

NEW BOOK NOTES

George Brosi

Ora E. Anderson, edited by Deborah Griffith. *Out of the Woods: A Bird Watcher's Year*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007. 176 pages, with illustrations by Julie Zickefoose and foreword by Jean Andrews. Hardback in dust jacket, \$28.95. Trade paperback, \$16.95.

“Ora Anderson is the Thoreau of the Appalachian Woods.” – William H. Thompson, III, Editor, *Bird Watcher's Digest*. Divided into the seasons and garnished by Zickefoose's charming line drawings, this book is a fitting tribute to the author, who died at the age of ninety-four in 2006.

Ted Anthony. *Chasing the Rising Sun: The Journey of an American Song*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007. 307 pages with photos. Hardback with dust jacket. \$36.00.

What a great sleuthing job! I was blown away by the fact that the first known recording of this great song was conducted by Alan Lomax at the home of Mary Elizabeth Barnacle, the New York folklorist and her husband, the coal miner and union activist, Tillman Cadle in Pineville, Kentucky, in 1937. Georgia Turner, who sang the song, was a local sixteen-year-old whose repertoire was almost entirely made up of traditional mountain songs. How nifty that this whole book is about one song. It certainly provides much information and context for mountain folk music, and it does so in an exciting, fascinating manner. A real substantive page-turner. “Readers will find this story engrossing, and true, and ongoing—a story without an end.” - Jean Ritchie.

Garry Barker. *Kentucky Waltz*. Nicholasville, KY: Wind Publications, 2007. 186 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.00.

This is Garry Barker's fourth collection of short stories since the 1980s. Initially known as the first National Merit Scholar from

Fleming County, Kentucky, Barker later made a name for himself as an arts administrator for the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, the Kentucky Arts Council and the Kentucky Folk Art Museum. Throughout, he was crafting poems and stories and often writing columns for small weekly papers. “*Kentucky Waltz* is a wonderful excursion into the heart and mind of modern Appalachia, and master story-teller Garry Barker is the perfect guide.” – Sharyn McCrumb.

Nan K. Chase. *Asheville: A History*. Jefferson, NC: 2007. 272 pages with photos. Trade paperback. \$35.00.

Written by a journalist who lives in Boone, North Carolina, this book provides a basic overview of the history of the city of Asheville augmented by many historical photographs.

Casey Clabough. *The Warrior's Path: Reflections along an Ancient Route*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007. 200 pages. Trade paperback. \$24.95.

Casey Clabough has established a reputation for himself as one of the leading literary critics of the Southern Appalachian Region. Here he shares his reflections as he hikes over 500 miles of the Warrior's Path from Maryland to Tennessee. His ruminations dwell on his ancestors who walked this path and also range, sometimes philosophically, over regional history, geology and especially his personal experience of taking this walk.

Billy C. Clark. *To Find a Birdsong*. Nicholasville, KY: Wind Publications, 2007. 97 pages with illustrations by Elizabeth Ellison. Hardback with pictorial cover. \$20.00.

Billy C. Clark published more than a dozen books for New York publishers beginning in the 1950s. Now retired, he is experiencing a resurgence of his writing and publishing career. This is a short allegorical novel with animal characters.

Jim Clark. *Notions: A Jim Clark Miscellany*. Mount Olive, NC: Rank Stranger Press, 2007. 279 pages with foreword by Jeff Daniel Marion. Trade paperback. \$15.00.

Miscellany indeed! This eclectic collection includes the critical piece Clark did for *Appalachian Heritage* on Byron Herbert Reece as well as a play, many poems, some short stores and a wide range of essays, topped off by a CD of his music! Clark's wide range of talent does not at all reveal him as a dilettante, however. Rather, as no less an authority than Jeff Daniel Marion notes in his Foreward, Clark deserves to be considered right along with Fred Chappell and George Ella Lyon in the upper echelon of exemplars of contemporary regional literature. A native of Pickett County, Tennessee, Clark teaches at Wilson College in North Carolina.

Clarissa W. Confer. *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. 199 pages with photos. Hardback with dust jacket. \$24.95.

The University of Oklahoma Press has established a reputation for books that combine popular appeal with scholarly reliability, and this volume epitomizes this worthy aspiration. It fills a clear gap admirably and is likely to be much appreciated by those who delight in good reading about both the Cherokee and the Civil War experiences.

Cynthia Cumfer. *Separate Peoples, One Land: The Minds of Cherokees, Blacks, and Whites on the Tennessee Frontier*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. 324 pages with maps. Hardback with dust jacket. \$59.95.

This book is basically an "intellectual history" of the three major races of the Tennessee frontier covering the years 1776–1796, a time when none of the three cultures had developed the "cultural apparatus," such as their own books, that provides the backbone of most "intellectual history." Thus this is truly a cutting-edge study of fascinating subject matter. The author is a lawyer in Portland, Oregon.

Donald A. Davis. *Stonewall Jackson: A Biography*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 204 pages with a foreword by General Wesley K. Clark. Hardback with dust jacket. \$21.95.

What an interesting juxtaposition with the previous entry! We go from a previously neglected field to one that seems to proliferate exponentially year by year. What is unique about this short biography is its emphasis on the great West Virginia leader as a military tactician.

Jill Thompson Decker. *Family Spirit*. Charleston: Mountain State Press, 2007. 174 pages. Trade paperback. \$12.95.

This is a coming-of-age novel set in the 1920s in East Ellis, West Virginia. The author grew up in Charleston, West Virginia, and is the former managing editor of a chain of Northern Virginia newspapers.

Richard R. Duncan. *Beleaguered Winchester: A Virginia Community at War, 1861–1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007. 380 pages with photos and map. Hardback with dust jacket. \$40.00.

This is a scholarly treatment of Winchester, Virginia, during the Civil War years, 1861-1865. The town changed occupations many times, at the hands of both armies and of guerilla bands. This study pays particular attention not only to the competition between civilian and military elites for control of the government, but also to the changing domestic power relationships of gender, race and class brought on by the tumultuous conflict. The author grew up in Winchester and is professor emeritus of history at Georgetown University.

Normandi Ellis. *Fresh-Fleshed Sisters*. Nicholasville, KY: Wind Publications, 2007. 101 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.00.

This is a collection of short stories that are indeed refreshingly short. “These quirky, Brautiganesque little stories are as spring-loaded with comic and tragi-comic surprises as a room full of jack-in-the-boxes, and Normandi Ellis, the prankster in residence, is a genius at concealing the most startling revelations within the most ordinary moments of everyday life. Do come in . . . but watch your step.” - Ed McClanahan. Ellis edits the *Berea College Magazine*.

Sidney Saylor Farr. *My Appalachia: A Memoir*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007. 231 pages with photos. Hardback with dust jacket. \$35.00.

Sidney Farr needs no introduction to this audience as she is a former editor of this magazine and a continuing regular contributor to it. This book is quite unique and perhaps simply cannot be quickly introduced in a paragraph. Fred Chappell waxes poetic about it: “It is as redolent with time and memory as a long-used smokehouse, yet fresh and lucid as cold spring water ringed with mossy rocks.” Sandra Ballard’s understatement, “A good memoir offers impressive candor and surprises, and Sidney Saylor Farr’s book delivers both,” offers a meaningful start to describing a book full of revelations that may leave you gasping.

Holly Farris. *Lockjaw*. Arlington, VA: Gival Press, 2007. 172 pages. Trade paperback. \$20.00.

This little book of stories, including two reprinted from *Appalachian Heritage*, doesn’t even have a table of contents, but it follows a pattern of stories of the youth in Southwest Virginia in the beginning, of middle-age in the region in the middle and of old-age in the final pages. The title refers to circumstances that often silence individuals, situations which these stories dwell upon, featuring marginal characters who are willing to tell all. It was nominated for a Lambda Foundation Book Award for Debut Lesbian Fiction. “*Lockjaw* sings with all the power of Appalachian storytelling—inventive language, unforgettable voices, narratives that take surprise hairpin turns—without ever romanticizing the region or leaning on stereotypes. Refreshing and passionate, these are stories of unexpected gesture, some brutal, some full of grace, and almost all acts of secret love.” - Ann Pancake. “Holly Farris’s prose ranges from elegant to gutsy, gentle to edgy, spare to lush. Her settings are evocative, and we come to care deeply about her characters. Each of these stories is like an entrancingly lyrical song, the kind you find yourself singing long after the music has stopped playing.” – Janice Eidus. The author is the fifth generation of her family to live on a farm in the mountains of southwest Virginia.

Edward Francisco. *The Alchemy of Words*. Delhi, NY: Birch Book Press, 2007. 56 pages. Trade paperback. \$13.00.

Eddie Francisco, who teaches at Pellissippi State near Knoxville, Tennessee, is the author of eight books, including novels, poetry collections and scholarly works. “. . . If only/ I could tell this story without/ resorting to parable, thereby/ ensuring the wrong people/ won't understand and be/ saved,” the poet writes in “Glossolalia.” These poems aren't obscure or elusive, but a kind of salvation does await those who will ponder their messages and their metaphors and their wonderful juxtapositions.

Connie Jordan Green. *Slow Children Playing*. Georgetown, KY: Finishing Line Press, 2007. 29 pages. Staplebound paperback. \$14.00.

This little poetry collection contains a wide spectrum of poetic topics from “Coal Mining Camp, Kentucky, 1935” to “Writers' Retreat,” reflective to the author's full life. Green was born in a coal camp in Eastern Kentucky, moved to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, as a youth, and now lives on a small Loudon County, Tennessee, farm. She is a frequent reader and presenter and writing workshop leader, and her young adult novels have won national recognition.

Diane Asseo Griliches. *An Appalachian Farmer's Story: Portrait of an Extraordinary Common Man*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2007. 121 pages with foreword by Peter I. Rose, photos, and CD. Hardback with dust jacket. \$40.00.

Roy Anderson of Russell County, Virginia, is the subject of this coffee-table book and CD. Born in the early 1920s, Anderson was a small farmer, a skilled cabinet-maker and dulcimer crafter as well as a preacher. The photographer, Diane Asseo Griliches “discovered” Anderson in 1989 and has been taking pictures of his farm and interviewing him ever since. The result is one of the finest evocations of traditional Appalachian life and values available. Most of the text of the book consists of direct transcriptions of Roy Anderson talking about his life.

Steven Hammond. *Looking beyond the Mountains: A Story of Courage and Endurance*. Nicholasville, KY: Wind Publications, 2007. 136 pages with introduction by Gurney Norman and photos. Trade paperback. \$15.00.

Linda Jean Hammond was born in the middle fifties and raised in rural Jackson County, Kentucky. When she became a teenager, she didn't develop like other girls, either physically or emotionally. Finally, in her mid-twenties she underwent medical tests that indicated she was a male who had been born with "ambiguous genitalia," so she opted to have surgery and become a male who named himself "Steven." Steven is now a happily married man. This book tells a story not only of sexual ambiguity but of growing up in rural Jackson County, Kentucky.

Lou Harshaw. *Asheville: Mountain Majesty*. Fairview, NC: Bright Mountain Books, 2007. 358 pages with photos. Trade paperback. \$29.00.

Profusely illustrated with archival photos, but also full of information, this is a readable history of Asheville, North Carolina. "The most interesting and comprehensive chronological history of Asheville to date." – Ron Holland.

Hank Hudepohl. *The Journey of Hands*. Cincinnati: Word Press, 2007. 96 pages. Trade paperback. \$17.00.

Hank Hudepohl grew up in Kentucky, graduated from Harvard University, served in the Navy, earned an MFA from Hollins University in Roanoke and still lives near there. "There are no gimmicks here. The work is full of music, clarity, depth and plain old good storytelling. At the heart of these poems is a tribal intelligence, a reckoning tender and fierce and true." - Thorpe Moeckel. "Hank Hudepohl practices a down-home legerdemain, conjuring up people, places, animals and experiences from distant past to immediate present and fixing them with a shapely permanence. Hudepohl's work looks easy and appealing, but its also layered and subtle, with tensions underneath every poem." – John Drury.

Robert J. Kapsch. *The Potomac Canal: George Washington and the Waterway West*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2007. 374 pages. Softcover with illustrations. \$40.00.

The Potomac Canal Company was founded two years after the end of the American Revolutionary War. George Washington was its first president, and its vision was to connect the Chesapeake Bay with the Ohio Valley. This beautiful coffee-table book with a plethora of full-color illustrations tell this story with academic acumen, aesthetic acuity and great vitality. The author lives in North Potomac, Maryland, and holds doctorates in American studies, engineering and architecture.

Stacey Jean Klein. *Margaret Junkin Preston, Poet of the Confederacy: A Literary Life*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007. Hardback with dust jacket. \$34.95.

George Junkin served as President of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia, and his daughters both married professors at Virginia Military Institute nearby. Eleanor married “Stonewall” Jackson, a math teacher, and Margaret married a Latin professor. Before her marriage, she published a novel, and during the Civil War, a long narrative poem. After the war she published three poetry collections and a prose work. She celebrated the Confederacy during the war and was considered a proponent of the “Lost Cause” after the war. The *Washington Post* called her “one of the really famous American authors of the day.” This is the first comprehensive literary biography of her.

Ed Krause. *Our Next of Kin*. Boone: Parkway Publishers, 2007. 242 pages. Trade paperback. \$19.95.

This is a sequel to the author’s first novel, *Our Kinfolks*. Here the protagonist becomes embroiled in a murder case in a mountain Indian Reservation.

Penny Loeb. *Moving Mountains: How One Woman and Her Community Won Justice from Big Coal*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007. 306 pages with photos. Hardback with dust jacket. \$27.95.

This book is simply one of the most inspiring books of the last decade, a must-read. "Painstakingly reported and compellingly written, *Moving Mountains* is an unforgettable account of environmental degradation, those who cause it, those who suffer from it, and those who try to alleviate it." - Steve Weinberg. This book is the story of Patricia Bragg of Pie, West Virginia. The author has covered Bragg's Southern West Virginia fight against "King Coal" for almost ten years as well as her personal effort to move her family off welfare, which culminated with her graduating from college *summa cum laude*. "*Moving Mountains* helps us understand the very real threats mountaintop removal mining poses to the environment, to coalfield residents, and to all of us. It shows both the staggering difficulty and the heartening possibility of fighting back. We need this book." - Anne Shelby.

James J. Lorence. *A Hard Journey: The Life of Don West*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007. 308 pages with photos. Hardback with dust jacket. \$39.95.

This is the first comprehensive biography of Don West (1906-1992), a native of the North Georgia mountains who worked in the mountains of North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia. West is widely viewed as one of the most compelling political and literary figures of the Southern Appalachians during the middle of the twentieth century. Don West was a poet, a promoter of mountain music, a minister, a labor organizer, an educator, a leftist activist, an amateur historian and a firm advocate for grass-roots mountain people and traditional regional values. The author was Eminent Scholar of History at Gainesville State College in Georgia after a long career as a labor historian in Wisconsin. "Don West was an American original, a stranger to fear, and one of the South's most daring, impassioned and indomitable working-class heroes. . . *A Hard Journey* is not only an important biography—it is also a groundbreaking chronicle of the extraordinary and often harrowing roles of southern radicals during our nation's most troubled times." – Jeff Biggers. "This presentation of West as a figure both emblematic and extraordinary, and absolutely fascinating to "track" from one political or literary endeavor to another, will rock the world of southern history." – Rachel Rubin.

E.C. Mantz. *Eula*. Brentwood, TN: Cold Tree Press, 2007. 184 pages. Trade paperback. \$12.95.

This is a memoir of the first sixteen years of the author's life, spanning the depression, the second World War and the years leading up to the Korean War. The author grew up in poverty in Smyth County, Virginia. This is a compelling read and an important window into regional life at a crucial time.

Brent Martin. *Poems From Snow Hill Road*. Cullowhee: New Native Press, 2007. Trade paperback. \$8.00.

This attractively produced book presents twenty short poems. The author lives in Macon County, North Carolina, and works for the Wilderness Society.

John McKernan. *Resurrection of the Dust*. Omaha: Backwaters Press, 2007. 223 pages. Trade paperback. \$22.00.

The author is a popular creative writing professor at Marshall University and the creator and editor of ABZ, a literary quarterly. Although he is very widely published in very fine literary magazines, this is his first full-length poetry collection. "John McKernan is the master of a sly surrealism that reveals the numinous inside the ordinary or the terrible that sleeps peacefully inside the mundane. With the twist of a quiet perception or the flick of a metaphor, he shows us the true terms of our being: frightening and glorious in equal parts." – Gregory Orr. "Elegant wit and humane generosity are the hallmarks of John McKernan's poems, and they make *Resurrection of the Dust* brim with energy, surprise and daring." – David Young.

Tennant S. McWilliams. *New Lights in the Valley: The Emergence of UAB*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007. 546 pages with photos. Hardback with dust jacket. \$39.95.

This is a history of the University of Alabama, Birmingham. The author is a dean there.

Robert Morgan. *Boone: A Biography*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2007. 516 pages with photos and maps. Hardback in dust jacket. \$29.95.

Truly one of the greatest literary achievements of recent years, this book is bound to soon be considered the definitive biography of Daniel Boone. It really will likely be considered for a Pulitzer this year. This is the first non-fiction foray by the author who has distinguished himself as a poet, story-writer and novelist while leading an impressive career as a professor at Cornell University. "This exquisitely-written, meticulously researched biography is as compelling and un-put-downable as a great novel....Not only does Daniel Boone come vividly alive in these pages, but also his wilderness landscape and historical era.... Robert Morgan has long been one of America's best fiction writers and poets; *Boone* is a striking confirmation that he is now one of our best biographers as well." – Ron Rash. "This is a riveting account of the real Boone. . . . The brilliant final chapter, unique among Boone biographies, reveals the impact of the frontiersman's legend on the American literary canon. . . . This is the best of all possible *Boone*'s." – Michael Kammen.

Ted Olson and Kathy H. Olson, editors. *James Still: Critical Essays on the Dean of Appalachian Literature*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007. 252 pages with photos. Trade paperback. \$35.00.

This collection of essays about one of the most admired figures in regional literature contains pieces by a veritable "who's who" of Appalachian Literature, both past and present: Carol Boggess, Ruel Foster, Fred Chappell, Jim Wayne Miller, Jeff Daniel Marion, Chris Green, Robert M. West, Diane Fisher, Dean Cadle, Hal Crowther and even Wendell Berry! It is the first book-length collection of James Still appreciation/criticism. Ted teaches at East Tennessee State University. His wife, Kathy, teaches at Appalachian State University.

Ann Pancake. *Strange As This Weather Has Been*. Emeryville, CA: 2007. 360 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.95.

Here it is! This is the long-awaited novel that depicts the way that mountaintop removal mining destroys not only mountains, but also families, and the mountain culture. "Ann Pancake is Appalachia's

Steinbeck. . . . Not since Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* has a writer so truly envisioned rural poverty, rural art, rural grace, but Pancake's book is utterly contemporary. This tragedy, a thousand miles of streams filled with toxic blast, while towering slurry builds to engender the next black flood, is ongoing tragedy. . ." - Jayne Anne Phillips. ". . . the honest complexity of both her characters and their sometimes beloved, othertimes estranged or forgotten landscape yields a hope which on the surface may seem unjustified, but ends up being as durable as the spark of life itself and then some. I was greatly impressed." - Rick Bass. "One of the bravest novels I have ever read." - Wendell Berry.

Jacob J. Podber. *The Electronic Front Porch: An Oral History of the Arrival of Modern Media in Rural Appalachia and the Melungeon Community*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2007. 166 pages with map. Hardback with dust jacket. \$35.00.

After four introductory chapters, this book gets right into presenting segments of oral history interviews that directly address first the impact of radio and then of television and then of the internet on both rural Appalachia and the Melungeon community. ". . . A work that is at once important and valuable to scholars and accessible and revealing to the general reader." - Michael C. Keith.

Rob Riggan. *The Blackstone Commentaries*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2007. 340 pages. Trade paperback. \$16.95.

From a 1959 Prologue to a 1973 Epilogue, a variety of characters tell the story, in their own voices, of Blackstone County Sheriff Charlie Dugan's investigation of a shooting, his re-election campaign, and his reassessment of the realities he faces in the mountains of North Carolina. "*The Blackstone Commentaries* is a compelling novel about one man's attempt to bring a measure of justice to an unjust town. Rob Riggan is a natural storyteller, and his depiction of small-town life is masterful." - Ron Rash. "*The Blackstone Commentaries* is an action-packed yet poetic look at the modern South in all its complexities. Beauty and warts are exposed here, and Riggan does an excellent job of helping the reader to understand this vibrant and complicated culture while also supplying a page-turner of a novel that never lets up on the tension from page one."

– Silas House. The author has been a medic in Vietnam, a small-town policeman, a newspaper reporter and a television producer. He lives in Massachusetts.

Joe Shannon. *My Old Gray Coat*. Boone: Parkway Publishers, Inc., 2007. 95 pages. Trade paperback. \$14.95.

The author lives in Boone, North Carolina, where he directs Mountainhome Music, which honors performers of the Appalachian Region. This book is a collection of stories he has told at concerts.

Anne Shelby. *The Adventures of Molly Whuppie and Other Appalachian Folktales*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. 88 pages with illustrations. Hardback with dust jacket. \$14.95.

Here are fourteen traditional Appalachian folktales told with a contemporary sensibility and sensitivity. Nine of them feature Molly Whuppie, a feminine character from traditional folklore. The author lives in Clay County, Kentucky, and is a performer of folk and topical music and the author of picture books for children as well as books of poetry and essays.

Debra Leigh Smith, Sandra Chastain, Virginia Ellis, Debra Dixon and Martha Crockett. *At Home in Mossy Creek*. Dahlonega, GA: Bellebooks, 2007. 287 pages with illustrations and recipes. Trade paperback. \$14.95.

Not content to be one of the most popular contemporary North Georgia novelists, Deborah Smith has created her own line of books and recruited some of her favorite southern authors to collaborate in creating a whole series of books set in the fictional town of Mossy Creek which seems a whole lot like Smith's hometown of Dahlonega, Georgia. This is Book Six of the Mossy Creek Hometown Series, set around Valentine's Day and featured an inter-connected batch of holiday romances. Is the series "serious" or is it "parody"? Who knows, *and* who cares?

Pamela Steele. *Paper Bird*. La Grande: Wordcraft of Oregon, 2007. 76 pages. Trade paperback. \$12.00.

Pamela Steel was born in her grandfather's house on the banks of Laurel Creek in Fayette County, West Virginia. She now lives on an Indian Reservation in Oregon, but many of the poems here hark back to her West Virginia youth. "Steele's poems are honest and visceral. They get under the skin and instruct us on how to squeeze our eyes tight and see the real beauty in the world. An important collection of love letters to everything that bleeds." – Frank X Walker.

Jan Watson. *Willow Springs: A Novel*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 385 pages. Trade paperback. \$12.99.

This is the story of Cooper Brown's difficult adjustment to living in Lexington, Kentucky, after a happy childhood on Troublesome Creek in Eastern Kentucky. A Registered Nurse for a quarter century, the author, like her protagonist, is a native of the Troublesome Creek watershed living in Lexington. Her first novel, *Troublesome Creek* won the 2004 Jerry B. Jenkins Christian Writers Guild Operation First Novel.

Robert West. *Out of Hand*. Louisville: Scierter Press, 2007. 22 pages. Stablebound paperback. \$9.25.

Robert West grew up in Henderson County, North Carolina, and is now an English professor in Mississippi. A bunch of these poems are groups of witty two-liners, like: "The Pornographer/ His art? To make a spectacle/ of this, then that, receptable." Or from "A Poetry Reviewer's Pocket Manual," "Remember there's a mask on every I./ You can't tell candor from a well-wrought lie."

Robert W. Witt. *Approaching New Bethel*. Frederick: Publish America, 2007. 167 pages. Trade paperback. \$19.95.

This novel is set in a fictional Kentucky town and begins with the suicide of the protagonist. Flashbacks portray the events leading up to her fatal decision. The author is the editor of *The Chaffin Journal* who serves on the English faculty at Eastern Kentucky University.

Jack Wright, Producer. *Music of Coal: Mining Songs from the Appalachian Coalfields*. Big Stone Gap: Lonesome Records & Publishing, 2007. 69 pages with Introduction by Jack Wright, Foreword by Jon Lohman, “Sanctus” by Archie Green, and two CDs. Hardback with pictorial cover. \$35.00.

What a treasure this is! It IS a book, but it could just as easily been seen as two spectacular CDs with extensive, profusely illustrated, liner notes in hardback book form! This is simply the culmination of decades of research and production work, incorporating the climactic achievements of many hard-fought careers. It is a must-have for anyone who cares about coal mining or music.

Jason F. Wright. *The Wednesday Letters*. Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 2007. 280 pages. Hardback with dust jacket. \$19.95.

After thirty-nine years of marriage, both partners in a Shenandoah Valley Bed & Breakfast die together. This is the story of the letters that the husband wrote his wife every Wednesday of their marriage, their discovery by their surviving children, the secrets the letters revealed and the impact of those secrets on the lives of the survivors. The author is a Fox News political commentator whose first book was the best-seller, *Christmas Jars*. He moved his family to the Shenandoah Valley after spending time there getting background for this novel.



REPRINTS

Fred Brown and Jeanne McDonald. *The Serpent Handlers: Three Families and Their Faith*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, a 2007 reprint of a 2000 release. 356 pages with photos and family tree. Trade paperback. \$15.95.

This is simply one of the best, most empathetic, treatments of serpent handling created by a husband-wife team of East Tennessee writers, both of whom have distinguished themselves with their individual books.

Robert J. Conley. *Cherokee Medicine Man: The Life and Work of a Modern-Day Healer*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, a 2007 reprint of a 2005 release. 154 pages. Trade paperback. \$14.95.

Robert Conley, a member of the Western Band of the Cherokee Nation, is the most prolific and one of the most accomplished Cherokee writers ever. His works include the official history of the Nation and many novels as well as poetry and stories. This story of the life and work of Little Bear tells not only of his work in Oklahoma, but also of the medical traditions that were brought there along the Trail of Tears.

George Ella Lyon. *Catalpa*. Nicholasville, KY: Wind Publications, a 2007 reprint of a 1993 publication. 69 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.00.

George Ella Lyon is one of the most beloved writers of Eastern Kentucky. A master of the children's picture book, a prominent youth novelist, but always the poet, this witty and wise collection is a sheer delight. A native of Harlan, she has lived in Lexington most of her adult life.

Robert Morgan. *Brave Enemies: A Novel of the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, a 2007 reprint of a 2003 release. 317 pages with map and discussion guide. Trade paperback. \$13.95.

Publishers Weekly's starred review called this a "gripping story of love and desperation." *Entertainment Weekly* chimed in, "With a plot that tears through the Carolina underbrush like a spooked rabbit, Morgan's novel of the American Revolution traces the gender-switching drama of Josie Summers, a pioneer girl raised in the same hardscrabble landscape of his 1999 bestseller, *Gap Creek*. The *Raleigh News and Observer* bragged on its "indelible sense of time and place." *The New York Times* trumped all the critics with "At this finest, his stripped-down and almost primitive sentences burn with the raw, lonesome pathos of Hank Williams' best songs." Robert Morgan grew up in Henderson County, North Carolina. A prolific poet, story writer and novelist, he teaches at Cornell University.

Charles C. Royce. *The Cherokee Nation*. Edison, NJ: Transaction Books, a 2007 reprint of a 1975 release. 272 pages with preface by Herman J. Viola, maps and photos. Trade paperback. \$31.95.

Charles Royce (1845–1923) became an ethnologist for the Bureau of Ethnology in 1883, and this work was first published as the Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau. This invaluable book provides the full text of nineteen treaties between the Cherokee and the United States penned between the years 1785 and 1868. Then it provides some historical context for each. The book is simply crucial for any in-depth appreciation of these treaties and their impact, without which a deeper understanding of Cherokee history is difficult if not impossible.

Lee Smith. *On Agate Hill*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, a 2007 reprint of a 2006 release. 384 pages with a conversation with the author and a reading and discussion guide. Trade paperback. \$13.95.

Lee Smith is clearly one of the most accomplished contemporary novelists of the Southern Appalachians. This, her latest, tells the story of a young woman from a Piedmont, North Carolina, plantation who works as a teacher in the mountains. "With lyric intensity . . . inventive storytelling . . . Lee Smith imagines the life of an orphan girl growing up in the post–Civil War South." – *The New York Times*. "Lee Smith is a whopper of a storyteller whose tales involve, enmesh, enthrall readers

from the opening sentence to the final page.” – *The Roanoke Times*. “*On Agate Hill* is a great example of how a tale with traditional Appalachian tones can also work as a modern, psychological, shifting, organic novel . . . Lee Smith’s creation is an inventive original.” – *Asheville Citizen-Times*.



CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Christopher Canyon. *John Denver's Grandma's Feather Bed*. Nevada City, CA: Dawn Publications, 2007. 29 pages with illustrations, musical score and CD. Hardback with dust jacket. \$19.95.

This delightful song simply jumps into life with Canyon's vivacious drawings. The CD is a fabulous bonus. "It just makes sense—John Denver and kids." – Vince Gill.

Sally M. Keehn. *Magpie Gabbard and the Quest for the Buried Moon*. New York: Philomel Books, 2007. 198 pages. Hardback with dust jacket. \$16.99.

The protagonist tells the readers on the jacket flap, "I don't know, though, if you have heard about how us Gabbards and Sizemores have been feuding or how both us feuding families put aside our considerable differences to outthink the Cob Hollow Goblins, and to save the moon. Dear readers, it was no easy matter. If this sounds like a tall tale, you might be right, but then again, you may be confronting Gabbard truth—and that is something to think about." The author is a veteran writer of children's books who was inspired to write this book by a trip to Hensley Settlement in Kentucky.

Lester L. Laminack. *Snow Day!* Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, 2007. 29 pages with illustrations by Adam Gustavson. Hardback with dust jacket. \$16.95.

Lester Laminack is professor emeritus at Western Carolina University. The topic of this picture book is certainly dear to the hearts of anyone who has ever attended—or worked at—a school! Kids will love the surprise ending.

