

# Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech

of SOUTHERN APPALACHIA  
with Rogers Whitener

Send your suggestions for column material to Rogers Whitener, Box 376, Boone, N. C. 28601.



Recently I ended an installment of Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech by asking readers to pass on information about herb-gathering or *varbing*, especially the digging of ginseng or *sang*. My particular interest was to discover in what areas of the Appalachian ginseng is still being dug and whether a fair number of mountain people are still prospecting for the golden root.

Letters immediately began pouring in from Wilkes, Watauga, Avery, Yancey, Burke, and Ashe Counties in Western North Carolina, from numerous locations in Eastern Tennessee, and from several addresses in Virginia. Respondents included regular hunters of mature wild sang roots, those who transplant small sang plants into their own patch for cultivation, domestic seed cultivators, hobby and vacation herbalists.

Some professed to have "an eye like a hawk" for locating wild sang; others needed descriptions of the plant at various seasons in order to aid their search. Some wild root diggers were eager to learn more about cultivated or tame ginseng. Somewhat typical is a letter from Herman Feagins of Kingsport, Tennessee.

"Dear Sir: Can you please send me some information on ginseng. I have dug lots of sang in my past, but I have never raised any. When do you sow it? How long does it take to make itself? Where is the best place to sow and where can I buy seeds. Also do you have a list of other roots and herbs that can be sold?"

Both an experienced digger and cultivator of ginseng is Mr. M. R. Pittillo of Rt. 7, Morganton, N. C. But apparently he has found that squirrels, too, have discovered the magic of sang—or sang seed.

"Dear Whitener I am a regular herb digger of all kinds

when the price allows or pays for digging and drying.

"I do not want to buy any seed because I have a large patch where I gather my own seed. I have a patch which will be seven years old this fall and which I want to dig and sell. The grey squirrels ate all my seed last fall just before the seed turned red. Year before last I planted two quarts of seed, and I have a patch of small plants now—or when it comes up this spring."

A number of readers apparently assumed from my earlier column that I run an herb market and consider myself an authority on the growing and gathering of seeds, roots, and leaves. Far from it. I am merely a curious person trying to find out about mountain work, customs and traditions that have carried into the present.

Since Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech does exist, however, and since it has opened up a can of worms on the sang question, I'll be happy to provide answers when I can. Perhaps readers of this column will help by sending in information about

the proper conditions and procedures for raising tame ginseng, what other herbs may be sold where, and what prices they were bringing the last time they were sold.

As a starter here are names of a few Appalachian herb markets (perhaps readers can supply the names of additional ones): Wilcox Drug Company, Boone, N. C.; Smokey Mountain Drug Company, Bristol, Tenn.; Lowe's Fur and Herb Company, N. Wilkesboro, N. C.; and Wilcox Drug Company, Pikeville, Ky. There is also a large market at Princeton, W. Virginia, but I do not know its name. I suspect that any of the companies can supply herb lists and prices.

Herb and seed ads often appear in the N. C. Department of Agriculture *Agricultural Review*, and I am sure that agricultural departments in other states provide information on the growing, gathering and marketing of herbs.

More about *varbing* in a future column. Please send responses to this column to me at Box 376, Boone, N. C. 28607.

## Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

Tuesday evening, I noted a group of young people and two adults picking up beer cans, pop bottles, and other unsightly debris from the roadside of 197 near the Bolens Creek turnoff. The group of volunteers was from the Bolens Creek Baptist Church.

Wednesday morning, I drove the same road and noted not one can or bottle anywhere on Bolens Creek Road or 197 from Bolens Creek Road to Burnsville.

The warm regard I hold for young people, who in this fashion, demonstrate so vividly their love of the beauty of this countryside counterpoints the loathing most of us feel for the unthinking scum who desecrate our roadsides in such an unthinking manner.

Yours most sincerely,  
Cy Jordan

Dear Editor:

We receive each weekly issue of The Yancey Journal with the eager anticipation of a special gift. Always delighted to unfold each priceless page of exciting news from friends and family back home.

We have especially enjoyed the recent articles on Folklore, and wish to express our many thanks to the staff for the great job they are doing.

Sincerely,  
Mary Briggs Hughes and family.

## Mallonee To Visit Here

Tom L. Mallonee, 11th Congressional District Assistant to Congressman Roy A. Taylor, is now making scheduled visits to the county seats and other sections of the counties.

On Tuesday, May 1, he will be at the Yancey County Court-

house, Burnsville, from 1:00 to 2:00; and at the Town Hall in Spruce Pine from 3:00 to 4:00.

Any person who has plans or official business pertaining to Congressional matters to be discussed is invited to meet with Mr. Mallonee.



Broma Bradford And Susan Wilson

## Students Selected For 1973 Governor's School

Two Yancey County students have been selected to attend the 1973 Governor's School this summer.

Among those selected are Miss Broma Bradford from Cane River and Miss Susan Wilson from East Yancey High School. Miss Bradford was selected in the field of French and Miss Wilson in the field of English, according to an announcement by Ed Hunter, Superintendent of Schools.

Miss Bradford is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Bradford from the Bee Log section of Yancey County and Miss Wilson is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ned Wilson of Pensacola. They will attend the eight-week session during June and July which is traditionally held on the campus of Salem College, Winston-Salem.

Being selected for Governor's School is one of the most coveted honors that can be bestowed on a rising high school junior or senior in this state. Those selected have an opportunity to be associated with about 400 of the state's most outstanding students and to work under some of the nation's best known instructors during the summer.

The formula used for selecting candidates only guarantees one student per county. Small counties do not always get two nominees selected. Therefore, we consider ourselves fortunate to have two students selected two years in a row, Hunter said. Last year Miss Mitzi Presnell and Mr. Doyle Byrd attended. This year Broma Bradford was

also selected to attend an eight-week leadership course on the campus of Mars Hill College along with 100 other rising seniors from across the state. This honor had to be declined, however, since both are held about the same time.

## Spotlight On The Movies

A Humphrey Bogart film highlights the attractions at the Yancey Theater this week.

The search for Mexican gold finds greed, jealousy and suspicion pursuing three hard-bitten men in their lust for the yellow treasure. "The Treasure of Sierra Madre" was a 1948 film that was voted one of the 10 best pictures of the year and it has come to be known as one of Bogart's greatest.

"The Good Guys and Bad Guys" is termed a mature western comedy. This story of two over-the-hill gunfighters stars Robert Mitchum and George Kennedy.

Also beginning this week is a Walt Disney comedy, "Snowball Express." Johnny Baxter (Dean Jones) inherits an estate in the snow covered hills of Colorado and moves his family there from the New York City rat race. The estate includes a dilapidated hotel which has ski-resort and of course laugh potential. Theater manager Ben Mandala says that this is only the first of a series of recent Disney movies he has scheduled. After this series is shown, the Yancey Theater will be showing current Disney films at the same time they are shown in Asheville and the surrounding area.

The Saturday and Sunday matinee features the 1949 John Wayne war-classic, "Sands of Iwo Jima." The tough training a U.S. Marine sergeant gives a squad of rebellious recruits results in the immortalized capture of Iwo Jima in WWII.

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