

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Steve Fisher

As we approach the turn of the century, it is natural to want to assess where we have been and to set new directions for the future. Since its inception, the Appalachian Studies Association has worked to confront the image of Appalachians as backward, fatalistic, quiescent people who live in an isolated hinterland and who are complicit in their own oppression. The early efforts to counter this image usually took one of two directions. They either painted highly romanticized pictures of Appalachian culture and then lamented its destruction by outside forces or described the many ways in which the region has been exploited by the rest of the nation. Unfortunately, far too often these efforts unwittingly reinforced the idea that Appalachia is separate from the rest of the country and the notion of Appalachians as victims, as nonactors in determining their fate.

More recent Appalachian scholarship has revealed the reality to be much different. It has demonstrated that Appalachia is not--has not been--outside of the global capitalist culture and economy. Indeed, many of the region's problems can be traced directly to its relationship with that culture and economy. Moreover, Appalachians have not lacked a politics of resistance. Residents in the region are in constant struggle to develop cultural and political forms of social practice that enable them to resist--or at the very least persist against--the global economic and cultural forces that threaten to destroy what is important to them.

Resistance in the Appalachian mountains has, more often than not, centered around the concept of "community" or "place" and has produced a language and practice of democratic action that is rich in cultural meaning and historical memory that is drawn from one's family, religion, and sense of place. It is not so much that the traditions of the people of Appalachia are inherently radical; on the contrary, they are quite frequently a conservative force. But these traditions and a sense of place, when under attack, provide the commitments and categories out of which resistance can, and often does, emerge. While we must not underestimate the importance of this place-based resistance, it is necessary to recognize that there are limits to community-based strategies that rely heavily on localism and traditional values and institutions. Too often, local values take the forms of

racism, sexism, homophobia, and isolationism. In addition, while place-based resistance offers a number of advantages, few significant problems can be solved solely at the local level. Local resources have been depleted and local economies gutted by national and global market forces. Those fighting to preserve their communities in Appalachia must find ways to clarify the connections that exist between local work and strategies and national and international institutions.

It is crucial that we in Appalachian Studies be more intentional in helping people make these connections because not since the advent of the Industrial Revolution in Appalachia in the 1880s have we experienced the kinds of social transformations that now powerfully affect the people and places of this region. These include far-reaching changes in technology, communication systems, human relationships, social structures, and the spatial organization of the globe. These changes require of us a reappraisal of how we envision culture, justice, democracy, and place identity. If we care about the future of this region, we can no longer allow ourselves the privilege of being passive observers and researchers. We must rethink what it means to be intellectuals, students, teachers, citizens, and cultural and political workers in Appalachia.

What is needed is a critical discourse and practice rooted in an awareness of popular traditions and resistance, but not blind to the wider contours of power within national and international capital. This requires a knowledge of both a "people's" history and a history of capitalism in the region. It means pursuing an approach that blends new ideas with traditional values and language. It requires the creation of a culture and an identity that chooses to complicate rather than to simplify by incorporating themes from many movements and traditions present in Appalachia and the United States.

The theme of the 1999 Appalachian Studies Conference, "The Power of Place and Strategies for Justice: Appalachia at Century's Turn," was chosen in hopes of encouraging papers, readings, roundtables, films, community presentations, and cultural performances that will contribute to such a discourse. Plan to join us in Abingdon, Virginia, on March 19-21 to take part in the discussions of the future of Appalachia.

News and Notes

Roberta Herrin Receives Cratis Williams/James Brown Service Award

Roberta Herrin, professor of English and associate dean of the School of Graduate Studies at East Tennessee State University, received the Cratis D. Williams/James Brown Service Award and was presented a plaque before over 450 scholars at the 1998 Appalachian Studies Association Conference at Appalachian State University. This award is given annually to "an individual who has made exemplary contributions to Appalachia" and the Appalachian Studies Association.

"Roberta is one of the most dedicated and versatile individuals I have ever known," Dr. Robert "Jack" Higgs, ETSU professor emeritus of English, wrote in his nomination of Herrin. "She is a superb teacher and scholar . . . [and] has served the region in so many ways, but if I had to select one area where her influence and service have been most profound and long lasting, I would pick the area of children's literature of Appalachia, for here we are talking about the culture of the future of the region. Roberta is very dedicated to preserving a knowledge of traditional Appalachian Culture but also dedicated to passing it on to the generations coming along."

Roberta, born in Carter County, Tennessee, was instrumental in the creation of ETSU's Center for Appalachian Studies and Services (CASS). CASS director Jean Haskell Speer wrote in support of Herrin's nomination: "I think most

importantly for this award, knowing the legacy of Cratis Williams, Roberta has cared deeply about educating children, young people, and college students about their Appalachian heritage. It has guided her teaching, her research work, and her service. When she was asked to return to Cloudland High School on Roan Mountain as commencement speaker, her topic was 'The Mountain in Relation to the Community,' the subject she felt most important to ritualize the occasion. That speaks volumes about Roberta's love for her mountain homeland and for its communities that require our service."

Dr. H. Tyler Blethen, professor of history and director of the Mountain Heritage Center at Western Carolina University, says of Herrin: "She is one of those few in life who can be counted upon completely, and many organizations are much the better for her contributions."

Herrin has held leadership positions in numerous organizations, including the Appalachian Consortium, the Appalachian Studies Association, the Southern Highland Conservancy, and the CASS board of advisers. She has also published a variety of articles in national and regional publications, and is working on a forthcoming book, *Appalachian Children's Literature: A Bibliography* (McFarland Press).

Emory & Henry College Literary Festival

Featured speaker:

West Virginia novelist Denise Giardina
November 12-13, 1998
Contact John Lang, email: jdlang@ehc.edu

7th Ohio Appalachian Conference

Featured speaker:

Kentucky novelist Gurney Norman
October 4-5, 1998
Contact Deanna Tribe, email: tribe.1@osu.edu

Calls for Papers and Participation

National Women's Studies Association Journal invites submissions on the unique position of women in Appalachia and/or the south for a Fall 1999 special issue on **Appalachia and the South: Place, Gender, Pedagogy**. Send 300 word abstracts by October 1 to Amy Speer, email: speeraw@appstate.edu.

Now and Then, the Appalachian Magazine invites submissions by November 1 on Appalachian architecture for its spring 1999 issue. Contact Jane Woodside, email: Woodsidej@etsu.edu.

Gendered Landscapes: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Past Place and Space, May 29-June 1, 1999. Participate in a conference of scholars inspired by issues of gender and landscape history. Proposals are due October 15, 1998. Contact Bonj Szczygiel, email: bxs28@psu.edu; website: <http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/GenderedLandscapes>.

Rural Women's Studies Association: To learn about the new RWSA and to participate in its June 22-25, 2000, Conference on all aspects of the lives of rural women, contact Debra Reid, email: debrareid@aol.com.

Undergraduate Research Opportunities are open for juniors/seniors to spend a fall semester or academic year concentrating on regional research at West Virginia University. Nominate your outstanding students for a National Science Foundation Undergraduate Research Fellowship and open doors to graduate school and academic careers. NSF Fellows Stacey Willis, Sarah Rentch, and Benjamin Hawkins presented papers at the 1997 Appalachian Studies Conference. Student applications are due March 1, 1999. Contact Mary Lou Myer, email: mmyer@wvu.edu.

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Explore ASA's website at
<http://www.wvu.edu/~appalach/index.html>

Twenty-Second Annual
Appalachian Studies Conference
*The Power of Place and Struggles for Justice: Appalachia at Century's
Turn*

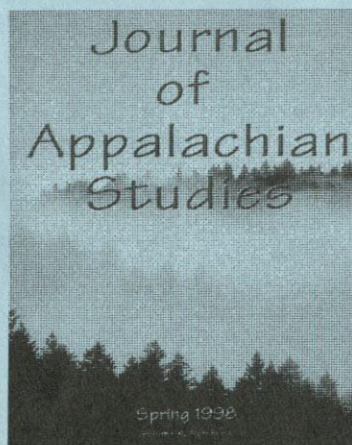
Call for Participation

March 19-21, 1999
Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
Abingdon, Virginia

Proposals are invited for papers, sessions, roundtables, group discussions,
panels, films, performances.
Deadline is October 15, 1998.

Carl A. Ross Student Paper Competition
Deadline is January 15, 1999.

For more information, contact:
Tal Stanley, ASA Program Chair
Appalachian Center for Community Service
Emory & Henry College
P.O. Box 947
Emory, Virginia 24327
Phone: 540-944-6817 / E-mail: tastanle@ehc.edu



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Invite your institution's library and/or your local public library to subscribe to the *Journal of Appalachian Studies*. Give them the form below. Tell them the JAS is published by the Appalachian Studies Association, the national association of scholars, teachers, and regional activists who write, research, and teach in the interdisciplinary field of Appalachian Studies. The JAS is published twice annually, in the spring and fall, and includes the most recent scholarship in academic disciplines specializing in the Appalachian region as well as an annual bibliography.

Most back issues of JAS are available. Inquire at RRIASA@wvu.edu or at the office address below.

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NOMINATIONS **1999 ASA CRATIS D. WILLIAMS / JAMES BROWN SERVICE AWARD**

This award is given to an individual who has made exemplary contributions to Appalachia and/or the Appalachian Studies Association. In most cases, the recipient is a member of the Association; however, in the event of a significant contribution by an individual outside the Association, the Steering Committee reserves the right to present the award to that individual.

The award winner will be selected by the Service Award Committee (appointed by the President) from nominations submitted by the membership, with the presentation to be made at the annual conference. The committee reserves the right not to present the award if no suitable nomination is made.

Nominee's Name _____

Address _____

Affiliations _____

ASA Member? Yes _____ No _____. If Yes, specify length and type of involvement with the Association _____

Please complete a narrative which includes the nominee's field of endeavor, specific examples of his/her contribution(s); the number of individuals affected by the contribution and/or the geographic area served; and any other relevant information. Please submit at least two supporting letters from other individuals acquainted with the nominee's work.

Nominated by _____

Address _____

Phone Home: () _____ Work: () _____ Email: _____

Affiliation _____

Please clip and send this form, the narrative, and supporting letters to Committee Chair Roberta T. Herrin: School of Graduate Studies, Box 70720, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614-0720; FAX (423) 439-5624; Email: herrinr@etsu.edu
SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 12, 1998.

TWO PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ASA CONSTITUTION

The Steering Committee of the ASA has recently voted to amend the organization's By-Laws. These changes need to be voted on by the membership at large. Please mail your ballot below to Danny Miller, Department of Literature and Language, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights KY 41099, or send by FAX to 606-572-6093.

AMENDMENT NUMBER ONE

To add to Article XI *Committees*, Section 1, the following underlined phrase: "Members of the Steering Committee shall include all officers, the Immediate Past President, and the ASA Office Manager"

AMENDMENT NUMBER TWO

To change Article V *Publications*, Section 1 to read: "Newsletter. *Appalink*, the official newsletter of the Appalachian Studies Association, shall be published two times annually—Summer and Spring"

BALLOT

For Amendment One _____

For Amendment Two _____

Against Amendment One _____

Against Amendment Two _____

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR VOTES BY OCTOBER 20, 1998

Silent Auction

This year's Appalachian Studies Association conference will again feature a Silent Auction. Proceeds will be used to support the involvement in ASA of three groups: students, elementary and secondary school teachers, and community activists. You can help us with your donations, and by bidding on items at the conference.

We are currently collecting: signed first edition books on Appalachia, preferably of \$10 value or more; Appalachian arts and crafts, again of \$10 value or more; other Appalachian artifacts / collectibles, such as photography, regional implements, small antiques, and the like. To make donations, please contact Howard Dorgan, Dept. of Communication, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, 28608, dorganch@appstate.edu, (704) 262-2403.

H-Appalachia

H-APPALACHIA is a new moderated discussion list sponsored by H-NET at Michigan State University. H-Net sponsors over 80 lists covering all phases of the humanities. H-APPALACHIA is devoted to a broad interpretation of Appalachian Studies and welcomes participants from all walks of life. It is not necessary to hold an academic appointment in order to join any of the H-NET lists, and that, of course, includes H-APPALACHIA. To join, send the following message to the listserve: subscribe H-Appalachia your email address. If you have any problems with this send me your name and email address and I'll subscribe you to the list. Thanks, Richard Straw, Radford University, rstraw@runet.edu.



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