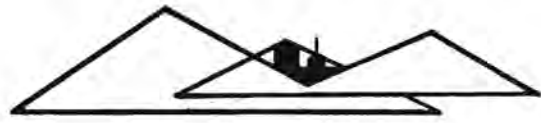


NEWS

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LETTER

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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New Play Captures Appalachian Spirit

When we got word that the Appalachian culture was about to be interpreted and presented by Carolina Readers Theatre of Chapel Hill on a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, we admit that we were somewhat skeptical. We remembered, for example, that when the ARC wanted technical help on tourism in Appalachia, they went, or talked of going, to Hilton Head. So, if they wanted to do something artistic, it was predictable that they would not look inside the region but would go elsewhere. Chapel Hill is known for its drama, and after all it is located in the general direction of Appalachia, if you're looking from Washington.

So, when we drove to Jackson, Ky. one evening in March to see the play, *Appalachia Sounding*, that resulted from the mating of ARC and CRT, we were ready to make note of the shortcomings we felt were inevitable. Right now we want you to know that we are bigger than our prejudices: *Appalachia Sounding* is great. We got there early and started scouting out the folks in charge. We met Scotty Collier, the chief musician, who was practicing a few old-time fiddle tunes right out of the hills of North Carolina. Then we met the musical director, Jan Davidson, from Murphy, N.C., who with Collier plays most of the show's music, and the road manager turned out to be Frederick M. Lloyd, who had played in Paul Green's *Wilderness Road* at Berea. We began to feel better as we settled down to await the show.

The script is by Romulus Linney, a novelist and playwright from Watauga County, N.C., now living in New York. The director is John W. Morrow, a veteran of the Barter Theatre and Cherokee's *Unto These Hills*. Linney has chosen to present the Appalachian experience through the lives of one family and their neighbors through nearly 200 years of history. The classic Appalachian types are represented: the strong, independent and self-reliant father, who guards his land as carefully as he does his honor; the equally strong mother, who defers with humor and some trickery to her husband; the sickly infant who succumbs to the hard life; the feisty and beautiful but innocent daughter; the lecherous young man who is

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Cincinnati Festival

The Sixth Annual Appalachian Festival moved into the Cincinnati Convention Center April 22-25. This year, however, there was a fundamental change. The Junior League of Cincinnati, which had founded the festival to call attention to the many Appalachians living in Cincinnati and to help craftsmen throughout the Appalachians, this year most commendably turned the management of the festival over to the local Appalachian community.

The Cincinnati Appalachians created the Appalachian Community Development Association to run the festival. Kathleen Sowders presided, Diana Trevino arranged the craft demonstrations, and Tommie Miller headed the committee that set up the musical program. All three women are Appalachian migrants to Cincinnati.

Some 70 craftsmen or groups from Cincinnati, Southeast Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia exhibited their products. Thirteen groups demonstrated their skills for festival participants.

The festival had a rich offering of music and dance, featuring Doc Hopkins, Asa Martin, Sparky Rucker, John McCutcheon, Floyd and Edna Baker, Hazel Dickens, Chief Richard Crowe and his Tribal Dancers and the Berea College Country Dancers.

A conference, "Cincinnati's Urban Appalachians: Old Values, New Settings, Changing Roles and Styles," was held in conjunction with the festival. Papers were presented by David Whisnant of the University of Maryland-Baltimore County; Wayne Miller, University of Cincinnati; and Jim Wayne Miller, Western Kentucky University.

Retirement Party

Cratis D. Williams is truly a man of many functions. He has been a high school teacher, principal, English professor, dean of the graduate school and acting chancellor of Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. He was one of the first Appalachian scholars to explore the culture from which he came. His master's thesis at the University of Kentucky was a collection of

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APPALACHIAN PLAY *from page 1*

brought to heel and redeemed by the wiles of the daughter; the brothers, one who loafs and fishes and enjoys the bounty of the land, the other an entrepreneur who seeks always to exploit the resources around him; the strange old woman with her dark superstitions and folk medicine; and the ever present musicians with their ballads and frolic music.

Appalachia Sounding is not a play in the usual sense. It is a mood piece that attempts to capture the essence of the mountaineer through simple action, music and pungent phrase. It succeeds remarkably well. From the threat of the primeval wilderness to the threat of strip mining and tourism, we were caught up in an important part of American history, caught too by the processes through which we went from the value of independence to uninhibited free-enterprising exploitation of people and land. But we were inspired by those who held to the old values, the ballads, the old ways. The strongest moment in the play is when the family gaze down from their unspoiled mountain to the strip mines across from them and the smokestacks in the valley below, and the local entrepreneur, who has tried through the years to buy their timber, their minerals and their time, comes one more time to buy their paradise as a tourist mecca for all of those seeking to escape the hell they made.

The actors, all professionals, gave good performances, and amazingly enough, they performed in believable Appalachian accents. The father and mother were played by David Adamson and Barbara Lea, the daughter by Gina McMath, the two brothers by Douglas R. Nielsen, the "character lady" by Marian Baer, and the young suitor by E.E. Norris. Davidson and Collier, for the most part, presented Appalachian music in an authentic way. We forgave them for using a guitar in the earlier scenes, even though the guitar was not common in the mountains until the 20th century. Two of the actors also sang, but they sounded as if they had come out of the Burl Ives or Hootenanny schools and their music wasn't common to the Appalachian region. The play soars to a climax with the entire cast joining in on "Wondrous Love."

And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on.

We learned that CRT had gotten together a group of Appalachian experts, such as Cratis Williams, Charles Joyner, Ambrose Manning, Harley Jolley, Jim Wayne Miller, Betty Smith and Leonard Roberts, for a marathon session at Boone, N.C., to feed ideas, songs, tales and sayings to the author, which accounts for much of the play's authenticity.

The ARC funding was sufficient only for the commissioning and production of the play and a one-month run through the Region. It played 26 places at a cost of \$4,000 a performance during March. Since the initial run, the CRT has received nearly 50 additional requests for the play. It has applied to the ARC for additional funding, but no definite promises have emerged. The CRT is hopeful of at least partial funding for a new tour in the fall, with the probability of an admission charge. If you're interested in having *Appalachia Sounding* play your community, you should write to The Carolina Readers Theatre, P.O. Box 1222, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. And if you think

this is a good project for the Region, you might want to write to the Appalachian Regional Commission, 1666 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20235 and say so.

RETIREMENT PARTY *from page 1*

Eastern Kentucky ballads. His 1,650-page dissertation (New York University), *The Southern Appalachian Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction*, is the definitive work on Appalachian literature from its beginning to 1960. Dr. Williams' studies of Appalachian speech are the outstanding work in the field. He is noted as a ballad singer, a lecturer and speaker and a cultural historian. For the past several years, Williams has written and spoken about the strengths of the Appalachian culture. Thus he has been an important resource for all those at various colleges and universities who have been developing Appalachian studies courses and for those administering programs who have had problems understanding the Appalachian culture.

How do you tell such an employee that he is appreciated when he retires? Give him a watch? A car? Send him on a cruise? Appalachian State University had a better idea. ASU announced a symposium in honor of Dr. Williams and invited scholarly papers on various aspects of Appalachian life. From 70-odd papers they chose 22 from such Appalachian personalities as Wilma Dykeman, David Loeff and Gene Wilhelm for presentation April 7-9 in the ASU Center for Continuing Education. They also invited Jean Ritchie for a concert, and gave time for films, slide shows and poetry reading (by mountain poets George Scarborough and Jim Wayne Miller). Though the papers were scholarly, they had heart, spirit and a great deal of humor. Many of them were written by Appalachian natives as a first exploration of Appalachian topics. The presentations were impressive -- enough so that the ASU's *Appalachian Journal* will publish all symposium papers and ASU officials hope that they will later appear as a book.

Williams was roundly saluted (and occasionally roasted) in the final evening of the symposium by friends, associates and former students. The highlight of the evening, perhaps, was the singing of ballads from Williams' collection by Jean Woodring, a 14-year-old Watauga County girl. Williams, who sat through every minute of the three-day symposium, allowed that he had had a right nice time. And he isn't really retiring. He'll continue to teach a course in English, do some writing and give his inimitable lectures wherever he's asked to appear.

Fairs and Festivals

Yes, it's that time of the year again. Back for its 10th annual spring fair is the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, which this year, in the true Bicentennial spirit, promises "a living history of Kentucky culture." More than 100 exhibitors are expected to be on hand. The fair is held at the picturesque Indian Fort Theater, three miles from Berea. Dates are

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Wild geranium (above) and May apple



Forest Primeval

More than half a century ago, a man named Lilley Cornett began buying tracts of woodland in Eastern Kentucky -- virgin forest that was the surviving remnant of the Mixed Mesophytic Forest which once covered the area. Because of the devotion of this pioneer ecologist, who refused to sell the timber, this priceless treasure has been preserved intact and is now, as the Lilley Cornett Woods, administered by the Division of Forestry of the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources. Botanists have listed 64 species of trees in the woods, many of them 500 years old and more and of record size. Wildflowers in colorful profusion carpet the forest floor. Unfortunately, we can only give you a tiny selection in black-and-white. For an extraordinary experience, visit the woods, which lie in Letcher County southeast of Hazard, Ky.



Oak tree (top photo) is centuries old.
Above: Christmas fern Below: Bloodroot

Squaw root



FAIRS AND FESTIVALS *from page 2*

May 27-30. For more details write Fall Fair, Box 291, Berea, Ky. 40403.

In mid-June (exact dates are 17-19) comes the annual Old Time Fiddlers' and Bluegrass Convention at Chilhowie, Va., which has been going since 1969. Prizes are awarded in various categories, and those who attend are promised "no electric instruments, horns or drums." To register, write Vance M. Yearly, 214 Huldale Ave., Marion, Va. 24354.

You can spend the Fourth of July weekend in an arts-and-crafts atmosphere at the Mountain State A&C Fair at Cedar Lakes, near Ripley, W. Va. One hundred craftsmen should be showing their wares here too, and there'll also be "sizzling-hot buckwheat cakes, spicy slow-simmered apple butter and well-seasoned chicken." Exact dates are July 1-5. For more information write Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, Cedar Lakes, Ripley, W. Va. 25271.

During the second week of July (the 12th through the 16th), the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild presents its fair in Asheville, N.C., at the Civic Center. The fair will have its own Bicentennial touches, with a special exhibit and a show of old-time tools and equipment, in addition to members' displays, folk dancing and traditional music. Address of the guild is P.O. Box 9145, Asheville, N.C. 28805.

It's back to the Asheville area on August 5-6-7 for the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, founded in 1928 by Bascom Lamar Lunsford. This gathering, truly the granddaddy of all the folk festivals, is now conducted by the Folk Heritage Commission of the Chamber of Commerce of the Asheville area. You can get more information by writing the chamber -- Asheville, N.C. 28805.

Looking ahead to fall, you might take note of the New Salem Mountain Festival, a community fund-raising project featuring various arts and crafts. New Salem is situated atop Lookout Mountain in north Georgia, between Trenton and Lafayette on Highway 143. Local talent is emphasized, but everyone is invited to attend. Dates are October 9-10, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Though it's not exactly a festival, mention should be made of a regional conference on the humanities and public policy, to be held May 27-30 in Nashville. Called "The Peoples of the South: Heritages and Futures," the conference is sponsored by the state humanities councils in the region and will include 100 opinion leaders. A few observers will be allowed for a \$75 ante; if you'd like to watch, write to Jane Crater, Southern Regional Conference, Suite 300, Coleman Building, 3716 Hillsboro Road, Nashville, Tenn. 37215.

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EYE on Publications

A Darkness at Dawn: Appalachian Kentucky and the Future, by Harry M. Caudill (University Press of Kentucky). A volume in the Kentucky Bicentennial Bookshelf. In it the author of *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* restates his analysis of the economic exploitation of Eastern Kentucky and he argues for a new assertiveness by the people. In developing his thesis, the orotund sage of Whitesburg ventures into some controversial culture-vs-genetics territory.

Tennessee: A Bicentennial History, by Wilma Dykeman (Norton/American Association for State and Local History). The prolific Tennessee novelist, historian and biographer here writes her state's official Bicentennial portrait, one of the 50 in the series. It's an interesting story, presented with verve and clarity.

The Scotch-Irish: A Social History, by James G. Leyburn (University of North Carolina Press). Published in 1961, this much-admired study aims at dispelling the "mythology" of the Scotch-Irish (or Ulster Scots, as they are known in Britain). The author traces the people from the Border to Ulster to America, and is interesting on specifics -- for instance, place names.

Magazine Now in its second year is *The Mountain Call*, a monthly produced in Mingo County, W. Va. Its editors believe that "mountaineers have much to say and that their culture has much to offer to folks throughout the country." A year's subscription is \$5, and you can get a sample copy for 35¢ (including postage). Write to the magazine at Box 611, Kermit, W. Va. 25674.

Librarians and others will be interested in the *1976 Catalogue of Selected Titles About West Virginia and Surrounding Region* published by the West Virginia University Book Store, College Ave., Morgantown, W. Va. 26505. It's available on request.

Berea's Hutchins Library has again counted the novels in its celebrated Weatherford-Hammond Mountain Collection; the new total is 1,132 (an increase of more than 400 since 1970). Dates of publication of the books range from 1832 to 1975. Those who are interested in seeing how their own Appalachian collections measure up (as well as those who are just interested) can get a copy of the list by writing the Hutchins Library, College Post Office, Berea, Ky. 40403.

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