

**James Stephen Brown  
(1916-1999)**

*Editor's Note:* The last issue of *Appalink* reported the loss of Jim Brown, a vital figure in the development of *Appalachian Studies*. It is appropriate that we commemorate Brown here with an eulogy written by Dwight B. Billings.

The University of Kentucky Department of Sociology lost a highly esteemed former faculty member in October 1999 with the death of Professor James Stephen Brown, retired professor of rural sociology and pioneer contributor to the field of Appalachian Studies.

A native of the Appalachian Region, Jim Brown was born in Pike County, Kentucky and as a youth lived in several Kentucky and West Virginia coal mining communities where his father served as YMCA director. When his father took a job at Berea College supervising students in industrial training, Jim attended a secondary school operated by the college and later graduated from Berea. He obtained a doctorate in sociology from Harvard University where he wrote his dissertation under the direction of Talcott Parsons. Prior to completing that degree, he joined the faculty in rural sociology at the University of Kentucky and served there from 1946 until his retirement in 1982, after which he spent his retirement years in Lexington, Kentucky.

Rarely do unpublished doctoral dissertations make profound impacts on a field of study but Jim's meticulously researched dissertation, "Social Organization of an Isolated Mountain Neighborhood," did so. Along with articles from it published in the *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology*, Jim's study of the so-called "Beech Creek" community in Appalachian Kentucky is today regarded as perhaps the most important ethnographic study of a rural Appalachian community. Jim began fieldwork in "Beech Creek" in 1942 before hard-surfaced roads or electricity had penetrated this isolated area in order to document the vanishing way of life of impoverished, subsistence farm families in the Kentucky mountains. His observations

of family patterns, economic strategies, social stratification, and community organization there deeply influence how Appalachia is understood today. In 1988, Berea College Press published his by then widely known study as *Beech Creek: A Study of a Kentucky Mountain Neighborhood* in order to facilitate its accessibility. Staff at the University of Kentucky Special Collections and Archives have preserved his original field notes and voluminous research materials for use by subsequent scholars.

Over the years, Jim's work attracted numerous collaborators. In 1971, Harry K. Schwarzweller, Jim, and J. J. Mangalam published a monumental volume entitled *Mountain Families in Transition*. A comprehensive survey of emigrants from Beech Creek to urban and industrial cities of the Midwest conducted twenty years after Jim's original ethnography, this highly praised book is regarded as the definitive sociological study of Appalachian out-migration and urban relocation. Later, Jim researched patterns of Appalachian migration with Clyde McCoy and forty years after his initial study, he collaborated with Virginia McCoy conduct a restudy of remaining residents in Beech Creek. In 2000, Dwight Billings and Kathleen Blee published an historical study of Beech Creek and its surrounding county from 1800 to the present entitled *The Appalachian Road to Poverty*.

In the context of a scholarly field that often leaves particular places like Appalachia and real people, like the people in Beech Creek, out of the professional equation, Jim's work personified an alternative way to live one's life as a scholar. Emile Durkheim urged sociologists to "treat social facts as things." But the most important quality about Jim for many of us who know and loved him is that he never treated social facts as things. They were people, real people he cared deeply about and who he respected enough to spend 40 years of his life listening to, trying to understand, and interpreting their stories and experiences to others. We often refer to the people we study as "subjects" but Jim fondly referred to the



## CANDIDATES FOR ASA OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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*Helen Matthews Lewis*

Sociologist, Anthropologist, Film-maker, Morganton, Georgia

LEWIS \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

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*Patricia Beaver*

Director, Center for Appalachian Studies, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina

BEAVER \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

### *For Steering Committee - 3 members for 2-year terms (2000-2002):*

*Frankie Patton Rutherford*

Executive Director, Big Creek People in Action, Caretta, West Virginia

RUTHERFORD \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

*Judi Jennings*

Executive Director, Kentucky Foundation for Women, Louisville, Kentucky

JENNINGS \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

*Pauletta Hansel*

Assistant Director - Community Development, Urban Appalachian Council, Cincinnati, Ohio

HANSEL \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

### *For Program Committee - 4 members for 1-year term (for the 2001 conference):*

*Ken Sullivan*

Executive Director, West Virginia Humanities Council, Charleston, West Virginia

SULLIVAN \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

*Ancella Bickley*

At work on recovering African American History in West Virginia, Charleston, West Virginia

BICKLEY \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

*Linda Tate*

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TATE \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

*Scott Loveridge*

Director, Regional Research Institute, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia

LOVERIDGE \_\_\_\_\_ WRITE-IN NOMINEE \_\_\_\_\_

### **Mail or Fax to:**

Sally Maggard,  
National Program Leader, ECS  
USDA-CSREES

1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Mail Stop 2215  
(Rm. 4016 Waterfront Center)  
Washington, DC 20250-2215

(202) 720-0741 voice  
(202) 690-3039 fax



people of Beech Creek as "his people," a phrase in Appalachian parlance that refers to one's kin and loved ones. It's just not done in the social sciences but Jim managed to maintain close, intimate relationships with the people of Beech Creek for well-over 40 years. And, they kept track of him, phoning or visiting from Kentucky or Ohio if they hadn't heard from him for a little while, making sure he was ok-as he did them. Jim taught us a great deal about Appalachia through what he learned from those many relationships but he also taught us important lessons about being in the world as scholars.

Jim's contributions have been widely acknowledged. In 1979 he was awarded the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Berea College Alumni Association. More recently, he won recognition by the Urban Appalachian Council of Cincinnati, Ohio for contributions to improving the quality of life for Appalachian migrants and their descendants. The Appalachian Studies Association's Cratis Williams-James Brown Award for Career Contributions to Appalachian Studies is so-named in honor of his lasting impact on that multidisciplinary field of study.

Dwight B. Billings  
Department of Sociology  
University of Kentucky

### ***Ballot for Officers and Committee Members***

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The Bylaws of the Appalachian Studies Association outlines the annual nomination and election of officers. A Nominating Committee presents the ASA membership with a slate of nominees, each with a brief biographical note. The membership elects officers through a ballot, which you will find in this edition of Appalink.

The ***Vice President (2001)/President Elect (2002)*** chairs the nominating committee and the scholarship committee, and negotiates for conference support at future sites. The Vice President becomes President the following year. The ***President*** of ASA, among other duties, presides at all meetings, directs fundraising, serves as spokesperson, and serves on the steering committee for one year following her term. Traditionally, and for obvious reasons, the Vice President & President Elect resides in the state of the upcoming conference (Georgia in 2002).

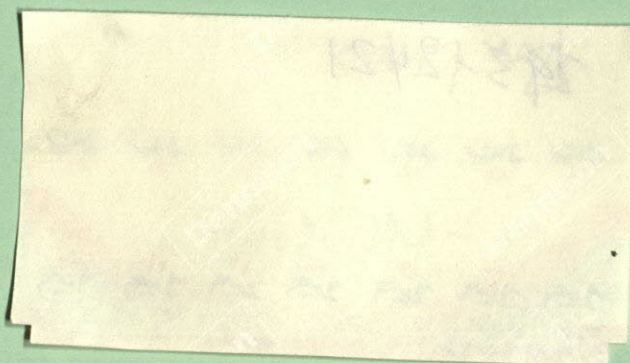
The ***Program Vice-Chairperson (2001)/Program Chairperson Elect (2002)*** assists the Program Chairperson, negotiates the future conference, and becomes

the Program Chairperson the following year. ***The Program Chairperson*** oversees the operation of all aspects of the annual conference. This includes officiating over the program committee and overseeing local arrangements. Following his or her term, the Program Chairperson serves one year on the program committee.

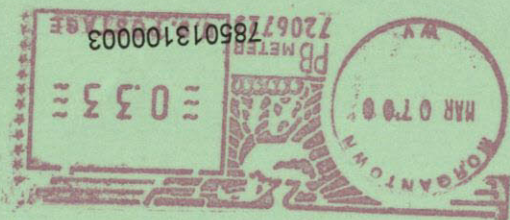
The ***Steering Committee*** includes all elected and appointed officers and six at-large members, elected by the membership and serving two-year terms. Three new at-large members are elected each year. The at-large members, among other duties, transact necessary business, form standing committees, and approve an annual budget.

The ***Program Committee*** prepares the calls for papers, reviews submitted abstracts, and compiles the conference program. A subcommittee handles local arrangements. The program committee includes four at-large members, elected by the ASA membership and serving for one year.





Appalachian Studies Association  
Regional Research Institute  
P.O. Box 6825  
West Virginia University  
Morgantown, WV 26506



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**Correction:**

Richard Couto has agreed to serve as **the** Associate Editor, *Journal of Appalachian Studies*. The Fall 1999 Appalink incorrectly identified him as associate editor for one issue.

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Appalink welcomes submissions for announcements and news: upcoming conferences, calls for papers, lectures, meetings, award nominations, or other events that pertain to ASA. Submissions should be sent by e-mail or regular mail to Bill Klaus at: e-mail [wklaus@wvu.edu](mailto:wklaus@wvu.edu); Department of History, West Virginia University, PO Box 6303, Morgantown, WV 26506-6303; Fax 304-293-6699. Limited space is available, and all submissions are subject editing. Paid-for advertisements will be considered for inclusion. Please contact the editor for rates. The deadline for the Fall 2000 edition is September 4, 2000.

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