

Notes about *The Clinch Mountain Review*

Welcome to *The Clinch Mountain Review* for 2021. *The Clinch Mountain Review* is the literary review of Southwest Virginia Community College. All of the authors have a tie to the southwestern Appalachian region of Virginia.

I hope you will enjoy reading many of these selected poems, fictional works, and creative nonfiction offerings. Some literary works are topical, as the global pandemic continues to affect individuals and communities; artists have responded.

Additionally, I want to remind you that the *CMR* accepts submissions from authors and artists who live, work, or have a tie to southwest Virginia. SWCC students can also submit poems, short stories, and memoirs, as well as artwork for the cover.

Submission guidelines can be found on the *CMR* website: <http://www.sw.edu/cmr>.

S. Russell Wood, Editor
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Poetry

A BUMBLE AT THE DOOR AS A SENTINEL HOVERED By Lou Gallo

Several actually, little globular helicopters, every
time
I go out to check the mail or just rock for a while,
they drift close, I could reach out and grab one
but figure they too sting and why would I anyway?
Beautiful perfect creatures, not aggressive like
yellow jackets,
they probably have a nest nearby, maybe in the red
tips
that, with all the rain, have sprouted ever higher,
inching
toward the upstairs window, blossoming here and
there.
I like the bumbles, friends from another alien
kingdom,
how they can suspend in the air, then dart off
instantly,
evolutionary brilliance.

I hate to cut a tree but last week we removed the
four
massive pines that started to threaten the house.
Now the mise en scène looks naked, barren,
but, ah, no more raking up pine needles
that clog up the spokes, no more sticky resin,

though I miss the pines, friends from still another kingdom.

How many friends do we lose in a lifetime?

And I would include the inanimate *objets d'art* we misplace or which disintegrate however much they persevere in the mind like tombstones.

Friends too.

And then of course the memories, some of dubious status,

others occasions for joy, whether distant or immediate,

like yesterday when Claire and I got caught in a downpour

returning home from Roanoke where she took a three-hour test

for Hollins. The rain pelted our windshield with such ferocity

we, along with just about every other driver, had to swerve off

into a service station parking lot and wait for it to abate.

Couldn't see a thing through the glass except liquid blurs.

I just read that archaeologists uncovered the preserved corpse

of a twenty-eight-thousand-year-old child buried immaculately.

Have you lived if you don't remember you once lived?

Memories--ephemeral friends, and some foes,

from this kingdom.

Chuckling It (*for Richard*)

By Lou Gallo

my friend he tells me about his sister
as we sit on the front porch and smoke.

She upped and quit her job
left a message on his machine

A weak little plea, he says,
to come get her, she's in a bad way

he's five hours by truck but rushes to the city
finds her crumpled like an old towel on the sofa
whimpering "take care of me; take care of me"

that's about a month ago now

he says she won't speak
sits secluded in his farmhouse

staring at walls

takes long walks in the woods

with their cat Bubbie

she won't answer the phone or drive
to buy food or answer his questions

It's big, he says, whatever it is
I'm leaning back on the swing thinking
sounds like an old-fashioned nervous breakdown
but what do I know?

I'm thinking about my job too
how to fend off dozens of people tomorrow

then meeting after meeting about nothing
how the debts rise like towers
and prospects for change fizzle overnight
as my vision of white sand, turquoise water and sun
quivers in these solid ancestral mountains
how the years pass and symptoms accrue like
 memories

my friend rocks in his chair, smoking
the burden an anvil on his back
and I'm thinking *I envy her*
the sister who had the balls to quit
give up whatever they promised
and learn to stare at nothing
sit alone and dive into herself
like those crazy kids in Acapulco
who leap off cliffs for tourists
I envy this ultimate pain & fear
& catapulting into the madness
beyond which lies only survival
that no longer matters.

Want Ad (Come Share My Life)

By Craig Kurtz

Come share my life, please share my bed —
do something fanciful instead;
it's said that life's not poetry —
is solitude security?

I've extra space and a queen bed —
who wants to be the scrolling dead?
I like my job, though the pay's low —
come split rent on this studio.
This neighborhood has lots of trees —
I'll get another set of keys;
who wants to be alone these days? —
consider I cook shrimp entrées.
I'm at the age where life alone
seems worse than risking the unknown;
what if our outlays could subside —
we might have things we've been denied.

Come share my bed, there's room for two —
come share my life, there's space for you;
come see the place, it wouldn't hurt —
it's time to be an extrovert;
the floors are wood, the ceiling's high —
Historic Downtown is nearby;
I'm good at back rubs, I don't drink —
it's cool if you say what you think.
Let's not get hung up on your weight —
the AC we'll negotiate;

I'm looking for my final mate
or split the rent, at any rate;
companionship, once in a while —
let's both of us give it a trial.

So, Mary Shelley, if you're there,
I've got a studio to share;
a universe, just made for two —
a bedroom where I will love you.

Elizabeth without Facetune

By Craig Kurtz

Elizabeth, where can ye be?
I've waited a lifetime for thee;
I know you're out there, set apart,
because of words that say thou art.

The person that I'd love the best
won't look like they'd hold much int'rest;
the person that I'll truly love
may not look like whom I've thought of.

It's hard to find the perfect mate
when vision's often insensate;
it's not her figure or her clothes —
there's other qualities I chose.

The portraits of her don't disguise
I won't love this one with my eyes;
but when I listened to her mind,
I knew that this love would be blind.

The one that I may first ignore
will often be her I adore;
Elizabeth, without Facetune —
it's what's inside that makes me swoon.

Forget her smile, her looks, her way —
these ornaments change day to day;
I'll count the ways that I've been smote —

it's from the comely words she wrote.

Elizabeth, it's who ye are
and not some hollow avatar;
it's not how your form gets arrayed,
it's from the poems ye have made.

An Awake Nightmare

By B. Chelsea Adams

The woman stands before her bed,
hesitant to get in, fearful that
sleep won't arrive, that he'll run
through town like Wee Willie Winkie,
but somehow,
skip her house.

She wonders what made sleep stop
visiting her house, refuse
to lay his potent hand
on her forehead or cheek,
close her eyes,

give her

restful slumber.

Feeling deserted, she picks up the covers,

slips in under them,

lays her head on her soft pillow,

and closes her eyes,

imagining sleep arriving,

quieting her mind,

giving her a peaceful dream,

bringing her

to a bubbling creek under willow trees,

leaning her against a moss-covered rock,

where she becomes entranced

by the water's slow progress,

its turns, its swaying.

But there is no dream.

Her legs quiver

and jump, her pillow no longer soft

crunched tightly beneath her fingers.

Her eyes open.

People she knows and strangers

have congregated. They

ask questions she can't answer.

It's like being suspected of something,

a crime.

The courtroom of interrogators

asks, "When did you start
having trouble sleeping,
years ago, days?"

She doesn't remember.

"What happened today?"

"Nothing, little things, but..."

"Are you afraid of something?"

"Yes, not sleeping."

As a Child in Winter

By Matthew J. Spireng

Frost formed on the windowpane
in the closet room—not as heavily,
for sure, as at the cottage in winter

in Dr. Zhivago, but a coating of
thin frost on the inside of the pane
so if I wanted I could scrape it

with my fingernails, little curls
of frost collecting and melting,

and make words, create drawings—

though now with new storm sashes

on that window frost no longer forms.

As a child in winter I never thought

to wonder how it could be so cold

on the inside of the window frost

would form. I never wondered

about heat loss, the efficiency of

the furnace in the basement or

how high the monthly bills.

Mom and Easter

By Tom Cooper

I believe mom's favorite holiday was Easter

Mom taught us about it in Sunday School

And she was born right near Easter

The first week of April

Mom brought to life the stories of Easter

With flannel people, crayons and chalk

Before the VCR, DVD,

And the Internet

One Easter we got into her '55 Chevy Wagon

We drove all the way to a store in town

Just to buy something special for her class

Like filled eggs and marshmallow crosses

One year she made candy Easter Eggs for our family in the kitchen

She said they were no good,

Not like the store's

But they were

I remember mom's last trip to the hospital a couple of years later

She had a pretty Plymouth Fury Wagon then

I was young, but I remember those things

She waved goodbye to us as dad drove her into town

Someone took a picture - I think she knew

Mom died there near Easter too, the first week of April

She just missed her birthday

The cancer took her too early

But her suffering was over

Kind of like Christ's was over in the Bible

The first time I saw my dad cry was at Easter

He answered that phone Saturday morning

He sobbed and cried like a baby

Then I knew without asking

And we all cried

I believe mom's favorite holiday must have been

Easter

A story of change in the Gospels

Of Hope beyond this life

Of all things made new

Like Springtime

And my favorite holiday became Easter.

Orison

by Marjorie Gowdy

Two scores keening

You now would be sixty

Wise, calm soul, tree-tall and slim

Shyness veiled by a crooked smile.

They called the eve of all hallows

You tried to save the house

Your fingers gripped the red metal tube

You sank helplessly in fumes.

Luminous family brilliance

Chance inheritance of sorrow, too

The night your eyes turned blue

Boy in seizure, frame lifted to the sun.

The portents

That winter, you reported the old man danced on
his casket

That summer, our shoulders weighted by ancient
quilts

That fall, a few days before, we swore to seek joy.

We carved a pumpkin on the round brick steps

You carried my little son your likeness

I sense your visits on solemn nights the smell of
smoke

I wish it had been me.

Oakey's Porch, II

By Marjorie Gowdy

Tree-tall, broad-boned, Oakey hugs me until my
insides pour out.

She grows string beans, cans in a kitchen soaked
with peach pie and pot roast.

Won't share her recipe for fried apple pies.

Oakey walks to the liquor store in November to
make fruitcake.

Cusp of August, I water Oakey's petunias.

Crimson choir robes, lining her walk.

We sit on metal rockers 'till the sun hits one
hundred,

then Oakey waters her porch. Sings shape-note.

Passage of broad red brick tiles lined in white

under a wide cool ceiling.

Cold hose stream to the portico's shoulder pushes
steam down to dirt.

I lift my bare feet, giggling.

Rounding of summer, long shadow of the wild
cherry.

Round a nearby bend, the next whistle blows,

skips the old clay-topped station,

its sign cock-eyed, siding of peeled skin.

Oakey's porch in autumn is quiet as they bring her
railroad man

to lie in death's parlor. By Oakey's own winter of
ninety, iced chunks of porch

crumble as they tear off red tiles to make a
highway.

She moves, proud big woman, to her primitive
vestibule.

The Moirai of Appalachia

By Morgan Gilbert

Mammy and pappy weren't ever gonna build an empire

But these mountains and hollers looked a lot like home.

A long journey from the highlands of the Scots

To the highlands of the Cherokee.

They built a homestead out of what they could make with their hands

With the strength in their backs and a little bit of granny witch magic.

So you took your first steps off of the farm and into your own.

And sometimes that granny witch magic felt like it didn't exist.

And sometimes it feel like an empty pill bottle.

There's nothing left for you around here.

The mine's been shut down

and there's no jobs.

You've lost the strength in your back

that you used to have

to work the fields

and be self-sufficient.

Now it's easier to rest your back

and take a check from the government

and take a pill from the Suboxone clinic

and wait your time.

But, your time will come

and what will you have to show for it?

The Madonna and Her Children

By Kevin McDaniel

A painter's brush birthed

your pallid complexion

on a grimy canvas

hanging above a staircase

in an historic mansion.

Passersby pause,

searching for your twelve

cherub orphans hidden

in the murky red backdrop,

a mischievous faced one

under your blanketed feet.

You bear responsibility

of looking after so many.

Will arms, legs, heart ever tire?

The chosen child plants
his chubby heels into your thighs
as he plays with red rosary beads
you might one day reach for yourself.

The painting hangs inside the Governor's Palace at Colonial Williamsburg. On-site historical interpreters estimate the work dates to the 1600s. Artist is unknown.

I Did Not Hear The Winter Come

By Teresa Fields Kestner

I did not hear the winter come,

But saw my words frozen in air.

I felt the needles in my fingers

And nothing in my shoes.

The sweet, clear scent of nothingness

Surrounding me, crisp as new money;

Deafened to its intentions,

I did not hear the winter come.

Old

By Linda Hudson Hoagland

Spring arrives

with sunshine

Don't care

Family doesn't

check mom

She's old

Alone and

dead for

two weeks

Tomorrow is

not known

for all

Comers Creek, Hurricane Ridge, Iron Mountain

By Piper Durrell

Like the locusts

the creek behind our campsite

sings all night.

We follow a soggy path

a creek leads the way

through, over, around

bogs and rhododendrons

leaf litter, smaller creek crossings

running cedar, rock piles, oaks and pines

and fresh piles of horse dung

strewn across the path

Bare November trees

have dropped their bounty of acorns

soaring pines
climb and define the ridge off to the side
everywhere
fallen or cut trees filigreed with delicate moss
patterns I long to trace with my finger
not knowing where to begin or end
a stone wall by the side of the creek
it too covered with moss
blue-gray boulders
pitted with lichen
looking as ancient as the stars
placed in tight formation
with no apparent answer as to
when or why or who
cared enough to create
beauty or function in this forest.

We turn around when

we reach mud, nothing but mud, ahead.

The flowers are few

the leaves are long past their glory days

yet running cedar remains the brightest of greens

tall beige spores heading to the sky

ready to conquer more territory.

On our return we pass a fisherman

heading out to catch, he says,

a dinner of brown trout.

Onerous Wandering

By Kohava Blount

Roaming the abyss,

Traversing amid dismantling mists.

Evermore searching – a stillness from

the rancor; incessantly lodged

where there is no pause from the clamor.

Circular ambling, equivocal paths;

burden unchanged, ageless lapse.

Time, illusory, as the encumbrances

Preserve a downward drift.

Spirit laden;

the vistas ahead permanently veiled;

never to witness

an unclouded clearing.

Fiction

Not Tonight

By Chrissie Anderson Peters

Life is rarely fair when you're sixteen years old, certainly not from your perspective. My Mom had married my stepfather when I was an eleven-year-old only child, at the end of sixth grade. In almost five years, nothing had improved in our relationship. He was old, only two years younger than my grandfather, but unlike my grandfather, whom I adored, I couldn't stand Al. He personified old. He couldn't hear. He talked too loud. His ideas were antiquated. He expected girls to wear dresses and know how to cook and do whatever boys and men told them. And this was not who I was at all. We tangled at every turn.

Mom had recently gone back to work for extra money during the holidays, because Al's retirement from his truck-driving days with Frito-Lay left little

extra for anything, much less the Christmas that Mom wanted her girls to have. Yes, her girls. I was no longer an only child. That had ended three years earlier when my little sister Dawn was born. I loved Dawn. I might as well love her: she followed me around everywhere, and I did practically everything for her. She called me “Sissy-Mommy,” which was embarrassing as heck in public, but endearing as could be in private. I loved being her Sissy-Mommy. There wasn’t much I wouldn’t do for her most days.

Al’s bitterness over Mom going back to work, even temporarily, was palpable. His ordinarily cantankerous disposition began to look sunny and made me miss the good old days. He believed that it was Mom’s job to be at home raising Dawn and cleaning the house, washing the clothes, cooking our meals – although I was old enough to help with that, and did what I could, considering I knew how to make only four things (chili, spaghetti, sloppy

joes, and baked ziti). Each of those required planning ahead to lay out beef, which we raised ourselves and slaughtered each Fall. If you forgot to put that out to thaw early enough in the day, you were probably having canned soup or Chef-Boyardee, if I was left in charge of dinner. And Al hated Chef-Boyardee.

In between doing household chores like folding laundry, cooking, doing dishes, bathing Dawn, and getting her ready for bed every evening, I had to get all of my homework done. I was a college-bound student, so I was in classes where I had to read lots and write even more. Al always complained because I had my nose buried in a book instead of doing more around the house. But here was the thing: I didn't intend to stay stuck in this town forever. When I turned eighteen, my goal was to leave for college and never look back. I hated it here. Tazewell was a small burned-out town in the coalfields of Southwestern Virginia.

Unless you wanted to be a coalminer, there was no real future here. I wanted to be a teacher. You could be a teacher in Tazewell. I was blessed with some of the best teachers in Tazewell. And they were the ones encouraging me to go on to college so I would have choices in life. Mom said I was going to college, too, but the way she said it, it was like it was some kind of punishment. I knew it wasn't, though. I knew that she just didn't understand it all because no one in our family had ever been. Only one person in our whole family had ever even graduated from high school, and that was her baby sister, back when I was in kindergarten. So no one understood what it took for me to get good grades to make me eligible for scholarships – because I knew that was the only way I was getting away from here, academic excellence, not through any financial means on our end – it was just expected that I would magically achieve the good grades and never slack on the

never-ending chores, especially now that Mom was working for the holidays.

I also had to have my lights out by 11:00 p.m. Another of Al's rules. I never had my homework finished by then. I was a natural-born night owl. When I complained to Mom and asked if I could stay up until at least midnight, Al interrupted and said, "No, but you can get up at 5 or 6 in the morning like I do to do my farm work if it's so important that you get it done!" That was never happening. I got up thirty minutes before the bus ran, threw on clothes, did makeup and hair, grabbed breakfast if it was something that I could take out the door with me, and walked down the God-Forsaken Hill to the bus stop to wait in whatever weather we had. Before Mom went back to work, if it was raining hard, or snowing, she would occasionally drive me down to wait for the bus, and my friend Kandy would climb in the old Ford pickup and wait with us, but now that Mom

was working, Al would sooner die than do something nice for me like that. Maybe I'd sooner die than expect it, too.

Being a writer, I knew my mind didn't always just shut off magically at 11 p.m. Some nights, I listened for Mom and Al to go to sleep at the other end of the doublewide, and then I would raise the storm window in my bedroom, and I would climb out with my notebook, a candle, and a book of matches, to the porch. If the moon cast enough light that I could see by it, I didn't light the candle, but on dark nights, I lit the candle, and it reminded me of just how fragile I felt like my life was most nights, like my life was a light being threatened by winds in the night, and I'd get scared, wondering what would happen if the wind snuffed it all out. Mom and Al fought all the time, over everything. I couldn't seem to do anything to make either one of them happy. The only place I made anyone happy was school. And I worried about falling behind there

during the holidays while Mom was working. I really did feel like I was about to lose control of the very few things I felt like I had any control over in my life.

One night, Al was in a particularly gruff mood and mine matched pretty evenly. I had three massive tests the next day, and I really needed to study for them. One would be mostly essays, so I could probably BS my way through that one. I was a good writer, and I could write my way out of just about anything; it was my one true gift. But the other two were in geometry and biology. Math and science were not my strong suits. In fact, I was passing geometry right now with a D, the first time I'd ever made below a B on a report card in my life, and was grounded from everything because of it. Not like I had much of a social life to crush. But I did miss talking on my own phone and having to rely on the old landline at the house, with the long extension cord, and taking it into my bedroom for

no more than fifteen minutes at a time, for homework purposes only. And tonight, Kandy called with a question about biology. I answered, as the baked ziti was in the oven baking for 20 minutes, and told Al it was about homework, and dragged the phone cord behind the sofa he had had for thirty years before he married Mom, and into my bedroom, and closed the door.

Kandy and I exchanged pleasantries and got to biology pretty quickly. I could see Al's feet outside my bedroom door from the time I got on, and was infuriated. That old son of a gun was listening in at the door to see what I was talking about! I seethed in anger. Ten minutes into the phone call, he started yelling, "Josephine, wind it up!" With Kandy still on the phone, I threw the door open, and he nearly fell into my room, he was leaning so heavily against my door listening. "I still have five minutes, old man! And I'll use them to finish talking about homework!"

With that the two of us began struggling for the phone and screaming at each other. On the other end, it must have sounded like the end of the world. Poor Kandy kept calling my name and asking if I was okay, but Al had gained control of the phone by pinning my wrist against my bedroom wall and ripping down some of the posters hanging there of my favorite band, and slammed it down.

I got up in his face and screamed with everything in me. “Does that make you feel better? To beat up on a kid? To listen in on my phone calls about a biology test? I cannot wait to get out of here. I hate you, and when I do finally leave, I am never coming back. I’m not like Mom. I will not make myself bound to any man, ever, not for the way she gets treated and for the way you treat me, too!”

“Well, you listen here, hot britches! Whenever you’re ready to leave, you go on! I sure as hell ain’t stopping you! If your mother was any kind of mother, she’d be here taking care of things instead

of out there working. I could work, but she won't let me."

"It isn't that she won't let you. No one will hire you because you're so old!" I screamed at him.

And that was it. The wind came just too close to the flame. I grabbed my coat and my purse, and stormed out the front door, slamming the screen door behind me. The cold December air hit me like a thousand jabbing knives as the snow came down and punched into my face amid the burning tears streaming down my cheeks. Where was I going? It was 8:00 at night. I had no car. I had no flashlight. I had nowhere to go, really. But damned if I was staying in that house with him. I'd seen him rip out the telephone wires from the wall when he was this mad at Mom. I'd seen him pull out a rifle from the closet and aim it in her general direction. Just then, I worried about Dawn. She was still in there with him. If he did something stupid while he was mad...

As I rounded the first curve leading away from the doublewide, going downhill, the front door opened, and I heard my three-year-old sister call out into the night, “Sissy-Mommy, please don’t go! Please don’t go!”

I stopped in my tracks and started crying a different kind of crying now. How could she be the product of their union? I loved her so much, and the two of them made me so miserable so much of the time. I sank to the cold, wet snow and just cried. Any thoughts I had about going across the road and across the creek to Kandy’s to see if she could possibly hide me out for the night vanished. I knew I could not abandon Dawn. Someone had to look out for her in all of this. But I would only do it until I was eighteen, I promised myself. Something had to change by then. But I knew it wouldn’t. Al would always be old and hateful; it’s how he was wired. And I would always long to be liberated and have a

smart mouth that became audible at times; it was my only real defense in life.

After a couple of hours, the headlights from Mom's pickup hit me in the face as she spun her way up the God-Forsaken Hill in the snow. I picked myself up off of the cold, slushy pile I'd created over that amount of time and got in the truck, telling her what had happened, making sure to put more emphasis on what he said about her not being there to do what she was supposed to do than I did on him hurting my wrist or offending me. I didn't try to make myself look blameless. It worked. By the time she marched into the house, she was loaded and ready to go after him verbally. And that's as far as it went that night. But it went loud, and it went long.

I closed the door behind me and went to get Dawn out of her bedroom while Mom and Al were fighting in their room. I took her into my room. "You didn't go!" she smiled at me.

“Not tonight,” I told her. I listened as the wind rattled my storm window and the snow continued to come down, and I hugged her to me. “Not tonight.”

Bad For Business

By Linda Hudson Hoagland

Darryl slid three quarters into the vending machine and weighed his options.

He studied each item closely though the glass barrier that was between him and his need to eat something that would curb his hunger until he could gather up a few more coins to quash that angry growl that was emanating from his innards.

He truly wanted the candy bar so he could taste and feel the sweetness attack his taste buds; but, no, he actually needed the package of cheese crackers that were slathered with almost dry peanut butter.

He would chew the small bits slowly savoring every cheesy, peanut buttery bite.

Water was what he would use to wash it down. Someone had left an unopened bottle of water sitting on the bench that was located outside of the entrance to the building. He snatched it up as soon as he saw it because he knew he would need a drink at some point during the day.

He pushed the button that would direct the apparatus inside the vending machine to drop his cheese and peanut butter crackers to the bottom opening where he could grab his precious food.

He peeled the cellophane wrapping from the brightly colored orange crackers as he sat on the bench next to the machine to savor the goodness that was assaulting his taste buds. He closed his eyes and chewed slowly.

“Hey! You dirty old bum, get out of here right now!” screamed a man who was standing directly in front of him. He opened his eyes and focused on

the red-faced, angry man that was doing all of the screaming.

He nodded to the angry man and proceeded to force himself up off of the bench. The angry man had to back up so he, Darryl, could stand up in front of him.

“Okay, Marty, I’ll get out of there. You can calm down now before you pop your cork. All I wanted to do was eat the crackers I bought from your machine,” said Darryl.

“Well, when you’re finished with them, I want you gone. You are bad for business with your raggedy clothes and nasty odor,” Marty sputtered.

Darryl winced with the last statement. He wilted right there in front of Marty. He looked as if the life had suddenly drained out of him.

He wrapped his fingers around his remaining precious crackers and grabbed the bottle of water.

He abruptly turned and walked away from Marty forcing his tired, old body to, once again, enter the cold night air.

“Marty used to be my friend,” mumbled Darryl as he walked away into the darkness.

Darryl was cold and oh so tired. That happened when he got old. He couldn’t shake that tired feeling no matter what he did.

He walked on and on looking for a place to rest his bones for the night.

His seventy-five years were weighing heavy on him. He wasn’t sure how much longer he was going to have to hunt and scratch for food and a place to live.

He wasn’t always homeless. That happened a couple of years before when his wife, Martha, died and the house was foreclosed because without her income, he couldn’t pay the mortgage.

It was all because of the COVID-19 that swept through the country killing most of the old people and the infirm. It was what killed his wife. Why it didn't take him, he didn't know. Life would have been a whole lot easier on him if he had joined his wife in death.

He knew he had to stop thinking that way. Those dark thoughts might predestine him for an imminent death.

He walked on so he could reach the same place he had slept the previous night. Hopefully, the owner of the out building hadn't found his sleeping area. He had tried to hide his use of the blankets and pillow by folding them up and placing them back into the bins where he had found them.

He was almost to his resting place when he saw that there was some kind of commotion happening in front of the out building.

“Oh no,” he whispered, “I hope they didn’t find out that I had slept in there.”

Rather than stop to find out what was happening, he continued walking slowly so he could scrutinize the scene that was taking place.

It appeared to him that two young men were preparing to get into a fist fight.

“No, don’t do that,” he mumbled. He didn’t want the police to be called because that would prevent him from returning to his resting place.

The words being exchanged between the angry, young men were beginning to level off and sounded more like a normal conversation.

He continued his walking so that he could get past the scene just far enough so he wouldn’t be seen by the two young men. Then he waited.

He tried to hide himself from the view of anybody around the area.

He was getting so tired of standing. He lowered himself slowly to the cold ground where he could rest his tired feet and legs by simply taking his weight off of them.

He sat with his legs stretched out in front of him, and, before long, he leaned back and closed his eyes.

A smile appeared on his face and he whispered, “Martha” for the last time here on Earth.

Hunting With Wolves

By Oscar L. Price

The Autumn nights are getting cool, and darkness has begun to fall over the Appalachian Mountains. A cluster of tepees stands in a circle beside Loop Creek where a pack of silver wolves grows restless as they get ready for a hunt. The sound of their howling carries a long way in the damp, cool air. Little wolf pups are yelping to go hunting with the older wolves, but they are much too young. The pups know that the older wolves' howling means it is near time for a hunt, but they have to wait until the pack returns to get their stomachs full of meat.

The wolves know that in the late Fall white tail deer feast on fermenting plums that have fallen off the red plum trees growing along the foothills. Elk graze in the meadow or feed on acorns hidden in dry leaves under the big oaks.

'Possums and skunks would have been easy kills for the wolves, but they didn't care for the smell of carrion that came from the 'possums or the stench of the skunks. The 'possums sometimes eat ripe persimmons in the trees that grow wild along the rolling foothills of the Appalachians.

The lonely call of a whippoorwill comes from the darkness of the woods. The great horned owl hoots as it perches in a willow tree growing along the creek. It sits quietly watching for rats or mice that come out to feed on the weed seeds at night. When the owl flies to catch its prey, its flight is silent like the fog hovering along the creeks at night.

The limestone cliffs along Loop Creek serve as protection for the Tutelo encampment from the cold northern winds and snowstorms that would soon come. The cliffs provide a good view of the meadows below and are close to a large spring that

furnishes the encampment with plenty of clean cool water for drinking and cooking.

Fish remain bountiful in the creeks. The Tutelo men use dried buckeye powder to stun the fish while the women and children gather them up in baskets woven from grapevines. They also use flint fish hooks. They make a medicinal tea for headaches from weeping willow bark. The willow bark contains aspirin. Tea is made from wild peppermint that grows along the creek banks, and they hunt grouse that feed on the wild grapes after they ripened.

After they finish their evening meal, the Tutelo begin their hunting ceremony. They dance and chant around a big campfire as the women and children look on. The ceremony brings the elk and deer close to the village for the hunt. The wolves lay sleeping by the tepees, but as soon as they hear the sound of the drumbeat, they become restless.

They knew tomorrow they would be going on a hunt.

The night passes quickly, and the sun peeps through pink, yellow and white clouds hanging low over the eastern horizon. The smell of wood smoke and hot fry bread lingers in the cool air. They would eat hearty just before going on a hunt because it is going to be a long, hard day. They always wait to go hunting until after the wild turkeys have flown from their roost. Some of them remember the lean, cold winters of years past, before there were bands of wild horses and before the Spaniards arrived in the New World in search of gold.

The tribe raise the wolves since they are pups and are happy to have them to help on a hunt. The hunters form a half circle, and the wolves drive the deer and elk into it. This makes the kill much easier. The wolves are trained to pull a travois and are a great help in bringing the meat back to the encampment after the hunt. The wolves also keep

the bears at bay, preventing them from stealing the food the Tutelo have stored up for winter.

They are up early and ready for the hunt when one of the men points at the tepee across from them. He says, "Today, we will have a good hunt."

The caw, caw, caw of the crows perching on the tepee poles signals good luck. The wolves yelp and tug against their strong rawhide leashes. They know the hunt will start soon, and they can smell the elk scent in the air long before the hunters see the elk grazing down in the meadows.

The hunters always carry sharp flint knives in sheaths on their rawhide belts. They take their best bows and arrows and spears decorated with eagle and turkey feathers for good luck.

The hunters walk nearly five miles from their village before they view elk grazing in the meadows. Then they form the half circle and release the wolves. It does not take the wolves

long to chase a big elk into the half circle. Then the hunters close the circle and make the kill.

They pray over the animals they kill and ask for the spirit of the animal to return as a great bald eagle and fly among the clouds. As the hunters look to the sky, they see a bald eagle circling overhead. The eagle's screams mean they are forgiven and that no evil spirit will haunt the tribe or bring bad luck to them.

When all the animals are skinned and butchered, every part of the animal is used. Nothing is ever wasted. The hunters experience a great day of hunting and will not have to hunt for elk or deer anymore until spring. They take down several large elk and kill several white tail deer. Thanks to the wolves' help, they enjoy a great feast tonight and enough meat to last them through a cold winter.

After the big feast, the tribe gathers around a big campfire. After giving thanks to the Great Spirit,

the chief praises the hunters and the wolves for their hunting skills. The chief says, "We will have meat for many moons, and the north winds won't be so cold. Our stomachs won't growl like the grizzly bear. Our children will grow strong until the spring sun warms the earth again."

The tribe now have plenty of tanned elk and deer hides to trade at the powwow that is held each Fall. This was a gathering of friendly tribes to trade goods with each other.

The Cherokees across what was later named Clinch Mountain are the only ones who mine and process salt. Their salt is always in great demand. The tribe uses salt to cure their meat, although some meat is sun dried with strips of meat made into jerky. The salt is also used to season food.

Wild onion, sage and other herbs, and salt are added for flavor as the venison cooks in large pots hanging over the campfires.. The smell from the

pots carries throughout the encampment, and the aroma of fry bread fills the air. It will taste so good with wild honey the women and children gather from beehives in hollow trees.

The women and children work hard all summer gathering nuts and seeds and berries. The maize has to be harvested, and the squash must be gathered from the field. Many other edible plants and herbs are dried and stored along with different kinds of mushrooms. This is a good time to celebrate, a time to raise their hands to the Great Spirit and give thanks.

The wolves, always well taken care of, receive their fill of meat. Sometimes, the wolves hunt for themselves, but they always return to their masters. On cold winter nights, the wolves sleep inside the tepees and curl up close to the children to help keep them warm.

When the white men arrive, they cut down the big oaks to build their cabins and clear land for their cattle to graze on--land that once was the Tutelo's hunting grounds. The wolves are all killed for their bounty. The elk no longer drink from the creeks.

If we listen closely, we can still hear the owls hooting in the willow trees along the creeks or the lonely call of the whippoorwill in the dark woods on a drizzly night. The only things left of the Tutelos are flint ax heads, spear points and arrowheads sometimes found in newly plowed fields.

The smell of wood smoke no longer comes from an encampment along the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The drums and howls of the silver wolf are now silent. Maybe it's not too late for us to restore the bounty and beauty of Mother Earth and learn to walk in harmony with Nature like the ones who lived here before us did, if only for the ones who come after us.

Should you hear the sound of drums or a wolf's howl coming from the mountain, maybe it's only the wind, or maybe it's the spirits of the Tutelo hunters, "Hunting With Wolves."

Creative Nonfiction

Southwest Virginia Through the Eyes of an Urban
Miss: A Memoir

By Dr. Julie A. Mayrose

I moved from Pontiac, Michigan to Richlands,
Virginia in November 1985 to work at Southwest
Virginia Community College. I came to work there
for two years . . . I stayed for seven.

During my time in Southwest Virginia, I learned
about Appalachian arts and traditions. I learned
about family pride and community spirit. I cherish
my time working at SWCC. Dr. Charles R. King and
his wife Mary brought me into their circle, and I
adopted their gracious ways and keep them to this
day.

However, there were many things I did not know
about or understand. My life in Pontiac was quite
different from living in Richlands. At that time,

Richlands did not have a drive through car wash, and I thought it was the end of the world! There was no shopping to speak of and no dry cleaners. I experienced “culture shock” firsthand!

Early on in my time at SWCC, I traveled to the home of Jane and Jerry Thornhill. Jerry taught math at SWCC. I knew him by sight and did not know Jane at all. Jerry and Jane lived in Russell County in a beautiful home nestled at the foot of a mountain. It was a long, curvy and very dark drive that night, and it was raining, as well.

Suddenly, I realized we were not alone. Outside, there were cows. Cows in the road! It seemed to me that there were hundreds of them. I demanded that my friend stop the car. We must save those cows I said. My friend was reluctant, but he did stop. “What are you going to do?” he asked. “I am going to put them in the backseat of the car,” I replied. My friend did not agree to that plan and,

instead, insisted we drive on to Jerry and Jane's and get help for the cows there.

I walked into Jerry and Jane's house yelling, "There are cows in the road, cows in the road!" I was met with stunned silence. Jerry broke the silence by saying, "Sit down Julie and relax you're in. . . there are always cows in that road."

I fell in love with Southwest Virginia and left with reluctance. I keep in touch with many friends and colleagues from SWCC and appreciate how they brought me into their lives and taught me the ways of living in Appalachia.

A Visit To Ralph Stanley

By Frank Shortt

“Do you think we could go visit with Ralph Stanley,” Dan inquired. “I’d sure like to get his autograph.”

“Maybe,” I replied, “one of dad’s churchgoers is a cousin of his. They don’t live too far from Ralph. I’ll see what I can arrange. He only lives a couple of hours from my folks.”

In the 1980s, my daughter, Leanne, her then husband Dan Hollywood, my wife Sharon and I decided to go to Virginia to visit my parents. They lived in the little burg of Shortt Gap, named for my forefathers.

Dan, a budding banjo player, was a great fan of the bluegrass banjo wizard, Ralph Stanley.

Dan was thrilled to be so near to Ralph and had bought one of Ralph's tapes at the Tazewell Flea Market.

Bonnie Salyers, Ralph's cousin, and her husband, Hobart, informed us at church on Wednesday night that Ralph would probably be home on the following Sunday. Furthermore, they assured us that if we came to dinner, they would take us out to meet Ralph after dinner (Lunch to us).

"Why, Ralph and I are regular coon-huntin' pardners," Hobart related. "Ralph's a great feller; he just found an easier way to make a livin' other than coal mining."

Hobart was a retired coal miner and farmer.

The following Sunday, Dan could hardly wait for church to be over. This was the day we were to meet the great Ralph Stanley.

After what seemed a very long sermon, we all—mom, Sharon (my wife), Dan, Leanne, and I—piled into the car and drove over to Hobart’s farm. He and his family had left ahead of us to prepare dinner for us when we arrived.

The drive over to Sandy Ridge was beautiful. The skies were unusually blue; fields of corn, cabbage, and variegated beet tops displayed themselves beside the highway. Where coal mines had once been, new growth had hidden the slate dumps.

Upon our arrival, Hobart, whose rough hands revealed his professions, showed us around his wonderfully manicured place. He explained to us the workings of the farm. He showed us the animals, tools, and the different crops he raised. There were many plants used medicinally as well as for food.

This was a very good education for Dan as he had never been on a working Virginia farm. He was

quite taken with Hobart as well as the rest of his family.

Dinner consisted of roast turkey with the trimmings, beef roast, mashed potatoes, coleslaw, green beans, corn on the cob, and for bread, flaky biscuits as well as golden brown cornbread. Mrs. Salyers had outdone herself.

For dessert, there was homemade apple pie, berry pie, and a huge chocolate cake. What a feast! One would have thought we were royalty. We decided to delay dessert until after the visit with Ralph. Secretly, we wished to digest the great amount of food we had partaken of so we could eat more dessert.

“Well, I reckon we’d better get started,” Hobart exclaimed as he hung up the phone. “Ralph says to come on over.”

This we commenced to do, and, after a dusty trip on a twisting mountain road in Hobart's van, we finally arrived at Ralph's house.

As we drove in the yard, we noticed Ralph's large touring bus. It reminded us of all the hours he and his band had to spend on that bus, the grueling hours practicing for the next gig and time spent trying to sleep with the incessant roar of the highway. Was this such an easy way to make a living?

Strolling through the open gate, we were greeted by a large collie dog. Barking a greeting, he came to Hobart's call.

"Where could Ralph have gotten to?" Hobart wondered aloud.

Suddenly a man emerged from a ditch. He was begrimed with mud. He wore a blue chambray shirt. An old straw hat was pulled low on his head. Could this be the famous Ralph Stanley?

“Well, howdy Hobart. How are you, Bonnie, and the kids makin’ out, and how are all you folks doing?”

We told him we were all fine.

“We’ve been having a terrible drought,” he explained. Don’t look like we’re about to have rain anytime soon. I’ve been havin’ to pipe water from an old spring way back up in the hills!”

Who would have thought the greatest banjo player of bluegrass would hazard his precious fingers by being out there digging his own ditches? He is even known as Dr. Ralph Stanley!

Hobart introduced all of us to Ralph. Dan could barely contain himself as he faced the famous picker. After some small talk, Dan got down to his main purpose.

“Would you mind taking a few pictures with us? We’d like to be able to show them to folks back in California.”

Dan’s avid enthusiasm must have influenced Ralph.

“I’d be glad to do that, just give me a minute to straighten up a little.”

He was the eternal showman! He began by removing his hat and smoothing his hair back. Then he commenced to brush off all the mud from his faded jeans. He winced as he looked down at his boots. He appeared to be at ease around Hobart; otherwise, he would have probably went into the house and taken a shower.

We had a great shoot. Ralph posed beside my mom, between Dan and Hobart, and finally with Hobart, Dan and me. Sharon was behind the camera.

Finally, a shot was made of Sharon and Ralph.

As mentioned before, Dan had bought one of Ralph's tapes at the Tazewell Flea Market. We had been there on Monday. Dan was impressed by all the small groups just sitting around casually playing music. The young age of some of the pickers was especially of great interest to him.

On asking Ralph if he would autograph the tape, Ralph exclaimed, "Where'd you get this tape?"

"At a flea market," Dan replied.

"Do you know that this is a pirated tape?" Ralph asked.

"I really wouldn't know a pirated tape from a legitimate tape," Dan informed him. "I just liked it, and I bought it."

Ralph, being the great gentleman that he is, questioned Dan no farther and proceeded to autograph the tape.

This was a fitting ending to a wonderful visit. After taking a couple of shots of the bus, making our adieus and wishing Ralph the best of everything, we began wending our way to Hobart's house for the wonderful dessert that awaited us.

Contributor's Note

B. Chelsea Adams's novel, *Organic Matter*, was published in 2020 and is available on Amazon. A chapbook of her poems, *At Last Light*, was published by Finishing Line Press and nominated for the Virginia Library Poetry Book Prize. Adams's chapbook, *Looking for a Landing*, was published by Sow's Ear Press in 2000. In 2012, Adams was the featured poet within rkvry online literary journal; in 2013, she was the featured poet in *Floyd County Moonshine*. Her poems have appeared in literary journals including *Albany Review*, *Artemis*, *Common Ground Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Rhino*, *Southwestern Review*, and *Wind*. Her fiction has appeared in *Floyd County Moonshine*, *Huckleberry Magazine*, *BlackWater Review*, *Potato Eyes*, and *Voices of Appalachia*. She earned a MA from the Hollins University Creative Writing program. She taught English and Creative Writing at Radford University and was a resident fellow at Virginia's Center for the Creative Arts, Nimrod, and Selu Writer's Retreat.

Since the age of eleven, Kohava Blount, a dedicated and enthusiastic author and poet, has had work continually published in newspapers, literary journals, and magazines. Through varying themes of subject matter, she fervently seeks to inspire, to uplift, and to rouse thought into the marvels of the inherent, Earthly grandeur. In addition to writing, Blount holds a strong passion for volunteering in

the community, being in nature, dancing, and playing sports. Moreover, further favored pursuits include composing and performing musical works, translating, interpreting, and speaking foreign languages, reading, cooking, and creating artwork.

Tom Cooper is a former student of Southwest Virginia Community College. He is a native of Virginia, having grown up near Dayton, Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley.

Piper Durrell has spent much of the last year and a half exploring the joys of gardening and walks with friends. She misses having the experiences of camping and travel that have been the basis of the poems she writes about-- the beauty of the natural world both of nearby Virginia and the landscapes of the west.

Four volumes of Louis Gallo's poetry, *Archaeology*, *Scherzo Furiant*, *Crash* and *Clearing the Attic*, are now available. *Why is there Something Rather than Nothing?* and *Leeway & Advent* will be published soon. His work appears in *Best Short Fiction 2020*. A novella, "The Art Deco Lung," will soon be published in *Storylandia*. National Public Radio aired a reading and discussion of his poetry on its "With Good Reason" series (December 2020). His work has appeared or will shortly appear in *Wide Awake in the Pelican State* (LSU anthology), *Southern Literary Review*, *Fiction Fix*, *Glimmer*

Train, Hollins Critic, Rattle, Southern Quarterly, Litro, New Orleans Review, Xavier Review, Glass: A Journal of Poetry, Missouri Review, Mississippi Review, Texas Review, Baltimore Review, Pennsylvania Literary Journal, The Ledge, storySouth, Houston Literary Review, Tampa Review, Raving Dove, The Journal (Ohio), Greensboro Review, and many others. Chapbooks include The Truth Changes, The Abomination of Fascination, Status Updates and The Ten Most Important Questions. He is the founding editor of the now defunct journals, The Baratavia Review and Books: A New Orleans Review. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize several times. He is the recipient of an NEA grant for fiction. He teaches at Radford University in Radford, Virginia.

Morgan Gilbert is the Director for the School of Arts and an Instructor of Visual Arts at SWCC.

Marjorie Gowdy writes at home in the Blue Ridge mountains of Callaway, VA. Gowdy was Founding Executive Director of the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi, MS, which she led for 18 years. Now retired, she worked in other fields that fed her love of writing, including as a grants writer. Her poetry has been published in the *Roanoke Review* (2015), *Artemis Journal* (2013, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021), *Floyd County Moonshine* (upcoming fall 2021 issue), *Valley Voices* (Mississippi Valley State

University, in 2021), Indolent Books (online, January 2021), and Visitant-Lit (January 2021). Her poem, "Last of the Blue Azures," was displayed at the Lynchburg, VA, 2021 Riverwalk Festival. In February, two of her poems will be displayed alongside quilts in the Colonial Piecemakers Guild and Poetry Society of Virginia exhibition in Hampton, VA. Her essays are included in *Katrina: Mississippi Women Remember* (2007). Gowdy also paints, with recent works accepted by the Virginia Beach Artists' Center (2020), illustrations published in *Floyd County Moonshine*, spring and fall 2021, in *Artemis Journal 2021* (a visual poem), and included in an upcoming exhibition at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. Her poems + verse, which she calls *carmen duca*, are also part of an exhibit, Welcome to Roanoke, in 2020-2021 at the Roanoke, VA, Municipal Building. Gowdy is a summa cum laude graduate of Virginia Tech and has a master's degree in liberal studies from University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Her work is informed by the tumbled Virginia mountains as well as her time on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and along the coasts of Virginia and North Carolina. She is currently newsletter editor for the Poetry Society of Virginia.

Linda Hudson Hoagland of Tazewell, Virginia, a graduate of Southwest Virginia Community College, has won acclaim for her novels including: *Onward and Upward*, *Missing Sammy*, *An Unjust Court*,

Snooping Can Be Regrettable, Snooping Can Be Scary, Snooping Can Be Uncomfortable, Snooping Can Be Helpful – Sometimes, Snooping Can Be Doggone Deadly, Snooping Can be Devious, Snooping Can Be Contagious, Snooping Can Be Dangerous, The Best Darn Secret, An Awfully Lonely Place, The Backwards House, Death by Computer, Checking on the House, Crooked Road Stalker and Dangerous Shadow. She has also written biographies and stage plays and has had her short stories, essays, and poems published in anthologies including *Cup of Comfort, These Haunted Hills, These Haunted Hills Vol. 2, Broken Petals, Easter Lilies, Wild Daisies,* and *Christmas Blooms.* Her other books include *Watch Out for Eddy, Just a Country Boy: Don Dunford-Updated 2014, A Guitar, A Bible, and A Shotgun, Quilted Memories, My First 90 Years, The Little Old Lady Next Door* (Out of Print); 3 volumes of short writings and 3 poetry collections.

Teresa Kestner's work has been published in literary journals, and Kestner is a lifelong resident of Southwest Virginia.

Craig Kurtz's musical / literary travels began with the Philosophic Collage in 1981. The composer of *Poèmes Déplorables de Wortley Clutterbuck* and *Gubbish*, recent publications include *Quadrant* (Australia) *Litro* (UK) and *Reed* (USA).

Dr. Julie A. Mayrose is a former resident of Richlands and employee at Southwest Virginia Community College from November 1985 to August 1991.

Kevin J. McDaniel is the author of three chapbooks and a book of poetry, *Rubbernecking* (Main Street Rag Publishing, 2019). McDaniel is the founder of *Speckled Trout Review*.

Oscar L. Price was born in Russell County, Virginia and raised in Elk Garden and Lebanon. He now resides in Colorado. He is a regular contributor to the *Clinch Mountain Review*. His works also include a poem "Beartown Mountain" in "Working for Stuarts" by Kathy Shearer, and "A Country Boy's Memories" in the late Ralph Snead's column in the *Lebanon News*. He has also published various poems and stories in both Virginia and Colorado publications.

Frank Shortt was born in 1942 at Shortt Gap, Virginia in a coal mining family. He joined the USAF in 1960 during the Cold War/Vietnam Crisis with a final discharge in 1966. He retired from the San Jose, California school department as a Chief of Operations in 2000. Since then, he has attended college, writes for a San Jose newspaper, three college journals, for an online magazine *The Spectator*, has contributed to the *Virginia Mountaineer* in Grundy, Virginia, and *The Voice* newspaper in Buchanan County, Va. He has two

daughters, four grandchildren, and one great-grandson living in Texas. His hobby is, of all things, writing! Frank continues to write constantly as he approaches 80 years of age.

Matthew J. Spireng's full-length poetry book, *Good Work*, won the 2019 Sinclair Poetry Prize and was published in 2020 by Evening Street Press. His book, *What Focus Is*, was published in 2011 by WordTech Communications. Spireng's book *Out of Body* won the 2004 Bluestem Poetry Award and was published in 2006 by Bluestem Press at Emporia State University. His published chapbooks are: *Clear Cut*; *Young Farmer*; *Encounters*; *Inspiration Point*, winner of the 2000 Bright Hill Press Poetry Chapbook Competition; and *Just This*. Since 1990, his poems have appeared in publications across the United States: *The Clinch Mountain Review*, *North American Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Rattle*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Poet Lore*. Spireng is an 11-time Pushcart Prize nominee and winner of *The MacGuffin's* 23rd Annual Poet Hunt Contest in 2018 and the 2015 *Common Ground Review* poetry contest. He holds an M.A. from Hollins College (now Hollins University).

