

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Volume 8, Number 1

Spring 1982



From the Editor: Thank You

I've felt somewhat guilty over the past few months for not having included a heartfelt "thank you" in the last GOLDENSEAL, to the thousands of readers who've contributed to our "voluntary subscription" plan. The truth is, at the time we were putting that issue together we were overwhelmed by the inflow of mail and still in the midst of processing contributions. It was already apparent that the response was larger than expected, and contributions were still coming in at a healthy rate.

We do not yet have a final figure, as a few checks still arrive in each day's mail, but it's clear that we'll be able to cover a large part of the year's printing bill from this source. Printing is by no means our only expense, but it is the single largest item and the one that has risen most rapidly throughout the history of the magazine. Your generosity has taken the pressure off us in this regard, and will insure that GOLDENSEAL continues as a quality publication.

As interested shareholders in GOLDENSEAL, several contributors have inquired about how we plan to administer the voluntary subscription program in the future. We keep a record of each contribution, but since subscriptions are voluntary we won't consider that each one "runs out" precisely one year later. We will not bill you at that time.

Rather, we will make our appeal once yearly, in the summer as with the first appeal last year. We will welcome contributions at any time, of course, especially from new readers. But, once started as a regular voluntary subscriber to GOLDENSEAL, we suggest that you consider your subscription to run from summer to summer. Make your contribution then. This will minimize expensive bookkeeping for us—thereby insuring that all contributions go directly into production of the magazine—and reduce the bother to you. Our goal is to keep things as simple and efficient as possible, for all concerned.

Each summer, we'll notify you by letter and with a coupon and notice in the magazine. These will be timed within a week or so of each other, as last year.

We will continue to refine the system as we go along, acting according to our growing experience and in response to your suggestions. For example, late last year we received many requests to enter Christmas gift subscriptions to GOLDENSEAL. Understandably, the giver almost always wanted a gift card sent in his or her name. We had not anticipated the demand for Christmas subscriptions, but were glad to have some simple cards

printed up for the purpose. We expect to continue the practice in future years, announcing the service in the Fall magazine so that all readers may be aware of it.

The suggested voluntary subscription payment will continue at \$10 for the foreseeable future. However, we will accept contributions in any amount, and already have received checks ranging from \$1 to over \$200. All are appreciated. Give according to your own budget and to what GOLDENSEAL is worth to you.

And we again stress that by "voluntary" we mean exactly that. We will keep GOLDENSEAL free to those unable to contribute, which often includes the elderly subjects of many of our articles. Older West Virginians have generously contributed their own stories and wisdom to GOLDENSEAL over the years, and we will not require further payment from those of them unable to give money. The voluntary plan offers the further advantage of allowing potential future contributors of all ages and financial circumstances to sample a few issues before deciding whether to support the magazine. As before, we welcome the addition of new names to our mailing list. Contributions made at that time will be gratefully received, but otherwise we will notify the new readers at the next annual appeal.

As pleasing as your financial support was, reader response brought a further nice dividend, in the form of hundreds of personal notes. Many indicated that they thought that some such contribution plan was past due, and most were warmly supportive. One writer said he'd been "thinking of sending coffee money" for a long time, and, while we can't put the money to any personal use, we do appreciate the thought. We'll buy our own coffee, and put that check to work in the next GOLDENSEAL.

To judge from those who sent notes, support came from a broad spectrum of GOLDENSEAL readers. We heard from bankers, undertakers, teachers, farmers, and housewives, among many others. Some nice surprises came from far away. A one-room school in Alaska sent a long letter and a check for \$10, for example, and the president of a Japanese electrical company sent warm greetings and a contribution of \$200 from Tokyo.

So, thank you, to all GOLDENSEAL contributors, far and near. We appreciate your support, and hope you'll again see fit to support us this coming summer. In the meantime, we'll get on with the important business of trying to give you your money's worth in the intervening issues of GOLDENSEAL.

—Ken Sullivan

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GOLDENSEAL is published four times a year, in February, May, August, and November. The magazine is distributed without charge, although a \$10 yearly contribution is suggested. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome. All correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, GOLDENSEAL, Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305. Phone (304) 348-0220.

Goldenseal

A Quarterly Forum for Documenting
West Virginia's Traditional Life

Volume 8, Number 1 ♣ Spring 1982

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Current Programs • Festivals • Publications

Quilts 1982

The Department of Culture and History's 1982 quilt competition and exhibition is currently in the planning stages, according to exhibits coordinator Sharon Mullins. The exhibition will open in the Great Hall of the Cultural Center during the annual Vandalia Gathering, held May 29 and 30, and continue throughout the summer.

The 1981 exhibition was a favorite with visitors to the Center. Hazel Ferrell of Middlebourne won the "Best of Show" purchase award with her "Hawaiian Sampler," which is now part of the West Virginia Permanent Collection.

Only residents of West Virginia are eligible to enter their work in the competition. First place ribbons and a cash prize of \$100 will be awarded in the categories of Traditional Pieced, Traditional Applique, Contemporary, and Best Decorative Quilting. Second and third place ribbons will also be awarded in these categories. The quilt selected Best of Show will be purchased for inclusion in the state's Permanent Collection.

Entry forms will be available after February 1 from the Department of Culture and History. Only quilts with the official entry form sewn onto them will be eligible. The Department's exhibits staff will receive the quilts during the latter part of March, and return them the following October.

For entry forms or further information, contact Sherri Hairston or Holly Grant, Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston 25305; phone (304) 348-0220.

Bound GOLDENSEAL Volumes

Again this year we are offering a limited number of bound GOLDENSEAL volumes for sale. This special hard-bound edition of Volume 7 (1981) includes all four issues of the magazine for the last year, topped off with the 1981 index printed in the Winter GOLDENSEAL.

Volume 7 of GOLDENSEAL was produced to match the 1980 volume. The same light tan buckram fabric was used, with the same distinctive

red stamping on the spine. Binding was done by the same Hampshire County firm as last year, with much of the work again performed by hand.

GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan noted that the new volume features the same durability as Volume 6, observing that "together, the two books will make a fine matched set for any West Virginia bookshelf." He added that "a few of the 1980 volumes are still available for sale, on a first-come, first-served basis."

He went on to say that "fortunately, the prices also match. We were able to keep the price at the 1980 level, since the binder was able to hold his costs down. Consequently, the new volumes will sell at the old price of \$25 each," plus \$1.25 tax (and \$1.50 postage and handling, if mailed).

Mail orders should be addressed to The Shop, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston 25305. Prepayment of \$27.75 should accompany all orders.

Appalachian Studies Fellowships

Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, continues to offer Appalachian Studies Fellowships to qualified researchers. The Fellowships are administered by Berea's Appalachian Center and its Weatherford-Hammond Mountain Collection under a grant from the Mellon Foundation, and are designed to encourage scholarship on Appalachian topics.

Berea College's librarians began collecting books and other materials about the Appalachian Region in 1921. The Weatherford-Hammond Collection is the oldest regional collection, and now has more than 8,000 books and over 350 linear feet of documents, records, and manuscripts. A recent mailing from the Fellowship program also notes the existence of other collections open to scholars, including those at West Virginia University, East Tennessee State University, and other institutions.

A primary purpose of the Fellowships is to enable regional scholars to use the Weatherford-Hammond Collection and the resources of the Berea Appalachian Center, as well as the

other research collections. Fellowships may also be granted for field research. In most cases the grants will cover only the cost of travel, lodging, food, copying, equipment rental or typing, and limited supplies.

An application form may be obtained from Director Loyal Jones, The Appalachian Center, Berea College, Box 2336, Berea, Kentucky 40404; phone (606) 986-9341.

Marshall History Published

The first full-scale history of Marshall University was recently published by the Marshall Alumni Association. *Marshall University: An Institution Comes of Age* was written by Dr. Charles H. Moffat, a member of the Marshall faculty for more than three decades. The yearbook-size, glossy volume contains 325 pages and includes more than 135 photographs.

Moffat first began gathering information for the book in 1961, shortly after Marshall became a university. In his spare time over the years, he pored over presidents' papers and other historical materials in Marshall's James E. Morrow Library and conducted numerous interviews with alumni, faculty members, and retirees. Moffat retired as History Department chairman in 1977 and began devoting nearly all of his time to completing the chronicle.

The resulting book carries the history of Marshall from academy days to what Moffat calls the current "Decade of Progress." He tried to include "the warts as well as the dimples," he says.

Marshall University: An Institution Comes of Age is available from the Alumni Association, phone (304) 696-3134, at a cost of \$20 plus \$2 for shipping and handling. Limited edition volumes, numbered, signed by the author and emblazoned with a gold seal of the university, are \$50 each, plus \$2 shipping and handling.

Appalachian Women

The University Press of Kentucky has recently published *Appalachian Women: An Annotated Bibliography*, by Sidney Saylor Farr. The new bib-

liography lists more than 1,300 books, articles, and unpublished interviews, with short descriptive notes for each.

Appalachian Women is wide ranging, with sections on history, education, music, religion, fiction, and several other subjects. The book's timeliness is indicated by an extensive chapter on women and coal mining, including women's role in union struggles and more recently as miners themselves. The bibliography appears to be current through about 1979, to judge from its listing of GOLDENSEAL articles. Listings are fully indexed by author, title, and subject.

Sidney Farr is a native Appalachian, from Bell County in eastern Kentucky. She was married at 15, and according to the book's "Foreword," managed to "read herself into an education." She considers *Appalachian Women* to be a step toward a still broader bibliography of mountain women, to be published sometime in the future.

Appalachian Women: An Annotated Bibliography (hardbound, 187 pages) may be ordered for \$18 from the University Press of Kentucky, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40506.

Mountain Books and Records

The Appalachian Book and Record Shop of the Council of the Southern Mountains recently published a catalogue of all publications and recordings available from the shop. *Appalachian Literature and Music: A Comprehensive Catalogue* lists hundreds of items from the region's most complete bookstore. Each listing includes a short descriptive paragraph, and the 80-page catalogue is indexed for easy reference.

GOLDENSEAL readers may be particularly interested in the works by West Virginians in the new catalogue. Among these are writers Meredith Sue Willis, Howard B. Lee, and W. E. Blackhurst; poets Don West, Billy Edd Wheeler, and "Billy Greenhorn" (Bob Snyder); and musicians Andy Boarman and Clark Kessinger. Photographs, used liberally as illustrations, are drawn from many West Virginia locations, including Institute, Pipestem, Beckley, Coalwood, and Yukon.

The magazine-style catalogue is divided by literature and music, and further broken down into sections on fiction, culture, biography, children's books, and so forth, as well as different types of music. Each major category is prefaced by a short essay by an authority in the field. The photography section is introduced by Doug Yarrow of McDowell County, a frequent GOLDENSEAL freelancer. The catalogue features photographs by several of Yarrow's Big Creek High School students, including a Judy Baker Lambert picture on the back cover.

The Council of the Southern Mountains is Appalachia's oldest grassroots organization, founded in 1913. In addition to the bookstore, the Council offers a small monthly magazine, *Mountain Life & Work*. *ML&W*, described by one member as a "hip pocket magazine—one that you carry around to show your neighbors," is available at \$5 yearly from CSM headquarters, at Drawer N, Clintwood, Virginia 24228.

Appalachian Literature and Music may be ordered for \$2 from the Appalachian Book and Record Shop, Council of the Southern Mountains,

104 Center Street, Berea, Kentucky 40403.

History of Pleasants County

The second edition of the new *History of Pleasants County* is now ready for sale by the Pleasants County Historical Society. The Society reports a sell-out of last year's first edition of 1350 copies, and is optimistic about continued good sales.

The book's first section is a full reprint of Robert I. Pemberton's 1929 *History of Pleasants County*. The English-born Pemberton came to West Virginia as a young child, and eventually became editor and publisher of the *St. Marys Oracle*. Pemberton's book, the standard reference on Pleasants County history up to the eve of the Great Depression, had been long out of print, until its inclusion in this new volume. The Pemberton reprint is followed by a lengthy supplement, which carries the Pleasants County story through 1980. The supplement notes Pemberton's own death in 1944, amid homefront reports of the war effort in the county.

The new history's final section, accounting for about three-quarters of the book's length, is an alphabetized compilation of hundreds of family histories. These short sketches by family members will be of most interest to relatives and neighbors, and to local and social historians.

The *History of Pleasants County* (hardcover, large format, 343 pages) may be ordered for \$35 plus \$1.75 sales tax and \$3 postage and handling. Send orders to Pleasants County Historical Society, P.O. Box 335, St. Marys 26170.

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.

Arthurdale

Palmer, Alaska

September 24, 1981

Editor:

Please keep GOLDENSEAL coming. We are a non-funded community-parent sponsored school. At present we

have nine pupils, ranging in grades one through nine and ages five through 14. Our oldest ones thoroughly enjoy your articles. In fact, one young man was so taken by the article on "Arthurdale Craftspeople" that he has taken up a wonderful craft himself, and is slowly supplying the one-

room school with porch chairs. I will send a photo as soon as I develop prints.

We appreciate your efforts, and know that quality such as you produce is rare and hard-won—that's why GOLDENSEAL has become a school-house word in our educational en-

deavors for our young people. Please send all the back issues of GOLDENSEAL that you may have available, as I'm sure there are some very worthwhile articles that would benefit our students and community alike.

Even though we fund ourselves, and we are quite limited in this area, the decision to send a voluntary subscription was nearly unanimous. Find enclosed a check from our treasury for \$10.

Very sincerely,
Karen White-Cougar
Wolf Lake School

we still have the same living room fireplace, and the bedroom and kitchen that were here.

My father, Andrew Ray Wolfe, came to Arthurdale in the early 1930's. He helped build the houses in Arthurdale. He also lives here now in one of the homes he helped build. I went to school here when I was two years old. My picture was in the photo of nursery school children in the 1930's. Now I make my home here. Please put me on your mailing list.
Thanks very much,
Hattie R. Wolfe Shaffer

band and I purchased the house next door to Mrs. Peluso, so we were neighbors again.

During my last visit to Fairmont in 1975 I visited with Mrs. Peluso and she delighted in telling me of her dream (which she had often spoken of to me) come true with her return to Italy.

I really appreciated the article and the magazine. The article brought back memories and a few tears.

Sincerely,
Betty Lou (Donahue) Nulliner

Lincoln and GOLDENSEAL

St. Albans, WV
August 14, 1981
Editor:

The article "Bringing Lincoln to West Virginia—Reminiscences by Louise Bing" in your Fall 1981 issue brought back many great memories. Dedication of the statue on June 20, 1974, was a truly memorable occasion in our state's history. Undoubtedly, old Abe is strolling around our Capitol grounds many a midnight!

Your introduction to Miss Bing's article also was appropriate but did contain a slight miscue, albeit one that many have made. You referred to Lysander Dudley and the State Chamber of Commerce. Dudley at the time headed the State Department of Commerce, an agency involved in the Lincoln effort as well as many, many other fruitful projects boosting our state and its grand history.

John D. Hurd is (and was at the time) head of the State Chamber of Commerce and confusing the two agencies was somewhat common. The State Department of Commerce was abolished on June 30, 1977, to be succeeded by the Governor's Office of Economic and Community Development. I was the Commerce Department's last commissioner and continued on with GOECD until my retirement on December 31, 1977.

As for GOLDENSEAL, I can recall back in late 1974 and early 1975 when Don Page, then Arts and Crafts director, and Tom Screven, destined to be GOLDENSEAL's first editor, came to me seeking funding for a new publication—GOLDENSEAL. At the time I was Dudley's administrative assist-

(Continued on page 72)



Arthurdale, WV
November 20, 1981
Editor:

A friend of mine received the GOLDENSEAL magazine and I would like to know if it would be possible for you to send me a copy of the April-June 1981 issue. I am the daughter of one of the homesteaders and I bought the first home built in Arthurdale, the model home on A Road. The picture of the living room in the magazine is my living room.

We have done some remodeling on the house because my family was too large and we needed more space. But

Anna Guarascio Peluso

Phoenix, Arizona
November 17, 1981
Editor:

Thank you for sending me Volume 7, Number 4, of GOLDENSEAL. It arrived today.

I was born and raised in Watson and lived in Fairmont until 1968 when I came to Arizona. Imagine my surprise and delight when I saw the article on Mrs. Peluso. I have known her all my life. I was born in my grandparents' home and the Pelusos were neighbors for many years. In 1951 my first hus-

"Recollections" and "The Home Place"

Folklife Programming on West Virginia Public Radio

Recently, West Virginia Public Radio has broadcast a nice sampling of traditional music, mountain culture, and oral history recollections—in short, what may be called West Virginia "folklife" generally, to use that sometimes confusing word. The Public Radio network of six FM stations now spans the state, and offers the usual public broadcasting combination of programming not available elsewhere, ranging from opera to some very good jazz and classical music. Of perhaps more interest to GOLDENSEAL readers is the WVPR commitment to reserve a part of its schedule for uniquely West Virginia material. This policy appears to have been somewhat broadened lately, as the network experiments with several fine new shows, although folklife still claims only a small portion of the broadcast week.

Traditional programming goes far back in the history of West Virginia Public Radio. Several years ago, when WVPR consisted only of the original Beckley station and a Buckhannon satellite, manager Rob Robinson reserved Sunday afternoons for his own bluegrass show, spotlighting old-timers as well as some progressive "newgrass." Tom Rodd's "Back Porch Music Time" originated a little later, with the first broadcast in the fall of 1978. Joan Fenton's "Old Time and Blues" half-hour dates from about the same period.

Of the three, only Fenton's show survives. Rodd recently discontinued "Back Porch Music Time" to pursue other activities, and the bluegrass show faltered after Robinson left for a public broadcasting job in New England. Eventually it too was dropped, to be replaced for a while in the Sunday

afternoon slot by "Folk Festival USA" and other syndicated folk music programs. This nationally broadcast music was often good, but rarely was it drawn from West Virginia.

Throughout this time West Virginia Public Radio was experiencing explosive growth, first adding stations in Huntington and Charleston and then in Morgantown and Wheeling. Management may understandably have been preoccupied during this period, with the important business of putting together a truly West Virginia broadcasting system. During the busy transition, traditional music fans were comforted by the introduction of the excellent "Down Home Music Time," broadcast live late on Saturday nights, and the occasional festival broadcasts, including the annual Vandalia Gathering.* We waited, more or less patiently, to see what the final programming mix would be from the new statewide network.

So far, the news has been reassuring. Most recently, there was the introduction late last fall of Andy Ridenour's "Folk Festival West Virginia," modeled on "Folk Festival USA" and in some ways much better. Early programs were drawn from last summer's Augusta Festival in Elkins. Ridenour is a steadfast friend of traditional programming on the Public Radio staff, and he should find more than enough festivals in West Virginia to keep his new show going year around.

The entertainment value of lively music is the main attraction in much folklife programming. But among the best of the new radio shows are two series that downplay entertainment in

*As this GOLDENSEAL went to press, "Down Home Music Time" was replaced by "Saturday Night Breakdown." Host Paul Epstein runs a traditional, bluegrass, and folk-flavored program from 9-11 p.m.

favor of a documentary approach. These are Susan Leffler's "Recollections," the older of the two, and Michael Kline's "The Home Place." Music is a major component of both, but the foundation of each is the spoken words of West Virginians with stories to tell. I had followed both series since the beginning, and was particularly gratified to hear the living voices of many people featured in past issues of GOLDENSEAL—Woody Simmons, David Daniels, and John Johnson, among others. Clearly the work of the magazine and these new radio programs overlapped, and I was delighted when manuscripts on both "Recollections" and "The Home Place" came into the office. They arrived at about the same time, and it seemed only natural to run them together.

—Ken Sullivan

"Recollections"

Collecting oral histories has become very popular in the last few years, but unfortunately few people ever get to actually hear these valuable taped records of the past. Most oral histories end up in college libraries or other scholarly collections, or recently, with the amateur interest generated by Roots, maybe on cassettes in the bottom dresser drawer with other family memorabilia.

West Virginia Public Radio's "Recollections" series attempts to change all that by providing a new way of distributing oral histories—radio programs. Through the magic of radio, listeners all over the state are taken back in history several times each week as senior citizens share their memories of life in an early logging camp, or playing music for the silent

John Johnson, Etta Persinger, and David Daniels are among West Virginians featured by "The Home Place" and "Recollections." Johnson photo by Doug Yarrow, Persinger by Bob Gates, and Daniels by Ron Rittenhouse.

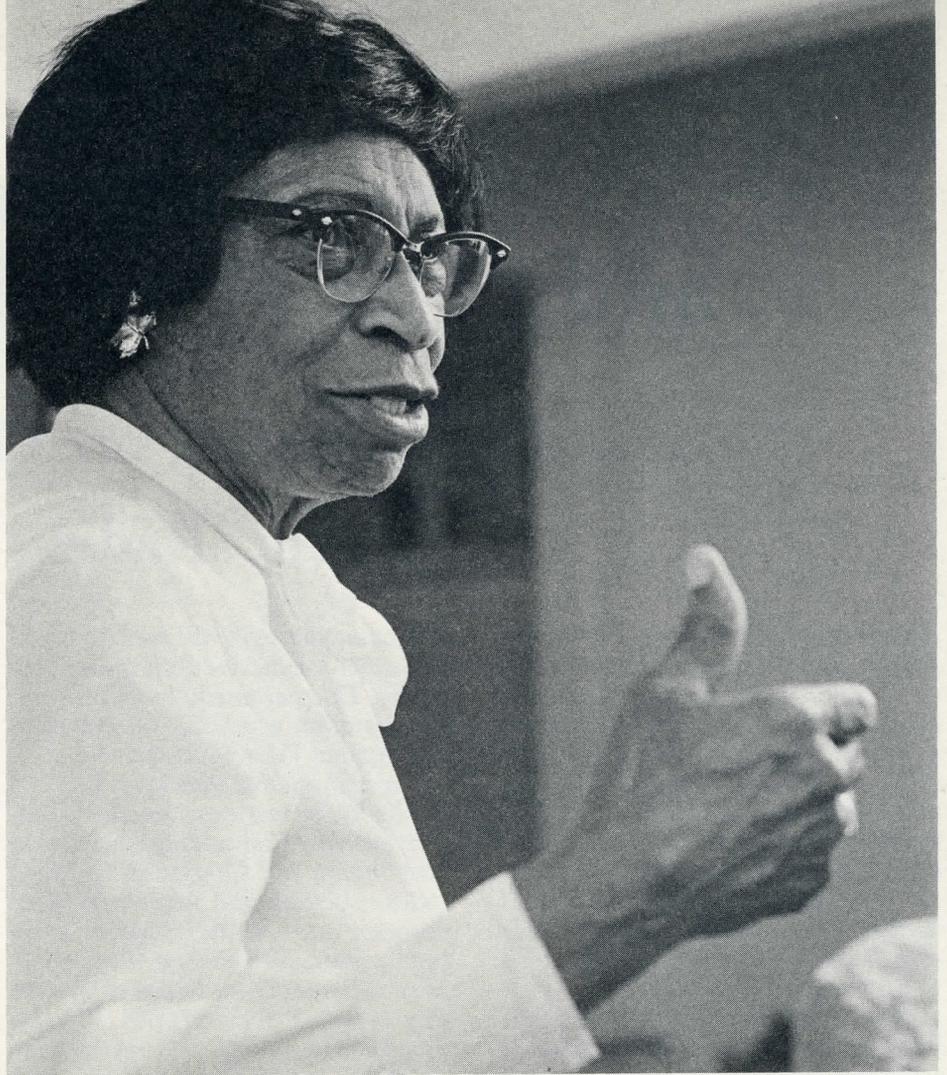
movies, or of selling "Crazy Water Crystals" out of the back of a Model T Ford. The radio audience hears the story, and gets an intimate feel for the period through the emotion, intonation, and expressions of the teller.

The programs are produced in a "collage" style, with up to four recollectors mixed with sound effects and music of the time. A local scholar sums up the piece with a brief comment at the end. Each program lasts for 10 minutes and is broadcast five times a week with a new program starting every Monday. Programs are divided into basic monthly topics such as "timbering," "education," "black history," and so forth.

The series started in the summer of 1980. As producer, I spent the spring of that year talking to staff members of various senior citizen programs and others in the state's "aging network," and handing out flyers for prospective recollectors at senior citizen conferences. The response was enthusiastic, so in June I hit the road, heading for the Folk Festival at Glenville. I'd been there several other times recording musicians and craftspeople for Public Radio and knew it was the gathering place for some of the area's finest traditional fiddle and banjo players, ballad singers, storytellers, and shape-note singers.

After Glenville came invitations to senior citizen centers and nutrition sites. The center, run by Marion County Senior Citizens of Fairmont, was very hospitable and provided a number of wonderful people with crystal-clear memories. Among these was David Daniels, conductor of the Fairmont Pops Orchestra, whose story of his escape from Russia appeared in the April-June 1981 *GOLDENSEAL*; Bennie Greene and Alta Knight, who compared the daily lives and expectancies of white and black women in the '20's and '30's; and two black coal miners who left the deep South to escape unemployment and racism.

I lived in Monroe County for several years before working for Public Radio, and still spend as much time

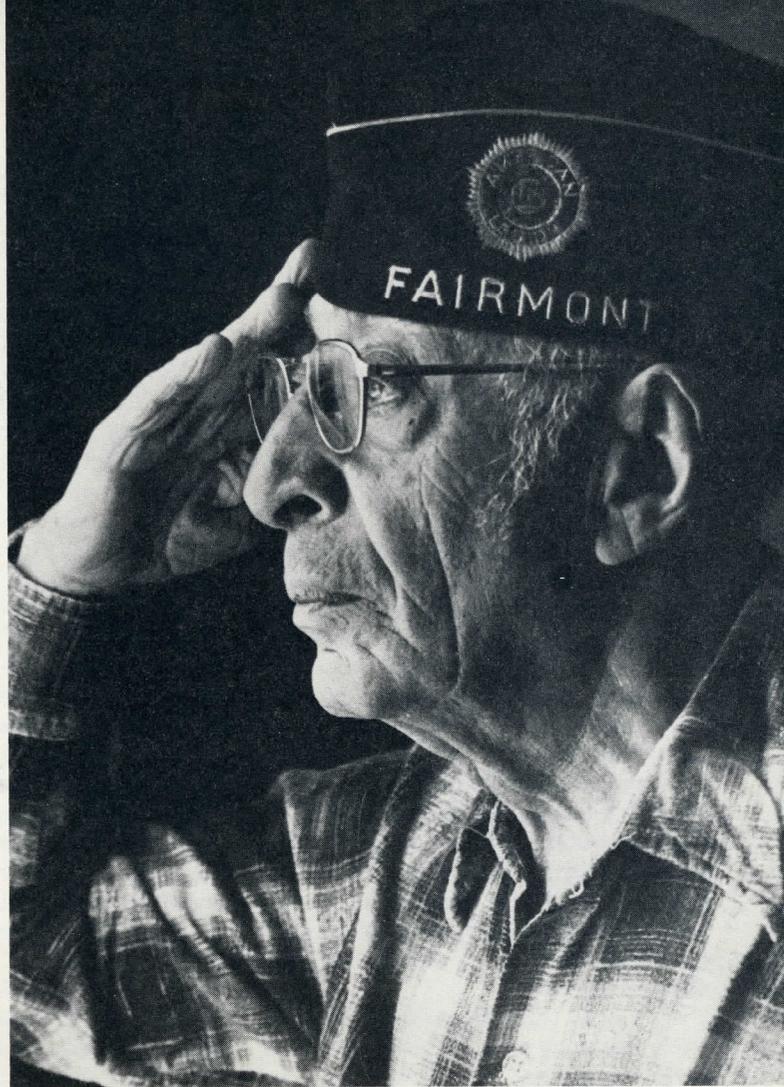


as possible in my house near Union. The original idea for "Recollections" came from talking to neighbors in this rural southeastern part of the state. These included John Bill Fleshman, who still lives near the farm he ran by hand for years on Sarton Mountain, and now earns money picking and selling berries and ginseng. His father died when John Bill was six and he can tell you all about breaking a mule to plow, harvesting wheat by hand with a cradle, walking to the local store to barter home-grown vegetables for sugar and coffee—and some of the most hair-raising stories about "hainted" houses you'll ever hear.

Another neighbor featured in "Recollections" is Tex McGuire. Tex is a local celebrity who plays 21 instruments and teaches music at the Mountain Heritage School in Union. Tex can't remember how many people he's taught to play music but he'll never forget his hobo days when he was making his way to Texas to start his music career. He had grown up way back in the mountains near Gap Mills,

with his only link to the outside world being an old Atwater Kent radio that belonged to a neighbor. His favorite station came from Del Rio, Texas, so he set out to find it—hitting the road at 14, with his guitar on his back and his belongings tied up in a red handkerchief. As Tex said, "I knew there was people out there. There was cities, and if I could just get in amongst them I could make it." Tex's stories of travel and the early days of show business are featured on several of the programs.

The first season of "Recollections" ended very successfully in June of 1981. The series had not only been heard by thousands of Public Radio listeners but had also generated several invitations for me to speak and play tapes for groups ranging from senior centers to the annual Oral History Mid-Atlantic Region Conference, an Appalachian literature class at Alderson-Broadus College, the Augusta Heritage Workshop in Elkins, and the Mid-Ohio Valley Media Conference in Charleston.



A second season was planned with expanded funding. Major support again came from the Humanities Foundation, with additional help from The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation of Charleston, the Onion Restaurant and Catering Service of Union, and the Hillview Nursing and Convalescent Center in Huntington. Topics for the second season focused on labor history, from railroading to union organizing. Much of the material was gathered at The Andrew S. Rowan Home, a state-run home for the elderly in Sweet Springs. Having nearly 200 people from all over West Virginia under one roof saved time and travel money.

With the second season of "Recollections" more than half over, I'm sure I've gained as much if not more than anyone from the series, in getting an intimate look at our history and a chance to talk with so many outstanding people. There's a certain strength people seem to get from living through a period when everything—including fun—was handmade. The Depression

took an incredible toll on people, but I've rarely heard anyone complain. It's usually "Well, it was hard, but it was a good life and we made it." The older people I've talked to seem to have a real value for their friends, neighbors, and families which we may be losing sight of today.

—Susan Leffler

"The Home Place"

"Now I'm a-tellin' it the way I heard it. I won't say it's so, but it's the way I heered it. Grandpap says that's the truth about it." So begins Currence Hammonds' tale of a hunting party in muzzle-loading days that took a sudden turn when a shot-stunned buck recovered while straddled by the hunter, and tore through the brush bearing the man on his back. The story is accompanied by the fiddle tune "Forked Deer," a traditional piece Hammonds attributes to "Uncle Pete" Hammons, who was inspired by the hunting tale.

In this episode of a 13-part series

of stories, reminiscences, songs, and music, Hammonds' preface, delivered in the mountain speech of his Randolph County home, declares the standard of truthfulness governing a folk tale. It is faithful to the original rendering, but the facts must not be considered sworn testimony.

A much more complicated problem of fidelity to the source confronts the radio editor who must distill an eight-minute vignette from hours of taped interviews and performances. Michael Kline and his associates spent the better part of a year in the field accumulating material, and two months in the studio shaping it into sweet but succinct appeals to the ear and imagination of the radio listener. If one feels any disappointment with the results, it is simply the desire to say to the narrative at points, "Hey, let him finish that tune!" as, for example, when it cuts short John Johnson's rendering of "Bonaparte's Retreat," in which one fiddle is made to sound like a battalion of bagpipes.

These performers are otherwise un-

recorded, and when the broadcast fades, we know the music is receding into the irretrievable past from which it has been briefly rescued by "The Home Place." The series is currently being aired on West Virginia Public Radio, WVMR at Dunmore, West Virginia, and WOUB at Athens, Ohio. It is being considered for broadcast by public television, in which case it would be accompanied by slides of the subjects taken by Beckley photographer Doug Yarrow.

Each of the programs was intended to stand on its own, but certain themes recur throughout. Most of the storytellers and musicians are from central West Virginia. More often than not the listener will be transported to the headwaters of Elk River. Here Ernie Carpenter relates his great-great-grandfather's stories of Indian attacks when his family were the first whites to settle what is now Centralia. Carpenter claims the tune "Shelving Rock" (which he fiddles as background to the story) commemorates the sheltering cliff to which they fled after an ambush.

Carpenter and two women singers from the same area, Hazel Stover and Sarah Singleton, lay proud claim to Indian ancestry, and a curious note of uncertainty emerges. Were the Indians heartless savages who reveled in murder and scalping, or were they the wise men of the woods who taught white settlers the forest craft without which they would not have survived? Carpenter, in a remark not included in the edited radio segment, even suggests his musical ancestors may have learned their fiddling style from the Indians.

Many of the people interviewed recall great hardship or dramatic conflict in the mountain environment of their generation. If not harassed by Indians, they faced racial animosity, dangerous work, or family tragedy. In each case music was a sustaining ingredient in resolution and survival.

Olga Perkovic Russ recalls her mother's disillusionment as a young immigrant from Yugoslavia who worked for board and no pay in the southern coalfields of the 1920's. Seeing chickens scurrying under shanties built on stilts, she asked, "This is rich America?" But as one hears the family tambouritzin band playing a polka, or a Croatian love song delivered in Mrs. Russ' mezzo-

soprano, one knows without being told that the Perkovic family made itself very much at home in West Virginia while conserving the riches of the old culture. Eventually they settled in the Slavic community of Boggs Run, in Ohio County.

For many of those interviewed, music had not been mere entertainment. "We sang, and we talked sacred stuff—no foolishness—at that wake," recalls Oliver Sines of a solemn occasion at turn-of-the-century Goshen in Upshur County. Sines learned to sing in the informal singing school that rotated among Goshen's homes. Singing was learned in other mountain communities by shape-note training such as that still conducted by Homer Sampson at Upper Sleith Methodist Church in Braxton County. Sampson's method is recorded in a memorable "Home Place" program.

For Etta Persinger of Beckley, gospel singing was a more intimate and emotional spiritual sustenance, closely tied to the remembered rhythm of field labor. When "raising up a hymn" with the choir of Beckley's black New Hope Baptist Church, Mrs. Persinger gives the line and the choir draws out a response that echoes the hot sun and hard labor that pace a work chant.

For Nat Reese of Princeton, playing guitar and singing blues was an entry to employment, a way to squeeze past the barrier of segregation. "You could always get a job in the coalfields if you could play music or baseball," he explains. "That was about all the people had for fun and those coal companies wanted to keep the people happy."

For John Johnson, who claims to have fiddled his way into and out of every jail between Clay and Texas, music was the perpetual rail ticket to freedom and the price of a drink at any bar along the way. It is Johnson's energetic fiddling of the traditional piece "Jimmy Johnson" that introduces each segment of "The Home Place."

Charlie Blevins is well known in Mingo County as the irrepressible proprietor of the Red Robin Inn. The segment devoted to his dulcimer-plucking, banjo-picking, and yarn-spinning conveys the full roadhouse flavor of long-neck beer and pickled eggs.

The concluding segment of the series has already been used by National

Public Radio's "All Things Considered" program, to commemorate the anniversary of the 1968 Mannington mine disaster. Sara Kaznowski, widow of one victim, recalls the last night she spent with her husband, who told her the gas level in the mine was dangerous and an explosion could be expected. Just in case the listener is not moved to heartbreak by the story, Kline overlays Hazel Dickens singing "Disaster at the Mannington Mine," which begins as an emotional ballad and ends as a political statement.

By the time you read this, the initial airing of "The Home Place" by West Virginia Public Radio will be over, having run from last fall through January. Unfortunately, the program was broadcast only at 7:10 on Wednesday mornings, and may have been missed by all but habitual early risers. However, some consideration is being given to a re-broadcast, perhaps at a later hour and to a wider audience, and Kline notes that the series is available to other stations who may wish to air it.

—Bardwell Montgomery

Commentary for "Recollections" is provided by Barbara Smith, head of the Humanities Division of Alderson-Broaddus College, Alan Gould, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Marshall University, and editor Ken Sullivan of GOLDENSEAL. Station manager Rich Eiswerth of West Virginia Public Radio provided technical advice and assistance, and William Cooperman of the Educational Broadcasting Authority handles bookkeeping. "Recollections" may be heard at 8:10 a.m. Monday, 5:45 a.m. Thursday, 3:15 p.m. Friday, 11:15 p.m. Saturday, and 12:20 p.m. Sunday.

"The Home Place" was produced by Michael Kline, with field recordings by Kline and Jerry Milnes. Engineering was by David Mould and Steve Heimel. "The Home Place" is not now being broadcast by West Virginia Public Radio.

The six West Virginia Public Radio stations are at 88.5 FM Charleston, 91.7 FM Beckley, 88.9 FM Buckhannon, 89.9 FM Huntington, 89.9 FM Wheeling, and 90.9 FM Morgantown. Major funding for both "Recollections" and "The Home Place" was provided by the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. ♣

Slim and Tex

Mountain Boys on West Virginia Radio

By Ivan M. Tribe



Slim and Tex, about 1940.
Photographer unknown, courtesy
Slim Clere.

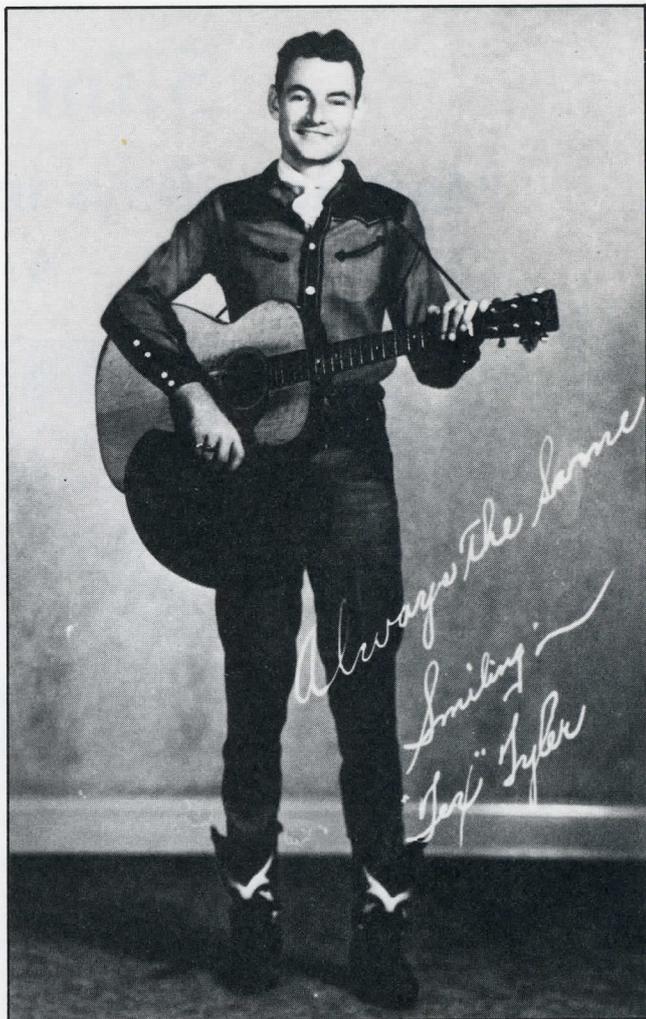
Ivan Tribe, professor of history at Ohio's Rio Grande College and authority on early country music, began showing up more often in West Virginia after Slim Clere took over radio station WZTQ in Putnam County. Clere, a pre-World War II radio star, was putting his station on a bluegrass and traditional country format, something extremely unusual these days. Professor Tribe wanted to hear that, and he wanted to see Slim, an old friend from earlier research forays.

Tribe dropped by the GOLDENSEAL office on a couple of these trips, and we talked him into formally interviewing Clere last July. The following article is based mainly on that interview and research in Clere's personal papers. —ed.

If one starts reminiscing about old-time radio acts that have graced the airwaves of West Virginia and adjacent states, it seems unlikely that names like Clarence Clifford Clere or

David Luke Myrick will be mentioned. However, bring up Slim and Tex, Nimbling Nimrod, Fiddling Slim, or T. Texas Tyler (the "Man with a Million Friends") and the chances for a favorable response increase considerably. In the case of Tyler, any American country music fan of a quarter-century or more seniority will take notice, for his "million friends" extended across the entire nation.

Between 1939 and 1942, Clere and Myrick used the pseudonyms men-



Above left: On the road with the "Boys from Ole Kaintuck," about 1937. Slim Clere wears the cowboy hat. Photographer unknown, courtesy Slim Clere.

Above right: T. Texas Tyler at WCHS in Charleston, about 1939. Tyler went on to become a major national star in the next two decades. Photographer unknown, courtesy John J. Bailes.

Below: Slim and Tex and their Radio Gang at WSAZ in Huntington, early 1942. Cliff Wilcox (left), Slim, Tex, and Gene Blankenship. Photographer unknown, courtesy Slim Clere.

tioned above, experiencing radio and stage success that ranked them among the more memorable twosomes in this rich era of Mountain State entertainment. An account of this phase of their careers provides an intimate glimpse into the lives of two significant musicians. It also helps illustrate how many West Virginia and Ohio Valley residents, just emerging from the Depression, found some release from tensions, toil, and tribulations through the songs, music, and humor of "hillbilly" entertainers.

Slim Clere, the elder half of the duo, originally came from Ashland, Kentucky. Born there on July 11, 1914, his Irish forebears included a line of fiddlers extending back several generations. Slim's grandfather had such talent that his fellow Civil War soldiers not only took up a collection to pur-



chase him a good instrument, but also informally relieved him of other military duties in exchange for keeping them supplied with tunes. Later Slim's father learned to play the same fiddle, but put down the bow when he injured two fingers. The violin then fell into the possession of uncle Sam Clere, but Slim purchased it on the installment plan when he became obsessed with a desire to learn the skill.

In addition to family tradition, Slim received considerable inspiration from musicians in the immediate area. These included Ed Morrison, leader of an early local square dance band, James W. Day (or "Blind Bill," the noted fiddler and folksinger made famous through the writings of Jean Thomas), and, most eminent of all, the transplanted West Virginian, Blind Ed Haley. This Logan County native working out of Ashland gained fame as the greatest old-time folk fiddler of his era, in the opinion of such experts and pupils as Clark Kessinger, "Georgia Slim" Rutland, and Slim Clere himself.

By 1934 Slim had gained sufficient experience fiddling at dances and other social functions that he successfully sought a job with the most prestigious of local bands, Chief Skaggs and the Mountain Melody Boys. Headed by the non-performing police chief of nearby Catlettsburg, this band gained wide popularity in the tri-state area via their weekly radio show and gave many musicians their start in the profession. After 1935, the Mountain Melody Boys also broadcast daily over WCMI of Ashland. Slim, reaching even higher, soon organized part of the group into a second band known as the Prairie Pals. By the spring of 1936, when nationally-known performers Riley Puckett and Bert Layne came to WSAZ radio in Huntington, Slim Clere and an ambitious young Huntington musician, Richard Cox, were ready to join forces with them, as Bert Layne and his Mountaineer Fiddlers.

Leaving Huntington on July 4, 1936, this new foursome went to station WIND, Gary, Indiana, and also did some guest spots on Chicago stations. However, Slim soon wearied of northern city life and longed to rejoin his Prairie Pals, who had gone to Georgia as band members for the Yodelin' Twins, Roland Gaines and Garner



Margie Shannon, "The Lone Star Yodeler," often shared WSAZ Tri-State Roundup Shows with Slim and Tex. Photographer unknown, courtesy Margie Shannon.

"Pop" Eckler. That fall Slim Clere went to WSB, Atlanta, where he became fiddler for the group known as Red and Raymond and the Boys from Old Kaintuck. Led by Lonnie (Red) Anderson, this band did early morning shows and the highly popular Cross Roads Follies in the afternoons. Slim spent about three years with Anderson, doing radio shows and playing personal appearances all over Georgia and much of Alabama and South Carolina. During vacation periods away from Atlanta, they played on WFBC in Greenville, and did guest spots over other stations in South Car-

olina, including the informal and unlicensed "grapevine" operations that flourished in the rural tenant farm areas.

Then in early October 1938, Slim received two urgent telegrams from old friend Harmie Smith at WCHS, Charleston. The latter had worked as a vocalist on WSAZ from 1930, and also WCMI, Ashland. Slim occasionally had fiddled with Harmie during his days with the Mountain Melody Boys. Now Harmie needed a fiddler badly, and Slim Clere returned to West Virginia radio.

Slim recalls that when in Charles-

ton Harmie Smith had "one bad habit." He kept getting homesick for Ashland and Huntington. After two weeks Smith departed for the tri-state region, again leaving Slim alone. He then joined forces with Indian Bill (Stallard) and his wife Little Montana, playing fiddle and also doing a comedy role as "Nimrod." Indian Bill and Little Montana went with musicians Salt and Peanuts after a couple of months and Slim briefly got together with two young Ashlanders of Mountain Melody Boys background, Bob Shortridge and Curley Wellman. Another case of homesickness left Slim by himself again, but fortunately the Nimrod character caught on sufficiently for him to sustain himself as a solo act at the station with his own 15 minute comedy show and Old Farm Hour appearances. He also filled in briefly as straight man for station announcer Frank Welling who had his own comic creation, "Uncle Si." He worked some show dates with Cliff Carlisle, an established recording star also at WCHS. Then in the early weeks of 1939 another new act, Deacon Wayne and the Dixie Melody Boys, came to Charleston. Among the group's numerous members was a young Arkansan who called himself "Smilin' Tex Tyler."

Tex also had many years of show business experience. Born in the Ouachita Mountain town of Mena, Arkansas, on June 20, 1916, young David Myrick taught himself to play guitar on an instrument ordered from Sears and Roebuck. Not getting much encouragement for a musical career on the family farm, Myrick, like many starstruck country youths in the Depression, hopped a freight with his guitar, a change of clothes, and left home at 16.

Myrick traveled over the entire country for the next six or seven years. At first, he stayed in Newport, Rhode Island, with an older brother who was in the Navy. There he first appeared on radio and used this exposure as a springboard for obtaining a regular station spot in Philadelphia. He then went to California and worked with a Hawaiian band in the Long Beach area. Moving next to Barstow and then to Nevada, Myrick played in clubs at both locations and also worked in Nevada mines.

A year in the mines left Dave Myrick with a desire to get back into radio,

and in 1935 he went to New York City. Unable to secure even an audition on the metropolitan stations, he played in small cafes and on Major Bowes' Amateur Hour. He then found himself booked for six weeks with a touring unit. However, he left the group in Davenport, Iowa, and went back to Chicago to land a radio spot at WJJD. He did better in the Windy City and even organized a band called the Ozark Ramblers. By this time he had taken the stage name of Tex Tyler. His fiddle player thought they could make it in the South, so they went to WJAX in Jackson, Mississippi. After a couple of months, Tex left to go on his own again and wound up in Cincinnati, where he ran into Milton "Ace" Richman and the Smith Brothers. Together they organized the Dixie Melody Boys. They went to Columbus where they experienced brief success by playing on Hank and Slim Newman's thrice-weekly broadcast over the Mutual Network. Moving to Pennsylvania they joined forces with Deacon Wayne, two female vocalists, and another musician or two. This was the unwieldy group that came to Charleston in early 1939 with so many members that by the time they divided their meager earnings little remained.

The band changed its name to the Red River Rangers, but this failed to help. Tyler dropped out and later others did likewise, until the Red River Rangers contained only Richman, Tennessee and Smitty Smith, and a comedian. By this time Tex had become close friends with Slim Clere, who was working solo once again. Seeing that they had a good duet, and that Tyler's solo cowboy songs would complement Slim's fiddling and comedy to give them a well-rounded act, the two joined forces. Having observed the rising popularity of the Blue Sky Boys in Georgia, Slim saw the harmony duet coming of age in West Virginia, too.

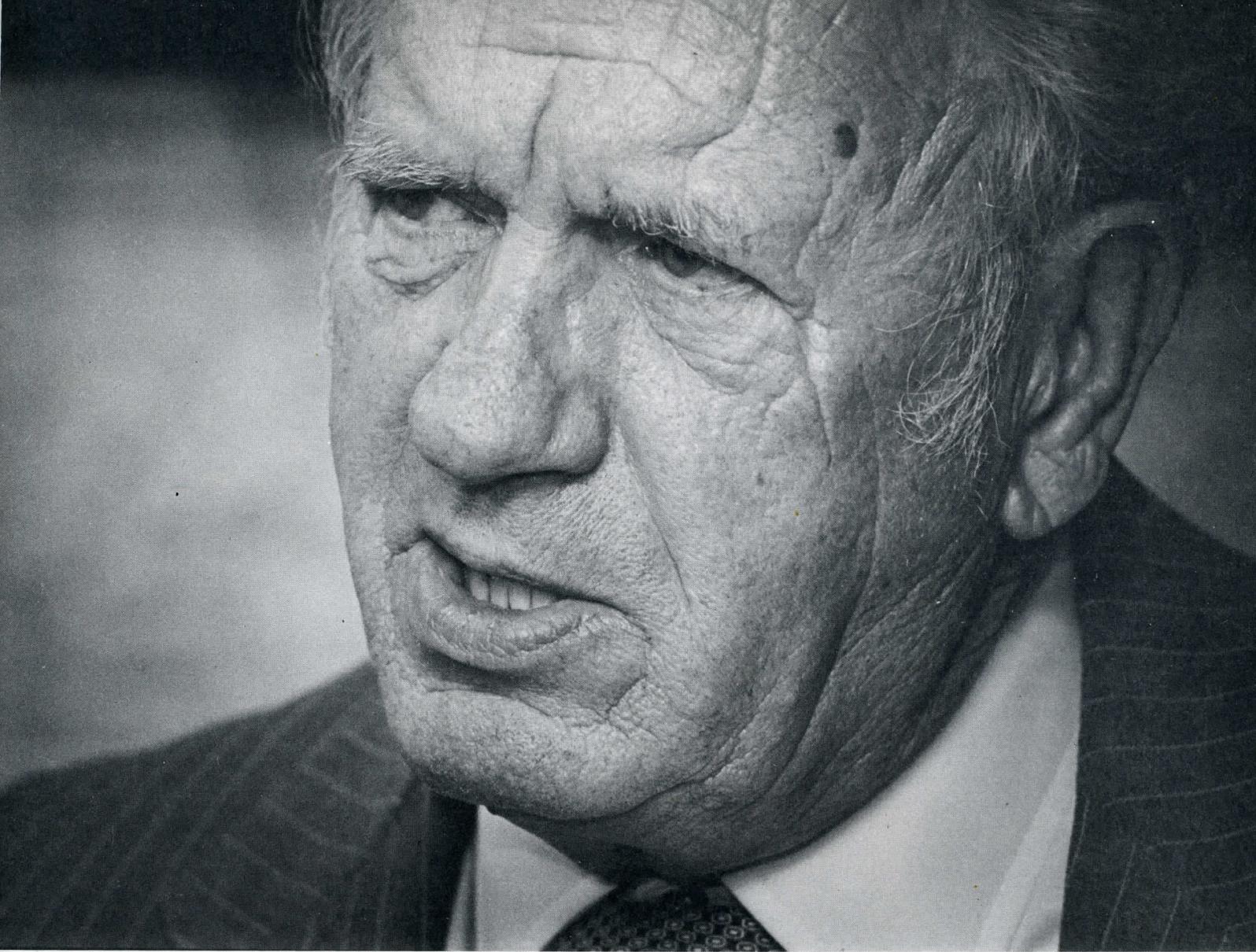
Slim Clere's thinking proved to be correct and the pair quickly became popular on both the daily show and the Old Farm Hour. They worked a few show dates with Cliff Carlisle and even more on their own. Tyler's winning personality brought them many friends, and "Nimrod the Nitwit" attracted more than his share of laughs. From about April 1939 until early July 1940 the pair pulled lots of mail and

drew the crowds. They added Orville "Q" (for Quickstep) Miller, a native Charlestonian known as "the boy with the musical feet," to their show. During summers the Franklin Brothers, a children's trio, also worked with them. WCHS Radio became a 5,000-watt station on October 16, 1939, which further increased their listening audience.

In Charleston, Tyler began the practice of growling one or two parts of occasional lines of songs. Slim recalls that he introduced it one night on the Old Farm Hour while singing the Spanish-flavored western song "El Rancho Grande" and the audience went wild with applause. Thereafter he put a growl into most of his solo performances—except for gospel songs—and it became a virtual trademark. Tex also picked up songs from other West Virginia artists that he would later record with commercial success, like Bill Cox's "Filipino Baby," Buddy Starcher's "Sweet Thing," and the old Will S. Hays recitation, "The Colored Child's Funeral."

The duo worked well together. Slim recalled that Tex felt that he owed his absolute best to the person who paid to see him, and thus became a perfectionist on stage. Tex's solid stagecraft earned strong support from audiences who gave him full backing when he had to deal with an occasional heckler in the rough communities where they performed. Tex also took his cowboy image quite seriously and wore western clothing virtually all the time. One day a couple of scoffers ridiculed his drugstore cowboy look on a Charleston street and his introducing himself as T. Texas Tyler. He explained that this outfit was his work clothing, for he earned his living as a radio cowboy vocalist. Forcing the men to concede that they would not make fun of a painter in white overalls, a miner with a pick and safety lamp, or a uniformed policeman, he eventually received a sincere apology from the fellows who shook his hand and went their way. The "Man with a Million Friends" always won them over, one way or another.

Slim and Tex prospered in West Virginia, but the figures show they worked hard for success. For example, on July 9, 10, and 11, 1940, they played a three-day engagement at the Virginia Theater in Parkersburg. During this



At 67, Clim Clere remembers early life on the road as hard but rewarding. He is gratified that old fans tune in to WZTQ, and others keep in touch. Photo by Rick Lee.

time they gave two shows daily to a grand total of 3,013 persons. The tickets, which sold for 10¢ and 15¢, brought in gross gate receipts of \$374.75. State and local theater taxes took \$17.54. They split the remaining \$357.21 with the theater management. The Franklin Brothers cost Slim and Tex \$50 weekly. Cowboy Copas worked this particular set of shows and likely received an equal cut. This would have given Slim and Tex each \$51.20 for three days' work, or slightly more than \$17 daily. This was one of their more lucrative appearances. The principal of one high school wrote that, with his auditorium seating only 175, it would be hard to gross more than

\$40, although if they still wished to play he would settle for a 30-70 split and publicize the show.

Within days of their Parkersburg appearances Slim, Tex, and Cowboy Copas relocated at WOPI in Bristol, Tennessee, where they had a daily afternoon show. Copas soon departed and secured a spot for all at WSB, Atlanta. Slim wanted no part of WSB at that time because of a recent change in that station's ownership. Tex remained with him in Bristol, but both soon saw that WOPI had been a mistake. The station was too small to reach a big audience and thus offered a small territory for show dates (Bristol's later station, WCYB, had more

power). As a result they quickly relocated to WBTH in Williamson, and by September to WSAZ, Huntington.

At WSAZ they repeated the success earlier found at WCHS. Orville Q. Miller rejoined them for a time and the Sergeant Brothers (Toot and Johnnie), who did guitar-mandolin duets in a Monroe Brothers style, also became part of their group. Country music had considerable appeal in Huntington at that time, and the Tri-state Roundup Show, consisting of all WSAZ artists, played two and sometimes three nights weekly from city theaters. In addition to Slim and Tex and their Gang, Lonnie Lucas and his Golden West Ramblers, Margie Shan-

Hillbilly Music

Slim Clere Discusses WZTQ

In October of 1980 Slim Clere put radio station WZTQ of Hurricane on a strict diet of bluegrass, early country, and traditional music. The programming is reminiscent of country music stations of 40 or 50 years ago, but is apparently unique in West Virginia today. Many listeners doubted that the station would survive in its new format, but after a year and a half most are convinced. Slim himself has been confident from the start. "We're gonna make it, yessir," he says.

I'm trying to run a good country music station, nothing fancy. Just the way it should be, just the way it started out years ago.

We try to program to people who have a little age on them, mature people, who work for a living, and not what you would say the rich elite people. Of course, they're welcome to it, but the usual people that we program to are just everyday Mr. and Mrs. Jones, the truck driver going down the road, or the lady cooking or washing dishes around the house. People that have to work for a living.

We're playing traditional music. It's the music that started back in

the days of the Revolutionary War and continued on up to the Civil War. The songs that tell a story. Most are written about love, tragedy, or something that happened to you when you was a boy—"When I was a young man I lived here and I met Mary" and so forth, "and I went away and Mary was dead," or had married somebody else, or "I caught her in the arms of another man one time and I left home and I found out later that the man was her brother."

It's hillbilly music. In order to dress it up, they call it country, contemporary, and bluegrass-progressive. Then you're going way out in left field when you get to that, because you're running out of music.

I was on the radio in the latter '30's and '40's, right here in West Virginia, at three or four different stations: Charleston, Huntington, Williamson, and around. And I have some of the same fans today that I had then. They were teenagers then and every once in a while I'll get a call, or get a letter from someone saying I heard you so-and-so. I got a letter the other day from a man over in Lincoln, 83 years old, said the first time he ever



saw me was on a jamboree program in Charleston. It does me rather good to know that those people are still loyal and remember.

But there is a generation gap with people in their 30's—seems like they have yet to understand what music is, some of them. I don't know why. It's something about the rock'n roll. It seems like they outgrow it when they get about 40. And they become hillbillies all over again. See, they were born hillbillies to start with, but it just took them that long to find out they are really a hillbilly.

non (the Lone Star Yodeler), and Radio Dot and Smoky typified the acts appearing on these shows. On other nights Slim and Tex worked surrounding towns throughout the tri-state area. Among their dates was a tour for International Harvester, playing some 20 free shows at various

dealerships. Also during this time Tex met and subsequently married a Huntington girl named Claudia Foster. As at WCHS, Slim and Tex found their stay at WSAZ a good one by the standards of the time.

Like other country music teams, they did have occasional differences.

In the summer of 1941 they broke up for several weeks. Slim and Check Anderson secured a spot at WGPC in Albany, Georgia, beginning on July 8. Leaving Huntington in June, Slim worked for a couple of weeks at WHLN, Harlan, Kentucky, on the way to the Peach State. Tex remained at



Slim occasionally takes over the control room at WZTQ, "a good country music station, nothing fancy." Photo by Rick Lee.

It took a lot of courage, a lot of nerve—and about half wit—to do what I did at WZTQ. When I came in here it was disco, and rock'n roll, and middle-of-the-road. Even the syndicated religious programs were contemporary. They didn't sound like hymns, and stuff like that. Some of them were actually on the—if you want to put it bluntly—dirty side. Actually were dirty. Especially where they interviewed college kids on campus. They'd say, for instance, "We're gonna talk today about God." And this student would say, "Well, who in the you-

know-what is God?" And stuff like that. So I got rid of all that, sent all those tapes back to Texas, back to the very places that had sent them in here.

One thing I do have is a beer commercial that's been on here for seven years. It helped pay the bills. We keep it away from all religious programs, and the company appreciates it. Like I say, it's paid the bills when things are rough. Not that they've got too smooth now.

We have to be very careful not to put a hymn anyways close to that commercial. On the other side of

WSAZ with the Sergeants, taking a yodeler named Tex Waterbury into his act along with Slim's former boss, Red Anderson. However, Slim found Georgia less to his satisfaction this time and by fall he had returned to WSAZ and his duo with Tex. They stayed together again until April of 1942. By

this time they had "pretty well played out the territory," and WSAZ station manager Mike Layman announced their impending departure.

Slim and Tex chose WMMN, Fairmont, as their new location. Many country acts had done well there. Tex and his wife found an apartment rath-

the clock, about five till, we have the hymn of the hour. We are very careful not to put a number before the hymn of the hour that says anything about dancing, or anything that would offend people. So they have grown to respect us, in that matter, you see.

All in all, I think we've got a good thing going here, but we're always looking for ways to improve. Here a while back I think we got a little bit too much bluegrass-oriented, we had to kind of shave it down a little bit because boys like Doc Williams and Lee Moore and Buddy Starcher were starving to death here, just itching to get played. We try to promote West Virginia artists above all. Fact is, when we first started out, they were gracious enough up at the State House to give us a whole shopping bag full of records that we promised that we would play and tell listeners where they could get them. That commitment still stands, in my mind.

We're gonna make it, yessir. We've hired a couple of advertising salesmen, they're out there beating the bushes. We've got business now that we never dreamed that we would ever have, or could get. It looks like we've sort of moved into Huntington, a market that we didn't have too much in. We have a few accounts in Charleston and around the immediate area of Putnam County. We know that Putnam County is on the grow and that we're right in the middle of a market of a half-million people, being halfway between Charleston and Huntington.

GOLDENSEAL readers living or traveling in the Putnam County area may tune in WZTQ at 1080AM.

er quickly, but Slim and teenagers Bud Nelson and Gene Light who had recently joined the act encountered problems with housing. In a moment of disgust, Slim accepted an offer to return to WCHS, thus ending the duo of Slim and Tex. They parted friends but never worked together again.

Each did well on his own. Slim together with the duo of Bud and Gene remained at WCHS for a time. Slim and Harmie Smith also worked together again. Towards the end of World War II, he got into the jukebox and record distribution business. Finally in 1949 Slim got back into radio at WHTN, Huntington, heading a group called the Melody Rangers which included the now-grown Gene Light. By the spring of 1950, he was having problems keeping his band together. He quit again and came back to his old job at Charleston. Except for helping Harmie Smith briefly at WKNA he dropped out of radio performing. Nonetheless, he played quite a bit of fiddle (and also violin) around clubs in the Charleston area for years.

T. Texas Tyler remained at Fairmont only briefly. He then went to WBIC, Indianapolis, and teamed up with another West Virginian, Little Jimmy Dickens. Entering military service, he went to California when discharged in 1945. Signing with Four Star Rec-

ords he had many successful hits, including "Deck of Cards," one of the top country tunes of 1948. He had popular radio shows at KGER, Long Beach, and KXLA, Los Angeles. Later Tex's local television show "Ranch Roundup" boasted high ratings. He came to Nashville and the Grand Ole Opry at Hank Snow's behest in 1957. He also spent considerable time in Texas. Continuing to record, his discs appeared on Decca, Capitol, King, and Starday.

As Tyler grew older, his thoughts increasingly centered on religion. By 1960, another former West Virginia entertainer, Walter Bailes, reported that "the 'Man with a Million Friends' had received the Call."

Through the 1960's Tyler, by now an ordained minister in the Assembly of God, gave more time to religion and less to music, although like other country stars who entered church work he managed to combine the two. Claudia died in 1968 and was brought back to Huntington for burial. Tex later

married "a wonderful Christian lady from Canada," Dorrie Susan, and they settled in Springfield, Missouri. However, in 1971 physicians told him he had terminal cancer. He became increasingly ill and died on January 23, 1972. According to reports, none of the Nashville crowd attended his funeral, and when Dorrie returned the body to Huntington for burial only a few old West Virginia friends appeared.

Slim Clere continued to live in Charleston. In 1979, he appeared at the Vandalia Gathering, and with the help of Rex Parker brought "Nimrod" back to life and displayed a bit of his other talents. Possessed of a fine memory and collection of material from the early days, Slim is an excellent source of information on early country music. In October 1980, at an age when others are retiring, he assumed management of radio station WZTQ in Hurricane. A few months later—on fan preference—he adopted a format of traditional country and bluegrass music. The station has picked up listeners and attracted widespread attention. At a time when the "country" seems to be eroding rapidly from country music, Clere is again bucking the trend.

In the last year of his life, T. Texas Tyler made final contact with his old friend. "You and I really had a fine act together, it's a shame we coul'nt [sic] have got some records on the market before we both went our way," he wrote Slim in a June 18, 1971, letter. "I believe we could have made a lot of them sit up and take notice."

Tyler spoke from the perspective of his own national success by this time, and he sold "Slim and Tex" short. Thirty years before, two mountain boys—one from nearby Kentucky and the other from distant Arkansas—sang their way into the hearts of thousands, and listeners throughout the Kanawha Valley and the tri-state area did "sit up and take notice." They still listen to Slim, who occasionally takes over the mike at WZTQ, and they remember Tex. ♣

Research for this article was in part funded by a grant from the Berea College Appalachian Fellowships program. Ivan Tribe also wishes to thank Gladys Byerly, Nancy Byerly, Pearl Cantrell, and Debra Newman for their assistance.

Slim Clere continues to play fiddle and violin, for his own pleasure and live on WZTQ from time to time. Photo by Rick Lee.



Russell "Dick" Rittenhouse

Growing Up Black in Marion County

By Arthur C. Prichard

Photographs by Ron Rittenhouse

Dick Rittenhouse grew up black at a time when racial segregation was still the rule in West Virginia. His slaveborn father, the original Dick Rittenhouse, had come to Mannington after emancipation, and established himself as a leader among the town's large teamster fraternity. Young Dick had the advantage of his father's respected name, and in a recent interview told of his own success in making a place for himself in a predominantly white community:

Russell "Dick" Rittenhouse, one of Mannington's best-liked citizens, retired in 1980 from Bailey's Home Furnishings, ending a relationship of nearly 60 years with that business. Starting in 1920 as a part-time employee of the Furbee Furniture Company, the furniture and undertaking establishment that was the predecessor to Bailey's, he became a full-time worker two years later. Jack Bailey and Evan Hopkins purchased the furniture division in 1949 from J. B. Lazear, and a few years later Bailey bought out his partner. While Dick's main employment continued to be in the furniture store, he also worked for his old friend, Berry Lazear, when time permitted, driving cars, ambulances, and hearses.

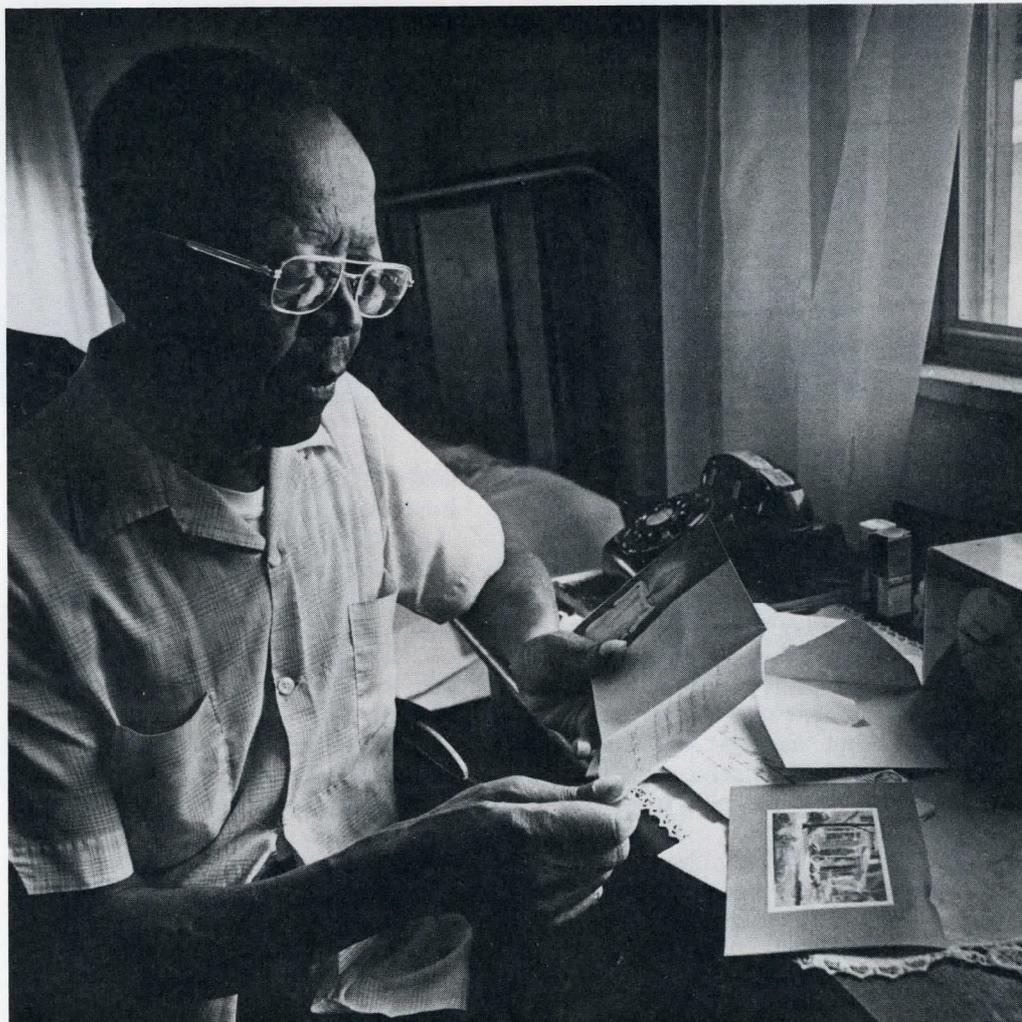
Working in a downtown store for nearly six decades, Dick Rittenhouse became the friend of hundreds of people. Talking to youngsters on their way to and from school, seeing them grow up, and continuing his interest when they went off to college or into the service, or moved away to work,

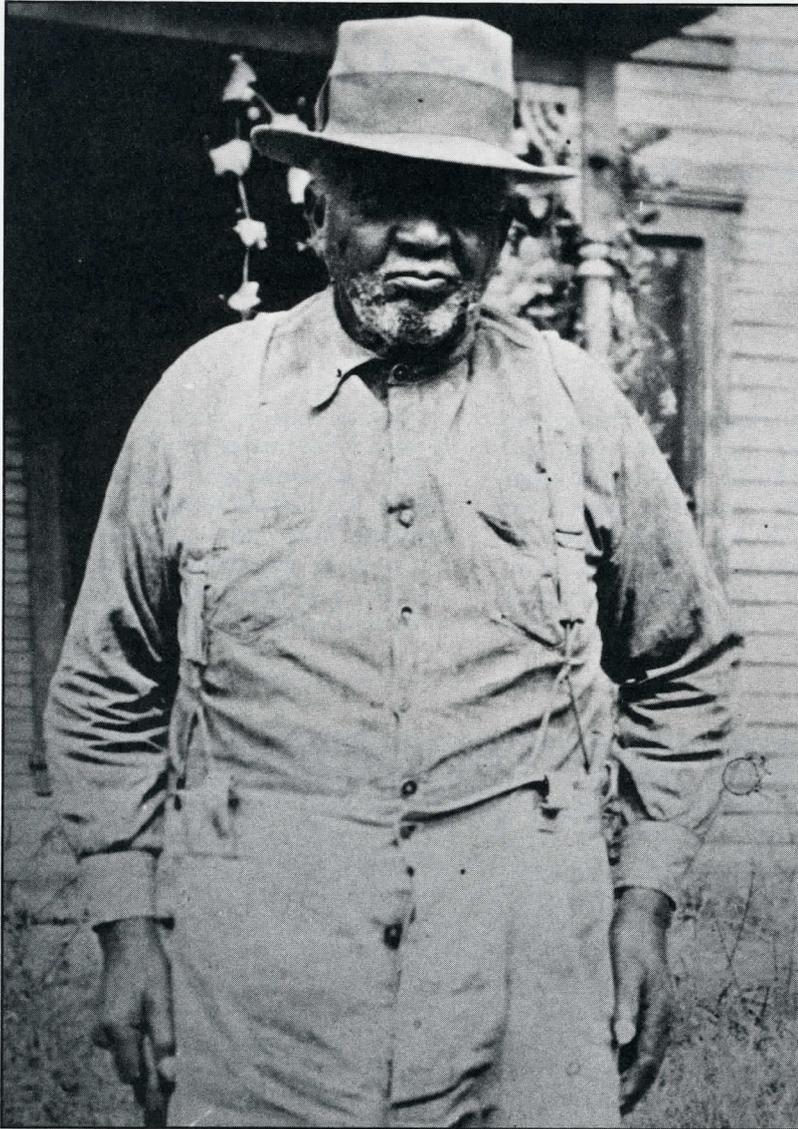
dealing with customers throughout the entire area, he became a source of information. Folks wanting to know where former residents now lived asked Dick. If he didn't know, he would find out if he could. Those returning for a visit generally stopped by to see him, to be brought up to date

on happenings in town and to locate former schoolmates or friends.

During Mannington Fair Week, the town's big homecoming event in late summer, Dick would spend most of his time in the store, not being assigned many jobs away from it. This made it possible for him to greet a host

In retirement, Mr. Rittenhouse examines a few of the many Christmas cards that come in each year from old friends.





Left: Dick's father, Richard "Dick" Rittenhouse was a leading teamster in the Mannington oil fields. Date and photographer unknown.

Below: W. D. "Bill" Smith, a leading Mannington businessman, was the employer of the older Dick Rittenhouse and a friend of the younger. Date and photographer unknown.

Right: Young Dick Rittenhouse and his dog Bull take a serious look at the world in this undated photograph. Photographer unknown.



of former Manningtonians who would drop in to renew acquaintances. Throughout the year friends write him. "At Christmas I get a lot of cards, from old friends, from some of those I used to play with as a youngster," Dick says. "I even get them from children and grandchildren of old friends. Some of them say they never remember seeing me, but their dads and mothers used to send me Christmas cards, so they are going to keep up the practice."

When Dick was hospitalized in Fairmont a few years ago he received

several hundred cards. "Some in the hospital wanted to know who I was. A girl who brought the mail said, 'You must be pretty popular.'

"I said, 'Oh, no, just a few people know me, that's all.'

"Well, there must be a lot of people who know you, for you sure get a lot of mail."

A nurse asked if he was mayor of Mannington, since he received such a number of phone calls and get-well wishes.

Dick gives as one reason for his having many friends the fact that he

had the example of several fine people when he was young. One was the legendary Bill Smith, head of the W. D. Smith and Son Company, teaming contractors for oil and gas companies in Mannington and nearby fields. Dick's father was one of Bill Smith's best teamsters. [See GOLDENSEAL, Volume 3, Number 4, October-December 1977.] Smith was his hero, and Dick grew up in his shadow. "I was with Bill Smith for years. We were the best of friends, and he always told me, 'Always treat people nice. Don't get smart with them, just be friendly. If



they say something that hurts your feelings, laugh it off.'

"Another good teacher was Berry Lazear. I worked for him for many years. He taught me a lot. He always treated people right. I learned that the way to have friends is to be friendly. In my time there have been a mighty nice bunch of people in Mannington. They treated me fine."

Asked if there had been those who had given him trouble during his years at the store, Dick says, "Not many. Sometimes people would kind of give you a smart answer. Once a

man did come in and ask Lazear to fire me and give his boy a job. Lazear said, 'No, I can't do that.'

"The man said, 'If you had a white boy workin' here, you'd get more business.'

"Mr. Lazear answered, 'Nobody ever kicked on him yet.'

"The man said, 'You mean you would keep that nigger here?'

"Mr. Lazear said to him, 'Don't you ever call him that in this store again. You see that door?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, get out, and never come back

in here as long as I ever have anything to do with it. He works for me and he's going to stay working for me.'

"The man turned around and looked at me, and said to both of us, 'I'd never let you bury a dog for me.'

"A month or two later the same man came to the door, but didn't come in. He hollered for me. I went to the door. He said, 'Where's Mr. Lazear?' I told him he was back in there.

"'I'd like to see him.'

"I said, 'You know what he told you?'

"'Yes, I know what he told me, but we don't have anything to eat and I wonder if he'd loan me something?'

"I went back to Mr. Lazear; we were working on a body at that time. I told him, and Mr. Lazear went to the door and talked to the man, who still stood outside. Then he came back, kind of grinning, and said the man told him he didn't have anything to eat and wanted to borrow some money off him. He said he let the man have \$20. You know \$20 was a lot of money in those days. The man never opened his mouth about Lazear or me or anyone around the store after that. He got a Christian made out of him that day."

Dick also credits his parents with teaching him about getting along with people. "They told us, 'You know you are colored, and you know there are places you can't go, and don't put yourself in on anybody.'

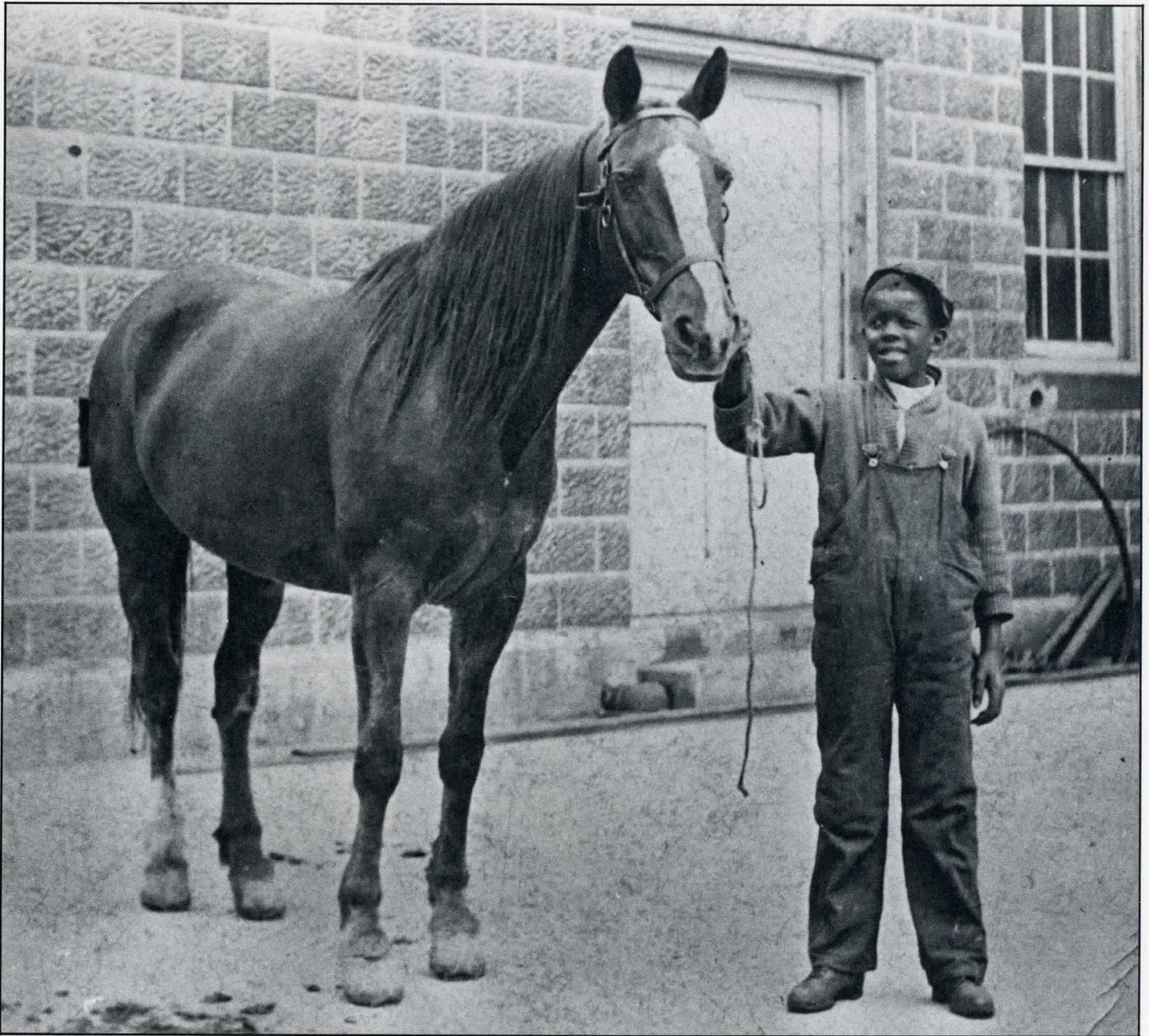
"We remembered that. Also I remember how the kids in our neighborhood we played with [almost all were white] would come to our house. My mother always kept cake and pies, and the kids would come and want to know if we had any cake or pie or anything to eat. And we would feed them. Once I asked my mother, 'How come we can't go to their houses and eat like that?'

"She said, 'Don't you ever go in anyone's house unless they ask you in.' So we never did go in anyone's house unless they asked us. All of them around here on Main Street would say, 'Come on in.'

"And I'd say, 'No, Mother said.'

The kids and their parents would say, 'You tell your mother we want you to come in.' We were well treated."

Dick came to know many people in Mannington District and the surrounding area through Mr. Lazear's business. "I knew about everyone as



Dick with his horse, Pet. The horse, like Dick's dog Bull, was a gift from Bill Smith. Date and photographer unknown.

at one time Lazear buried an awful lot of people, about everybody around here. Some people would come in ahead of time and pick out a casket and whatever else they wanted—a vault or a rough box—and get the prices. They would say, 'Whenever anything happens we will give you a call.' And most generally they would call us. At times some would come in and pay for their funerals ahead of time when they had the money."

At birth, Dick received the name of Russell. But since his father, Richard "Dick" Rittenhouse, was so widely

known, the name Russell in time gave way to a nickname, "Little Dick," which later became simply "Dick." His father had been born a slave in Harrison County in 1850. When very young he and his family had moved to the Bennett Rittenhouse plantation in Marion County. Coming to the Mannington area as a free man after the Civil War, he became an expert handler of horses, and in the early 1890's began working as a teamster for Bill Smith. Later Smith wanted Dick to be the team boss for Smith's Mannington business, but Dick refused.

Yet through the years he gave considerable leadership to the operation as his fellow teamsters rallied around him.

"Little Dick's" mother was Nancy Hall Rittenhouse from Grafton. He had two brothers, Charles and Harry, both considerably older than he, a sister, Mary, and another who died in infancy. Dick's parents, his brothers, and his wife, Thelma, have been dead for many years. Sister Mary married Bill Meade, a stonemason and bricklayer, and lives in Fairmont.

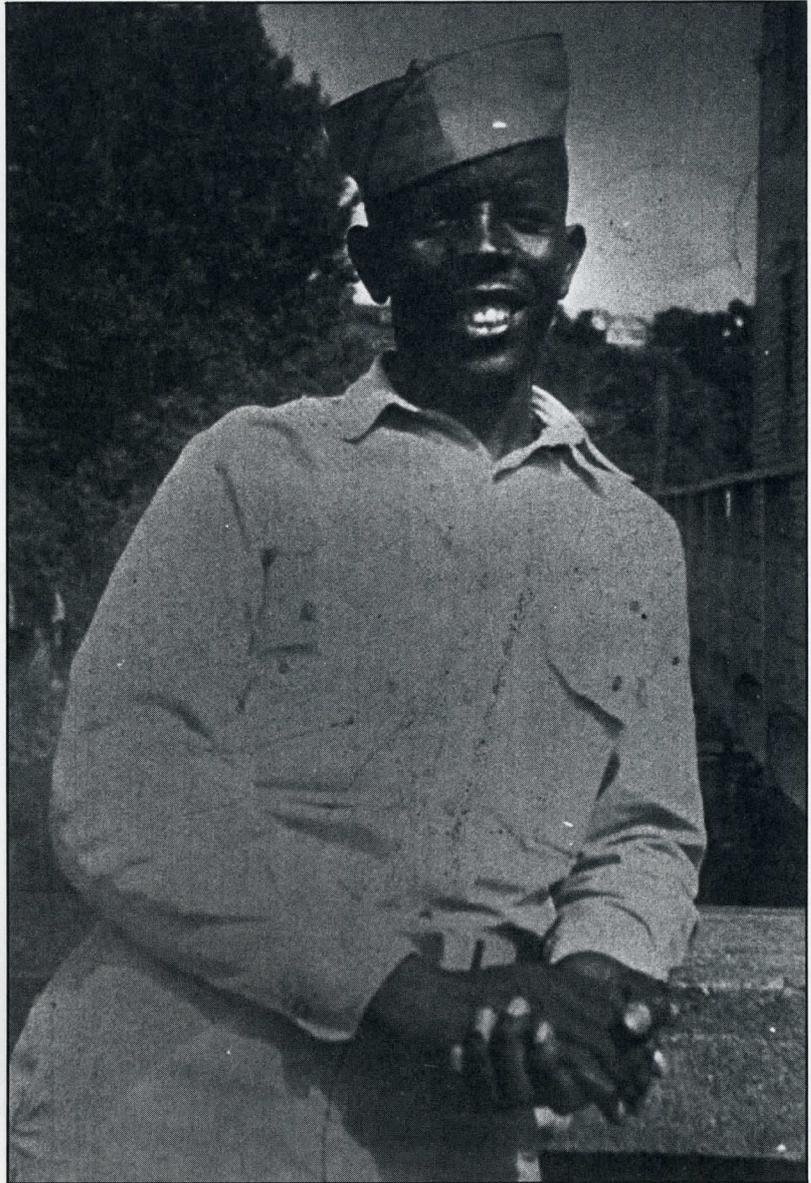
Childhood and youth for Dick Rit-

tenhouse centered around Bill Smith, the Smith family, the horse barns, and the teamsters, as well as his own family. They are remembered as years of delight. Bill Smith was his friend and idol. In 1892 or 1893, Smith as a young man had driven into Mannington from Greene County, Pennsylvania, seeking employment in the booming oil field. By the time Dick was a youngster, Smith was operating 100 teams of horses in Mannington and nearby communities, hauling oil and gas materials and supplies. Big Bill Smith, six feet four inches tall and weighing 325 pounds, was a dynamic, colorful man, remembered as one who was kind, generous, fair, and forceful. He was a man to be reckoned with in the oil fields and the community.

"Little Dick" trailed Bill Smith around, spending as much time as he could near him. Mary Gail Koen, a granddaughter of Smith, recalls, "My mother told me that, as a little boy, Dick had so much fun following Grandpa around at the stable that it became a real problem getting him to school. Mother went on to say it was no wonder he didn't want to be at school, because what little boy would want to be 'bothered' with that when there was so much going on at the barn; teamsters leaving for far-away places, teamsters returning from such places, and lots of questions to be asked and answered about what they had seen."

Dick simply says, "Bill Smith saw to it that I went to school." But on non-school days and in the summer, Dick remembers, "I went with Bill Smith about every place he went. Whenever he went some place in a buggy I would go with him. I went with him until he died." Dick was 14 years old when Smith's death occurred.

Mary Gail also tells of her grandfather Bill and his son, Winston Smith, once being in Ohio laying a pipeline. "Uncle Win had come back to Mannington for some needed items and was to return to Canton promptly. While home, Dick's mother heard Win was there and asked him if he would please take Dick back with him. Mrs. Rittenhouse said he was so lonesome for Bill Smith and missed him so much she feared he would run away from home trying to find him, and he was too young to be wandering



Dick Rittenhouse served in both World Wars. Date and photographer unknown.

around by himself. But if Win would take him, she would let him go and all she needed was time enough to get his clothes washed and packed." Win took Dick along with him to Ohio, and Dick was reunited with his idol.

Dick says, "It was great growing up with fellows like the teamsters. You knew them all; you knew what they did. They were a fine bunch of guys. When they came into the barn or when they went out in the morning, they were always pretty jolly and laughing and joking with one another. When they came back from trips they would tell stories about one another, sometimes making them up, and have some pretty good laughs.

"They would stick together; they would help one another. They got along better than people do today. Today you find a crowd of fellows, maybe with two or three bullies who want to do their way or some who don't want to work. You never found that among those boys. They stayed together. If they had any beefs, they took it out among themselves, but not on anyone else. They always treated you good. They would fight for me, and wouldn't let anyone say anything about me or my dad.

"Once some local fellows got smart and were going to start some trouble with my dad and some other teamsters. Some of the teamsters told the



Three generations of Rittenhouses: Dick, son Russell "Tiny" Rittenhouse, Jr., and grandson Ron Rittenhouse.

fellows who wanted to fight, 'If you want to start something, you boys start it, but let us tell you one thing. A couple of you aren't going to jump on one; it's going to be one on one. Now if you want to do that, you start something.' The troublemakers never did anything; they just turned around and walked away. And the teamsters yelled after them, 'Now don't you ever forget that.'

"One of the men connected with the troublemakers afterwards went to Bill Smith to complain about the teamsters' part in the confrontation. Bill asked him, 'You work for the Hope [a leading gas company], don't you?'

"Yes, sir.'

"You still want to work for the Hope?'

"Yes, sir.'

"Then let me tell you something. You just go back down there and tend to your own business, and I'll tend to the teamsters' business.' The man left without saying another word as Smith had great influence with the companies for whom he teamed."

Late one severely cold winter day five of Smith's men, on their way back to Mannington, stopped at a farm house in nearby Harrison County and asked for food and lodging for themselves and horses. When supper was ready the farmer's wife called the white teamsters to the table, but said Dick would have to wait and eat later. The men refused to eat without Dick and left, driving several hours in the cold to a more receptive house.

"Little Dick" takes up the story from there. "Bill Smith talked to that

farmer and his wife; he talked so strongly that the farmer cried. Bill told them, 'Don't ever come to my barn and ask us for a favor or anything.'

"A month or so later my dad and some other drivers were going out Whetstone Road and there stuck in the mud was that farmer's wagon—hung up right. The other teamsters, recognizing the man, wouldn't help; they just drove on. But Dad took his horses and pulled the farmer's wagon out. The man wanted to thank Dad, but he said, 'Nope, I wasn't good enough when I was in your house, but I stopped to help you. Now just don't say anything more.' Dad drove off. The farmer never got over it.

"Bill Smith was a fine man," Dick declares. "He treated everybody alike, all of them were the same. When ho-

bos came along, he would ask them if they had had anything to eat, and if they would say no, he would give them money, and they could go up to a restaurant nearby and eat. He was good to everybody; he always donated to everything that came along; treated people right.

"When he died some of the hobos—we called them 'the knights of the road'—came back to the funeral." The Mannington school and stores closed when Bill Smith died, and Dick Rittenhouse remembers it as a big funeral. "Oil people from far and near came; all the teamsters were there, men who used to work for him were back. It was one of the biggest funerals this part of the country had, back in that time.

"My dad drove the boiler-wagon with Bill Smith's casket on it. He and Bill had a pact—that which one died first the other would drive the body to the cemetery. If Dad died first, Bill would drive, using six black horses; and if Bill died first, Dad would drive, using six white horses." A wagon wheel, with one spoke broken out and with flowers around the wheel, was on top of the wagon near the casket. The broken wheel had been provided by the teamsters. Later "Little Dick" drove the hearse carrying Mrs. Bill Smith's body to the cemetery. Still later, when Gail Smith Koen, the Smiths' only daughter, died, he was at the wheel of the hearse.

"After Bill Smith died I stayed there a couple of years, helping to look after the horses, until about the time Win Smith sold the teams to the Hope. I drove automobiles for Win. We used to go all around the country, to Baltimore, Washington, D.C., to Washington, Pennsylvania, where Win had gone to W & J College years before."

Mary Gail Koen recalls that "back then driving a car was a real physical chore and much more time was required to cover the miles. To save time when time meant money, it was necessary to have someone to share the driving, and Dick was a big help to Uncle Win. Apparently, Dick's high regard for Grandpa had also included Uncle Win, because Dick told me how much he always enjoyed these business trips with him. He went first class with Uncle Win, always ate the same quality of food, sat at the same table. When time came to stop over-

night, Uncle Win always went with Dick to see what Dick's room was like. If Dick said the room was OK, Uncle Win would pay for it. Otherwise, they would drive on until a location suitable to both was found.

"In 1918 I went in the army," Dick recalls. "I went about the same time that Clare Hess, Joe Gaughan, and Walter Cordray, from out in the country, went. First I went to Fort Lee; then I was sent to Morgantown, West Virginia, to go to a truck-driving school. Cordray went there too.

"When I came out of the army I worked a while at Boor and Davis Feed Store and Mill. After that I began working at Berry Lazear's furniture store and undertaking business.

"I was in World War II also. I got drafted when I was 42 years old. It turned out I didn't have to go because of my age, but I went anyway. They put me to driving again. I went to Orlando, Florida, and was with the air base, truck driving. I was in the army three years or longer the second time."

According to Mary Gail Koen, when Dick was home on leave, "getting to see him was like standing in line to greet a United States President. I remember one Saturday night in particular, he had stopped in the furniture store, and before anyone could count to 20, people galore had crowded inside to say 'hello' and see him in his uniform. I don't imagine the store did much business that entire day with Dick visiting somewhere all around the town and then at the store during the evening. But there was always Monday for shopping."

Through the years Dick helped the Smith family in various ways. "I used to help take care of Bill Smith's two grandchildren, Charlotte and Mary Gail, daughters of Gail Smith Koen. We got along fine. Mary Gail was just like her granddad up and down. Charlotte took after her father. I had to make them mind, but they would listen to me. I would tell them I would spank them and that was all the farther they would go."

Both Charlotte and Mary Gail remember the good care Dick took of them. Mary Gail writes, "I remember Dick from practically the same time as I first remember my own family. When I was two or three years old, I could barely reach Dick's middle finger when I walked with him from

Grandma's house to the main part of town. As time went on and I was growing, he never hesitated to speak up if he thought it necessary. He never ceased to remind me that he used to spank me when I was little and he could always do it again."

Dick married Thelma Brown of Martinsburg. Charlotte and Mary Gail remember times when Dick and his wife came to the Koen house to take care of them for a weekend when their parents were gone. When Thelma and Dick had a son, Russell, Jr., both Koen children were afraid Dick wouldn't have time for them because he had his own child. The girls soon discovered that Dick liked three children as well as he had two.

Russell Rittenhouse, Jr., was exceedingly small at birth. "Smallest boy born around here," Dick states. "People used to come to see him and would say, 'He's awful tiny,' so they started calling him 'Tiny,' and he's gone by that name.

"Speaking of babies, makes me think of when I was a boy on Main Street," Dick goes on to tell. "When we kids would see Doc Andrews going by we would say, 'There goes Doc Andrews with a little baby in that grip, and he's taking it some place.' He always carried a medical bag with him. When we were kids many people here had him deliver their babies. So we would say, 'he's got a baby in that grip.'

"Sometimes a new boy would ask, 'How do you know?'

"And we'd say, 'You just see where he goes, and then after a while you'll find out that they have a baby there. Doc Andrews has it in that grip.'"

The original Dick Rittenhouse is gone now, and "Little Dick" is finally retired, but the family tradition of hard work and service to northern West Virginia has continued in their descendants. Tiny, his parents' only child, grew up to become a mechanic for the local Ford garage. During World War II he joined his father in military service. He and his first wife had two children, Ronald Richard and Rosalind. Young Ron Rittenhouse now lives in Morgantown, where he is senior photographer for *The Dominion-Post*. Ron's excellent photography has won him many awards, and his pictures of his grandfather accompany this article. ✨

Grandmother's House

Memories of a Brooke County Farm

By Anne Clark Culbert

When I was a child, back in the 1920's and '30's, I led a double life. Most of the year I spent home with my parents in a New York City suburb. But for a good share of each summer, instead of being shipped off to camp like most of my friends, I visited my Grandmother Carter's farm near Colliers, West Virginia, north of Wheeling in Brooke County. This farm and the house on it were hundreds of miles from New York City physically, and nearly a world away culturally in that pre-television age.

My mother had lived on the farm (which had been in the Carter family since the 1850's) until she married my father, who was from Steubenville, in 1920 and moved to New York. It was a sheep farm during the time Mother lived there. Although we ate lots of lamb chops and roasts when I was a child, she always said that she could never stand the smell of lamb cooking, because it reminded her of butchering time, and the slaughter of those lambs she had cared for and loved.

Although in the 1920's and '30's there were still many farms in the Northern Panhandle, the area was primarily coal and steel country. All my memories of that period and place are

permeated with the smell of burning coal, the sight and feel of gritty coal dust on windowsills, and the blaze of Bessemer blast furnaces reflected in the Ohio River at night. On hot humid afternoons we could hear the dull rumble of coal cars from my grandmother's front porch.

Grandmother's house was not beautiful, gracious, luxurious, or even an especially comfortable house, but it had a dignity and personality which left a deep impact. It was alive with family history, both real and imaginary. Originally the house had been a log cabin, but the logs had long ago been covered with siding, resulting in walls two feet thick in the oldest section. Also, many later additions somewhat disguised its early shape.

Like many old houses, it was placed close to the road which led up the hill past St. John's Episcopal Church in one direction, and down past open fields to a row of cherry trees in the other direction. In the background lay rolling hills, fenced pastures, orchards and woodlots. I recall my mother and grandmother standing on the summer lawn looking out over those hills and singing, "Oh, the West Virginia hills, how majestic and how grand!" This song no doubt referred specifically to



the rugged hills farther south, but still it fitted beautifully. Though the land had been cleared by the settlers, deep in the valleys and ravines were black, rather frightening wildernesses. And there was still old talk of panthers and mountain lions.

The oldest section of Grandmother's house contained the living room, a large, semi-divided, dark room. It was furnished with a horsehair sofa, an upright piano on which I had to practice, a square oak parlor table with



Although young Anne Clark saw her grandmother's house most often in summer, the family album contains many snow scenes as well. This one dates from the 1920's. Photographer unknown.

a shelf underneath, a newspaper and magazine holder, several oak rockers, a glass-doored bookcase, and a large red, potbellied stove, the only heat in the house except for two or three fireplaces and the kitchen stove. As a very small child, I remember sitting cozily in front of the curling blue and yellow flames of the living room fireplace playing with a box of old toys which included a small iron cookstove with tiny utensils, miniature wooden milk pails and churn. Hanging high on the

living room wall was a creased family portrait of a young woman with dark eyes, an empire-waisted gown, and a plumed headdress. This painting was said to have been carried over the Alleghenies in a saddlebag.

Also in the old part of the house were narrow, twisting, enclosed back stairs, where Grandmother kept two or three years' supply of *Lady's Home Journal*, *Women's Home Companion*, and *Country Gentleman*, all of which I spent much time perusing, especially

on the porch swing. At the head of the stairs was a curtained cubbyhole. At night when the curtain stirred in any slight breeze, I thought of hidden burglars, wildcats, copperheads, or ghosts.

To the left of the stairs, coming up, was Grandmother's bedroom, also a part of the original log cabin. Its two windows were very small and high. There was a large trunk there, and a cradle in which Mother said she could remember rocking herself to sleep as an infant. Grandmother's dresser top



Right: Grandmother Carter—actually a great-grandmother by the time this snapshot was taken in 1947. Photographer unknown.

Far right: The author in the arms of her mother, Elizabeth Carter Clark, preparing to leave the Brooke County farm for New York. Photographer unknown, 1923 or 1924.

held a silver receptacle, boxes, and a hobnail glass slipper pincushion, but Grandmother slept on patched muslin sheets and wore a flour-sacking nightgown.

The only other room in this oldest section was a small bedroom to the right of the back stairs. When I was 10 or 11, I claimed it for my own during the lengthy visits I spent with Grandmother during June and July. I even enjoyed the feather bed, despite the heat, for the novelty of it. Over the bedstead hung a bookshelf, filled with children's books which had belonged to my mother, her brothers and sisters. Some may have been even older than that. There were McGuffey Readers, animal stories of oddly people-like rabbits and dogs, and I especially recall a large book with beautiful colored illustrations of children dressed up in ruffles and caped coats for church, children entering a sleigh for a drive through snow-encrusted hills, children strolling under mighty oaks, gathering fruit in summer orchards, hickory nuts in the fall.

Between the head of the bed, the bookshelf, and the wall lived mud dauber wasps. Every morning they flew lazily back and forth from their nest, through the open door of my room and out through some hole only they knew about. They trailed their long legs over my face, and buzzed loud enough to wake me. "They won't



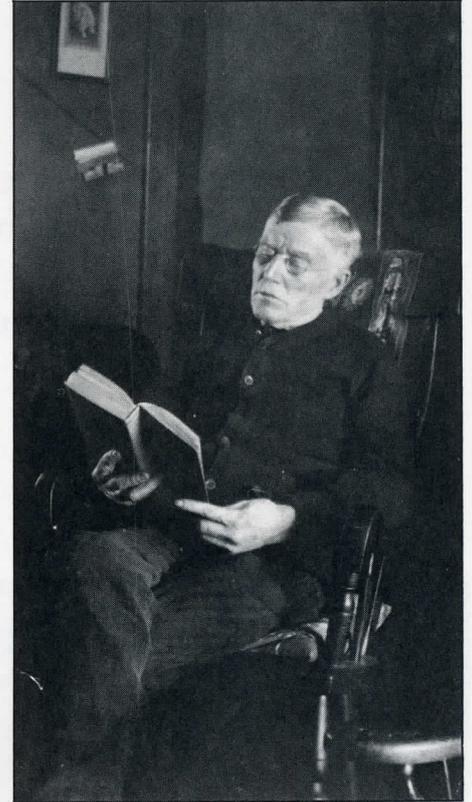
**“Between the head of the bed, the bookshelf, and the wall
lived mud dauber wasps. Every morning they flew lazily
back and forth. They trailed their long legs over my face,
and buzzed loud enough to wake me.”**





Above: Grandfather Eli Carter (center) prepares apples for storage, about 1924. Photographer unknown.

Right: Grandfather Carter reads in the farmhouse dining room. Date and photographer unknown.



bother you if you don't bother them," said Grandmother.

By the time I arose, after the clock struck 7:30 or 8:00, Grandmother would often be asleep and snoring on the horsehair sofa, having already spent several hours hoeing, caring for the animals, or, maybe, cutting fresh asparagus. *And* eaten a second breakfast of hash browns and pie, or hash and pie.

Sometimes in the evenings, after I had gone to bed and was supposed to be asleep, I would grow homesick and lonely. Through the small window, high on the wall, overlooking the cemetery, lights from approaching autos would shine as the cars crossed the brow of the hill. The light glided in pale squares across the wall while the sound of the motor grew slowly louder. And slowly the squares slipped away into darkness while the sound of the engine died in the distance. Then I might hear the long-drawn hooting of the night train as it rumbled through the valley and, I knew,

eventually to New York. Or I would imagine I heard bats in the chimney, squeaking and thumping. I would put my head under the sheet.

At some point in the house's career, perhaps as a concession to fashion, a Victorian parlor had been built to one side of the old living room. The parlor was furnished with ornate Victoriana. I do not recall anyone ever sitting there, unless special company came to call on special occasions. There was an ornate foot-pumped organ, which my cousin and I liked to play, especially when staging an elaborate funeral for some deceased bird or rabbit. There were a number of fringed velvet pillows bearing messages like "Friendship" in fancy script. On the wall hung my uncle's collection of antique muzzle loaders, flintlocks, and powder horns. Uncle Sam was a shooting enthusiast. He spent long hours at target practice behind the house.

The second door to the parlor exited onto a small porch called the portico, where houseplants lived in summer.

It made a good background for snapshots. Also, it was by this portico that my cousin Mary Elizabeth, aged 5 or 6, was finally found one evening after she had disappeared at the call of "Bedtime, children!" Mother and Grandmother discovered her, clutching the roots of the goldenglow, her head hidden among the stalks, and carried her into the house screaming and kicking. I held open the porch door. She went home the next day to Follansbee, but I had been very impressed. My cousin put on many and splendid tantrums, but I never could work it myself. One day I tried, but Mother and Grandmother looked at each other, gasped, "Good Lord, she's catching it!" and put a quick stop to any such nonsense.

The rest of the house was added, all at once or piece by piece, sometime in the mid to late 19th century. A large opening was cut in the back of the living room wall and sliding doors were installed, opening on a dining room, with a screened-in side porch.

Over the dining room was my uncle's big square bedroom, with big square bed, and several large windows, making it the brightest room in the house. On the far side of the dining room was the most used room in the house, the kitchen, with adjoining pantry and washroom. Over the kitchen was the bedroom my mother and I often shared. Under the kitchen was the cellar, dark and cool, where apples in barrels and preserved foods in glass jars were stored for the winter. Legend had it that the house had been a station on the underground railway, especially useful because there was a cellar with an exterior entrance, through which runaway slaves might escape.

From the outside, the frame house had a comfortable country charm. I recall the pleasure I felt when I first arrived in late May, running past the as yet empty fruit stand by the road, through the front gate, up the stepping stones past the climbing roses, the peonies, the green wooden slatted glider where my cousin and I played pirate ship, the fragrant red florets on the spice bush by the garden fence, and the bush honeysuckle to the screened-in porch. Grape vines growing on trellises shielded the un-screened front porch, hiding the coal dust which turned even new paint gray only too soon.

I suspect Grandmother would have thought it rather sinful to spend much time and money in an effort to beautify either herself or her home. She planned things with utility and propriety in mind, giving a slight bow towards comfort and fashion. White lace curtains hung in the living room and parlor, and all the windows had room darkening shades. Grandmother made the braided rag rugs on the floor and the quilts on the beds, not as an art, but because they were needed and utilized scraps and worn-out clothing.

The warmth and attraction of the house came from its old fashioned qualities, and its aura of family history. There were the cherry corner cupboard in the kitchen, filled with willowware china, cut and pressed

glass bowls, spoon holders and silver flatware, the coal stove on which Grandmother brought her aromatic jams and jellies to a full rolling boil, the blue enamel bucket of fresh water from the well (my job to keep it filled) and the enamel dipper from which water tasted marvelously good. There were the washstands in the bedrooms, with their big flowered washbowls and pitchers (chamberpots were stored in the cupboards beneath). There were the brown engravings hanging on the bedroom walls; sheep under a tree entitled "The Lord is my Shepherd," and the farmhouse nestled in the hills called "Home Sweet Home," both framed in oak carved to resemble leafy branches.

Mother told me once that most of the old furniture was no longer in the house, or had been relegated to the kitchen or side porch or even the barn when "mission oak" became the rage. The horsehair sofa was not gracefully Victorian, but squarely Michigan, and quite uncomfortable although I used to lie on it after lunch when the house was still, reading old copies of magazines. Multi-paned window sashes had been replaced with large, single-paned windows. The dark green shades were kept pulled on hot afternoons when the Ohio Valley sun streamed in and the thermometer read 105 in the shade—which happened all too often, except when the heat was broken by a spectacular storm.

Grandmother was not an early ecologist with her scrimping, saving, recycling, and economizing. She was a late pioneer. She knew how to live without benefit of electricity, icebox, dishwasher, or washing machine. She was also very concerned about wasting food. One evening Mary Elizabeth and I made an abortive attempt to run away, and before returning, dumped our hoarded food—bread, radishes, tomatoes, and a little chicken—in a clump of poke weed behind the hen house. The next day, when Grandmother discovered the discarded food, she was furious!

"That's a very wasteful thing to do!" she scolded. "Here people are starving

all over, and you throw away perfectly good food! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

We were chagrined, because of course Grandmother was right. It was in the depths of the Depression, and whenever some stranger begged at the door, Grandmother gave him a good sandwich, but nothing was wasted.

Of course the kitchen was the center of domestic activity. It was also the coziest room in the house, what with the coal stove for baking bread, pies, making jams and jellies, cooking delicious meals of homegrown vegetables—lima beans, string beans and pork, little onions and peas, pan fried steak with gravy, sliced boiled potatoes fried in bacon grease, rhubarb, stewed tomatoes, and that asparagus. There we also consumed homegrown fruit—strawberries, cherries, peaches, apricots, plums, apples, and grapes. And on the kitchen table Grandmother cleaned plump, scalded, plucked chickens, which I had watched her execute on the stump by the henhouse. I always covered my eyes for the final blow, then opened them to see the beheaded fowl stagger about before collapsing. I sometimes helped clean it, marveling at the number of eggs within, from that nearly completed one to the smaller others which that poor hen might have laid. My cousin and I would fight over who got to eat the heart.

There were two windows in the kitchen, one on either side of the corner cupboard, where Grandmother kept money in an old sugarbowl. The money she got from selling butter, an occasional chicken, eggs, vegetables and fruit, collected in that bowl. Out of it she paid for the newspaper, staples from the grocery in town, stamps, and who knows what else. One window looked out over the fence into the cemetery; the other past the washhouse corner, and almost down to a big sugar maple. Next to this window was the sink. When I was very young, it was watered by a hand pump, piped from a nearby shallow well. Later, water from that well was used only for washing clothes and flowers. I remem-

ber the well had fishing worms in it. But before the cistern was built, the only water we had came from it, and from another well farther from the house. This second well was only used for cooking and drinking and the water was delicious. During dry spells people came to our house to draw drinking water from that well.

Between the sink and the outside door was an old fashioned wall coat-rack, and on it always hung an old shawl, for trips out back in cold weather. To the right of that door was the pantry, a narrow little room with a small window at the end just above the flour and sugar bins. Both walls were lined with shelves crowded by the various pots, pans, and kitchen utensils, a collection built up over more than one generation, I am sure. Next to the pantry was the washroom, containing in the early days a dry sink and another pump. When I was quite small, I remember being bathed in a metal tub on the floor of this room, but by the time I was ten, the cistern was built and a regular bathroom constructed in the washroom.

Although water was often scarce due to dry weather in the summer, we did take occasional baths, or at least

I did. How my grandmother would scold when I used more than a necessary two inches of water! We also continued to brush our teeth by the enjoyable old method of carrying a waterglass and toothbrush outdoors and spitting onto the grass, frequently a companionable rite.

Toilets, as well as bathtubs, used lots of water, so we went to the privy, backhouse, or "out back," as we called it, most of the time. Also, we liked to go "out back," at least in summer. The privy was behind the washhouse, just the far side of an old sugar maple with a children's swing hung from one of its large wooden boughs. It was a three-holer, the middle hole being child-sized. A wooden box containing an old Sears catalog and a roll of toilet paper was placed over that center hole. There were pieces of wooden board with which to cover the holes when not in use. It was, as I recall, a clean-smelling privy.

The washhouse was an anachronism even when I was small, with its huge open fireplace and crane, great iron pots, turkey feather brooms, and God knows what other paraphernalia. I only entered it occasionally. Sometimes I played with kittens born there

(those Grandmother did not drown in the horse trough soon after birth). Sometimes I took butternuts from the basket behind the door, and cracked them, sitting on the broad, well-worn stone steps.

In my day, Grandmother did the washing in washtubs on the kitchen stove. She stirred the sudsy laundry with a long stick, and eventually hung it on lines on the hillside yard behind the coal shed, propping up the lines with notched poles. The grass under the lines had been infiltrated by ground ivy, and to this day I cannot sniff the odor of ground ivy without remembering washday. After the washing was done, it was my job to fill buckets with soapy washwater (the soap was homemade) and sweep the porches clean. Much of the summer living was done on the porches I scrubbed, both the front porch which was for socializing and reading, and the side porch where we often worked, preparing fruits and vegetables for jam and canning. What water was not used in porch scrubbing watered the flower borders of sweet william, petunias, and snapdragons. *Nothing* was wasted in this house. String, wrapping

Right: Author Anne Clark (Culbert) wearing gift scarf and muff, brought home by Great-aunt Anne Johnson from an around-the-world trip. Photographer unknown, 1924 or 1925.

Far right: The farm in winter. The author remembers her mother and grandmother singing "The West Virginia Hills" as they gazed upon the view from the farmhouse. Photographer unknown, early 1920's.



papers, newspapers, and boxes—all were saved.

I loved the outbuildings on the farm. There was the smokehouse, not far from the house, by the family garden gate. Once, before Grandfather died, it was used to smoke and store hams and bacon for the winter. Later, though it never lost its smokey odor, it housed the Delco generator which my uncle installed and puttered over, and which provided us with enough electricity for a water pump and heater, and an Icyball refrigerator on the side porch. Sad to say, Icyball ice cream was full of icy particles, instead of being like the real thing.

In the summer the coal house, out by the front gate, contained little but empty coal scuttles. In the shed attached to it, my cousin and I used to play house. Across the road was the granary, now used as a garage but still containing barrels of chicken scratch, and smelling sweet and powdery of oats and other grains. Just inside the barnyard was the chicken house. The chickens roamed the barnyard, and often crossed the road to our lawn, which Grandmother did not like, and chased them back again.

Beyond the chicken house was the hay barn. I remember Mother telling me about one day when she was playing in the hay barn. She climbed up to the haymow, and there, to test herself, ventured out along the bare beams and joists above the threshing floor, where the hayrake was stored, prongs up. Suddenly she lost her footing, and glancing down, saw in terror that if she fell she would land on those prongs. She swayed a moment, gripping the wall with whitened fingers, and at last regained her balance. She cautiously made her way back, and never tried that feat again. Neither did I.

Underneath the barn floor were the cowstalls. When I was small and Grandmother still owned a couple of cows, I used to go with her to milk, and even tried squeezing the teats myself, rather unsuccessfully. My cousin was more adept. The milk squirted foaming into the pail. Old Yellow, the cat, hung about for his share.

Farther away yet was the sheep barn, which I cannot recall in use. Inside the sheep barn reposed an old buggy, and a sleigh, as well as other outmoded farm vehicles. Mary Eliza-

beth and I used to play in the buggy occasionally, but I never had a chance to ride in it, although for a time Grandmother's last horse, Old Bird, lived in the pasture.

Last of all, and perhaps the best of all, was the spring house, down the hill behind the farm, where the crocks of milk and cream and butter rested in the dark flowing spring. After the bright glare outdoors, it was hard to see the interior, set into the hill, but I could hear the rippling and burbling of the water, and in time my eyes adjusted. It was always cool there, even in hot summer. While my grandmother churned on the spring house porch, I played in the old sycamore which overhung the horse trough where the spring exited, and under which mint grew. Grandmother churned, removed the butter from the buttermilk, put it in a big wooden bowl, paddled the liquid out of it, clear as could be, salted it lightly, and made it into butterpats, ornamented with a sprig.

If I could go back, just once, that is where I would go, to the spring house overlooking the back pasture and the black woods, with the distant hills beyond. ❁



"I Didn't Think I'd Live to See 1950"

Looking Back With Columbus Avery

By Tim R. Massey

Photographs by Peggy Massey

Columbus Avery of Williamson had a birthday in January. He figures his age at 110, and as far as anyone has been able to document, he's correct. He is by far the oldest man in the United Mine Workers retirement plan, from which he began drawing a pension in 1949. He had ended a half-century underground the year before, at age 76.

Avery has "been taking it pretty easy for the last 30 years or so," he says. In recent interviews he began by recalling those years of hard-earned leisure, gradually working his way back to earlier times of travel and labor. Born in Oklahoma, he wandered throughout the South before ending up in West Virginia in 1912, initially settling in McDowell County.

Columbus Avery enjoys talking to visitors and friends on the front porch of his house at 232 Mulberry Street in Williamson. He's become something of a celebrity in the Mingo County town where he and his wife, Margie, have made their home for more than 40 years. He was named King Coal for Williamson's annual King Coal Festival in 1972. Avery was 100 years old then. Six years later, Avery and his wife accompanied about 1,000 Tug Valley residents to Washington, D.C., where they marched to demonstrate their demands for flood control measures along the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River.

For his participation in the march and other community efforts, Williamson's senior senior citizen was

presented West Virginia's Order of the 35th Star and was proclaimed a "Grand Old West Virginian" by Secretary of State A. James Manchin. It is the highest honor the Secretary can bestow.

"I like Manchin," Avery said. "I'd campaign for him if he ran for governor. I told him I'd even buy him some votes down here." The broad grin belies Avery's seriousness, because he is sincerely interested in politics.

Born January 16, 1872, in the small farming community of Redbird, Oklahoma, Avery has had a rare opportunity to watch American history unfold, from Ulysses S. Grant to Ronald Reagan. On the walls of his home, he and his wife have hung pictures of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

"John Kennedy was my favorite," Avery says, pointing to the photograph of a young Kennedy. "I think he was interested in the little man." Eisenhower was a particular favorite of Margie Avery, who exerts a strong influence in the household, although, at 77, she's 32 years younger than her husband.

Also adorning the walls of the Avery's five-room house are pictures of Governor Jay Rockefeller and his family, Jesus, and healing evangelists Ernest Angley and Oral Roberts.

"I know God can heal because He healed me," Mrs. Avery said. "I had a tumor inside me the size of a grapefruit. Oral Roberts prayed for me and it went away. The doctors never could explain where that tumor went, but I know God took it away.

"All you have to have is faith."

Margie Avery, much younger than her years, demonstrated her faith last fall when she scraped and painted the house's exterior. She said the project was partly for therapy and partly to show her grandchildren she could do it.

"I just asked the Lord to be with me every time I got on that ladder," she says. "I put myself in the hands of Jesus and he took care of me."

Neighbors and friends wouldn't have been surprised to see Columbus Avery on the ladder himself. After all, he still drives his own car, travels by plane anywhere he wants to go, and does carpentry and plumbing work.

"My legs aren't as good as they used to be," Avery said, explaining why he was content to supervise his wife's work with the paint brush. "They might have given out. That's the reason why we moved here in the first place.

"I used to own a house on the east end of Williamson, Talbott Street. But it was too hilly there. I commenced to giving out of breath and my air was getting short. I had about 75 steps to go up to the house before I built a road.

"The mayor gave me the bricks and I laid them with mortar. That was 1949, and that street is still there. After that, I didn't have to walk too far. But it was still too hilly.

"One day I told the old woman, 'You can live here if you want to, but I'm going to find me another place.' She said she hated to leave the house. I told her, 'I had to leave my family when



Columbus Avery enjoys talking to front porch visitors on subjects ranging from his own long life to the politics of flood control.

I was nine. Jesus had to leave us here on Earth. Why can't we leave this old house?"

With that, the Averys went shopping for a house in 1969 and Margie picked out what Columbus calls, "the worst-looking house on this street. It

was falling down. As a matter of fact, it was already condemned."

But, he said, he wanted to move and the house was on a comparatively level lot. "I went to the courthouse and checked on the valuation of the property," Avery recalled. "I believe it was

about \$1,200. The owners wanted \$3,000, so I offered them \$2,500 cash. They were glad to get it."

Although he was 97 at the time, Avery and a friend from his church put a new roof on the house and built a front porch. He also painted the house, inside and out. The distinctive bright green house has since become a landmark in the neighborhood.

"I'm glad we moved when we did," Mrs. Avery said, surveying her new paint job. "I don't think Columbus could have done all that work now."

The original refurbishing job also included cleaning out the backyard so the Averys could plant a garden. "The backyard had weeds as tall as I am," Avery recalls, gesturing with his hands above his six-foot, 220-pound frame. "It took a while to grub it all out, I can tell you that." Now the small fenced-in plot produces enough vegetables to fill their cellar with a variety of canned goods, from asparagus to pumpkin.

"I'm going to eat good, no matter what," Avery observed, expounding on one of the reasons he thinks he has lived so long. "The good Lord didn't put us on this earth to go hungry. I eat a lot of meat, beef, pork, and chicken. I don't like lamb much, though."

The Averys live comfortably these days. He receives Social Security payments and a retirement check from the United Mine Workers of America. He also receives black lung compensation, a small repayment for his 50 years as an underground coal miner.

As a matter of fact, Columbus C. Avery is the oldest living UMWA pensioner. The union's fund was just two

years old on June 23, 1948, the day Avery worked his last shift at Pond Creek Colliery in Pike County, Kentucky, across the river from Williamson. His pension was approved on March 9, 1949, exactly six months after John L. Lewis presented the fund's first pension to H. M. Ainscough of Wyoming.

Avery's decision to retire didn't come easily. He had been working hard nearly all his life and he and Margie still had three of their seven living children at home in 1948. But he had recovered from the first serious illness of his life just a year earlier. He was hospitalized for pneumonia.

"I had black lung but they didn't call it that back then," Avery said. "Doctor told me I could go back to work, but he told the superintendent that he should try to get me out of the mines as soon as he could. He told the superintendent, 'Six months is a long time for him to live.' I was 74 then. One day the superintendent sent word that he wanted me at his office.

"He told me I was a good worker, just as good as ever worked in these mines. Then he said, 'But I tell you, why don't you retire and enjoy some of the fruits of your labor? My report is that you aren't going to be around much longer.'

"I told him I would have to study about that for a little while. He said, 'Better not study too long.'

"In 1948 I kept feeling bad, so I went to see the doctor. He said he didn't think I should go back in the mines again. I was worried about making a living, but the doctor said he would talk to the superintendent to see if something could be worked out. I didn't want to go on charity, but I was feelin' bad.

"My last day of work was June 23rd. I remember it because I was supposed to go on vacation the next day. I loaded 38 tons of coal that last day. I was feeling tough then, sure 'nuff. I walked out of the mines and off that big hill and all the way home. It was about nine miles in all.

"I went to the company store and drew my vacation pay, and I never came back. I have never missed the mines one bit. I've been taking it pretty easy for the last 30 years or so. I worked hard most of my life until then."

But Columbus Avery says he never

dreamed he would be around to talk about his life in 1982. "I didn't even think I would live to see 1950. It looked so, s-o-o far away the year after I retired. I just told the Lord I wanted to live as long as I felt good. But if I started feeling bad, I wanted Him to take me away quick. I don't want to be a burden to anybody."

Avery hasn't had to ask God for that ultimate favor yet. He could pass for a man in his 60's. His broad, friendly face is nearly wrinkle free and his mind and senses are as sharp as those of a person half his age. He can still remember, in vivid detail, his early childhood.

"I was about two when we moved from Oklahoma to Albie, Alabama. Daddy's father was a slave owner. Daddy told me many a time that his father wouldn't sell him because he was his own flesh and blood. Later, my grandfather told me I was his grandson and my dad was his son. He had two children by my grandmother and three others by another colored woman.

"He brought my grandmother from Oklahoma for his whipping boss, but I guess he liked her for himself. The whipping boss was something else. His name was Jake and he was four feet tall and four feet wide, four feet square. He couldn't hardly sit in a swing he was so wide."

Young Columbus idolized his only living brother, Willie. When Willie left home at the age of 10, he left a big void in his younger brother's life. So, when Columbus was nine, he left home to find Willie. His search took him from Alabama to California and points between. To keep eating, he took what work he could find along the way.

His first job was hauling water for a construction crew in Alabama. He made 15¢ a day. "I worked 12 and 14 hours a day for that 15¢," Avery said. "I chewed tobacco a lot back then. I would buy me a plug of chew once a week. I would save up the coins until I got enough for a dollar bill. When I left the job, after about a year, I had \$10."

With his savings, Avery continued his quest.

"I went to traveling, looking for Willie. Sometimes I'd catch a freight and sometimes I'd just walk the tracks. Other times, I walked through the

woods. I hoboed a whole lot in Texas. I heard Willie was in Beaumont, so I went there. Nobody there knew him. Went down to Houston looking for him, too.

"Lit out for California. I went to Wisconsin, Idaho, and Nevada. I'd work for a while and hobo a while. I never did find Willie. The problem was that colored workers went by a lot of names in those days. On one job I was called John, on another Willie. Nobody knew Willie by his right name, so it made finding him tough.

"Finally, I quit looking and came back to Alabama and got a job."

He began working as a brickmason in Birmingham. Soon, however, Avery drifted into the industry that would occupy about half of his life—coal mining. He was 14 when he took the job trapping at Doley mine near Birmingham.

"Trapping was keeping the door open for cars coming out of the mine and keeping air flowing," Avery explained. "I stayed there about three or four years."

Again he went back to his alternate calling as a brickmason. Returning to Birmingham, Avery "made brick" for a contractor named R. N. Smith. He accompanied Smith to Oklahoma for a couple of years, and while in his native state tried to locate his birthplace.

"Dad said Redbird was just a store and a barn, but I guess they tore both them buildings down because I never could find the place," Avery said, laughing.

Avery's work in Oklahoma was somewhere near Muskogee, "you know, where they raise sand on Saturday and go to church on Sunday." While there, he learned another skill that would come in handy years later, whiskey making.

Avery also met Lavita Heard in Oklahoma and she became his first wife and bore two of his children. But when his job was finished, Avery said he left Oklahoma without his family. "I guess my oldest would have been 90 now if he had lived," he reflected. "But he died young, in his 60's."

When he returned to Alabama, Avery had a reunion with his mother and sisters. But he learned that his parents had separated in Virginia and his father had died after starting another family.



Margie Avery scraped and painted the couple's Williamson house last summer. Mr. Avery stands by in the "bossing hat" presented to him by Secretary of State A. James Manchin.

"My mom hadn't seen me since I was nine, and I was 21 then. I went back to the farm and she didn't recognize me and I didn't know her. She thought I was dead. She was sure glad to see me."

John and Ida Mae Avery both lived to be more than 100 years old, accord-

ing to Columbus. "People lived a lot longer back in the slavery days," he said. "My sister Maggie died a few years ago. She was four years older than me."

Columbus Avery's long life can't be attributed to the absence of pain or hard times. Quite the contrary, he has known both, especially during the 20

years between 1890 and 1910. It was during that period that he met Ruby Williams in Mississippi, and their relationship produced 10 children—seven girls and three boys.

"She said we were married, but we never did get a certificate," Avery recalls. "Colored folks didn't get into paperwork much back in those days.

On the Road

Columbus Avery remembers his years before coming to West Virginia as the hardest. The Avery family had moved from Oklahoma to the Deep South while he was still a toddler, and he later wandered throughout that region and beyond. As a boy and young man Avery traveled the roads and railroads alone, and the following anecdote recalls a chilling episode from that period. To retain the power of the story we have reproduced the racial epithets, in the ugly language he remembers being hurled at him at the time.

Cautiously, the young boy began to walk more slowly as he approached the two figures on the railroad trestle that spanned the Tombigbee River and the Alabama-Mississippi border. He had chosen to travel at night because the daylight hours weren't safe for black people on the move during the unsettled 1880's in the South.

Columbus Avery was obviously black, although his grandfather had been a white slave owner and both his grandmother and mother had Indian blood in their veins. And he was alone, had been for the past four years since he left home at the age of nine. He was afraid, and his fears were well founded.

When Avery neared the bridge's midway point, he heard someone say, "He's alone." Suddenly, a light flashed in his face, and he was confronted by two men. One was black and the other one was so dirty it was difficult to determine his color. But the gun was easily distinguishable.

Quickly the black man searched the frightened 13-year-old youth and found \$50 that represented two years of sweat and sacrifice.

"Now get on across the bridge

and don't look back," the white man shouted. "No, wait a minute, go back the other way. It's shorter."

When the husky boy neared the end of the bridge, he heard the men laugh. "Better trot now, somebody might catch you," they taunted. Then a chill ran up Avery's spine when he heard the black man say, "Let's kill that nigger, he might tell somebody what we done."

Columbus Avery's eyes still light up and he flashes a broad grin when he tells the story. Perhaps the recollection is so vivid because it marks just one of the many times he has cheated death during his 110 years of life. Maybe Avery smiles because he realizes that few men live more than 100 years and can still tell about it.

"I heard them running, matching me tie for tie," Avery said, picking up the episode. "They got to the end of the bridge and started looking. I had gone up on a hill above them and laid down. About 30 minutes later, they went on down the road looking for me. I crawled away and went through some woods and came up on an old house. It had a lamp burning and a fella was up feeding his stock. I hollered at him.

"He said, 'Hey, who's that?' I told him I was lost. He went in the house and got his lantern and an old shotgun. He had two dogs with him, too.

"'Who is you?' he asked," Avery continued, obviously relishing the story he had told many times.

"He kept saying, 'You a nigger! You a nigger!' I said, 'Now wait a minute, I don't mean to do anybody any harm. Two men on the trestle down there robbed me.'

"He said, 'Who was they?'

"I told him a colored fella and a white man, it looked like. He was so dirty I couldn't tell anything about him.

"He said, 'Yeah, there's a warrant out for those two but they ain't showed up around here for a long time. Wait a minute and we're going to catch 'em.' He commenced to blowin' his dog horn, 'W-h-o-o!'

He began hollering, 'Somebody come! Somebody come!'

"They started coming out of the woods with sawed-off shotguns and all kinds of weapons, pistols, rocks, big hammers, and all the like. They looked at me like they wanted to do something, and I thought I was a goner. But the old man said, 'Don't harm him. There are two fellers out there that robbed him. There's a warrant for them for making counterfeit money. Let's go down there and find them.' "

Avery chuckled as he told of the ensuing chase.

"They got their hounds and put them on the tracks. When they got to the bridge, some of the dogs went up the river and some others went down the river. I guess they had split up looking for me. Well, they caught the white fella. Oh, he was a sight. He was so rusty looking and he smelled something awful. He was up a pine tree and was sittin' in the forks, just like a possum or something.

"They told him to come down and he said, 'I ain't going to do it; come up and get me.'

"So they got an ax and commenced to cuttin' the tree down. After a couple of whacks on the tree, he said, 'Hey, don't cut no more, I'll come down.'

"They said, 'Come down with your hands up.' I don't know how he was supposed to with his hands up, but that's what they said.

"When he hit the ground, they threw guns on him and the dogs grabbed him. The men kicked the dogs off him. When things quietened down, that counterfeiter told them, 'Well, you got me. I'm willing to tell you everything. But one thing I want ya'll to let me do. Then you can kill me, or anything else you want to do.'

"They asked, 'What's that?'

"He said, 'Just let me kill that nigger,'" referring to young Avery.

Fortunately, the posse didn't give the outlaw his wish. Instead, they gave Avery his \$50 and let him go free.



"My last day of work was June 23, 1949," Mr. Avery remembers. "I loaded 38 tons of coal that day."

We had a hard time even registering to vote."

Most of the Avery children died early, several at birth, according to Avery, who doesn't like to talk about that period of his life. He continued to work in the coal mines most of those two decades, but when times were hard he had to scrape out a living on the road.

"The hardest times I can remember was 1904 and 1905," said Avery with a far-away look in his eyes. "Those were the panic years in the South. People just walked the tracks looking for work, wearing the soles out on their shoes 'til they were barefoot. I did. At the end of the day I'd go into the woods and make me a bed of leaves. Sometimes I woke up covered with snow, but I'd keep on walking."

His travels took him through the Southeast. At one point, he said he worked on a farm in Alabama where he was paid \$8 a month and meals for his labor. Although Avery says "it ain't worth talking about," he ran into trouble with the law during that time and joined the army under an assumed name. After a short tour of duty that took him to the Philippines, Avery said he walked away from the army.

"They didn't have my right name anyhow," he explained.

But when the United States entered World War I in 1914, Columbus Avery enlisted in the army again. This time he used his correct name. During his 11-month stint, Avery was stationed in Georgia and New Jersey.

Something significant had occurred in Avery's life between his two hitches with Uncle Sam—he had found a home in West Virginia. "I came to McDowell County in 1912 and I have lived in West Virginia most of the time since then," Avery said. "I was disappointed at first. I thought things would be different in West Virginia, but there was just as much prejudice in McDowell County as there was in the South.

"Most colored people lived in tarpaper shacks in the coal camps. Companies promised us a place to live and a job. But most of us started out in debt and never got out."

For about two years, Avery said he traveled from job to job, from McDowell County to Mingo County, then to Pennsylvania and back to Alabama. For a time, he became involved in an activity he calls "pulling transportation."

"I was hired by the general manager of a coal company in Big Stone Gap, Virginia," Avery recalls. "He gave me a bunch of train tickets and I would go South and pick up a bunch of colored men and put them on a train. When they got to the coal camps, they had to pay the company back for the tickets."

Avery said the men were happy to get out of the cotton fields to find work elsewhere. But the federal government took a dim view of such recruiting practices.

"Those plantation owners didn't want to lose all that cheap labor," Avery explained. "It was against the law to pay for a man's transportation from one state to another. If the law caught you with a bunch of tickets, you were gone. A couple of my friends were arrested. It was too dangerous for me, so I quit after a couple of months. The last transportation I pulled, I brought about 1,000 people to West Virginia and Kentucky.

After World War I, Avery returned to McDowell County and coal mines at Warrior and Yukon. With his experience and strength, "I could drive a mine from one end to the other." Although he was primarily a coal

loader most of his mining career, Avery's jobs also included being a cut boss and fire boss at various mines. However, he is most proud of his ability to fill coal cars.

"One day in 1917, I was working at a mine at War. I had a slab of coal cut along the track and I shot it down in the morning," he related. "I loaded eight cars and they came back and got 'em. Loaded eight more, they came back and got them. Told them to put me four more cars in there. I loaded them.

"They came back and said the superintendent said if you load five more cars he would give you \$10. So I loaded them. It was a gondola full of coal—more than 60 tons. I was feelin' good when I came out, too. I went up to the super and he gave me \$10. That was more than I was drawing for a half [two weeks] back then."

Avery's second wife, Ruby, died in 1919, and by that time he had lost contact with his family. "Most of them had gone on their own. The last time I saw any of them was in 1917. I heard three of them settled in western Ken-

tucky but I have never been able to find them. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Two activities forced Avery to find employment outside the McDowell County coalfields—union organizing and bootlegging. Perhaps because he had been on his own most of his life, or maybe because he was a strapping six-foot, 240 pounds, Avery was "my own man. Nobody pushed me around much.

"Coal companies treated everybody terrible in those days. We had to pay for all our tools and you had to work from daybreak to dark. Even then you couldn't draw no money. You had to pay it all to the company store. If you laid off one day, you couldn't get scrip the next day.

"It didn't make any difference what your color was; if you was poor, you caught hell."

During the Prohibition days of the early 1920's, Avery found a way to beat the system. Using the old recipe he had learned back in Oklahoma, he became a bootlegger. "I started mak-

ing moonshine in my house," Avery recalled. "I just couldn't produce enough to keep up with the demand. I was selling moonshine by the wagon load. I started buying it in Virginia for \$2.75 a gallon, cheaper than I could make it myself. And I sold it for \$40 and \$45 a gallon.

"I was bringing in \$200 and \$300 a day. Every weekend I'd make \$3,000 and \$4,000. I would go and buy 1,500 gallons one night and the next morning I didn't have none but just what I'd saved to drink. Take 1,500 gallons of whiskey at \$40 and \$45 a gallon and you know what you got."

With the fast money, Avery said he bought fast cars and attracted fast women. "I made lots of money and I spent it," he said. "Now what did I do with that money? I bought a car anytime I wanted one. I had plenty of pretty women and I bought them anything they wanted. When I quit bootlegging, I didn't have a cent."

"All the chances I took, with Baldwin-Felts thugs and deputies all around, and I had nothin' to show for it. Easy come, easy go." By that time

"Daddy's father was a white slave owner. Daddy told me many a time his father wouldn't sell him because he was his own flesh and blood."





Columbus and Margie Avery at home. The Averys prominently display pictures of Governor Rockefeller's family, and presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, on their walls.

he had about worn out his welcome in McDowell County, Avery said. Bootlegging was a fact of life, but coal operators didn't take kindly to union organizers.

"Me and a couple of white men tried to get a union started at Dry Fork and we got fired and blackballed for it," he said. "Two other men got put in jail on trumped-up charges."

Companies were known to throw union sympathizers, furniture and all, out on the streets in those days. But Avery said he was allowed to pack up his things and go. "I had me a high-powered rifle, just the same as those thugs did," he pointed out. "If they had tried to put my stuff on a slate dump like they did some others, I would have killed until they killed me."

Two women came into Avery's life in 1923 that made a lasting impression—Mother Jones, the famed union organizer, and his wife Margie.

He said he first saw Mother Jones at a rally in Welch, exhorting miners to organize and taunting authorities. "Mother Jones was something else, for sure," he remembered. "She'd get up on that wagon and call those Baldwin-Felts thugs everything in the book.

She'd throw out her chest and say, 'Shoot me, shoot me.' And she'd cuss them for everything she was worth. But it just wasn't time for the union yet."

That same year, Columbus Avery married young Margie Watkins of Gary. He was 51 and she was 19. "He was quite a ladies' man," Margie Avery says, recalling her first impression of her seemingly ageless husband. "He had quite a reputation."

With his new wife, Avery moved to Mingo County looking for work. For three years, he went from one job to another. "I didn't stay anywhere long if I couldn't make money," he says. "I tried Red Jacket for a while, but I couldn't make enough to keep a crow alive there. Things were too tough."

He also worked at Pigeon Creek near Williamson and at Borderland, Kentucky, but Avery said he found problems there and other places. "If you had a little money, you could buy yourself a job," he noted. "A lot of foreigners came in with a little money, and that's why they were able to get jobs. When you went to a doctor for a physical, he'd turn you down if you didn't pay him.

"One time in Stone, Kentucky, the

superintendent turned me down for a job, and the doctor told me, 'Now if you had \$5, he'd give you a job.' I told him I didn't even have two cents for a stamp."

At Borderland, Avery ran into problems with the superintendent. "He was always cracking jokes, racial things," Avery said without elaborating. "He kept it up, and one day I told him what he could do with his job. He told me I couldn't get a job anywhere if I quit. I told him I would starve before I took that kind of stuff."

As it turned out, the superintendent was wrong. Avery got a job shortly after he walked away from Borderland. He was hired by Pond Creek Collieries, which was owned by Norfolk & Western Railway. The mine was in Pike County, Kentucky, but the Averys settled on the West Virginia side of the Tug Fork in the small coal camp of Vulcan.

"It was a dirty place, coal dust everywhere," Avery said. "We lived in a double house that we shared with another family. We shared the outhouse, too. We took the side that was on the same side of the house that we lived in. It was on the side of a hill.

"I had to walk up a big hill to work. I didn't think too much of Vulcan, but our kids say those were the happiest days of their lives."

Columbus Avery worked for Pond Creek until he retired in 1948, through good times and bad. The first four years were the most difficult, he said.

"The first section they gave me had too much rock and slate in it. The four places had 36 inches of rock. Every room I cut into, I got two cuts out of it. If I ran into slate, I had to load it. I cleaned up two places of coal one day. The next day I cleaned up one room of coal and 12 to 14 cars of slate.

"They closed that place down after about four years. It was costing too much for that slate. When they moved me into higher coal, it was like letting a man out of prison."

The Depression years were especially difficult for the Averys, too. "We almost starved to death under Hoover," Avery says. "One time I drew only 8¢ for two weeks of work. I was too ashamed to go up to the pay window and pick it up." But Margie wasn't. "I could get four stamps for 8¢," she recalls.

When the union was allowed to or-



He's not the handyman he used to be, but Avery says he still "plumbs a little" when Mrs. Avery needs a job done.

ganize in 1933, Avery said he was one of the first to sign his UMW papers. "It was like night and day after the union came in," he said. "The company tested us for a while and tried to break the union, but things got a lot better after 1940."

Eight good years out of 50 years' work isn't a good percentage, even if you haven't spent a day in school. Columbus Avery isn't bitter about his life, but he says he regrets ever going underground to dig out a living. "If I had it to do over, I would have been a brickmason. I'd be in better health today if I'd stayed out of the mines."

He survived two explosions in McDowell County mines "with hardly a pin scratch." He avoided serious accidents through the years by refusing to go into sections he considered unsafe. "I'd go into a place in the morning and inspect it. If it was bad, I wouldn't have anything to do with it. Some men would be with me and say, 'What's wrong with this place?' I told them to go ahead and work, but I'm not.

"Maybe two or three days later, they'd haul those men out, broke all up where a piece of slate had fallen on them. I never was hurt. I just wouldn't go into a dangerous place. They could fire me if they wanted to, but I wouldn't risk my life on a bad top. They fired me at Pigeon Creek once because I refused to go into a place I thought was dangerous."

Today, Columbus C. Avery says he is contented. Deeply religious, he likes to quote Scriptures. The 23rd Psalm is a particular favorite.

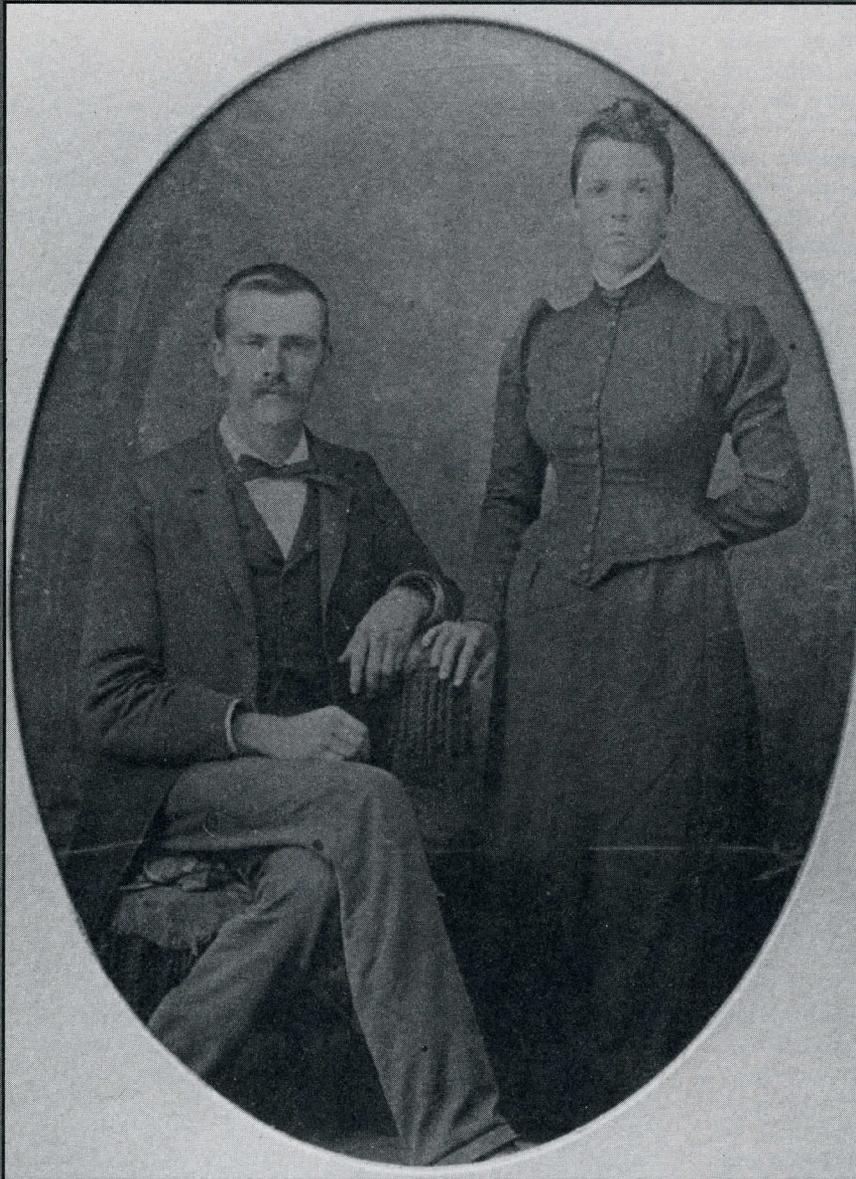
"I joined the church in 1917, but I backslide a whole lot. God forgives you for anything you do, except murder and sinning against the Holy Ghost. All you have to do is ask. You have to forgive yourself and He will forgive you.

"If you have anything between you and someone else, you have to ask that person to forgive you. If they don't, it's on them. I ain't got no hatred in my heart for nobody. I love people."

As for death, Avery says he doesn't worry.

"You know God will take away all those aches and pains, and worries. No more briney tears you shed. God will take away those briney tears. On the day of Resurrection, he'll give you a brand new body." ❀

“Get Yourself a Good Horse”



Dr. James and Cora Dye soon after their wedding in 1891. Photographer unknown.

Dr. James Dye of Calhoun County

By James E. Joy

The writing of this story held special significance for me, because Dr. James Dye was my grandfather. I wrote it at his old oak rolltop desk amid his diplomas and medical books. I had access to his papers, including notes of encouragement and advice from his older brother, Dr. W. T. W. Dye. Unquestionably, however, my most important source was my mother, Eva Dye Joy. Although the youngest of James Dye's ten children, she could still recall for me many incidents of his life and practice.

In the growing darkness of evening a lone horse and rider slogged along the narrow muddy road that linked the small community of Tanner with the Calhoun County seat of Grantsville. James A. Dye, chilled by the early March wind and weary from the day's calls, was still in his first year of rural medical practice just as the spring of 1892 was about to deliver area inhabitants from the grip of another harsh winter. "Babies pick the darndest times to come into the world," ran a popular joke in medical school that was proving true in Dr. Dye's young practice.

While aware of his own exhausted state, he was concerned about the condition of his sturdy mare. He had heeded the advice of his older brother, W. T. W.—also a physician—and purchased this sleek roan for \$110 soon after his graduation from Starling Medical College in Columbus, Ohio. "James, you've simply got to get yourself a good horse," W. T. W. had urged, and four-year-old Nell appeared to be a good one. She stood at 16 hands and weighed a thousand pounds, well qualifying her for conveying Dr. Dye's six-foot-two-inch frame, and his saddle pockets laden with alcohol, lysol, chloroform, chloral hydrate, digitalis, and a mixture of wild cherry syrup and whiskey to quell coughs. Space was also provided for a box of plaster of Paris, needles and silk thread, several packages of compressed sterile gauze, a bone saw, needle holder with several needles, and an assortment of

OFFICE OF
W. T. W. DYE, M. D.,
Physician and Surgeon.

OFFICE HOURS:
6:30 to 7:00 and 10:30 to 11:30 A.M.
1:00 to 2:00; 4:00 to 5:00 and 7:00 to 9:00 P.M.
When not Professionally Engaged.

Tanner's, W. Va., Thursday 2-5-1891

James A. Dye,

Dye Dear Sir & Mrs,
I have not Received an answer
from my last letter yet, but
look for it to day & if I get
it I will not send this out
until to morrow & then write
more.

I write this especially for one
thing that came in my
mind this morning, and
that is you will have
to have your Diploma
Registered & at same time
get a certificate from the
State Board of Health.
I forget who the Secretary &

In this page from an 1891 letter, Dr. Dye's brother, Dr. W. T. W. Dye, scolds him for not writing and advises him to register his new diploma with the State Board of Health. Dr. W. T. W. Dye's letterhead indicates that he kept office hours intermittently from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

knives and forceps—all wrapped carefully in clean gauze with a packet of calcium chloride to absorb moisture and prevent rusting. Nell carried them all without quarrel.

These were the days when doctors—and their horses—wore out early. Indeed, long hours in the saddle had prompted W. T. W., only six years James' senior, to abandon much of his practice that required travel by horseback. He had recruited James early in 1891 to fill the gap.

The elder Dye's offer was beneficial to both men. W. T. W. was spared the rigors of travel on horseback in addition to having someone he knew and trusted to look after his property in Tanner. James, on the other hand, had

walked into a well-established practice, for his older brother was known among Gilmer and Ritchie countians as an honest and hard-working doctor. James rented the office at Tanner from his brother for the nominal fee of \$1.00 per month. There was a stock of drugs valued at \$35 to \$65; James kept 10% from the sale of those drugs, remitting the remainder to W. T. W. Once business arrangements had been concluded, W. T. W. vacationed for several months, then resumed his practice in Grantsville, where he served until his death in 1941.

Both brothers had graduated from Starling, W. T. W. in 1886 and James in 1891. Starling Medical College, founded in 1847 and later a part of

Ohio State University, had impressive physical facilities, including a 150-bed hospital managed by the Sisters of St. Francis. Thus in addition to rigorous lectures in anatomy, physiology, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pharmacology, and other subjects, students were offered diverse clinical experiences. An institution that coupled lectures with such "hands on" hospital work was unusual at the turn of the century, when many revolving-door medical schools turned out doctors who had never seen a patient in a few months of nominal study.

James Dye was born in Freed, Calhoun County, on May 24, 1867. He attended a one-room log cabin school, with oiled oak floors and a pot-bellied

This photograph shows Cora Griggs Dye (center right) with her brothers and sister, about 1896. Before the 1891 wedding, W. T. W. fretted that "Coree was too short" for his brother. Photographer unknown.





The first 24 years of marriage brought 10 children to James and Cora Dye. This photograph dates from about 1915, the year Dye temporarily retired from medicine to devote his time to his family and a new Wood County farm. Photographer unknown.

stove, at Seth Fork of Leeding Creek, from the time he was six until he was 19. The school term of four months was sandwiched between the spring planting season and autumn harvest. He later taught in the same school during the summers of 1887 and 1888 for \$22 per month. Unable to refuse the lofty salary of \$28 per month, he was lured away to teach at Spruce

Hollow during the summer of 1889. James entered Starling in the fall of 1888. He was an average medical student. He completed the full three-year medical curriculum, wrote his thesis on "Cholera Infantum," survived four days of exams during the final days of February 1891, and received his diploma—along with 53 other men—on March 4, 1891.

Thus in the spring of '91 James returned home as a doctor rather than a schoolteacher. His teaching salary had not been enough to finance his medical education, estimated at \$150 per academic year. The Starling catalog noted that room and board could be had for as little as \$3 a week (\$78 for the academic year), "including light and fuel." Tuition was an additional \$50. As with most college catalogs, even now, the estimated expenses represented an almost unattainable minimum. The purchase of books and instruments, not to mention miscellaneous items, surely pushed the total over \$150. Moreover, candidates for graduation had to pay a final examination fee of \$25. Fortunately, James' parents and brother W. T. W. helped with his expenses.

With graduation behind him, his financial prospects were considerably brighter. He possessed most of his instruments, while an office with a stock of drugs was his to take over in Tanner. His major purchase would be a horse, and W. T. W. had apparently found an excellent four-year-old for \$110. James had yet to decide upon fees, but he felt he could draw from W. T. W.'s experience, and knowledge of what other practitioners charged in West Virginia. For example, Dr. W. R. Goff, who according to W. T. W., "always had an extra large practice," charged regular patients \$1.25 to \$2.50 for a ride of up to nine miles; or \$3.00 for "special cases." Five dollars was the customary charge for delivering a baby. W. T. W. described Goff's charges as "trifling." Another prominent area physician, Dr. Adams, reportedly earned about \$2700 one year.

Of course James was aware that payment of fees wasn't always made with hard currency. Rural economies throughout much of the year operated not only upon the exchange of money for goods and services, but frequently upon the exchange of goods for services. On countless occasions throughout his 62 years of practice, James received a well-cured ham, a couple of nice hens, or the promise of a bushel of apples or potatoes when they "came in," for treating the ill or injured in the community.

Shortly after he arrived in Tanner, James met Cora Griggs. They were married on November 19, 1891, even though W. T. W. was mildly opposed

to the marriage because, as he put it, "Coree was too short."

Later in the following year the young couple moved to Minnora, where James practiced until 1915. Cora, in a letter written some 60 years later, provided an insight into what many doctors and their wives faced during winters of the 1890's: "The children were ill with membranous croup* and we thought sure Lance would die. Jim would be gone for days at a time treating other people's children for the same malady. He'd come home almost anytime, day or night, exhausted. After preparing something for him to eat I would go to the barn and rub the ice and mud from the horse's belly and legs with towels. Jim would visit with the children, rest awhile, then ride off again.

"There was a time one winter when I didn't know where he was for nearly three weeks. Men would come to the house and I would tell them he had gone to so-and-so's farm two days ago. They would dog his trail from farm to farm until they caught up with him,

*A bacterial disease clinically very similar to diphtheria. The infection frequently spread to the middle ear and could result in a hearing loss. Lance recovered, and later attended, with younger brother James, the West Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind at Romney.

then direct him to their home where some member of their family needed the doctor. He ate and slept in the homes of those he treated, returning home when able for fresh clothes, fresh supplies, and, when lucky, a couple of days of rest."

Twenty-three years of delivering babies, mending (and sometimes removing) cut or broken limbs, and treating croups and fevers, extracted a heavy toll from Dr. Dye. The hours were too long, the travel too rigorous, the working conditions often too primitive. Moreover, his family had grown to include 10 children, and it had become increasingly difficult to be with them while continuing his duties as a physician. So in 1915 he sold his Calhoun County property and moved the family to a large farm he had purchased in Williamstown, in Wood County. Here he engaged in farming and tending orchards, while practicing medicine sporadically. He also raised large numbers of guinea pigs which were sold to laboratories for scientific research. Dr. Dye enjoyed the curious expressions that came over children's faces when he told them that "if you hold a guinea pig by its tail, its eyes will fall out." He neglected to mention that guinea pigs lack tails.

The years at Williamstown were good to the Dyes. The older girls helped Cora with the cooking and housework, while the boys tended the fields and orchards. There were generally fresh eggs available, fresh milk too, and clabber for the churn. A couple of pigs were slaughtered each year. Cora was unsurpassed in the preparation of sausage, which she canned in thick lard, while James was well known for the care he took in preparing cured hams. Barrels of apples were stored in the cellar to be used during the winter for pies, or simply for snacks. With the first signs of fall, cabbages, turnips, beets, and carrots were buried in small depressions dug in the garden, then covered with straw and a mound of dirt. Later, by digging into a new mound every two weeks or so, the family was able to enjoy those vegetables well into the winter months. In January or February James and the boys would cut ice from the Ohio River, load it in irregular sheets sometimes five inches thick onto horse-drawn wagons, and haul it across the narrow flood plain up the hill to a large pit that had been dug out by horse and scoop near the house earlier that winter. A layer of ice was placed in the pit followed by a layer of sawdust and so on until the pit, measuring

A now elderly Dr. and Mrs. James Dye stand at the center of this 1940 family reunion photograph. Cora Dye began a 15-year stint as Chloe postmistress in 1935, at age 62. Her first year's salary was \$144. Photographer unknown.





The Dye homeplace at Chloe in 1981, as renovated by the doctor's son, Howard. Dr. Dye's old office is at left.

roughly six feet deep and 20 feet square, was nearly full. Then the pit was covered with dirt. Their efforts provided the Dyes with ice throughout much of the summer. The Dye family, like so many others of that time, was a close-knit, highly independent family.

When the youngest of the children, Eva, graduated from high school, James faced a void in his life, a void that he felt could only be filled with a return to doctoring. He and Cora sold the Williamstown farm in 1932, and moved to Chloe in Calhoun County, where he resumed his practice after a self-imposed semi-retirement of 17 years.

The practice of medicine in rural West Virginia had changed significantly since 1915. For one thing, the "miracle drug" penicillin had been discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1928, although sulfa drugs were still

used on a regular basis until after World War II. In addition, there was a new hospital in Spencer only 20 miles from Dr. Dye's Chloe office, so that patients generally did not have to be referred to hospitals in the more distant cities of Charleston or Parkersburg. A third notable change had occurred in transportation. Although rural roads in West Virginia had improved considerably since James' days in the saddle, they would probably be considered impassable today. Still, Dr. Dye's Model A Ford, held high above the graded gravel surface by its 30-inch wheels, could negotiate the roads even when they became deeply rutted and muddied by spring rains. Moreover, the old Ford, blessed with a low gear ratio, could clamber up almost any grade.

In the late 1940's, James granted himself the luxury of a second car, a gray Plymouth coupe. Unfortunately

the low-riding Plymouth could only travel to Spencer and back, being no match for the Model A on other country roads. It was terribly impractical, and sat in the garage a lot, but James was enamored by this sleek new Detroit product. It was a practical man's one extravagance.

Dr. Dye continued to practice until a few months before his death in 1952 at the age of 86. During his 62-year tenure he had delivered over 5,000 babies, and tended to the medical needs of countless others. He is still remembered by those living along the roads of Calhoun, Roane, Ritchie, and Gilmer counties where asphalt shimmering in the hot summer sun has been laid over the gravel he once traveled. ❁

James Joy wishes to thank Dorothy Ross of the Ohio State University Archives for her help in researching the Starling Medical College records.

"A Person Has to Have Some Work To Do"

S. L. Jones, Wood Carver

By Charles B. Rosenak

Route 12 winds through eastern Summers County hugging the hill ridges, beyond Alderson. There, silhouetted against the valley of the Greenbrier River, on the highest hill-top in the area, is the black statue of John Henry, the legendary steel-driving man who worked on the C&O tunnel under these hills and died "with a hammer in his hand."

Shields Landon Jones (S. L. to his friends) is a 20th-century folk carver who makes his home on Pine Hill, a mile or so south and west of John Henry's statue. He too was a railroad man, and he too has a vision bigger than life.

The house on Pine Hill, overlooking road and valley, has been S. L.'s home since his marriage to Madelaine in 1970. Painted green, the house fits the needs of the retired couple. A one-story ranch style structure, it is heated by a wood stove in the large living room, backed up by an oil furnace for the coldest days.

Farther up the hill, next to the vegetable garden, is a small shed, also heated by a wood-burning stove. Piled against the shed is a stack of well-aged logs of maple and other hardwoods used for carving, and another, larger pile of firewood.

Jones built and designed the one-

"I had just taken my pension, and I lost my first wife," remembers Mr. Jones of the two turning points of the late 1960's that prompted him to take up art as a serious pasttime. Photo by James Samsell.





Above: Three heads by S. L. Jones. Photo by James Samsell.

Right: Although Jones is most noted for larger pieces, his earliest casual work was small and he still does miniatures. "I didn't make any big carvings until the last few years," he says. Photo by James Samsell.

room structure as a workshop and music studio. One wall is dominated by a mural he painted years ago of rural life, and on another wall he has hung the many ribbons won at county fairs for carving and fiddling. He carves while sitting on a pine stool in front of the fire, listening to taped music of his fiddle playing. Shavings can pile up on the floor and not bother the order of things. Because the shed is also a music studio, neighbors often visit in the evenings to play and record their music. There, old friends can convene, away from the house, to play the country music they love and spin stories and yarns of days gone by.

The house is Madelaine's territory where she quilts, knits, and preserves for the winter. Her preserves, made from the produce of the garden, and her quilts have also earned her numerous awards at local fairs.

Pine Hill is the perfect retirement location for this couple. Several of their children (S. L. had two boys and two girls) and most of their relatives live nearby. In fact, the 32 acres constituting the community of Pine Hill

were developed by Jones' oldest son, who lives there now with five of his children.

So the retired couple do not feel isolated or abandoned. As Madelaine will tell you, "on the Hill and nearby, we have everything, a Burger King and everything a heart could desire." Also, the folk carving of recent years has brought in extra money. The couple can travel now—three trips to the Holy Land, Egypt, and Greece, as well as trips to New England and South America in the last 10 years. And that isn't bad for a man who grew up as the son of a sharecropper.

Times were hard in Franklin County, Virginia, in October 1901 when S. L. Jones was born. Even so, his father, Shields Ballard Jones, raised eight boys and five girls by sharecropping. S. L. recalls, "My daddy moved around quite a bit, from place to place, while the children were growing up." Finally, Ballard bought a small farm in Summers County, West Virginia. "He lived there the remainder of his days, there on the farm, until he passed away in 1923. He was 51 years, 14 days

old. My mother lived several years after his death on this farm and we children helped her out."

S. L. had to quit school during the eighth grade. Although he was only 17 years old in 1918, he lied about his age and got a job working on the railroad. In those days, the Chesapeake & Ohio was the principal employer of boys leaving the farms in the area. The choice was either the railroad or the mines, and Jones chose the former.

Although relatively poor as a boy and young man, Jones' life was full of adventure and excitement. He learned skills during boyhood which would make him independent and self-fulfilled later in life. As he puts it, "I've been here quite a long time and I've had a lot of fun, a lot of pleasure. My hobbies that I took up back yonder years ago are coming in pretty handy now, to spend my time."

Much of his boyhood was spent in the woods hunting rabbit, fox, and possum. In those days "you could get 15¢ apiece for rabbit at the store and they'd ship them to New York and different places and get a big price."

He's had beagle hounds for hunting all of his life and they appear often in his carving now.

It was in the woods, with the cry of the hounds in the air, waiting hours for a fox to be cornered or a possum to be treed, that Jones first began to carve. He whittled away the hours with a Bowie knife, making little things like birds or rabbits. He states that he "didn't make any big carvings until the last few years."

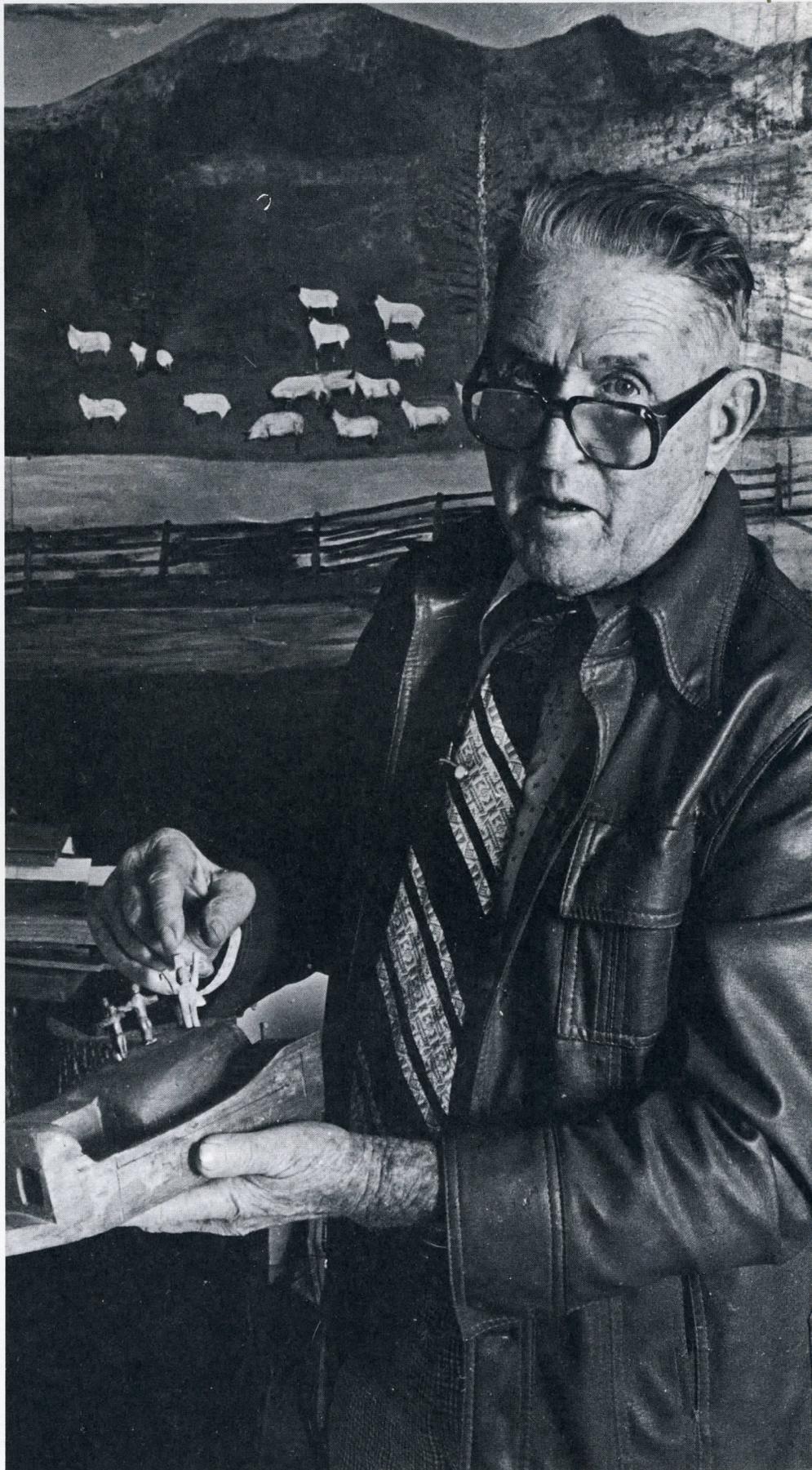
In school he was good with a pencil and could draw "anything." However, no very early carvings or drawings have survived. He didn't take up these crafts again as a serious avocation until his retirement.

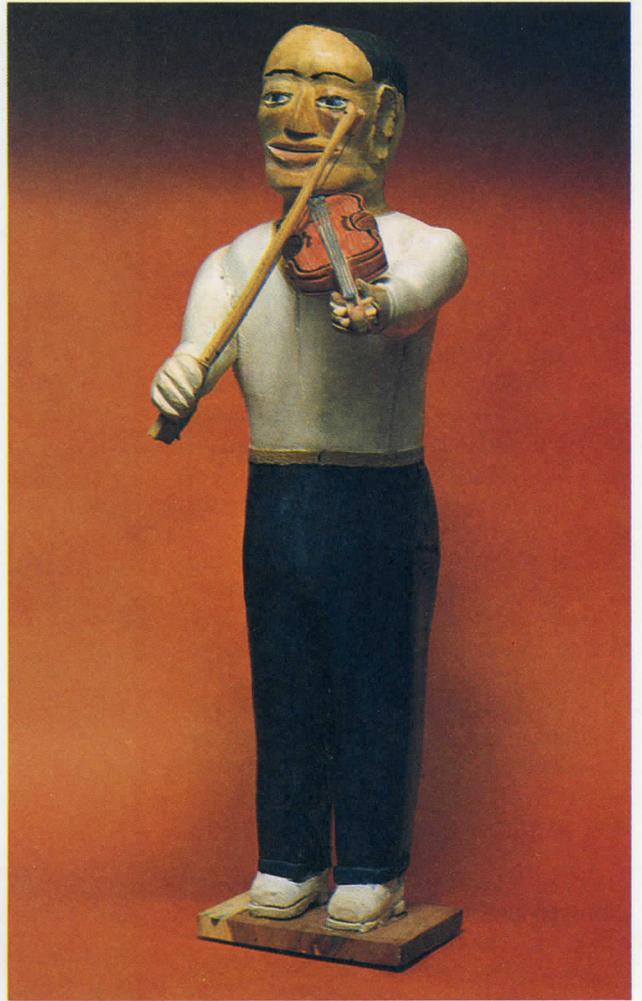
To the boy and young man growing up in rural West Virginia in the first quarter of this century, music also played an extremely important part in everyday life. In church on Sunday, at fairs or socials, wherever people got together, there was music. Music was associated with good times and bad. Jones could always turn to his hobbies, music and carving, to cure loneliness and to create joy.

When S. L. was six years old, Ballard made him a little five-string banjo. After he "saw I could play the small banjo, when I was about seven years old, he bought me a larger banjo and I began to play this one pretty good," Jones remembers. "When I decided that I could play the fiddle, I took an old 16-gauge shotgun to a fellow that owned a fiddle, and traded the gun for the fiddle."

Jones was only about 10 years old when he played in his first fiddlers' contest at a local fair. He was very nervous because there were expert fiddlers from all over the area competing for the prizes. The tune played that day was about a man who wanted to get rid of a cat, and he won first prize.

Back when he was 20 or 25 years old and working on the railroad, "I could really do some fiddling," he proudly proclaims. In those days he had a country band, composed of a fiddler, five-string banjo player, and a guitar player. Jones' group used to play after work, on weekends and holidays at local fairs and gatherings in the neighboring communities and towns. Now he only plays for pleasure, but he still considers himself to be "pretty good for my age." S. L. Jones has carved two country combos composed of the above





Above and above left are examples of Mr. Jones' larger figures, while at *left* he holds a carved miniature. Above photo by Charles Rosenak, left by James Samsell, and above left from West Virginia Artists Register.

Opposite page: As for other artists, the S. L. Jones studio is a retreat for relaxation and creativity. Photo by James Samsell.

three musicians and these groupings are probably his most important work to date.

The railroad years were dominated by days of hard labor and, with a family to support, there was just not enough time available for hobbies. However, even while working on the railroad, he did some carving. For instance, a picture frame made for his first wife Hazel in 1938 still exists. This frame is finely decorated with carved leaves and vines. The leaves



and a cherry-like bloom are painted. Early pride in his craftsmanship is demonstrated by the inscription on the back which reads, "Carved by S. L. Jones in 1938." Although the style which was later to make him famous had not yet evolved, it is obvious that the skills learned whiling away time during the hunts were not lost during the years of laying rail.

In 1967, after spending more than 45 years on the railroad, Jones retired. Two years later, Hazel died. "I had just taken my pension, and I had lost my first wife." When he was lonely, he turned again to his boyhood skills—carving and music. Now, when he finally had the time, the making of sculpture really began.

First, he took a course in oil painting "from Mrs. Zama Rodes, a lady in Hinton." S. L. Jones is one of the very few folk carvers who also draws and paints. His drawings are of faces, similar to these which appear in the sculpture. However, unlike trained

artists, he does not carve from or use the drawings as models. S. L. prefers carving to drawing. But sometimes in the evenings, in front of the wood-burning stove, after a good dinner, it is relaxing to pick up a pad of paper, pencils and crayons, and draw pictures of the faces which inhabit his imagination.

The carvings he made after he retired were larger and more sculptural. The forms were no longer related to idle boyhood whittling. Heads and figures began to emerge from logs of yellow poplar, walnut, and maple gathered from the woods behind Pine Hill. The faces came from visualizations seen sometimes in dreams. These faces, usually smiling, are real to Jones. For instance, after carving a figure of a man, he felt he had to begin work immediately to make "a wonderful woman for that man. When you get them together," he figured, "that will be something."

As the work found a style of its own,

the pocket knife was used less and less. Now a set of wood chisels replaced the Bowie knife of his youth. Madelaine will tell you that she paid "\$18.00 for just one of his chisels," a Christmas present. Paint is purchased in small jars from neighborhood stores and applied to highlight the natural color and texture of the wood.

The figures are abstracted from life. The feeling is similar to that of trained artists such as Alexander Calder, William King, and Elie Nadelman, but this art did not come from formal learning. No one taught S. L. Jones how to carve.

Art lessons were always out of the question for the boy and young man. Also, there were no museums in the area to take children to on holidays or school field trips. Jones never saw a serious work of art until recently on his trips to what he calls the "Bible country" of Egypt, Greece, and Italy. There for the first time he visited museums. "Oh, it was a wonderful, won-



Above: Until destroyed by vandals, the "S. L. Jones: Wood Carver" sign beckoned to passers-by. Photo from West Virginia Artists Register.
 Right: Madeline and S. L. Jones, in a moment of togetherness with quilting, music, and the family dog. Photo by James Samsell.

derful experience," he stated, "but I never saw anything over there like what I can carve. No carving work, I never saw any carving."

It wasn't long before the outside world discovered this remarkable folk artist. Jones began showing his work at county fairs in the early '70's. These were the same fairs that had awarded him ribbons for fiddle playing over the years. New ribbons of many colors were added to his collection on the studio wall. The judges were kind to him, but the local people who visited the fairs were not serious collectors and sales were few.

Then the gift shop at the lodge at nearby Pipestem State Park began to display Jones' work, along with that of other craft people. While visiting

Pipestem in 1973 and 1974, a well-known television personality spotted Jones' sculpture and took several pieces back to California. At about the same time, the collector and writer on 20th-century American folk art, Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr., discovered Jones and began including his work in exhibitions of his collection. Later, in 1975, Phyllis Kind, who owns art galleries in Chicago and New York, visited Jones and showed his carved, painted heads in a folk art show in Chicago. Her dramatic postcard of three Jones heads against a turquoise background was distributed to collectors all over the country.

Today Jones' drawings and carvings are part of the permanent collections of many museums, including the Na-

tional Museum of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., and the Museum of American Folk Art in New York. S. L. Jones' folk sculptures have been included in museum shows in such places as New York, Philadelphia, and even Tokyo.

Fame has come to this resident of Pine Hill in Summers County. But when asked about his success, Jones merely shrugs and says, "I guess I'm famous. I get calls from people we never heard of and they tell me that they have seen my work here or there. But I would have done the carving whether or not I got famous. A person has to have some work to do, so I carve some and play the fiddle. I have to confess that I believe I'm fairly good, not boasting." ❁



"I Might as Well Go Back In"

Remembering the Eccles and Layland Explosions

Interview by Paul Nyden

In 1914 and 1915 West Virginia experienced two of its worst mine explosions, within little more than ten months of each other. On April 28, 1914, Raleigh County's Eccles Number 5 mine blew up, with deadly explosive gases kicking back into the connected Number 6. And on March 2, 1915, Fayette County's Layland Number 3 ignited in a tremendous coal dust explosion.

Together, the two disasters claimed 302 lives, but one man survived them both. In this excerpt from a recent interview, William Derenge of Quinwood recalls the Eccles and Layland tragedies—and his own decision to continue working in the mines afterwards.

Derenge, who will be 91 this year, was born in Freeland, Pennsylvania. When he was nine years old, his father moved to Dunloup in Fayette County to work in the coal mines. William himself began working in the Royal Mine on the New River in 1902, when he was 11. In 1906, his father was se-

verely hurt in a roof fall in the Greenwood Mines up Laurel Creek and was partially paralyzed for nearly a year. "But back in them days," William recalls, "there was no Workmen's Compensation," so he stayed at work. Both father and son worked on and off in various mines and on different farms during the next several years.

Then in 1912, William first went to Eccles to work in the mines owned by the Guggenheim family interests. "But they got in a labor dispute, and went on strike. I wasn't going to do what they call 'scab.' So I left and went back home to Springdale to work in the woods cutting timber until the strike was settled." When he returned to Eccles, they were working under a United Mine Workers contract.

I went to Eccles, it must have been about 1913, and worked for some time. And on April 28, 1914, Number 5 Eccles blew up. I was working Number 6, and Number 5 and 6 connected up with a "false-bottom shaft," they call it. Everyone that was around close

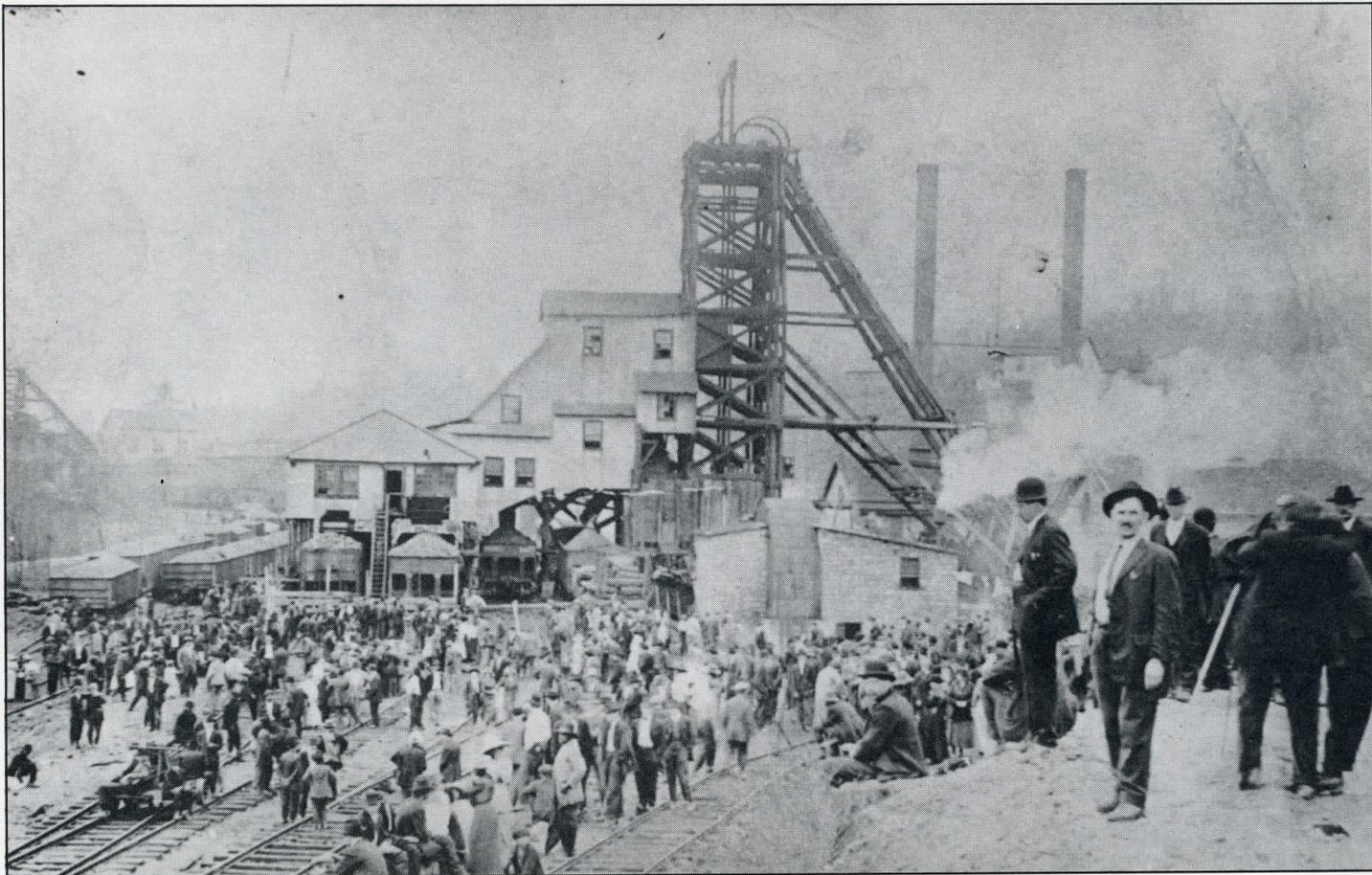
to the shaft was blown all to hell.

We was farther back. We could have run into the afterdamp and suffocated, but we got out. Three of us went back to our working place to get some canvas—something to build a barricade with, trying to stay away from the poison fumes. While we was going back Number 5 blew up the second time.*

We didn't want to move no more, so we barricaded ourselves off, close to where we was working. The air was still clear up there. And we stayed there till the rescue party come after us. We got out about six o'clock, I would say. Well, there was people there from all over. It was like a circus day. You couldn't hardly get around to nowhere. People that just heard about it come there, and a lot of relatives come there to see about their people.

Some of my friends from down in Terry asked me what I was going to

*Deadly gases following a mine explosion.



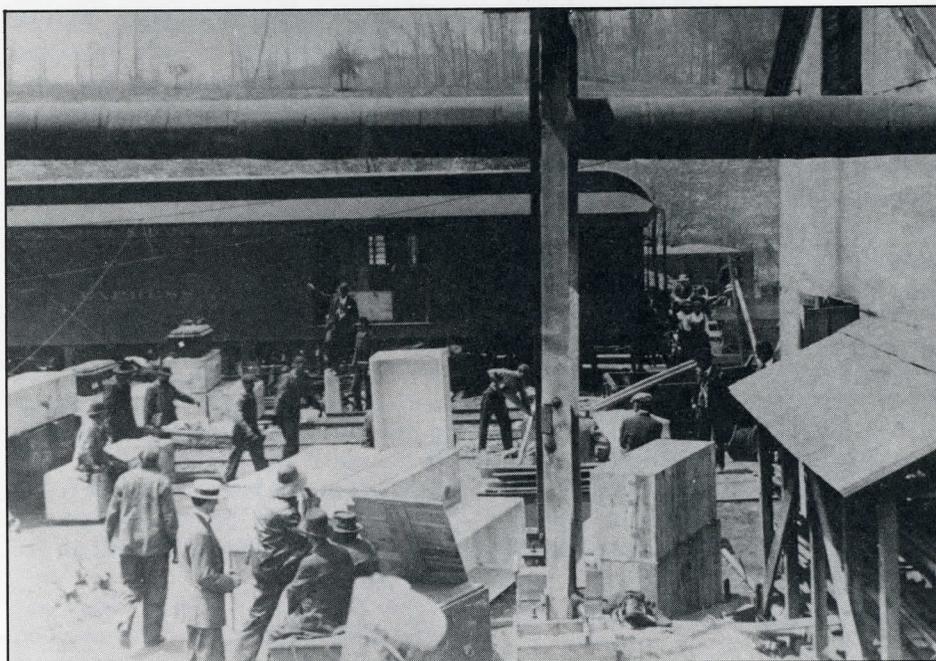
Above: "It was like circus day," Bill Derenge said of Eccles mine after the explosion of April 28, 1914, and recalled a similar scene at Layland the next spring. Photographer unknown, courtesy Lacy A. Dillon.

Below: After the Eccles explosion, coffins were crated at trackside for shipment by rail. Among the 183 bodies recovered, old Raleigh County names like Quesenberry mixed with dozens of those of eastern and southern European immigrants. Photographer unknown, courtesy Lacy A. Dillon.

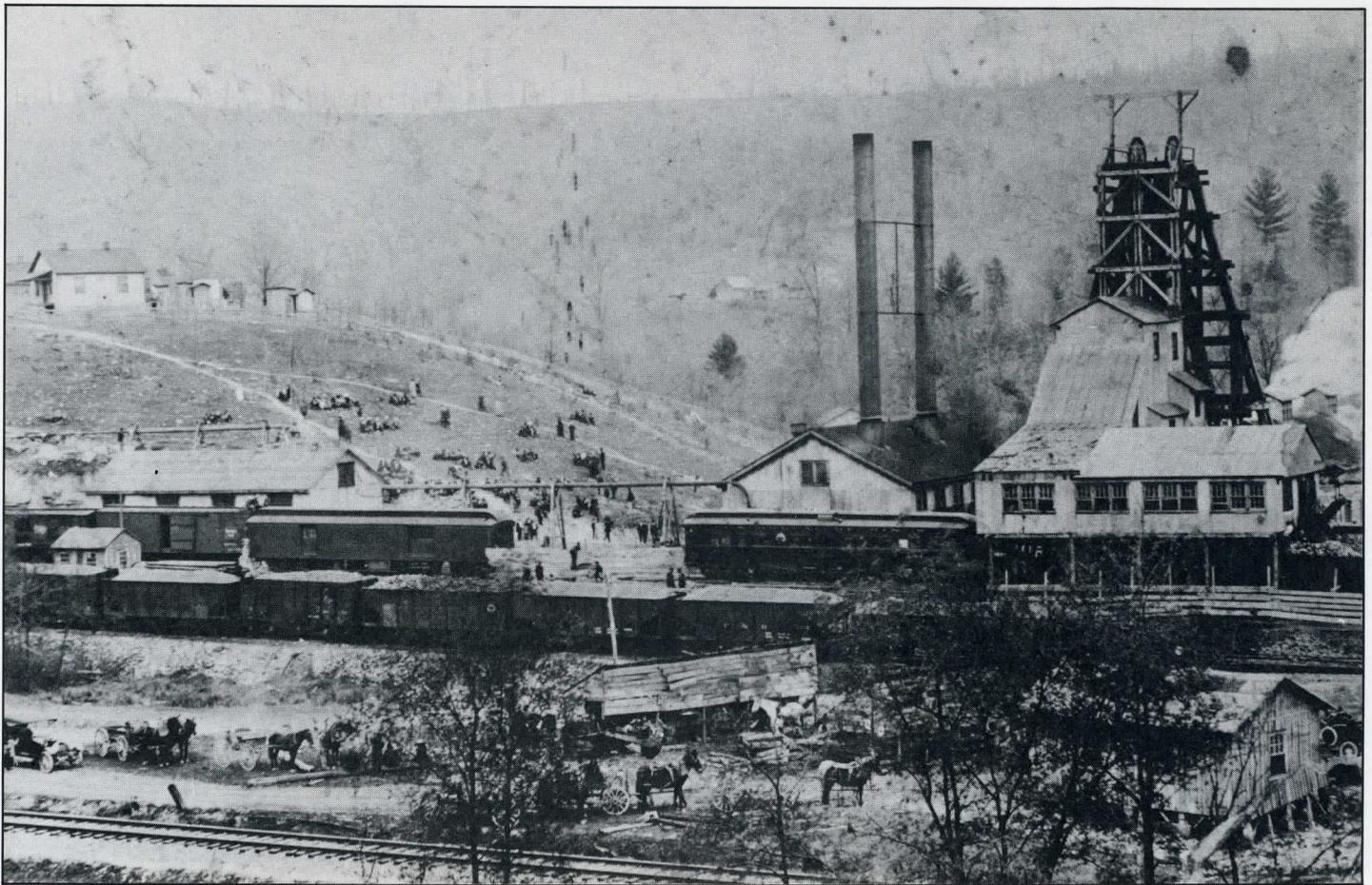
do. And I said, "Well, I can go back in there and work. But I say not." Well, they said, "Come on down to Terry." Terry was a good place to work. And I told them, "Well, I'll get my board and things straightened up, and I'll come down." Which I did. I drew what little pay I had coming, and paid up my board.

I went to work at Terry about a week after the Eccles explosion, and I worked there for 10 months. And the work begin getting slack in February, so I told someone I wasn't going to lay around there. I'd go to Layland, which I did. I went up there on the first day of March and got a job. I went to work on Tuesday, March the second, and it blew up in about 10 minutes after I got to my working place.

When I went in, I had asked the foreman, "Well, where are you going to send me in?" And he said, "On tenth left*." And I said, "Who's work-



*"Tenth left" refers to a section of the mine, which was laid out in a grid.



The Eccles mining complex at the time of the 1914 explosion (above) and as it appears today (right).

ing that side? I know a lot of people here." He told me, "Errol Aurentz." And I told him, "Well, I know him quite well." I said, "I can find my own way. You don't have to show it to me. You can tell me where it is." He says, "Number three room on tenth left." So I struck out. They all walked in on foot. They didn't have no man-trip.

When I got up there, Aurentz looked around to see who it was. He was tickled to death. He jumped up and hugged me. He said, "I sure am glad I got you for a buddy." He said just the Saturday before his old buddy had quit and left. He said, "I sure am glad they sent you in here instead of someone of no 'count."

The way it was, if you were buddies you shared half and half whether you done anything or not, you might say. Each one checked** car-about, regardless of how much more one worked

than the other. And some fellows was naturally lazy; they didn't put out their part.

We talked there for a few minutes and there's such a concussion. There's no way to describe it, only it seemed like it numbed you all over. You can't think of anything, the compression's so great. It's almost enough to bust your eardrums. Not no noise, but just the air compressed. When that compression lets loose, well, you come back to your senses.

After it let loose, he said, "Bill, what is that?" I said, "Well, it's an explosion." I said, "Was there any gas here?" Well, he says, "There's not much gas here. There's a little bit up on the main headings." And I said, "If it's up in the main heading, we'll try to get out of here. We better try to get out of here before the poison fumes gets everywhere. Get out on the main entry."

The first man we seen dead was right at the switchpoints. We went on down and one was laying on top of

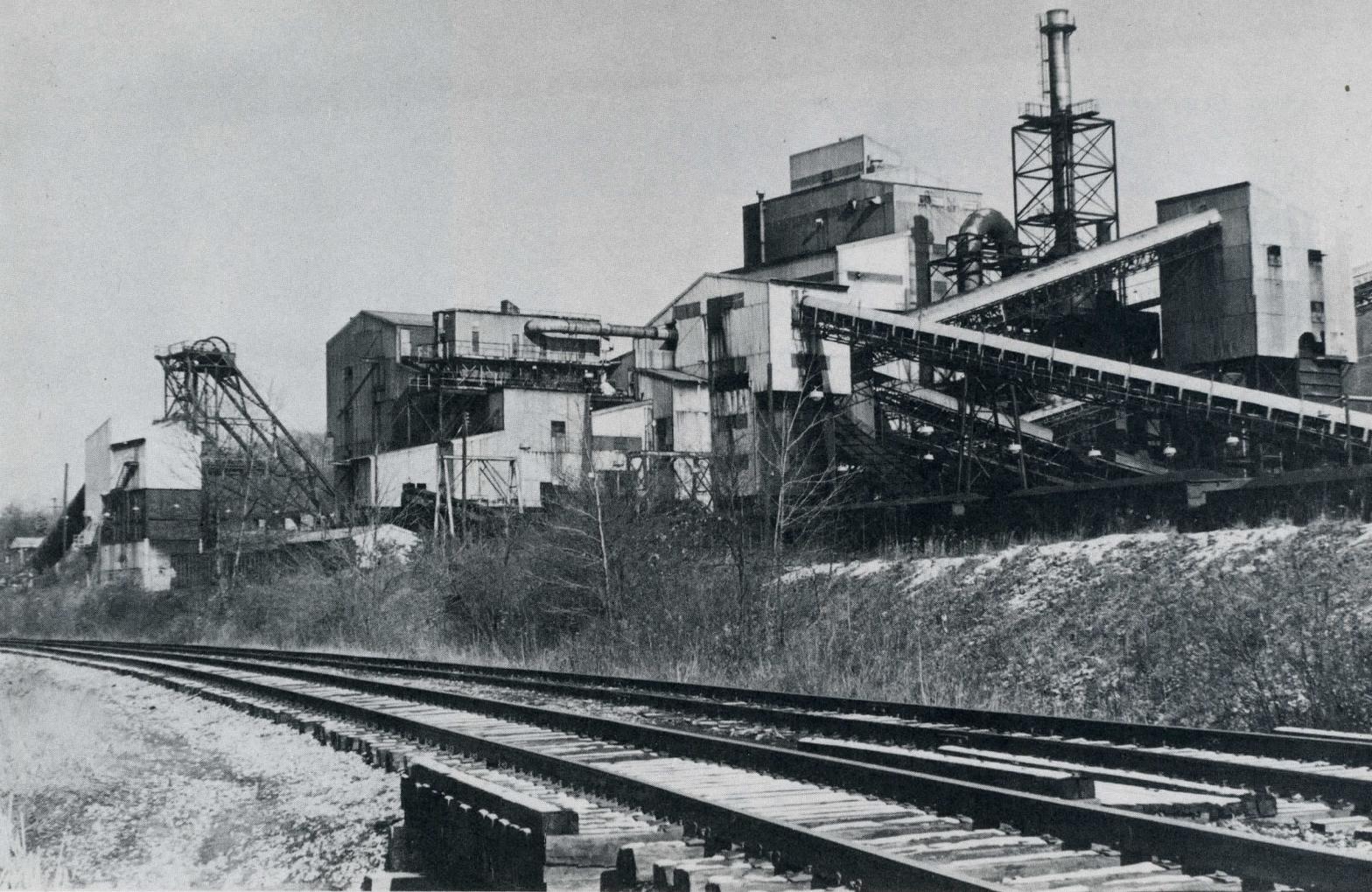
the motor—head up on his arms like that—he was dead.

We were right at the mouth of ninth left. All the men out of ninth left was coming out, and the fumes was getting so strong, you couldn't hardly breathe in. I said, "Let's go back." Everybody turned around and started back.

About that time we met all the men out of the main entries. I told them the air was good in tenth left. And I said, "There's only one chance we've got of surviving." They wondered what that was. I says, "Build a barricade." Some of 'em wanted to know what good would that do, and so on. Of course, I explained it as quick as I could. I told them, "The main thing of it is to seal the fumes off, and we can live several days with sound air there." Well, when they seen the point, they all pitched in.

We went just inside of tenth left, above the main air course. And we built us a barricade, just a temporary one. Then further back, we built a little better—used rocks and used this

**Referring to the practice of each coal loader putting his brass check on cars loaded in a room.



here fine coal dust for mortar. Well, after some time, the smell was coming through it. Let's see, this was on Tuesday. So on Wednesday, I told them, "Well, the only thing we can do is build, build another barricade."

We built one right at the "gob entry." If you know what we're talking about, a gob entry's where they take coal out and throw the slate back in that space there. They call that a gob. So we got out gob, and took the big pieces and made a wall, and filled in between the wall with fine dirt we got out of the track and so on. Built a wall about five-foot thick, and it held. We never could smell no fumes after that.

There were, I'd say, 42 of us. There was 30 foreigners, probably Italians. They got restless, and on Thursday they said, "They're going to leave us in here to die. We'd better try to go out." "Well," I said, "You're not talking about we going. I'm not going." I said, "Let one go out and if one makes it, well, the rest of us can make it." So this fellow, Tony, said, "All

right, I'll go." I told him, "Well, it don't make any difference to me who goes. But I don't think it's any sense for more than one to go, because if you go down, that'll be one. But if all of us go, we'll all go down." "That's a good idea," he said. "I'll go."

So we broke a pick handle out, and told him to slide the pick handle along on a trolley wire. He knowed he was all right so long as he followed that trolley wire—it'd take him to the outside. I told him he couldn't take no light. Well, he balked then. He said, oh, he wouldn't go without a light. But I told him he can't take no light, 'cause it'll blow up and kill everybody outside and us too. And he seen the point, he didn't insist on it anymore. Well, he said, he'd go anyway. I tore up a piece of what we call "shooting paper," "dummy paper," we called it. And I wrote on there, "42 men alive," and dated it. I told him, "You take this with you now. If you don't make it, they'll find this paper and they'll know where we are."

Well, he kept just sliding the pick, we told him to rap the pick on the trolley wire—sound goes a long ways, you know. He kept saying, "Okay, okay, okay, everything okay." And all of a sudden, no more "okay." And we heard him thumping on the bottom. So I said, "Well, he's down." I said, "Shall we try to get him or not?" I don't know who the man was, but he said, "Yeah, I'll go and try to get him." I said, "Take a good deep breath. And let the breath out as little at a time as you can. Breathe air very little."

First, he grabbed him by the legs and started dragging him, his head bumping on the side, and bumping hard on the ribs. So he changed holds and grabbed him by the hands and pulled him. Pulled him up and shoved him through the hole we had in the wall. Just took out a hole big enough for a man to crawl through. He shoved him through, and he crawled through hisself, and sealed it up again.

He laid just like a dead man, didn't move even. After about five minutes,

Bill Derenge's Will

To my Dear friends
 This is Sat morning 8 o'clock
 Mar 6, 1915. We are all still alive
 but not knowing long God will
 spare me. So dear friends should
 it be Gods will that I must die
 you will find on me a Gold watch
 and a purse with \$10 and 90cts and the
 rest of my belongings is at John Deuls
 house such as trunk and clothes. So please
 notify my father and restore everything
 safely to him so God being my helper
 I will close W Derenge
 My father address is Mike Derenge
 L Lute
 Springdale W.Va
 W.Va

Mr. Derenge is characteristically modest in describing his role in the Layland rescue, but others have taken a different view. Lacy Dillon, whose book *They Died in the Darkness* is the standard reference on West Virginia mine disasters, calls Derenge a "hero." Dillon points out that Layland was the first mine explosion which a large group of men survived by barricading themselves off, and that no barricaded group of any size had before then lived so long—nearly five days—before rescue. Dillon credits the survival in large part to Bill Derenge's cool head.

As leader of the trapped miners Derenge remained outwardly calm, but he himself secretly despaired as time went on. On his fourth night behind the barricade, he dreamed of a woman in white trying

to lead him from the mine. At the time women in the mines were considered unlucky by superstitious miners, and Derenge took the dream to be a bad omen.

Fortunately, he was wrong. The next morning he set to work with a pencil and a scrap of "shooting paper," producing the will reproduced here. But within an hour rescue workers broke through the miners' barricade, and carried the trapped men to safety.

Further Reading

Lacy A. Dillon, *They Died in the Darkness*. (Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Company, 1976.) Dillon's book covers 43 major mine disasters, from 1886 to West Virginia's last great coal tragedy, at Farmington in 1968.



Bill Derenge survived West Virginia's second and fourth worst mining disasters more than 65 years ago, worked nearly 40 more years in the mines, and continues in reasonably good health today. Photo by Paul Nyden.

he begin breathing heavy. And then he started moaning. I said, "Well, I believe he's going to be all right." In about 15 minutes, he set up and looked real wild. I said, "Tony, what's the matter?" I said, "Why didn't you go outside like you said you was?" He said, "Oh, Bill, all I know, my legs go to sleep." That was on Thursday. And after that we didn't have no trouble of anybody wanting to go.

The first day we had about one biscuit around, I think. That was the end of our food supply. So the men went around and picked up the scraps where men had eaten their lunch, you know, pieces of moldy bread and things. Some of them took the strips out of eggshells and ate the stripping. And some went so far as to eat leather on their shoes.

I experimented peeling the inside of bark of chestnut mine timbers. The bark come off easy and had a thick, white layer in there. You scrape that, and it really tastes good and sweet. But there's acid in it, and it just eat up the top of my mouth. When a horse has "lampers," the roof of his mouth gets sore and swells up. Well, that's the way my mouth was. So that ended my chestnut diet.

We just had to set there and wait her out. Every now and then, somebody said they heard something, you know. And after listening and listening for a long time, we found it was just imagination. There was nothing.

In the meantime, there was five men on ninth left. They done the same as we did, only they had more material. They had wood there and they nailed up a wooden barricade. They had a door or something, and they'd get out and sample air. And it seemed like on Saturday, the air was pretty good. So they ventured and come outside. And when they come outside, they really bawled out them on the rescue. Wanted to know why they didn't explore tenth or Number 3 mines. They said, "We were in there; there might be others in there." So they went in there, and they come across this paper where it said "42 men alive on tenth left." And they come right into where we were.

I might have to add, they had the mine rescue car in them days, but they kept it up in Pittsburgh. And the ones that worked on the rescue—most were some politicians' sons. And they didn't know anything about a coal mine. They knew how to use a breathing apparatus—oxygen helmets and so on—but as far as knowing anything about a mine, nothing about it. They come in Number 3, I guess. It exploded on Tuesday; they come up Number 3 about Wednesday. They said Number 10 entry fell in from top to bottom. *They didn't know a barricade from a slate fall!* That was the truth. They reported there wasn't anybody in Number 3 mine alive. So they didn't explore it anymore.

Layland was just like it was in Eccles, a crowd like circus day. You could hardly get through there, there was so many people from all over the country. My dad, he got the word that Layland Mine blowed up. He got in his horse and buggy and took off. He was there



This memorial commemorating the dead in the Eccles explosions of 1914 and 1926 was erected by Westmoreland Coal Company in 1976. Photo by Paul Nyden.

waiting for me when we were rescued.

At that day and time, there was a lot of things we didn't know. We had the idea that you have to have gas before the dust would explode. Found out after that, it wasn't so. That mine was so dry that you'd walk in dust above your ankles, just as fine as talcum powder. Ribs everywhere was lying full of dust.

They had a substation to boost the power right in the mine, cut into solid coal. It got so hot at peak load, they had to shut it down sometimes. This old man Atticus attended that substation. Some fellow had got the idea to put a fan in there to blow through the generators. You know, blow that hot air out, help keep them cool. They put the fan in on a Monday, and the old man was instructed to start up that fan the next morning.

When he started that fan, that just stirred a whole lot of dust up in there. And the breaker went out, and that circuit breaker's what set it off. It was not just a spark, it was a big arc which jumped almost a foot. Anyway, they never did put that substation back in the mines anymore. It shows that they're satisfied that's what done it. They built it on top of the mountain and put the wire down through a borehole.

After I got out of Layland Mine, I decided I wanted to quit the coal mines for a while. I left there and went out in the country to my father's house, and went to work in the woods. I worked cutting timber, let's see, about a year. I first worked for Hutchinson's company in Bellwood.

Something went wrong there. I quit and went to Meadow River, and went down to Bear's Creek. I got together with a fellow by name of Louis Johnson from Oklahoma. We become quite close friends and worked together, during the very severe winter of 1913 and '14.

I didn't work in the mines no more until after I got out of the army in the First World War. Then the sawmill blew up and killed my brother. After I got over the shock, I just said, "Well, it looks like things blow up outside as well as in the mines. So I just might as well go back in the mines." And I did. I worked there on up till about '58, I guess, when I retired from the mines. ✨

A longer version of this interview was included in a New River oral history survey, contracted for by the National Park Service as part of the planning for the New River Gorge National River.

"My Line of Work"

Augusta Gallozzi Recalls the Mining Life

By Norman Julian

Photographs by Ron Rittenhouse

Augusta Gallozzi, who spent 48 years underground working in West Virginia coal mines, recalls that mining wasn't the promise that brought his father and him from Italy to America at the turn of the century.

Augusta recounts the journey across the Atlantic as it was reported to him, because he was a babe-in-arms at the time. But his recall of other events in his early years in the "new country," West Virginia, is good. In his family, Augusta, a slight but muscular man who at 82 still raises a few chickens and a vegetable garden, is not known as a "talker." However, during the three interviews I had with him in preparing this article, he described his experience in depth, speaking deliberately, searching not so much for the memories, which he could recall in detail, but for the apt words to express them.

Born in the small town of Monticello near Rome in 1900, Augusta came to the Mountain State two years later when his father emigrated.

"He was a marble stone sculptor," Augusta remembers. "Friends over there [West Virginia] contacted him and said there was all the work he wanted. All kinds of work. But when he got over there, wasn't nothing but coal mines. He was just stuck, that's all. Went to the coal mine and then that was the end of it. There was no way he could go back, because they brought the whole family. He had spent all of his money."

Augusta remembers that the trip had taken about a month and when the family got to New York "they made them stay three days there. They wouldn't let you off. They said that they was having Thanksgiving, you know. My dad called it a 'chicken holiday'—he always had to say that."

Neither Augusta nor his father ever saw Italy again despite it being the custom of many Italian miners who came to West Virginia to return to the "old country" time and time again.

The elder Gallozzi got work in a coal mine near Fairmont and the family took up residence in a three-room company house near Pennsylvania Avenue. The boys slept in one bed and the girls in another, "with a partition, you know, from one room to another," Augusta remembers.

The house was heated with coal that had to be bought from the company. That was supplemented with what could be found along the railroad tracks. "As a kid I used to go pick coal up the road, you know. Sometimes we used canvas bags. Sometimes used to go there to the tippie and pick it up."

The company houses were made of green lumber, without insulation, and occasionally they warped and sagged. An outdoor privy was in the backyard. A fire hydrant supplied water that was pumped from nearby Buffalo Creek. It was used by all the residents for washing and cleaning but Augusta says for drinking water "you had to walk about 15 minutes to where it came out of a hill."

Everybody in the coal town lived about the same, with the bare necessities of life purchased with scrip from the company store. Asked whether those were happy times, Gallozzi said, "At that time you didn't pay attention to it. That's all there was to it. Everybody was in the same boat."

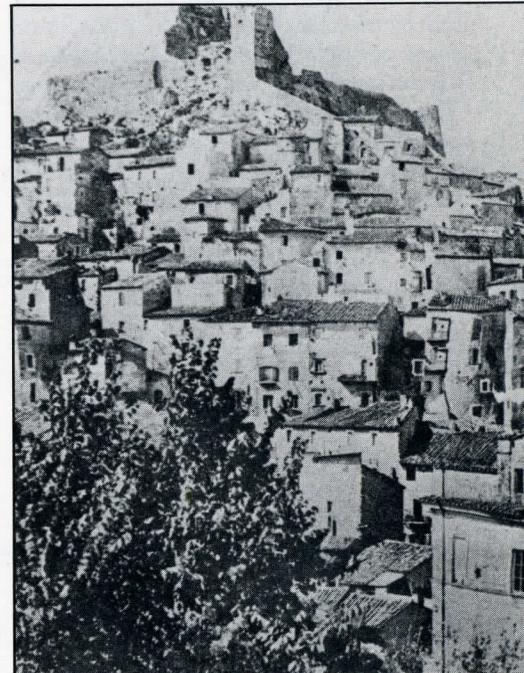
A marble stonemason who worked as a miner couldn't afford any better. "He didn't make very much," Augusta says of his father's first job. "Only paid 'em a very small amount of money. In fact, I don't think he ever drewed a pay for six months."

His rate of pay then was around a dollar a day—"some days he might have made less and some days maybe he'd make a little more. At that time they paid by what coal you load."

The elder Gallozzi worked 38 years in the coal mines, retired in 1940, and died in 1952. Asked if his father died of black lung, Augusta says, "He didn't have black lung. At that time they didn't hear nothing about black lung. He died of throat cancer."

Like other Americans, Augusta started school at the age of six. "The school I went to was a large school that used to be a normal school at one time, you know. They had made sort of a grade school out of it. It had about eight or nine, ten rooms in it."

Most of the students were Italian-Americans, like Augusta, and he says he didn't feel awkward because of his

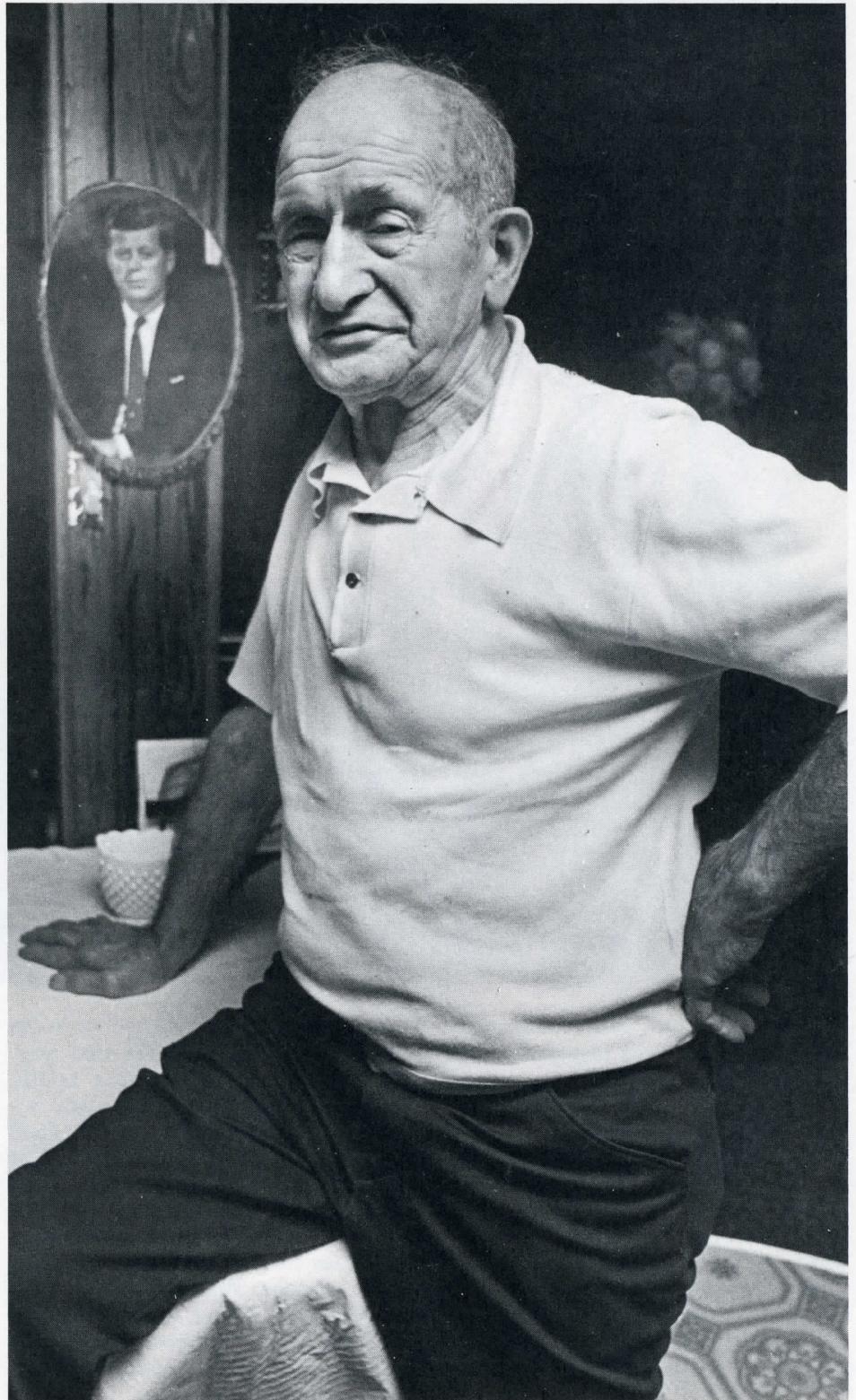


Below: Postcard view of the Italian town of Monticello, Augusta Gallozzi's birthplace.
Right: Augusta Gallozzi with portrait of favorite president.

nationality. He recalls that he started speaking English in school "pretty good, all at once."

When he was nine he quit school for the first time and started working at the Monongah Glass Company, doing what he calls "catching out" of the molten glass. He burned his hand and had to quit and returned to school. Although it was often the custom for Italian-American boys of nine or ten to go into the mines with their fathers, Augusta didn't. "Dad didn't want me to go in. He wanted me to go to school."

Augusta did quit school again when he was 14 to work at the same "glass house." He returned to school again, but then, at 16, he left for good and got his first job in the mines. "That was the only job that was available at that time. Wasn't nothing else to do."





Left: Formal portrait of Gallozzi at age 22. Photographer unknown, about 1922.

Below: Augusta Gallozzi, age 28. Photographer unknown, about 1928.

Right: The Gallozzis with son David and daughter Karen, in the 1930's. Photographer unknown.



I wanted to go to work and there I went. At the time you just went up to the mine office there and signed your name up." No doctor's examination or other tests were required.

The first colliery at which he worked was Consolidation Coal Company No. 38 Mine near Fairmont. Except for a little time off for a broken arm and when he participated in strikes, he spent most of the next half century of his working life underground.

Once in the mine, he worked with his dad at pick-and-shovel mining. As was the practice, Augusta had to fur-

nish his own tools, buying them at the company store out of his first paycheck. Most everything the family used came from the same place, according to Gallozzi. "Most of the food and everything that you bought at home, your clothes and everything, from the company store."

The miner's uniform included rubber boots, not safety shoes, and a canvas cap, rather than the helmet used now. "It had a hook on it," Gallozzi says of his cap, "and you hooked your light on it." It was an open-flame carbide light, the kind that would set

methane gas to burning.

"There was gas," Gallozzi remembers. "I've seen times, you know, that there'd be gas in your place. Maybe you have an open light or something, you'd blow that gas out. Sort of a flame comes out, you know. But after a while you'd 'smother' it out, see. Like when you shoot your coal down, you know. Smoke and stuff."

Miners would drill a hole into a coal seam, pack it with dynamite and "shoot" the coal loose, then would pick it into manageable pieces and shovel it into waiting cars. Gallozzi

remembers that he often worked bent over in water. "Sometimes it would get up to the top of your boots." When the miners would complain about it, "they used to bail it out. But it'd come right back in, you know. So you more than likely had to try to load all day long with it."

"All day long" was typically ten hours, six days a week. He remembers: "In the wintertime a lot of days you never seen the sun. Just on Sunday." But of that, Augusta says, "Well, at that age I didn't pay much attention to it. You know, everything looked so nice and neat to me. But as years go by, I started realizing a lot of things."

He adds, "Well, you worry about it, yeah. You'll see conditions sometimes—you know, the roof was bad, it sort of gets under your collarbone. You keep thinking, 'I don't know if I'll get out of here today or not,' and you go along. In them early years, you never knowed. They didn't teach you no safety. You just had to go along yourself."

In those early years as a coal miner, on his day off, Gallozzi said for recreation "I used to go to town, go to a pool room, shoot pool. That was about it." In the mining community, he says "we used to play cards, things like that," for recreation. "They used to have baseball games at the parks around the mines. Here and there, you know. But they never even have a community building or nothing."

At first Gallozzi was paid about the same as his father, sometimes making a dollar and a half a day. But he remembers that "later on, maybe a year or so, the First War broke out, you know. People got scarce. First thing you know I started driving a horse. That is, to haul coal, you know. What other people load up, you got to haul that coal out and put it up on the siding so they take it." He says that "some of those horses could see in the dark."

For that, he made about \$2 per day. "Considered a pretty good job, yeah," Gallozzi says with a smile and a chuckle.

In 1923, Gallozzi left for the Bethlehem Steel Company Dakota Mine, about two miles from Fairmont. He remained a hauler because, he says, "at that time there wasn't any much better job. It's not like today—that if you qualify for a job, you bid for it

and you get it, see. At that time they'd tell you to keep what you got or you get out."

He said most of the time "they had plenty of guys to take your place. That was best for me, what I done, you know, in my line of work, see. I never asked for a job aboveground. Probably might have had a chance, but I never did ask for it. Outside the mines the only job you had was picking slate,



or dumping coal, dumping cars. I don't think it paid quite as much as the underground."

He never saw a miner killed but "I seen some got covered up, seen 'em come out of that, I've seen 'em get hurt. At that time you had to get hurt pretty bad for the company to take care of you. Otherwise, if you just got hurt slightly, here and there, they never paid any attention to you. They had a medical doctor but the only time you see him is somebody get hurt and he wasn't able to walk."

Gallozzi was forced to miss work for the first time when he broke his arm driving. "A horse knocked me against a car and broke my arm, see. Well, I walked home. Nobody never said anything, you know. My arm was hurting, painin' me, so I went home. From there I had to call the doctor. He sent me over to State Hospital [now Fairmont Emergency Hospital on the East Side]. They took about three hours to

X-ray, this and that, couldn't find nothing. Then finally found my arm was broken. Broke right in the middle. They put a lot of plaster on it. After a couple of months, it got better. I lost a couple months' work."

If a miner got hurt so bad he couldn't work, the family was still able to stay in the company house, according to Augusta.

In 1916 the Gallozzi family moved to the town of Buffalo, near Fairmont. Augusta remembers, "It was a better house, they had just built new houses.

And we had to pay—I think it was \$8 a month.” That usually represented close to one week’s wages.

Things changed in the mines with the coming of the United Mine Workers of America and John L. Lewis. “Well, I tell you, when I started there wasn’t no union, no sign of it, but then—it was in 1917—the war broke

made’s a contract. In later years then they start putting onto it.”

Augusta remembers the first day he saw and heard Lewis, a man who, like him, had quit school at an early age to work in the mines: “He come to Fairmont here one time, had a big rally on Labor Day, out in the shack town where we have the fairgrounds, he

it don’t matter, gonna take time, but we’ll get out of it. He was right. It took time, you see. That strike lasted about nine months.

“They’d evict people out of their homes, out of the company house, you know, and the union built the barracks. The company brought in a lot of what-you-call these scabs from the southern part of the state. They brought in carloads of them. They furnished them tools, they furnished them clothes. People that never worked before. Strikebreakers, or what you would call ‘em. They kept the mines open. Most of them went in the company houses where they’d throwed the other people out, see. All they was there for was to break the union, see. It did work for a while. If it wouldn’t have been for when Roosevelt got in there and give the union back, they probably wouldn’t have the union today.

“A lot of people got their job back, what was on strike, a lot of them didn’t. A lot of them had to go here, there. They had the mines filled up. And you couldn’t get rid of those people that was in there. But, you know, gradually as time went on some of them moved, some left. And Roosevelt put the union back in there in ‘32, ‘33, and it’s been here since.”

During World War II, Augusta says, “you had more work if you wanted to work. They didn’t compel you to work only regular hours. If you wanted to work those 16, then you could do it, see.”

Augusta met his wife, Katie, at church. He recalls that he kept seeing her there and had his sisters introduce them. Three months later they were married. “It didn’t take long,” he says with a grin.

With the miner’s pay, he raised a son, David, and a daughter, Karen. His son-in-law, Stanley Sears, is now president of a company which overhauls electrical machinery for the mines.

Augusta says he never would have advised a man to work in the coal mines the way it was when he was a boy. Conditions were too bad. But, he adds, “You know, in later years, they take all that, most of that, off of you, see. They come out with a lot of safety stuff and you forget about that. When I retired in 1965 conditions were better then than it had ever been. Now they got ‘em a lot better.” ❁



In retirement, Augusta Gallozzi keeps up with the news, taking a particular interest in mine safety and working conditions.

out, you see, then gradually they started to organize. Oh, had a few meetings and time went by. I think along about a year after that we organized.

“Well, I think when the union come in there I think we got—the average pay I think went to around \$4.70 a day. And that was from about \$2, you know. It jumped.”

Augusta recalls that conditions didn’t improve all at once, though. “Well, not right off the bat. All they

spoke. At that time we was on strike. The union was pretty well busted up. And he come and just as soon as he got in town they had a warrant for him to put him under arrest. But the rally went on. They didn’t put him in jail.”

Despite his lack of formal education, Lewis was an eloquent speaker who spoke of and from the miners’ experience. Augusta recalls how in booming voice, “He’d tell you to stay on it [the strike], stand for your rights,

"Learning By Doing"

Teachers Remember Arthurdale School

By John Maxwell

The April-June 1981 GOLDENSEAL included articles on Arthurdale, the Depression "resettlement community" in Preston County. Arthurdale was one of many such projects by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, which sought to bring the unemployed together into decent communities. Ideally, such communities were to become self-supporting, with employment for the residents provided nearby. Arthurdale never became the financial success it was supposed to be, but it left a deep impression on its people.

The Community School was a central part of the Arthurdale experiment, becoming a social center as well as a place of education. It was also a special pet of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and a laboratory for progressive theories of education. The importance of the school was made clear in the earlier GOLDENSEAL, in quotations from graduates. In the following article, John Maxwell of Morgantown takes the process one step further and talks with former teachers of Arthurdale Community School.—ed.

Arthurdale School was the result of several forces. The White House Conference on Child Welfare called by President Herbert Hoover in 1930 pointed out the distress in the northern West Virginia coalfields. The American Friends Service Committee was active in relieving this distress, cooperating with the Morgantown Council of Social Agencies and county and state relief agencies. But it was President Franklin Roosevelt's National Recovery Act and the Subsistence

Homestead Division of the Department of Interior that provided support for a new community in Arthurdale. Eleanor Roosevelt kept the President's attention on the Mountain State when she visited the coalfields in the summer of 1933, advocating the purchase of the Arthur homestead in Preston County and the founding of a new community with unemployed miners and their families from Scotts Run.

Elsie Clapp became involved in the planning of the school as the head of the Committee on School and Community Relations of the Progressive Education Association, which tried to realize the goals of John Dewey's philosophy. The school opened in 1934 in less than ideal conditions. Classes had to be held in the Arthur mansion on the homestead while construction continued on the school buildings. The fourth grade teacher reported: "School opened, yes, with one broken table, four temporary benches with backs on which to write, 12 penny pencils and a filler of line paper . . . That and nothing more."

The memories of those first days bring smiles to the faces of the teachers who endured them. They were a time of challenge, Alice Conley of Morgantown told me, as she faced conditions in the nursery which she described at its opening as "primitive." But the staff overcame the difficulties as they set about their work not only in the school, but in every aspect of the community's life.

Not everyone agreed with the experiment in Arthurdale. The county paper railed against Roosevelt's "socialism." A rumor spread that a mem-

ber of the Preston County Board of Education said that he would not be happy until he saw a padlock on the school door at Arthurdale. An evaluation by the West Virginia University College of Education published in 1940 found problems in achievement, organization, and methods. Its recommendations in effect meant the end of what was unique in the school. The school gradually came under county control and became a traditional public school in the 1940's.

But the participants remain dedicated to their work even to this day. Constantly they stress the conditions from which the new community residents and students came. In one of her books, Elsie Clapp described Scotts Run in 1933, remembering both the community and its people. "Scrawny children played in the sulphur-stained puddles by the road," the educator wrote, "and everywhere men and boys were standing about, not talking, just looking vacantly into space. Back from the highway, hundreds of black shanties rose tier on tier on the steep sides of the gulch."

Glenna Williams, one of the first Arthurdale High School graduates, remembers today what Scotts Run was like when she was growing up there. "The color I have for that period in Scotts Run is a dark gray," she says. "There were 11 or 12 mines from Cassville down to the river. There were houses just lying on those hillsides. There were people of the two races and many nationalities. We were all crowded into one little valley. We lived first over a store where we had absolutely no land at all. Then we moved to this little shanty over on the hill.

Below: Making pottery outside the school. Photographer unknown, courtesy Sara W. Liston.
Right: Arthurdale children did extensive research before building an Indian village at their community school. Always, the emphasis was on "learning by doing." Photographer unknown, courtesy Sara W. Liston.
Far right: Teacher Alice Conley dressing a nursery school child. Today, Conley says the Arthurdale experience taught her to "understand children in anything they do." Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia Collection/WVU.



It was an unpainted shanty, just an old brown color. It sat on a bank and the back post had fallen out. I used to tell my father that we ought to take a cable and go around it and tie to the trees so that it wouldn't fall over. There were four nice shade trees, but no grass. The only way that you could clean your yard was to go out and sweep it."

The children suffered in every respect, including educationally. E. Grant Nine, Arthurdale principal after Elsie Clapp, told me of the deficiencies in reading abilities of the older children—the greatest problem he encountered at the school. Inez Funk and Sara Liston, who taught in the grade school, said that they could see the physical improvements in their students from month to month as the new community, rest, proper nutrition, and eradication of health problems produced striking results. Rehabilitation was a word frequently used in the first months of the Arthurdale experiment.

In 1982, Arthurdale School no longer looks like it did in the 1930's. Some buildings have been destroyed. A modern brick school greets the visitor

who seeks to locate the original six wooden buildings. The new building houses kindergarten and first and second grades. The remaining old buildings are used for fifth through eighth grades. All other local students are bussed out of Arthurdale. Remodeling has changed several buildings' interiors.

The current principal of the school, Dale McVicker, gave me a tour through the buildings and pointed out the features that were unique—the gymnasium's floor which was once celebrated as the "best basketball floor in West Virginia" remains in good condition; classrooms have deep coat closets, adequate storage space and even running water. The library still has the solidly constructed tables and chairs from the Arthurdale furniture cooperative.

I asked several current Arthurdale teachers if their students know much of Arthurdale's past. Sadly they agreed they did not. Ruth Lovett, who has taught there since 1953, described how few original settlement families remain. Linda Nicholas now teaches where she once went to school and remembers that Ruth Lovett did dis-

cuss Arthurdale in her eighth grade class. During this past year, Glenna Williams returned to spend time with the sixth grade and tell them about the past.

Still, a network of people and memories keeps Arthurdale's story alive. A graduate who went on to become a successful attorney in Cleveland returns nearly every year to visit his former teachers. Another attorney in Raleigh, North Carolina, also keeps in touch. A retired teacher, Margaret Brown, reports that her niece who attended Arthurdale encountered another graduate in California when she enrolled in college in Los Angeles. Evidently, the Arthurdale educational experience was so unique it will be cherished as a lifelong memory by participants.

How was it done? I asked this question of several former teachers in the fall of 1980 and the spring and early summer of 1981 in Monongalia and Preston counties. I asked about goals and methods, strengths and weaknesses, and differences between the school and other schools of the time. Particularly interesting was the ques-



Clapp and first discuss the school?

Sara Liston. 1934.

IF The year that we started out there. We went out in the fall, I had to go out on a Saturday. We worked and she talked about the things she wanted. We were out there two or three times before we started teaching.

JM What do you think was the most important characteristic of the community school?

IF Well, it's one in which the parents and others participate and take an interest in the school. The parents came to school, they cooked the lunches, they ate at school. They did a lot of work for the school. They did weaving and they learned to make rugs.

SL You would teach the children during the day and the parents would learn at night. They showed such an eagerness to learn what we were teaching.

JM Had you been introduced to progressive education ideas before you came to the Arthurdale School?

SL No, no, no! We learned it from scratch.

IF We had to go to classes at night and work extra.

JM Sara Liston, you wrote these words a long time ago: "It seems to me that Arthurdale School plays a more important part in the community than any other school with which I have been connected."

SL I would still say that. The community was brought right in. Parents worked right along with children. They worked in the dining room, weaving room, pottery room. Anything that was going on for which we needed help, they were always ready and willing.

JM You also once wrote: "It involves so much more than just regular schools." What were the big differences between Arthurdale and the regular schools that you remember?

SL Well, more contacts with the parents—many more. And more night activities or after-school activities in which the parents came in. They felt so close to the school.

E. Grant Nine. It was different as far as layout was concerned and certainly different in its purposes and how it was administered. It wasn't one building, it was six buildings. It was spread over nursery school, picking up children two years of age, and went

through into adult education in the community which no other school anywhere near us did.

The philosophy back of it was essentially the philosophy of John Dewey, where you *learn by doing*.

JM How was the school different in its daily activities?

EGN Well, we didn't stick, particularly in the elementary part of it, to any single textbook. We met as groups of teachers and decided what was important in the needs of the boys and girls that we had and then built these study guides ourselves and took them through them and the activities. It was essentially a learning together process. We did many field trips out through Arthurdale. We'd see gardens planted and roads and houses being built. We would study Arthurdale itself as it was growing up.

We were never under any compulsion to stay with a particular rigid something or other that had to be learned at any given moment.

The emphasis was not so much on theoretical materials as it was on whether, if you learned something, could you apply it, can you do it, and do you understand it?

JM How did you use the log cabin near the school to teach?

IF We had a project on pioneering and we worked out a lot of things that they did. We had a spinning wheel. We did some pottery. We had a loom and did weaving.

Well, we read about it and went up to the log cabin. The children had all the materials—old iron pots they would bring in, for example. There was a place where you could have a fire and they made things like the pioneers had. We also had a little garden up there and raised some flax. We brought it in and dried it and tried to make thread for linen. They wove a lot of things.

SL One nice thing about the pottery and weaving, the adults got into that as well as the children.

IF Here is a picture of the old flatboat that we made.

JM In building this flatboat, how did you pull together all the classroom subjects?

IF We looked for materials and read what we could; what they couldn't read, I would read to them. Then we measured to get our proportions, did

tion of how the school put into practice the concepts of learning by doing and relating classroom instruction to the total life of the student and community. Finally, participants were asked about the celebrated ties of Arthurdale to the Roosevelts of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

John Maxwell. When did you first learn that there was going to be an Arthurdale?

Alice Conley. Sometime in July [1933], Miss Jessie Stanton came from Bank Street School in New York to Morgantown to interview people who might be interested in going to Arthurdale. She needed two people and I became one of them. She came down for a couple of years, about every six weeks and stayed two days and set up the program. And we had conferences with her—that's the way we learned our techniques.

JM Did you have a chance before the school opened to discuss what you would be doing?

Inez Funk. We were out there two or three times before we started teaching.

JM When did you meet Miss



Carding fibers and churning butter in the pioneer cabin. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia Collection/WVU.

the arithmetic and figured that out. It seemed that they could read and work at the same time.

JM Mrs. Liston, how did you incorporate some of the progressive ideas into the study of Indians?

SL First we studied where we

would have to build the Indian community and had to go into the woods and clear out an area. They would have to have a wigwam. We studied how to make the wigwam; together we discussed how many yards of cloth we would need for a wigwam big enough

for us to get into once it was set up. We stretched out the muslin on the attic floor of the old Arthur mansion. We had a few days of studying Indian symbols. And they chose the ones they wanted—to represent rain or the sun or whatever, and they painted that symbol. We had to have books to use. We traced and then painted. We had to study how to make it stand up. We cut poles. We went to the weaving room to make a rug. We knew that the Indians wove from studying a book on Indians.

After we studied about the weaving, we knew we had to have a loom and yarn. The boys cut the wood and the girls strung the threads back and forth on the nails. Together the girls and boys wove the rug. First they learned to put in a design and learned what it meant—dove or moon, or whatever. They put a loom up between two trees and wove the rug. Then we decided we would need a place to roast corn and potatoes. They dug a hole back in a hillside. Of course, they studied first, gathered stones and put them around in the inside of the hole and covered the top with a large flat stone. And we used those things we had out in the village. An hour a day we would go out and weave and the boys would make bows and arrows or whatever they needed to do. They studied these things as they went along—language, reading, writing, and all the courses derived from the project.

JM Do you think this was the most important thing in progressive education—pulling things together like this?

SL Oh, yes! Don't you all agree with me?

Others. Yes.

JM What did the Arthurdale experience do for you as teachers?

Margaret Brown. I was a better teacher. I understood children better, how they developed, what they enjoyed doing. If they were involved in the planning from the beginning, they were more cooperative and disciplined.

Lucille Jamison Madeira. I certainly learned that some of us have much more than others, and I certainly came away with a keener appreciation of people who didn't have as much and were striving to get more.

IF I would not trade the experience for anything! It taught me a lot about

working with children, how to deal with them and the things they can do.

AC Well, I can understand children in anything they do. I can always see things that need changed, but the child must want to change and so you must go along and guide him until you get there. Children really want to learn, they're interested in learning.

EGN Wherever I've been, I've tried to use some of the methods and some of the organization that we had at Arthurdale because I believe in it firmly. I don't believe in restricting education to a program dictated by the central office for all its schools. There used to be a time in this state when you were supposed to be on a certain page at a certain time of the year. To me, this was hogwash! That isn't the way to live life. So I've tried to use these kinds of methods and encouraged my teachers to do that.

SL I felt that I learned how best to put knowledge across to the child so that he could get the most benefit from it. Arthurdale children got more that they could use in living—actual living. Most satisfying was the freedom that children had, and the close contact with the parents.

JM Teachers at Arthurdale worked hard in learning by doing? You had several meetings each week?

SL We had meetings every Sunday evening in Miss Clapp's home, besides the ones she called throughout the week after school. At some of the conferences, for instance, she wanted us to take a problem child and study that child, and study far enough along that with reading, we would learn to cope with that child in a way best for his advantage and ours. We had to keep a report on that child for a period, and then she would ask for a written report on results. And then at these meetings, she would pull out her sheet and say, "Well now, Ethel did not get quite what I was hoping for. Sara didn't quite meet it. Gene managed to hit the nail on the head."

We had to study John Dewey's methods. And then we discussed them at the meetings. She wanted to know if we were understanding and applying them.

LJM I taught at Arthurdale after Miss Clapp, from 1936 to 1939, when Mr. Nine was head of the school. I can only remember having two free evenings at Arthurdale. I was pretty con-



Boys as well as girls learned to spin at Arthurdale. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia Collection/WVU.

scientious and I really wanted to be a success there. I worked hard at it. We visited every home. I had to write up every visit. I was active in the women's club and helped the women with their homes. We all helped in any way we could: square dances, PTA, plays.

I did a group of three one-act plays with adults. That was a real busy community!

Mr. Nine was a very conscientious principal. I was thankful for the training. Actually, the three years I taught under him were like three more years

of student teaching. In other words, we wrote a report every day of everything that went on in every classroom. You didn't leave that building until you had all that written up. I wrote reams of things about our classes. And Mr. Nine read it all and commented on it. He had a conference with each teacher every week to go over the reports.

JM What are your memories of the Roosevelts?

IF Eleanor Roosevelt I remember coming to my room three or four times. She never stayed very long, but she would always come in. She would talk to the children about anything that they were doing. I remember one time someone had brought a tortoise. She said, "Why, I've eaten that! Does it look like that?" The children were thrilled that she would come.

SL She was such a pleasant person. She acted as if she had known you all your life. She would come into each classroom, walk in, give us friendly greetings, shake hands with us, ask a few questions, and go on to the next one. She just felt like she was one of us. She gave us the impression that she was very much interested in the work we were doing.

We had a square dance for Mrs. Roosevelt and *Time* magazine carried a picture of Eleanor Roosevelt doing a Virginia Reel. My husband and I were in the picture.

EGN My salary came from the American Friends Service Community out of funds provided by Mrs. Roosevelt. So did four other faculty members'. That enabled us to add to the staff qualified teachers in areas that the normal schools in Preston County did not have. We had an art teacher, ceramics teacher. The money came from Mrs. Roosevelt's "My Day" column and her radio talks and was channeled through the American Friends Service Committee.

LJM One thing that impressed me was that she remembered my name. Let me give you a little example of something that impressed me very much. Each spring she would have the senior class from Arthurdale and the teachers from the high school to the White House and lunch in the State Dining Room. We talked about the students and what they were going to do that summer. I said, "Dorothy M. is a girl who is very talented in weav-

ing and I just wish that she could go some place and have some expert instruction. I think she would really go places in her field of weaving."

Do you know, the next time she came to Arthurdale, she came into my room and asked, "Miss Jamison, where is that girl you were telling me about?"

So she said that she had made some arrangements and would like to see some of her work. She made arrangements for her to go down and work as an apprentice that summer under a woman in Kentucky.

She would take 10 or 15 kids from Arthurdale who wanted to go to Washington to work. She would get them jobs, maybe for the Department of Treasury, maybe at the Hot Shoppes. She would have the jobs lined up for them. She would take them down there in the summer, put them up in a hotel and they would work.

One time when I was in Washington, I told Mrs. Roosevelt that we were having such a rough time getting books, because we didn't have much money. So she said that maybe she could do something to help us out. The next time she came to Arthurdale she brought Mrs. Henry Morgenthau, the wife of the Secretary of the Treasury, with her. She came to talk to me and said that she would like to do something for the school. So about the next week, I received a \$1000 check in the mail to buy books for the school. And then—you should know what happened a week or two after her parents died—Mrs. Morgenthau sent all their furniture for the library. All this beautiful, overstuffed furniture for the library.

Eleanor Roosevelt did so much good. If I would say to her that someone needed something, she would get it.

EGN Another thing that Mrs. Roosevelt did that was wonderful. Every year as Christmas neared, she would send me a check and ask me to appoint a committee from the Arthurdale settlement to list the names of every girl and boy in the community, buy a present for each one, and hold a Christmas party. All I would have to do would be to tell her when we had it, what it was like. That happened every year.

In 1938, I went to Johns Hopkins for an operation on my leg. Mrs. Roosevelt knew that I was to enter the hospital. Now this shows you what

kind of a lady she is. And do you know, while I was in there late at night, almost midnight, two different times, the nurses would come bursting into my room, all excited. They had a big lot of roses from the White House garden and a card from Mrs. Roosevelt.

JM Did the President's trip in 1938 disrupt everything?

SL No, I think we kept everything very much in order.

MB It was stressed that everything should be done as usual, nothing special, no showmanship.

SL We had to study protocol. We put on a luncheon for him and his party. I sat where I could see him directly when he came to sit down. We were all supposed to stand around the table and wait until he and his party were seated. We waited and waited. But when he came into the room, never had I realized how badly crippled he was. John and his secretary led him in and when he got to his seat they lowered him and then he put his hands down and unlocked his braces and drew his legs back.

EGN It was our custom, each time that Mrs. Roosevelt came to make the commencement speech to our graduates, that the faculty would have a special dinner for her and her party. We wanted to continue that when the President came. She had been the speaker for each graduating class, and she had already accepted the invitation to be the commencement speaker for the class of 1938. Then she wrote me and said that she had been trying now for a long time to get President Roosevelt to visit Arthurdale and he had finally agreed to come. Would I please extend the invitation to him and she would still come and be with us. We wrote and he agreed to come. That made a big change in our plans. Our ambassador to Mexico, Josephus Daniels, the Governor of West Virginia, Holt, and other dignitaries accompanied him.

The Secret Service arrived one full week before graduation time. They visited every road, looked under every culvert and bridge that the President was going to travel. They went all through the kitchen and all the buildings and wanted a list of all the stores where we would buy what was to be eaten that day. I think they kept two Secret Service people in the kitchen all



Arthur Dale principal E. Grant Nine sat by Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt at the 1938 high school graduation. President Roosevelt used the occasion for a major tax speech, and his visit to West Virginia was the lead story in *Time* magazine the following week. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia Collection/WVU.

during the preparation and serving of the meal.

They had us build ramps leading from the floor of the gymnasium to the stage. Then they decided they had better close the grounds of the school for a few hours before commencement to make sure that no one got in before time who shouldn't be there.

The estimate was that we had 10,000 people. We had to have a loudspeaker erected outside so that the President's voice could be heard by everybody on the grounds. All the newsreel cameras were there and all the radio stations had nothing else on but the President's message because he was using that to let a tax bill which he didn't approve become law without his sig-

nature. He explained to the nation why he was doing that. I had to introduce him on the microphone. CBS sent me a little metal record of my introduction of the President.

This picture shows me introducing the President. The Secret Service said that this was the only picture they ever allowed where the braces on the President's feet were showing.

JM Here we are in Arthur Dale in 1981. Dale McVicker, you were once a student here and now for five years have served as principal. How much do you remember learning about Arthur Dale's history when you were a student?

Dale McVicker. Very little. Most of it I've learned since becoming prin-

icipal. The more I think about the educational system that they had here in the 1930's and simply look at the facilities—the way the junior high school was laid out, and the programs they had—day care, headstart, and the like: Why, what are we talking about today? They had a kindergarten. We just reestablished kindergartens in the state in the past few years. They had adult education and vocational education.

JM Margaret Brown said that the Arthur Dale School was 30 years ahead of its time. Do you think that is a fair statement?

DM Definitely. It would have been a dream come true to have taught in a system like this in the 1930's. ♣

(Continued from page 4)

ant in charge of fiscal affairs. As the record shows, GOLDENSEAL was established and has been gratis until now to all who wished a copy.

Hope you and your staff continue the good work in publishing GOLDENSEAL. It is an asset to our state's recordings of current and past history. Sincerely,
Robert B. Moran

Mable Gwinn

Arbovale, WV
October 25, 1981
Editor:

I enclose a check for ten dollars, my contribution to the voluntary subscription plan of GOLDENSEAL. If at all possible, please send me the current issue, which contains an interview with Mabel Leete Gwinn and an accompanying article on the McKendree Hospital.

These two articles alone will be worth the money to me, as an addition to my "family history archives." The boarding house near the store at McKendree, mentioned by Mrs. Gwinn, was my birthplace in 1924, and Mrs. Gwinn, whose husband, Wallace, was my father's youngest brother, assisted at that momentous event (more momentous to me than anyone else, I'm sure). My father managed the boarding house, which also was his first home as a married man, and which burned shortly after my birth.

I spent many happy hours as a child at "Round Bottom," the Gwinn home across New River from the hospital. I am considering writing a personal memoir of those happy days for my own son and grandchildren. Very truly yours,
Leona Gwinn Brown

Blackie Cool

Fort Gay, WV
August 30, 1981
Editor:

May I offer my congratulations to the editor and staff of the GOLDENSEAL, for publishing such a fine magazine. As a lifelong resident of this state, I have always been interested in the folklore and history of West Virginia. That's why your magazine is so im-

portant. It offers the people of West Virginia a historical publication of our culture, the traditions, the music, and the arts and crafts of the mountain people. All are unique and have a right to be published so everyone can see just what a great heritage we have.

I have just finished reading the Fall issue of GOLDENSEAL and really enjoyed the story on Blackie Cool. We have talked to him each year at the Vandalia Gatherings. I also enjoyed the story in the July-September 1979 issue on Woody Simmons. I have known him for years.

I am sending you this contribution and hopefully everyone who receives this fine magazine will also send a contribution so you can keep up the good work.

Thank you,
Bernard L. Cyrus
Mountain Dulcimers

Jenes Cottrell

Parkersburg, WV
September 19, 1981
Editor:

I read your article in the April-June 1981 edition of GOLDENSEAL, on Jenes Cottrell. I am a retired member of the West Virginia State Police; as such I was detachment commander at Glenville for eight years (1969 to 1977). During this time I saw and talked to Jenes at the West Virginia Folk Festival, also watched him play his homemade banjos at each event. He always drew a large crowd each time he played. I agree with you, he was one of a kind and will be missed by the folk music lovers.

In 1964, I was stationed at Parkersburg and heard about the banjos he made at his mountain home. At that time Cpl. Lee was stationed at Clay, so I sent him a radio message to tell Jenes to make me a banjo and let me know when it was ready and I would pick it up. Several months later the banjo was ready, so my wife and I drove to the State Police Detachment at Clay and Cpl. Lee drove us up to Deadfall Mountain. We had to park the car and walk up the hill to get to the house. When we arrived we were met by Sylvia O'Brien. Jenes was not at home on our visit. Anyway, I told Mrs. O'Brien who I was and that I was there to pick up the banjo Jenes had

made for me. She took us into a bedroom and showed us five banjos laying on the bed and told me to take my pick. These banjos were made from discarded aluminum pressure cookers. He would cut the cookers or pots into three rims and make three banjos. Therefore he made different size banjos. It all depended on the size of the pot. I bought and still have two, which I have hanging on my living room wall. One is larger than the other. The large one is 12 inches across and the small one is 10½ inches.

While there Mrs. O'Brien took us through every building and told us a story about each one. She gave us some Indian corn, which we still have. Sincerely,
C. R. Davis

Humanities Foundation

Institute, WV
November 11, 1981
Editor:

I want to express the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia's appreciation for the coverage GOLDENSEAL has given to projects we have helped support. For example, the Winter 1981 issue gives prominence to activities of two projects. The cover story on John Johnson by Mike Kline is an outgrowth of a project to weave the threads that tie West Virginia traditional music together and relate it to the history and culture of our people. Also, on the inside cover of that issue there are pictures of the Coal Life exhibit presently at the Cultural Center. The Foundation is very proud to have had a major part in initiating this project on our most important natural resource, and in our continuing support of the project's activities.

Preserving and interpreting our musical traditions and making our history come alive are two of the Foundation's goals. Thanks for your help in achieving these goals. Sincerely,
Charles H. Daugherty
Executive Director

Unfortunately, the Winter GOLDENSEAL failed to note the important contribution of the Humanities Foundation to these two projects. We try to credit all support for work that we eventually publish or publicize, and thank you for reminding us. —ed.

In This Issue

ANNE CLARK CULBERT is from an old Northern Panhandle family, and grew up in New York's suburbs and on her grandmother's Brooke County farm. She now lives in retirement with her husband in Ohio. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JAMES E. JOY was born in Parkersburg and lived in Williamstown until his graduation from high school. He earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Marshall University, and a Ph.D. from Texas A&M. He taught at A&M's College of Veterinary Medicine for two years, then served on the staff of the Smithsonian Institution before returning to Marshall where he is now an Associate Professor of Biology.

NORMAN JULIAN was born in Clarksburg. He has worked on a half-dozen newspapers in north central West Virginia, for the past 13 years for the Morgantown *Dominion-Post*, where he was founding editor of *Panorama* magazine and editorial page editor. A graduate of West Virginia University's school of journalism, he is the author of a book, *Mountains and Valleys*, and is now at work on an adventure novel set in West Virginia. His article on Morgantown glassblower and centenarian Oscar DuBois appeared in the January-March 1979 GOLDENSEAL.

TIM R. MASSEY, a native of Price Hill in Raleigh County, has 20 years' experience as a newspaperman. He first worked for the *Raleigh Register* in Beckley, later moving to the *Baltimore News-American*, UPI, and the *Charleston Gazette*. He holds a B.A. and an M.A. from Marshall University, and now works for the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*. This is his first appearance in GOLDENSEAL.

JOHN MAXWELL, a Huntington native, is a history professor at West Virginia University. He holds a Ph.D. from WVU, and also studied at a West German University from 1966 to 1968. His major interest is in German history, and his last contribution to GOLDENSEAL was "A West Virginian's Experience in Germany After Hitler," in January-March 1978.

PAUL NYDEN has written widely on Appalachia, particularly on coal mines and miners, with articles appearing in the *Nation*, *New York Times*, *Working Papers for a New Society*, *Mountain Life and Work*, *Mountain Eagle*, and other journals. Paul, who now lives in Beckley, earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University, and has taught at Bethany College, University of Pittsburgh, University of Cincinnati, Antioch College/Appalachia, and Concord College. He recently completed an oral history pilot project for the National Park Service, and is now writing a social history of four abandoned New River coal towns for the NPS. His latest contribution to GOLDENSEAL, "Mabel Gwinn, New River Nurse," appeared in Fall 1981.

ARTHUR C. PRICHARD, born and reared in Mannington, was graduated from Mannington public schools, West Virginia University, and McCormick Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) of Chicago. Mr. Prichard served as pastor of churches in Ohio and Pennsylvania, and in Wheeling and Mannington before retiring in 1970. He was a moderator of Wheeling Presbytery and the Synod of West Virginia for his denomination, and in 1969 received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Davis and Elkins College. His most recent work for GOLDENSEAL was the article on Lynn Tusing of Hardy County in the Fall 1981 issue.

RON RITTENHOUSE, grandson of Dick Rittenhouse, was born and raised in Mannington. Since 1975 he has been senior photographer for the Morgantown *Dominion-Post*. In recent years he has won several first place awards in the commercial and news categories of the Professional Photographers of West Virginia annual contests. His hobby is collecting old cameras and photographs, of which he has one of the largest private holdings in the state.

CHARLES B. ROSENAK was born in Chicago and grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He holds his undergraduate and L.L.D. degrees from the University of Wisconsin, and currently practices law in Washington, D.C. He has written for the *Clarion*, a publication of the Museum of American Folk Art, and the *Folk Art Finder*. This is his first appearance in GOLDENSEAL.

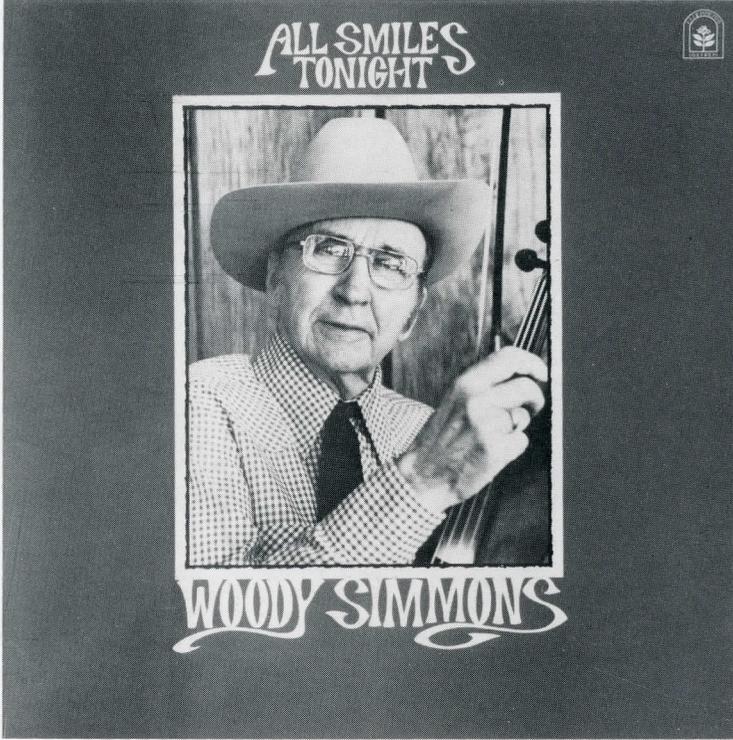
JAMES SAMSELL is a Morgantown native, a graduate of West Virginia University, and an Air Force veteran. He was formerly chief photographer for Beckley Newspapers, Inc., and also worked as a reporter for the Beckley *Post-Herald*. Currently working as a commercial photographer in Beckley, he is married and has a daughter. Samsell's photos of Pleasants County oil and gas workers appeared in the Winter 1981 GOLDENSEAL.

IVAN M. TRIBE, a native of Albany, Ohio, earned his B.S. and M.A. degrees at Ohio University and his Ph.D. at the University of Toledo. A professor at Rio Grande College in Ohio, his interests center around the history of rural and industrial communities and particularly old-time, traditional country, and bluegrass music. Dr. Tribe has published in such periodicals as *Ohio History*, *Old Time Music*, *The Devil's Box*, *Bluegrass Unlimited*, and *JEMF Quarterly*, and co-authored a biography of West Virginia musician Molly O'Day. Dr. Tribe's "West Virginia Country Music During the Golden Age of Radio," from the July-September 1977 GOLDENSEAL, is now in its third printing and furnished the theme for the 1979 Vandalia Gathering.

Department of Culture and History
The Cultural Center
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