



GOD HAS MADE OF ONE BLOOD ALL PEOPLES OF THE EARTH

**BEREA COLLEGE**

*Loyal Jones*  
**APPALACHIAN CENTER**  
*Tradition. Diversity. Change.*

# From the director

Since the airing back in the winter of the 20/20 special “Children of the Mountains,” a great deal has been spoken and written about the views conveyed about the people of Eastern Kentucky. Some have emphasized that the special drew on



**Wilson**

tired old stereotypes, others were critical that it didn’t address structural reasons for persistent poverty. Some saw the

attention—either positive or negative—as a good thing for the region and the people. In March, the Center was a stop on the Affrilachian Poets Bus Tour. Among the searing and poignant poetry presented that Sunday afternoon, we heard a young Affrilachian voice contribute to the debate and were reminded of the power of the poem.

## Appalachian Gold

Not all Sawyers are clever as Tom  
 but one told us anyhow  
 about the real commodity in Kentucky  
 not to be divined from cancerous veins in  
 the ground  
 like limited edition collectable carbon  
 or the kind of green crops made from  
 shriveled cocoons draped in barns for  
 harvest:  
 desiccated elephant ears with veins crawling  
 175, 65, 275 to 35 dollars a carton  
 none of this, none of what lay abandoned in  
 a confederacy of failure,  
 nothing of the vestiges of a phantom  
 economy left  
 by the blue X in proud Bluegrass  
 when the South was forgotten  
 no, America knows now that Kentucky  
 harvests  
 something sinister like a baby rattle,  
 that here folks put together their heads and  
 teeth  
 and hustle doctors for tic-tac colored bottles  
 forgetting that the users for this kind of fix  
 are the age and race and social class  
 of news casters and politicians  
 a special is called that because it makes us  
 feel that way

children of the mountain are starving,  
 illiterate and incestuous, just like we  
 suspected  
 somewhere in the jungle someone the color  
 of tobacco  
 dies with flies in its eyes  
 just as we guessed  
 more women raped than we could have  
 ever dreamed  
 and there’s inspiration in all that,  
 we love that the strength of the human  
 spirit,  
 means that somehow, against all odds  
 humanity looks past it  
 and finds happiness

Keith Wilson is an Affrilachian poet and graduate of Northern Kentucky University. He lives in Burlington, Ky.

This issue marks the culmination of Tom Parrish’s long association with the *Newsletter*. We thank Tom for all his words, and we wish him the very best.

As the days grow shorter and the nights cooler, we here in the Center wish you all a pleasant autumn.

—Chad Berry, Director  
*Loyal Jones Appalachian Center*



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Berea College and the Appalachian Center are committed to the betterment of the peoples of Appalachia. The unique views and perspectives of individual authors in this Newsletter, however, do not necessarily represent the views and policies of Berea College.



# Once an activist, 94-year-old isn't your typical

by **Thomas Parrish**  
*Contributing Editor*

In 1984 a young Hollywood blonde named Daryl Hannah starred in a movie about a mermaid who saves Tom Hanks from drowning and later falls in love with him. The film was called *Splash*, and now, 25 years on, the actress is still making a splash and still trying to save things, this time in the unlikely environs of Sundial, West Virginia. In June she and some 30 other environmentalists were arrested for “obstructing and impeding traffic” in front of a Massey Energy coal storage silo.

A vigorous environmental activist for many years, Hannah was arrested once before, in 2006. (That time she had protested the eviction of farmers from a plot of land in California by chaining herself to a tree.) But she was not the only veteran arrested in the Sundial protest, nor could she claim seniority. By a wide margin, that distinction belonged to one of the most remarkable figures in West Virginia’s political history, the 94-year-old former Congressman Ken Hechler. In fact, just a month earlier this nonagenarian had taken part in another anti-mountaintop-removal demonstration, but that time, though trespassing, he was not cited.

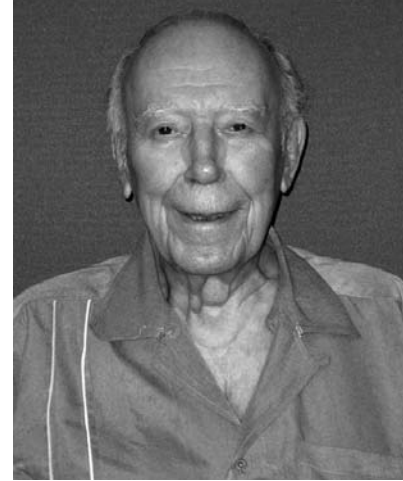
A totally untypical political figure, by West Virginia or any other standards, Hechler had enjoyed an unusual and notable career before entering elective politics. A native of Long Island, he was a graduate of Swarthmore with graduate degrees from Columbia; as a World War II combat historian he saw action in the Battle of the Bulge and was present at the capture of the Ludendorff bridge across the Rhine, telling the latter story in a book and a movie, *The Bridge at Remagen*. After other adventures, including working in the Truman White House and directing research and helping with speeches in Adlai Stevenson’s 1956 presidential campaign, Hechler came to West Virginia to teach political science at what was then Marshall College. “I just liked the idea of accepting a new challenge,” he said, where he could “not only teach a class, but participate in community activities in the small town in a grassroots fashion.”

Students soon urged this apostle of grassroots action to run for Congress, and in 1958, having won a close election just a little more than a year after his arrival in Huntington, he went off to Capitol Hill. During the summer of 1957 he had helped Democratic senators develop an early civil-rights bill, favored by the majority leader, Lyndon Johnson, which, though tame by later standards, represented a beginning and created the first Civil Rights Commission.

Once he arrived in Congress, Hechler proved to be one of the most dedicated Democratic liberals and also one of the strongest opponents of the

# still an activist

## politician



Hechler

long-established Democratic machine in West Virginia. He was a principal author of the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, the first legislation to limit coal dust and provide strict safety standards for miners. He continually fought corruption in the United Mine Workers of America, risking his life to campaign for Jock Yablonski, the rebel candidate for the presidency of the union, murdered by union establishment goons in December 1969. Hechler also notes that he was the only Congressman to march with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. And, he says, “I also was active on a lot of environmental issues, such as saving the New River from being dammed up by the Appalachian Power Company.”

Although never letting up on the West Virginia party bosses, Hechler only once faced significant opposition in Democratic primaries and won re-election to Congress eight times. In later years, having lost the 1976 race for governor, he returned to office as secretary of state of West Virginia. In 2004 he ran one final time for the office, winning the primary but unexpectedly losing in the general election. Many observers blamed the upset on voters’ reluctance to support a 90-year-old candidate.

But this outcome has had no effect on Hechler’s continuing involvement in events. “I started out as an activist, but found it necessary to be a hell raiser.”

Though the *Appalachian Center Newsletter* has not exactly raised hell during our 37 years of existence, we have extensively written about and commented on many of the kinds of issues that have engaged Ken Hechler and others concerned with the well-being of the Appalachian region.

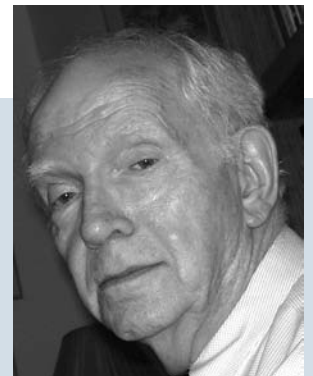
“Newsletter” was not truly a well-chosen name, since it tends to convey a flavor of personal comings and goings and office trivia (“Has Myrtle in bookkeeping got a little secret she won’t be able to keep much longer?”), whereas the creator of the idea and original donor, the late Alfred H. Perrin of Berea, had in mind a publication that would report on news of all kinds from across the region. That was the idea that also appealed to everyone else involved, and I may say that I personally wanted to make sure that the NEWSLETTER would not be perceived as a public relations effort for Berea College. If PR benefits were to come, it would be as the result not of favoritism but of our producing a publication that could profitably be read by someone at any college or no college.

Our first issue, Winter 1972, appeared to be tame enough, with an article about the Appalachian Center itself, about a fifth-semester plan at Union College, about Western Carolina joining the Appalachian Consortium and so on, but on page 3 appeared an article emblematic of one of our future consistent concerns: “Strip Foes Focus on Frankfort.” From that issue till now, we have tried to cover mining and other environmental and social concerns in all their aspects.

We have also been mischievous at times, tweaking the Appalachian Regional Commission for some of its foibles, while also reporting on its real achievements. We have reviewed books—maybe 400, maybe 500—on serious topics and issues and on lighter subjects as well. We have attempted to keep everybody up to date on regional events. We hope we have done some good, and we have had fun.

And I hope this publication, in printed or electronic form, will continue to serve useful purposes. But this is the final issue with which I will be associated. As the writer through the years, I thank you for reading my words.

—T.P.





## THE VIEW FROM HERE

Juan  
Garcia

# A voice from nueva

## Good times—and bad—in Dalton, Ga.

**M**y grandmother ran a boarding house up on top of the hill above Dalton, in what a lot of the old timers around here call Happy Top. That is where my mother met my father. He was living in the boarding house. My father actually worked on Carter's Dam. He did the concrete and came shortly after they were dynamiting. It was close to 1971 or 1972.

As far as coming here, it was more the mills and the dam work that brought both sides of my family here. We relocated to Florida for a short time. My father worked in the orange crop. From there, my parents separated, and we went back to New Mexico, where my grandmother lived and the majority of my mother's family still lived. We moved back to a place they call Portales, New Mexico, right on the state line with Texas and New Mexico. It was all of us with my mother. She remarried, and we stayed there until I was about 10 years old, working at a place called Borden Peanuts. During the time the peanuts were not working, they would work tobacco. It just really got to be not enough for a mother with four kids. It was pretty rough.

My step dad and my mother heard about work in Dalton, and we left New Mexico about 1983. I was 10 or 11 years old in 1983. My dad got a job at a place called Whitecrest Mills. My dad started learning trades there. He learned to weld. He learned a whole lot about electricity.

My mother went to work at a carpet sample company, which back then a lot of the ladies did. The husband would work first shift, because it was easier for him to get that job. The wife would take a job on the second shift, so that one parent was always home with the child. My mother went to work at a place called Southern Binders, where I got my first mill job. I got hired through her and started doing summer work until I was old enough to work throughout the school year.

I was 15 or 16 when I started in the mills. I was going to Dalton High School. It was really tough.

There might have been eight of us Hispanics. We probably got into extra trouble because, number one, we had two things going against us—we were Hispanic and we were foreign. We got into a lot of fights. I'm sure if you wanted to stay out of trouble you could. I wasn't absolutely too willing.

Tenth grade, I quit school. So during the summer, I went to what was called the Adult Learning Center and went through their program. I should have graduated in 1991 but I got my GE in 1990. It qualified me to continue working during the school year. I started working in printing, at Southern Binders, in what is called silk screening. I was catching at the back end and desperately wanted to learn to print. I badgered the supervisor enough about when he was going to teach me the printing press. I didn't want to sit back. If they let me, I learned it. I moved all around that building.

I then moved to ChemTech Finishers. By that time, I was 17. When I started at ChemTech, we would go months without a day off, working seven at night to seven in the morning, seven days a week. When we worked on Sundays, our meals were purchased. Most of the time it was either Gondoliers, an Italian restaurant, or Kentucky Fried Chicken. We had one room that was not used, a pretty lengthy room, and you knew that one tab that room was going to be completely covered with food. We looked forward to Sundays.

I worked in boil-up there. What we did there was dye the carpet. It was rough. You wore gloves but the chemicals were rough. The cracks in your hands would just bleed. We had some chemicals called Textone and Hydro—you never forget the names of those. They were very reactive to water, if you had an over amount. If you had a cup of hydro in a gallon of water, you were okay, but if you had a gallon of hydro and a cup of water, it would flare up bad. We kept gas masks, boots, and we had to be completely dry down before we entered those two rooms. We worked with pure ammonia. You get a bucket of ammonia and hold your hand above your

# Appalachia



**Newcomers to a locale don't just bring themselves, they bring elements of their culture with them, as this storefront church in Dalton attests.**

ammonia and the vapors would burn you. From there I worked my way up to dye weaver, which paid more money. It was not as hard on your back.

I guess when you hear I quit school and got my GED that is all fine and dandy, but the problem is I still needed a lifestyle change. The work was there...but as some people said, "He is a functional workoholic." I believe that, because I never slept. All I knew was work. I had worked everywhere from Five-D to Lady Madison—which is throw rugs. I did some sodding for the Pullen Sod Farm, cutting grass and loading it up. I later started working at Aladdin Mills and met my wife. By that time, there was a whole lot more of a mix of Hispanics and Americans working together. There were a whole lot more interracial marriages.

I worked at Aladdin for about two years until I was let go due to an accident. By then I was used to a fairly decent company making fairly good wages and having steady work and insurance. I had started a family, and I knew I didn't want to go back to what to me meant a step backwards. So I came to Collins & Aikman and put in about three different applications before being called in for an interview. My pastor worked there as a maintenance man. I said to him, "I put in two applications and haven't gotten my foot in the door, do you mind putting in a good word for me?" By then he had known me for a pretty good bit as I attended the church he pastored—Cove Fellowship Church. So he talked to them and got me in the door.

After working ten years at Collins and Aikman, I realized that my lack of a college degree was holding me back. They would bring in college graduates with no experience, and I would train them so they could move above me and have a better job. In 2003, I accepted a job as assistant manager at Wal-Mart. I did well but continued to feel that because of my experiences working with people I could do better. I am now an assistant manager at a large national restaurant chain in Chattanooga and doing well. I may not have a college degree, but I have the ability

to work with people and the desire to always improve.

It is great now to go to Fifth Avenue in Dalton. It was a real rough looking place back then. There were more abandoned apartments than there were filled apartments. Kids on the corner at Green Spot grocery would go in and buy the one-cent little Fortune bubble gum from Mrs. Green, the owner. She knew us boys were headed in kind of a bad way, and she would take us fishing and give us summer jobs mowing yards. She really loved the Hispanics. Mrs. Green really reached out to us. I hug her neck if I see her to this day.

My children are going to be raised with people who are going to understand that their mother is American and their father is Hispanic. It is great to know that we have mingled, and personally I feel like I have been completely accepted by the American side. I even have a little country in my voice. The people have just opened up to me. I just really like the ways of this area. This is the place where you can go to church on Sunday and get a cold watermelon at the end of the day. It is a very family-oriented area. There is enough work for everybody and enough play for everybody. It's been a joy.

*Excerpted from* Voices from the Nueva Frontera: Latino Immigration in Dalton, Georgia (2009). *Grateful appreciation goes to Donald E. Davis.*

# LJAC keeping on the sunny side of renewables

Environmental preservation of the Appalachian region is a focus of the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center and a major goal has been to meet as much of the Center's energy needs as possible through renewable resources. Doing so, says Appalachian Center Director Chad Berry, is something he hopes will teach and inspire others.

Currently, a variety of energy resources—coal, natural gas, and oil—are extracted from Appalachia's mountains and valleys. Its once wild rivers have been tamed to generate hydroelectric power, particularly in

to Berry, "The Appalachian Center is dedicated to helping Berea College serve the Appalachian region primarily through education, and seeing the destructive effects of nationwide reliance upon fossil fuels to generate electricity, we feel compelled to model a policy committed to clean renewable energy."

Berea College's Loyal Jones Appalachian Center is the site of a newly installed 15,000-watt photovoltaic collection system. The 66-panel system began producing electricity on March 13 and will

assist in powering the Center in the Bruce building, which includes the front and rear portions of the first floor, the Artifacts and Exhibits Studio on the second floor, and the Entrepreneurship for the Public Good area on the third floor. The installation contributes to the College's goal of meeting 10 percent of its energy needs through renewable sources by 2010. The Center also is working to reduce energy use by exploring lighting options, energy controls, and usage habits.

Accompanying the installation in the Center's gallery is an exhibit created by the Artifacts and Exhibits Studio titled "Energy and Appalachia," which teaches visitors about the relationships among energy use, lifestyle, resource

extraction, and Appalachian communities.

The exhibit includes a public monitoring device that indicates the periodic output of solar energy captured and used for varying time periods. It also relates the value of power produced by the system in terms of greenhouse gases avoided by the use of renewable energy. Since March, the solar panels have prevented 25,000 pounds of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere.

The Appalachian Center solar panel project was funded in large part by a grant from the Anne Ray Charitable Trust.

southern Appalachia. And throughout the years, abundant coal reserves and good river access resulted in a concentration of coal-fired power plants being constructed in the region. Because of such historic abundance, states in the Appalachian region boast some of the nation's lowest electricity rates: Kentucky's, for example, is 60 percent of the national average. Consequently, people in Appalachia also have some of the country's highest electric usage, a fact that further underscores the need to increase environmental awareness of energy use and to encourage more energy-efficient behavior. According



# Embracing tradition



THE VIEW  
FROM HERE

Robert  
Elkins

This little essay is about Appalachia, but not necessarily the Appalachia of today, but the one that is timeless. Much is being written, and well it should be, about the present day ills that exist in this region—prescription drug trafficking and abuse, mountaintop removal, unemployment—the list could go on—but these areas have been and continue to be reported on quite ably by those directly involved and by those armed with the statistics with which to make a strong case for needed reforms and more stringent law enforcement. We owe a great debt to these eloquent reporters. They should continue with increased fervor.

I want to concentrate briefly on the Appalachia that existed in the middle of the last century, which happened to be the time period that I attended high school, and also to look backward for a couple of decades beyond that. I am not speaking of a memoir telling how granny made lye soap or how grand pap made molasses or about any of the hardships that were endured on a daily basis. I prefer to dwell on how this region affected the emotional and spiritual development of its inhabitants, and how it has captured the imagination of many fine fiction writers and other artists as well.

The region was, and is, blessed with great natural beauty with its impressive mountains and creeks and rivers, albeit presently threatened. Along with the beauty there was the isolation which was both a disadvantage and a blessing. In these hills and hollers the culture and of these rugged people was able to flourish even while the outside world was beginning to sift through the cracks via the radio and the movie houses.

The first fiction writer that I became aware of while in high school that seemed to catch the true worth of these noble people was Jesse Stuart. I'm sure there were others, but Stuart stands out in my memory. But it was the discovery of the work of James Still that made me realize that great art could be distilled from these very mountains. Two books, *River of Earth* and *Sporty Creek*, are examples of his work that capture the flavor of the time so well. Even though it is a world of violence, privation and death, the people are endowed with dignity and love, and even humor by Still.

Other writers who come to mind who have been swept up in the imaginative world of the Appalachian region are Robert Morgan with *Gap Creek*, Chris Offutt with *The Good Brother*, and Charles Frazier with *Cold Mountain*. There is not space in this short piece to list the other great writers from this area but there are many. I mention these three because their books made powerful statements about Appalachia and its people and made quite an impression with many readers. Silas House is another writer that belongs in this group. There are also painters, poets, and playwrights who have succumbed to the mystical qualities of the region.

I know this to be true because I, too, along with many others, have surrendered to the spell of the mountains and have had two works of fiction published. I don't think it would have happened without that something special that is prevalent in these beloved hills. Even though I no longer live there, I go back often. They restore and inspire me.

So, let's fix the things that are plaguing Appalachia, while increasing our responsiveness to the stimulation and creativity the region affords and will continue to do so for generations to come. And even as we attack the existing problems, let us stay constantly aware of and embrace the strong artistic tradition that has flourished here for many years and shows no signs of drying up any time soon.

*Bob Elkins is the author of two works of fiction, both with Appalachian themes. A former educator, he is currently the Safety Standards Specialist for the Kentucky Labor Cabinet in the Occupational Safety and Health division.*

# SCHEDULE FOR 2009 CELEBRATION OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC



## Thursday, October 15

8:00 p.m., *Phelps Stokes Auditorium*. Stephenson Convocation Concert—The Horse Flies (Free to all, public is invited)

## Friday, October 16

Noon, *Appalachian Center Gallery*. Symposium—Loyal Jones, "Country Music Humorists and Comedians"

7–9 p.m., *Bruce Trades, Appalachian Center*. Jam Session with festival musicians or start your own session

9–11 p.m., *128 N. Broadway in Old Town Berea*. Third Friday Contradance. Sponsored by Oh Contraire Dance Assoc., admission \$2. Open mic calling and band! New dancers welcome, no partner or experience required.

## Saturday, October 17

1–3 p.m., *Alumni Building, Activities Room*. Afternoon Concert and Open Mic

3:30–5 p.m., *Alumni Building, Activities Room*. Afternoon Dance

7:30–10 p.m., *Phelps Stokes Auditorium*. Concert of Festival Musicians—The Whitetop Mountain Band, Don Pedi, Sparky and Rhonda Rucker, John Haywood, and the Berea College Bluegrass Ensemble

## Sunday, October 18

9:00–10:15 a.m., *Union Church sanctuary*. Hymn Singing with festival musicians

