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Lunsford Festival
On October 5-6

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Special Luncheons For Seniors

Older Americans from the Spring Creek, Laurel and Ebbs Chapel (Upper Laurel) communities were treated with a special luncheon last week, sponsored by the Madison County nutrition program, according to Dorothy B. Shupe, supervisor.

The meal was prepared by Maria Cox, Sue Pangle and Wavel Seay. It consisted of ham, cheese, lettuce and tomato on a bun, potato chips, green beans, cantaloupe, a brownie cookie, and tea, coffee or lemonade.

The meal was also sponsored by the Madison County Commissioners, the Madison County Council on Aging and the existing meal sites at Marshall, Mars Hill, Hot Springs and Greater Ivy.

Interest in obtaining a meal site for these communities is very high. Locations for these sites would be in the old home economics room at Spring Creek school and the Upper Laurel Community Center in the old Ebbs Chapel school. So far, the Laurel community has not found a suitable place for a meal site. Their meal was enjoyed in the Belva Baptist Church. The biggest problem of all is transportation for the participants.

Leaders who worked diligently to do the leg work at the luncheons were Anna Fox and Vernon Ponder at Upper Laurel; Sue Pangle, William "Bill" Moore, and Larry Plommons at Spring Creek and Oleta Shelton and Rena Shelton at Laurel.

"We hope to do more of these meals in the future, as supplies hold, for the people of these communities," Mrs. Shupe said.



SKY-HIGH CANE towers above Roy Roberts, who says that four to five of the

rows around him will yield about 80 gallons of juice.

Making Country Molasses "Preserving A Heritage Passed Down To Us"

Woodrow Ramsey tipped his engineers cap back a half-inch, waggled a bent finger through some sticky green syrup, and popped the finger into his mouth. A look of satisfaction spread across his face. "That's the stuff, buddy," he said. "That's country molasses."

It was the end of a long day; every day spent making sorghum molasses is a long one. But it had been worth it. After a lot of boiling and stirring, some 80 gallons of cane juice had shrunk to eight gallons of the finest sweet eating material Appalachia

has to offer.

And there was more to come. The Ramseys' sorghum patch had already yielded up eight batches of syrup, and another five batches worth remained to be cut.

Roy Roberts took me over to the patch and explained how they did it. Roy is one of a group of four people who have been making molasses together for several years now: Woodrow Ramsey; his wife, Mabel Ramsey; Mabel's brother, Roy Roberts; and Roy's wife, Odessa Roberts.

"We put in I guess six-tenths of an acre here," said Roy, of-

fering a ripe persimmon from a tree at the edge of the sorghum plot. "The important thing is not to put in too much seed when you plant; just a pinch. The rest of the seed is good food. We feed it to the ducks. Now, about four to five rows like that," he pointed at rows about 30 feet long - "will squeeze down to about 80 gallons of juice. We cut the cane by hand and just haul it over to the grinder there. We had a good crop this year, with all that rain."

He broke off a stalk and gave a sample of the mild-sweet sap, which tastes similar to maple sap. We walked over to the old grinder, which Woodrow Ramsey had found several years ago. It was made long ago by the Chattanooga Plow Co., and its grooved rollers are just suited to squeezing the juice out of cane and guiding it down to a spout. After flowing through a cheesecloth filter the juice flowed through a flexible pipe about 10 feet to a bucket next to the big vat where it was being boiled down into syrup.

The vat itself is made of galvanized tin; the group hopes to get a stainless steel vat next year, which is easier to clean and to keep free of corrosion. Odessa Roberts was tending the vat, scooping off the scum as it bubbled to the top and plopping it into a bucket. The heat was considerable, and the sweet sorghum vapor seemed to fill the little shelter around the vat.

"Whew," said Odessa after a go-round with the scoop. "I'm going to sit down a minute. That work makes you old." She used to work at the Marshall Post Office, she and Roy now run the Old Mill Wheel on the Laurel River.

Roy has been making molasses ever since he was a boy and seemed to enjoy every minute of it. "We'll get between 90 and 100 gallons of

molasses this year," said Roy. "We'll use some of it ourselves and sell the rest."

He slipped a thermometer onto a metal bar to take the temperature of the bubbling juice. Everyone crowded 'round; the reading was 217 degrees. At 223 it would be done. The pine logs blazed fiercely under the downhill end of the vat and the temperature climbed steadily upward.

"That's it," shouted Roy finally. "That's 223. We've got molasses!" He and Woodrow took hold of the wooden handles at each end of the vat and lifted the whole rig off and away from the fire. They carried it onto the lawn, where Mabel and Odessa ladled it through another swatch of cheesecloth and into buckets. At the same time everyone swiped fingerloads of foamy syrup from the bottom of the vat.

"There's still some good sopping in there," said Mabel Ramsey as she wrung out the cheesecloth. "Doesn't anyone want more sopping? I'll tell you what's good - that's popcorn balls, all wadded up and soaked in molasses. That's what we used to eat when I was growing up. We didn't have any Hardee's and MacDonald's then."

"And another thing was sweet potato butter. Oh, my. We used molasses for everything instead of sugar; we couldn't afford sugar. That's one reason why old people are so healthy around here."

She paused to catch her breath and sop a little. Everyone had worked hard. "Now that's a days' work,"

said Mabel; "from 8 in the morning until nearly 4. Now we're selling this for \$14 a gallon and people say we're getting rich. Rich! We're not getting minimum wage, that I know about."

Why, then, do they bother?

(Continued on 2)



MABEL RAMSEY AND ODESSA ROBERTS pour the finished product into buckets.

A Letter From Governor Hunt: Marshall Wins Award

Sooner than expected, Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. announced this week that Marshall has won the award it worked so hard for. In a letter to Mayor Lawrence Ponder, received Oct. 1, Gov. Hunt wrote: "I am happy to announce to you and the citizens of Marshall that your community has been approved to receive the Community of Excellence Award."

Judges from the state Department of Commerce and other leaders described the economic features of the town and led them on a tour of the greater Marshall area. At that time, the head of the judging committee, Jack Stuart, hinted that Marshall would indeed receive the coveted award.

"I was very impressed by the hard work and positive attitude of everyone here," said Stuart after a closed-door meeting with his fellow judges. "It's a very sincere feeling you've projected to the people who might think of coming here."

The "people who might think of coming here" are, hopefully, small industries that would bolster Marshall's economy by providing more local jobs, especially for male workers.

"This award," said Mayor Ponder after receiving the governor's letter, "will mean increased activity on the part of the state people to encourage industries to locate here. Because of the program we got together for the judges, the Department of Commerce has a pretty good idea what's available here for industry, and what kinds of industry we want here. It wouldn't make any sense for the state people to look for a great big plant employing five or 10 thousand people, needing lots of water or level ground. So now they know that what we can handle would have to be far smaller, and need less water, and put out a minimal amount of pollution."

"Another thing about this award is that it shows how the people of Marshall are really

united behind the town. That really came through when the judges were here; the townfolk themselves got up and did the talking."

The town is planning to celebrate winning the award, featuring a harpsicord concert and a return of the slide show for the members of the community. The date has not yet been determined.

Meanwhile, Marshall can finally take a deep collective breath and bask in the praise of the governor. His letter concluded "Your community is to be commended for its willingness in devoting the time and effort required to prepare for economic growth. Let's hope that the partnership between state government and community leaders will result in reaping many benefits for the state."

"I look forward to presenting this award to you and citizens of Marshall at our Economic Development Conference on Nov. 15."

"Congratulations on a job well done."

Harrel Quits As Chief Of Social Agency

Donald F. Harrell, director of the Madison County Social Services Department, has announced his resignation, effective Oct. 15, according to Zeno Ponder, a member of the agency's board of directors.

Ponder said Harrell stated in a letter to him Saturday that he was resigning for personal reasons.

County Housing Units Get \$39,732

The Northwest Regional Housing Authority in Madison County has been awarded \$39,732, congressman Lamar Guder announced last week.

The contracts were approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Develop-

ment. The funds will be used to finance existing Section 8 housing.

At the same time, it was announced that Mountain Projects Inc. of Haywood County received \$63,816 for 34 existing housing units.

Marshall Couple Gives Two Scholarships To Mars Hill



JOHN AND LILLIAN CORBETT

Two \$1,000 scholarships in church music have been endowed at Mars Hill College by Lillian and John O. Corbett of Marshall, according to James R. Cox, director of development at the Baptist related school.

"This significant gift will enable the college to continue to provide assistance to students who possess outstanding musical ability and intellectual excellence," stated Cox in announcing the gift. "We are grateful to the Corbetts for their support and generosity."

The Corbetts are alumni of Mars Hill, members of the Class of 1934. Mrs. Corbett continued her education at Agnes Scott College, while he graduated from Clemson. They returned to Marshall in 1937 when Corbett became manager of Service Motor Sales, eventually becoming owner and operator of the business, which is the local

Ford dealership. Mrs. Corbett worked for a number of years as a bookkeeper at the Citizens Bank, which her parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. Arthur W. Whitehurst, helped found, and which became part of the Wachovia chain several years ago.

The Corbetts have been active in civic, youth, and church activities. Corbett is or has been a member of the Optimist Club, director of the March of Dimes efforts in Marshall, president of the Marshall Merchants Association, president of the Civitan Club and lieutenant governor of the state Civitan organization, chairman of the Marshall Boy Scout Council, a deacon in the Marshall Baptist Church, and has several terms on the Mars Hill College board of trustees.

He is presently chairman of the board of directors of French Broad EMC.

Mrs. Corbett has been president and vice president of the Marshall P.T.A., is a member of the Marshall Girl Scout Troop Committee, the Marshall Book Club, and is organist at the Marshall Baptist Church.

The scholarships they have endowed will be awarded to two students selected on the basis of scholastic and artistic achievements and potential, personal integrity, evidence of moral force and character with a capacity to lend through service to church and community, and financial need. The students selected must also be planning to major in a church related vocation in music at Mars Hill and may renew the scholarship during their tenure as a student provided their performance is maintained at a high level and their academic scholarship does not drop below a 2.0 average - a "B" on Mars Hill's 4-point grading system. The first awards will be announced on Pioneer Day, May 1980.

Judge Sends Jury Home; Riddle Case Is Not Resolved

On Jan. 14, in a swirl of events so clouded and uncertain that they may never be clearly understood, a .38 revolver was fired in the bedroom of Lula Kate Riddle, 46, hitting her in the forehead and killing her. Billy Riddle, now 22, her oldest son, was arrested for the killing and charged with murder.

Billy was held in custody until last week, when finally his case came to trial, before Superior Court Judge Edwin S. Preston Jr. By this time the indictment, which had called for a charge of first-degree murder, had been lessened by the state to second-degree murder. The judge had considered the unusual case, and the unhappy people involved, and further amended the charge to voluntary manslaughter.

On Sept. 26, after two days of testimony, the jury was sent out at 2:27 p.m. to decide Billy Riddle's fate. They returned undecided; 10 jurors thought Billy should not be punished at all on the basis of the evidence, and two thought he should be. The judge sent them back. Still later, they returned, their positions unchanged: a mistrial was declared. After nearly eight months in a state of arrest, Billy Riddle was still not to learn his fate. And if the district attorney so decides, Billy could face a brand new trial sometime in the future.

The jury's difficulty is not hard to understand, given the unusual nature of the case. As the judge summarized it to the jury, there were no eyewitnesses; there was no direct evidence. There was only the testimony of Billy himself, and that testimony seemed to conflict with earlier statements made to Sheriff E.Y. Ponder and another witness.

Lula Kate Riddle lived in a

remote seven-room log house off Rector's Corner Road, across the river from Marshall. On the night of Jan. 13, she was joined by her husband, McKinley; Billy's cousin, Darlene; his Aunt Hazel; two other sons; and a daughter. There were two guns in the house: the .38 revolver and a rifle. Just after midnight, when everyone was getting ready for bed, Billy was seen getting the revolver, then was seen alone with his mother in her bedroom. Then he came out of the room, went to the house of a neighbor, and told him that his father had killed his mother.

Subsequently, according to the judge, Billy had told the sheriff three stories about what had happened: 1) his father had killed his mother; 2) his father had hit Billy's hand or arm or gun, causing the gun to fire; and 3) his father had caused him to drop the gun, which then discharged, killing his mother.

When Billy was speaking with the sheriff, he pulled the revolver out from under the mattress of his mother's bed and gave it to the sheriff.

The judge also summarized Billy's own testimony of the previous day. Billy said he had drunk about two-and-a-half cans of beer during the evening, while the family was watching wrestling matches on television. After the matches were over, everyone went to Lula Kate's bedroom, where there was some horseplay; everyone was having a good time, not quarreling. She was lying on the bed. She asked Billy to get the revolver; she said she was afraid. He was, he said, placing the .38 on the dresser at the head of the bed when his mother lunged at his father in play; his father leaped backward, struck Billy's arm or hand or the gun, knocked the hammer back,

and the gun went off. When he saw blood on his mother's face he went for help, concealing the gun in the bed so no one would get hurt.

"If you think that Billy Riddle intentionally shot her with the .38" said the judge to the jury, "thereby causing her death, then return a verdict of voluntary manslaughter. If not, if you think he caused her death by criminal negligence - and by this I mean more than mere carelessness, I mean gross recklessness, heedless indifference to the safety of others - then return a verdict of involuntary manslaughter. If you find him guilty of neither of these things, then return a verdict of not guilty."

The jury could agree on none of these choices, and the judge sent them home. Thus the decision of whether to call for another trial now rests with the district attorney's office.

It is not hard to understand the jury's difficulty in this case. Both defense lawyer Joseph Huff and state prosecutor Tom Ruscher said several times that Billy Riddle is not an articulate man, nor intelligent, nor fortunate in the circumstances life has brought him. Prosecutor Ruscher described the killing as "a tragic occurrence in a household where unfortunately the people are not the most fluent and educated and have trouble making themselves understood." He even went so far as to tell the jury that this case might not ever be decided on this earth, in this life; that the facts of the case are so confused and sad that it would not be easy to attach the label "murder" to them.

"If you believe all that you have heard today," Ruscher concluded, "fine, then find him not guilty. I have nothing personal in this case."