

THE NEWS RECORD

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On the Inside . . .
Special 'Ski Night'
For County Residents
... Turn To Page 3

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NOLA BRIGGS at home

Nola Briggs Enjoys Her 100th Birthday

Nola Briggs, a strong and spirited lady who was born a century ago in Madison County, celebrated her 100th birthday Sunday amid friends, relatives — and a letter of congratulations from President Jimmy Carter.

Seated in the wheelchair that has been her daytime home for the past 12 years, she greeted dozens of well-wishers all weekend at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Briggs, her son and daughter-in-law, on Crooked Creek Road.

Her eyesight is poor now, and her hearing has grown faint, but her voice is clear and her memory both powerful and sharp. Her brown eyes sparkle with pleasure when she talks, which she loves to do.

"The reason I get along so well," she said to one visitor, "is that people like me so much."

No one who talks with her could dispute that. Nor could they fail to admire the strength of a person who has

seen and done as much as Nola Briggs. She was born in a three-room log house near Big Bald, far up Upper Laurel, on a 300-acre farm beside Punccheon Fork. Her father, John Banks, and her mother, Cordella English, were also raised on Punccheon Fork. On the farm they grew corn and wheat and bred cattle, sheep, hogs, chickens and ducks. Everyone worked hard and enjoyed it.

Nola's specialty was spinning wool, which she learned to do when she was 12 years old. She later took up sewing, making all the quilts she would need when she got married.

She did just that when she was 18, to Willard Briggs. Willard built a house on Crooked Creek, where they moved and where she has lived ever since. Her husband died 27 years ago, and she moved in with her son. Of her five sisters and two brothers, only she and one brother are living.

"I've got a baby brother, 92," she says. "He's been in a

nursing home for some time."

In addition to Walter Briggs, she has one other child, Mae Jarvis, who also lives in Mars Hill. She has had eight grandchildren: Eloise Marion, Nell Yates and Hilda Warner of Thomasville, Lloyd Briggs of Pennsylvania, Larry Jarvis of Asheville, Betty Grace Clements of Georgia, Doris Roberts of Mars Hill and Harold Roberts of Crooked Creek Road. Harold Roberts died last year, a loss Mrs. Briggs feels deeply. "He was a mighty good help here," she said. "We miss him powerful."

She celebrated last weekend amid the cards and good wishes of her two children, eight grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren and seven great-great-grandchildren.

And the birthday message from Jimmy Carter: "I am pleased to send you my congratulations as you celebrate your 100th birthday. I hope that the year ahead will be especially happy."

'Mother' Says That Alcohol Is The Fuel For The Future

By ALAN ANDERSON

Since 1978, researchers at The Mother Earth News have been trying to show that straight alcohol — not gasohol — is the right fuel for the times.

According to this Hendersonville-based organization, which publishes the magazine The Mother Earth News, they have spent some \$300,000 on alcohol research — testing mash formulas, studying distillation processes, designing apparatus, converting engines, and making the alcohol itself.

And holding seminars on the subject. They held one last week at their new 600-acre research and meeting facility outside Hendersonville, charging \$40 a head for seven hours of lectures by their chief alcohol researchers. More than 800 people went to this seminar, including myself, and I concluded that this seminar series must be extraordinarily successful.

"Mother" — this is the way the magazine/group refers to itself — must think so too, since "she" is holding no fewer than 23 of them this year, five of them lasting three days. On such topics as earth-sheltered homes, residential solar systems, small hydroelectric systems, small windpower systems, solar greenhouses, log cabin construction, wholistic gardening, the self-sufficient homestead, raising backyard livestock, methane production, steam engines, and silviculture ("grow the right trees and they'll feed, clothe, shelter, comfort, heat, cool, and house you for the rest of your life.")

Mother is nothing if not a crusader in the things she believes in, and alcohol is high on its list of favorites. I spoke briefly with David Davidowitz, the plant manager at the new site, who echoed the rationale for alcohol research I had already seen several times in the magazine.

"It's the best way to get free of the Arabs," he said. "The price of oil isn't going anywhere but up, and they could cut it off altogether any time they want. It's only a matter of time."

The seminar group was so large that it was split in two sections. Our speaker was

John Vogel, a John Travolta look-alike who is head of alcohol research at Mother's and who made a convincing case for putting alcohol in your gas tank. He gave three reasons why he prefers it over gasoline: 1) Almost anyone can make it, with a minimum of equipment; 2) It is "almost nonpolluting" when burned (there are questions about nitrous oxides and aldehydes) and it is safe and easy to handle; 3) the cost of converting traditional car engines is minimal — sometimes simply an adjustment of carburetor jets.

Powering cars, trucks, and tractors with alcohol is not a new idea, of course. The first practical internal combustion engine, patented by Nikolaus Otto in 1877, ran on alcohol — at a time when there was no gasoline. The Model A Ford, produced from 1928 to 1931, was designed to burn a variety of fuels, one of which was alcohol. Gradually, however, the organized petroleum producers lobbied so successfully that the mostly independent, farm-based alcohol producers went out of business.

Why not gasohol? Gasohol is primarily gasoline — 80 or 90 percent — so that our gasoline shortage problem remains. And gasohol is made with 200-proof alcohol — 100 percent — and this purity is almost impossible to achieve on the farm.

Why not gasoline and home-brewed alcohol? Because most "home-made" alcohol still has some water in it — from 8 to 15 percent — and water doesn't mix with gasoline. It sinks to the bottom and would cause freezing and vapor-lock problems in a car. The straight alcohol-water mixture, however, 180-190 proof, burns just fine — without gasoline. Mother's researchers even say the small amount of water, which expands as steam, makes it burn better than pure alcohol.

Alcohol can be made out of most any crop material, from grains to grapes. The moonshiner's common choice of corn is a good one because corn has a high starch content and a fairly low price.

In terms of average yield of alcohol per acre, the most efficient crops are sugar cane, sugar beets, Jerusalem artichokes, potatoes, sweet

potatoes, apples, dates, carrots, raisins, yams, grapes, corn, peaches, and prunes, in that order.

In terms of average yield of alcohol per ton of raw material, the best crops are wheat, corn, buckwheat, raisins, grain sorghum, rice, barley, dates, rye, prunes, molasses, sorghum cane, oats, figs, and sweet potatoes. (Notice the difference in water content.)

John Vogel, the alcohol expert, used corn as his example in explaining the five basic steps in making ethyl alcohol:

—Milling: The corn must be shelled, cleaned, and ground into a fine meal (not flour), the same as feed for livestock. This is necessary because alcohol production is a chemical process, and if all the corn is to react, it must be in pieces small enough for the enzymes and yeast cells to get at them.

—Cooking: Heat about 28-30 gallons of water for each bushel of corn. When the temperature reaches 150°F, slowly add the ground corn, stirring constantly (it's easier to rig an automatic stirrer).

Now the pH (acid-base balance) must be measured with a simple device called a hydrometer, and adjusted if not between 5.5 and 7.0. Add enzymes available commercially that help break down the corn starch into sugar. The cooking itself is essential to soften individual starch capsules so the enzymes can get at them. Bring the mash to a boil and let it roll for 30 minutes; if the enzymes are working, it should become much thinner. Let mash cool to 140 degrees, adjust pH to 3.8

(Continued on Page 8)



THIS PORTABLE STILL, designed and built by researchers at The Mother Earth News, uses a 275-gallon tank and a column six inches in diameter and 20 feet tall

to produce eight gallons of alcohol fuel per hour. The researchers hope to have a large model with two columns built by this summer that will yield 22 gallons per hour.

Bailey Mountain Cloggers Return From Florida Trip



THE CLOGGERS IN ACTION: From left to right, Kelley Vaughn, Cheryl Hall, Mark Moore, Dean Dalrymple, Ron Andrews (partly hidden), David Glover, Brenda Snyder and Roger Ball (partly

hidden). Not pictured are James Anderson, Faela Maney, Carolyn Gwinn, Mark Harris, Stormy Honeycutt, Sherry Beck, James Wagner, and Jane Criminger.

The Bailey Mountain Cloggers have just returned from a 10-day tour of Florida where they gave 16 lively performances to high school and college audiences.

This group, begun four years ago by Mars Hill College students, goes on tour once a year, performing at other times throughout the area for schools, services clubs, programs and festivals.

"This group really loves to perform," says Lewis Miller, the college librarian and faculty advisor to the group. "You can see it in their faces when they perform. And this is something the audiences pick up on. I went with them on the tour, and before each performance I would give a little pep talk to the audience, telling them that we liked them to clap and holler along with the dancing."

"I keep telling people that clogging emphasizes self-expression and freedom, and this is something the audiences respond to. A lot of the schools we went to are used to having a speaker or some pro-

gram where they sit passively without getting involved. So the chance to yell and clap was just what they wanted.

"At one school, Cardinal Gibbons High School in Fort Lauderdale, the student government president came out and presented everyone with T-shirts. At another, South Brevard High in Hollywood, we were practically mobbed by autograph seekers!"

The troupe visited the towns of Titusville, Garden, Cocoa, Fort Pierce, Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood during the tour, demonstrating a number of dance styles at each performance. They opened each show with coordinated precision steps, then moved into freestyle routines. Then came the most popular exercise — the "Shine Line," steps that have been adapted from various dances. In one, for example, dancer Ron Andrews slings Brenda Snyder around his back and then around again. Finally the dancers break up and move into the audience to pick out volunteer

dancers.

The Bailey Mountain Cloggers were organized by students who had been on clogging teams in elementary schools and/or high schools in the region and who wanted to continue dancing. They founded the group on their own and arranged costumes and scheduled performances. Then the Southern Appalachian Center decided to provide some additional support, enabling them to go on tour. And this year the ladies of the Opportunity Corp. made them new costumes.

"Clogging is inherited from Scottish and Irish flings and jigs," said Don Anderson, director of the Center for Appalachian Studies. "The people in the mountains made modifications, and you can see these changes easily enough. The clogging program fits in very well with our goal at the center to continue and share the cultural traditions of the area. The students work hard and they get credit for participating. It is a way for the college to affirm its commitment to the region."

Thieves Steal 23 Guns

From Joe's

Thieves broke into Joe's Junque shop on Main Street in Marshall on Sunday and stole 23 guns valued at \$1,250.

The guns were all shotguns and rifles. Nothing else appeared to be missing, and no damage was done inside the store.

The robber or robbers entered by cutting the large padlock on the front door, according to owner Joe Eads, then prizing off a second lock and jimmying the door to get past a third lock. Eads says that this is the third time someone has broken into his store.

Marshall policeman Warren Edwards said that no one has been arrested in connection with the crime, "but we're still looking into a couple of leads."

Edwards said that the padlock on the door was very large and heavy, so that powerful bolt cutters would have been used to cut through it.