

AROUND THE DISTRICT

By George Vitas.

Last January we went down in Lost Cove, up in Yancey county, and wrote a column about the isolated folks up there — the mountains to the south, east and west and the Nolichucky river gorge to the north. Wednesday, we revisited Lost Cove, this time with Forestry Aide John Stanley and Will Murphy of Hunt Dale. We were told that several big city newspapers picked up our story on the Cove and expanded it. A few magazines became interested in the Cove and one large North Carolina newspaper sent a reporter and photographer into the Cove and in a full page spread in their Sunday edition on Lost Cove. We were glad to learn that Lost Cove received such wide recognition, for it is a most unusual place.

Once again, we met our old friend, Sinclair Conley, ex-professor of psychology at the University of Florida, about whom we wrote in our original article. He is still teaching all eight grades in the single room school house. Like Lost Cove itself, Mr. Conley is a most unusual man. He is short, wiry, very alert, inspiring and teaches his classes in a booming voice. He is sixty-nine years old, the father of six children, the youngest of whom is three years old, and the operator of a very successful farm on Jacks Creek. This is his last year of teaching at Lost Cove, since he will be 70 next year, which is the

age of compulsory retirement for teachers.

The building in which Mr. Conley teaches is a combination school house and church. When we arrived, he had just issued the students their new books. You could tell the upper grade from the lower grade pupils by the height of the stacks of books that were piled on their desks.

Mr. Conley firmly believes in applied education. When a small sawmill recently moved into Lost Cove, he taught his pupils to measure lumber in board feet. He believes that education is a process of preparing children for life. On Mr. Conley's desk was a large stack of the latest current events magazines. When we asked him what he did with these he said that he allowed the pupils to look through them, study them and then the entire class discussed articles which they found of particular interest to them. The pupils knew the names of all their public officials—the governor of North Carolina, their congressman, U. S. senators, sheriff, school superintendent, etc.

We found, much to our surprise, that the pupils were not shy, even though they rarely see visitors. We soon learned the reason for this. Mr. Conley believes in instilling confidence in his pupils. As he said, "when they are away from home in school, I try to be both father and mother to them." He treats them with understanding and kindness; and being a father himself, he understands them, loves them, and they love him.

We were very much impressed with the informality and effectiveness of the educational system used by Mr. Conley. He proudly stated that he would scholastically pit any of his pupils against pupils of comparable grades in other North Carolina schools. He was very much concerned over the fact that two of his students, Eugene Bailey and Junior Miller, were now in the eighth grade, and upon graduation in June, would have no place to go, since there is no high school in Lost Cove and no road by which a school bus could take the boys to a high school. Mr. Conley's greatest desire before retirement, is to see Lost Cove linked by a road to the rest of the state of North Carolina. He has not given up hope, for as he said, "Cut off from the rest of the state, it is true, we live in a lost country; but the people are not lost — not while we keep on learning."

MONTREAT

Sunday, the Montreat Presbyterian church began a thirteen-weeks "Tithing Adventure." The Rev. John R. Williams preached on the subject "Prove Me — Saith the Lord."

The Women of the Church met Tuesday, Sept. 18 in Gaither chapel for the first meeting of the season. Mrs. W. J. Gammon, president, presided at the business session. Mrs. Samuel, program chairman, prepared the program.

Mrs. Keith Townsend has been appointed chairman of Circle 1, in place of Mrs. Richard Mooney, who has moved to Aiken, S. C.

District 2, Women of the Church, Asheville Presbytery, Mrs. Mellinger E. Henry, chairman, will hold its fall meeting in Friendship Presbyterian church on Oct. 1. Morning session begins at 10:00 a. m. with registration at 9:30.

The Women of the Church are planning an "Intensive Bible Study" the last week in September.

A group of young people from the Gastonia Presbyterian church held a retreat in Montreat over the past week end.

Friends of the Rev. and Mrs. Harry Punt and family gathered at the Black Mountain depot last Sunday afternoon to bid them "Godspeed" as they left to take up their work as missionaries under the Southern Presbyterian Church to the Belgian Congo, Africa. The Punts have won for themselves a very warm place in the affections of the Montreat people who will miss them very much. It is hoped that their next furlough will find them again in Montreat.

Among those saying "goodbye" to the Rev. and Mrs. Punt, Elizabeth, Leo and Marina, were the Rev. and Mrs. John R. Williams, Dr. and Mrs. L. Nelson Bell with Jiji, Anne and Ruth Graham, Misses Irene and Edith Tait, the Rev. O. F. Yates, Mrs. S. H. McBride, Miss Nettie Lund, Dr. and Mrs. Turner of the Assembly Inn, Miss Ann Vanderventer, Dr. Nettie Grier, Miss Lucy Grier, Mrs. Samuel Woods, Mrs. Mellinger E. Henry, Miss Julia Stokes, Miss Carrie Newell, Mrs. Thomas

Spence, the Rev. and Mrs. W. J. Gammon, Mrs. W. R. Potter, Mrs. Robert Coit, Miss Josephine Woods, Miss Lucy Senn, Mrs. Blackwell, Miss Corson, Miss Iona Smith and Larry, Mrs. Lansing, and others.

Don Woods has returned to his studies at Erskine college after spending a short vacation at the Grier cottage on Virginia road.

Clayton Bell has returned to Wheaton college after spending the summer with his parents, Dr. and Mrs. L. Nelson Bell.

The Rev. and Mrs. William G. Neville of the North Brazil mission, under the Southern Presbyterian church, left Montreat this week for Decatur, Ga. Miss Virginia Neville has gone to Decatur, after spending the summer in Montreat doing work with the young people.

Dr. J. Rupert McGregor and the Rev. John R. Williams attended the meeting of Synod last week.

Plans for the erection of the new McGregor home are under way, and building will begin at an early date.

The Montreat church manse is undergoing considerable repairs. It is expected soon that the house will be in good order.

The Montreat people are awaiting with considerable interest the news of who is to be the new postmaster. In the meantime C. H. Rice and Mrs. Griffin are still on the job to the satisfaction of everyone.

The Montreat year-around residents are settling down to quieter living and shaking hands with friends and neighbors whom they have not seen for some time.

RESUMES STUDIES

Jody Atkins left Thursday, Sept. 13, to resume her studies at Appalachian State Teachers college, Boone.

ENDS SUMMER STAY

Mrs. G. F. Bell has returned to Miami, Fla., after spending the summer at her home on Pine street.

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POET'S CORNER

GRAYBEARD'S DAUGHTER

Aeons ere the lapsing ages into calendars were tied,
Or for kings' uncertain favor
ancient bards their talents
tried,
Graybeard's lovely daughter
through his rugged castle
sang—
From its turrets to its portals
rippling rhythm rang.

Out the castle gates she slipped,
crossed his terraced courts,
Sped through eery, sylvan crypts
and leaped his granite forts,
Raced with laughter down her
gorge in ecstasy complete,
Then between her meadow banks,
the Swannanoa to meet.

—James Peale Parker

The Creative Writing Group is deeply indebted to Mr. Parker for having granted permission to publish, when needed, his poems on the mountains of Western North Carolina. All of the poems published so far have been from "Hemlock Twigs and Balsam Sprigs," 1947.

Black Mountain (NC) NEWS—7
Thursday, September 20, 1951

Names Annual Staff Swannanoa High

The staff for the Cygnet is all lined up and ready for a hard year's work. Names of staffers who will make the annual this year are: editor-in-chief, Jewell Cooke; asst. editor, Ariel Young; production managers, Pat Stevens and Peggy Rayburn; business manager, Thelma Mayfield, assistants, Joyce Weatherly, Bobby Slagle and Ed Wilson; circulation manager, Roy Nanney, and assistant, Jim Stroupe.

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