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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. 28602.



People in my section of Appalachia occasionally stop to speak howdy and offer topic suggestions for this column. And of the many why-don't-you-do-a-column-on-idea's broached, the most frequently mentioned is the American chestnut blight.

I suppose one reason I have not gotten around to this subject is that I automatically assume that everyone is an authority in this area. Certainly I hear references to wormy chestnut lumber at every hand, and when fall rolls around there are those who love to repeat the judgment that "these Oriental chestnuts just don't compare with the old timey ones."

Another reason I have abstained from comment is that, for me, it's a rather painful subject to consider-- almost like trying to write about the passing on of an old friend or relative who has no offspring to carry on his or her good name. But recently on a picnic jaunt to Tater Hill, a plateau-topped mountain north of Boone, I began mulling over the plight of the chestnut, and a column began taking shape.

If you have walked or driven through an area where chestnut trees once stood, you will understand why. For all along the rutted Tater Hill road were stands of chestnut sprouts growing from the bases of gaunt, grey stumps.

Sprouts is really the wrong term, for many of them were saplings fifteen to eighteen feet high and several inches in diameter. They appeared to be vigorous and healthy, with the promise of developing into sturdy trees.

They will never make it, of course, for the Oriental blight is already eating at their vitals. A few may live long enough to bear a handful of burr-encased nuts, but their trunks soon will

show blotches of yellow, then brown, their meager crop will be worm-infested, and the tree itself will die.

It wasn't always thus. The American chestnut once made up from 30 to 60 percent of the Appalachian forest cover. Along with the yellow poplar, it was one of the so-called "monarchs" of the Southern Appalachian forests.

The mature chestnut tree might soar from 75 to 125 feet in the air and occasionally measure over 10 feet in diameter at stump top height. In Greenbrier in 1934, for example, A. J. Sharp reported measuring a chestnut stump 13 feet across at ankle-high!

Such trees literally poured their glossy harvest to the ground. After a heavy autumn rain, accompanied by strong wind, Appalachian youngsters gathered bushels of the shiny chestnuts which had rolled free of their prickly covers.

These served as the currency of the young. Like the pop bottles of a later day, they were taken to the country store and exchanged for such items as a pencil and tablet for school, a pair of shoes for cold weather wear, a poke full of jawbreakers or stick candy to nourish the sweet tooth.

Chestnuts also represented a money crop for the head of the house. On a fall day a farmer with a stand of 50 to 100 mature chestnut trees might fill his wagon bed with nuts, apples, cabbage, and a ham or two and head down the mountain either to peddle his goods along the way or to sell them to an area wholesaler. Several days later he would return with an empty wagon and enough money to clothe his family for the winter ahead.

But the blight put an end to the youngster's barter and the father's peddling. Coming into

this country in imported nursery stock from China in the early 1900's, it struck the New York area and moved relentlessly down the Appalachian chain. By 1940 it had swept throughout the natural growth areas of the American chestnut estimated at about 9 million acres.

Trees on the upland slopes were the last to go. One still hears an occasional report of a nut-bearing tree, but usually by the time he investigates, that tree also has fallen by the way. Despite an unceasing battle by forestry experts, no cure for the blight seems imminent. The only hope apparently lies in the study of trees transplanted from the eastern range to Wisconsin a number of years ago, trees which have so far escaped the fatal disease.

Possibly--just possibly--out of the experiments of scientists with the chestnuts from these trees will eventually come a blight-free species, and the American chestnut will again cover the Appalachian range.

United Fund Honor Roll

The United Appeal now nears the half-way mark toward raising the \$14,990 goal set for the 1973 campaign.

The first publication of the UF Honor Roll, shown below, is known to be incomplete by the campaign committee, owing to slowness of reports to reach the UF treasurer.

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 (contributors of \$200)
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 (contributors of \$100 to \$200)
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 Burnsville Fum. & Hardware
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BUSINESSES & OFFICES
 where all employees have made contributions:
 Yancey County Department of Social Services
 Yancey County Child Development Center
 Yancey County Health Dept.

Bookmobile Schedule

The Avery-Mitchell-Yancey Regional Library bookmobile will be visiting the following persons or residences on the Seven Mile Ridge run in Yancey County on Thursday, November 1, 1973: Nell Hoover, Grace Blalock, Fanny Ray, Gladys Robinson, Cora Byrd, Maxie Burgin, Clara Lee Chrisawn, Westall's Grocery, Evelyn Wilson, Arlene Whitson, Louise Robinson, Adelle Briggs, Margaret Gouge, Pearl Thomas, Hattie Mac Geouge.

Anyone else who lives close to these people and who wishes to have bookmobile service, please contact Mrs. Barbara Dupkoski after 4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday at 765-4673.

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3/69¢

Schick



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 Reg. 89¢

65¢

Gillette PLATINUM-PLUS



D.E. 10's
 Reg. \$1.99

\$1.39

GILLETTE TRAC II Cartridges



Reg. \$1.19

5's **88¢**



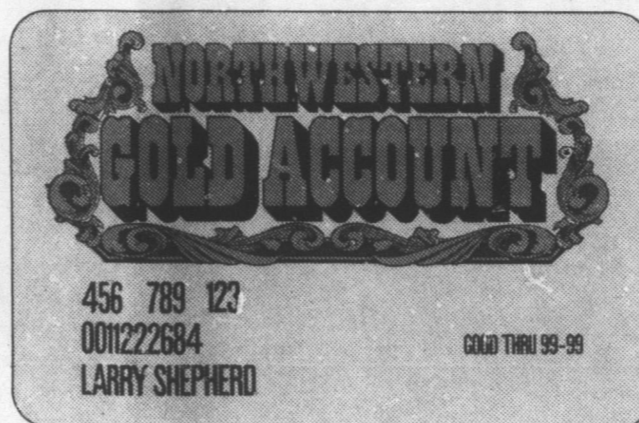
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Girl Scout News Roundup



- Yancey Neighborhood Service Team:**
 Neighborhood Chairman--Mrs. James Anglin
 Secretary--Mrs. R. L. McIntosh
 Troop Consultant--Mrs. Garland Wampler
 Troop Organizer--Mrs. Edgar Hunter, Jr.
 Publicity--Theresa Coletta and Mrs. Ardell Sink
- Girl Scout Troops 1973-1974:**
 Brownie Troop 86--Meets on Mondays at 3:15 p.m. at Burnsville Presbyterian Church. Leaders are Mrs. Jessie Woody and Mrs. Trena Williams.

- Junior Troop 88--Meets** Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. at Burnsville Community Building. Leaders are Mrs. Don McGalliard, Mrs. Albert Williams.
Junior Cadette Troop (for 6th graders only)--Meets Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. at Burnsville Presbyterian Church. Leaders are Mrs. Mike Griffin and Mrs. Bill Stallings.
Cadette Troop 65--Meets on Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. at home of Mrs. Charles Gillespie. Leaders are Mrs. Charles Gillespie, Jr., Mrs. Tom Chatman and Mrs. Dick Bailey.
Senior Troop 66--Meets Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Yancey Public Library. The leader is Mrs. Richard L. McIntosh.

Junior Troop 88 held its first meeting on September 11, 1973, and elected patrol leaders for the twenty-six girls registered. These Patrol Leaders are: Johanna Hall, Toni Banks, Crystal McGalliard and Amy Profit. Other officers elected were Assistant Patrol Leaders--Kim Banks, Donna Braithwaite, Julia Canipe and Jan Blair; Troop Scribe--Tonya Allen; Troop Treasurer--Sheri Phillips; Patrol Secretaries--Susan Pitman, Elaine Britt, Joy Bennett, Tonya Allen; Distributors and Collectors--Jackie Rathburn, Kathy Young, Brenda Williams, and Mary Fender; Patrol Telephoners--Machelle Laws, Johanna Hall, Lisa Grindstaff and Alecia Lee.

October plans for Junior Troop 88 include learning rope skills and fire building with Mrs. Anna Lois Garrison to be followed with a weenie roast and hike. Halloween plans,

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too, are in the making.
 *
 The organizing of a **Junior Cadette Troop** is a new idea for Scouting in Yancey County. This Junior Cadette Troop which includes girls of sixth grade level has already ten enrolled members.

Plans for the month of October include emphasis on assistance to the elderly in the community with leaf raking and house cleaning projects. Halloween plans include a service project with the UF or with UNICEF.

*
Cadette Troop 65 elected officers on Wednesday, October 3, 1973. From the 29 girls registered with the troop, the following elected officers are: Patrol Officers--Beth Bailey, Cindy McLain, and Cathy Henson; Troop Correspondent--Carol McDonald; Troop Secretary--Diane Wampler; Troop Reporter--Kim Aldridge.

Concentration for this troop's yearly activities will be in the area of active citizenship. Participation in this area has already begun with the girls distributing literature for school bond election and with the touring of county government offices. At present, two patrols are working on the Traveler Badge and one patrol working on the Radio-TV Badge.

*
Senior officers elected for the 1973-74 year are: Patrol Leader--Karen McIntosh and Gwen Tomberlin; Secretary--Marie Hunter; Senior Planning Board Representative--Martha Ann Westall, Suzanne Edge and Gwen Tomberlin.

On Monday, October 8, members of this troop participated in a community service project by assisting with the cleaning of the new clothing closet facilities. Also, on Sunday, October 14, fifteen elderly senior citizens from a local rest home were entertained by this troop with a fall outing at the Black Mountain Campground. This area of service was provided by these Senior Scouts in collaboration with the Yancey Department of Social Services.

*
 Interested in being a Girl Scout? Contact any one of the above listed Girl Scout Leaders or Yancey Neighborhood Chairman Mrs. James Anglin.

