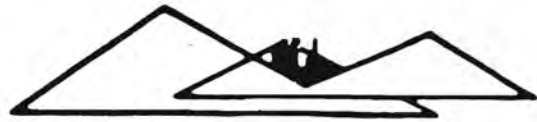


# NEWS

# I



APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE

# LETTER

Loyal Jones, Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 12 No. 2

Spring 1983

## Looking Forward

**July 10-16:** Appalachian Visual Arts Week, Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, Ky. 41822. Painting and drawing, under the eyes of practicing artists.

**July 15-16:** Festival of Appalachian Humor, Berea College (see story below).

**July 18-24:** Appalachian Writers Conference. Information from Jay Reese, Institute for Appalachian Affairs, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614.

**July 30:** Annual meeting, Council of the Southern Mountains, Carr Fork Lake Reservoir, Knott County, Ky. Information from CSM, P.O. Box 1188, Clintwood, Va. 24228.

**July 31-August 6:** Appalachian Writers Workshop, Hindman Settlement School, featuring Harriette Arnow, Jim Wayne Miller and James Still. Information from Mike Mullins, executive director of the school.

**July 31-August 27:** Two two-week sessions, Summer Craft III and Summer Craft IV, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Workshops through the alphabet, from basketry to woodworking.

**September 4-17:** Fall Craft I, once again at the John C. Campbell Folk School.

**October 1-2:** Tenth annual fall festival, John C. Campbell Folk School; arts and crafts, folk dancing, some folk not dancing. Special children's entertainment.

## Humor Update

The list of participants in Berea's Festival of Appalachian Humor (announced in the Winter issue of the NEWSLETTER) has expanded to include an impressive array of jokers, tale tellers, story spinners and humorous singers. Among those to be present are Eslie Asbury, M.D., Joe Bly, Jim Comstock, Byron Crawford, Barbara Freeman, David Holt, Loyal Jones, Ernest "Doc" McConnell, Bob Terrell, Connie Regan, Billy Edd Wheeler and Jennie Wilson. Scholarly grace will be added to the proceedings by Robert J. Higgs, professor of English at East Tennessee State, and W. Gordon Ross, professor emeritus of philosophy and religion at Berea.

to page 2

## "Miners, Millhands..." Cops Weatherford Award

Ronald D Eller, author of *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, is the winner of the 13th annual W. D. Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia. The presentation was made at the annual luncheon, held in Berea on May 10.

Eller's book asserts that, contrary to a widespread belief, Appalachia is not a backwater left idle by the main course of American industrial development. Instead, it says, the Appalachian region we know today was in fact produced by waves of industrialization, the mightiest of them being the coming of coal mining.

The Weatherford Award is jointly sponsored by Berea College's Appalachian Center and Hutchins Library and is given every year to the writer of the published work of any kind or length that best illuminates the problems, personalities and unique qualities of the Appalachian South. The \$500 prize is donated by Alfred H. Perrin of Berea in memory of the late W. D. Weatherford, Sr., a pioneer and leading figure for many years in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations in the South. Dr.

to page 2

Donor A. H. Perrin, winner Ron Eller





Ron Eller (above), President Weatherford

**"MINERS"** from page 1

Weatherford was the subject of the biography *Prophet of Plenty*, by Wilma Dykeman.

*Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, which is published by the University of Tennessee Press, is essentially a thorough social and economic history of the Appalachian South from 1880 to 1930, by which time mountain people, like those in the rest of the country,

were adrift in the Great Depression. The process of industrialization, Eller said, had deprived the Appalachian people of their folk culture, which had earlier offered a more satisfactory way of life than the habits and expectations that replaced it.

It is traditional at the award luncheon to have a talk by a guest speaker who knew and worked with the late W. D. Weatherford. This year the reminiscer was Dr. Weatherford's son, Berea College President Willis D. Weatherford, who spoke of the inspiration he had received from his father's beliefs and principles and then "delighted his audience," as a visiting journalist (Andrew Eckdahl of the Lexington *Herald-Leader*) wrote, "with a *cappella* singing of a song from the Texas past of the Weatherford family. The ditty—dating from the last century when Turners and Weatherfords lived in North Texas near the town of Weatherford, concerned safety in the wilderness. (Weatherford's grandmother, Margaret Turner, was described in an 1896 book, *Prominent Women of Texas*, as being both a good shot and a good rider. She married a Weatherford.)"

Many in President Weatherford's audience believed that they had seen the establishment of a new tradition for the award luncheons.

Besides the winning book, works receiving serious consideration for the award included *TVA and the Dispossessed*, by Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny; "Dying for Coal: An American Tragedy," a series published in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*; and two novels, *The Winter People*, by John Ehle, and *The Killing Ground*, by Mary Lee Settle.

## Serious Symposium

Because we failed to tip you off about the second annual New River symposium, held at Virginia Tech April 14-16, we're taking a long look ahead and letting you know that there will be a third such gathering April 12-14, 1984 (to be held at Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C.).

What is notable about this enterprise, in contrast to other conferences one sometimes encounters, is the solidity and specificity of the subject matter. Although the sponsors say that their aim is to produce a nonspecialized working meeting, they certainly don't encourage the speakers to water down their papers. Some examples from this year's symposium: "Fish Food Habits in the New River with Emphasis on Black Fly Utilization"; "An Analysis of Vertebrate Fauna Recovered from the 1976 Excavations at Fort Chiswell, Wythe County, Va."; "Indices of Water Quality for the New River Gorge National River and Its Tributaries"; and one more, "A Geographical Analysis of Demographic Changes in the New River (WV) Basin, 1900-1980."

The symposium, say the sponsors, is "open to all those with a professional or amateur interest in the New River," from economists to botanists to archaeologists. But professional or amateur, if you go you'd better be prepared to do some serious listening.

**HUMOR** from page 1

Humorists of all ages are invited to attend and compete for the cash prizes, which will be awarded in at least five categories of humorous endeavor (including original songs). The festival will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, July 15, and will continue through the day and evening of Saturday, July 16. It is sponsored by the Berea College Appalachian Center, which you can reach at the address on the outside of the NEWSLETTER.

## Unto Which Hills?

In the Winter 1983 issue of the NEWSLETTER, we presented three mountain pictures, labeled the whole thing "Unto These Hills," and asked readers to guess what hills we were speaking of. Did we mean to be tricky? Well, yes, we did, and we succeeded...almost.

One reader, who lives just outside Berea, was sure we'd pictured the hills she sees as she drives to work every day. Another person wrote that he recognized in the photos the mountains of western North Carolina, around Cherokee.

Sorry, folks, that's what we thought you might say. Now for the revelation: the pictures were actually taken—by our far-flung photographer, Loyal Jones—in the Snowdonia region of north Wales; two of them were views of Mt. Snowdon itself, the highest peak in Wales (3,560 ft.). When in Wales, he says, he was

to page 4

## Leonard Roberts

1912-1983

If you ever heard Leonard Roberts relate a tale, you know he was a truly unique man. During the telling, which involved episodes strung together to make wonderfully long narratives, you would become aware that he enjoyed his stories more than anyone in his audience. Often he would be overcome by the humor or the absurdity of his tale, and he would pause to snicker or laugh outright and slap his leg, all the while regarding his audience slyly and wisely. He remained a boy, full of fun and perceptiveness. In many ways, actually, he seemed the essence of Jack, the character in the tales with which he delighted generations of listeners.

This past April 29, Leonard—writer, folklorist, publisher and teacher—was killed in a highway accident near his home at Stanville, Ky. A pioneer collector of folklore, he earned the first doctorate in the subject ever granted by the University of Kentucky. This achievement followed a varied series of life and educational experiences. Born on Toler Creek in Floyd County, Ky., he dropped out of high school in 1930 to join the Army, and he mastered enough music to play in the 21st Infantry band at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. When he finished high school at the age of 23, he went to Berea College, where he won a degree in English and also excelled in the javelin and low hurdles. After teaching in high school and junior college, he took a partially finished novel off to the University of Iowa, studying creative writing and receiving a master's degree. Teaching followed in wartime Army and Navy programs at the University of North Carolina and North Carolina State.

Leonard Roberts reached a real turning point as a teacher of English in the Foundation School of Berea College. Although he had grown up in the midst of the folk-tale tradition of the Appalachians, he became aware for the first time of the richness of this tradition and of its social and aesthetic value for our own day. His students were his instructors. Wishing to help them write expressively, he encouraged them to put down the tales they had heard from their families. The results were so fascinating to him that he invited himself home with the students, to places like Hell-fer-Sartin and Cutshin and Greasy Creeks, where he recorded songs, tales, riddles and life stories on rather primitive equipment. After five years of collecting he went to Indiana University to learn how to classify and index his treasures.

By this time Leonard was married to the former Edith Reynolds; the couple had four children: Sue Carolyn, Margaret Anne, Rita Helen and Lynnedda Jane. When Leonard was working for his doctorate at Kentucky, Edith supported the family by teaching at the Pine Mountain Settlement School. The result of Leonard's Ph.D. labors was the book *South from Hell-fer-Sartin*,



published by the University of Kentucky Press. He went on to write and edit many others: *I Bought Me a Dog*; *Nippy and the Yankee Doodle*; *Up Cutshin and Down Greasy*; *The Sang Branch Settlers: Folksongs and Tales of a Kentucky Mountain Family*; *Old Greasybeard: Tales from the Cumberland Gap*; and *In the Pine: Selected Kentucky Folksongs* (with C. Buell Agey). *The Sang Branch Settlers*, published for the American Folklore Society by the University of Texas Press in 1974, was his best-known work and a model of its kind. The subject was the cultural life of the Couch family of southeastern Kentucky and southwest Virginia, including their tales, riddles and songs.

After receiving his Ph.D., Leonard taught and headed departments of English or languages at several colleges—Piedmont in Georgia, Union and Morehead in Kentucky, West Virginia Wesleyan and finally Pikeville in Kentucky, where he established the Appalachian Studies Center. At Pikeville he published *Twigs* (later *Cumberlands*), a literary magazine, and edited and published many books through the college press—books on subjects like the Hatfield-McCoy feud, books by mountain poets such as Lillie Chaffin and Sylvia Auxier, and works of history, folklore and genealogy.

The man was always a delight, laconic at first meeting but with a twinkle and a lurking smile. In his lectures he often dropped into his narrative style, complete with storyteller's inflections, but underneath was a thorough knowledge of literature and culture. He was a scholar's scholar, always at work on a project, editing someone else's work, scouting for the moldering manuscript that might shed new light on some pet subject. His last scholarly endeavor was the editing of a book on John C. C. Mayo, the eastern Kentucky entrepreneur who built an empire out of the infamous "broad form" mineral deeds, assembling a large and wealthy group of capitalists to exploit the riches of the region. Although Leonard was a folklorist, his interests ran deeper and wider than the collecting of tales and songs, and he edited and published books of general importance to Appalachia.

It is to the credit of Leonard Roberts that he chose to teach mountain young people in small regional institutions, but it must be considered a great pity that only a few people at these schools seemed to recognize his true worth. He was an original man, whose like we shall not see again. We miss him already.

UNTO from page 2

struck by how similar parts of Wales are to parts of Appalachia. Some of our readers seem to agree.

But one didn't. Ann Pollard of Berea, who has herself traveled in Wales, wasn't fooled by our foolery. And to her we award the prize we promised.

## EYE on Publications

*The Butterfly*, by James M. Cain (Vintage Books). A reprint of the 1946 novel by the author of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Double Indemnity* and other torrid page-turners; as a *Saturday Review* critic once observed, "no one has ever stopped in the middle of one of Jim Cain's books." This reissue was prompted by the movie featuring Stacy Keach, Lois Nettleton and Orson Welles. Years ago, Cain says, he was "much under the spell of the Big Sandy country and anxious to make it the locale of a novel that would deal with its mine wars and utilize its 'beautiful bleak ugliness.'" But a quarter of a century later, when he came to write that novel, the part about labor had dropped away, "for reflection had long since convinced me that this theme, though it constantly attracts a certain type of intellectual, is really dead seed for a novelist." What we get instead is a steamy tale of incest and mistaken identity—not Cain's best, perhaps, but any of his work is worth attention.

*The High-Pitched Laugh of a Painted Lady*, by Lewis W. Green (John F. Blair, Winston-Salem, N.C.). Eight short stories set in the mountains of North Carolina, featuring some strong and rugged characters—a trapper, a chaingang preacher, an Indian warrior—at grips with nature and primitive emotions. The fight with the bobcat, for one thing, is guaranteed to stay with you for a long, long time.

*Wheels on the Mountains*, by James Elliott (Jack Craft (McClain Printing Co., Parsons, W.Va.)). An unusual Appalachian memoir, published in 1969. The author, who was a boy in pre-World War I Breathitt County, Ky., went off to Ohio to seek his fortune, didn't find it, tried working in the West Virginia mines, fell in love with the first automobiles he ever saw, and ended up owning a bus line which he sold to Trailways, a transaction that enabled him to retire, at

56, to a cozy little waterfront pad in Palm Beach. It's Appalachia with a difference.

*Come, Go With Me*, by Smith G. Ross (Kentucky Hills Industries, Inc., Pine Knot, Ky.). A narrative history, with photos, of a business set up in the 1930s to make it possible for small farmers to earn part-time cash and thus stay on the land. "We have," Ross says, "seen families with as little as five acres of land, a milk cow, chickens, and pigs, who followed a well-planned canning, freezing, and drying program live surprisingly well," especially when they could supplement their incomes by selling craft objects.

*Visions of Utopia*, by John Egerton (University of Tennessee Press). Published in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission, this little book traces the history of Tennessee experimental communities founded by 19th-century visionaries. Three come in for particular attention: Nashoba, an interracial settlement near Memphis (1825); Rugby (the best-known to us), an English cooperative community in the Cumberland (1880); and Ruskin, a socialist town in Dickson County (1894). The author himself is the grandson of one of the English colonists who started Rugby.

*Welcome the Traveler Home: Jim Garland's Story of the Kentucky Mountains*, edited by Julia S. Ardery (University Press of Kentucky). A brand-new book, a combination history and personal record, by a mountain man from Kentucky who ended up living by the sea in the state of Washington. Several years after he had produced his original draft, Garland discovered that the National Endowment for the Arts would pay him "to write about those things that forty years ago almost landed me in jail." The author's original aim appears to have been to write a history of mountain Kentucky, but what has emerged, after a complex writing and editing process, is the personal story of an unusual man. A coal miner, Garland was involved in the famous organizing attempt by the communist-backed National Miners Union in 1931-32, along with his sister "Aunt Molly" Jackson. After the routing of this effort, he fled the mountains for New York, where, as performer and composer, he became absorbed in the folk and protest music of the 1930s. "My father did some of the first organizing for the United Mine Workers union in Kentucky and was a member as long as he lived," the author tells us. "It was in this tradition that I grew." The book includes an extensive discography.

Published by  
Appalachian Center/Berea College  
C.P.O. Box 2336  
Berea, Ky. 40404

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Berea, Ky. 40404  
Permit No. 19