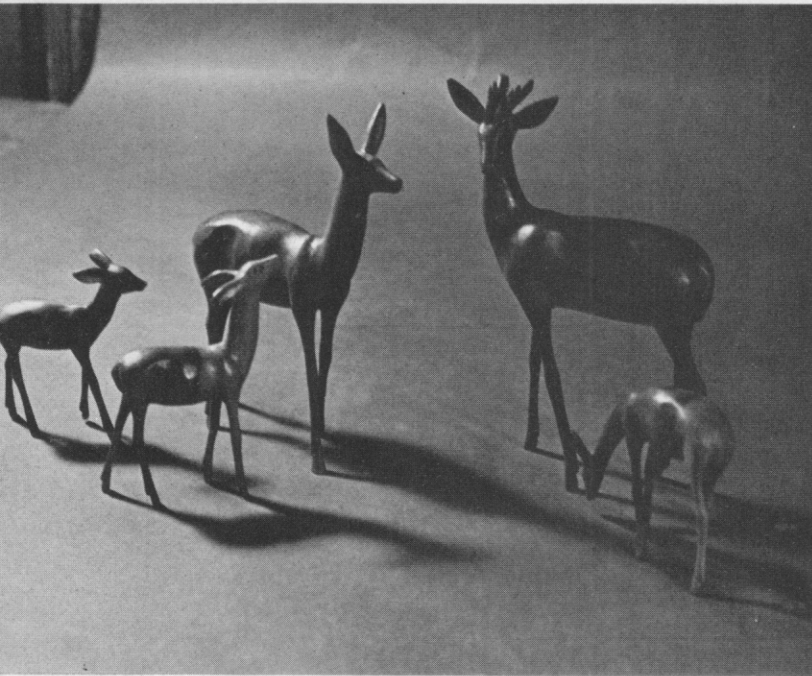


We especially enjoy those activities learned from our older neighbors. The ancient modal tunes, cleverly told tales, and lively Appalachian dances have a special charm because we have inherited them and know their roots. However, we have not limited ourselves to Appalachian folk material. We no longer care to do one dance all night long! The recorder, a Renaissance instrument, takes its place in our program along with the Appalachian dulcimer. We enjoy the Danish singing game "Rosalil" as well as "Old Betty Larkin" and "Going to Boston." We find as much excitement in a well-executed English sword dance as in fast-paced Appalachian "set running."

The recreation material is related to other Folk School pursuits. A program we recently produced showed the thread of relationship between Shakespeare and mountain fiddling!

**C**ERTAINLY this is a different sort of school. Programs in woodcarving, trellis tomato growing, and community dances are not commonly associated with educational institutions. But the form continues to evolve and change. Over the years the Folk School has become a way of life, and a generation of students has taken its place in the community. Many of our present staff were students in the prewar days.

To meet the needs of today we have established a new boarding program, Internships for Rural Living. Through it we have assisted a number of colleges in giving their students the stimulating experience of a real community project, outside the classroom. The program is designed for the 18-



*The Brasstown Carvers, associated with the John C. Campbell Folk School, are famous for their figures of woodland creatures, hand-carved from native hardwoods.*

to 30-year-old. Each intern is given, or identifies on his own, an experience-service-learning assignment.

Through service, the intern finds a deep need to understand himself, to be effective, and to touch the lives of other people. Human relations and personal growth rightfully attain priority as the primary educational concern of the program. Through experience, patterns of personal growth are developed, and foundations for future growth are laid. Learning arises from the service-experience. Facts sort themselves into meaningful order and are more easily digested and retained because they are needed and are put to work in the community.

Interns have served as important manpower sources for tackling community problems that otherwise would remain untouched. Several have worked in public schools offering special classes for students. They have held classes for students on the verge of dropping out. Others have prepared music and art classes in schools with limited programs. An intern under College Work Study, a federally funded program, studied the zoning needs of Clay County, working with the county commissioners. Two other interns worked with our blacksmith to develop a harvesting machine for sorghum molasses cane.

Higher education in the United States is showing increasing interest in service-learning as a legitimate educational method. The southern highlands, through the John C. Campbell Folk School, Mars Hill College, Alice Lloyd College, Berea College, the Settlement Institutions of Appalachia, and other organizations are showing mountain ingenuity and independent spirit in exploring service-learning, in most cases with scanty financial assistance. The Southern Regional Education Board, Dartmouth College, and Appalachian Regional Commission have pioneered and cooperated.

A new American Studies Term will allow the Folk School to address its program more directly to all Americans, not merely natives of Appalachia. We will be looking for the American spirit in literature, history, and the sweep of events surrounding us.

Public school structures in the rural southern highlands—and in the rest of the nation as well—are in need of innovative change. Present curricula stress academic achievement and teach the mores of an industrial society. In an age of rapid change we can not afford to prepare our children for the outdated industrial revolution. We can scarcely prepare them for today's world. We must look farther ahead.

I see in the future a desperate need for personalization and integrity, for community, for cooperation. How do we prepare children for this? One way is through schools like the John C. Campbell Folk School. ■

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**John Ramsay has been director of the John C. Campbell Folk School since 1967. He is a graduate of Berea College in Kentucky and received his Ph.D. from Iowa State University. Indicative of his major interests are his chairmanship of the Settlement Institutions of Appalachia, representation on the board of the Country Dance and Song Society of America, and membership in the America Dairy Science Association.**

John M. Ramsay

# APPALACHIAN FOLK SCHOOL



OUR TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS and the newer educational impact from television and other mass media continue to press our young people toward a life with far too little relationship to the communities from which they come. This is true especially in Appalachia where urban materialism contrasts strikingly with rural resources.

Although not surprising, it is disheartening to see the great majority of youth from rural Appalachia leaving their communities for employment in urban areas. More particularly, it is ironic in view of the active interest many urban youth have in the residual Appalachian lifestyle being forsaken by those for whom it is a birthright.

I am one born outside the region who has come in to stay. My heart was captured by the southern highlands when I first entered Berea College, a school in Kentucky for mountain youth. There I found a quality of life that reinforced my childhood training in the Golden Rule and its social consequences.

From an oldtimer whose house is perched on a North Carolina hillside, I learned a golden rule of economics that requires a cultural commitment quite different from the competitive stance of an industrialized society. I call it Derreberry's economic principles: (1) "Hit's worth right smart to have something to do." (2) "I wouldn't want to charge anyone more than I'd want to spend."

Life acquired a different historical perspective to me when I heard vestiges of Elizabethan speech spoken naturally by the "uneducated." The ablative case sends chills of awe through me when I hear it, in the same way that an old loom causes me to ponder what history it could tell.

But more important than the rich heritage found among

the hills is the contribution its people could make to a society whose fabric has lost its strength. Answers to competition, specialization, spectatorism, and depersonalization can be found among the hills. Saving the best of the southern highland culture is a conservation issue equally important as protecting streams filled with trout and cherishing clear, starlit nights and productive forests.

What kind of educational program could prepare young people for life at home? Since its founding in 1925 the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, has addressed itself to this question. Through the late twenties, the Great Depression, World War II, the postwar period, and the present, its program has been tested. Certain principles established by the Danish bishop N. F. S. Grundtvig, founder of the Folk School movement, have proven to be sound and point the way to a school program that can adjust to changing social needs.

- Awakening, enlivening, and enlightening the spirit is a primary purpose of folk school education. Technical expertise becomes a secondary achievement that follows because an awakened spirit will grow on its own. Examinations and credits are an unnecessary interference.

- Utilization of culture in the learning experience expands the personality, creating an understanding of personal identity in the culture and history of man. Life is seen as an integrated whole in time and space. The learning experience prepares one to participate. Economic, spiritual, and cultural matters are studied as integrated and interrelated parts of life. How one makes a living is seen as having everything to do with how one lives.

- A spirit becomes educated through the relationship of



DRAWING BY NANCY MORAN

personality to personality. The “living word”—the warm, emphatic, spoken word—conveys messages not easily taught through other media. To achieve this, staff and students live together as a family.

- Cooperation and participation are necessary tools of education.

**WOODCARVING** at the Campbell Folk School began as an idea of Olive Dame Campbell, the school’s founder. Hayden Hensley, a student, caught the vision, took pocket knife in hand, and carved a goose with a slender, whittled neck. Currently, 44 men and women living within a 10-mile radius of the school are known as the Brasstown Carvers. They learned to carve and now sell their products through the school to an appreciative market.

This is an example of an economic program that complements the better features of rural living. The carving is done at home; the craftsmen are self-employed, with husbands and wives often working together. Children help with sanding and learn the use of the knife early. The colors and grains of native hardwoods enhance the beauty of the farm and woodland figures for which the carvers have become famous.

The cool nights resulting from our high elevation and the fertility of the clay soil base give our section of the mountains a particular advantage in producing trellis tomatoes. Vine-ripened tomatoes grown near the Smoky Mountains have especially fine flavor and can be produced over an unusually long season. Tomato cultivation adapts as a family enterprise, requires only modest capital outlay, and utilizes garden skills traditional to our neighbors. Small

amounts of land, a necessity in this hilly section of limited holdings, and intensive hand labor complete the picture of another economic enterprise that fits the natural and cultural resources of the area. Classes funded through the Manpower Development and Training Act supply up-to-date information for tomato growers.

Development of such industries is not easy. The Folk School encouraged George Kelischek, a master violin maker from Germany, to build a beautiful new workshop in Brass-town. When building loans for his combination home-workshop could not be arranged through the state Department of Conservation and Development (because somehow industrial concepts dictate that a man should not live where he works), private financing was arranged; and Kelischek is now employing three local craftsmen. Music, always a strong feature of Appalachian life, has received a new dimension in Brasstown through Kelischek’s skill.

The school is experimenting with a homemade greenhouse, a travel trailer park, sorghum molasses production, a community cannery, and other enterprises, measuring each in terms of how it fits into the pattern of life. Although we have done no more than talk about it, we are intrigued with the possibilities of small industrial enterprises that might suit the area. Could men become keypunch operators? Could they work a 4-hour day so twice as many might be employed and half a day would then be available to them for rural pursuits?

A recreation movement has grown out of Folk School interests. Community dances are held weekly. It seems natural to us that parents and children choose each other for partners. Children 2 and 3 years of age grow up in a spirit of cooperative fellowship and become participants rather than spectators.