

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Maintaining the ASA's Commitment to Public Life

by Dwight B. Billings

The ASA is twenty years old! Every time I say those words over to myself I can't believe it—and in my mind I invariably add the phrase “and still ticking.” In the olden days, long before Patrick Swayze contributed his stellar portrayal of hillbilly cop Truman Gates to celluloid eternity, back when clocks still ticked and tocked and televisions still pictured in black and white, there was John Cameron Swayze presiding over countless acts of TV violence done to Timex watches and reassuring breathless viewers at home that those watches were “still ticking.” Twenty years old “and still ticking.”

And we're not just ticking, folks, we're thriving. Yet success and growth in any organization also bring new challenges as well as opportunities. In the last issue of *Appalink* I wrote about how the increasing size of ASA annual conferences challenges our ability in some states, especially Kentucky, to find large enough meeting spaces to accommodate our numbers. But growth in membership and participation also bring other worries. The increasing size of the annual conference—54 sessions, 101 papers, and 16 other events in 1996—encourages fragmentation, and specialization is displacing the common concern for Appalachia itself that originally motivated “scholars, teachers, and regional activists” to form the association twenty years ago. How, we must continue to ask, can the ASA, as one of the few region-wide forums still in existence in Appalachia, contribute to the improvement of community and public life in the region? This year's annual conference program committee is currently struggling with this issue and I want to highlight two promising initiatives.

First, by co-sponsoring the 1997 conference in Kentucky with the Urban Appalachian Council of Cincinnati, we are attempting to strengthen the Association's connection to the grassroots. The UAC is one of the most effective and—like the ASA—enduring Appalachian educational, advocacy and service organizations in existence. By asking its members to work with our program committee in planning for the upcoming conference, we are hoping to insure that ASA members can learn first-hand about the needs and activities of an important segment of the Appalachian population and carry that information into their teaching and research.

Second, by strengthening the ASA's new Teaching Initiative, we are hoping to disseminate Appalachian Studies research and teaching methods more broadly. At last year's

conference in Georgia, we incorporated programming targeted at and involving public school teachers as an alternative to the annual Youth Conference. At least 42 public school teachers registered for the conference and participated in eight sessions. Some of them were granted “scholarships” to attend thanks to a grant from the Georgia Humanities Council and several brought their students, assuring us a continued youth presence. We are hoping for even greater teacher participation in the upcoming conference.

The ASA Teaching Initiative is being spearheaded by Bobby Ann Starnes, Foxfire's national director, whose involvement accounts for much of our early success in attracting and planning for public school educators. Bobby writes:

A large part of my work is visiting schools and classrooms around the Appalachian region. In my travels I have seen some amazing work, sometimes under conditions that make teachers' attempts to excite children about learning seem heroic. So, I was literally thrilled last year when past president John Inscoe invited me to identify teachers to participate in that year's conference. A number of Foxfire teacher presenters have told me how excited they were to be able to share their work and how honored their students were to learn that the work they are doing is important to people outside their communities.

The quality of last year's exchange convinces me that conversations between classroom and college teachers are beneficial to all of us, that they deepen and broaden our understandings and build bridges between scholars and the community. Including teachers in the ASA program reinvigorates them, confirms the value of their struggles, and challenges them to go further. It also broadens the conference discussion and grounds it in the real world of community, enriching the experience of those who may not work directly with children.

She adds:

It seems to me that the most powerful work can be done only when the understanding of scholars is both informed by and informs the experiences of communities, teachers, and children.

Like I said, twenty years and still ticking!

<http://access.mountain.net/~brasm>

The Appalachian Studies Association homepage is now a living entity that you can reach at <http://access.mountain.net/~brasm>. This temporary address should change soon—perhaps even before you read these words. What you'll see there is the preliminary efforts of the committee that was appointed last spring at the annual meeting. Scott Schwartz, as the ASA webmaster, has done herculean duty managing to sort out all of the dizzying links that a project like this requires. He and Barbara Rasmussen met for a few hours last July over some Smithsonian Institution coffee to block out a structure for the website that can last us for a long time—through several growing phases at least. Lou Athey worked to dredge up all those wonderful research links you'll see, also. The page is not yet "final." It probably never will be actually "done," as these things evolve and are constantly updated. Right now, it is very much a work in progress. Lou Athey has taken over the project and is in the process of gathering additional research and service links that Association members will find helpful. Joining him in this task is Marie Tedesco. The page was well-received at the Steering Committee meeting in Lexington in September.

Appalachian Studies Conference Plans

The Appalachian Studies Conference will be held March 14-16, 1997 at the Drawbridge Estates in Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky. Ft. Mitchell is located in northern Kentucky about five miles south of Cincinnati, Ohio. The Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky area boasts a large number of Appalachian migrants and their descendants. These "urban Appalachians" comprise about one-fifth to one-fourth of the total population, according to census statistics. The Urban Appalachian Council of Cincinnati will be co-sponsoring this conference, the theme of which is *Places Where the Mountains Have Gone*. Shaunna Scott and Kate Black are program committee co-chairs. Local arrangements are also being made by the Urban Appalachian Council, including special sessions and some special activities. The University Press of Kentucky will also host a free concert on Saturday night featuring acclaimed Kentucky ballad singer and folk musician Jean Ritchie at the historic renovated Union Terminal in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati Historical Society will also present a photographic exhibit at the Union Terminal.



Call for Syllabi on Appalachian Studies Courses

Chris Baker, assistant professor at West Virginia University Institute of Technology, is editing a teaching resource guide on Appalachia for the American Sociological Association. This guide will be interdisciplinary and all Appalachian scholars and organizations are invited to contribute syllabi or a description of an organization to the address below. Also, groups engaged in social activism and community projects in Appalachia are invited to submit descriptive material. Please send a copy of a recent syllabus, course support materials, or information to: Dr. Chris Baker, Department of the Social Sciences, 324 COBE, West Virginia University Institute of Technology, Montgomery, WV 25136-2436. Ph: 304-442-3390.

DOWN HOME DOWN TOWN URBAN APPALACHIANS TODAY

Edited by Phillip J. Obermiller

"Perhaps nowhere is Appalachian identity more sharply defined than in urban areas, especially outside the region. These essays examine some salient issues in urban Appalachian life and culture. They make an important contribution to the growing body of discourse about Appalachia."

Professor Jean Haskell Speer, Director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, East Tennessee State University.

"A truly interdisciplinary collection featuring a wide diversity of voices, approaches, topics, communities, and experience. An important addition to the Appalachian Studies and migrant literature."

Steve Fisher, Hawthorne Professor of Political Science and Director of the Appalachian Center for Community Services, Emory and Henry College.

"Appalachian culture, education, literature, women, values - all are topics of interest and debate among Appalachian scholars nationwide, but here they apply to urban Appalachians, a group that those of us from Snowville, Virginia to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania need to pay attention to."

Professor Grace Toney Edwards, Director of the Appalachian Regional Studies Center, Radford University.

"A welcome addition to the scholarly literature dealing with urban Appalachians in particular, this well-balanced and up-to-date collection of essays, case studies, and creative writing can also help readers to better understand the interdisciplinary range and scope of Appalachian Studies as a whole."

Professor Richard Blaustein, Coordinator of the Undergraduate Minor in Appalachian Studies, East Tennessee State University.

Phillip J. Obermiller is a Center Associate at the Appalachian Center of the University of Kentucky and a Visiting Professor of Urban Affairs at the University of Cincinnati.

DOWN HOME, DOWNTOWN: URBAN APPALACHIANS TODAY

Publication date: March 1996

Available in paperback from Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company

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At Bookstores or Order Toll-Free: 1-800-228-0810



Jim Wayne Miller Tribute

by Loyal Jones

(This article is reprinted by permission from the *Lexington Herald-Leader* of Sunday, August 25, 1996)

Jim Wayne Miller, who died a week ago at his home in Bowling Green, was a wellspring of talent and ideas for Kentucky and Appalachia. A native of Leicester, N.C., he taught German in the Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies Department at Western Kentucky University since 1963. There, he was recognized as a gifted teacher who always had time for students, colleagues or others who sought his counsel. He was also known as a prize-winning poet, novelist and essayist.

However, his native Appalachia always claimed a major portion of his time and effort. Most of his poetry, short stories and his two novels and dozens of scholarly essays were about Appalachia. He prepared several anthologies and bibliographies and course outlines to help teachers of courses related to Appalachia. The latest of these was a two-volume work, *Appalachia Inside Out*, which he co-edited with Robert J. Higgs and Ambrose Manning and was published by the University of Tennessee Press.

Mr. Miller's work with people and organizations is best remembered. He was the mainstay of Hindman Settlement School's Writer's Workshop for nearly two decades, and he taught similar workshops in several states. He drove hundreds of thousands of miles to visit schools, to speak, read his poetry or teach extended courses.

He read dozens of manuscripts from aspiring writers and wrote pages of carefully reasoned critiques. He was never too busy to take phone calls from people seeking advice or help.

He was the brightest and best of those who tried to understand and write about Appalachia and its people.

It was to Mr. Miller's advantage that he was both poet and scholar. Like Robert Frost, he thought that true thinking

was in metaphors and similes, that is, in the ability to see two things seemingly unrelated that are somehow connected. In both his poems and essays, he brought this metaphorical thinking to help us see things for the first time, or from a different perspective.

Also, he learned and effectively argued for Appalachian studies in regional colleges and universities. His training, both in German and English literature at Berea College and Vanderbilt University, equipped him to bring world literature and thought to bear on regional studies.

In such discussions, he was apt to quote such literary figures as Goethe, Montaigne, Yeats, Robert Penn Warren, Wendell Berry, James Still, Robert Morgan, Wilma Dykeman and a host of others to great effect, even before skeptical liberal arts faculty. Mr. Miller taught always that all literature is local someplace, and if so, then why shouldn't Appalachians produce good literature, and why shouldn't it be worthy of study?

At his funeral Wednesday in Bowling Green were former students and proteges from across Kentucky and beyond whom he had inspired to be what they are, including these: a school superintendent and poet; a publisher and poet; an English professor and musician; a historian and social activist; a physical education teacher, writer and farmer; a literature teacher and bookseller; and a settlement school director and organizer of Appalachian programs.

Speaking movingly was his daughter Ruth, a graduate student in San Francisco, who, choosing a field she thought to be far removed from her father's work, kept coming across the name Jim Wayne Miller.

As we say in the mountains, he was a good 'un. He served his native region in ways the rest of us will not be able to do. I am grateful for his work and am comforted by the fact that his books are in Kentucky libraries to help us into the future.



Remembering Jim Wayne

by Gurney Norman

I'm glad *Appalink* is reprinting Loyal Jones' *Lexington Herald-Leader* article about Jim Wayne Miller. It was first published within days of Jim Wayne's funeral and really filled a need many people felt at that time, and still feel. I was so stunned, immobilized, by Jim's death that for days I couldn't think of a thing to say about it to anybody. Nearly everybody I talked to later felt the same way. How is it possible to express the feelings aroused by the passing of this wonderful friend and writer? Loyal found the perfect words for the immediate occasion. To me his words represent the starting place for the many words about Jim Wayne that are sure to follow as the community he was such an essential part of gradually finds the voice to utter the thoughts and feelings that Jim Wayne's passing calls forth.

In the week following Jim's funeral several people I spoke

with used the same image in trying to put words to the fact of the absence of Jim alive among us. It was the image of a giant tree that had fallen in the forest, leaving the space of itself in the woods around. You had always known that it was a large tree, but it was only after it had fallen that its full dimension could be realized by the enormous space it left. It's the kind of image Jim Wayne himself would make a poem of.

I hadn't been in direct touch with him for several months but that was our pattern, as I know it was for many of his friends. It didn't matter how much time passed between visits or telephone conversations, Jim and his friends always picked up exactly where they left off the last time. In between actual conversations his friends had his work to read.

Continued on back page



We Will Miss Jim Wayne

by Dick Hague

All of us who knew Jim Wayne Miller will feel his absence for years. We will miss him at the Appalachian Writers Workshop in Hindman, Kentucky, and we will miss him at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative in Tennessee and Virginia, and we will miss him at the innumerable workshops and readings and festivals and conferences he was a part of all around the region. We will

miss the way he moved close to us at crowded gatherings, so as to share a story and a laugh. We will miss his sudden, late-night, coffee-fortified departures in that car full of manuscripts and books.

He always made it home. We know he's made it this time, too.



Ernie Mynatt

1923-1996

In Cincinnati's Appalachian community Thursday, October 10, phones were ringing off the hook. The man called "Papa" or the "Godfather" was dead. "It was clear right away," said Michael Maloney, "that in planning the details of paying proper respect to Ernie's passing, his family would be joined by the entire community." This was entirely appropriate; Mynatt had taught this community to value its own best traditions of community life. In sickness or death the community responds.

Ernie Mynatt was born in Knox County, Kentucky, grew up in Harlan County and, after his World War II military service, went back to Eastern Kentucky, finished college and became a school teacher. By the late 1950s, Appalachian migration to the cities was at its all-time peak. In 1959, Mynatt joined the stream of migrants and came to Cincinnati. After stints at Courter Tech (Central High) and Emmanuel Community Center, Ernie eventually met Stuart Faber and became a detached worker for the Appalachian Fund. He worked with troubled youths and families in Over-the-Rhine, by then a major "port of entry" for Appalachians displaced by automation of the mining industry and other economic factors.

Larry Redden, now a senior staffer at the Urban Appalachian Council was "one of Ernie's kids." "If you were on the street and hungry," says Redden, "and wondering where to spend the night, Ernie would show up. He was everybody's surrogate father. That's why he got called 'Papa.' He taught us on the street. If we used the N word, Ernie would say, 'My grandmother was black.' If youth made an anti-Semitic remark, Ernie would pull out the Star of David and claim to be a Jew."

Maria Redden, daughter of Italian immigrants, remembers bringing her first daughter home from the hospital, back to Over-the-Rhine. Looking at her precious baby, Maria lamented, "Where are we taking her." Ernie's response was, "Remember, Guinea, it's not where you live. It's who you are." He was always supportive, say "Ernie's kids," who number in the hundreds. Most now have stable family lives.

Some stayed to work in Over-the-Rhine and other Appalachian and African-American neighborhoods as social workers or educators.

During the 1960s, Ernie became a much sought after speaker by church groups and civic organizations concerned about conditions in the inner city. He called for recognition and inclusion of Appalachians in the opportunity structures of the city, especially in the school system. He sought allies in his work and became an adviser to such programs as the Main Street Bible Center and Hub Services in Over-the-Rhine. He recruited and trained dozens of volunteers, many of whom dedicated the rest of their lives to inner city social work and education efforts.

Around Ernie's street work and organizing emerged the Urban Appalachian Council and numerous affiliated programs. All base their work on concepts taught by Papa, like unconditional acceptance and racial tolerance. Scholars came to document the needs and cultural strength of the Appalachian community. Books were written and festivals were organized to celebrate Appalachian culture. Poets and writers and musicians found interest in their art. Mynatt earned a doctorate in Psychology from the Union Institute in 1987. His dissertation told the story of urban Appalachians and described his approach to social work. After 37 years of Ernie's work, inner city poverty still exists but many lives have been touched and healed. Ernie Mynatt is survived by his wife Maureen Sullivan, Executive Director of the Urban Appalachian Council, his son Michael, and daughters, Katie and Donna (Susie), and by all whose lives he touched, including "Ernie's kids."

Memorials may be sent to:

Ernie Mynatt Memorial Fund
Urban Appalachian Council
2115 West 8th Street
Cincinnati OH 45204

For further information, contact Larry Redden (513-251-0202) or Mike Maloney (513-784-0682).

Constitutional Amendments Proposed

The ASA Steering Committee proposes the following two amendments to our constitution. Please vote yes or no for these proposed amendments:

Amendment One

To create the position of a non-salaried *liaison officer* in order to facilitate communication and transactions between the Appalachian Studies Association and its institutional base (currently at West Virginia University's Regional Research Institute). The liaison officer will be appointed by the president to serve four-year renewable terms and will be a voting member of the Steering Committee.

_____ Yes _____ No

Amendment Two

To establish the Committee on Maintenance of the Appalachian Studies Association Web Site:

A. Membership

1. Chair—to be elected by the general membership to a three (3)-year term
2. Three (3) Regular Members—to be appointed by the ASA president to rotating 3-year terms, with an effort made to preserve a committee membership balance between the scholarship and service/activist interests of the association. The initial appointments will be for either a three (3), two (2), or (one) 1-year term.
3. The president of the Appalachian Studies Association to serve as an ex officio voting member.
4. Effort will be made to maintain, among these five members, at least one person with a librarian/archivist background.

B. Duties

1. To receive from ASA members all suggestions relative to revisions of the ASA web site: changes or additions in copy, photography, organization, links, etc.
2. To deliberate the wisdom of such proposed changes and to approve such changes as seem warranted.
3. To communicate, in a timely fashion, such changes to the Web Site Overseer.

- C. The Web Site Overseer—Although not a member of the committee, the Web Site Overseer will play an advisory role and will have veto power over all suggestions that simply are not technologically feasible.

_____ Yes _____ No

Please send ballots to:

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1515 Patterson Office Tower
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40506

Or Fax your completed ballot to Dwight Billings at: soc171@ukcc.uky.edu

Deadline for ballots, December 15, 1996

POPULAR PRESS

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Wingless Flights *Appalachian Women in Fiction* Danny L. Miller

Focusing on three major phases in writing about Southern Appalachian mountain people, this study surveys some of the images and depictions of mountain women from the 1880s to the 1950s, in the writings of Mary Noailles Murfree, Edith Summers Kelley, Anne W. Armstrong, Emma Bell Miles, Jesse Stuart, James Still and Harriette Arnow. The two major aims of the study are: to show changes in the descriptions of mountain women—from non-native to native depictions, from romantic to realistic presentations, and from an emphasis on victimization and drudgery to an emphasis on strength and endurance; and to identify those qualities which have consistently characterized mountain women in literature.

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Moving On *The Heroines of Shirley Ann Grau, Anne Tyler, and Gail Godwin* Susan S. Kissel

Focusing on the work of Grau, Tyler, and Godwin, as representative of changes taking place today, Kissel argues that Southern women are "moving on" in their fiction, with heroines not only continuing to renounce patriarchal tradition but moving beyond to establish independent lives and caring communities in American society.

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A Question of Class *The Redneck Stereotype in Southern Fiction* Duane Carr

"Rednecks" have long been subjects of scorn and ridicule, especially in the South because of an antebellum caste and class system, parts of which persist to this day. Carr records the progress in southern fiction of this negative stereotype—from antebellum writers who saw "rednecks" as threats to the social order, to post-Civil War writers who lamented the lost potential of these people and urged sympathy and understanding, to modern writers who reverted, in some sense, to Old South attitudes, and finally, to contemporary writers who point toward a more democratic acceptance of this much maligned group.

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Isn't Justice Always Unfair? *The Detective in Southern Fiction* J.K. Van Dover and John F. Jebb

The American South can claim distinction in the history of detective fiction: a Southerner, Poe, invented the genre; some of the greatest writers to exploit the genre have been Southern; and some of the best contemporary American detective-story writers are Southern. *Isn't Justice Always Unfair?* explores the uncommonly long and rich relationship between the fictional detective and the South. The detective illuminates the South, and the South illuminates the detective in this study covering some of the greatest early writers of the genre as well as contemporary authors composing inquiries into the character of life in the Southern landscape of today.

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He was so prolific, his written words were like one of those swiftly-flowing North Carolina mountain streams. His writing was like Deep Creek, filled with music, voices, stories. So it didn't matter that you might go a year or more without seeing Jim. You knew that sooner or later you'd catch up with him at one of the many annual gatherings of people all across the mountains. For a day or an evening or even just an hour or two, there he would be, present with you, interested in you, that sweet engaging light shining from him that we all needed to bask in from time to time.

By now, late September, 1996, I'm getting so I can talk about Jim Wayne, and read his work with the old pleasure. Again, I know that many, many people all over this enormous Ohio Valley-Upper South-Appalachian Region, and everywhere else that poetry is appreciated, are having a similar experience. Slowly we gather ourselves up and begin to take pleasure in the space in the wilderness Jim Wayne created with his work and his life. We begin to feel like gathering together in that space, to enjoy it, to visit, to remember Jim, appreciating him over and over again in the environment of our memories of Jim and his words which surround us now like a comforter. As time goes by writers and schol-

ars will give us their written appreciations of Jim and assessments of his work. Eventually I want to write up some of my favorite Jim Wayne anecdotes, accounts of the many good times, good talks, we had together. (One of these has to do with the way we first came to know each other, in the pages of the magazine *Mountain Life and Work*, in the late 1960s, where we both first started publishing. It wasn't until 1978 that I actually met Jim. He drove up to Hindman Settlement School in a pouring rain and sat there in his car waiting for it to quit. After awhile I got so impatient to meet my fellow writer that I put on an Army poncho and carried a big umbrella out to the car and held it for him as he got out. That was a modest occasion but it has meaning for me.) I know that hundreds of people have their own "Jim Wayne stories" and will have the impulse to write them down.

Undoubtedly there will be books about Jim Wayne and his work. Undoubtedly he was a great writer. I hope his essays will be collected and published, just as they are, no editing needed. His short stories will surely be gathered into a book. His novels and poems will remain in print for years to come.

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