

NEWS LETTER

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

January 19-25: Basketry, photography, tapestry rug techniques, marbling—here's an opportunity to polish up your skills or acquire a new one through instruction by some of the country's finest practitioners. John C. Campbell Folk School, Route 1, Box 14A, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone 1/800/FOLK-SCH. Sessions during succeeding weeks will take up everything you ever wanted to do in the area of crafts.

February 9-March 1: Winter session, New Opportunity School for Women. As of November 1, the school transferred its institutional affiliation from Berea College to the Mountain Association for Community and Economic Development (MACED), also headquartered in Berea. Successful applicants (up to 14 per session) to this popular program spend three weeks learning about jobs and how to get them. For full information, contact Jane Stephenson at 213 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403; phone 606/985-7200.

February 13-16: Ninth annual Folk Alliance Conference, Toronto, Ontario; the Friday evening program will include a traditional-music showcase sponsored by the Old-Time Music Group, Inc., of Elkins, W. Va. To find out more, call 202/835-3655.

March 14-16: 20th annual Appalachian Studies Conference, Drawbridge Estates, Fort Mitchell, Ky. Drawing inspiration from its location in the Greater Cincinnati area, this year's conference will have as its theme "Places Where the Mountains Have Gone"; the Urban Appalachian Council of Cincinnati is cosponsoring the gathering. The Saturday evening entertainment will feature an irresistible combination—Jean Ritchie singing in Cincinnati's famous art deco Union Terminal. For more details, write to the Appalachian Studies Association, P.O. Box 6825, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W. Va. 26506.

March 20-21: "Managed Care Around the Life Cycles," a conference exploring the influence of managed care on different age groups in Appalachia, sponsored by the East Tennessee State University College of Public and Allied Health; Meadow/View Conference Resort & Convention Center, Kingsport, Tenn. Workshops will address such concerns as children at risk, early discharge of women following childbirth and ethics in an aging society. For more information, call 1/800/222-ETSU or 423/439-6943.

April 11-12: The New River Symposium returns in all its marvelous variety. Sponsored jointly by the New River Gorge National River (a unit of the National Park System) and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, the

meeting will take place at the Glade Springs Resort, Daniels, W. Va. Not for the intellectually faint-hearted, the symposium will, as usual, concern itself with archaeology, folklore, geography, natural history and all sorts of other scientific and humanistic matters. The directors are paying particular attention to the history of the lead mines in New River country, but if you're not seized by that subject you'll find plenty of other things to listen to and talk about. For more information, phone 304/465-0508.

April 13-19: Spring Dulcimer Week, sponsored by the Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W. Va. 26241. Instruction will be given at all levels, and there'll even be a craft class in which you can learn to carve decorative motifs on your dulcimer. You may write to the center at the address given here, or phone 304/637-1209.

April 30-May 1: Berea College Appalachian Fund Affiliates Conference, Berea College. Representatives of all the organizations helped by the fund will give progress reports; members of the public are especially invited to attend. The sessions begin on April 30 at 2:00 p.m. in the activities room of the Alumni Building on campus. If you would like more information, call the fund office at 606/986-9341, ext. 5022.

June 16-July 3: 25th Berea College Appalachian Center Summer Institute. This series focuses on Appalachian history and culture with the primary aim of helping teachers create courses in Appalachian studies.

Ernie Mynatt accepts Cincinnati Kinship Award (see page 3).



“Worst-Case” Is Bad Indeed

It isn't exactly a secret, but at the same time it doesn't seem to attract much consistent attention. It's the housing crisis, for want of a better term, and government figures make you wonder what initiatives the reelected Clinton administration may decide to take.

More than 5 million households either live in severely substandard housing (about 10 percent) or spend more than half of their income on rent (about 90 percent)—and the number facing this situation, which is defined in bureaucratese as “worst-case housing needs,” grew by 1.1 million from 1978 to 1991 and by another 400,000 by 1993.

Low-income families waiting for government assistance must draw on their patience; some wait for eight years or even more. One question for the new Congress is how well housing vouchers will fare.

Whoa, Boys!

TO THE EDITORS:

Whoa, boys, whoa! The summer issue of the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER tries to slide one of the wonders of West Virginia back into the Mother State of Virginia, from which we fought and bled to separate our-

selves these many years ago.

RE the *Rockbridge County Artists & Artisans* review: The “stupendous scene” Thomas Jefferson describes is the view down the Potomac from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, a long, long way from Rockbridge County. The rock formation at Harpers Ferry is Jefferson Rock, a fine boulder but not nearly so grand as Natural Bridge, for which Rockbridge County is named.

There is a Jefferson connection to Natural Bridge, though the details are a little misty to me. I believe he owned the property, in fact, and it is among the marvels discussed in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

I just couldn't let this one go by, being both a proud West Virginian and a graduate of Mr. Jefferson's university. Otherwise the issue was a good one, and I especially appreciate your words on Jim Wayne [Miller], as sad as the news of his passing was.

KEN SULLIVAN
Editor, *Goldenseal*
Charleston, W.Va.

Thanks for your letter, Ken. Funny thing—we thought it was our atlas that was wrong about those rocks and bridges. Anyway, we can say, in perhaps feeble extenuation, that in Jefferson's day it was all Virginia over there, even though the crow does indeed have a long flight from Harpers Ferry to Rockbridge.—EDITORS

EYE on Publications

The Evangelical War against Slavery and Caste: The Life and Times of John G. Fee, by Victor B. Howard (Susquehanna University Press). “John G. Fee [1816-1901] did not appear to be physically endowed by God to win people over to his cause,” the author of this book tells us; he was a plain, not particularly attractive man who spoke in an unstudied way (in an era accustomed to formal oratory) and in a piping voice with little variation. Yet he developed enough power and persuasiveness to become a unique figure in antislavery history, a Southerner who chose to do his work against slavery in the South and became what Victor Howard calls “the most important and influential reformer to wage war against slavery in the South in the nineteenth century.”

Some years after Fee's death a person who had known him said that “if indignation rose within him it was against evil deeds, rather than against bad men.” Certainly Fee had strong views on matters of good and evil: in 1859 he wrote his sometime friend and associate Cassius M. Clay: “I love the principle of righteousness more than you or any other man, and I expect to love men as they love righteousness.”

One does not find it hard to believe that such an outlook characterized the man who founded Berea College. From the day of Fee's conversion (as a very young man) to antislavery, Howard tells us, he “demonstrated an unwillingness to compromise his moral commitments.” So single-minded was he that “even his friends and supporters sometimes felt he had a touch of fanaticism.” Well, yes. Of course, without such bedrock beliefs, however trying to

others they may have been at times, Fee could hardly have waged the almost lifelong campaign in which he “towered above racial identification, geographical sections, and nations, and stood out before the world as a universal man representing truth, justice, and mercy by his work for humanity.”

Along with slavery, Fee rejected religious sectarianism and schism. Denominations, he decided early in life, served only to give people reasons to regard themselves as different from others, and hence better, just as whites had created the unnatural racial barrier that made the blacks outsiders. Early in his ministerial career Fee, a courageous man but no seeker after violence, believed that slavery could be brought to an end by moral suasion and large-scale conversion of the slaveholders, but after the Mexican War he saw the need for the antislavery forces to develop sympathetic public opinion and secure a measure of political power; moral suasion and religious conversion alone couldn't do the job that had to be done. In addition to slavery itself, Fee fought against the caste system that oppressed free blacks.

After John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 set off a wave of hysteria among proslavery groups across the South, Fee and his companions were driven from the town and school they had founded at Berea. The *Louisville Courier*, not so liberal in those days, suggested that the people of the area hold a meeting “to consider whether or not the carrying out of the principles of Fee required THAT THEY SHALL BE MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD!”

Fee spent the war years as a refugee in the Middle West, where, for the first years, he worked for an emancipation proclamation. Afterward he returned to Berea, where he

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Cincinnati's "Papa" Hung Out

Ernie's kids: Unto the generations.
Youth workers pose for a living mural in front of the mural they created on the wall of the Urban Appalachian Council's main building.

"If you were on the street and hungry, and wondering where to spend the night, Ernie would show up. He was everybody's surrogate father." That's how a senior staff member of Cincinnati's Urban Appalachian Council, once one of "Ernie's kids," remembers the man everybody called "Papa."

Ernie Mynatt, 73, died on October 9. A native of Knox County, Ky., he came to Cincinnati as a vocational-school teacher in the late 1950s, and in 1960, with the support of the Appalachian Fund, he became involved in work with troubled young men in the Over-the-Rhine area populated largely by migrants from Appalachia. Much of his time was spent hanging out on street corners, wandering the streets, getting to know everybody in the neighborhood. Out of these efforts grew the innocuously named Main Street Bible Center and the Hub Center, a model social-service agency.

As federal poverty programs developed in the 1960s, Mynatt hit on an ingenious, seriocomic plan to acquire a bit of political clout for dealing with the city authorities who



doled out much of the money. Taking a bus to Berea, he obtained from P. F. Ayer, the executive director of the Council of the Southern Mountains, an imposing certificate, complete with gold seal, declaring Ernie Mynatt to be the authorized spokesman for Appalachians in any city in which he might choose to work.

Anticipating the creation of community action agencies, Mynatt developed a corps of home visitors and teachers who became community organizers. "He was a civil rights leader and teacher," said Michael Maloney of the Urban Appalachian Council, and he called for the inclusion of Appalachian people in all aspects of Cincinnati life. Through the years he never lost his love for close contact with the people of the neighborhood. Back in 1960 Ernie wanted to hang out on the streets, Stuart Faber, former president of the Appalachian Fund, said several years ago, "and he's still doing it."

Not a bad epitaph.

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worked for improved race relations, promoted civil rights for black people, and devoted much attention to the temperance and prohibition movement.

Victor Howard is an emeritus professor of history at Morehead (Ky.) State University. His book, a thoroughly documented academic history, makes no claim to being a page-turner, but it tells an important story about a remarkable American worthy and should, with its references, prove to be a gold mine for writers of articles and papers.

Wildwood Flowers, by Julia Watts (Naiad Press). Many

are the books, fiction and nonfiction, that have portrayed the arrival of urban "outsiders" in small Appalachian towns, with its accompanying culture shock, and, in one way or another, have dramatized the protagonists' progressive integration into the local community.

Wildwood Flowers is, in its way, such a book, though it has its own special angle. Andie, a newly minted Ph.D. from Boston, arrives in Morgan, in far southeastern Kentucky, to teach English in a strongly Christian-oriented college. Okay so far—with a doctorate in English, she's thrilled to

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find a job anywhere. But she arrives with her longtime lover. Not so okay in local eyes—or it wouldn't be if she identified her lover as such. But she doesn't, because the lover is not a young man but a young woman. Not okay at all.

We won't recapitulate the story, except to say that the situation brings choices to make and decisions to abide by. Andie's problems probably would not have been understood by John G. Fee and his contemporaries (see preceding review), but, says Professor Carol Guthrie of the University of Tennessee, "Watts brings a previously marginalized group, lesbians and gay men, into focus as part of that rich quilt which is Appalachian literature."

Throwback, by Frank C. Strunk (HarperCollins). If you've been looking for a good suspense story with an Appalachian setting and characters, pursue your quest no further. Author of two historical (1930s) novels about a mountain sheriff (*Jordan's Wager*, reviewed in the Summer 1991 APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER, and *Jordan's Showdown* (Fall 1994), Frank Strunk has now produced a gripping read set in the present day and featuring a thoroughly contemporary character, a murderous sociopath. (It's truly regrettable that criminologists have abandoned the stark sounding "psychopath" for this milder term, but whatever you call this guy, you certainly wouldn't want to irritate him.)

Book Note

The extraordinarily industrious folks at the Jesse Stuart Foundation (P.O. Box 391, Ashland, Ky. 41114) just keep

the books coming. The latest offering to show up on our desk is a reprint of *Beyond Dark Hills*, which Stuart originally wrote at Vanderbilt in 1932 as a term paper; it first appeared in book form in 1938. Anybody who knew Stuart will not be surprised to learn that the manuscript of 322 pages was produced in response to the professor's request for a personal paper of up to 18 pages. The price of the book is \$29.95 plus \$3.00 s/h.

Drama Note

Billy Edd Wheeler and Ewel Cornett have collaborated on a children's musical, *The Glass Christmas Tree*—a story about child labor at the turn of the century, based on the life of the famous photographer Lewis Hine, a social crusader who devoted much attention to the plight of children working in factories; it's being produced in Louisville this Christmas season. If you're interested in the play, you can get more information from Wheeler at 704/686-5009.



In Appalachian Heritage ...

Highlights of the Fall 1996 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* include "Clearing Newground"—a memorial piece about Jim Wayne Miller—and "Coal Companies Are Lying, Miners Are Dying..." in which three coal miners present the graphic testimony they recently gave to a special U.S. committee on pneumoconiosis (black lung).

You can obtain the magazine (\$6.00 a copy, \$18.00 for a year's subscription) from *Appalachian Heritage*, Hutchins Library, Berea, Kentucky 40404.

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