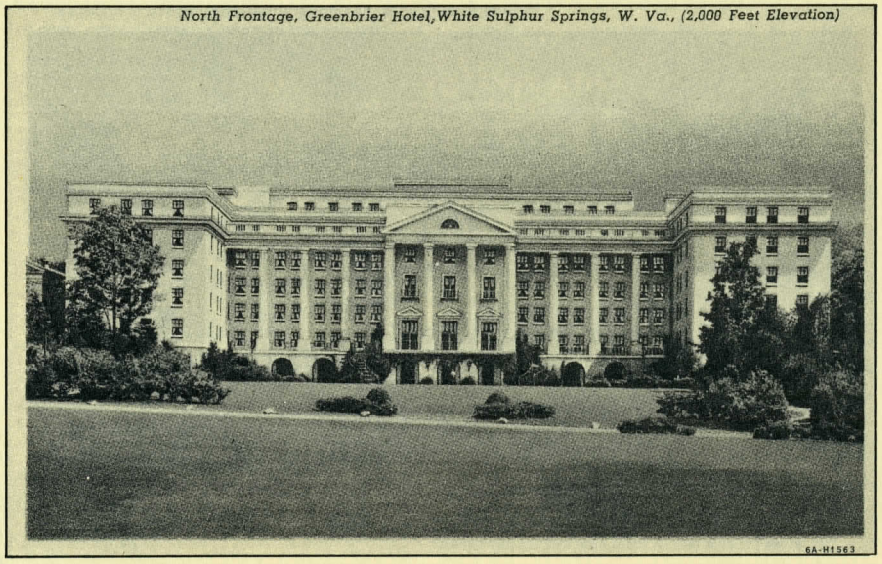


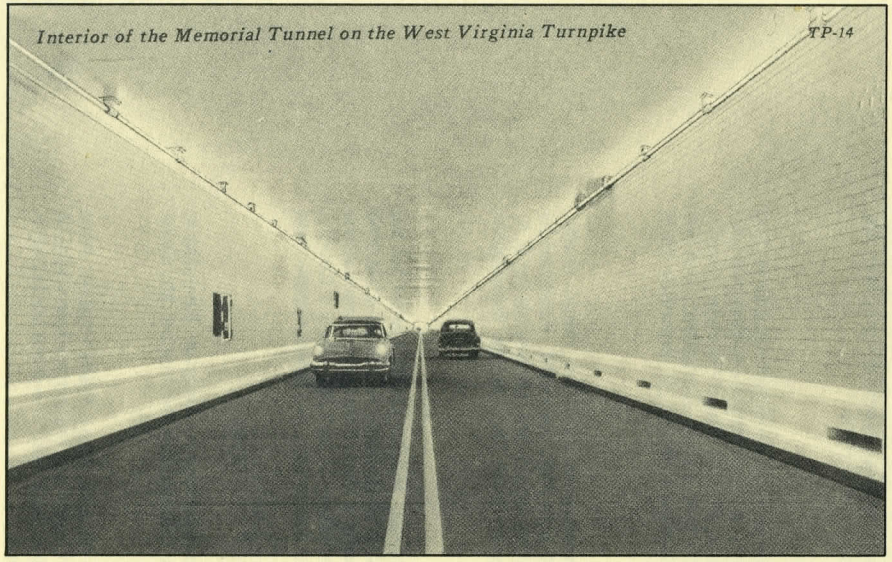
Sent from Fairmont to Mt. Morris, Pennsylvania, in 1920, this card as well as the Chimney Corner junction card are a few years older than the others here.

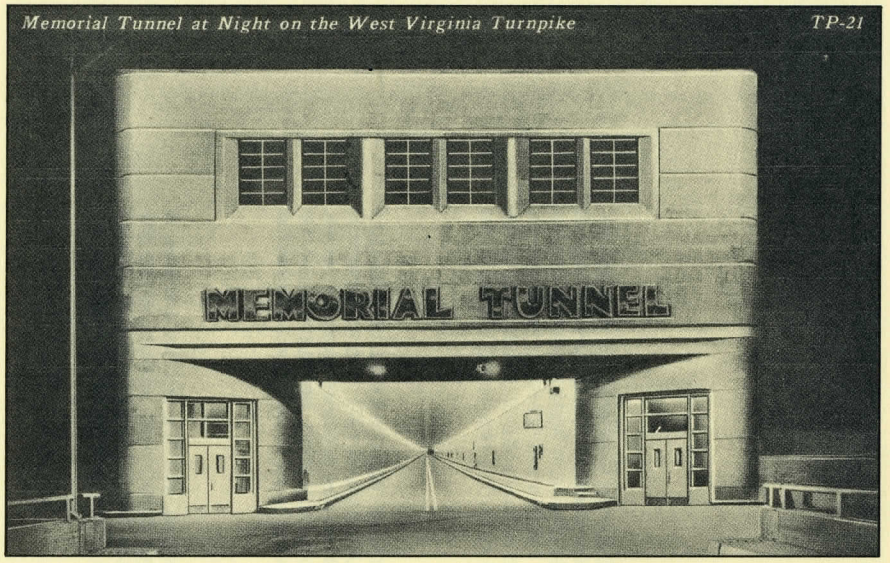




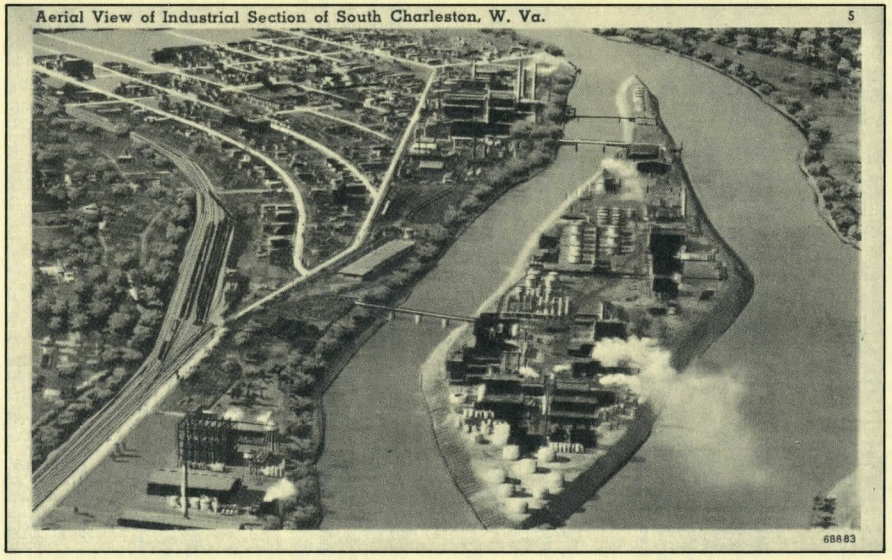
Sent from Boonsboro, to Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1949.

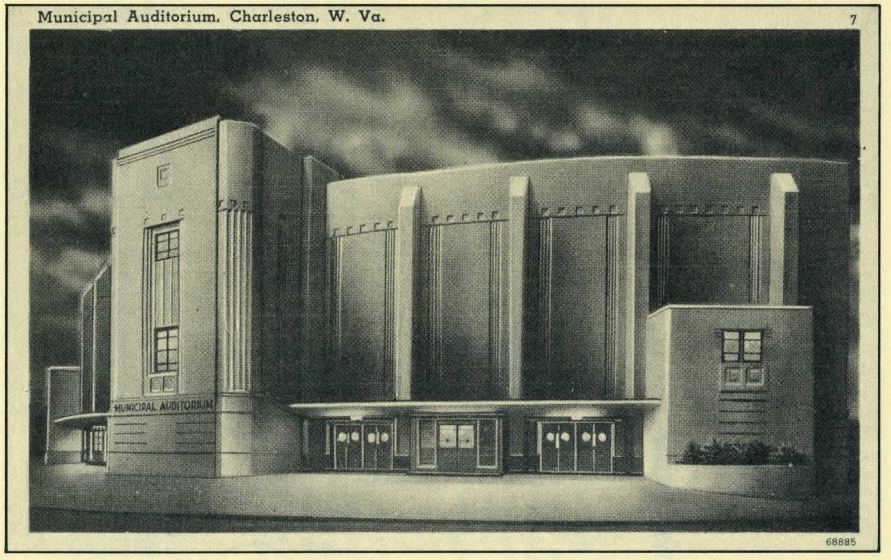






The Turnpike was dedicated on November 8, 1954.





In This Issue

ELAINE EFF is a folklife arts specialist who has worked in documentation and exhibition of traditional and occupational arts for the Georgia Council for the Arts, The Museum of American Folk Art, Winterthur Museum, The Library of Congress and The Smithsonian Institution, among others. She holds an M.A. in Museum Studies from State University of New York's Cooperstown Graduate Programs and is presently studying for her Ph. D. in Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania. She was employed by the West Virginia Department of Culture and History and *GOLDENSEAL* to locate and document folk artists in the State, a project she completed in the summer of 1978. The results are housed in the photographic and tape archives of the Department of Culture and History.

ANDREW LEE HINKLE, son of Don Lee and Willetta Emma (Goddin) Hinkle, was born and reared in Elkins. He received a B.A. from West Virginia University in 1966, a M.A. in psychology from Marshall University in 1972, and he expects to complete a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Alabama's Auburn University in 1979. He has published several scientific articles in psychological journals, but this contribution to *GOLDENSEAL* is his first historical effort. He says he wrote the article in this issue to preserve a record so that when his son Andrew Ralph is old enough to appreciate it he can know the life and times of his namesake, great-granddaddy Ralph Hinkle.

PEGGY JARVIS was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, lived much of her life in Morgantown, and now teaches and lives in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. She was a Phi Beta Kappa member at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, where she earned her B.A. in English. Studying in France, she also holds a M.A. degree in French. Her journalism experience began in the ninth grade in Morgantown, and she has written non-fiction and poetry most of the years since. Her most recent interests include learning to play the banjo and to spin yarn.

SKIP JOHNSON, a native of Herold in Braxton County, moved to Charleston with his family when he was 12. He graduated from Stonewall Jackson High School and soon went to work for the *Charleston Gazette* where he has worked for 30 years. For 24 of them he was a writer in the sports department, and in 1972 he became environmental and general feature writer. His hunting and fishing column, "Woods and Waters," has been a regular *Gazette* fixture most of his career. Mr. Johnson is a Korean War veteran who saw combat there. He and his family moved to Herold in 1972.

DICK KIMMEL, formally trained as a professional wildlife biologist, is currently self-employed performing and writing about traditional Appalachian music. He has lived in Morgantown for the past 12 years. His record and book reviews and articles and music for old-time tunes have appeared regularly in *Bluegrass Unlimited, Pickin', Banjo Package* (Japan), and *Mandolin Notebook*. He is currently performing with Mountain Grass and The Wild Turkey Stringband, and has recorded seven LP's with those and other bands. Mr. Kimmel produced Andy Boarman's recent LP, *Mountain State Music* (June Appal 025).

KATE LONG is a Fayette County native now living in Morgantown, and has wide interests—In education, music, crafts, and ecology. Her successful 1977 book, *Johnny's Such a Bright Boy, What a Shame He's Retarded,* published by Houghton Mifflin, won the 1978 Delta Kappa Gamma Society of International Education Award. Ms. Long holds the B.A. degree in English from West Virginia University and the M.A. in special education from The George Washington University.

REGINALD MILLNER was born and raised in Princeton. He attended Concord College, Antioch Urban Center for the Study of Basic Human Problems, and Antioch College's Southern Appalachian Center in Beckley, where he graduated with a B.A. degree in journalism. He has worked in Pennsylvania as a youth counselor in a North Philadelphia methadone maintenance center. Mr. Millner has been a youth counselor and community organizer in both St. Mary's County, Maryland, and in his native Mercer County. His major fields of interests are labor union history and Black Appalachian culture.

BOB SWISHER was born and reared in Cincinnati. He was graduated from Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky in 1970. Since that year he has lived in Richmond and worked for the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. Mr. Swisher's paternal grandfather was born in Lewis County, West Virginia.

JOHN C. WEISBLAT was born in Paris, France, and came to the United States with his wife, also a French native. After living for some time in the New York, New York, area they bought a farm in Calhoun County and made their home here. A free-lance photographer, Mr. Weisblat's work can be seen regularly in the *Charleston Daily Mail,* the State Magazine of the Sunday edition, *Metro West,* and occasionally on the Associated Press wire service.


W.VA. SON 1963 - IN-THE-EYES-OF- DAVID. BRINKLEY.

Department of Culture and History
The Cultural Center
State Capitol
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Address Correction Requested