

NEWS

LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones, Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

February 2-4: Spring dance weekend, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902.

February 4: "The Subjects of Doris Ulmann: An Exhibit of Her Brasstown Works"—the opening of a new permanent exhibition of these notable photographs from the late 1920s and early 1930s. John C. Campbell Folk School.

February 11: "Appalachian Religion and Education"—a historicocultural discussion by Loyal Jones. John C. Campbell Folk School.

February 16-18: Music weekend—ballads, dulcimer, recorder—with Betty Smith, Jan Davidson, Judy Drake and Tippy Kramer. John C. Campbell Folk School.

March 26-28: Appalachian Studies Conference—"The Many Faces of Appalachia: Exploring a Region's Diversity"—Unicoi State Park, Georgia. Participants are reminded that in the past "we may have overlooked the essential resilience and richness of Appalachian culture..."

April 12-14: Third annual New River symposium, sponsored by the New River Gorge National River of the National Park Service; Center for Continuing Education, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. If you go, you'll probably hear discussion of such topics as Wythe County iron furnaces, early settlement along the New River, and the role of the black fly in the New River ecology. Information from the sponsoring agency at P.O. Drawer V., Oak Hill, W.Va. 25901.

July 30-August 4: It may seem that we're looking excessively far into the future here, but if you wish to participate in this one you'll need to do some planning. It's the Ulster/American heritage symposium, to be held at the New University of Ulster, Coleraine, County Londonderry, Northern Ireland. It's a bit late, but you still might manage to get a proposal accepted if you hurry. Contact George Antone, Department of History, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28608.

Confronting or Avoiding?

Have the structure and the philosophy of the Appalachian Regional Commission prompted it to confront Appalachia's basic problems directly or to do its best to avoid them? Some divergent opinions are summed up by Philip W. Conn, formerly director of Ken-

tucky's Legislative Research Commission and currently vice president for university and regional services, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky.

From the outset, ARC officials have emphasized that theirs is a "regional planning and development effort" as distinct from an "antipoverty program" in the manner of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). ARC has consciously attempted to work with and through official state and local "power structures" rather than ignoring or circumventing them. Some analysts suggest that ARC has survived in large part because of its policies aimed at the "integration of state and local elites," whereas OEO, with its philosophy of "maximum feasible participation of the poor," barely survived past the 1967 amendments and is no longer recognizable.

ARC continues to identify the creation of private sector jobs as its principal and ultimate goal. John Sweeney, former ARC federal cochairman, observed that ARC is "designed to provide that kind of investment which comes about when entrepreneurs have faith in their region to make an investment, following the traditional patterns of this country."

James Branscome, a native Appalachian who served on the ARC staff for three years, states that in essence ARC is a public-works program stripped of all con-

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Appalachian art. . .see p. 2



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roversial elements, like expanding public power, breaking up land monopolies, and working to correct the under-taxation of corporations.

Playing It Safe?

According to David Whisnant, "instead of mounting a bold, imaginative and aggressive attack on the problems of Appalachia, the commission has proved to be characterized by caution, vacillation and deference to the wishes of vested interests." He alleges that the structure of ARC is such (i.e., allowing for strong influence from the governors and their most powerful constituents) that the agency undertakes only the most politically popular projects (e.g., highways, vocational schools and hospitals), while any efforts to tackle the root causes of poverty in the region are blocked.

Many Appalachians predicted long-range ineffectiveness for ARC from the beginning, because it chose to rely on "the establishment" for support and strategy and to ignore what they felt to be the keys to any lasting economic and social independence for Appalachia: local control and use of the region's vast natural resources, the rape of which, they felt, had been responsible for much of the area's plight in the first place.

Recently the ARC, as well as Kentucky's policy makers, was unexpectedly blasted by an editorial in the Lexington Herald-Leader (see CENTER NEWSLETTER, Winter 1983). The most interesting point made is that Kentucky governments can and should assume responsibility for their own problems with financial resources coming from a reasonable taxing system on the state's "vast natural resources that are being exploited at little profit to state and local governments."

There is no doubt that ARC has taken a rather conservative, nonthreatening approach in developing the material "infrastructure" of Appalachia in harmony with the region's existing business and political forces. But that might be the key to the agency's longevity. While most observers might agree that ARC's structure and philosophy have prevented it from directly confronting certain regional "situations," the motives for and wisdom of such avoidance will continue to be matters for vigorous debate.

(This article is excerpted and adapted from "The Appalachian Regional Commission: An Experiment in Intergovernmental Management," which appeared in Appalachian Heritage, Fall 1983, pp. 49-58.)

Wanted: Director

Appalachian State University is in search of a director for its cultural center—a unit of the school which has as its purpose "to collect, preserve and interpret local and regional culture and to relate the Appalachian region to the world community through interpretive exhibits and other programming of a broad cultural nature." If you're still with us, we'll tell you that the director will be responsible for management, fund-raising and program planning and development; he or she will also have "minimal teaching responsibilities."

An advanced degree is required, preferably one in

"More Than Land or Sky" ▶

Several years ago a Harlan, Ky., native named Ann Bray, who was then with the Appalachian Regional Commission, suggested that the National Museum of American Art assemble a collection of art from Appalachia. The result, after the expenditure of much time and effort, was "More Than Land or Sky," a show of contemporary fine art including the work of 69 artists from the 13 states considered by the commission to be Appalachian.

The exhibition is organized under four themes: Images of the Land; Images of the People—Their Lives, Occupations, Preoccupations; Images Incorporating Myth, Totem, Folklore, Reverie and Private Visions; Works of Art on Paper. All types of creators are represented, from highly trained sophisticates to native folk artists.

The show opened in the fall of 1981 in Washington, and since early 1982 it has been touring museums and galleries throughout Appalachia. It has just made a stop at Berea, and from here it goes to Roanoke, where it opens January 6 at the Museum of Fine Arts. It's the only show of this kind there's ever been, so we suggest you seize any chance you have to see it.

museum studies, although a scholar in an academic field is not ruled out. If you're interested, send your letter—with resume, academic transcripts and list of references—to G.P. Antone, 204 Whitener Hall, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28608. And do it right away—the deadline is January 9.

EYE on Publications

After Eli, by Terry Kay (Houghton Mifflin). Eli Pettit disappeared from his mountain farm seven years ago, leaving a wife, a young daughter and a sister-in-law. Now along comes an itinerant Irish actor, blessed with blarney and seeming to the wife to bear a remarkable resemblance to the long-gone Eli. What she doesn't know about this fellow is that he thinks nothing of committing murder and he's heard about the money that Eli's supposed to have hidden somewhere on the farm. The story is set in the late 1930s, a time that seems to be a current favorite of Appalachian novelists.

Seedtime on the Cumberland, by Harriette Simpson Arnow (University Press of Kentucky). A reissue of the classic 1960 account of what the author modestly calls "a few of the more important aspects of pioneer life as it was lived on the Cumberland by ordinary men and women." The pioneer was basically still an English colonial, the author says, but he was a "master hand at adapting old learnings to a new environment."

Scalded to Death by the Steam, by Katie Letcher Lyle (Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, N.C.). "They were goin' down grade making ninety miles an hour, / When the whistle broke into a scream; / He was found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle / And scalded to death by the steam." In reality, the unfortunate subject of this verse—Joseph A. Broady, the engineer of Old 97—was found some distance from the wreck, face

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"MORE THAN LAND OR SKY": This traveling exhibition of Appalachian art featured not only paintings but sculpture, drawings, prints and mixed

media works. Occupations of the people received much attention: the painting below, "Morning at the Portal," is by West Virginia artist Andy Willis.



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down in a creek. But ballads, like any other forms of art, rearrange life to suit the artist's needs; Broady *should* have been clutching that throttle even as the engine hurtled off the wooden trestle outside Danville, Va., and plunged 75 feet into a muddy ravine. Anyway, Katie Lyle's book is all about train wrecks and the ballads they inspired, and about men and women—engineers, firemen, wives, sweethearts, passengers and rescuers. And the pictures themselves are enough to win the rapt attention of any railroad buff, whether he likes ballads or hates them. A singular fact emerges from a set of maps in this book: Ohio was the scene of nine major train wrecks between 1890 and 1933, and produced not a single ballad; Kentucky had only one major wreck but gave the world six ballads. Perhaps that tells us something.

Humor of a Country Lawyer, by Sam J. Ervin, Jr. (University of North Carolina Press). Senator Ervin, truly a humorist of the most erudite class, delighted and reassured a shaken America with his wise observations during the Watergate hearings. He has here put together humorous stories from his varied contacts and associations. Ervin, a native of Morganton, N.C., has this to say about humor:

Humor is one of God's most marvelous gifts. Humor gives us smiles, laughter and gaiety. Humor reveals the roses and hides the thorns. Humor makes our burdens light and smooths the rough spots on our pathways. Humor endows us with the capacity to clarify the obscure, to simplify the complex, to deflate the pompous, to chastise the arrogant, to point a moral, and to adorn a tale.

Here is a sample of Mr. Sam's humor. The scene is a Fourth of July Celebration where two men are about to speak.

The master of ceremonies presented the . . . first speaker. When he arose he declared that a great New Englander, Daniel Webster, was the greatest of all America's great sons. He extolled Webster's services without stint. . . . When he [the next speaker] arose to reply, he snorted, "It's absurd to maintain that Daniel Webster was the greatest of all Americans. The greatest of all Americans was Old Hickory Jackson, who led our army to victory

at the battle of New Orleans. And where was Daniel Webster, I ask my friend, when Old Hickory was exposing his breast to the bullets of the enemy at New Orleans? He was in a bomb-proof shelter in Boston writing a dictionary." The daughter pulled her father's coattails and said, "Father, that wasn't Daniel; that was Noah." The old man roared, "Noah, hell! Noah didn't write a dictionary. He built the ark."

This Land, This South, by Albert E. Cowdrey (University Press of Kentucky). Subtitled "An Environmental History," this is the story of the relationship of man, land and climate in the American South. It begins long before the arrival of Europeans, when the Indians—not exactly the "natural ecologists" of present-day myth—were busily using fire to clear land and to drive animals in the fall and winter hunting. Then came the Europeans, with diseases and bad habits of their own. For three centuries the Southern land—soil, water, forest, wildlife—declined, and, though there's been a turnabout, the story isn't over. A volume in the publisher's New Perspectives on (*sic*) the South series, this is an unusual book, packed with interesting facts. The author is chief of the medical history branch of the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

We don't ordinarily review records, but there's one that simply must be mentioned: *Lily May Ledford—Banjo Pickin' Girl* (Greenhays, GR712, distributed by Flying Fish). Lily May Ledford was one of the original Coon Creek Girls that John Lair brought from Kentucky to WLS radio (Chicago) in the mid-1930s. A dynamic performer, she has won a whole new audience from new generations in recent years touring campuses and playing at a variety of festivals. She is an extraordinary fiddler, banjo picker and vocalist who is also a fine story teller. She is an authentic folk artist and a regional treasure. The album includes "Banjo Pickin' Girl," "Christmas Eve," "Wild Bill Jones," "Cacklin' Hen," "John Henry," "Callahan," "Texas Bound," "East Virginia," "John Hardy," "Babes in the Woods" and "Wake Up Susan." Thanks to Greenhays (Jean and George Pickow) for bringing us this record.

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