Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Volume 6, No. 3 July-September 1980

from the editor

This GOLDENSEAL comes to you a bit late, as is usually the case for the July-September magazine. July is a special month in state government, marking the beginning of a new fiscal year. For GOLDENSEAL, this means a new printing contract, and sometimes (as this year) a new printer.

The process of writing contract specifications, having these "specs" approved, and then advertising for bids takes several weeks each spring. This year the process was begun in early April, with the bid opening finally set for May 20.

As soon as the bids were opened it became apparent that competition for the GOLDENSEAL contract was particularly keen this time. Less than $1,100 separated the two low bids. Evaluation of these bids took several days, and production on this magazine actually began on June 2. GOLDENSEAL's new printer is Visual Communications, Inc., a young and aggressive firm in Bridgeport. V.C.I. will use ultra-modern computerized typesetting equipment on GOLDENSEAL — quite a change from the more romantic "hot lead" Linotype used for the past year, as described in the January-March issue. Colleen Anderson and Pat Cahape will continue to design the magazine.

After the annual struggle to get the specs out and the contract awarded, the beginning of the fiscal year is a time of new hope and fresh starts. This is perhaps especially so this year, since a rumor circulated a few months ago that GOLDENSEAL was to be discontinued. As you can see, this is not true. The support of the Department of Culture and History continues to be strong, and we will continue to offer a magazine as good as — or better than — that of previous years.

With current spending cuts, however, GOLDENSEAL will have to make sacrifices, as will other units of state government. Specifically, we will be restricted to an average of 17,500 copies of each issue over the next year. This is an increase over last fiscal year, but not as great an increase as we will likely need.

In all probability, our mailing list will have to be "frozen" one or more times this year — that is, we will have to stop adding names whenever our 17,500 average is threatened. We will then hold names to add as openings occur.

GOLDENSEAL's readers will have to help us through the crunch. It is more important than ever that you keep us fully informed of changes in your name or mailing address. Please let us know if you're receiving duplicate copies, or if you no longer want the magazine.

We will also take positive action on this end, beginning with a complete updating of our mailing list. The computer list has accumulated many inaccuracies — names of deceased persons, incorrect addresses, and so forth — over the last few years. Each error costs us a magazine. To continue sending GOLDENSEAL to all interested people, we must eliminate this waste.

You will receive a folded postcard requesting your assistance in cleaning up the mailing list. The card will include your address as we have it, on a special gummed mailing label. To continue receiving GOLDENSEAL free of charge, make any necessary address and name corrections and then transfer the label to the other half of the card. Return that half to us — it requires no postage. You must respond promptly, or your name will be deleted from the GOLDENSEAL list.

Planning for the mailing list revision was still under way as this GOLDENSEAL went to press, and it's impossible to say exactly when the operation will be carried out. However, if you have not already received our postcard, you may expect to see it in the mail soon. After that, the matter is in your hands and we're relying on your cooperation.

With that said, I invite you to settle back for another year of GOLDENSEAL. This issue we are featuring the work of Michael Kline, Yvonne Farley Snyder, and other veteran GOLDENSEAL writers and photographers, as well as several newcomers. I am particularly proud of the S. George wood block prints photoessay, a project which had been in the planning for about a year. Readers may be interested to know that the S. George prints will be exhibited at the 1981 Vandalia Gathering, as the Helvetia photographs from the last GOLDENSEAL were shown at this year's Vandalia.

This fall we will offer a special Mother Jones GOLDENSEAL, to commemorate the famous labor organizer's work in West Virginia. We are working closely with Lois McLean of Beckley on that issue. Lois, president of the West Virginia Labor History Association and Mother Jones biographer, is also coordinating the MJ Festival, to be held here at the Cultural Center in November.

Beyond that, for the winter and spring issues of 1981, our plans are less definite. However, you may count on Arthur Prichard and other regular contributors returning to the pages of GOLDENSEAL. Many other good articles are in the works, and it appears that — as usual — the real problem will be in fitting everything into the limited space available.

—Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

A Quarterly Forum for Documenting West Virginia's Traditional Life

Volume 6, Number 3 ✱ July-September 1980

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Down Home Music Show

The Down Home Music Show is a new and unique program that began on West Virginia Public Radio in early February, and continues to be aired every Sunday evening at 11 p.m.

An independent production of the Appalachian Literary League (publishers of *The Illustrated Appalachian Intelligencer),* the program is co-hosted by Leonard Adkins and Pat Love, and is co-produced by Adkins, Love, and Michael J. Pauley. It is essentially a revival of the Down Home Music Hour, which the League produced for commercial radio in Charleston during 1976-77, but with a new, commercial-free, 90-minute format.

The Down Home Music Show features traditional, mountain, and country music, with a strong emphasis on music written and/or performed by West Virginians. But the program goes much deeper than just airing well-known pieces of music. According to co-host Adkins, "We will be exploring the roots of our traditional music, going to many Old World tunes to illustrate the beginnings of our music." In addition, the program has and will be doing "theme shows." Adkins says, "Already we had a program dealing mainly with railroading songs and another highlighting love songs and their tradition. In the future we will be doing programs devoted to all women performers, riverboating, black Appalachian musical tradition, laboring songs, and many other such themes."

The Down Home Music Show is a unique offering; an independently produced radio program that strives to preserve and promote the musical heritage and traditions of Appalachian people. The program can be heard over the West Virginia Public Radio network at 88.5, 91.7, 88.9, and 89.9 on the FM dial.

Foundation Directory Published

The *West Virginia Foundation Directory,* a comprehensive guide to private charitable and philanthropic foundations in the state, has recently been published by William Sceto of Terra Alta. The book was produced with the support of the Salt Lick Art Project of Terra Alta.

The *Directory* lists full details for about 100 foundations, including addresses, assets, and many trustees and officers. The book will be of most value to fund raisers for local projects, although it should be noted that awards are made primarily to established educational, religious, and charitable groups. A full listing of grants made in a recent year allows a fascinating glimpse of current trends in private philanthropy in West Virginia.

The 50-page *Directory* may be ordered for $7.95 ($9 if not prepaid), from West Virginia Foundation Directory, Box 96, Terra Alta 26764.

"They Can't Put It Back"

June Appal Recordings, an affiliate of Appalshop of Whitesburg, Kentucky, has recently re-issued "They Can't Put It Back." This remarkable album by Rich Kirby and Mike Kline is a collection of coal protest songs, aimed particularly at the ravages of strip mining.

The title song is by West Virginian Billy Edd Wheeler, and the album features the well-known "Coal Tatoo" and another Wheeler song. "Strip Away," by Kline and Tom Bethell, follows the American tradition of setting protest songs to popular gospel tunes. To the music of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," Kline sings:

"Strip away, big D-9 dozer, comin' for to bury my home,
I'm gettin' madder as you're gettin' closer,
Comin' for to bury my home."

A later Kline song, borrowing a tune from a 14th century peasant uprising, threatens to "blow the big dozer" with "hot lead and powder." By far the most powerful song, however, is Hazel Dickens' heartbreaking "Disaster at the Mannington Mine."

Mike Kline and Rich Kirby continue to be active in Appalachian music. Kirby may be heard on another June Appal recording, "From Earth to Heaven," with the Wry Straw band. Kline performs regularly, and he recently collaborated in making fiddler Woody Simmons' "All Smiles Tonight" album for the Elderberry label of the West Virginia Department of Culture and History. Kline, who lives in Elkins, was formerly assistant to the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

"They Can't Put It Back" was first released in 1977. The re-issue features a redesigned album cover, and a booklet containing words to the record's songs. "They Can't Put It Back" (JA012) may be ordered from June Appal, Box 743, Whitesburg, KY 41858.

Second Chemical City Festival

The Second Annual Chemical City Festival will be held at the South Charleston Mound Park on September 13, 1980. It is sponsored by the Commission for Promotion of Visual Arts and Beautification of South Charleston and by the City of South Charleston. The Arts and Crafts Show is open to West Vir-

ginia residents. Those under the age of 18 may participate as members of a school group. Original works of painting, sculpture, crafts, photography, and graphics will be judged and awards given in each category. Registration forms and information may be obtained from Ruth Ryan, 934 Glen Way, South Charleston 25309. Phone 768-5671.

On view at the festival will be Mound Park's new statue, "Burial Attendants," done by Dr. Cubert Smith of West Virginia State College. One of the highlights of the First Chemical City Festival, last fall, was the unveiling of the sculpture by Sharon Rockefeller. In ordering the statue, it was the Commission's intent to involve as many persons in the community as possible, and to enable them to see an art form created. Consequently, the actual work on the statue was done outside at the Spring Hill Fire Station by Dr. Smith and his assistant, Fred Hays. In public view, the limestone block became the three figures of the burial attendants. The figures are abstract representations of life, death, and immortality.

Photograph by Mike Meador

Eighth Year for John Henry Festival

Ed Cabbell, director of the John Henry Memorial Foundation, and R.T. Hill, coordinator of Appalachian Studies at Concord College, have announced plans for the eighth annual John Henry Folk Festival. This year's festival will be held in conjunction with Concord College's Appalachian Heritage Week, beginning September 21. The John Henry Festival itself will take place on Friday and Saturday of that week, September 26 and 27.

The 1980 festival will be dedicated to John "Uncle Homer" Walker, the banjo man from Glen Lyn, Virginia, who died January 4, 1980. According to Cabbell, "Uncle Homer always attended the festival, from the first one on, and has been such an integral part of the John Henry Folk Festival." Festival planners have invited a number of people who have been associated with Walker and his music over the years.

The event will also feature traditional musicians from southern West Virginia and the surrounding Appalachian area, as well as several nationally-known performers. This year's festival will include craft exhibits and sales. Concerts will be held in the ballroom of the Concord College Center. As in the past, the 1980 John Henry Folk Festival will celebrate West Virginia's black cultural heritage.

This is the first time since its inception that the John Henry Folk Festival will be held indoors at a college rather than outdoors in a community setting. It is also the first time that a college will cosponsor the event, along with the "Friends of John Henry."

For further details, contact the Public Information Office, Concord College, Athens 24712. Phone (304) 384-3115, ext. 211.

Ivydale Festival Film Released

Morris Family Old Time Music Festival, a new documentary film by West Virginia filmmaker Bob Gates, was recently released by Omnificent Systems. Shot in 1972, this 30-minute black and white film records one of the now historic Ivydale traditional music festivals held by John and Dave Morris. The Ivydale festivals were a series of "back porch" festivals which took place at the Morris family homeplace in Clay County, from 1969 to 1973. The festivals were famous for their traditional music, good times, and persistent rain, mud, and flooding.

Bob Gates has taken the original materials from the 1972 festival and edited them into a cohesive film, marking the culmination of an eight-month project which was funded in part by the West Virginia Arts and Humanities Commission. Some 30 musicians are represented in the documentary, which records the dancing, the participants, and the consistently adverse weather conditions, as well as the music itself, in an effort to capture the unique spirit of the Morris brothers' Ivydale festivals. Some of the musicians featured in the film are no longer living, notably John Martin, Uncle Homer Walker, and Aunt Minnie Moss. Among the other performers presented are Ira Mullins and Lee Triplett, both fiddlers from Clay County; Della (Granny) Norton,

ballad singer from the mountains of North Carolina; Sylvia O'Brien and her brother Jenes Cottrill; and Gruder Morris, a relative of the Morris brothers who was instrumental in passing on the family's musical heritage to John and Dave.

Morris Family Old Time Music Festival premiered at the Cultural Center on May 2, with the Morris Brothers performing in concert prior to the showing. Omnificent Systems, the film's distributor, also handles two other films by Bob Gates: the strip mining documentary, *In Memory of the Land and People;* and *You Touched Me,* on volunteer recreation for the retarded. For further information on these films, contact Robert Gates, 1117 Virginia Street, E., Charleston 25301. Phone (304) 342-2624.

Historical Glass at Huntington Galleries

"A Century of Glassmaking in West Virginia," an historical exhibit of glassmaking in West Virginia, opened June 8 at the Huntington Galleries in Huntington. The exhibit will continue through September 7.

Over 200 objects are included in the exhibit. Among these are pitchers, tumblers, glass tableware, and decorative items. Several varieties of glassmaking techniques will be represented, including freeblown, moldblown, and pressed.

"A Century of Glassmaking in West Virginia" documents the work of many of the oldest factories in the state, some of which have grown to national prominence and some no longer in existence. Companies included are: the Hobbs, Brockunier & Company and Central Glass Company, both of Wheeling; Riverside Glass Company of Wellsburg; Fostoria Glass of Moundsville; Blenko Glass of Milton; Seneca Glass of Morgantown; the Viking Glass Company of New Martinsville and Huntington; the Fenton Art Glass Company of Williamstown; the Huntington Tumbler Company of Huntington; the Akro Agate Company of Clarksburg; and the Pilgrim Glass Corporation of Ceredo.

The exhibit is accompanied by a catalog, with a preface written by Gary Baker, Curator of the Mansion Museum at Oglebay Park, Wheeling. Eason Eige, Curator of Collections at Huntington Galleries, is curator of this exhibit.

New Appalshop Film

Appalshop Films has released "Strip Mining: Energy, Environment, and Economics," a 50-minute color film. Tracing the history of strip mining with its interwoven stories of technological advances and the evolution of the strip mine law, this film is an account which reveals the cost of strip mining in human and environmental terms. The problems explored include: rising energy consumption and the increased demand for coal; the economic and political power of the coal industry; the long-term environmental effects of strip mining; and the increased production costs caused by the federal strip mine regulations and their effect on the current prosperity of Appalachia.

"Strip Mining: Energy, Environment, and Economics" was directed by Frances Morton and Gene Dubey. The 16 mm film is available for purchase at $750 and for rental at $75 from Appalshop Films, P.O. Box 743, Whitesburg, KY 41858.

Hardy County Heritage Weekend

Hardy County Heritage Weekend provides visitors with a capsule review of more than 200 years of civilization in the broad river valleys of the South Branch, Capon, and Lost Rivers — two centuries of prosperous living and strong cultural patterns, the result of fertile soil and an amenable climate which produced a generous crop-yield and allowed the inhabitants to develop an easier and more refined lifestyle.

During the last weekend in September — September 27 and 28 — Hardy County offers visitors a glimpse of fine old manor houses, early churches, and a 19th century grist mill — 22 sites in all. Many of the homes on the tour are still lived in by descendants of the original builders. Six of the sites are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In adddition to the tour, there will be craft demonstrations in such areas as blacksmithing, spinning, weaving, quilting, and applebutter making, with craft items offered for sale at several shops and sites on the tour. Many church and civic groups will provide a variety of homecooked foods and special meals during the weekend. Special events include a muzzle loading rifle shoot, an antique auction, and mock Civil War battles. The Knights of the South Branch will demonstrate the traditional sport of tournament riding, formerly a favorite sport of southern gentlemen but now practiced in only a few areas.

One special feature of this year's Heritage Weekend will be a Victorian funeral, to be held in the main parlor of the Old Stone Tavern at Moorefield.

Tickets for Heritage Weekend are $4.00 if purchased by September 15, and $5.00 thereafter. Single home visits are $1.50. The price includes punch and cookies, which will be served at the new Library in Moorefield. Special discounts for busloads may be arranged. There is no price reduction for children, who must always be accompanied by an adult. Hours, unless otherwise stated, will be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 1 to 6 p.m. Sunday.

For information and tickets, contact Heritage Weekend, Box 301, Moorefield 26836. Phone (304) 538-6560.

goldenseal reader survey

The typical GOLDENSEAL reader is 52 years old and a native West Virginian still living in the state. She (and the average reader is slightly more likely to be female) heard about us through word of mouth, has read the magazine for about two years, and shares her copies with several friends and relatives. She is likely to be retired or a housewife and has at least a high school education. Her favorite articles concern history, with folklore and interviews running second and third. She reads GOLDENSEAL from cover to cover.

That is, if respondents to the recent GOLDENSEAL survey are representative of all readers. There is no scientific way of knowing that they are, since those responding were not a random sample of the readership. Rather, response was voluntary, and some readers — the retired, for example — may have had more time or a greater inclination to complete and return the questionnaires.

However, the survey does reinforce general impressions gathered from reading our mail and talking with readers. There is no doubt, for example, that GOLDENSEAL has an older readership. Our mail seems to come disproportionately from older people, and our survey shows an average age of 52. Only 36% of our respondents were 45 or younger, with 30% over 65. To put this into perspective, the American population as a whole has just turned 30, with half above and half below that median age.

Altogether, we heard from 422 readers, fewer than we had expected. Some respondents, indicating that they did not wish to tear the survey page from the magazine, photocopied, mimeographed, or hand-copied the questionnaire. Others not wishing to tear their magazines may have not answered at all. Out-of-state readers were somewhat more likely to respond, making up about 31% of our survey and just under 25% of our mailing list.

The questionnaire in the January-March GOLDENSEAL asked how many people read each copy and other questions about the use of the magazine, inquired about the type of article preferred, and several personal questions. Statistically, the responses break down as follows:

I. 1. *How long have you been reading GOLDENSEAL?*
—eight issues, or the equivalent of two years, on the average.

2. *How many people (friends, family members, etc.) ready your copy of the magazine?*
—an average of seven.

3. *How did you hear about us?*

Word of mouth	253 (60%)
In a public place or through an organization	69 (16%)
Through *Foxfire* and other publications	67 (16%)
Other	32 (8%)

4. *How much of the magazine do you read?*

All	307 (74%)
Less than all	108 (26%)

II. Preferences
Which GOLDENSEAL features and topics interest you the most?

History	365
Folklore	333
Interviews	278
Crafts	245
Folk Art	218
Letters	191
Announcements	190
Music	155
Ethnic/Black Culture	117

III. 1. *How old are you?*

Under 30	56 (13%)
31-45	95 (23%)
46-65	141 (34%)
Over 65	127 (30%)
Average age	52

2. *What is your occupation?*

Retired	120 (29%)
Housewife	77 (19%)
Educator	43 (10%)
Legal/Medical	19 (5%)
Clerical/Secretarial	18 (4%)
Artist/Craftsperson	14 (3%)
Technical/Scientific	14 (3%)
Student	7 (2%)
Farmer	6 (1%)
Merchant	5 (1%)
Ministerial	4 (1%)
Other blue collar	47 (11%)
Other white collar	40 (10%)

3. *Education?*

Elementary	41 (10%)
High School	117 (29%)
Vocational/Technical	25 (6%)

College	139	(35%)
Graduate school or professional school	77	(19%)

4. *Sex*

Male	206
Female	216

5. *Were you born in West Virginia?*

West Virginia	292	(69%)
Other	129	(31%)

6. *What state do you currently reside in?*

West Virginia	275	(65%)
Other States	133	(32%)
Did not answer	14	(3%)

Regarding the last question, nearly half of the out-of-state respondents live in states bordering West Virginia. Floridians — mostly retired West Virginians — make up a sizable fraction of our mailing list, and they sent in 15 questionnaires. All told, we heard from 27 states and two Canadian provinces. In actual circulation, GOLDENSEAL goes to all 50 states and several foreign countries.

The GOLDENSEAL readers behind these dry statistics varied widely. Our first response came from a 12-year-old, and we later heard from people well into their 80's and 90's. We heard from preachers, teachers, scientists, farmers, miners, and one river guide, among many others. Under "occupation," one elderly reader said "taking care of myself," and an 81-year-old woman listed her job as "mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother." Some of our respondents had little or no formal education, while many others held Ph.D.'s or other terminal degrees.

The final item on the survey form, a call for suggestions and comments, was impossible to tally statistically. Nonetheless, it provided perhaps the most valuable information of all, for GOLDENSEAL readers had stimulating ideas regarding how their magazine should be run.

Some readers offered perceptive insights about the potential problems of a state magazine. A Chicago reader enjoyed GOLDENSEAL, but advised us to "be careful not to let the cost of production and distribution become too much of a burden on the taxpayers." Another warned us to not "ever let politics enter into it."

Probably the most common suggestion was that there should be a subscription charge for GOLDENSEAL. Many readers felt the magazine should be published on a monthly basis. Unfortunately, neither idea is feasible at this time.

There was much constructive criticism. A Charleston reader felt that "many of your articles are just too long, especially the interviews." Another West Virginian suggested that the "magazine cover, or the fastenings, should be more practical," saying that the staples had pulled through before he had finished with his copy. An engineer felt that the "Midwives' Tales" article (October-December 1979) "contained a much too graphic description of childbirth under primitive conditions. This is not preserving our heritage but, rather, glorifying in depravity." One reader urged that we add a book review section.

A Michigan professor suggested that we reprint articles, for use in college classes. Many people indicated that they were sharing GOLDENSEAL with their own children. A Texas-born West Virginian said that she was saving all copies, "for my daughter to learn more of the state when she's old enough to read." An adult college student testified, "thanks to GOLDENSEAL, I got an A."

In addition to suggestions, there were also comments, many of them flattering. A railroad man figured that "GOLDENSEAL is the best magazine, bar none." A Nebraskan said, "you can't hardly improve upon perfection." An Ohioan felt we were doing a "splendid job — especially for a bunch of hillbillies!"

Out-of-state readers said that GOLDENSEAL kept them in touch with West Virginia. One such person was a former West Virginian, now living in Richmond, who called himself "what Jim Comstock refers to as a chickened-out West Virginian." A West Virginian now in Connecticut said that "in reading GOLDENSEAL I feel I am closer to being at home." A Canadian who received military training at Elkins during World War II remembered Randolph Countians as "unbelievably warm and kind," and said that stories about that area "just delight me." An Oregon resident said GOLDENSEAL had wide appeal, adding that the "proof is that I who am a Westerner enjoy it very much."

Only one respondent, a West Virginia "escapee" now teaching college in California, felt that GOLDENSEAL was doing a disservice. "West Virginians, I have felt for years, are taught that guilt, poverty, and political machines are a way of life," he wrote. "Your magazine has continued to teach these ideals." He added that "whenever we escapees get together, we talk about the good life that we have now. We only feel 'guilt' when we are talking to those whom we left behind." GOLDENSEAL, he thought, was "boring at best."

We are grateful to all respondents, particularly those offering practical advice and criticism. Your ideas are under active consideration. In fact, some suggestions have already been acted upon — the letters column, for example, has been tightened up and redesigned. We have also reversed an earlier decision to use fewer question-and-answer interviews, since your votes place them behind only history and folklore in popularity. You may expect to see other suggestions in print in future issues, as your ideas shape GOLDENSEAL in the months and years to come.

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.

Harrisville, WV
January 25, 1980
Editor:
We just received the January-March issue of GOLDENSEAL and thought this would be the ideal time to voice our comments about your past work. We enjoy reading this magazine and pass it on to local friends.

However, I've come to realize that our definition of "traditional culture" differs from yours on one important point — time. My impression from your magazine is that, by and large, traditional culture is a past entity; to be remembered, cherished, and mourned as gone forever. The main focus seems to be that our older citizens are guardians of the "traditional" lifestyle — relics from the age when we were "folks," not consumers. I fear you are only presenting one side of the issue. You fail to indicate that culture and traditional lifestyles are a constantly evolving form.

There are people within our own "community" who carry on many of the traditional values and skills. We are many families spread over Ritchie and Doddridge counties who are carpenters, midwives, quilters, farmers, teachers, gardeners, herbalists, cobblers, musicians, etc. We have continued many traditions and preserved the best of the old ways, combining some of them with new technology where appropriate. My point is that we, too, in 1980, are a traditional culture. Our older neighbors have been, in many cases, our mentors, passing on knowledge and skills that their own children often scorn. And our community is certainly not unique. There are many such groups scattered over these hills. West Virginia's traditional culture is alive and well. Let's see more evidence of that in your publication.

Keep up the excellent quality of your magazine. I look forward to reading future issues.
Sincerely,
Vicki L. Bartz

Renick, WV
March 10, 1980
Editor:
I enjoyed last quarter's issue that was loaned to me by a friend. I was particularly interested in a letter from Charles W. Satterfield, 1932 Champ Fiddler from Fairmont. The '31 West Virginia Square Dance Team Champions were from Moundsville. In 1932, I joined the band (as rhythm guitarist) that had accompanied them — Jay Burley's Barnstormers. I played with them through the '34-'35 season, as well as with other groups and six different radio stations. At the time the Dancers took the Championship, the main fiddler was Doc Brown, who, I am sorry to say, I never met. To my knowledge there are only three members of the Barnstormers still living and only two dancers — one was the wife of the late Charley Powell (who could rattle the bones — ebony — and spoons) and the other, "Shorty" — because he *was* short and bowlegged — but what a dancer!

I seem to recall a Tommy Satterfield who fiddled over WWVA, Wheeling, in the late '30's. I am wondering whether Charles could have been nicknamed "Tommy"? Should you be in touch with him, tell him Blaine Heck, WWVA staff guitarist (died in '76 in Seattle), spoke of him often.

Jay Burley's Barnstormers consisted of Jay on fiddle; Kermit Cox, tenor banjo and slap bass; Steve Martin (Kovich), steel guitar; Ray Vandyne, piano; Clyde Snedeker, five-string banjo; and myself. Steve had the first all-steel body guitar and diaphragm (Dobro) I ever saw, '33-'34. My memory isn't sharply tuned since I had a major stroke in '73. I am 65 in May and am still capable of playing a few solos melody-chord style.
Thanks,
Vellar C. Plantz

Whiskey Days

Jumping Branch, WV
April 4, 1980
Editor:
In the "Whiskey Days" article, you only have the boring story of a bootlegger (which we honest people resent), and it sounded as though that was all that lived at Streeter. Most of all the people over in Streeter were God's people, hard-working, and lived an average country life. Some bootleggers, yes, there always are and always will be, but certainly not the majority. I am a retired teacher and still own a lumber business and furnish two mines. We do not want to be classed as bootleggers and jailbirds, because we know how to make an honest living.
Sincerely,
Grace S. Smith

Raleigh, WV
April 19, 1980
Editor:
The April-June story, "Whiskey Days, " by Rebecca Browning (?) is so out of context that the author should have just signed her name, as everyone who read it hereabouts soon recognized the tale

and could add a little to it. We old Streeter-ites, and the not-so-old ones, too, know all the moonshine that came through Streeter was not made in Streeter. There was also Ellison Ridge, Mt. View, Panther Knob, Flat Top, Suck Creek, and Fall Rock, to name a few. The list is long, but I'm sure you wouldn't want to read it all.

I like your magazine, even with the "ghost" writers, washing machine repairmen, and sawmill men. It adds spice to the pudding and all it needs is a good slug of white lightning to wash it down! Bottoms up!

Thank you,
Pauline B. Vist

Rebecca Browning was not a "ghost" — she changed only the names of people featured in the story, not her own. Thank you and Mrs. Smith (above) for your comments. — ed.

Aunt Nannie Meador

Clifton Forge, Virginia
March 13, 1980
Editor:

I am writing to you in regard to the story of Aunt Nannie Meador and the Bluestone Dam.

I was born in 1927 at True, approximately one-eighth of a mile from this dear lady. As a child, I carried drinking water from the large well in her yard, which was located between the big house and the cottage. I have sat there many times cracking walnuts which had fallen from the huge walnut tree, which she loved so very much.

I have played many happy hours in her yard with the other children who lived nearby. I have gathered apples from her trees, fed her chickens, and gathered weeds for her hogs many times. As I got older, I plowed the cornfields with a large team of horses as well as used a tractor pulling a large level land plow, from early morning until after dark. I have also picked many blackberries on the hillside in front of her home and hunted rabbits on this farm in the winter months when the snow was on the ground.

My father ran the country grocery store and filling station, as well as the True Post Office there, until I was about 19 years of age, at which time we also had to move because of the Bluestone Dam taking the place where we lived. So you can see what I was thinking as I read these things you published. So many memories come into my head.

Sincerely yours,
Rev. John D. Neely

Mother Jones

Beckley, WV
January 31, 1980
Editor:

I enjoyed the article by Lois McLean on Mother Jones. I would like to comment on the photograph, a formal portrait, used, among others, to illustrate the article. It shows Mother seated, and you say the photographer is unknown.

Actually, your print was made from an 11 × 14 glass plate portrait made in Gates Studio in Charleston, circa 1912. The glass negative was presented to me by Mr. Gates' widow about 1950; she was then living on East Washington Street in Charleston. I won't bore you by telling you why she gave it to me, but she did.

Because circumstances have required me to move about a great deal, I feared for the safety of the large, fragile plate. So about 1972 I presented the negative to West Virginia University, sending with it data as to when it was taken, who took it, and who presented it to me. I am not certain as to the year that Mr. Gates did the portrait, but 1912 was Mrs. Gates' estimate.

Sincerely,
William C. Blizzard

Helvetia

Baden, Pennsylvania
April 21, 1980
Editor:

In the April-June GOLDENSEAL you featured Helvetia. We have been through that lovely little Swiss community several times, and have camped in Holly River State Park.

When in the area, we *always* buy delicious Swiss cheese from the Balli sisters, who work the old family farm which is now surrounded by Holly River State Park. These women are a tribute to West Virginia, and it was a never-to-be-forgotten experience when they invited us to view their cheese stored along with shelves overflowing with canned goods, fresh eggs, butter, etc., in their immaculate cellar. Upstairs again they showed us a lovely quilt stitched during the previous winter. These sisters were featured in the June 1976 *National Geographic* — "Turnabout Time in West Virginia."

We are sorry that you missed including them in your article on

continued on page 71

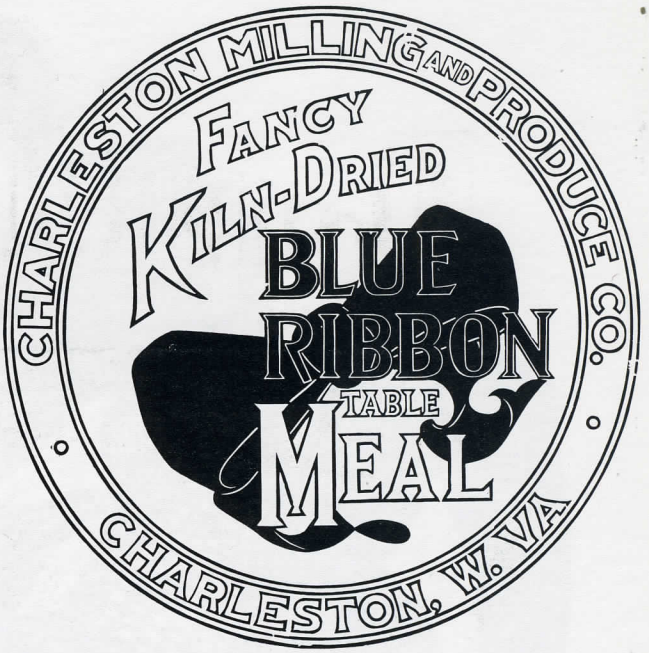
Flour Sack Art

The S. George Company Wood Block Prints

Bob Graham and Pat Lee are both native Pittsburghers, but in late 1977 they made a discovery of interest and importance to West Virginians. In September of that year, Graham heard from his brother of the closing of the S. George Company of Wellsburg, Brooke County. S. George manufactured and printed flour sacks and other paper bags for nearly a century, and, Graham was told, the liquidating company had a large inventory of wood type and wood printing blocks on hand.

Graham, who is in the advertising business, makes his living working with printers, as does his friend Pat Lee, a 14-year veteran of the typesetting industry. Both were excited by the news from the West Virginia panhandle. Graham visited Wellsburg to confirm the report, and in October the two men made an offer to buy the whole lot. Disposing of out-dated engravings and type was not a high priority as the S. George directors closed down operations, but the Pittsburgh offer was finally accepted a year later.

It was then that, as Pat recalls, "the fun began." Working with Graham's station wagon and a borrowed van, the pair began moving their newly acquired collection to Pittsburgh. Altogether, the type, wood and steel engravings, and



other items weighed about nine tons, and 15 trips were required to complete the transfer. Graham and Lee had acquired a proofing press as part of the deal, and they now set to work to make rough, "proof" prints from the wood blocks. These proofs revealed the most beautiful antique commercial art that either man had seen. Delighted with their find, they arranged with a Baltimore company to make prints for sale through its distribution network.

Ironically, the printer that the Baltimore company located to make the S. George prints was West Virginian Cliff Harvey, of Morgantown. Harvey, professor of graphic design at West Virginia University, operates Permutation Press, a private press. Professor Harvey owned a 1907 Albion press, perfectly suited for printing wood engravings, and he eagerly agreed to take on the S. George assignment. Once more the antique blocks began moving across the state line, this time from Pittsburgh to Morgantown.

At GOLDENSEAL we first heard about the S. George discovery in 1979, from Dr. Peter Gottlieb, of the West Virginia Collection at WVU. Gottlieb, then working to help document S. George Company history, put Harvey in touch with GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan. Everyone agreed that a GOLDENSEAL story was in order, as soon as enough quality prints were readied for publication.

There matters stood for several months, with Professor Harvey patiently

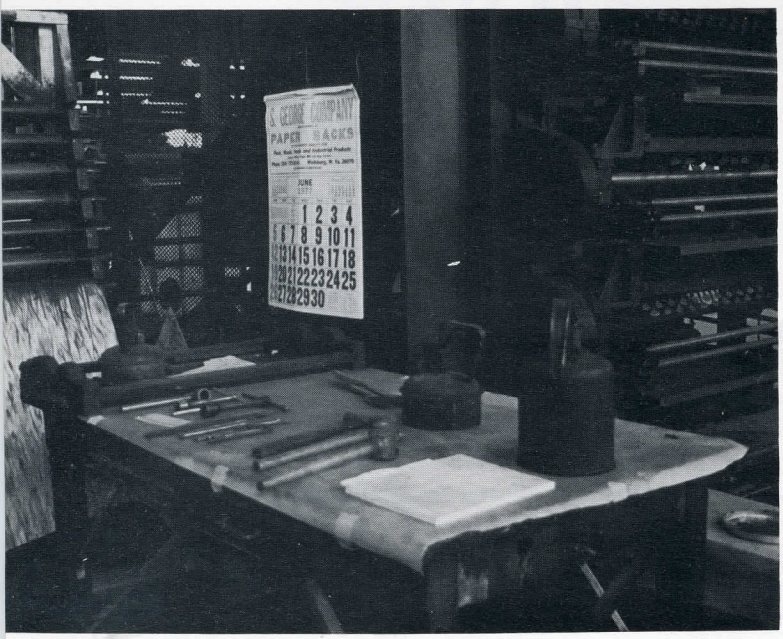
proofing blocks in Morgantown, gradually sifting the finest specimens from among hundreds of engravings. Then, early this year, the S. George affair began heating up. Through the efforts of assistant Arts and Humanities director John Hennen, the West Virginia Department of Culture and History began negotiating to acquire a selection of blocks and prints for the State Museum. Discussions continued into the spring. Both Graham and Lee felt that a representative collection should be returned to West Virginia for preservation, and in April they generously offered to place certain blocks at the Cultural Center on permanent loan. These blocks will arrive this summer, and are eventually to be donated to the State.

The S. George Company sold bags to mills across much of the country, but we have emphasized West Virginia logos in selecting prints for this issue of GOLDENSEAL. These images, originally printed by S. George on rough flour, meal, and feed sacks, are now carefully reproduced by Professor Harvey on fine handmade paper. In a short account accompanying this photo essay, he describes the painstaking process. Peter Gottlieb offers a short history of the S. George Company.

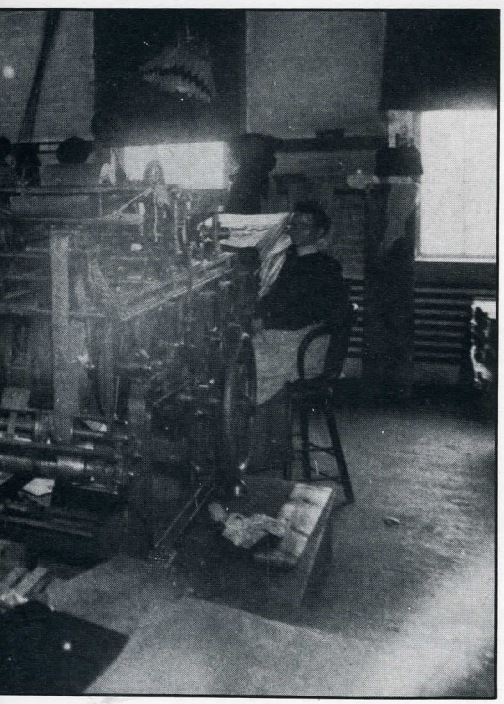
For financial and technical reasons, we have had to print most of the wood blocks in black and white. Original prints, some in two, three, and four colors, will be offered for sale by GramLee Associates (26 Club Rd., Carnegie, PA 15106) as they become available. — ed.

Above and below left: Machinery and tools now stand idle in the century-old factory. Photographs by Jenny Dinsmore *(above)* and Rick Doheny.

Right: Women bag makers were gradually displaced by machinery and male machine operators. Date and photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia Collection, WVU.



Modern S. George bags on display at the closed plant. Photography by Jenny Dinsmore.

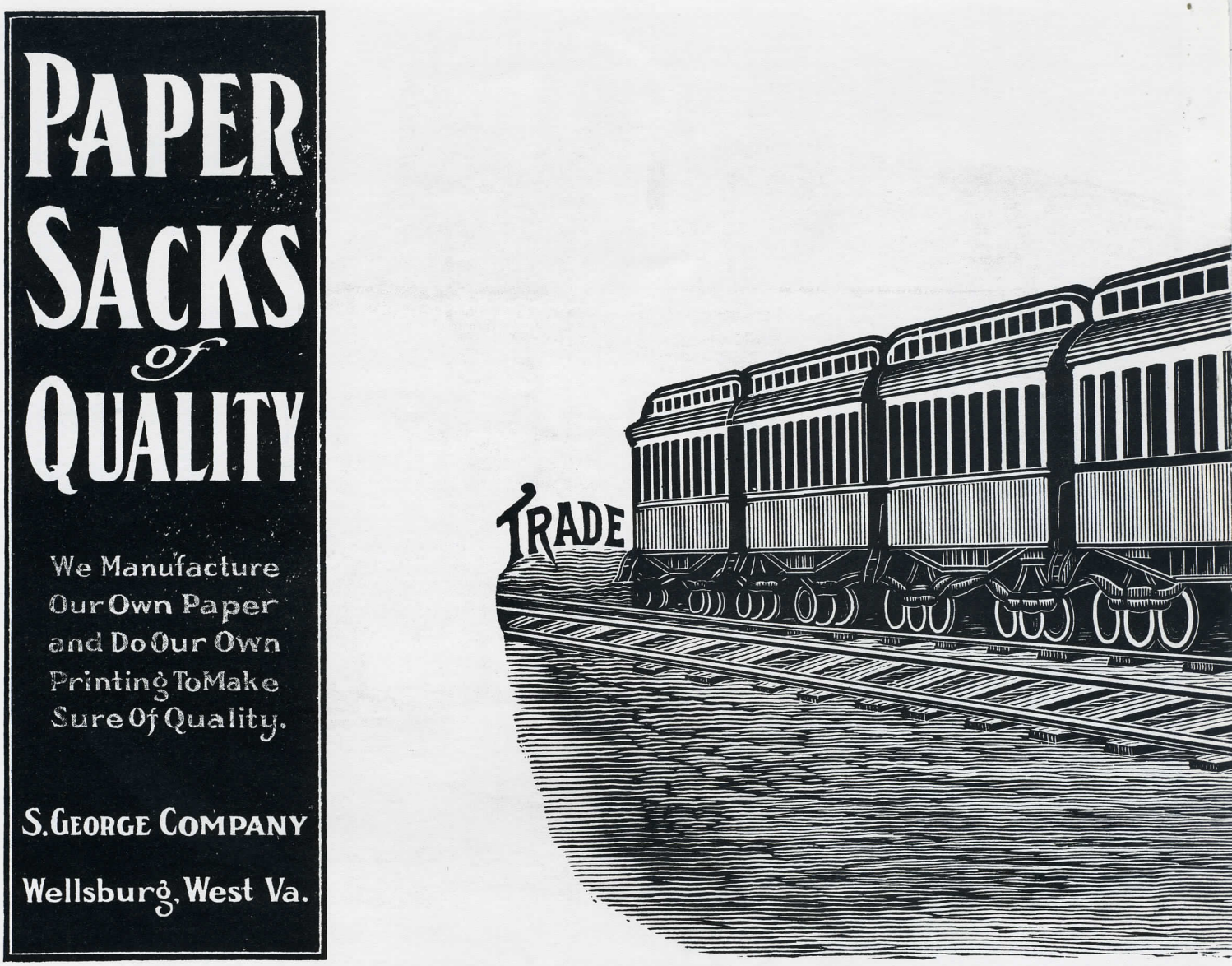


S. George Company History

By Peter Gottlieb

Wellsburg has been a textile and papermaking center for almost 150 years. Barges pushing up the Ohio River towards Wheeling and Pittsburgh delivered the raw material for both industries in their early days. Proximity to the centers of American industry and ample supplies of water in the locality also attracted factories to this Brooke County community. When Samuel George, Sr., went into business in Wellsburg in 1870, there were already several paper mills in the area.

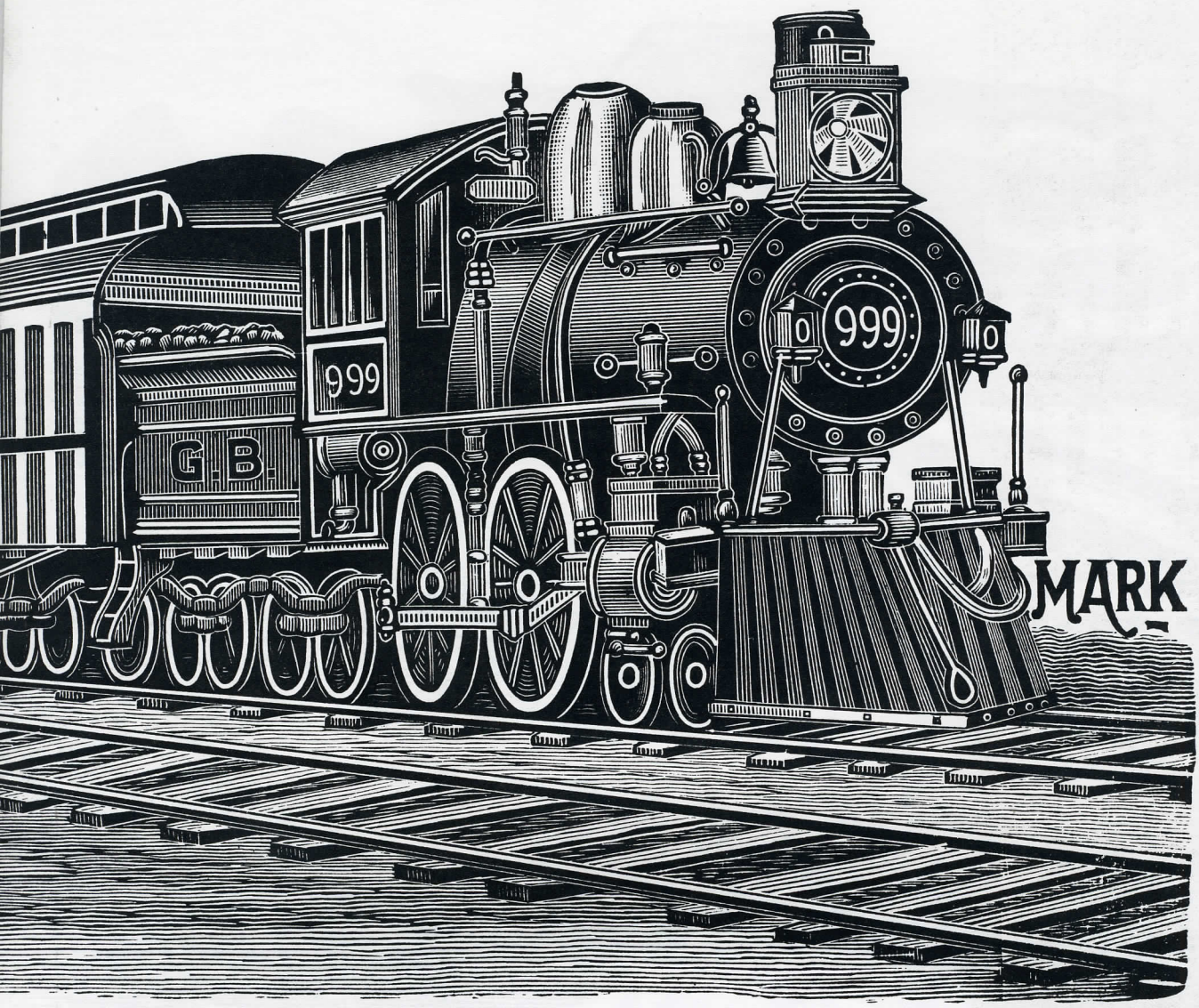
It was not until the 1880's, however, that paper bags became a famous local product. The story behind this development has it that an agent of the Wellsburg *Herald* newspaper procured an order for 1,000 printed sacks from a Wheeling benefactor. The sacks were needed to collect Thanksgiving donations of food for needy children. Since paper was made in Wellsburg, the newspaper agent carried the order for sacks back to his hometown. Large rolls of paper were brought to an office next to the newspaper's printing room, and a woman was hired to fabricate the bags by hand. The bags were then printed in the newspaper's



shop. Not only was the newspaper agent satisfied with the quality of the sacks, but Wellsburg merchants discovered that they were excellent for general purposes as well, and they flooded the paper manufacturers with orders for more.

The opportunities in the paper bag manufacturing field led Samuel George, Sr., to concentrate his entrepreneurial efforts there. George grew up on a Brooke County farm and came to Wellsburg in 1852 to enter the wool trade. His business career in time branched out to include banking, lumber, glassmaking, and paper manufacture.

It was from S. George Company's paper mill that the roll of paper for the donation sacks came. From the success of that experiment, Samuel George invested additional funds in his paper mill. In the 1880's a Pittsburgh engineer joined the company's staff and laid out the most modern cutting, folding, and pasting machinery then available. In addition to these improvements, George set up a printing department and hired skilled workers to run the machinery. Formerly, the paper sacks had been assembled primarily by women, whose nimble fingers (so S. George and his managers believed) were best suited to the hand work process. The revamped bag factory of



the mid-1880's employed a greater percentage of men to tend the automatic machinery and to run the printing presses. From a local supplier of paper bags, the S. George Company gradually extended its market all over the United States, filling orders from large manufacturers like Pillsbury and chain store mills as well as smaller producers in Virginia and West Virginia.

The prosperity of the S. George Company rested on family flour purchases. We no longer place this grocery item high on our shopping lists, but for many decades the 25-pound bag of white flour was indispensable to any household. No matter in what region of the country a family lived, it needed flour for baking such staples of the diet as bread, biscuits, rolls, cornbread, griddle cakes, pies, and pastries.

The ubiquitous sack of flour, therefore, became a prime object of competitive marketing. Here a bag manufacturer like the S. George Company played an important role. The inside of the sack was dyed a deep blue or violet color in order to make the flour seem whiter (and, therefore, purer) by contrast. Similarly, the mills to which the sacks were sent used widely recognized symbols of whiteness as brand labels. The mills contracted with S. George Company

to print the images of swans or billowing sails on their bags. Other frequently used symbols suggested to shoppers wholesomeness, nutrition, or the goodness of country life: sheaves of wheat, for example, or pictures of old-time water-driven grist mills.

The S. George Company won fame and customers not primarily for the printing of sacks but for two other aspects of its manufacturing process. Long after other papermakers had converted their factories from the superior rag and hemp raw material to wood pulp, the S. George Company continued using manila rope as the most important ingredient in its products. Sacks made from manila hemp withstood the pressure from the automatic flour filling machines used increasingly by commercial mills. Hemp sacks also stood up to the stresses of shipping and handling better than wood pulp bags. In 1966, the S. George Company was one of only two bag makers in the United States which continued to use manila hemp fibers to produce a sack of the highest quality.

Skilled workers with long service at the S. George Company further ensured the quality of the paper sacks. This was especially true in the printing department, where the partially completed bags ran through printing

presses which could print as many as seven colors at once. Mr. Wylie B. Mendel, current president of the S. George Company, recalls expert press operators who proudly held up samples of their work for the supervisors' inspection. Employees' dedication to their work extended their employment over long periods of time. Men hired in the 1880's were still working for the S. George Company after World War II.

After a century, advancing technology and a changing economy caught up with the aging plant, rendering the company's business less profitable. In 1977 the board of directors voted to close down, and today the S. George Company mills stand vacant and idle. Efforts to sell the company buildings and machinery have not succeeded as yet, but the hemp fiber bags and their artistically printed labels are already part of the Northern Panhandle's industrial history. The reprinted labels shown on these pages serve as reminders that more than darkened factories have been left to testify about the work once done within their walls. the prints vividly portray a combination of commercial marketing and popular art — a lively but forgotten facet in the mundane business of bagging and selling flour.


CORN
MEAL

Cliff Harvey at work in his pressroom. Photograph by Vic Haines.

Wood Block Printing

By Clifford Harvey

Permutation Press was founded in 1977 by Cliff Harvey, professor of graphic design at West Virginia University. The Press began with a few type borders, purchased at a type auction, and a Challenge flatbed proof press. Within a year, a 12" x 18" iron hand press was purchased, along with fonts of Garamond, Caslon, and American Uncial type, in several sizes. A Chandler Price 12" x 15" job press has also been acquired, and now awaits restoration.

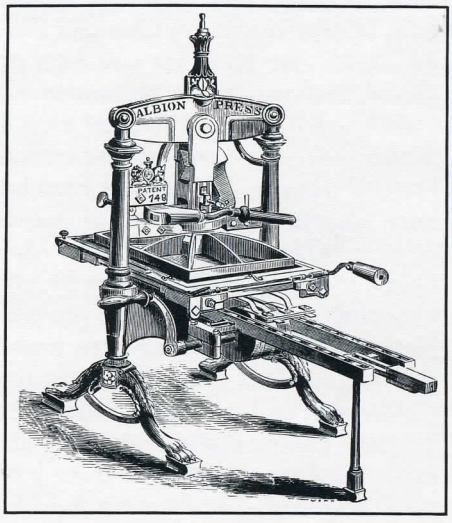
Although begun as a personal press to further the research and creative work of Professor Harvey, Permutation Press has since undertaken several major outside projects. These include Old Man Quay, *a 20-page book of poetry by John Gagliardi; a portfolio of border prints on Hosho paper; a commemorative broadside for the First Annual Typecasting Conference held at Terra Alta, West Virginia; various prints, invitations, and exhibition announcements; and one book yet to be bound. The Press has provided apprenticeships for two WVU graphic design majors, Jenny Dinsmore and Chris Gluck.*

Since early 1979, Permutation Press has proofed and catalogued several hundred engravings from the GramLee collection of S. George Company wood blocks. The Albion press being used in this work is a Demy folio press, of the type originally invented by R.W. Cope of London. Permutation Press's Albion was manufactured about 1907, and reconditioned in the 1950's. The press bears the foundry name of Harrild and Sons, London.

Professor Harvey expects eventually to assemble a limited edition portfolio of prints from the S. George engravings. The portfolio will be available from Permutation Press, 49 Maple Avenue, Morgantown 26505. — ed.

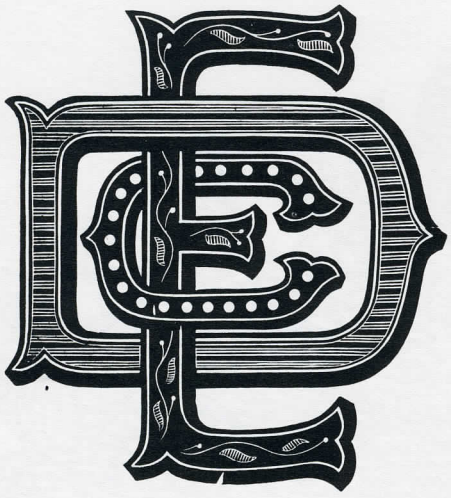
Wood engraving is a relief process with the area not to be printed cut away, leaving raised sections which print. Woodcutters had carved plates of wood with knives since the middle ages, but in the 1770's, Thomas Bewick discovered that he could engrave a more delicate line with a burin on the dense end grain of boxwood. The burin, the traditional tool of the copperplate engraver, could be manipulated far more easily than a knife, and the fine lines of the end grain could withstand the pressure of modern printing presses.

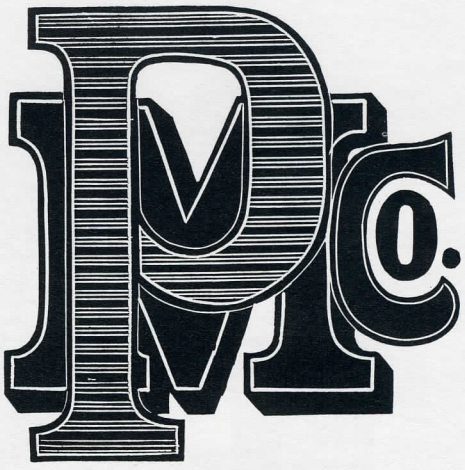
Until the advent of photography on wood, the designer drew his illustration in reverse directly onto the whitened block in black lines and washes. Around 1870 engravers adapted photographic techniques to transfer the drawings in reverse to a sensitized wood block surface covered with a mixture of silver salts and albumen. The results were dramatic; the artist could work in any size or any medium, and the original picture was preserved. Because materials were less expensive and the process



less time-consuming, wood engraving could compete with steel engraving. Unlike both steel engravings and lithographs, woodblocks could be set directly in the press and printed simultaneously with the text. A single block could withstand over 100,000 impressions.

The most common woods for engraving were cherry, apple, dogwood, pine, boxwood, mahogany, holly, and maple. To prepare the wood for end-cut engravings, blocks slightly more than type height were cross-cut from the end of the log. The blocks were then cut in half and stacked so that air could circulate freely. Different companies used different means for curing the wood. The Hamilton Manufacturing Company cut its wood in the winter to season for two years undisturbed. A mechanical device brought the cured slabs down to type height and gave





them the first finish. A mixture of linseed oil and pumice applied by hand gave them a high finish, and coats of lacquer or varnish alternated with lacquer sandings furnished the final finish. The Hamilton Company cut most of the blocks in this collection, but others may have been cut by the S. George Company itself.

Wood engraving was especially popular for illustrations, magazine covers, views of buildings, landscapes, pictures of machinery, portraits, seals, and insignias. In competing with the lithographer and metal plate engraver, the wood engraver was the ally of the letterpress printer. For the small printer far from the services of an engraver, trade cuts were a blessing, as they eliminated the time and cost required to engrave each illustration anew. Most of the cuts were general enough for a variety of uses, with some provision for personalizing a cut with a scroll, tablet, or frame so that the printer could insert the message or name of his customer. In 1840 there were scarcely 20 professional wood engravers in America, and another 20 years passed before the best wood engraving was done here. By 1870 there were more than 400 engravers, and some houses, such as that of Edward Sears of New York City, employed more than 100 engravers.

Printing of the S. George engravings at Permutation Press begins first with cleaning the blocks, and checking each for warpage. All the blocks to date (over 800) have been cleaned, proofed, and catalogued on newsprint paper. Multi-colored blocks are proofed one color at a time, changing colors at different stages to explore various possibilities. Most of the multi-colored blocks were printed in the traditional red-yellow-blue (and sometimes black) combinations. In order to take advantage of their potential, and to reinforce the time in which they were produced, the final prints have used colors such as those found in poster art of the late 1800's and early 1900's. Because age and wear have taken their toll, a good final print or proof of each block usually requires extensive packing or padding of the press. This is accomplished using newsprint and other thin papers placed behind the tympan frame.*

The papers used for final prints so far have been mainly Hosho paper, and Arches white and buff cover. The Arches is a 100% rag paper made in France. To prepare the paper for printing, it is first dampened by passing the sheets through a tray

*A frame designed to hold a sheet of paper or cloth between the impression surface of a press and the paper to be printed.

of water, once in each direction. The sheets are then laid one on top of the other, alternating wet and dry. The stack is wrapped in plastic, placed under 30 to 50 pounds of weight overnight, and turned once to evenly drive through the moisture. This process produces a limp paper, but not a wet one. Dampening results in a sharper image, better solids, and requires far less ink.

Simple black prints require only one block and one printing. Multicolored designs require separate printings, with a separate block for each color. Specially constructed humidors keep the paper damp between printings. Permutation Press uses two humidors made of plywood and lined with foam rubber. In printing, paper is taken from one humidor to the press and then to the other humidor after printing. Moisture loss is minimal, and paper may be stored in printing condition for up to ten days.

After the block has been proofed to satisfaction, a final proof is pulled by first printing a sheet of newsprint held in place on the tympan, and then by placing a clean sheet over the first, and re-printing without re-inking. This results in a transfer of the first image to the second (or top) sheet. This reverse image becomes the guide for future packing.

Either stiff letterpress inks or

lithographic inks without driers added are used. The ink is mixed with either Sure-set compound where large areas must be printed, or burnt plate oil where inks must be thinned or where tint bases are incorporated. If the block contains a fine detail, the inks are generally used stiff, with nothing added except a drier when trapping one ink over the other. Inks are rolled out on white glass slabs, using two slabs and two rollers. Transferring ink from one slab to the other, and one roller to the other, allows for controlled distribution and a more consistent means of adding ink when necessary. Each block is generally inked five to seven times per impression.

A sheet of acetate is used where the tympan comes in contact with the paper to facilitate packing and counter the effects of the damp paper on the tympan surface. In order to "register" (or align) the blocks in the case of multi-colored prints, the paper is cut on two sides on a commercial cutter. The cut edges are then placed against the registration pins inserted in the tympan. In the case of three- to four-color prints, the images are usually printed one per day to allow for some setting and to guard against the dangers of losing one's concentration. After all the prints are complete, they are hung to dry on a clothesline and are later pressed in a book press or under weights.

"Soup, Soap, and Salvation"

"Brother Pat" Withrow and the Charleston Union Mission

By Louise Bing

The Charleston Union Mission Settlement, one of the largest institutions of its type in the country, was founded by Pat B. Withrow on October 1, 1911. "Brother Pat," a reformed alcoholic himself, first organized a downtown rescue mission for homeless men. Later, other programs were added — including homes for the elderly and for orphans — and the modern Mission Hollow complex was built, but the Union Mission remains strongly committed to Crossroads, its Summers Street shelter for transients.

Pat Withrow was born on October 9, 1880, a few miles from Charleston on the Rocky Fork of Poca River. Parents Joseph S. and Mary Jane Robinson Withrow were religious but poor tenant farmers. Upon the mother's death in 1889, the family was broken up, with the children scattered over the countryside in neighbors' homes. Pat himself endured life as a foster child for a few years, but at the age of 15 he set out for Charleston in search of his fortune.

According to his autobiography, it was in the city that Pat Withrow first fell into sinful ways. The boy from the country went to work for the old Farley Hotel by the Courthouse as cook, waiter, janitor, dishwasher, porter, and night clerk. Under the strain of many jobs and odd hours, Withrow began drinking at Charlie Hatcher's saloon, next door to the hotel, at age 16. He continued the practice after Farley sold the hotel to

Pat Withrow preached regularly in Charleston's Tabernacle, built by the Mission for revivals and other meetings. Photograph by Maggard Studios, Charleston, date unknown.

Withrow with alcohol, tobacco, and weapons taken from men entering the Union Mission. Date and photographer unknown.

him, while he was struggling to make it on his own as an independent businessman.

The hard-drinking Withrow was unsuccessful as an innkeeper, and his business failed after a few months. Meanwhile, Farley had acquired a saloon, and Pat joined him as bartender. During this period he met Pearl Byer, and the couple was married in April, 1902. The next month the young husband was arrested for the first time. Pat Withrow was 21 years old, a married man, and a confirmed alcoholic with a police record.

Over the following years, Withrow bounced around turn-of-the century Charleston's night life. He continued to drink heavily, reportedly consuming as many as 45 shots of whiskey daily, while still remaining able to work. Following a barroom shooting incident, he left Farley to work for the Eaton brothers at the old Burlew Theatre on Capitol Street. Then uncle J.D. Kittinger opened four saloons on Cabin Creek and called on Pat to manage one. He later recalled that "the miners were making plenty of money, and it was like a circus all the time up there....Some days I was compelled to close the saloon at three o'clock in the afternoon and go into the woods to hide, to keep them from killing me and shooting up the place."

Catherine, the Withrow's first daughter, was born at this time, but the family's home life continued to be rough. Pat drank too much and rarely brought any money home. The unsettled family moved 25 times during the first nine years of marriage.

Withrow soon left Cabin Creek to return to Charleston. He again went to work in a bar, this time J.P. Clarke's place on Capitol Street. By 1904, however, he was back in business for himself, with a small store on lower Charleston Street. Again his business failed, this time lost to gambling debts. Pat went to work as a streetcar conductor and, later, as an employee of the telephone company.

Withrow's new jobs brought him into contact with people who did not usually frequent the bars and his other former places of employment. Several invited him to church. Nonetheless, his personal life continued to decline. He reached bottom — what he later called "the depth and despair" — in burning the family home for insurance money. This act nearly cost the lives of his wife and daughters, and Pat considered suicide in his fear that the crime would be uncovered. He was ready for a change when the next invitation to attend church came, made this time by preacher John W. Johnson. Withrow accepted the preacher's invitation and was converted in February, 1907, in a West Side church.

Pat Withrow later recalled that his conversion was a quiet one. "I, like others, was expecting a great deal, or a light, or some such great feeling. None of them appeared, and I was a disappointed man." Nonetheless, he continued praying until the job was done. "My knees were sore! You see, I had never done any knee work." Withrow later recalled that he had by this time "committed every crime except murder," and the morning after his conversion he rushed about Charleston, apologizing to those whom he had wronged.

Following his conversion, Pat decided he wanted to become a preacher himself. He busied himself in the church, organizing prayer services, and in one memorable series of meetings converted 83 sinners at the site of his old saloon at Dry Branch on Cabin Creek. The church was impressed with his work, and it made him a lay exhorter. After due time, the Methodist Church, at its district conference at Clay, licensed him to preach. People who had known Pat Withrow in the old days were astonished, and great crowds turned out to hear his sermons.

In his enthusiasm as a convert, Withrow soon became dissatisfied with the leadership of his church. "We had some splendid men on the board, but so many of them without a vision," he felt. "Often we would meet to discuss the Pastor's salary and how to raise it. Some old fellow would say: 'The Lord sent him here; let the Lord take care of him.' I soon found out that the business of the Lord (which is the biggest business in the world), was handled in the most

Above: Mealtime at the Mission's children's home. Date and photographer unknown.

Below left: Withrow and Homer Rodehaver, music director for evangelist Billy Sunday, who visited the Tabernacle in 1922. Date and photographer unknown.

Below right: Tabernacle congregation. Date and photographer unknown.

Top: Laying the cornerstone for the Methodist Episcopal South church. Several denominations united in the work of the Union Mission, but Withrow remained a lifelong Methodist. Date and photographer unknown.
Bottom: Ground-breaking became a regular ceremony as the Mission grew. On this occasion, Charleston businessman O.J. Morrison handles the shovel. Date and photographer unknown.

careless manner." Thereafter, Withrow made it a point to take a business-like approach to the Lord's work, and he later associated with religious businessmen in his rescue mission work.

It was one such businessman who started Withrow on his life's work. Colonel John Q. Dickinson, the Malden industrialist whose family was associated with Charleston's Kanawha Valley Bank, contributed the first $100 toward building Withrow's rescue mission. Founding such an institution was Withrow's dream since his conversion. At first, he had had to continue working to feed his family. But one Sunday, while walking the railroad tracks from a service on Cabin Creek, Pat felt the divine call to full-time service. On the strength of that call, and with the support of Dickinson and other backers, he resigned his job and opened the Union Mission on an October Sunday in 1911. Withrow's brother vehemently objected to the Mission's first home, a former house of prostitution at the corner of Clendenin and Lovell Streets; nonetheless, he became the first person converted there. The same busy week had brought the birth of son Pat B. Withrow, Jr., and Withrow considered has family to have been doubly blessed.

Pat Withrow had never seen an urban rescue mission before this time, but he soon came to realize that he was working in an established religious tradition. Many mission leaders had backgrounds similar to Withrow's. Jerry McAuley, 19th-century founder of the American rescue mission movement, was an Irish immigrant and the son of a counterfeiter. McAuley himself was a reformed thief. He was first converted to religion while serving a term at New York's Sing Sing prison, through the efforts of preacher Orville "Awful" Gardner, also a reformed criminal. McAuley later back-slid to sin and crime, but he eventually re-converted. He founded McAuley's Water Street Mission in New York in 1872, and later started *Jerry McAuley's Newspaper* to promote the mission movement. The Charleston Union Mission still mentions McAuley in its publications.

The heart of the rescue mission idea was that religion must minister to physical as well as spiritual needs. This was particularly true in dealing with the "down-and-outers" roaming the streets of any sizable city. Such transient men — and early missions did serve males primarily — would be brought into the mission and given a bath, food, and shelter. In return, grateful recipients of aid would be expected to listen respectfully to the mission workers' religious message. Pat Withrow sometimes summed up this philosophy as "soup, soap, and salvation."

The original Union Mission building was in downtown Charleston, a few blocks from the Elk River. Nearby, in the old Triangle section, was the city's red light district, a center of prostitution and related vice. Pat Withrow was offended by having such neighbors, and he launched a campaign to "clean up Charleston." He first sent his wife and other church women to attempt to hold prayer meetings at each house of ill fame. The lady visitors found only two out of 136 prostitutes willing to voluntarily change their ways, and

A Meal at the Mission

By Kathy Megan
Photographs by Steve Payne

Writer Kathy Megan and photographer Steve Payne recently visited Crossroads, the Charleston Union Mission's downtown shelter for transient men. There they were given a tour by Crossroads director Roger Mullins and were introduced to current residents. Megan stayed for supper and herewith reports on her conversations with the men of Crossroads:

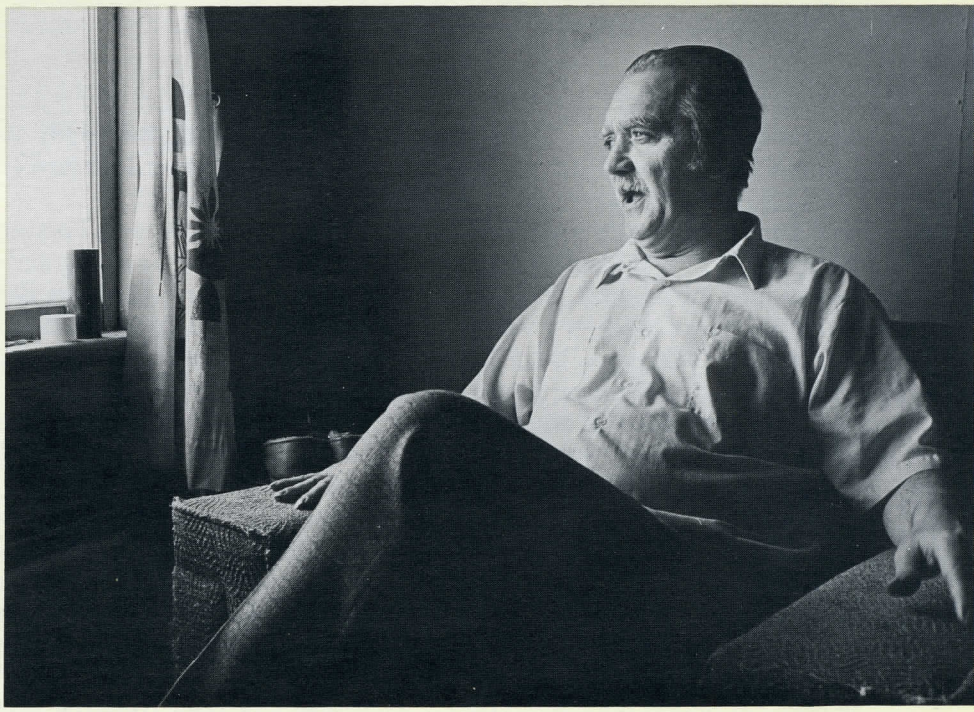
A little force-fed religion is a small price to pay for a meal of macaroni and canned corn and a warm bed.

That was the unspoken consensus at a recent evening meal in the steamy dining room of the Crossroads shelter. As some 60 men paused for prayer before the filling fare, a wiry man with sharp eyes enjoined them: "If you are not interested in our church services, there is nothing we can do for you. If you stay with us you must attend our church services."

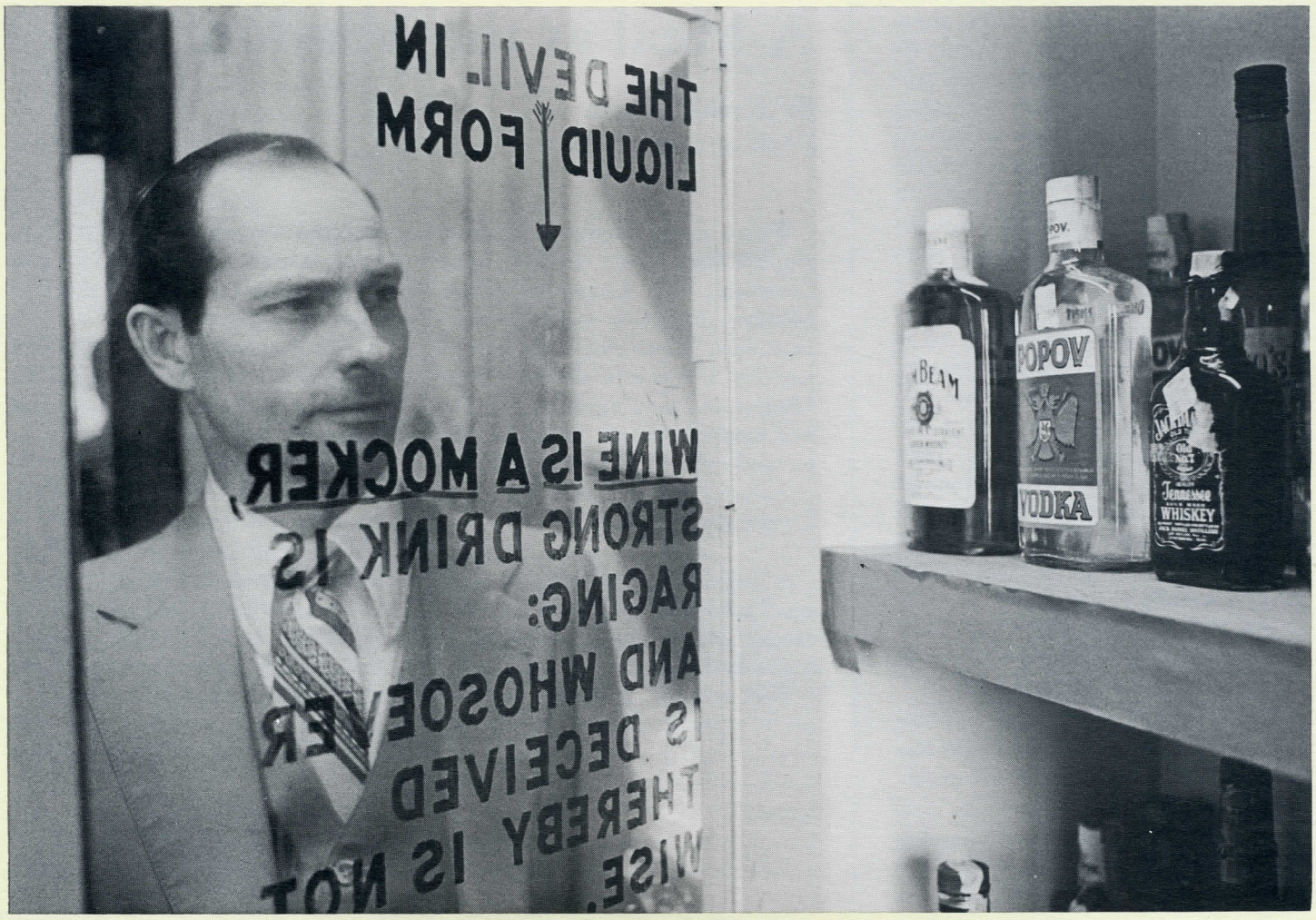
The Reverend Roger Mullins, director of the shelter, is steadfast, but not without charity on that point. A man who misses one of the four weekly services at the shelter will not be barred from the next meal if he is contrite.

The men who come to the Union Mission's shelter in downtown Charleston may stay for only a meal or for the rest of their lives. Their first three days are free. After that they are asked to pay $3 a day, or they can earn their stay by working for the Mission.

In the dining room there is a sense of lives sustained on survival tactics. Folding tables are set with



"I know which side my bread is buttered on," Paul Skeen says of Crossroads. "This place is a sanctuary for me."



The Reverend Roger Mullins, Crossroads director, looks into the shelter's liquor cabinet. Bottles are filled with colored water.

mismatched silverware. Old mayonnaise and mustard jars serve as salt and pepper shakers.

"I know which side my bread is buttered on," said Paul Skeen as he spooned into dessert, a coconut pudding. "This place is a sanctuary for me." Skeen, a large man with a politician's charm, is one of the 15 men who live at the shelter permanently. He arrived six months ago when he became sick after knocking around the streets of Charleston for 20 years.

"I was a landmark on Summers Street," Skeen said.

The 52-year-old man never held down a job, which he blames partly on a childhood bout with polio. Though he was fully recovered by his teenage years, his family supported him for years and didn't expect him to get a job.

"Jobs were just a game I played," Skeen said. "One day I wanted to work in a factory, the next day I wanted to be a grocery clerk...I could talk my way into any job I wanted, but then I'd fizzle.

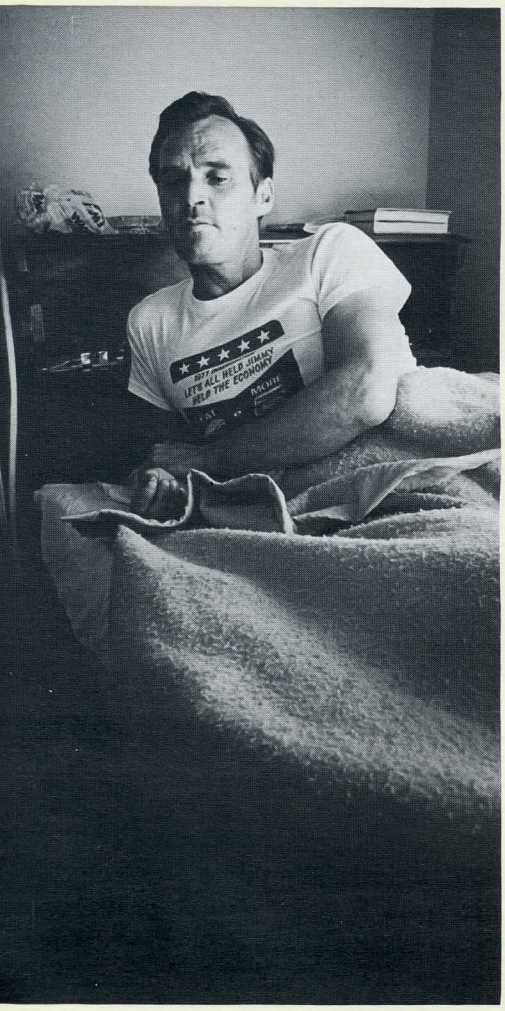
"I was immature, unmanly, and cowardly," he said in a tone a bit short of remorse.

When his parents and relatives died, Skeen was left to wander the streets, checking into "Ford and Chevrolet hotels" in the evenings and stumbling into weeklong drunks.

"Now I've been thinking about my old age," he said.

Though he was raised by "fire and brimstone" Baptists, Skeen said, he had long since fallen away from religion when he arrived at the mission. "I kind of embrace the religion here," he said. "When you think nobody cares about you, it keeps you alive."

Some men squirm under the regimented religion, strict ban on liquor and profanity, and a required daily shower. But most say it is good for them — even those who find themselves the object of Mullins' justice. Frank Payne, for example, twice slipped in his resolve to regain his sobriety at the mission. The first time he was drunk he refused to leave the shelter when Mullins required it. He



Frank Payne was twice ejected for drinking, but says, "Reverend Mullins always took me back."

was upstairs on the second floor when the police came in and took him to jail for a few nights.

One the second occasion, Payne said, a "stool pigeon" told Mullins that he was out drinking. Payne knew Mullins would be waiting for him at the front door. He slipped up the back fire escape into his room.

"Next thing I knew the reverend was in my room telling me the police were downstairs waiting for me," he said. "All I'd done was play two games of pool and drink two beers."

Still, Payne is convinced the shelter has been the best break of his life. "Reverend Mullins always took me back," Payne said, "and I'm thankful for that." He is now set on returning to work as a carpenter.

The Union Mission's primary goal is to "reach the lost for Christ," Mullins said. "We offer food and shelter, but we are not a hotel, motel, or social service agency. We are a rescue mission."

And of all the evils from which man must be rescued, Mullins said, liquor has the greatest hold. A sign on a glass case in his office warns in Bible verse, "Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is Raging." Inside the case are liquor bottles filled with colored water, resembling the appropriate alcohol. The idea is that residents who see the same bottles of liquor outside the office will be reminded of the religious verse as well. "Liquor will devour you," Mullins believes. "It is truly the Devil in liquid form."

When Mullins came to the shelter two years ago, his policy was to suspend any man suspected of being under the influence of alcohol for 30 days. He has since softened in that respect. "Now I tell a man he must leave, but I'll keep my eye on him while he's on the street," Mullins says. "When he looks like he's straightened up, I tell him he can come back in.

"We rescue these men from a lot of things," the preacher notes. "They have been through the school of hard knocks. I'll put my arm around them and say: 'God loves you. God loves you through me, and I couldn't love you without Him.'

"You'd be surprised how that melts them."

With dinner finished, the men file into an adjoining room, a makeshift chapel, to await the evening service. Later on, local bakeries will deliver unsold donuts and other baked goods for snacks.

"This is run by true Christians," Paul Skeen figures. "Anyone who isn't inspired by it, isn't all there. Besides, the food is excellent."

Brother Pat turned to more vigorous measures. He employed a detective agency to gather evidence, and through a series of lively public meetings shamed local officials into bringing indictments. At Withrow's request, only four of the prostitutes were actually jailed, and the others were released on the condition that their houses would be shut down. One of the jailed four, "who had gained from her vice considerable money and beautiful diamonds," was later converted by Withrow in an emotional meeting in her cell.

The well-publicized prostitution crusade made Pat Withrow a force to be reckoned with in Charleston politics. He reported that "the political powers of both parties" became his enemies, but in fact he had had powerful establishment allies in the fight. Attorney J.M. Payne organized and served on Withrow's "clean up" committee, and Colonel Dickinson and others continued to support his religious work. Members of the wealthy Abney family donated over 800 acres of land on South Park Road in Charleston, and Mrs. Alex Ruffner contributed property worth $8,000 to the Mission.

Withrow lost no time in putting his affluent backers to work in building up the Union Mission. The initial building drive had modest aims, involving only the construction of a suitable new home building for the Mission. Over the years, however, construction goals would become more ambitious. The campaign eventually developed a double focus, with construction planned both for downtown and later for South Park Road. The South Park Road property gradually evolved into the modern Mission Hollow, with a children's home being first built on the site.

The construction program required large sums of money, and Withrow did not hesitate to take his solicitations to the top, consulting first with God and then with human leaders. When a 1914 money crisis required $60,000 for the new Mission home, Withrow donned his $15 suit and boarded the train to Washing-

The Pat B. Withrow Chapel at Mission Hollow. Photograph by Steve Payne.

ton to present his case directly to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. Brother Pat found a roomful of men waiting to see Bryan, some of them diplomats with hats "as high as water buckets," but (by promising to take Bryan's private secretary to lunch) he managed to slip into the Secretary of State's office. Bryan, known for his populist "Cross of Gold" and "Prince of Peace" speeches, was a religious man, and he was reportedly brought to tears by Withrow's story of need. Unable to come to Charleston himself, he suggested that Withrow invite the Vice President instead.

Vice President Thomas R. Marshall's schedule proved to be more flexible than Bryan's, and Sunday, May 24, he was in Charleston on the Union Mission's behalf. He was met at the train by a committee including Withrow and former governor William MacCorkle, and he stayed at MacCorkle's Sunrise mansion during his visit. In his Sunday afternoon fundraising speech, Marshall had high words for Pat Withrow, comparing his work to that of Christ: "Jesus first set men on their feet and then gave them the wherewithal to take care of themselves. This is...what Pat Withrow and the Union Mission are doing." Two years later, in a re-election campaign speech in Charleston, Marshall remarked that he was glad to be back in "Pat Withrow's town."

Withrow considered Marshall's 1914 visit to be "the greatest day of my life since the day Jesus saved me," and he recalled it as a turning point in his fundraising efforts. Money poured in over the following weeks, much of it in donations of several thousand dollars each from interested businessmen. One oil man alone contributed $15,000 to the work. The construction contract was awarded to a builder, and in due time the Mission moved into its new home.

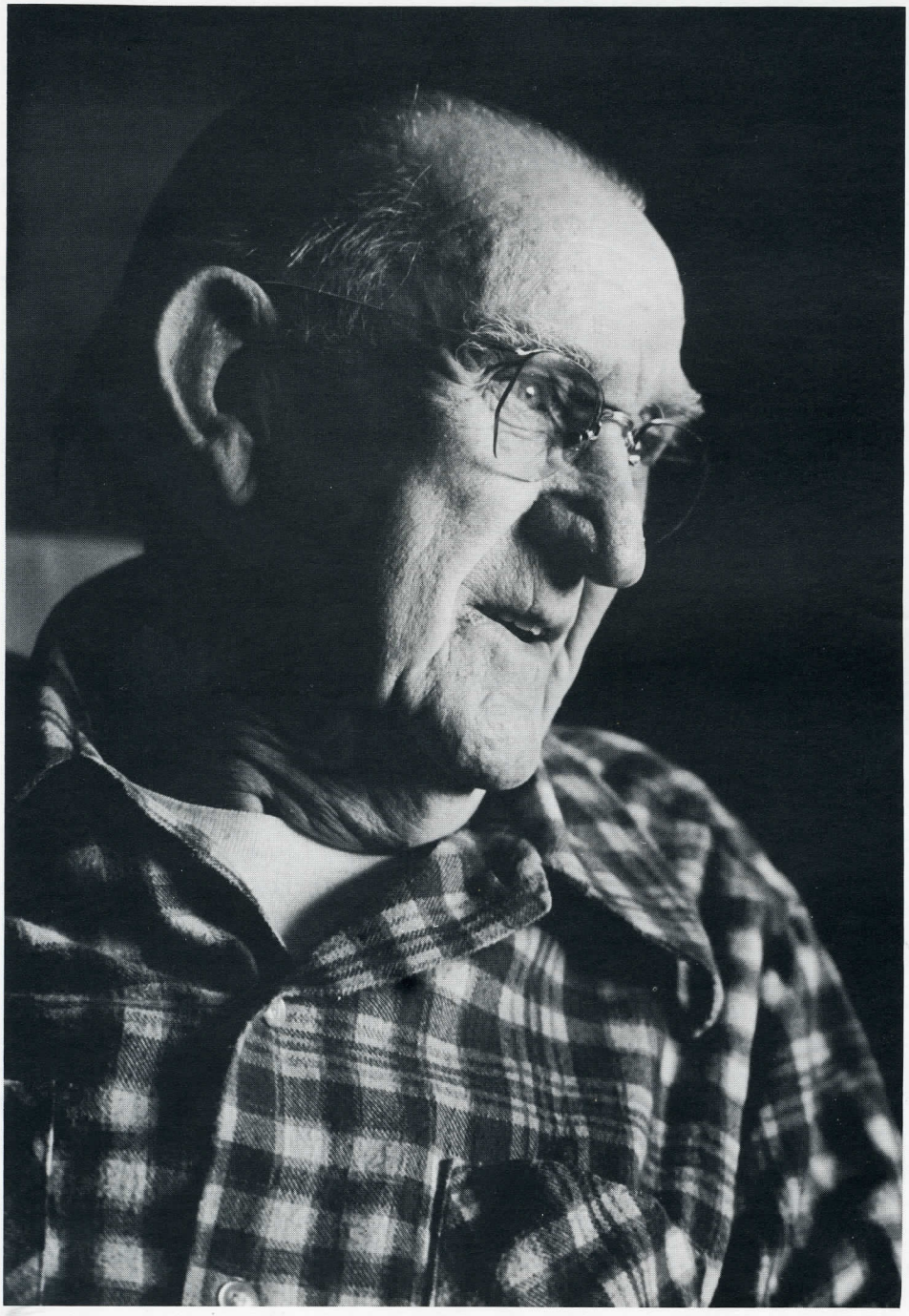
The Union Mission continued to build over the decades, with the center of operations gradually shifting across the Kanawha River from downtown Charleston to the South Park Road location. The downtown buildings were eventually demolished in highway construction and urban renewal. Now, only the Crossroads hostel is in the central city, at the corner of Summers and Quarrier Streets. Along South Park Road in Mission Hollow the Mission now maintains Brookside Children's Home, the Hilltop home for the elderly, the Bargain Store and warehouse, and general administration offices. The founder is remembered in the Pat B. Withrow Memorial Chapel, an impressive brick structure of modern design.

Pat Withrow's spirit is still in the Mission's work, perhaps especially at Crossroads, though Brother Pat himself has long passed from the scene. He had made it a practice to celebrate the yearly anniversary of his conversion, and in 1957 he observed his 50th such "spiritual birthday." At 76 he was in declining health, and the year before he had surrendered active control of the Mission to businessman-evangelist Clyde Murdock. Withrow continued to serve on the board of directors but, knowing that his remaining time was short, he prepared a farewell statement. In November, 1957, he died, and his statement was released to the public. "I have fought the devil for 50 years," the departed preacher told his friends, and he characteristically asked them to spend their money on the work of the Charleston Union Mission rather than on memorial flowers for its founder.

Towing Coal
Francis E. Wright, Riverboat Captain

By Ken Sullivan

Captain Wright at home in Saint Albans.



"That's all I ever done. I wouldn't know any other life," says Captain Francis E. Wright of his years on the rivers of West Virginia and nearby states. Captain Wright's home in Saint Albans, Kanawha County, is filled with boating memorabilia, and at 82 he remembers his life on the water perfectly. He recalls that he went to work in 1914, at the age of 16. He began his river career on the docks at Dana (now Port Amherst), near Charleston, but spent most of his working life on the big towboats on the Kanawha and Ohio.

Coal has always made up most of West Virginia's river freight, and it was coal that Captain Wright moved. Then as now, the bulky mineral demanded cheap transportation, and there was nothing cheaper than slow-moving barges, at least where mine and customer were both reasonably close to navigable waterways. The barges were chained together in groups known as tows — though they were pushed, rather than towed — and herded to market by powerful riverboats. As a captain, Wright was responsible for the safe guidance of boat and barges over hundreds of miles on each of the hundreds of trips he made until his retirement in the early 1960's.

The choice of an occupation was not a difficult one for young Francis Wright. He grew up on the banks of the Kanawha River in the town of Buffalo, Putnam County. The Wrights were an old and respected family in Buffalo, remembered by one neighbor as "the kind of people

Captain Thomas C. Wright, father of Francis, in a photograph by his wife, Mame. Date unknown.

who make a town better just by living in it." Buffalo was a river town, and the Wrights, like many other residents, made their living on the water.

Francis Wright's father was a river captain, and *his* father before him. In fact, the family's experience dates back to flatboating days and, by one count, 140 Wrights have worked the river in some capacity. "We kept it in the family," Captain Wright now recalls. "My grandfather, William Penn Wright, was the first river captain licensed by the government, back before the Civil War. Then my father went after him, and I followed my father." When the time came, Francis Wright, with no sons of his own, trained a nephew to continue the family line of river men.

Francis began his own training as a cub pilot, working under his father, Captain Thomas C. Wright. The apprenticeship system was a simple one, but it required years to fulfill. Typically, a young man began as cub pilot, advanced to pilot, and after obtaining his master's papers became a full-fledged captain. Each boat employed both a captain and pilot at all times, and the maturing officer was broken into full responsibility only gradually. "A lot of times I'd be piloting and the captain would get off a while, and I'd go on alone," Captain Wright remembers. "So when I went to take charge of a boat, I couldn't see much difference in it."

Francis Wright left the Dana docks to join his father on board the *Robert P. Gilham* in 1915. The *Gilham*, owned by Campbell's Creek Coal Company of Dana, had been captained by the elder Wright since its construction in 1901. The year after young Wright hired on as cub pilot (or "came out on the *Gilham*," in his river talk), the boat was laid up for repairs at the docks in Madison, Indiana. To broaden his son's education, Thomas Wright arranged for him to work on the *City of Louisville* packet boat to "learn the river" downstream from Cincinnati. The month spent on the *Louisville* was Francis Wright's only experience on a passenger boat, and he vividly remembers the riverboat gamblers who traveled not for transportation but for a chance at the gaming table.

Ordinarily, life on the hard-working towboats was a good deal less glamorous, consisting of routine coal delivery runs on the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers. In the case of the *Robert P. Gilham* and other Campbell's Creek Coal boats Francis Wright was to operate, regular trips were made as far downstream as New Albany, Indiana, across the river from Louisville. Exciting at first, these runs soon became old hat to a young river man.

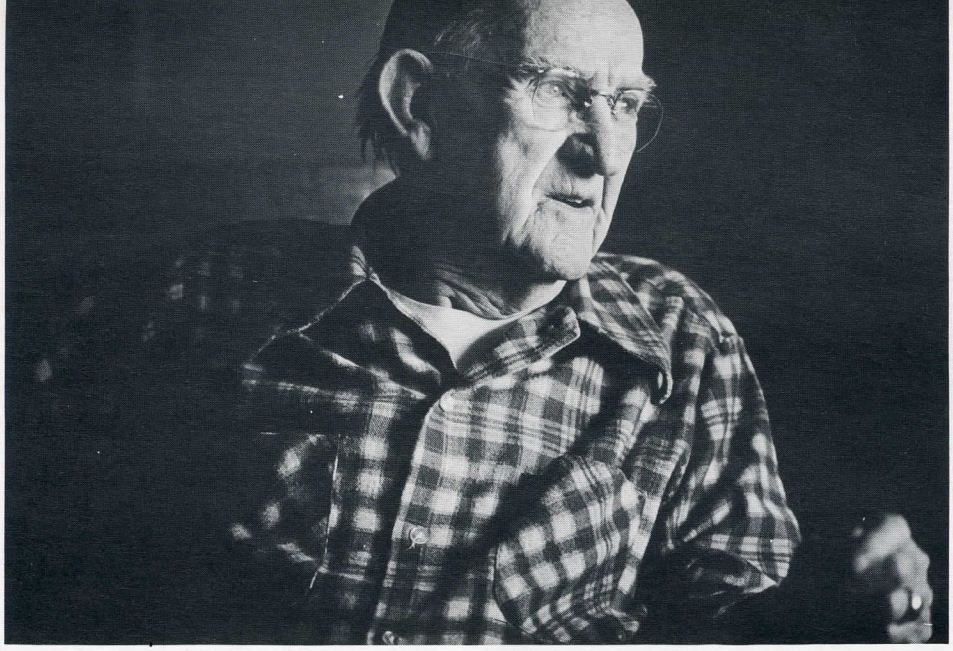
However, it was shortly after leaving the *City of Louisville* to return to his father's boat that Wright had the most memorable trip of his career. It was 1918, a year remembered for the devastating influenza epidemic and for bitterly cold weather. The *Gilham* left West Virginia in December 1917, on a run that ordinarily should have taken a few days. But Captain Wright remembers that the winter intervened and the trip took months to complete.

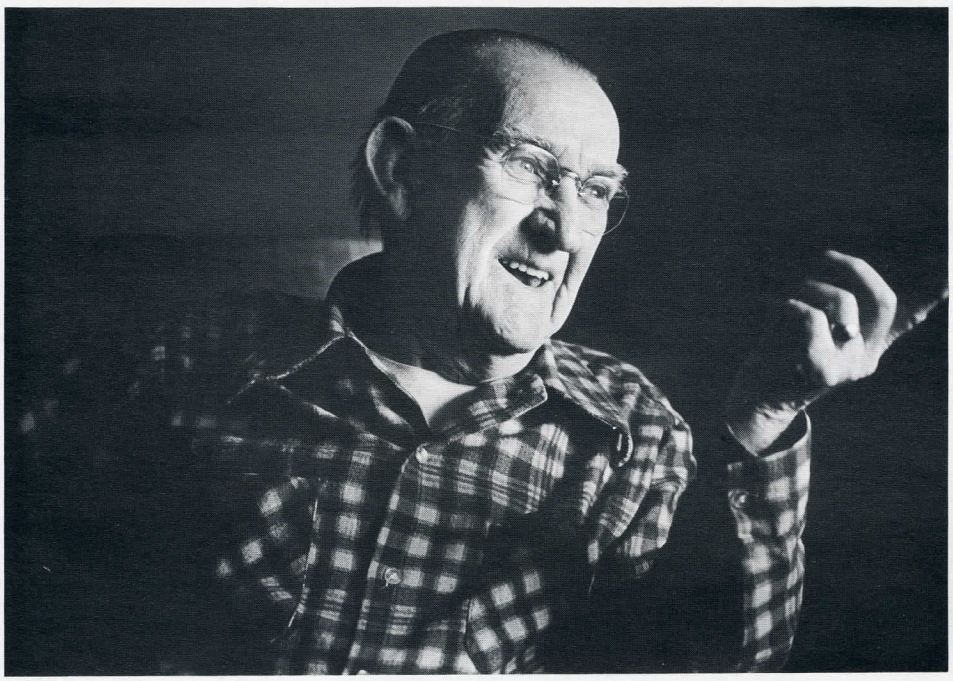
"It was big ice," he recalls. "We first started out in Point Pleasant with 12 loaded barges of coal. The river froze up and we tied off at Buena Vista, Ohio. We was there in one place 34 days."

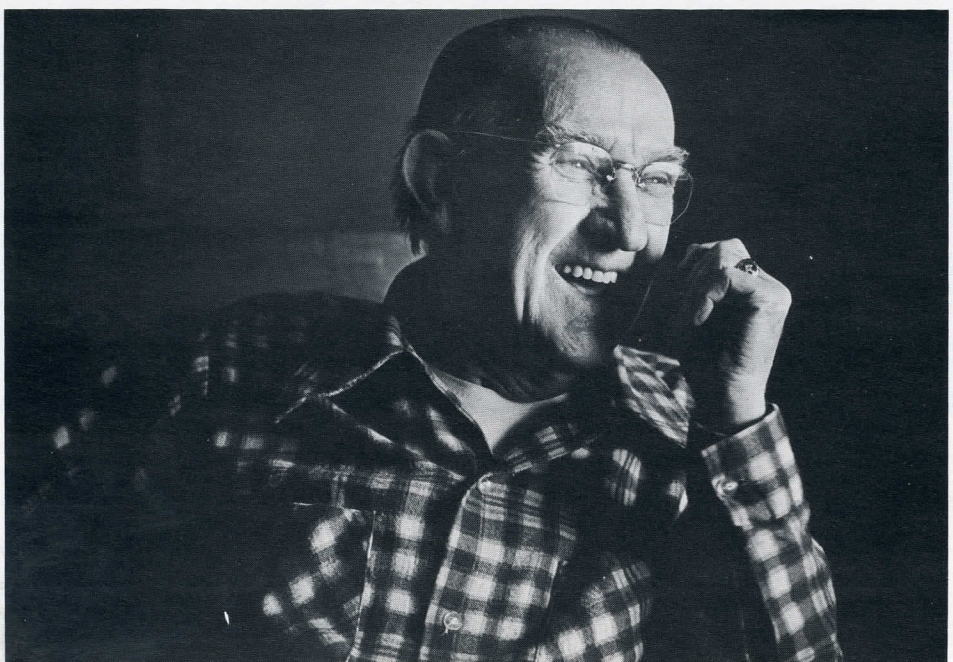
With his boat and tow of barges locked in and in danger of breaking up, Captain Thomas Wright tried unusual measures. "They was starting to build a lock there, Number 31, just below Portsmouth," his son remembers, "and we got a lot of dynamite from them. We tried dynamiting around the barges, to loosen them up, but they was gorged in there. And it was so cold every day that we just couldn't gain any on it.

"When the ice broke up, it shoved us up on the bank. It broke the boat down. The ice had shoved the bulkheads — that's the ends of them there wooden barges — in, and when it started to thaw, why they leaked so we couldn't hardly hold them!

"So, Poppy sent me out looking for a phone. Up above us, in the Scioto Valley, the ice tore down all the poles up there. I went down to a little





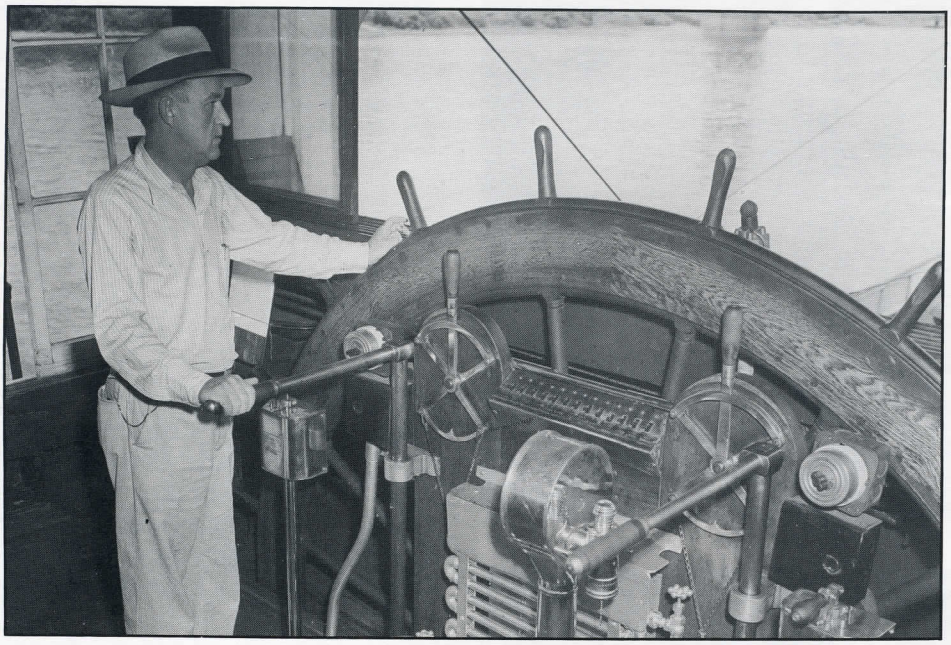


Of modern riverboating, Captain Wright says, "Everything's by numbers. The crew's all numbered, and when you order your stores, that's all by numbers." But in the old days, he says, "It was just knock down, drag out." Photograph by Steve Payne.

town across from Vanceburg, Kentucky, called Shady Springs. Well, them days the telephone, you know, would just be an old cranking outfit. We finally got through to Cincinnati. And I got a-hold of Mr. Gilham, at company headquarters, told him my father would like to have a boat to come and help us pump on them barges, we were gonna lose them. And he said, 'You go back and tell your father we're just glad his boat's still there!' So he got another boat at Point Pleasant, the *E.P. Lane*, and sent her down there and helped us pump them barges, and we got to Cincinnati.

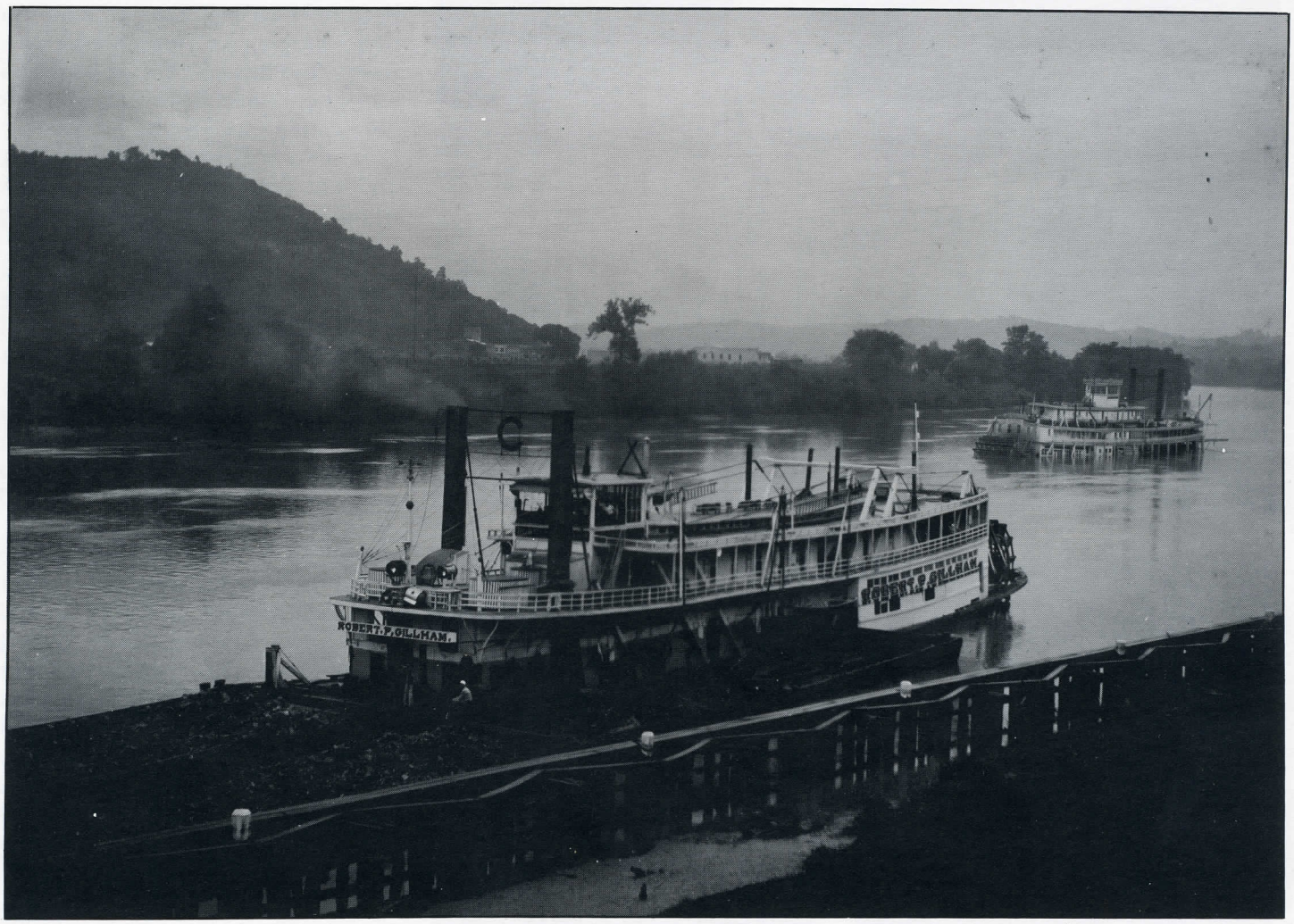
"Then the ice gorged several places, backed the river up. There was a place down below Cincinnati called Sugar Creek. The ice went down in there and backed the river up to 60-some feet! Boats went on down there and gathered up — there were 40 barges, a houseboat, two pump boats. Some of them lived and some of them didn't.

"We went along all the way to Cairo, saving what we could — what was good enough, we'd pick up and leave it at a dock somewhere. Saving barges that a-way. They had a digger boat — that's a big boat that has a clam shell crane on it — down at Evansville, Indiana. There was a big bend there, high water, and the big digger was out in there. We was there at Evansville about, oh, ten days, raising that digger. Got it up all right, saved it. We went on to where the river turned into the Mississippi, at Cairo. Anyhow, we was three months and ten days from Point Pleasant before we got back."



There would never be another run like that one, but Francis Wright continued traveling the rivers after the Big Freeze, making the regular trips from West Virginia to Ohio and Indiana. He continued to work and study under his father's direction, learning the ways of the two rivers and the complexities of operating a steam-powered riverboat, until 1920. In that year a tragic riverfront accident in Kentucky took the life of Captain Thomas Wright, and the first period of Francis Wright's education as a river man ended.

Francis Wright was not with his father on the fatal trip. Thomas Wright, looking toward retirement, had acquired a farm on the outskirts of Buffalo, and had left his son to as-



Top: Captain Wright in the pilothouse of the *Taric*, which he remembers as a "nice-built, very accommodating" boat. Photograph by Herb Heise, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, late '30's or early '40's.

Above: The *Gilham* locking at Dam No. 7 on the Kanawha, with Francis Wright piloting. The sunken *Senator Cordell* may be seen in midstream. Taylor Studio, Saint Albans, date unknown.

sist in remodeling the farm house. Francis was priming lumber for painting at the time of his father's far away accident, and he tells the story as it was told to him.

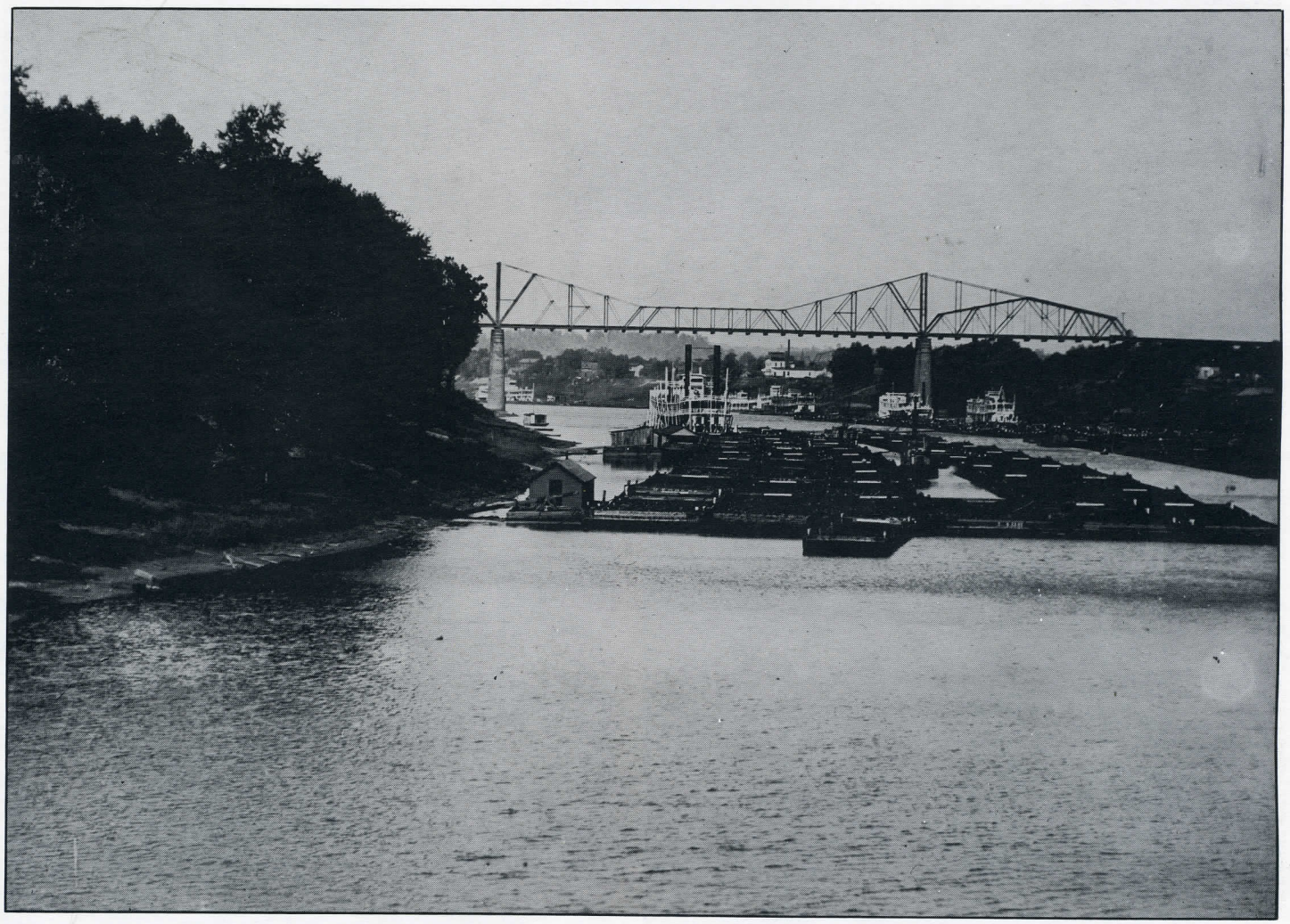
"They got to Jeffersonville, and he was asleep. The pilot and the maid woke him up, told him that they had a bad accident out in the tow. See, they had big foundation chains with rings, oh, that big — chained them barges together with a ratchet, you know. There'd be a big screw at each end, one'd go one way and one the other. One of them broke and hit a boy on the leg, and I guess it cut almost to the bone where it broke through the hide.

"Well, Poppy told them to tie the tow off over at Jeffersonville, and take the loose boat over to the Coast Guard station at Louisville. That was the only inland city there above the falls that had an active Coast Guard station. They called for a land ambulance, and the cops brought one. They come to get this boy and Poppy walked out on the levee there to watch them load him up. The policeman driver come 'round to get his bag to put in there. When he stooped over his pistol fell and hit on one of them cobblestones, and the bullet struck Poppy in the stomach down below, lodged in his spine. He died right after that. That was on the fourth of December, 1920."

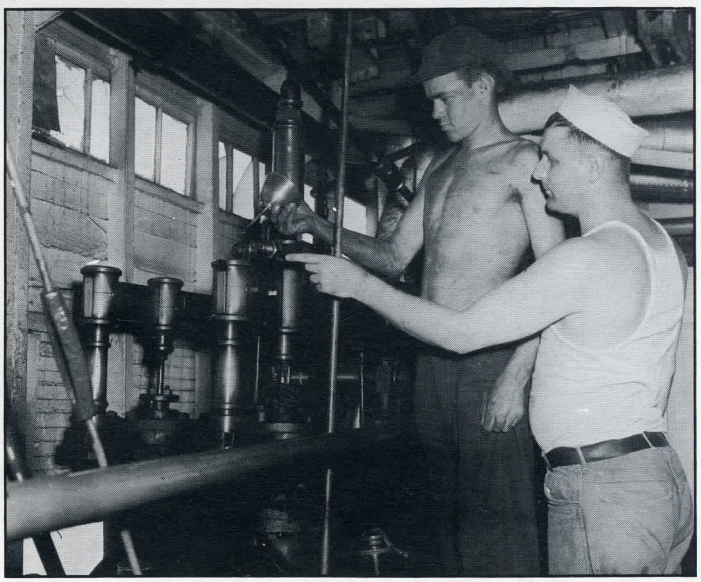
Wright had turned 21 the year before his father's death, legally old enough to become a certified river pilot. However, he had preferred to continue working with his father, and obtained his pilot's license only after the Louisville accident. He remembers that the examination process was a difficult one.

"Well, you'd go to Cincinnati, and it would take about three days. You were licensed before the U.S. inspectors, you know, Coast Guard inspectors. You had to have several years of work, and you had to have letters from a couple of active captains and a chief engineer, them days. They can get it much easier now than we used to then."

The pilot had the principle responsibility for safely guiding the river boat and its tow of barges. Consequently, he had to be completely fa-



Boats and barges from Kanawha River waiting at Point Pleasant for the Ohio River to rise to navigable depth. Photographer unknown, about 1910.



Working on the river. Scenes from the *Taric* when Captain Wright was in command, in the late '30's or early '40's. Photographs by Herb Heise, *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

miliar with all landmarks and stream conditions, and Wright recalls that each pilot was certified for only a certain river or stretch of river. "You could captain on a boat on the Mississippi or anywhere, but you couldn't pilot on it."

Some men preferred to remain pilots, as Captain Wright's nephew has done. Those who wished to advance further had to gain piloting experience before trying for a captain's license. "When you got your pilot license, that made you a First Class Pilot. Then you had to hold that a good while in active duty before you could try for your master's license. I had to pilot for a good while before I even tried for my master's license." The Captain recalls that he obtained his final papers in 1926 or 1927.

Francis Wright's first command as a river captain was the *Eugene Dana Smith*, owned by the Campbell's Creek Coal Company, his father's longtime employer. Campbell's Creek Coal, with mines in Kanawha County and headquarters in Cincinnati, shipped coal to company docks in Ohio and Kentucky, to the railroad terminal at New Albany, Indiana, and to independent coal yards. Natural gas had not yet become widely used for home heating, and much of the coal was ultimately sold to domestic consumers. Captain Wright recalls that very little went to electric utilities at that time.

"Them days, they didn't have any gas down along the river," the Captain remembers. "In them little towns, all the little shops, like dry cleaning places, all them, they'd have boilers. They had to have coal." Coal for the river towns was unloaded by "digger boats" at waterfront landings, and elevated up the river bank. "They'd have a rig, you know, where they'd pull a cart up the hill, up a track there. They'd elevate coal up there, and then they'd sell it all out to the community. You'd see all these farmers come in in their wagons, hauling coal out."

Then as now, coal was a West Virginia export. On the Kanawha it moved only downstream, with barges accumulating at Point Pleasant during the dry months to await higher water on the Ohio. The towboat's return trip was with empty barges, or no barges at all, unless a cargo of some other commodity could be picked up along the way. Government locks and dams on the Kanawha facilitated the flow of river freight, impounding water to lift boats and barges over shoals and other shallow places.

Early locks were small, and "locking through" consumed many hours of each trip. A downstream tow of

six loaded barges had to be broken up at the lock, and then reassembled at the other side.

"See, they put four through at a time, and then two and the boat. Put four down in the lock, then they'd shut the gates. Then they'd open the valves at the lower end and let that water out, to the level of the lower. Then open the gates, and they'd pull them out by hand. Or, they could crank the valves open up there on the upper end and wash 'em out. They had to open them gates and close 'em, you know, open the valves and everything, by hand."

Upstream lockages were still more complicated, since a boat often towed more barges on the unloaded return trip. "Coming up with the empties, you could bring all you wanted to," the Captain says. "But it would take you much longer to lock them, you know. You'd have three or four lockings, and it takes time to fill that pool, time to drain it, then it takes some time to open the gates and shut them. And when they'd try to pull them barges out by hand, if you have very many upstream and a little wind blowing, you'd have a lot of trouble there then. They couldn't pull them out. Sometimes you'd have to leave part of them below the lock, and come back and get them." Since the boat could only push two barges through the small locks at once, this process took much time.

The dams and locks were maintained by the federal government, with lock men working for the Army Corps of Engineers. The same arrangement exists today, but the locks and dams are much bigger and their workings more mechanized. Captain Francis Wright, although still an enthusiastic river man in his retirement, questions massive investments

Working the Kanawha with Captain Wright

Following service in the navy in World War II, young John Davis returned home to the town of Buffalo, Putnam County. His first civilian job was as a deckhand on the George M. Verrity, *under Captain Francis Wright. Mr. Davis has since left the river for work ashore, but he recently recalled his early days on the Kanawha for GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan.*

Ken Sullivan. How did you come to know Captain Wright?

John Davis. Well, I was born and raised down there where he was, in Buffalo. His whole family, his grandparents, all of them, were pillars of the town, I'd say. You know, had done a lot for it. And they were great church people. They were just good people, all-around people, the whole family.

KS And they were known primarily as a river family?

JD That's right. I guess that's all the work his dad ever done, was work on the river. Of course, everybody in Buffalo worked on the river — that was a river town.

KS When did you go to work with him?

JD In 1946, right after I got out of the service. First job I had, was on a boat with him. Deckhand.

KS What did you do exactly?

JD Well, we painted, chipped, took care of the boat. Handled lines, spliced lines, and things like that. And, of course, you had to lock — when you went into lock, split the barges up. Make up tows. You'd line up a tow according to where you were going to drop off the first one — put it where you could get at it first, and on down the line. In sequence, in other words.

Then you had to wheel so much coal to keep the boilers going, you know. You had so much that you had to wheel. A lot of times we'd wheel it all in the daytime to keep from being out there at night. You'd wheel it out of a fuel flat*, which you carried alongside. I think it was 11 foot deep, and you wheeled it up a ramp. You'd haul that wheelbarrow load of coal up that ramp, up to the top deck to the stack, stored it right there.

* In coal-burning steamboats, the fuel flat was a small barge lashed alongside to carry the boat's fuel.

KS Did you ever work for any other captains, other than Captain Wright?

JD Oh, yes. I worked for my dad. He was a captain, and I worked on a boat with him. But that was diesel boats, that wasn't steamboats. You know, it wasn't long after I went to work for Captain Wright that everything converted into diesel. That was the last of the steamboats; they were going out then.

KS Did the captain actually steer the boat when it was underway?

JD Yes. Captain and the pilot. And sometimes they had a young fellow. It was more or less in families, handed down to the son. Just anybody didn't go out and be a captain or pilot. They'd take their sons, relatives on there, and teach them the river — called the cub pilot. That was their job, you know, just learning the river.

KS There was a pilot on the boat all the time?

JD There was a pilot and a captain. The two of them might have master's licenses, but the oldest

of tax money in river navigation. He particularly fears that these public subsidies put the railroads, obliged to maintain their own track and right-of-way, at a competitive disadvantage.

Captain Wright worked well into the period of modern diesel towboats, which began in West Virginia in the 1940's, but his strongest memories are of the steamboats of earlier years. The steam towboats were sternwheelers. Sidewheel boats, though more maneuverable, did not develop sufficient power for towing, and were used instead for passenger service. Propeller-driven steamers, perfected at the Charles Ward Engineering Works in Charleston (GOLDENSEAL, July-September 1977), were not widely used, according to Wright's recollections.

River trips ordinarily took several days, and the sternwheelers were laid out for the full accommodation of the crew. Quarters for the deckhands were located aft, with those for licensed officers toward the front of the boat. Maids looked after the rooms and did the laundry for the 20 or so men on board.

Life on the river was one of hard work, with each man working two alternating six-hour shifts daily. Modern crew members work 30 days on the river, with 30 days off, but early river men enjoyed no regular time off, taking a few days between trips or enduring unpaid idleness in times of low water. Wages were not high — averaging $1.25 per day for deckhands — and the work was sometimes dangerous.

Old river men unite in the claim that a major compensation for the hard life afloat was in the quantity and quality of food offered. When asked about this, Captain Wright ex-

one with the company was actually the captain, the head of everything. The other one was the pilot. They just took turns, six hours on and six hours off, day and night. Each one worked 12 hours a day. That's the same way with the deckhands — each crew worked six hours and would be off six hours.

KS What do you remember about Captain Wright as a boss?

JD Oh, he was a good man. Good man. He just expected you to do your job, and that was it. As long as you done your job, there was no problems. I don't remember there ever being any problems on the boat.

To me he was the best one I ever worked for. I was on opposite watch with him, one time, and when I'd get off watch I'd take a bath and everything, and if I didn't feel like sleeping I'd go up there and talk to him, you know, up there in the pilothouse. Loaf around the pilothouse. We'd just talk about Buffalo — I'd known him all my life.

But, now, the mate came to me, he said, "Captain don't like for you to be up in the pilothouse." Being a young fellow, you know, I couldn't understand that. I'd just come out of the navy, and I was

John Davis recalled working for Captain Francis Wright during a February visit to the State Archives library in Charleston. Photograph by Steve Payne.

claimed, "That's the whole history of boating! You had anything you wanted to eat." Campbell's Creek boats were stocked with non-perishables at the company store in Kanawha County, with fresh groceries taken on at various places. Wright took care to provide the best. "Sometimes a manager of some kind in Cincinnati, a new one come in, you know, would fire a little note in there not to buy so much of that out-of-season stuff," he recalls. But the Captain's smile suggests that he paid little attention to such fretting from headquarters.

A river captain had full charge of his boat, and was responsible for payroll, bookkeeping, and company reports, as well as actual day-to-day work operations. Additionally, he and the pilot were the steersmen, taking turns in the pilothouse at the top of the boat. The captain might be relieved in the pilothouse by his cub pilot, when he had one, but he otherwise had little respite from his heavy work load.

The captain was also in charge of overall supervision of the crew, administering discipline when necessary. Francis Wright recalls that he never had much trouble in this regard, as he usually kept a close-knit and friendly crew from Kanawha and Putnam counties. Occasionally he did have to break up late night poker games, or round up men after shore leave. The rowdy river towns sometimes presented special problems. "They had a lot of red light districts, then. They'd go down to some of them houses and get into fights, you know." Wright says he "would always give them a first chance," and generally "just tried to be a good fellow."

used to a lot of brass anyway.

Whether the Captain said that or not, I don't know. But I did go up; I'd set up there and talk and get in the way. Francis Wright, Captain Wright, I'd talk to him anytime. You remember, Buffalo's a small town; it's like a family. Him and I'd just talk about Buffalo and old times in Buffalo, just like I go down there to his house now. He's just a fine feller, that's all there is to it. If anybody couldn't work for him, they couldn't work for nobody, I'll put it that way.

KS What boat did you work on with Captain Wright?

JD The old *George M. Verrity.* That was Armco Steel; they had three or four boats.

KS What was the run you made with Captain Wright on the *Verrity?*

JD It was up Kanawha here, Kanawha to Huntington. Up to the head of Kanawha for coal.

KS How long would that have taken?

JD About two days, round trip. Two and a half, something like that. Boy, that was hard steaming, with those small locks. Those big old wooden barges only had about — oh, I'd say, a foot gunwale on the side of the barge. And you was walking out there with a ratchet on your back, and ice, and that barge empty.... 'Course, after diesels and they got these steel barges in, the gunwales were two foot wide and there weren't no strain. But those old wooden barges, they were hell.

I was thinking about that the other day. Now, you work 30 days on and 30 days off. You get day per day. But it doesn't seem to me like you had days off then. You worked all the time. Well, in between locks you might get off. Like, I'd come into the locks up above Red House, get off and run home, then catch up down at the next lock. Guys done that. After I got on diesel boats, it got easier. We'd play cards, play poker and cards. In fact, I've played poker from Huntington to Pittsburgh and never got up.

KS How did you eat on board? Did they have a mess hall?

JD There was a kitchen, dining room. They served just like at home. 'Course, at that time you didn't eat at home like eating on that boat. They really believed in eating. In fact, when you'd come home you'd want a boloney sandwich, you'd be so tired of good food then. And that's the truth. I've come home, and my mother said, "What would you like to have to eat?" And I've said, "Mom, have you got a peanut butter or baloney sandwich? I'm tired of steak and beef and pork!"

KS Well, John, if you had to sum up Captain Wright in a few words, what would you say?

JD He was a damn good pilot. A good captain. He knew the river, and he was a good man with it. I've never met a finer person in my life, whether on the river or not.

John Davis Dies

John Davis died unexpectedly on May 30, just as this magazine was going to the printer. John had helped with a number of GOLDENSEAL articles, particularly the Captain Wright story in this issue and the Putnam County photoessay a year ago. He was a frequent visitor to the GOLDENSEAL office, dropping in for the last time on the day before his death, and was among the magazine's most enthusiastic supporters. We dedicate this GOLDENSEAL to his memory.

Wright considers himself to be a "union man," but he does think that unionization has made labor relations more complicated than in his early years. He has witnessed other changes in river work. Perhaps the most profound was the shift to diesel boats, which came while he was in his prime as a river man. Dieselization was preceded by the building of the modern lock-dam complexes at London, Marmet, and Winfield in the 1930's, under Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. These large dams raised the minimum depth of the Kanawha River to nine feet, and, together with the powerful diesel boats, increased the size and number of barges in a tow. Accompanying improvements in communications — particularly radio and radar — have made it easier to handle the larger cargoes.

When he's in a reflective mood, Captain Wright muses about the changes that modernization has brought. "You know what they do now?" he asks. "Everything's by number. The crew's all numbered, and when you order your stores, that's all by numbers. Everything's numbered. That's a quick way to work, you know.

"Now, they tell me, on a lot of them boats coming out of Pittsburgh, the meals are all prepared and brought aboard. Like on an airplane. All along the river these boats now have tug stations. They bring your water, your stores, and changes of crews, your mail, laundry — they have them all stationed along, you know. It's just like clockwork.

"And they never stop. You see, when we had foggy weather, we had to land. We couldn't see. Now, there'll be one radar on and one on standby. They never stop."

Francis Wright is not sure whether the changes are for good or bad, on balance. But he has no doubt that life on the river is not what it used to be, when river men traveled on their own hard work and perseverance. "Them days it was just knock down, drag out," he says.

Top: Captain Wright and friend Jerome Collins watch as Highway Department workers erect street sign near old Wright farm at Buffalo. Photograph by Rick Lee.
Above: Captain Francis Wright in May of this year. Photograph by Rick Lee.

"The Spark to Play Music"

Interview with Jimmie and Loren, the Currence Brothers

By Jack Waugh and Michael Kline

The miracle of the Currence brothers and their achievements in the field of West Virginia music are important elements of a story we have been longing to present for some time. With half a dozen long playing recordings of bluegrass and gospel music to their credit, Jimmie and Loren Currence are leaders in the country music field in this state. Yet they have never allowed success to change them or to alter their unshakable vision of the Almighty. And they are still close to their father, a number of brothers and sisters, and the humble origins of the family — a remote, beautiful section on the Randolph-Upshur County line called High Germany, about 15 miles from where the Currences now live in Cassity.

When we asked the brothers and the father to participate with us in an interview for GOLDENSEAL, they encouraged us to visit the homeplace in High Germany with them. "You'll have a much better understanding of us once you see that place," Jimmie insisted. And so we motored over in a 4-wheel drive Bronco on a late December afternoon, and had the benefit of their running commentary about that country and their very difficult beginning in it. The Currence family lived in the High Germany section for five generations, but they left their farm in the mid-60's. The following reflections are excerpts from a series of interviews, the major one of which was conducted with Jimmie and Loren at the home of Jack Waugh and his mother, Pauline Waugh, on Rich Mountain on December 29, 1979. We were recounting the drive to High Germany earlier in the day.

Michael Kline. It's a shame about the old house. With no one living in a place it doesn't take it long to go down.

Loren Currence. Well, it was in nice shape when we left there. In fact, when my mother and dad left it, it was in real good shape. I don't know, must be about 14 years ago. He still had some livestock on it when they lived there by theirselves for several years, and it was in good shape then.

Jack Waugh. What impressed you the most as you were growing up? Were you happy?

LC Yeah, yeah. Almost everything about a farm impressed me. But I liked to venture around in the woods, the edge of the fields, when I could go, you know — when I could get about and when I was growing up. I was very interested in wildlife, birds, and things like that. One of my hobbies was a-finding bird nests. I liked to do that. And after I grew up we had turkeys and I'd always want to find turkey nests.

MK You grew up with a lot of kids around the house there, didn't you? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

LC One died when he was two years old. And there was 11 of us grew up — I think it was about a 6-room house.

MK Did you tell me they all played music?

Jimmie Currence. Every one of us.

JW Did you all learn to play by yourselves? Nobody ever came in to teach you how to play or anything?

JC Not a note.

JW Who started you out on it?

JC Well, the oldest brother started us out. He got a violin from a neighbor. About three and a half miles down the road there was a store, and a guy by the name of Emry Zickefoose played the fiddle. And he got my oldest brother to fiddle. We didn't have no bow so we just whittled him a slim stick to use for a bow. From that day on we all started playing.

LC We sorta taught each other to play, really. We started playing, and then after a while somebody got us a guitar. And then we had a mandolin and we sorta, you know, just started playing and taught one another to play.

JW Both of your parents played guitar. Did they teach you anything?

LC No, they never taught us a thing, 'cause they didn't play in the same key that we played in. They had the guitar tuned different from what we would. And they could play, my mother could play, a har-

Jimmie and Loren Currence. Photograph by William Metzger.

monica, and of course they could play the Jew's harp, but that's all the musical instruments they had, you know, at that time.

MK Where did your mother learn her music, do you think? Can you think of the names of a couple of her favorite pieces when you were children?

LC They sang a lot of hymns, mostly gospel songs, but they played "Marching to Georgia." I liked to hear them play that on a guitar. And "Whoa, Muley, Whoa," and pieces like that, you know.

JC I think the favorite one was "Sitting Alone in the Moonlight."

MK They were pretty religious, weren't they, your parents? What did they think of dancing?

LC Well, they never did--

MK They never rolled back the rug and danced?

LC My dad was a good tap dancer if he wanted to be. But he never would approve of us going and play for dances.

MK There weren't dances in the community then?

LC No, not in the community where we grew up in. They never did have the hankering to do anything like that right around close. The closest dances ever held anywhere around here was Helvetia.

JC The most important thing to people back then, it was their church life and their religious life, because back then people didn't have what they have today. And they totally depended on their beliefs and their religion, which was really a good thing, to my opinion.

LC And then they depended on each other. Like in the fall of the year, in the summertime, they would help one another to do all their hay harvesting. They had log rollings, syrup boilings, and things like that. People worked together back then. They didn't depend on just one particular person, they depended on each other. That's the way it was back then. When you didn't have any electricity or anything you depended on oil lamps for light and a potbelly Burnside stove for heat, and it wasn't like it is nowadays. Everybody's, you know, mostly for hisself anymore.

MK Loren, one of your earliest childhood memories must have been the sound of music played around the house. Because the older kids had already got a start on it, had they, by the time you came along?

LC Oh, yeah, right. By the time we came along they had already been playing. My brother that plays the violin now — Shorty — he played the guitar some. And Carrol played the fiddle, my oldest brother. When the younger kids was born, like Jimmie and myself and my brother, we sorta teamed up and had some trio songs a-going, you know. We would learn them off the radio from Clarksburg and Fairmont. They had some old radio programs and live entertainment, and we would learn some songs, pick them out.

MK Who was on the radio then? Who were you listening to?

LC Oh, the Franklin Brothers and the Delmore Brothers, and Jake Taylor and the Railsplitters and a whole mess of the older stars. Buddy Starcher, Cap, Andy and Flip — I could name a lot of them there that used to be playing and singing on the radio in the late '30's and early '40's. We listened to every program on it and picked up the songs, you know, learned them by heart. We listened to Doc Williams and the Border Riders. I expect they were in the early '40's, too.

JW Were you playing gospel music at this time?

LC Yeah, we played some gospel music, we sang some of the older songs out of the song books.

MK Jimmie, you said that an older brother, Junior, that he died when he was young?

JC He died when he was two, he fell and bumped his nose as far as I know by my dad and mother telling about it. He bled somewhere, and it kept a-going, down internally. And he took inflammation on the inside, from the blood being on the inside. He died of hemophilia.

JW Had there ever been any cases of hemophilia in your family at all before that?

JC Not as far back as I can remember, and not as far back as my mother could remember.

MK How old were you when you realized that you were different from your brothers and sisters?

JC Well, when we started going to school and playing around. We knowed right then that we was different, messing around playing games.

MK What would happen? Would you get bruised?

JC We would get all hemorrhaged in the joint. We would be swollen up till we couldn't do a thing, just couldn't walk. Even take spells of bleeding internally. Internal bleeding could be either inside of you or it would be internally in a joint or under the skin — caused hemorrhaging like that. And then that way it would lay you up.

MK How much of an injury would it take to do that? Just ordinary rough-housing on the playground?

JC Not very much, just sometimes a little bump would cause hemorrhage for weeks at a time. Just a small bump.

JW When did your parents realize that you had it? And did they know what you had?

LC No, no, no. They knowed that our brother had died, that he bled out. And they knew that there was something wrong. My mother knowed that we were bleeders, but she still didn't know (about) hemophilia. They ain't none of us knowed, not even the doctors knew how to stop the bleeding or anything like that.

Jimmie Currence was a four-time fiddle champion at the Forest Festival in Elkins, but took up the banjo when deterioration of the elbow cramped his bowing style. Photograph by William Metzger.

JW At what point in your lives did you realize what it really was? Did you find somebody who could tell you and somebody who knew what to do about it?

LC That hain't been too long ago, Jack. It's been since we started going to the University Hospital in Morgantown.

JW You were adults before you knew?

LC Actually we were adults. I expect I was in my late 20's or early 30's before I knew anything about how severe it was.

JW And the hematologists there realized what you had?

LC Right.

What they had was one of the oldest and most dreaded of hereditary diseases, known and feared — but little understood — even in ancient Egypt and Babylon. Queen Victoria was an unsuspected carrier, and through her offspring the royal houses of England, Spain, and Russia were later ravaged by it. It became known for that reason as the "royal disease." And Jimmie and Loren Currence in High Germany, West Virginia, accountably had it. There had never been a history of it anywhere in the Currence family.

The crushing truth was that the Currence brothers were victims of a grim genetic mutation. And never in their early years did they or their parents — or even the rural doctors who treated them — realize the terrible deadly danger they faced daily. Only one in four hemophiliacs in those days (they were born during the Depression) survived to age 16.

As hemophiliacs, they are probably unique in the U.S., in the severity of their affliction, in the odds they have had to overcome, and in the degree they have excelled in the face of it. Until they were in their late 30's the only thing that really helped Jimmie and Loren were transfusions. Loren, bleeding heavily from the kidneys one time, had 16 pints of blood poured into him in a day and a half. Not until medical science learned to produce blood concentrates of Factor VIII did Jimmie and Loren experience the kind of relief denied them for the first 30 years of their lives.

To this day the disease frustrates the medical profession. One in every 10,000 people in the world has some form of hemophilia. Some 25,000 hemophiliacs live in the U.S. Not all have the severe hemophilia — near zero clotting factor — the Currence brothers have. In two-thirds of all cases the disease is inherited. But a dispiriting one-third of the time it

appears mysteriously, without warning, and without precedent, from a gene mutation. Such was the case in the Currence family.

MK It's 4.2 miles (we clocked it) into where you were raised from the hard-surfaced road. Straight down and around. You were describing as we drove in there snowdrifts that a bulldozer couldn't push without a running start downhill. That an ordinary grader couldn't push out. And you were describing your childhood as being snowed in for long periods of time before there were even bulldozers to push snow. And there you were, in a condition in which at any time you could have bled to death. Were you scared all the time?

LC No, we never give it a thought, did we?

JC No, we just lived with, well, with faith. We didn't think nothing about it. In other words, it's hard to explain, you just lived like a person that was just normal, hoping nothing would happen.

LC You would lay and suffer and cry and have a lot of pain, but after you got over it you didn't think that anything would happen.

MK What happened in the winter time when you would take these spells? How would you get out?

LC We didn't get out, we laid in there and suffered. We never went to a doctor much till we was in our teens. And if we got a sprain, a hemorrhaged knee or arm in the winter time, we stayed at home. And we stayed at home the biggest part of the summer time. After we had grown up there was times we had to hire someone to take us out in a car. That's scary, after you think about it, hain't it?

JC Like when we got up in our teens. I had one bleeding spell in my stomach and I had to go to a doctor in Buckhannon. The only thing that saved me was my brother-in-law giving me a pint of blood at the time. The doctor said it was a wonder I hadn't gone into convulsions and died right then. But I was doing fine after I got the pint of blood. It was off and on you would take a spell. Many times I would have a joint problem, and after it was all over with I would keep a-going. I'd go right on; should have been a-laying still. When you was a boy and you was active as we was, you just continuously kept a-getting hurt. But as soon as you got over a spell you still wanted to go. You still had the guts to keep a-going. I did. I mean there's something about my life and the —

LC The will.

JC The will power. I liked that farm so well. We fooled around with everything. We made rails with our daddy. We cut wood, used axes, and everything else. But *now* we wouldn't dare to use an axe or fool around with stuff like that.

MK To give an example of that, you mentioned one time going berry picking way back on a ridge. Were you with your sister?

JC I was with my oldest sister. I expect it was a good mile and a half back in there. I went a-berry picking with her and I caught my toe on a snag, or something, and twisted one of my knees, and it started hemorrhaging. Still yet I didn't know what it was. But before I got out of there I was in pain, trying to carry the blackberries. My sister would keep a-saying, "Can you make it?" I would say, "Yeah, I'll try." But before I got to the house I was with severe pain. And after I did get to the house I couldn't walk a step for days and days because my knee was a-swollen clean up. Full of blood from hemorrhaging into the joint.

MK And how old were you then?

JC I expect I was about 13 years old.

MC Was that when you laid in a chair?

JC No, Michael, when I laid in the chair I was married. Right after I got married I was a-cutting wood on a block and I fell on that hip and it started hemorrhaging. It never acted right after that, but it got so I could walk pretty good. And then I went

Loren Currence is a guitarist and singer, and manager of the Currence Brothers band. Photograph by William Metzger.

back through that country a-deer hunting after I got to going around again, and I think that made it worse. But see, I laid across a chair for about three weeks to get rest from that hip socket. It was damaged, too, in the joint, from falling so much on the ice going to school. Well, you seen where the school house was. We walked six-tenths of a mile there from home every day. I set many a time right in the school house bleeding from the teeth — just shed a baby tooth — just set there a-spitting blood right in a can and still a-trying to study.

LC I had the same trouble with my teeth. A lot of times I'd go to school, like Jimmie said, I had a lot of pride about me and I didn't want the other kids to know and I would swallow the blood. Just pour the blood. I bled with my baby teeth until I was as white as a sheet. So weak I couldn't hardly go. See, that's what I said about the hemophiliac bleeder. We don't have a bit of clotting factor in our blood.

I went one morning to school and fell on the ice. Four o'clock that evening school let out and I had to crawl almost back. I never slept for three nights with that knee. It was swollen up so tight it wouldn't bend a bit. It almost set me crazy. Didn't have a thing for pain. We didn't have no ice or anything to put on it. We didn't have no refrigerator, see, at that time. The doctors said that ice packs would help it, but we didn't have none to put on. And you just suffered bloody murder. Especially when a joint was a-hemorrhaging. The only things we would use we got from Blair products. It was called high-powered liniments, and a few bathing liniments, and we would use that on our joints.

JW What was your first contact with doctors?

LC Our first contact with doctors was when I cut my foot on a pile of glass. And I was very small. I must not have been over six or seven, if that. And they taken me to the hospital in Buckhannon. And they sewed that foot up — they put four stitches in it, never numbed it, never froze it, never put me to sleep, or anything. And I laid there and screamed like a wildcat. They couldn't hardly hold me. And they sewed my foot up. When I came back from Buckhannon it kept a-seeping and a big blue knot about the size of a silver dollar came out there about two inches long. And it just healed from the inside out, that's how long it would take it to heal. That's the only way a cut could heal — we would just keep a-bleeding till we didn't hardly have any blood in our bodies. It would eventually stop after it had a scab on it. I've bled with my nose. We've had nosebleeds just poured the blood, just keep a-bleeding and keep a-bleeding.

MK Did you ever think you were going to die when you were a kid bleeding like that?

LC No, I never give it no thought. Well, I didn't. I don't know about Jimmie, but I didn't have the realization that I was in that kind of

The old Currence homeplace at High Germany, in the edge of Upshur County. Jimmie recalls that he would hear squirrels barking on the mountainside, and "get my crutches and my rifle and go to them." Photograph by William Metzger.

shape, see? That's why it never bothered me. If I had known I would have been a nervous wreck.

JW After you did find out, how did you feel?

LC When the doctor sent me to Morgantown with an abscessed jaw, I don't know how many doctors examined me. Of course they found out what I had. They said, "Do you know what kind of a shape you are in?" I said, "Well, I think I do, I've had it long enough." They said, "No, you don't know. You're a severe hemophiliac bleeder." They said, "You could bleed to death like that (snap of the fingers)." And of course that there let the cork off. It started me to thinking. It had an effect on me psychologically — nervousness, mental, everything.

Then I was called back by a telegram after they released me. I got a telegram in the post office saying for me to report to the hematologist at the University Hospital on a certain date. Doctor Mabel M. Stevenson. She was a hematologist. I went down there and they drawed blood out of me and asked me my life history. And I said I had a brother living and a nephew living with it. And the next time all three of us went down. That was Jimmie, Malcomb Pastine, and I.

MK What year was that?

LC That was in the early '60's.

JW But there wasn't any real organized concern about you until Doctor Stevenson sent you the telegram?

LC Not a bit in the world, that's right. There wasn't no real concern about us until I got the telegram. From that time we went regular's a month come, to give blood for the lab to work with down at the University Hospital.

JW Had Dr. Stevenson been in the first group of doctors who saw you when you went for your abscessed tooth?

LC No, she found out after I left. She had never seen me. We were the worst hemophiliac bleeders that's been in the University Hospital, except one down in Philippi. The Factor VIII will not take a-hold of him. He built up an antibody to it. Our blood is down to zero factor.

MK This "zero factor" refers to the ability of your blood to clot?

LC Right. The zero factor is severe classical hemophilia.

MK If I were normal, what would mine be?

LC Well, anywhere from 70 to 80, maybe 100 percent. And if a man's got 30 percent in his blood he is counted a hemophiliac bleeder, but you never notice it until major surgery. He could go through the army. There was two of them I knew in Morgantown name McBees and they was in the army. They was hemophiliac bleeders but they wasn't severe.

JC I would say this for a fact. I would never — even a hemophiliac growing up today — I would encourage him not to be afraid. Not to be afraid or let something like that get him down, because if you let something get you down, after a while it will throw you clean into the dumps. I would encourage them to go right about their business like there was nothing wrong.

MK Well, you have that job ahead of you, don't you? I mean, to encourage? You have a grandson who you'll have to encourage a lot.

JC Yeah, that's right. I noticed a blue mark on him this evening. He's going to get them things on him before long, as soon as he starts walking. He's going to be having a hemorrhage in a joint, hemorrhage in an elbow or anywhere he falls and hurts hisself, till he gets up and knows how to take care of it, and learns to cope with it. After we got up a certain age and we was hurt so much we was more protective of ourselves. We limited ourselves to what we knowed we could do, and what we couldn't do. And you would have to learn that. And that's why I would advise them not to let it worry them.

It did worry me there at one time. It had me with a nervous breakdown almost. I was afraid to go anywhere. After I found out what I had I was afraid to go anywhere, to the point where I was a nervous wreck. I even went to the doctors. I thought everything. I seen I was a-going to die. I had death on my mind, because people kept a-telling me that — people who have since passed away — told me I wouldn't live no time: "You can't live no time because you're a

Proposed Legislation for Hemophiliacs

New legislation for hemophiliacs was brought before the last term of the State Legislature in Charleston. Introduced by Representative Jae Spears of Elkins, the bill was designed to bring relief that Jimmie and Loren Currence and other earlier sufferers of hemophilia never enjoyed.

The proposed legislation called for a comprehensive program to be administered by the State Department of Health. It would have established treatment centers throughout West Virginia to provide services to all registered hemophiliacs. All possible sources of funding for the program were to be exhausted first, including private insurance funds, Medicare, Medicaid, all government assistance programs, and private or charitable sources. But where these fell short, funds would be called up from the Department of Health.

The bill also would have established an advisory board of knowledgeable physicians, representatives of the state chapter of the national hemophilia foundation, and patients or parents of patients, to advise the Health Department on the treatment of hemophiliacs.

Although failing to make it out of the 1980 Legislature, the bill is expected to be introduced again next year.

hemophiliac." That was people I grew up with and went to school with. I was afraid to go out, I would be setting in the house all the time. So I went to the doctor and he said, "Well, did you ever stop to think that the house could cave in on you and kill you?" He said, "You might as well enjoy yourself." Of course, he snapped me out of it and I got over it. I just felt that, heck, life's life and you'll live till you die. And I figured it was a higher power, like God, would take care of me.

Pauline Waugh. Your lack of fear was your protection.

JC Right, that's exactly right, lack of fear.

LC Well, another thing that protected us, too. I can't keep from believing this. We had a praying mother, and a praying father, too. They was God-fearing people. My mother was, and so my daddy is yet today.

JC My mother, she kept alert after that one boy bled to death and she cautioned us everything that we'd do. She'd say don't do this or don't do that, try to watch and not jump like the other kids and climb trees and things like that. She cautioned us not to do that, but like boys, you know, we done that. That's why we was hurt a lot. We would go out and we were adventurous. And we would walk rail fences and we would have black and blue marks on us all the time. But we never give it no thought of being in that shape. Still, she would caution us about our condition. And we just went right ahead and did it, tried to do, what the other boys done.

LC I think she worried a little more than Daddy. Of course, I don't know. I think a mother has got more of a test. I know a father would worry too. I worried, you know, about my kids, but I think a mother's nature is to worry more. Mom was more to worry about it than Daddy.

JW What was the attitude of the neighbors and the other children?

JC Some of them was a little protective with us. You know, they would watch us. But others didn't pay no attention to us.

Home of the Currence grandparents, built of hand-hewn logs before the turn of the century, still stands. The Currence children often stopped here for "beans and cornbread" on their way home from the High Germany School, in background. Photograph by William Metzger.

LC They didn't understand it really.

JC In fact, when I started to high school — I got my 8th grade diploma from over there at the High Germany school while we was on the farm — and then I started to high school at Coalton. But then it got to the point where I couldn't climb up and down stairs and change rooms and classes. It would hurt me so bad, I would have to skip so much, it just got next to me and I couldn't take it. When we were younger a-growing up, we was hurt more and didn't have no medicine to take. If we had the medicine and that there Factor VIII we have today I think we could have went along to school and finished it and got more of an education, which would have been good. But we couldn't get it, just on account of having no medicine, no way of paying for that kind of expensive medicine.

MK You had this tremendous expense buying medicines and getting doctors?

JC It cost us a lot of trips.

LC Well, it cost a lot of trips, but we couldn't afford to pay for the medicine. There is nobody can afford to pay for Factor VIII. The State pays for that.

JW How much Factor VIII do you have to use?

LC It's depending on the hemorrhage. If it's a bad knee hemorrhage you probably have to use three units. The Factor VIII is spun out of human blood, and you mix it with sterilized water and inject it with a needle in a vein. The joint gets weak before the hemorrhage comes on. You can feel it. That's when its hemorrhaging light. And then it starts to stiffen up. If you catch it then, you're all right. But if you don't it will get bad. I've had my joints, my ankle joints and knee joints and elbow joints to start hemorrhaging and in a matter of an hour they would be a-hurting so bad

that you couldn't stand it. If you get a fast hemorrhage, look out, you're going to have a lot of pain with it, real bad pain. And the doctor said the more it hemorrhages the worse for the joint, the more it destroys the joint, the cartilage in it. We would have been in a lot better shape if we had that Factor VIII 20 years ago.

JC Oh, yeah, but there's nothing they can do with them joints now. Nothing. But it never did destroy my spark to play music. And it never will! I'll quit having the urge to play music when they put me away for good.

MK Well, we'll all be playing your records when that happens, so they won't be able to keep you quiet even then. Hemophilia is a condition that comes through the genes some way and it's carried by women. Is that right?

LC Right.

MK Do women ever get it?

LC and JC No.

MK You have outlived all the predictions that your neighbors and everybody said about you years ago. You've lived normal lives, you've married, you've had kids, you are now grandfathers. And each of you had three daughters.

JC I had one boy. He died when he was five months old. But he wasn't no hemophiliac. He just died because he took pneumonia and was too little to survive in the cold winter over there where we lived in the farm.

MK Are your three daughters carriers?

LC Oh, yeah, all of them, every one of ours.

MK If you had 100 daughters they would be carriers? All carriers?

LC Yes indeed, everyone of them carriers.

JW But if you had sons none of them would be?

JC and LC Right.

JC Now, see, Malcomb, my nephew, he's got hemophilia. Well, he's got a son.

LC He's got a son, and he's normal as can be.

JC See, my wife's no carrier of hemophilia, but my daughters carry it through my genes.

MK But then were all of your sisters then carriers? Or some of them?

LC All of them's carriers.

MK But all of your brothers were not hemophiliacs?

JC Oh, no. Me and Loren and one that died.

LC There was seven boys and three of us were hemophiliac bleeders. And four of them was normal. So it's actually a 50-50 chance. Like 50 percent chance of rain. It might rain and it might not, so that's just the way it is when a woman is pregnant with a child — if it's a bad gene or a good gene.

MK Has anyone ever suggested that your daughters should not have children?

LC Yeah, doctors do.

MK What do you think about that?

LC I say not.

JC I advised them, before they got married not to have children, because of what I had. I mean, you know, of what I've went through with and what I have experienced in my life. Of course, they've got a better chance, like I say, with this Factor VIII than I had. But still, if you can prevent suffering humanity in the world I say not.

As Loren steered his Bronco over the rutted road to High Germany, old memories were rekindled. He and Jimmie exclaimed over long-remembered landmarks — the forest alongside the road, the homeplace, the dilapidated old school house, its paint peeled and gone, old and empty and weathered.

MK What was it like, though, in the one-room school? Can you describe that a little bit? You told me as many as 45 kids were going to that school at a time.

LC All eight grades, yeah.

JC And we had a real good time. Then, you know, the older ones in the higher grades would help the younger ones.

LC Yeah, they helped out.

JC And they brought teachers in. The only way they could teach over there was to board with somebody. Most of the time they boarded with us there at our farm.

MK Do you remember a particular teacher that was outstanding in your mind?

JC Yeah, I remember Nellie Lambert. I remember Ava Nell Loudin, and Geneva Church. And Eleanor Fahrner taught me, when we went to school.

LC She lives at Helvetia.

MK Was Eleanor a pretty keen teacher?

JC She was a fine teacher. And there was several more teachers taught school in there. The school house served as our church and school activities and everything that went on. At Christmas time they'd have a Christmas play like they do in any school. I thought it was better than most schools. Back then to me it was really something, 'cause most of the time they would work up their own plays and there was people come from miles, you know, walked to see that. Them big crowds come to them and attended them. They'd be grownups take parts in it, too, as well as the kids that went to school. And they always had a Easter play and have an Easter egg hunt for the kids. And they would have eggs all over. And I never will forget they'd take the kids way out on a farm, clean back on a picnic.

LC That was the end of the school year.

JC The end of the school year. Take us on picnics a-way back.

LC All the families would go together.

JC All the families would go, and go together.

LC They would have a tremendous meal to eat, you know, they would put it on the ground on tablecloths.

MK What games did you play as a kid?

JC We had a game we called "base and banner." I don't know if you ever heard of that or not. Let's see, you teamed up, as well as I can

remember. There would be four, five get in a team and they'd be so far apart and they'd have bases and one of them would try maybe to go around the other one. And if the other one tagged him they got him on their side. And whoever got the most people on their side was the winners.

MK Did you have any special beliefs as kids? Did you tell storeis about haunts or spells or any of that kind of stuff? Or were there beliefs like that at all in the community? Did any of the older people believe in ghosts or signs or--

JC Yeah, signs. They believed in signs. Well, actually some of them believed in ghosts, especially my grandmother, and I couldn't doubt her words on a few things she seen. She told us one time her grandfather was a-walking from a place. He said there was another man with him. He kept a-saying there was a dog a-following him. And he said, "No, there's no dog there." But he saw the dog and he said, "Yeah, I see the dog." And after they came to this graveyard this dog just went out and disappeared. One of my grandmother's sons, my uncle, he could almost detect somebody when they died over there. I don't know if it were ESP or what. But when they was a-going to tell him somebody died, he said, "Don't tell me, I already know that somebody died."

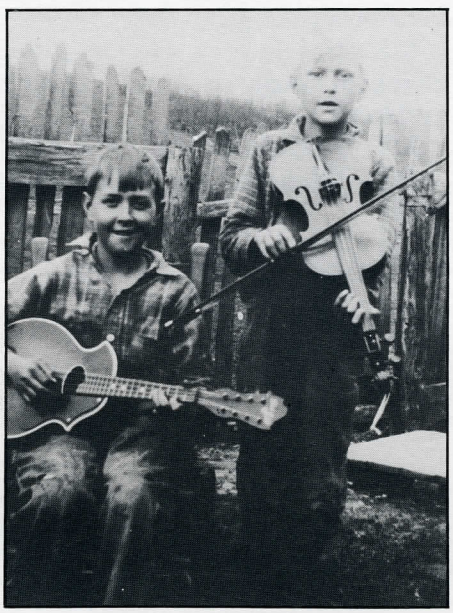
Of course, they had a big old bell over there in the church. Every time the church bell rung you know somebody died. Unless it was Sunday morning. But if somebody died they rung that church bell so many times in that community where we lived.

That same uncle had a cat. And my grandmother told him one night, said it was time for him to put the cat out and go to bed. He said, "No, I'm going to say up a little bit more." She said, "Now, you got to get up early in the morning. You put the cat out and come to bed." On this particular night he stayed up a little bit longer with the cat and she kept a-telling him to come to bed. She finally told him for the last time. (You know they only told kids back that time one or two times and that was it.) And he knowed to come. "Well," he said, "Tom, I'll put you out, but I'll never see you no more." And he never did see the cat no more. She said he never did, and I never knowed of her a-telling lies.

MK Did he have any other kinds of special powers? What about healing? Did he do any healing or were there healers of any kind in the community?

JC Well, there was a woman over there--

LC They tried, they were wanting somebody in the community to try to stop the blood when one of us was cut.



The Currence brothers began playing their music early. Date and photographer unknown, courtesy of the family.

JC They never did stop it. She claimed she could heal, and she had the power, if any little kid was sick she could heal them. But I never saw it happen myself, I never really seen it. And I never saw no ghosts as they spoke of.

LC Only one time. I remember that just as well as yesterday. We were very small. And we went outside for something. Jimmie can remember it. It was before World War II and everybody, you know, they thought it was those northern lights. You've seen the northern lights shoot up. But anyway, this one particular night, I think it was in the 1940's — early '40's — we went out and I said, "Look up at the sky, it's awful peculiar." I said, "It's very interesting." It was red, just as red as it could be, and the sky was in a quiver, like this.

JC Just looked like jelly.

LC Nobody would believe it. The people through that country was scared to death. And it was just a-quivering like this all the time. It just looked like red jello in it. And some of them even seen the American flag in it. The younger generation, they just don't believe that. But that was the only time it ever happened. And right after that World War II broke out. It was weird. It scared people. There was people that got out of bed and run and everything. They thought the world was a-coming to an end. But it was the sky. I mean not in one spot; it was the whole sky. And it was no northern lights.

JC The sky was lit up. You know how jello looks when you got it in a pan, if you chop it up. But the heavens was just in a pure quiver. This one guy had long johns on and he run from a-top that hill, he was so frightened, he run from the top of the hill way into our home hollering and screaming. They just thought the whole heavens was on fire. I mean it was all over.

MK Do you remember any other strange goings on?

LC You heard some tales a-going on about music going through the skies. They heard music, people did, go over their houses. They said they heard music go over the house just in the sky.

JC Well there was some weird things happen, I mean, back when I was in there. Things that I never saw happen today.

LC I don't know whether there was some kind of an animal, but there was a thing that hollered back in them days, of a night. They thought maybe it might be foxes. But it would scream just like a woman.

And I heard it many of times. It would make cold chills, make the hair stand on your head. One time it would scream one place and the next time it would be on the other hill. It was that quick, that's how quick it was.

MK Well, what were some of the other tales people told?

JC Yeah, a woman that went to a church there died from some cause and they buried the body. And my grandmother said the next day or two they had to move her or something, you know, and put her somewhere else. They didn't want her there. But they had took her up and they opened her up and she wasn't dead. And she lived 15 years after that!

JW You fellows grew up, both of you, and became fiddle champions. Is it safe to say, Jimmie, that you're probably one of the best fiddlers in this part of the country? How in the world did you become that good? At what point did the music start to become very important to you? How did you get to the caliber that you could go and win four Forest Festival fiddle contests in a row?

JC Well, I knew that after I had the bleeding that I was going to have some activity in life that I could pass the time away, you know, for a hobby. I had to have something to do, and I just put my head to it that I wanted to play music. I worked very hard at a violin. I practiced on that fiddle all the time, at night, in my spare time. After I won them championships I got this bleeding, see, in my arms. And then I got till I couldn't use the fiddle that good anymore. I didn't let that whip me out. I went to picking my banjo.

MK It's as though you could see it coming or something?

JC Right. I did. I saw it coming. It was just there, something you wanted to do and you can't let it get out of your system. It's just something that grows in there. Like a man that's worked in the mines all his life, he wants to be there until he retires. I like music because it brings something to me, especially if I'm singing and playing anywhere for people. I like to make people happy with music. It makes me feel good. That's why I like music and that's why I'll continue to like it as long as I'm able to pick it. There's something about music to me: when you're in the worst down-hearted, in other words, depressed, I can get my banjo and pick a good old gospel tune on that thing and it will start to spark again. It takes all that away. And that's why I like to play music.

MK Well, did you have the same kind of experience, Loren?

LC Yeah, same thing. I always liked music, always liked to fool with it. It's just like Jimmie said, it's sort of like we have an incline to play music. It was a part of you.

Buddy and Loren Currence, at ages eight and ten. Buddy now plays with the Currence Brothers Band. Photographer unknown, courtesy of the family.

JC Of course, we can't leave our sisters out either.

LC No, we've got brothers and sisters played.

JC Our sisters sang with us. All of them sang, from the oldest one down.

LC And then our mother sang with us.

JC Mother sang with us in church. We sang with her a lot of times, lots of places and all over in churches, even from the oldest one to the youngest. And we all sang together.

LC After they got married and moved we had to reorganize, you know. Our nephew, Malcomb Pastine, he played rock and roll. We got him to play the bass for us. And then we organized our band.

JW Malcomb is a hemophiliac too.

LC Yeah, he's just like us.

MK Was the Currence family thought to be very special in the music line or were there other musicians around the community that you played with at all?

JC Well, there was a few, but not that many around where we lived. We was sort of special to that community, because they totally inclined for us to come and sing in church from the time we started. In fact, all the Currences over there, like my uncle, see, his girls and boys sang with my oldest brother before we got big enough to sing. We was something special through that part of the country. After we got to getting older and when we was able to go, people would call on us to sing in different churches all the time. Then I met Woody Simmons when I was young enough to date girls. I got to going over to his restaurant there at the 76 station in Mill Creek. We played around with him a lot when we was kids growing up. I fiddled a lot of times for him. Like the Log Cabin Inn. Played down there with him. But of course that's been years ago.

MK Did you used to hear Woody on the radio when you were home?

JC Oh, yeah. We listened to him all the time. Daddy always pulled the chair up close — they were on at a certain time. I think it was in the evening, about supper time. Mom would always have supper for us. We would all gather around the old battery radio to listen to him. Then Woody got to knowing us, too, you know. He got to coming over and then after we knew each other we got to fiddling around together, too, all of us.

MK Well, apart from the enjoyment of music, has it also been a

source of income for both of you?

LC No, if you had depended on it for a living I would have starved to death a long time ago.

MK How in the world have you made it, financially speaking?

LC Well, nobody would hire us. And we couldn't get a job at manual labor because we couldn't stand it. I even tried to get school bus driving jobs. My doctor wouldn't allow it — Dr. Stevenson. But I went ahead anyway and tried to get a job driving a school bus, but they wouldn't hire me, said it was too big of a risk. And we can't get a drop of insurance or nothing. We thought we would get life insurance, but they turned us down.

JC People's Life. It's been tough, Michael — on Supplemental Social Security. It ain't that much, but it's the only little bit of regular income we have. Maybe if somebody donates you a few dollars when you are out in church.

MK For singing?

JC Singing. But you don't count on that all the time, 'cause months and months go by and you don't have no place to play music.

MK But in another way of looking at it, you've had a pretty rich life, haven't you?

JC Yeah, I would actually say my life has been a benefit to the world. I've made a lot of people happy.

LC Yeah.

JC In fact, we've sang at funerals that I didn't think I would be singing for. I thought they would be singing at mine. I always questioned my mother when she was alive. I said, why did I have to be this way and my other brothers didn't have to be? "Well," she said, "you have brought just as much joy to me as they have, or more, because you do a lot of singing in church, whereas the others don't."

JW Were there other musicians, styles of music, that influenced or had an effect on you that changed your music in some way?

JC Definitely, Jack. When, well, in the early '40's when I was a kid, I always listened to the Grand Ole Opry. Every time I would hear somebody like Smiley and Reno play it always put a spark into me, where I wanted to play music. And it had an influence over me. Every time I would hear Reno, Smiley, or Bill Monroe singing, especially some of them old songs like "Danny Boy," I always had an urge to play and sing. There was a spark there.

Music to me is something that is caught, just like building a fire. It built a fire under my life to hear some singing and hear good music. It was so much joy for me to make another person enjoy it, like the older people when they get to smiling and a-tapping their feet. That means that I want to keep playing as long as I can pick music. It's a gift, a talent that was give, and I won't bury it as long as I'm able to fool with it. When I was low in the hospital at times, there was times I wanted to give up, you know, but then my wife and my kids would come, I would think of my banjo at home. And I would think of being home with them, and then I would think about getting back to where I could get that banjo. And that always brought life to me again.

When I thought of the music and the family and the kids, I think that's what kept me a-going, really. Just like I told my wife this evening. We was a-talking about 25 years together. She was reading me something from the proverbs, how a woman was a backbone of a man. "Well," I said, "you are the backbone of me, plus my music." I like my music and she has never kicked on me a-playing. You know, she has never been like some: "You ain't a-going this place and play music," or "I don't want you a-leaving." Naturally she hates to see me be gone when I'm away at times. But still it's a duty that we have to fulfill, having a gift to playing music. Just like if this man is desperate to hear good music, I ain't a-going to turn him down. I ain't a-going to turn him down, 'cause I like to play the music if it makes him happy. I do that for people on the CB radio, too. They like to hear it. And I'll play them a tune.

PW What part does CB play in your life?

JC Well, sir, in fact me and Loren has made a lot of friends at that there radio. It plays a big role. I get in contact with people I like in Buckhannon that I don't get to see much. And then somebody on there will holler back and say, "Well, I would like to hear a good banjo tune!" It always lifts them up.

JW Your handle is "Banjo Picker?"

JC Right. The first radio I got I just thought, well, I'll pick a banjo. I hollered at Troy Simmons, been paralyzed for 30 years from his waist down, shut in. He just hollered back, "Hello, Banjo Picker!" I said, "How did you know that was my handle?" "Well," he said, "I figured that was what you would go by, Banjo Picker." And he knowed my voice, you know, and of course that's what I used as a handle on the CB ever since.

JW Larry Groce told me one time that you played together with the first violin of the Charleston Symphony. He said that was a fairly memorable occasion. Here was the West Virginia fiddle champion playing with the first violin of the Charleston Symphony. Can you remember that and describe what it was like?

LC Yeah, up at Elkins, remember?

JC Yeah, that's right, I remember playing. Right, we played together with him. I played one tune was called "Bill Cheatham." He played off the notes, you know, and everything, and I played "Leave Something Special" with him and I played "Maple Sugar." He was amazed at the tunes I played on the fiddle. Of course, he was a good violinist from down at Charleston. He was a really fine fiddler.

JW Would it be possible for you to assess your role in the music of West Virginia?

JC Well, part of it would be knowing that I had a lot of will power and knowing the people that seen me at the point of death. And

The Currence Brothers Band. From left to right: Marvin Currence, Loren, Malcomb Pastine, Buddy Currence, Jimmie. Pastine is a nephew of the brothers.

then I would come right back and go to playing the banjo again. I think it had a big influence over a lot of people, me a-getting right back a-playing the music. If that's a-telling you anything, Jack.

Just like Woody Simmons, for instance. You take him there when he had that open heart surgery they didn't think he had a prayer. But he had a strong constitution. And look at him today. He's still after the fiddle, just a-yanking on the bow. He had a strong constitution to play. And the same way with me. When I was in the Morgantown University Hospital, that's been four years in February, that's when I had that real bad bleeding spell, real bad. Now I was really depressed, you see, when I went down there, 'cause I was a-getting ready for surgery. And they didn't think they could get the bleeding stopped without surgery. And the doctor just plain out and told me, "Mr. Currence, it's a matter of life or death."

Well, they did, they got it under control, but they knowed I was pretty well depressed with it. The doc he comes up and he tells me, "No, you're not well enough to go home." "But," he said, "you can bring your banjo down in the hospital if that will help you out." I said, "How can I play with an IV in my hand?" He said, "We'll fix that right up."

So my wife brings the banjo down. I go in there set up in the bed, I got to feeling good. And I picked the banjo and before it was over with I had the whole hospital, the doctors and all, came right down to my room, and people would shut off the television to listen at me pick the banjo. Even a woman up in her years was there. They wheeled them down and they set there and they enjoyed it. And the doctor he had a guitar. The next night he brought the guitar over and he played with me, and sat on the edge of the bed and played. And they really enjoyed the banjo. They could hear it up the halls echoing. A lot of the doctor staff come right there, listened at me play. Now most hospitals wouldn't allow it, but they allowed it in there. Just put me right on top of the world. It wasn't long until I was back home playing the banjo again.

Special thanks to the Randolph County Creative Arts Council for funding the transcription of this interview, and to transcriber Sheila Amorese.

Remembering the Currence Boys

After talking with Jimmie and Loren Currence, Michael Kline sought out two people who had known them from childhood. Teacher Eleanor Fahrner and father Jacob Currence remembered the difficulties and the joys of the hemophiliac Currence brothers' early years, and the special responsibilities of the adults in charge of their upbringing.

Eleanor Fahrner Mailloux, of Helvetia, was one of several teachers who taught in the High Germany school when the Currence brothers were growing up there. She often stayed with the Currence family. Jimmie remembers her as "a fine teacher," and she remembers the brothers with equal warmth.

Michael Kline. You came from the Swiss community of Helvetia nine miles away to teach at the High Germany school?

Eleanor Fahrner. Yes, my brother blazed a trail for me and he felled a tree across the river, and I crossed the river on a log. It was a very interesting sort of transition there, you know. I came from Helvetia, which in those days was even more a European culture than it is today. I came into High Germany, the little settlement which was only nine miles away, but was an entirely different culture. It was like Elizabethan, something that you would read in a novel.

You know, it's too bad at that time that I didn't have a tape recorder, that I could have recorded some of the music and some of the songs that they sang — back in the late 1930's, the first year that I taught. I remember that they would get up in the morning and sit on their porches and get together and they would play guitars and sing. They loved music. And this would go on maybe for two or three hours.

MK Could you comment on the hemophiliac condition of Jimmie and Loren Currence?

EF Yes, really when they were in school it was a very grave concern to me, because if they bumped themselves they would get a tremendous bruise. You could see the blood would come right to the surface of the skin. And of course they were always out with an axe chopping in the yard, or with a pen knife, and I really lived in fear: No transportation, no doctor. So it was always a concern, those children. But I must say they were lovely people, and very good to me and always looked out for me. They would beg me to stay, even though the weather was nice that I could walk. They'd say, "Oh, please, Miss Fahrner, why don't you stay overnight?" And I visited all of the High Germany people, and stayed overnight with them and visited in their homes.

MK That was a nice arrangement for the teacher to be that involved.

EF I think it was nice for everyone because — you know, the assessor came through there, but who else went to High Germany? So this was outside influence, even though it was only nine miles away, and it was always something a little bit different. They were very good to me, and I suppose being someone from the outside it meant something to them, too. It was a two-way thing.

They never seemed at all depressed. They were happy people. I would attend the revivals and lead the singing — though I couldn't sing, I was supposed to do this anyway. And I helped take care of the sick. You know a teacher in those days in a very remote rural area was considered to be a nurse. You should know a little about medicine, and you were expected to visit the homes. And if there was some problem you were expected to intervene or to assist. That was just the thing that you did. This was part of teaching.

MK How do you suppose the Currence boys ever made it?

EF I don't know. I was gone for many years and when I came back the first place I visited was over to High Germany. I took my family over there to see the school, and didn't know at that time that the Currences and everyone had moved out of High Germany. And then I found out that they had moved to Cassity and I went to visit them. It was my first pilgrimage, when I came back, was to go and visit those people. So you see, I had a real thing for them.

Jimmie and Loren Currence's father, Jacob, is 81, in excellent health and living in a house not far from his two sons in Cassity, Randolph County. It is a matter of pride to him that he and his wife, Allie, had 12 children and had a doctor in attendance but one time — when their youngest, Mary Jean, was born.

MK Of your 12 children, how many were hemophiliacs?

Jacob Currence. Three of them. The second boy, Junior, he lived about two years and a half.

MK Did he injure himself?

JC Yes, him and the older boy, Carrol, was a-playing and he bumped his nose. He never would stop [bleeding]. Of course, the doctors never knowed nothing about it, they didn't know what to do. But he bled to death. Bled right out.

MK And how long did that

take, a day, a couple of days?

JC Yes, he'd been a-bleeding right smart and they hadn't sent for me, but he'd got awful bad. They come after me at the camp Friday morning. And I told my wife when I got home Friday, I said, "I'm afraid, Allie, that it's too bad for Junior." I noticed when he'd get down he'd go to walk across the floor, he'd just go like this (makes his hands sway back and forth). And on Saturday, he died on Saturday.

MK But this condition had never been anywhere in your family before, had it?

JC Oh, they was nobody knowed anything about it nowhere!

MK Or in your wife's family?

JC Oh, no. They was no doctors, them old doctors at Clarksburg nor nowhere, ever heard tell of it. Jimmie and Loren were at Clarksburg one time, they'd been down there before to these young doctors, and this old doctor said if they ever saw one (a hemophiliac) he'd like to see it. So they went downstairs and got that old doctor and said, "There's some of these hemophiliac bleeders up here if you want to see them." He'd never heard tell of it. They was the first ever I heard tell of.

MK Did Jimmie or Loren ever bleed to where you thought you were going to lose them?

JC Oh, yeah, Jimmie one time in Buckhannon, I didn't think he'd live any time. He had bled out and we took him to the Catholic hospital down there. They said they'd have a blood donor and to get him there just as quick as we could. And do you know they fooled around there till 11 o'clock and Jimmie said, "Daddy, I can't stand it no longer, I'm bound to die...I'm going to get out of here and if you fellows can get me to the other hospital maybe I can get some relief." And when he got up, that there big drops of sweat just stood on him and he just fell over, Jimmie did. We got him over to Dr. Rusmisell's then, and Rusmisell hustled around there and tried to get some blood out of Jimmie for a blood test and he couldn't get a bit. And Rusmisell just told me, "I don't see how he's a-living!" And they got blood in him there, I think a pint or two of blood about noon, and he went down in the evening in the mess hall and eat his supper. I watched it. You could see that red a-coming in his face, that blood a-going. That saved his hide.

Father Jacob Currence at the gate to the old homeplace. He sold the farm to move to Cassity in 1964, but now figures, "I'd been so much better off to have stayed."

MK The Lord must have had a hand in it, too.

JC He did! That's exactly the reason why they're here. My wife — I lived with her 53 years — she continually prayed that in some way before she had to leave this world there would be appropriated some way to stop that blood, to help them with that pain. It come along.

MK Factor VIII?

JC Yes, sir. It come along. And don't you bet she was tickled!

MK You think the Lord has a purpose in that kind of witness?

JC Yes, sir! And these boys — now they're in bad shape as far as that's concerned, and we know they are. They're handicapped. But they ought to be glad. Them boys might have been to the army, they might have been in the pen, they might have been killed. God knows best. But they can walk, they go places, they can sing, they've got a home. What else could they expect? It's marvelous how they can do. I don't know, the way they do in church, it's hard to tell how many souls they might win for Christ. Well, if me and you just wins one that means something. You can't tell, they might outlive my [normal] boys.

Ramps

By Yvonne Snyder Farley
Photographs by James Samsell

Jody Snyder of Richwood says she's only been eating ramps for about 20 years, but she adds that her husband, Wetzel, has been eating them "forever." That would not be unusual for a life-long resident of Richwood like Wetzel. The ramp is found throughout the Appalachian region and spring ramp feeds are common for rural West Virginia, but there's no doubt that Richwood is the ramp capitol of the world. However, it's not known if any other community would be interested in wrestling the title away from this Nicholas County town.

It's in Richwood that ramp fever reaches its zenith around the second weekend in April, when the wild mountain plant emerges on the nearby slopes. It's in Richwood that one experiences the wisdom of such mountain maxims as, "Ramps make men equal" or "Moonshine and ramps don't mix." The ramp, known more formally as rampson, or by the Latin name *Allium tricoccum*, is cultivated for gourmet cooking in some parts of Europe. In the mountains around Richwood it grows wild, free for the digging.

And as wonderful a place as any to enjoy the eating and digging of ramps is with the Snyder family atop the Snyder building overlooking downtown Richwood. For the Snyders have the appreciation of the West Virginia delicacy and the hospitality that goes with it down to a fine art. "Come on up," said Wetzel to a party of ramp-eaters just arriving in Richwood. He stopped sprinkling grass seed on his back lawn and said, "I was just about to fix myself a ramp sandwich." (Later Wetzel was to reveal that he also likes ramps and scrambled eggs, macaroni and cheese with ramps, and ramps in tossed salads.) And it seemed as soon as one got out of the car, the pungent and unmistakable odor of the mountain leek came wafting through the air from the Snyder building.

Not every native of Richwood shares Wetzel and Jody's enthusiasim for the ramp. One old friend visiting their home shook his head, thought about ramp eating, and then said, "When the good Lord put a smell on them that way, he didn't intend for you to eat them." He and Wetzel remembered earlier days when school teachers sent ramp-eating children home because of the lingering odor. Actually the two men thought that many a classmate ate ramps intentionally just to get a spring vacation. For it is the telltale ramp odor that lingers with the diner — for about three days — which leaves the whole subject of ramps open for so much humor.

There are both public and private ramp feeds. In Richwood there's a famous public meal at a Richwood school. Now sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce and the National Ramp Association, this ramp feast began informally in the 1920's. Outside the school a visitor is greeted by ramp diggers there to sell to those who come from all over the country just to eat ramps in Richwood. Willie Wise and his son Tony were there

Left: D. Wetzel Snyder. Photograph courtesy of *Beckley Post-Herald.*

with 44 bushels of ramps that they said were selling well. Wise said his wife taught him how to dig ramps and he's been at it now for 20 years. His wife and son eat them — but he himself has never tasted one. "They say that they taste like green onions," he offered with a smile.

Across the parking lot from Wise's truck was Glen Facemire of Richwood, who has been digging ramps for 55 years now. Facemire traditionally dug the ramps for the big feast until it got to be too much for him, he said. Several years ago Facemire, who is a hunter and fisherman, too, began canning ramps in vinegar because "you want them winter and summer." Ramps aren't hard to find, he says, but the hard part is "getting to where they're at." Called "Ramp Man" on the CB radio, Facemire said he picked that name because, "I always figured if you'd pick a stinking handle no one would take it from you."

Inside the building the odor of ramps literally assaults the nostrils. Mabel Hinkle was in the kitchen directing operations. She said this year they had 90 bushels to cook. Merlin Trickett of Richwood, owner of a local produce market, dug the ramps on the South Fork of the Cherry River and, along with family and friends, spent a month cleaning them. All the ramps were frozen until the big event. In another part of the kitchen Waneda Facemire was removing six bushels of limp ramps from a fryer-cooker. The ramps were carried over to the serving line to be dished out to a widely varying crowd united by ramp fever.

"It is a good excuse to get out of New Jersey," said Jan Clark of Medford Lake, New Jersey, when asked why she'd returned for the fourth year to attend the Feast of the Ramp-son. Her son John was eating ramps but she pointed out, "You'll notice I'm not eating them. One of the girls in the office told me if I came back smelling like I did last year she'd kill me." The previous night she said they'd camped at Spruce Knob. She didn't know where they'd camp that night, but she said she was sure she'd have to sleep apart from the others.

Ms. Clark wasn't the only one who came to the ramp feast and didn't eat ramps. Jennings "Muleskinner" Talbert of Oceana comes every year along with his wife and two other couples. What does he think of ramps? "I hate them! I just eat the

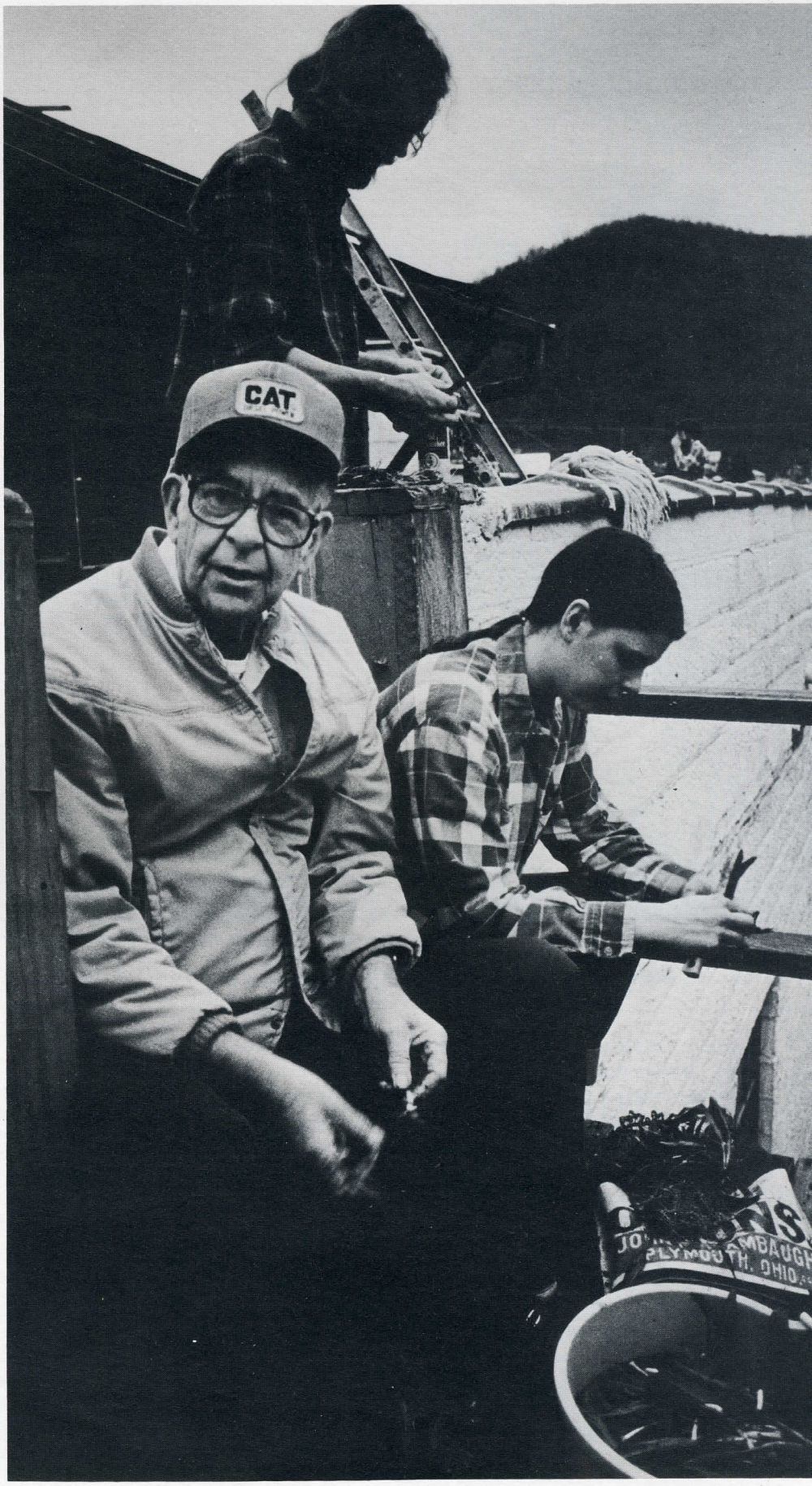
Left: Fred Mullens and Jane Snyder cross footlog to reach their favorite ramp spot.

Below: Jane Snyder digs ramps near Bear Run.

Right: D. Wetzel Snyder and daughter Jane clean ramps outside their Richwood home. Fred Mullens stands in background.

beans." He was prompted by friends to add that he does always eat just one to be sociable. The only defense against ramps, they say, is to eat them yourself. He came all the way from Oceana because, "There's no place like Richwood." He added (with the enthusiastic support of his friends), "We also give the Moose Club a little of our business."

Meanwhile, Bill Butler, executive secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, was greeting the crowd and talking with reporters. He said that attendance was down this year — 870 rather than the 1200 or so at previous meals. He attributed the decrease to gas prices and a depressed economy. He mentioned there was a telegram from the governor and one from Senator Jennings Randolph. Nothing from Senator Byrd — the



Above: Willie Wise and son Tony offer ramps for sale in Richwood. The Wises dug 44 bushels of ramps this year.

Right: Waneda Facemire and Mabel Hinkle deep-fry ramps for the 1980 Richwood ramp feast.

Iranian Crisis must have taken priority, Butler mused.

Eating ramps is a West Virginia tradition, and the National Ramp Association says it was the Indians who introduced the leek to early settlers. In pioneer days it was the first edible green after a winter menu of dried beans and salt meat. Jody Snyder, a former elementary teacher, said she never minded that her pupils came to school reeking of ramps. She was happy to see the children eating greens, she said. Many believe that ramps are a kind of spring tonic and that the plant is full of vitamins — including an abundance of vitamin C.

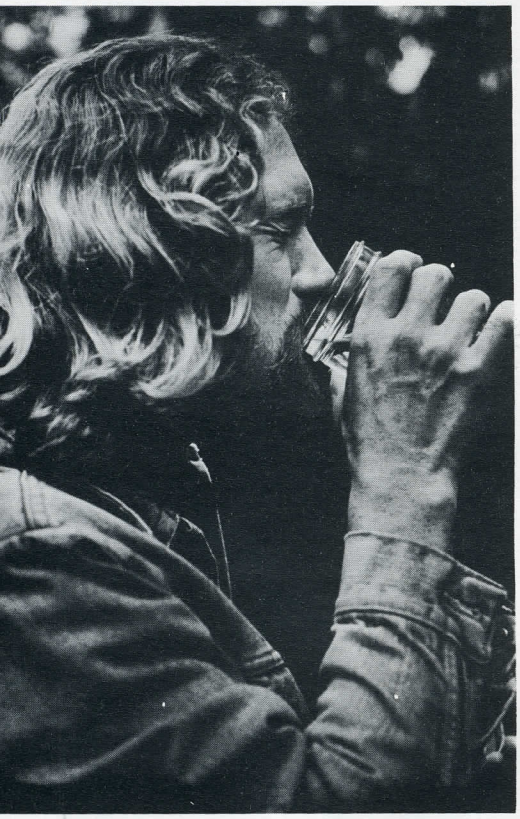
The greatest ramp escapade of all times — and the one which put Richwood on the map as "Ramp City" — was when *West Virginia Hillbilly* editor Jim Comstock put ramp juice in the ink of a special edition to announce the ramp feast. The story goes that the post office was not appreciative of such ramp-boosting adventures.

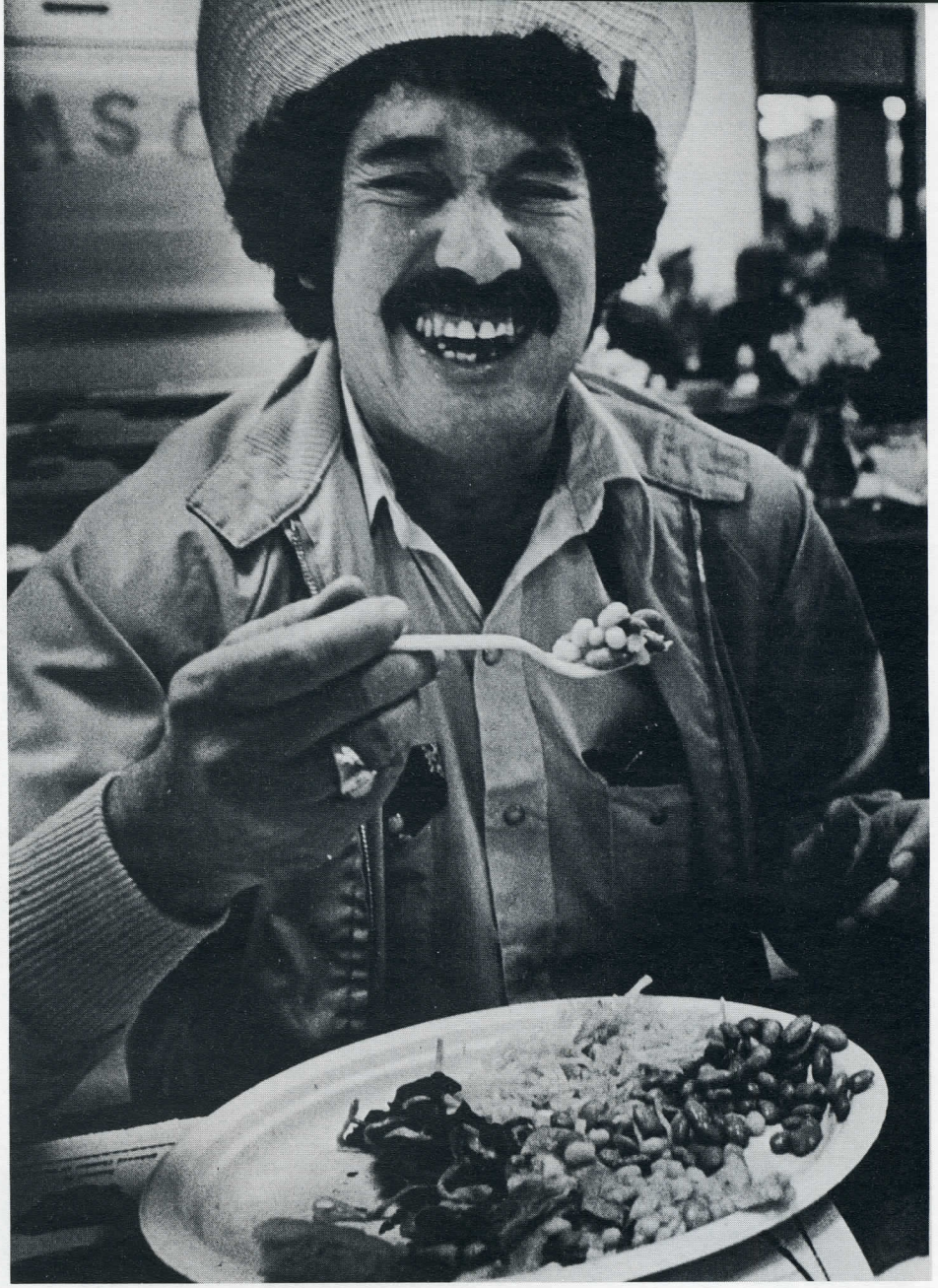
Around 3 p.m. it was time to return to the Snyder's home and to team up with daughter Jane Snyder and her friend, Fred Mullens. Despite a slight drizzle they led an expedition to dig more ramps. At 24, Jane hardly fits the stereotype of a crusty mountaineer ramp digger, but she has been going with her father into the woods for ramps "as long as I was big enough to tag along." So it was up the North Fork of the Cherry River to a spot near Bear Run. There the searchers abandoned the car and climbed down a muddy hill to a creek. Then, to reach the Snyder's secret ramp spot, it was necessary to tread a slippery log which had conveniently fallen across the stream. On the other side they followed an old railroad bed and climbed up the mountain.

Jane and Fred were armed with ramp hoes — just short hoes with white painted handles to make them easily found — and an empty onion bag. Jane quickly spotted the long

Below: Fred Mullens.

Right: Darrell Cutlip traveled from Charleston to enjoy ramps and beans in Richwood.

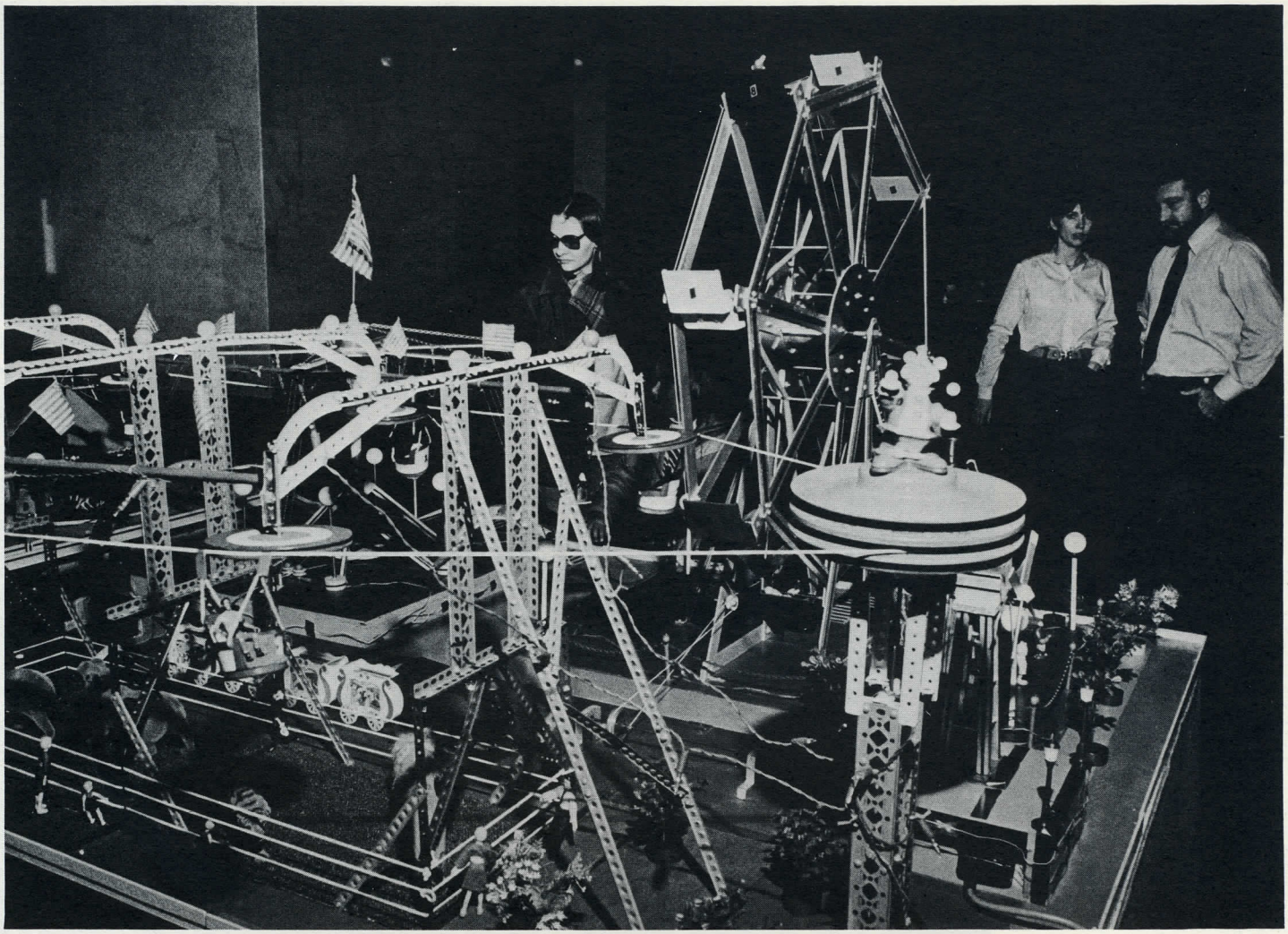




broad leaves of the *Allium tricoccum* sprouting up through the wet leaves. "I always get hold of a bunch, pull on them a bit, pry them up and put them in the sack," she said. Then she and Fred started digging. Ideally, the ramps should be about 10 to 12 inches high. Jane said that it seemed to her that ramps grew more often around little streams such as the one that trickled down the side of the mountain near where she was digging. Mid-April is the best time to dig ramps and cook them, she said, because later the plant would bloom and be too tough to eat. After half an hour or so of digging Jane figured there were enough ramps to supplement those Wetzel had already cleaned back at the Snyder building. On the way back through the woods Jane stopped and dipped the onion bag full of ramps into the creek to clean off some of the mud. It was also a handy place to wash hands.

Back home, Jody already had the potatoes peeled and sliced, the bacon frying and the beans cooking. Wetzel and the others cleaned the ramps in a bucket of water outside on the high wooden steps which led down from the roof-top porch. No way would a professional bring that many raw ramps into the kitchen to pollute the home. Rather, Wetzel had a hot plate to fry the ramps in bacon grease, which is crucial to the taste of fried ramps. It was growing dark now and from the Snyder's home a few lights on the mountains that surround Richwood could be seen. In the kitchen, Jody's half of the meal was in full swing.

The meal was perfectly balanced to complement the main attraction. The Snyders had homemade cornbread, fried potatoes, beans, and fried ham. Some people like sassafras tea with their ramps, but this family prefers cold beer. The ramps are cooked and eaten whole, leaves and all. The taste is delicious. "Don't tell anyone," said a pregnant guest who was heartily eating ramps at the dining room table. "There won't be any left for us if people find out how good they are."



Culture and History Commissioner Norman Fagan (right) and exhibits coordinator Sharon Mullins examine carnival.

Carnival

Photographs by Rick Lee

One of the most popular recent exhibits at the Cultural Center in Charleston was a miniature carnival, built by Glenn Teter of Elkins. Mr. Teter's carnival was on display for several weeks in December and January, attracting the fascinated attention of children and grownups alike. Like other viewers, GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan was filled with questions about the workings of the intricate toy, and he took the occasion of a trip to Randolph County to arrange a visit with the carnival's builder. The following comments by Mr. Teter are edited from a longer conversation.

"Well, back in 1972 when my grandson, Glenn Ashton Teter, was born, I decided I'd like to make a little action toy for him. And at that time I just constructed the merry-go-round. Then I got the idea to construct some more, and I set out to make the Ferris wheel. And so forth. But then my son's family moved to Texas, and they were unable to take these things with them. So, consequently, I reinherited it, and I put it downstairs in my basement on my Ping Pong table. From time to time I got more ideas, and that's how it started.

"My grandson is now seven years old, and when he comes back to see me, why, that's the first thing he wants to do. He says, 'Grandpa, let's go down and play with the carnival.' The last time we were down there about 45 minutes, and he didn't want to come back up. And I said, 'Now, Glenn, we must go back up and visit with your mother and father. We can't stay down here and play all the time.'

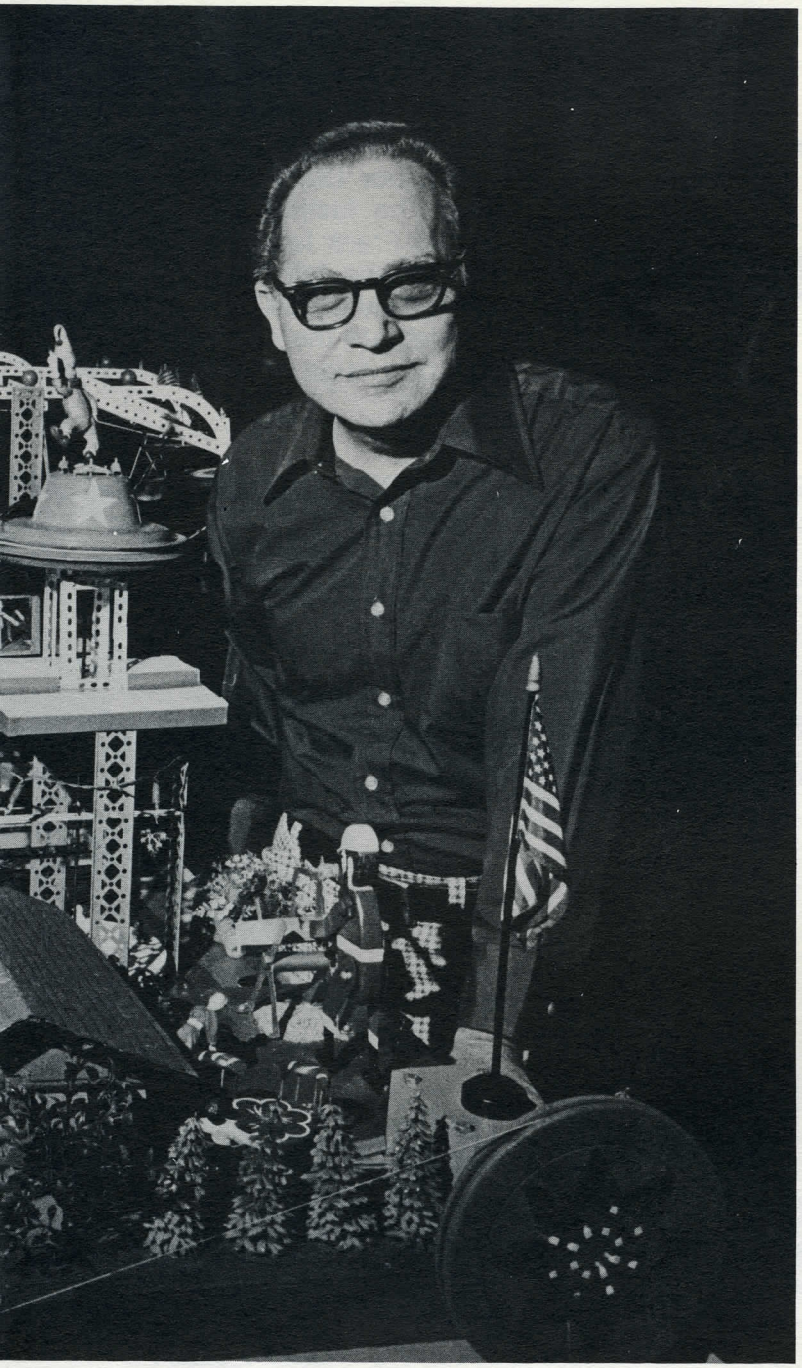
"The mechanics of the carnival is operated by a hand drill, quarter-inch electric drill. It's locked in its full position, top speed, then it's run through an electrical reduction unit. It's not geared down, just regulated by an electrical unit that I purchased here locally from an electrical shop. I suppose it runs

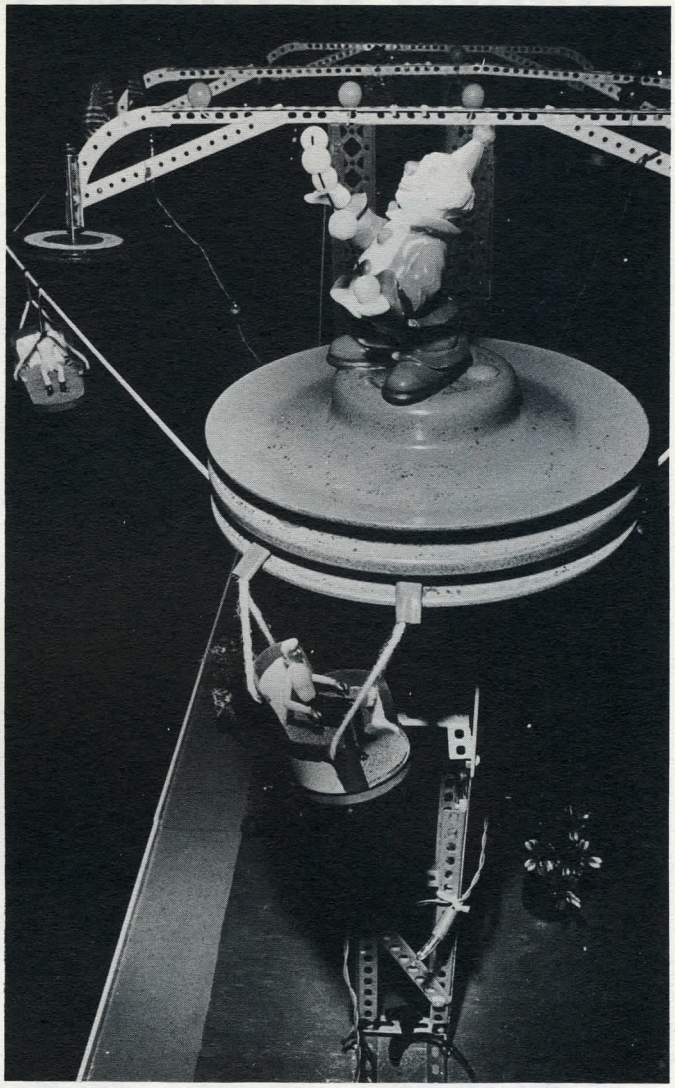
Glenn Teter with his carnival. Central drive shaft connects to electric drill, hidden under box at rear.

at about 10% of its top speed. You want it to run real slow. The drill is fastened to a main drive shaft, made of welding rods, that runs all the way through, with various size pulleys, off of which the belts work and operate.

"I found material for those belts in a sewing shop. Ladies use this, I suppose in sewing their dresses and so forth. It's elastic cord, is what it is. Various sizes, it comes in different diameters. I worked many months in trying to come out with the right belt. You'd see in catalogs, you could order certain belts, and they were pretty expensive. And finally it was just by trial and error I ran on to this. And then I had a problem of fastening it, putting the belt together. I came up with the little ball key chains that we have, and was experimenting with that. I found that if I tied a knot in the end of the elastic cord, and slipped it down in there, it made a suitable fastener. Consequently, I could make belts of all lengths, which I really needed.

"The only parts that I bought ready-made are some erector set parts for what I call the 'sky ride.' The Ferris wheel's constructed primarily of yardsticks. You'll find a piece of radiator hose in it, and all my bearings used throughout this carnival are either from alternators or transmissions. See, I work in a garage, I'm a parts man-





ager there, and I had the different mechanics save me used bearings that they would remove from alternators or transmissions. There's a transmission bearing that operates the merry-go-round.

"The base of my swings is two Christmas tree stands. It has bathtub chains, and yardsticks, and then I bought some Fat Albert characters to ride that set of swings. The merry-go-round has a Sanka coffee can in the center of it, painted yellow and red. The top of the merry-go-round is a cap of a Colgate's toothpaste. Just some various odds and ends that I could pick up.

"This particular thing is complete now. I'm not so sure my wife wants me to clutter up the basement any longer, but I do have another idea that I would like to ponder in my mind. It's to construct a three-ring circus tent, approximately the same size as my carnival. With the tent being cut in two — like if you were out back of the tent looking at it from the rear, you'd see nothing but the tent. Then when you went around on the other side, you would look down in and see a three-ring circus, you see, with the benches and people and different little things taking place. But I'm not sure she'll want me to clutter up the basement for seven more years!

West Virginia's Italian Heritage Festival

An estimated 75,000 people flocked to Clarksburg, Harrison County, for the first annual West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival, held Labor Day weekend of last year. The festival was the joint idea of Frank Iaquinta and Merle Moore, who felt that Clarksburg was ideally suited for a gathering to celebrate the culture and heritage of a large segment of West

Virginia's population. A substantial number of Harrison County's citizens are of Italian descent, part of the more than 17,000 West Virginians who claim Italian ancestry.

Although its purpose was to spotlight the Italian-American's heritage and traditions, the festival drew the support of people from different backgrounds, evolving into a cooperative venture reflecting the diverse heritages which make up West Virginia's rich historical and cultural inheritance. For one weekend, all participants shared the spirit of being Italian.

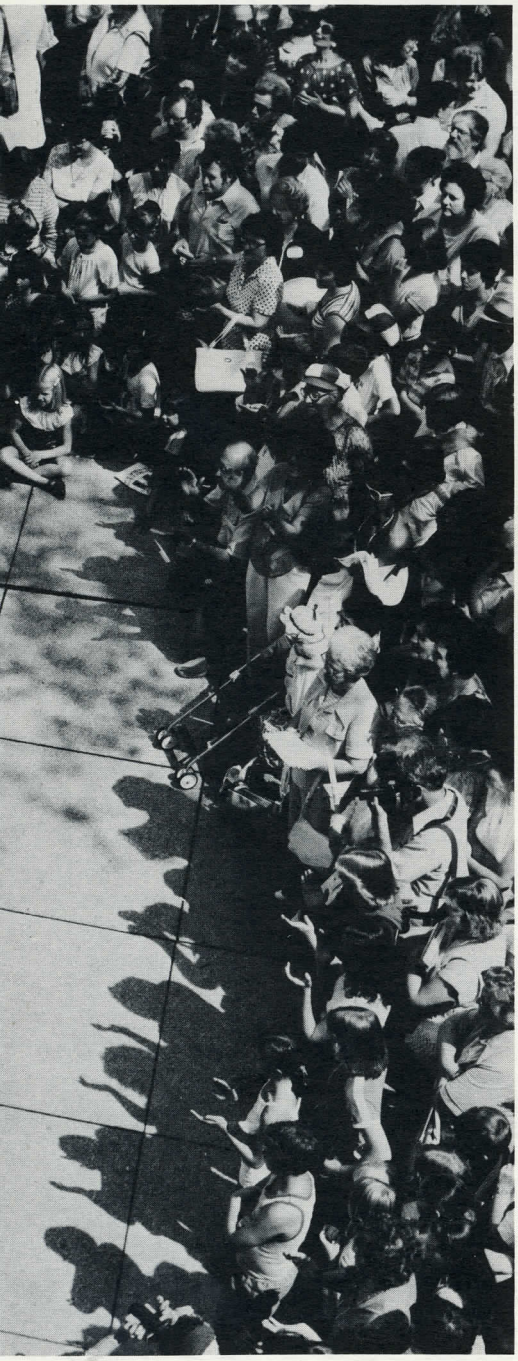
"We are not attempting to celebrate or sing the praises of the country of Italy," explained Chairman of the Board James D. LaRosa. "As it should be, this festival is a celebration of brotherhood and a vehicle by which we can reflect our pride and appreciation for the hard work and sacrifices our parents and grandparents made to find a new life in the greatest country on earth. That country is America."

For Clarksburg natives, the West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival served as a gigantic hometown reunion. For visitors, the gathering offered a wide range of festivities. Singer Jerry Vale headlined the 1979 festival, and Joe DiMaggio served as Grand Parade Marshall. West Virginia Opera Theater offered performances as part of the celebration, and the Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library sponsored a film festival. Dancers from New York, Pittsburgh, and Clarksburg kept the audience entertained and often solicited partners from the crowd.

A bank plaza was transformed into a wine garden restaurant. In the streets there were puppets, organ grinders, buskers, music, dancing, singing. In the skies there were hot air balloons, parachutists, and fireworks. There were contests — a marathon run, bocci and chess tournaments, morra and homemade wine contests. And through it all, there was food — Italian food, of course.

West Virginia Secretary of State A. James Manchin, who can himself lay claim to Italian descent, was on hand to crown the queen, as Mary Francis Beto of Clarksburg became Regina Maria I.

From August 29 through September 1, 1980, Clarksburg will once again host the West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival. Joe DiMaggio has promised to return, not only in 1980, but "every year the good Lord grants me the opportunity." DiMaggio, as well as other visitors in 1979, discovered that Clarksburg played host to a festival that had a heart, vitality, and spirit all its own.



Left: Clarksburg children dance in ethnic dress. Photograph by Ideal-Sayre.

Above: Street-performing buskers. Photograph by Ideal-Sayre.

Below: Tom Hardesty's puppet was among the performers.

Photograph by Steve Payne.

Uncle Homer Walker

I first met Uncle Homer, as John Homer Walker was affectionately known by his friends and fans, at the first annual John Henry Folk Festival, held just outside Beckley during Labor Day weekend in 1973. He was the first black man that I had actually seen or heard playing a banjo in the clawhammer style associated with African slaves. I was impressed by this living documentation of the black roots of the banjo in the Appalachian South.

As I talked with Uncle Homer at the Festival I learned that this Summers County native came from a very musical family where banjo, fiddle or violin, mandolin, and, later, guitar music was commonplace. He was also knowledgeable about the history of the banjo and its connections to Africa and, later, slavery in America. Born February 15, 1898, Uncle Homer had been influenced to play clawhammer banjo by his grandfather who had been a slave in Summers County, thus tracing his own knowledge of the banjo directly back to his slave ancestry.

Our friendship was immediately established, based upon our mutual interests and concerns with the banjo and its relationship to old-time music and the life and culture of black people in the hills and valleys of Appalachia. This friendship continued until his death on January 4, 1980, in the Princeton Community Hospital.

During my frequent visits to Uncle Homer's home on East River Mountain in Lurick, near Glen Lyn, Virginia, I was to learn a great deal about and from this unique Appalachian personality. Above all, he was truly an honest and good man, who loved life and lived it to the fullest. He accepted everyone at face value, considering people to be his friends until they proved otherwise.

He loved all types of music, especially old-time tunes. "Cripple Creek," "Old Joe Clark, " "John Hardy," "John Henry," and "I Will Answer When He Calls My Name" were among his favorites. Often he would sing and play for hours when I visited him.

Uncle Homer had performed a little when he was younger, but until he played the Morris Family Old Time Music Festival at Ivydale in Clay County, he had received very little public exposure. Encouraged by Frank and Jane George to attend the

Ivydale event in 1972, he became one of a very few black Appalachian musicians who played traditional music at the growing number of festivals in the region in the early '70's. His music was especially interesting because he was a black man who played secular pre-blues rather than religious music.

As the word spread about this unique musician, offers to play at festivals throughout the region were received. College students at old-time festivals in Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia were especially fond of Uncle Homer's clawhammer banjo. He was even invited to play at the prestigious American Folklife Festival at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington during the gala '76 Bicentennial Celebration.

Any event which Uncle Homer wanted to attend, arrangements were made to get him there. Often I would take him myself, or one of his many other friends in the area would volunteer. He never missed any of the annual John Henry Folk Festivals or the Concord College Appalachian Festivals. He also frequently participated in the festivals at Don West's farm in Pipestem, and he recalled playing on the same ridge as a child. He was a firm supporter of all three of these festivals in southern West Virginia.

Uncle Homer loved to travel, but he appeared to enjoy local music gatherings the most. Apparently he wanted the people he actually knew to appreciate and enjoy his music. He was especially fond of the John Henry Street Festivals held on the Pine Street Playground in Princeton during the summer months. At these events the children would square dance and come up on the small, homemade stage to play his banjo or to play whatever instruments they had with them. He was never too busy to stop and enjoy young children, and he enjoyed watching the old-time culture and traditions being passed on to them.

As his fame as a clawhammer banjo player grew, the internationally-known musician Taj Mahal, along with photographers and filmmakers from Yale University, visited Uncle Homer in 1970 and made the film "Banjo Man" about his life and music. This 26-minute black and white documentary has won awards at two film festivals. It is considered by many Appalachian scholars to be the best film available on black Appalachian life and culture.

In 1978 the Princeton-based John Henry Memorial Foundation produced a record album, "Blues Roots: Pre-Blues Music from West Virginia," on its John Henry Records label. The album featured the banjo and vocals of Uncle Homer Walker and Clarence Tross, the last known old-time banjo players born in West Virginia.

With the passing of this grand old banjo man, a legacy remains with those of us who loved him. It is a legacy of true human kindness that knew no racial or color restrictions in this region. Beyond his music, he taught all who came into contact with him how to accept the happiness that life brought. I am sincerely grateful for having experienced just a part of the life of this Appalachian banjo man.

Edward J. Cabbell

continued from page 8

Helvetia, but perhaps they might be the subject of an article in a future issue.

We love West Virginia and can't tell you how much we enjoy your magazine. We especially enjoy anything dealing with crafts, and the way in which the "old timers" quilted, spun, made moonshine — much of which is still done almost the same way back in the hills.

Thanks again for a great reading experience!
Sincerely yours,
Mrs. Alice H. Ward

White Sulphur Springs, WV
April 8, 1980
Editor:
GOLDENSEAL was lent to me by a good friend, Clyde Bowling, and it gave me such pleasure to read it from cover to cover and enjoy the excellent photos. In the April-June issue, I was particularly interested in the informative article on Helvetia. I have had the good fortune to have been to that delightful mountaintop a number of times, and I particularly enjoy their Summer Fair in August. A very good Swiss friend, Werner Stoessel, is also a frequent visitor there. Through him I've had the good fortune to get to know more of the fine Swiss — the artist who carves the beautiful furniture, the artist of the ceramics, the people who make the cheese, and others. West Virginia has a jewel in Helvetia.
Thanking you sincerely,
Mrs. Bert Gamba

Lexington, Virginia
April 29, 1980
Editor:
Your April-June articles on Helvetia were fascinating and well--done.

My family is also Swiss (although fairly recently having come to this country), and I have long been interested in the early Swiss of this area.

I have found that many of today's Switzers, Swishers, and

Sweitzers come from families originally named Schweizer...and I wonder if there are any families that still use the name of Schweizer in Helvetia?
Sincerely,
Hans Schweizer

Jim Comstock

St. Albans, WV
January 18, 1980
Editor:
A friend of mine asked me if I would like to read an article about Jim Comstock (knowing we were from the same town of Richwood) which appeared in your magazine. I told him I certainly would.

I loved the article. When I read anything about him or his work, it always seems like home to me as he mentions some of the places, people, and talks the language I know. When I lived in Wisconsin for six years I found a book he wrote and it was like finding a Picasso. I read it over and over and got so homesick. His daughter tried to teach me English in the 10th grade, and it was one of the hardest classes I ever had. I never caught on to all those fancy words she gave us, not that she wasn't a good teacher, she was, I just couldn't see why all those words were so important. Today I am still simple spoken, but able to get my point across most of the time. Anyway, to sum it up, I think Comstock has "guts" and I respect him and his "way." I also think a life story about him would be played great by James Stewart.

I also noticed your article on goldenseal, known as yellowroot. That also brings memories back to me when I was growing up. As a little girl I always had stomach problems and I remember my mother saying that my dad said yellowroot would cure anything, so guess what — I ended up getting the bitter end of the deal. I don't know if it helped my stomach or turned my stomach, as it was so long ago. I remain with stomach problems, maybe I should try it again — who knows.
Sincerely,
Marilyn Griffith (Brewster)

Buffalo, Putnam County

Tuppers Plain, Ohio
April 28, 1980
Editor:
I saw my first copy of GOLDENSEAL yesterday at my great-uncle's home, Mr. Brad Safreed of South Charleston, and I think it is grand! He gave me Volume 5, No. 3 (July-September 1979). Beginning with page 13 it was a grand homecoming for me; honoring my people, most of whom were dead before I was born. Squire Collins was my great-grandfather (my father was James Lewis Collins, born Buffalo 1897, died Marmet Dam accident April 23, 1932). Cecil Blake was a friend of my mother's family, the Hayes-Burches.

J.H. Wallace made the same type of small pictures of my grandfather and grandmother taken on their wedding day (Roy Collins and Agnes Safreed).

While I was not born in West Virginia and have lived most of my life right here in Tuppers Plains, my roots are deeper in Putnam County than any other county or state in the United States.

A bouquet of West Virginia rhododendrons to you; just as long as you don't pick it along the highway or byway!
Sincerely,
Agnes C. Hill

Linotype

Terra Alta, WV
January 17, 1980
Editor:
I have read with great interest Delmer Robinson's article on the Linotype machine — with great interest because I am one of the founding members of the American Typecasting Fellowship, established in 1978 during a meeting here at Terra Alta, attended by representatives from 16 states.

We are making every effort to keep the heritage of letterpress printing alive with the machines and processes we are preserving in our homes and hobby shops. It's a heritage of great craftsmanship and great inventors, including Mergenthaler, Lanston (whose Monotype machine makes the Linotype look simple), and many others.

And indeed, I am a former student of James W. Loop, mentioned in your article.

But there is one big rub: The information contained in the article regarding modern photocomposition is out of date by at least ten years. Count the number of Linotypes still in use and you will realize that *all* the "advantages" alluded to have been wiped away. Indeed, although I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for the Linotype, I earn my bread with computerized typesetting — because it is better, faster, and easier.
Sincerely,
Richard L. Hopkins
President, Pioneer Press
of West Virginia, Inc.

Goldenseal

Lewisburg, WV
February 14, 1980
Editor:
As to the name of this magazine, GOLDENSEAL, I was given that damn herb or root when I was a boy living in Summers County. It was made into a tea or powder. Later on my family insisted when we had a sick horse that I was to pound the root into a powder and pour it over dry horse feed or make a liquid form and pour that over the dry feed. For the life of me I can't remember if it ever helped the horses or me. All I can say is it didn't kill either.
Sincerely,
Paul R. Lilly

in this issue

LOUISE BING was born near Gallipolis, Ohio, and has lived in Charleston since 1918. She served at the Naval Ordnance Plant during World War I and World War II and worked in the Charleston restaurant business for 35 years — starting with a Broad Street "dog wagon" diner, converted from a streetcar. Mrs. Bing has written for the *Charleston Gazette,* and has done "hundreds of articles" for the *West Virginia Hillbilly.* She is currently a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and serves on the board of directors of the Kanawha Valley Fellowship Home, a home for alcoholics. Her story, "The Famous Latlips, Charleston's Premiere Show Family," appeared in the April-June 1979 GOLDENSEAL.

YVONNE SNYDER FARLEY is a native of St. Mary's, Pleasants County. She graduated from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and worked for several years as a staff member for Antioch's Appalachian Center in Beckley. She now lives in Beckley with her husband Sam, a coal miner, and son Luke. Yvonne worked most recently as a religion reporter for the Beckley *Post-Herald,* and now does general free-lance writing. Her most recent GOLDENSEAL contribution was the Lilly Reunion piece which appeared in the January-March issue.

PETER GOTTLIEB was born in Washington, D.C., and grew up in Fairfax County, Virginia. He attended the University of Wisconsin and the University of Pittsburgh, receiving a Ph.D. from Pitt in 1977. Peter lives with his wife and son in Morgantown, where he has been assistant curator of West Virginia University's West Virginia Collection since 1977.

CLIFFORD HARVEY has worked in the field of graphic design since graduation from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1960. His experience in the design field has ranged from publication design with Meredith Publishing Company, publisher of *Better Homes and Gardens,* to Control Data Corporation's corporate design program. Before coming to West Virginia, he taught at the University of Utah as head of the graphic design program for seven years and he is presently a professor and coordinator of the graphic design program at West Virginia University.

MICHAEL KLINE is a Washington, D.C., native who spent childhood summers in Hampshire County. After receiving his B.A. in anthropology from George Washington University in 1964, he moved to Appalachia full-time, working in various poverty programs in Kentucky and West Virginia. In 1970 he and Raleigh County photographer Doug Yarrow created "They Can't Put it Back," a slide and music program about social and ecological struggles in the mountains. His LP recording with Rich Kirby of coal mining songs, also called "They Can't Put it Back," was re-pressed by June Appal Records in 1977. Michael served as assistant to the editor of GOLDENSEAL in 1978, and now lives and works in Randolph County. His last article for GOLDENSEAL was the interview with Woody Simmons, "Recollections of a Randolph County Fiddler," in the July-September 1979 issue.

KATHY MEGAN, a Boston native, graduated from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and Columbia School of Journalism. She worked for *Appalachia* magazine in Boston, and is currently a reporter for the *Charleston Gazette.*

WILLIAM METZGER is a graduate of the Ohio Institute of Photography in Dayton. Bill has published in *Skateboard* magazine and is currently free lancing in central Ohio. He resides in Bucyrus, Ohio, where he was raised. Bill is a frequent visitor to West Virginia.

JAMES SAMSELL, a Morgantown native, is a graduate of West Virginia Univeristy and an Air Force veteran. He is currently Chief Photographer at Beckley Newspapers, Inc., where he has worked for the past two and a half years. In the past, he was a reporter for the Beckley *Post-Herald* before turning to photography full-time. He has been a free-lance photographer, worked at a variety of odd jobs, and maintains a keen interest in the outdoors. He is married and expects to be a father for the first time before this reaches print.

JACK WAUGH spent 17 years as a staff correspondent and bureau chief for the *Christian Science Monitor,* leaving the *Monitor* in 1973 to join Nelson Rockefeller's staff. He has written for a number of national publications besides the *Monitor.* In 1976 Waugh began free lancing and writing books and screenplays. He moved to West Virginia in 1978.

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