

NEWS

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LETTER

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

September 20-23: National conference of the Oral History Association, Marriott Hotel, Lexington, Ky.; papers, workshops, panel discussions, media presentations. John Egerton, winner of the 1984 Weatherford Award for his book *Generations*, will be one of the speakers. Further information from Anne Campbell, Appalachian Collection, King Library, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. 40506.

October 10-16: Dance and Music Week, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902.

October 12-14: Annual fall fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. 40403.

October 19-21: Annual fall fair, Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. The guild's address is P.O. Box 9545, Asheville, N.C. 28815.

November 1-4: Berea College Celebration of Traditional Music (*see following story*).

Celebration Time

One of Appalachia's top musical events—the Celebration of Traditional Music, presented by the modest publishers of this NEWSLETTER—returns at the beginning of November for its eleventh annual installment.

The proceedings will get under way on Thursday, November 1, with a free concert by the Foxfire Band, led by folklorist George Reynolds of Rabun Gap, Ga. (yes, it's the same *Foxfire*). The big old-time, multi-performer sessions will be held on Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30. These jamborees will be followed at 10:00 (or whenever) by square dancing.

Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon will be devoted to instrumental workshops and informal performances, and at 2:00 Saturday afternoon Guthrie T. Meade, a collector, researcher and record producer, will lead a symposium on seeking out the early Kentucky recording artists.

And if you're not exhausted on Sunday morning, you can participate in the concert of hymns at 9:00.

The Celebration will of course present its usual stellar array of established favorites and performers invited to appear on the local stage for the first time. Besides the



Florence Homolka, 1951

Writer James Agee
(see p. 2)

Foxfire Band, the participants will include Lulu Belle Wiseman; Lily May Ledford; Robert "Bud" Garrett; Clyde Davenport and Bobby Fulcher; Doug, Jack and Berzilla Wallin; the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers; Lotus Dickey; Frank George and David Odell; and Virgil Anderson.

If you need any further information, get in touch with the Appalachian Center at the address on the outside of the NEWSLETTER.

Appalachia: Competitive Edge

The Appalachian Regional Commission may be in ideological disfavor in Washington and hence on its way out, but it isn't giving up without a few thousand choice words.

In April 1983 the commission held a conference, "Jobs and Skills for the Future," focusing on the kinds of problems presented and the opportunities created by the impact on the job market of foreign competition and technological advances (see CENTER NEWSLETTER, Summer 1983). Now the commission has hosted a follow-up meeting, "Appalachia Working: The Competitive Edge for Today and Tomorrow."

As a consequence of the 1983 meeting, according to ARC Federal Co-Chairman Winifred Pizzano, "all the states have programs under way to improve the quality and relevance of their training programs." The purpose of the recent meeting was to continue the commission's push to prepare workers for the changes brought about by advancing technology and to support the growth of new business and the modernization of existing industries. "Our data suggest that Appalachia's best bet

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will be a service and technology-assisted light manufacturing economy," says Pizzano, though traditional industries must be preserved too.

Taking as an example the programs under way in the Appalachian town of Gainesville, Ga., Neil Peirce, a Washington columnist who specializes in the study of state and local problems, told the meeting that "economic development at the state and local level is coming of age. It is moving beyond smokestack chasing, beyond beggar-thy-neighbor competition for a limited number of footloose firms and a scattershot use of tax breaks for private industry.

"Instead," he went on, "we are moving toward advanced processes of state and local economic analysis. We're moving on every front from venture capital to manpower training to foreign trade ties and worker ownership. We are witnessing complex and rapidly maturing public-private partnerships. We are seeing economic development move to a central place on the agenda of state legislatures [and] county and city governments."

The chairman of the meeting's high-tech workshop called attention to an active but relatively unpublicized government program authorized in 1981—the Small Business Innovative Research program, which provides about \$1 billion over a five-year period to small businesses engaged in high-technology innovation. Last year 41 companies in seven Appalachian states received SBIR grants, Alabama (because of the Huntsville technological complex) heading the list with 15 recipients. But there's more money available, money for which many small businesses known to NEWSLETTER readers may well qualify. If you know of any potential candidates, you might check to make sure they're aware of the opportunity.

Appalshop Job!

Appalshop Films, the all-media people in Whitesburg, Ky., are looking for "an aggressive sales person and experienced manager for its film distribution company." This person will be responsible for "developing and implementing a yearly, comprehensive marketing plan for the Appalshop film and tape collection." The salary will be in the \$14,000-\$15,600 range. If you think you might be the person, you can send your resume (with a narrative of your background and experience) to Appalshop Films, P.O. Box 743, Whitesburg, Ky. 41858.

Agee on Film

In the Spring 1984 issue of this NEWSLETTER we told you about an important (and good) documentary film, *The Electric Valley*, a sort of biography of the TVA, produced by an enterprise called the James Agee Film Project (316½ East Main St., Johnson City, Tenn. 37601). Now, on the principle that one good notice calls for another, we're back with news of another film from the same outfit. This one, fittingly enough, is called *Agee*, and it is in fact a commemorative of the Knoxville-born writer and film critic. ▶

It's another long film—88 minutes—but it must be said that every author worthy of being remembered ought to be the subject of such a work. To a remarkable extent, watching the movie is like meeting James Agee. He himself appears a great deal, and not only in stills; fortunately, he was captured on movie film, including a bit he did in *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky* (for which he wrote the script) as the town drunk—a piece of casting that was too close to home to be amusing in retrospect, however cute it may have seemed at the time. Blended in with all the background material and the interviews are enactments of Agee's early life in its various settings; these are surprisingly effective, partly because Ross Spears, the producer-director, has insisted on careful attention to the small points of period detail.

All this combines to create a strong impression of what Agee was like—and he was very much like, it appears, many other writers, American, 20th-century style—particularly, to be sure, southern writers.

Something inside him seemed to drive him to wear himself out, drinking, smoking, scorning sleep, and he died in a Manhattan cab at 45. His output in book form was small but his memorials are varied. On the serious side there are, notably, *A Death in the Family* and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*; his most enduring words, however, may be those he put in the mouths of Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn for *The African Queen*. Changing TV channels just the other day, we paused and listened to a few.

EYE on Publications

Ford, by John B. Stephenson (University Press of Kentucky). "The people are generally active, humane, hospitable, middle-sized, and capable of bearing cold, wet, and hunger to a great degree." The prose is not the author's but is quoted by him from an 18th-century official survey of Scotland. One gathers from this book, however, that the description would apply pretty well to the 20th-century inhabitants of Ford, the Scottish village that is the subject of John Stephenson's study (i.e., provided that 20th-century official surveyors were capable of unbending enough to use such concrete language). The book is subtitled "A Case Study of Repopulation and Social Change in a Small Community"—wording that suggests the author's reach toward universality. He may be interested in Scottish villages, in other words, but he is after all an Appalachian scholar (and the new president of Berea College), and through the years he has developed "a concern with the fates of remote communities everywhere." What can such places do—whether they're in the Scottish Highlands, the Blue Ridge Mountains or anywhere else—in order to remain (or return to being) living human centers and not become fossils of purely antiquarian interest? For one thing, to be sure, they need people, and Stephenson quickly discovered that even though he was told "Ford is dying," the population of the village is, from what sociologists call "in-migration," actually increasing—a phenomenon also observed during the past decade or more in Appalachia. That is at least a beginning.

Flowering of the Cumberland, by Harriette Simpson

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**Carl D.
Perkins
1912-
1984**



"Carl Perkins was our friend," said Senator Edward M. Kennedy, "but even more, he was the friend of tens of millions who never met him—who did not perhaps even know the name of his committee—but who could see the results of his work in their lives."

The veteran Kentucky Congressman died on August 3, 1984, and in remarks at his funeral in Hindman, Ky., Senator Kennedy paid tribute to Perkins's achievements as longtime member and for 17 years chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. "My brother Robert Kennedy," said the senator, "often spoke with admiration of individuals who see things that never were—and say 'Why not?' There never was true opportunity in education for those who were unequal and unprivileged—until Carl Perkins said 'Why not?' There never was a full chance for the health of children and mothers and families without wealth in Appalachia—until Carl Perkins said 'Why not?' There was no Medicare; there was too little food for the hungry, too little concern for the aged, too little learning in the schools, too little hope for those whose lungs were blighted in the mines—until Carl Perkins said 'Why not?'"

Originally elected to Congress in 1948, Perkins served longer than any other Kentuckian, and throughout his service he was identified with much of the social legislation passed during those years. In 1967 he succeeded Adam Clayton Powell as chairman of the

Education and Labor Committee. His educational monument was perhaps the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which was produced in his subcommittee. Mary Hatwood Futrell, president of the National Education Association, said that "Carl Perkins will be remembered not only as the father of virtually every piece of postwar education legislation, but also as a man who made a real difference. A part of him will live as long as there are children to teach and students to learn. He was truly Mr. Education." (Those wishing to remember Rep. Perkins in a practical way are reminded of the Carl D. and Verna Perkins Endowment at Hindman Settlement School, Hindman, KY 41822.)

Perkins also championed vocational education, federal assistance to libraries, and a greatly increased federal role in child nutrition and school feeding programs. He was also a leader in the field of industrial safety, sponsoring and battling for passage of the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 and managing the Occupational Safety and Health bill in 1970. "The working men and women of this country had no better friend than Carl Perkins," said Richard Trumka, president of the United Mine Workers. "Every day a miner ventures into a coal mine, he or she knows that they are more protected because of the mine health and safety and black lung laws that Carl Perkins engineered."

"The country," said Kennedy, "is better and truer because of him."



FRIENDS: Carl Perkins and Senator Edward Kennedy. Top photo: Perkins spent much time in his district. Here he goes through the receiving line at a swimming-pool dedication in Salyersville, Ky., one of the myriad occasions on which he was the featured speaker.

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Arnow (University Press of Kentucky). Following up on its reissue of *Seedtime on the Cumberland*, the publisher now gives us the companion book, in which the author changes her focus from the explorer-hunters off in the forest far from civilization to the "pioneer as a member of society." Most famous as the author of *The Dollmaker*, Mrs. Arnow in these two books shows herself to be a master of what Wilma Dykeman terms "creative research." When you've read these books, you've experienced in specific detail a number of lives incredibly different from your own.

William H. Vaughan, by Cratis Williams (Appalachian Development Center, Morehead State University). A memoir of a one-time president of Morehead State University (back when it was a teachers college), this little book is of particular interest to NEWSLETTER readers because it is not only written by Cratis Williams, the all-time dean of Appalachian scholars, but tells a great deal about him. Vaughan was Williams's high school history teacher and later principal, and took on the role of mentor for the promising lad from a remote part of the county. This tribute is especially effective because the author knows the difference between affection and sentimentality.

The Appalachian Experience, edited by Barry M. Buxton (Appalachian Consortium Press). This volume contains the papers presented at the sixth annual Appalachian Studies Conference, held at Pipestem, W. Va. in 1983. The subjects are divided into eight sections: Appalachian images and issues of ethnic diversity; Appalachian literature; Appalachian politics and government; aspects of daily life: yesterday and today; black Appalachians in social history; culture, mental health and personality; economic development in Appalachia: new perspectives; the humanities in Appalachia: progress reports. There's much of interest here. We were unable to find any identification of the contributors, but we know them to be a diverse and knowledgeable group. It would be nice to be able to say that the editing and the proofreading of the book do justice to the contributors, but it must be regretfully reported that these nuts-and-bolts matters have been sorely neglected—beginning with the introduction, in which

Jim Wayne Miller's presumably sage observations are here and there reduced to gibberish.

The Mountains Within Me, by Zell Miller (Commercial Printing Co., Toccoa, Ga.). "My roots run deep in the mountains of North Georgia," says the author, the present lieutenant governor of the state, and to prove it he gives us this "personalized account of the environment" in which he lived.

Dulcimer Maker: The Craft of Homer Ledford, by R. Gerald Alvey (University Press of Kentucky). The eminent dulcimer maker is here treated as a person, as a craftsman and as an aesthetic phenomenon. He may not have realized that such a fate lay ahead when, at the age of 18, he cheerfully agreed to repair the first dulcimer he had ever seen, and went on to build two more for a store in New York. We suffer, says the author, from a shortage of well-documented studies of the folk artist at work. This book is aimed at filling at least a bit of that gap.

Clearing in the Sky, by Jesse Stuart (University Press of Kentucky). Twenty-one short stories from "Kentucky's inimitable and beloved storyteller," all originally published in the 1941-50 period. The collection has a strange history; originally published in 1950, it was, we are told, "inadvertently declared out of print after three years" and never reprinted till now. Since Stuart's short-story production was enormous (some 500), perhaps no one realized that a handful of stories had gone astray. But, as Ruel Foster points out in the foreword, "the years from 1930 to the mid 1950s were Stuart's freshest and more spontaneous period....the dialect is a stronger, the language more evocative." *Clearing in the Sky* is thus a particularly welcome encore turn.

Hollybush, by Charles E. Martin (University of Tennessee Press). We start with a community study and we end with one. Hollybush, an American—in fact, Appalachian—highland village was born in 1881, grew to have a population of some 150, and died in 1960, being abandoned because of "technological change which brought social upheaval manifested in the region's now-vanished architecture." Martin, who teaches at Alice Lloyd College, makes heavy use of interviews and data from artifacts.

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