West Virginia Humanities Council's Official Publication

Fall 2026

People & Mountains



West Virginia Traditional Fiber Arts

WEST VIRGINIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

From the Executive Director



As we prepare for the final months of 2026 and the start of a new programming year, I want to share an important update about the federal funding landscape, and how it will shape our work over the next several months.

In June, following 14 months without any federal funding, the state humanities councils finally received a portion of our congressionally appropriated funding for 2026, delivered through our primary institutional partner, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

This long-awaited development is a relief and affirms the ongoing value of our work. **Still, the financial reality is more complicated than this welcome news might suggest.**

We anticipate that the NEH will ultimately deliver less than half of what Congress approved for the state humanities councils in 2026. Next year's federal budget is currently being developed on Capitol Hill, and we are pursuing a much different outcome. But strategically, we must be ready to weather a similar situation in 2027.

Normally, we direct substantial federal dollars to our grantmaking through NEH funding. Therefore, any disparity between congressional appropriations and the funding *actually delivered* impacts our work immediately. Until full funding is released, much to our frustration, we will be able to award only about one-tenth of the grants we would distribute in a normal year.

Grantmaking has long been one of the most cost-efficient and impactful ways by which we sustain West Virginia's cultural ecosystem and economy; federal support, as approved by Congress, has always been the foundation for our grantmaking. We are determined to continue that effort. **We will not stop working to secure full release of this funding.** But receiving less than half of what Congress has actually approved for the state humanities councils means we must think carefully about how to maximize our impact in the year ahead.

For the remainder of 2026 and as we plan for 2027, we will prioritize fundraising and direct programs—initiatives we sustain and grow through private support—while routing currently available federal funding to minigrants. This approach will allow us to dispense the largest number of grants possible in a constrained funding environment, as we continue offering programs that serve West Virginians statewide.

"...we must think carefully about how to maximize our impact in the year ahead."



The West Virginia Humanities Council's Historic Headquarters

This is where your partnership becomes especially powerful. You can extend our reach by supporting Council programs such as *e-WV*, the West Virginia Folklife Program, *History Alive!*, and our annual McCreight Lecture in the Humanities. Your support will not only sustain these original humanities programs, it will allow us to dedicate the maximum amount of our limited federal funding to grantmaking, quickly and easily, as the year unfolds.

Your generosity has always been the spark for our most ambitious work. Today, notwithstanding the reason, we are eager to embark on one of our Council's most ambitious and inventive periods. Your friendship and your financial support will help determine how boldly we can continue to serve West Virginia's cultural sector.

Thank you, now and always, for standing by us, for your faith in our work, and for helping us build a future in which the Mountain State's cultural life and living traditions can flourish.

—Dr. Eric Waggoner



Doug Wood is among the West Virginia scholars who portray historical figures at museums, schools, libraries, fairs and festivals, and community centers through the Council's History Alive! *program.*



The West Virginia Folklife Program documents, sustains, presents, and supports our state's vibrant cultural heritage and living traditions.

All photos by Michael Keller

Contribute online at bit.ly/donatewvhc or by mail at 1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston, WV 25301

WEST VIRGINIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

Board of Directors

The West Virginia Humanities Council is a nonprofit institution governed by its Board of Directors. The next Board meeting is October 16 in Charleston and is open to the public.

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Book lovers are invited to the 2026 West Virginia Book Festival on Saturday, **October 24**, at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center. Enjoy talks by acclaimed authors Rosalie Haizlett, Craig Johnson, Kate Quinn, Margot Lee Shetterly, and R. L. Stine. The Humanities Council has served as a proud sponsor of the West Virginia Book Festival since the event's first year in 2001. For more information, visit www.wvbookfestival.org.

Note: This year, the Council's McCreight Lecture in the Humanities takes place nine days before the Book Festival.

West Virginia Book Festival





Correction:
In the summer issue of *People & Mountains*, our Robert Higgins House article did not credit the Hardy County Convention & Visitors Bureau, which worked in cooperation with the town of Moorefield and the Hardy County Commission, to restore the historic building.





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On Cover: Fiber artist Enrica McMillon demonstrates how to use a tape loom. *Photo by Michael Keller*



A big jam concluded the festivities, featuring Annick Odom, Mike Miller, Dave Bing, Gerry and Jesse Milnes, Emily Miller, Edwin McCoy, and Ron Mullennex.

Humanities Council Celebrates

Gerry Milnes

The summer issue of *People & Mountains* profiled Gerald "Gerry" Milnes, a folklorist, musician, filmmaker, author, and teacher from Elkins. In April, the National Endowment for the Arts named him as a 2026 National Heritage Fellow and this year's sole recipient of the prestigious Bess Lomax Hawes National Heritage Fellowship. On May 21, the West Virginia Humanities Council hosted a packed reception to recognize Milnes' achievements. The following photos, taken by Michael Keller, highlight some of that evening's many musical moments.



Online readers may view a short film, *Gerry Milnes: An Artist Profile*, filmed by Clara Haizlett. For other readers, visit vimeo.com/1221169609.



Milnes recounted his career as a folklorist to a standing-room-only audience.



The evening reunited Dave Bing (guitar) and Milnes (fiddle).



Annick Odom was Milnes' apprentice in the 2022-23 West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program.



Milnes' daughter-in-law Emily Miller and son Jesse entertained the crowd.

A partial reunion of the band Gandydancer brought together Gerry Milnes (fiddle), Dave Bing (guitar), and Ron Mullennex (banjo). Bass player Jim Martin was unable to attend. The gathering also honored former band member Mark Payne, longtime Humanities Council program officer, who passed away in 2019.



Transformative Narratives:
2026 McCreight Lecturer Rick Atkinson



As a national saga, it's the stuff of great literature, with spectacular characters, variously noble, ignoble, courageous and tormented, and a plot as improbable as it is spellbinding.

—Rick Atkinson in 2019 on writing about the American Revolution

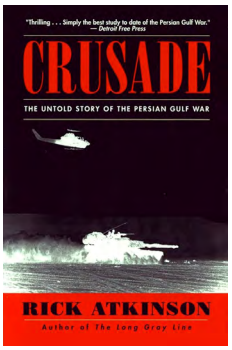
By Kyle Warmack

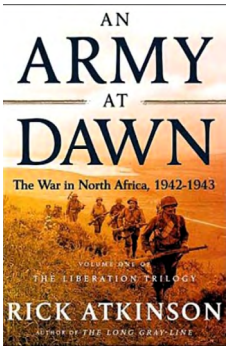
The very first historical figure we encounter in *The Fate of the Day* (2025), the second and most recent volume of Rick Atkinson's in-progress trilogy about the American Revolution, is not an American at all. In fact, the character is mostly notorious for her association with an entirely different revolution on the other side of the Atlantic. Her most famous words, "Let them eat cake," probably never passed between her lips but are nevertheless etched into historical legend.

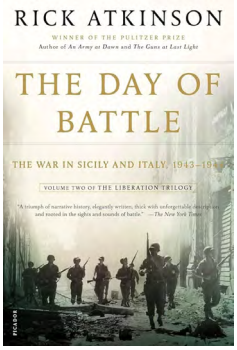
Marie Antoinette is a bold character choice for the first chapter in the "second act" of an American Revolution trilogy—though perhaps it's a choice we should expect from this year's McCreight Lecturer. Pulitzer Prizes tend not to be awarded to writers meek and mild, especially three times (twice for journalism during Atkinson's long tenure at *The Washington Post*, and once for his subsequent work as a historian).

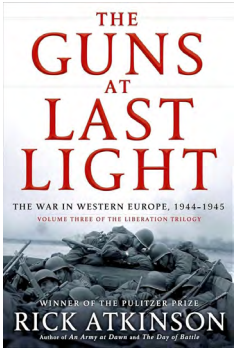
My personal introduction to Atkinson's work came not long after the release of his first Revolution Trilogy tome, *The British Are Coming* (2019). Before I could finish it, though, I began reading his earlier book *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (1993):

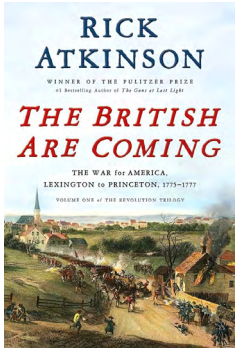
> **The first sound they heard, fittingly, was that familiar din from the late, lost war—the deep whomp whomp whomp of helicopter blades beating northward. Half a dozen armed Apaches, darting around a larger Blackhawk like courtiers around their monarch, emerged from the low surf of oil smoke. Veering wide of the armistice tents on the northern stretch of the runway, the procession touched down in a furious boil of sand. Soldiers ringing the airfield drew themselves up and squared their shoulders. A murmur ran among them: *Schwarzkopf's* here.**

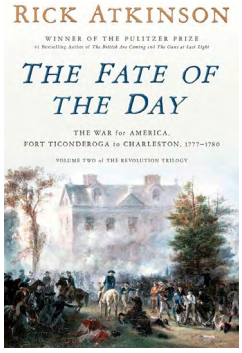












Stark are the contrasts between writing about the Persian Gulf War and the American Revolution, not least because one had ended only two years prior, and the other more than 200 years. *Crusade* played to Atkinson's strengths as a journalist for which he was then far better known. He won his first Pulitzer for national reporting in 1982. His war correspondence experience enabled the author to buttress *Crusade* with material from a staggering 500 interviews. Access to living veterans was crucial since the Pentagon was extremely tightfisted with its documentation so soon after the conflict's conclusion. Many of Atkinson's interviewees requested anonymity in sharing their experiences, as the smoke was still rising from burning oilfields when he visited the theater of war only weeks after its end. *Crusade* includes 30 pages for its bibliography and notes in a book just over 500 pages.

His first American Revolution book, *The British Are Coming*, posed the opposite dilemma, the inescapable mortality of its subjects having furnished Atkinson with no living interviewees. But by the time he got around to America's founding, however, Atkinson himself had a much deeper well of writing experience from which to draw. He left journalism and *The Washington Post* behind in 1999, the year he earned his second Pulitzer. However, he would return to the newspaper temporarily for war assignments in Iraq in 2003 and 2007.

After journalism, the author's focus shifted to history. His next Pulitzer came for his Liberation Trilogy about the United States' role in Europe during World War II. It was the grandest possible announcement of his full-time entry on the historical scene. Its first volume, *An Army at Dawn* (2002), became a bestseller and netted his third Pulitzer.

It was thus a transformed Rick Atkinson who began researching and writing about America's War of Independence in the years leading up to the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding. The accumulated bibliography and notes for *The British Are Coming* amply demonstrate this, spiraling to an eye-watering 178 pages for a book about the same length as *Crusade*. Some of this was born out of sheer necessity to include the documents, paintings, and archaeological and museum artifacts Atkinson used to access the world of the 1770s and 1780s.

Most of all, *The British Are Coming* bibliography seems to be its own silent answer to the question Atkinson posed in a 2019 video: "Who needs another book on the American Revolution?" He had already given his rejoinder to that query, however, when interviewed by the *Journal of the American Revolution* in 2015: "I believe that all great events and great figures in human history are bottomless. Whether it's World War II and Eisenhower, the Civil War and Lincoln, or the Revolution and Washington, there's more to write—there will always be more to write."

Atkinson gradually wove his sources into an incredible tapestry, richly embroidered with historical texture and characters, such as in this passage from *The Fate of the Day*: "Washington's right wing [at the 1777 Battle of Brandywine] had been entrusted to Major General John Sullivan, a litigious, barrel-shaped New Hampshire lawyer with a peptic ulcer and eyes almost as dark as his curly black hair." His writing here could have been a dry exercise in maneuvers, volleys, and flanking

movements; instead, the battle comes to life as Atkinson pins our attention on figures great and small, such as Sullivan who—according to one contemporary—was also "weak, vain, without dignity, fond of scribbling [and], in the field, a madman."

While readers' online reviews of Atkinson's work overwhelmingly trend toward enthusiastic praise, a handful complain about unnecessary length and detail. The "historian's trap" is my name for the phenomenon, and it's an easy lure for an "archive rat," as Atkinson describes himself. Personally, I don't think his first two Revolution volumes fall into such a trap. The granular texture brings an era from the distant, unfamiliar past into sharper focus. His practiced pen seamlessly conveys us from scene to scene, often through minutiae that never lets the reader forget the lives and activity disrupted by political upheaval and war. As tension mounts before the Battle of Brandywine, Atkinson reminds us in the *Fate of the Day*:

> **Apples and peaches now ready for picking would instead rot on the ground. Buckwheat ripening for harvest in a month would be trampled, along with the Indian corn and fields fertilized with wood ash for the winter wheat and rye scheduled for planting later in September. Thursday was baking day on many farms, perfuming the air with the scent of burning brushwood, but most ovens in the Brandywine valley remained cold on September 11.**

Back in 2013, fresh from the release of the Liberation Trilogy's final installment, *The Guns at Last Light*, Atkinson stated that "the true ambition of a narrative historian should be to bring people back from the dead," a task at which his writing often succeeds. And while he readily admits in the same interview that he "sort of stumbled on the structure" for the first volume of his Liberation Trilogy, the craft of his Revolution books feels more confident and clarified. Whether his attention to detail is your cup of Boston Harbor-flavored tea or not, you can feel Atkinson, the artisan, hard at work in every paragraph.

Like all human endeavors, that work is imperfect, and Atkinson is, by his own definition, a military historian first and foremost, tending to position the Revolution's political context as a backdrop. Not every reader or scholar will find this satisfactory. In the final assessment, however, Atkinson's goal is less analytical than immersive. "The challenge," Atkinson remarked, "is to take a story that people think they know and about which much has been written—good stuff, too, in many cases—and try to make it fresh, try to make it sound in the reader's inner ear as if this is a story they haven't heard before."

In short, the narrative historian's job is to be transformative, not merely interpretive. When reading an Atkinsonian take on history, I'm struck by how often I've learned not only what *happened* but about how people *felt*. Rumors, plots, plans, passions, and fears all take flight on his pages, reaffirming that history is not just past, but past *lives*, with all the growth, mistakes, triumphs, and tragedies those lives entail.

To read both *Crusade* and his Revolution books within a short span of each other is to observe, in a sense, Rick Atkinson's past life, too. *Crusade* was the last book he wrote while working as a full-time journalist. Yet, in the ensuing decades, he has retained the skills of a veteran journalist who knows how to paint vibrant portraits even within sprawling canvases.

The nation's 250th is a fitting time to contemplate history in that way: to treat its founders as living humans with petty jealousies and gout mixed with their soaring ideals, not as infallible saints. Through the centuries their collective memory has also been transformed as the nation has grown and changed. Every generation reckons anew with its place in the larger tapestry, and no doubt Atkinson's work will have a profound impact on ours.

Kyle Warmack is the program officer for the West Virginia Humanities Council.



2026 Betsy K. McCreight Lecture in the Humanities

featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning historian

Rick Atkinson

Thursday, October 15
7:30 p.m. (doors open at 7:00)

Capitol Theater
123 Summers Street
Charleston, WV

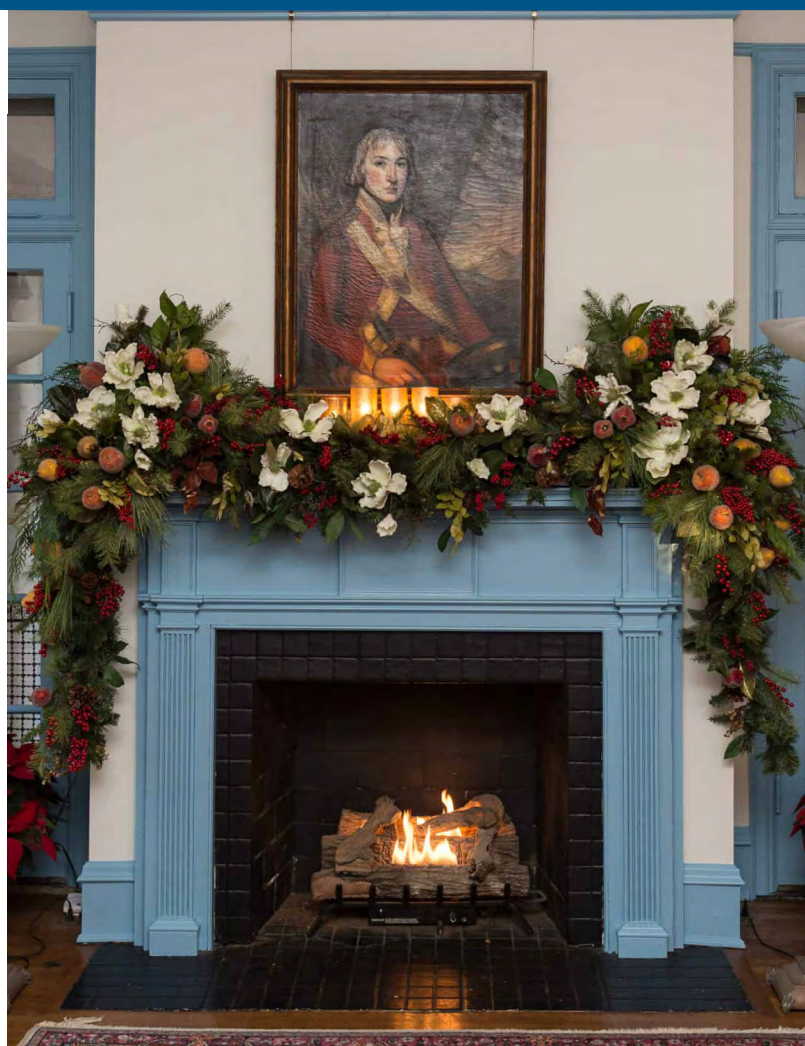
Free parking at Summers Street Garage! Make us part of your downtown ArtWalk!

Holiday Open House

Celebrate the holidays with the Humanities Council at our annual Open House on **Friday, December 4, from 4 to 6 p.m., at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House**, 1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston.

Gather in our festively decorated 1836 headquarters for seasonal refreshments, holiday cheer, and tours of our historic property. Enjoy time with friends, colleagues, and Council supporters.

We look forward to seeing you!





Tape Looms in the 18th and 19th Centuries

By Enrica McMillon

When thinking of looms, the types that usually come to mind are the large wooden-framed floor looms used to weave wide fabrics, such as blankets. Because of the amount of labor required to make textiles, looms for producing those fabrics were the first to be mechanized. The production of narrow bands (up to about 2 ½″ wide), though, remained in the hands of those who needed them. Virtually every household in America had what has come to be called a tape loom.

Box Tape Looms

The most common type in West Virginia were box tape looms. They were simple to construct, and while some show fine craftsmanship, many have rougher finishes. They are simply wooden boxes, anywhere from 15-24″ front to back and 6-7″ wide. Depth varies more, but 4-5″ is common.

The box holds an upright wooden heddle, located at or near the front of the loom, with holes and slots for the warp to pass through. A bar or reel near the back of the box holds the unwoven length of warp, and there must be some means to hold this under tension so the warp doesn't unwind when the weaver pulls on it. Most weavers simply



Box tape looms were essential to a weaver's daily work. *Photos by Michael Keller*

attach the other end to their apron strings or belt to hold it, but some looms have a slot near the bottom of the heddle and a second tensioned bar closer to the front of the box. This isn't simply to store woven tape—it's held in place with a cog and pawl so the woven end can be kept under tension. A stick about 6-8″ long is placed through the resulting loop and inserted into the weaver's apron string, where it can be held under tension without using one's hands. Those who don't have the second reel simply pin the woven part around the stick before inserting it into their apron string, which wraps all the way around the waist and is tied at the side (as seen on page 14).

Products Made with Bands

The material used to weave the band (also called tape) depends upon its end use. Before the 19th century, it most often would have been linen, but hemp was preferred sometimes for its strength and for items exposed to weather. Wool was best for garters to hold up stockings, and those who could afford silk used it for hair ribbons or fancy trim on dresses. Cotton became commercially available after the start of the 19th century, and soon replaced linen for many purposes.

The list of products produced on a tape loom is long, but these narrow, woven bands were necessary in everyday life for all people. Before

The woven part of the band is wound onto this reel, tensioned by a ratchet and pawl so the weaver can easily keep the warp tightened.

the advent of such things as elastic, Velcro, and zippers, tapes were used many ways in clothing. It's a simple matter to weave round cords, as well as flat tapes or bands, on the same loom.

Women's clothing included ties for holding blouses in place; tape drawstrings for petticoats, skirts, and bloomers; cords for corsets or stays; bonnet and apron strings; and those for pockets, shoelaces, and garters, just to name a few.

Men's clothing included work shirts that tied at the neck, an inner neck band that could be removed and replaced when worn or stained, tape reinforcement for shoulder seams, suspenders, ties on trousers, and garters for stockings. Men's leggings were worn over stockings to protect them from brambles and wear, and those were held on with tape ties. A felt hat had an inner tape band to help hold its size and shape, an outer hatband, and possibly ties to hold it on in the wind. Men also used bands and drawstrings for their shot pouches and powder horns.

Children's clothing was simpler but included many of the same ties and garters. Both girls and women used woven ribbons to tie up their hair. Safety pins were invented in 1849. Before that, babies' diapers were tied on with a woven band, and baby swaddles were held in place with a sash. Bands were sometimes laced crisscross over the



Fiber artist Domenica Queen of Elkins weaves tape.

top of a cradle to keep the baby from falling out. Most materials used for buttons didn't survive the laundry methods of the day; instead, buttons were reserved for items rarely washed, such as men's wool coats and vests. Washable "knot buttons" were made from a knot of linen tape.

There were myriad uses for bands both in the house and around the farm—from weaving candle wicks and tying feed sacks closed to leashing animals and strapping down wagon covers and tarps. Offices and government officials used thin, narrow tapes to tie folders of papers together. Some documents were tied with red tape to denote their importance, which is the root of the "cut through red tape" phrase commonly used today.

The many cords needed to operate a large floor loom were woven on tape looms.

The military had even more uses for woven tape/bands/webbing, etc. During the Revolutionary War, George Washington ordered thousands of tents to house troops. All had tape bindings around the edges, tape loops for tent pegs, and tapes for tying the door flaps shut. Many yards of tape, binding, and webbing were needed for just one tent. These tapes weren't woven in individual households. Young boys, who were apprentices to the tentmaker or linen weaver, wove all of this on simple tape looms. Men were professional weavers, and weaving was not a gender-specific activity in households either.



Domenica tucks the stick into her apron band, freeing both hands for weaving. She controls the tension with her body by leaning slightly forward or backwards.



Controlling the tension allows even a beginning weaver to create a band with perfectly even edges.



Each slot and hole has a warp thread. Here, Enrica lifts the slot threads to create a space called a shed for the shuttle to pass through.



The second shed, the natural shed, is formed automatically as the shuttle passes through the first one. This happens only when the warp is tensioned.



The pull to keep the band tensioned means these little looms need to be secured in some way, usually with a clamp or by tying it to a table leg or another immovable object. A few looms, such as this one made by Enrica, have an extension at the back that holds the loom on the worktable without a need for clamping.

In her book *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing*, Ellen J. Gehret says that children and grandparents probably did most of the tape weaving. This is probably true, although people of all ages and genders wove on them whenever necessary. Children often learned by age five or six. They didn't need official instruction since they had been observing the process throughout early childhood. They might need a couple of tips from an experienced weaver, such as "move back a little more so your warp is nice and tight" and "don't release too much weft when you pass the shuttle" or "try to keep the edges nice and even." Candle wicks and ties for feed sacks were good practice, and a child would soon have the skills to weave other items or put a warp on the loom.

People in very remote rural areas, such as where I grew up in Helvetia, still used these looms in the mid-20th century. I am surprised that modern reenactors don't know how to use them with the same efficiency and skill. Such simple looms didn't seem important during the craft revivals of the late-20th century, and the knowledge of their use wasn't passed on.

Knee Looms

Another type of tape loom is referred to today as a knee loom. Instead of the heddle being held in place in a box, it is secured between the weaver's knees. The weaving end is attached to the weaver's apron band or sash belt with a stick in the same manner as a box-type loom, but the long, unwoven end of the warp must be handled differently. The weaving takes the path from the weaver's belt, through the holes and slots of the heddle, then around a solid object, before coming back so the weaver can secure it within easy reach. This is especially important with a knee loom, which allows so little working distance for weaving that the warp must be advanced often, preferably quickly, without having to get up.

Because knee looms could be wider for weaving the sorts of things that men were making, and because the full skirts of women's clothing would make using one more difficult, I believe knee looms were more often used by men. Many antique knee looms still found are quite crude and may have been used in barns or other outbuildings. There would have been plenty of beams handy for setting up the loom, and the weaver would need only a stool to sit on, but I haven't found any historical record as proof of this.

Many large looms from the past still survive, but others were relegated to outbuildings, where they rotted away or the wood was repurposed for other things, even firewood. The little tape looms remained in the house, where they were protected from the elements. As the need for them gradually faded, they were stored out of the way or in an attic. Some were preserved for their sentimental value and occasionally used. Because of this, a surprising number still exist, many in museum collections.

Enrica McMillon, a fiber artist from Elkins, has participated as a mentor in West Virginia Folklife's Apprenticeship Program.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is documenting West Virginia cultural traditions as part of the nationwide By the People: Conversations Beyond 250 *initiative.* By the People *is a series of community-driven programs created by humanities councils in collaboration with local partners. The initiative was developed by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.*

The West Virginia Folklife Program contributed by recording demonstrations from traditional musicians and artists. The short films will be available on e-WV. *Future issues of* People & Mountains *will include additional* By the People *material.*



THE BROAD SIDE

More Than the Hunt

The Life and Philosophy of George Bird Evans

By Erin Riebe

A quick search for books on bird-dog hunting yields countless manuals on shooting, dog training, and bird identification. Many offer practical instruction, and some include stories from the field. Few, however, rise to the level of literature achieved by George Bird Evans, founder of Old Hemlock near Bruceton Mills, Preston County. Through a careful blend of poetic prose and personal philosophy on upland hunting, Evans' works continue to attract readers well beyond the sporting community.

The foundation of his literature was simple—a journal. Beginning in 1932, Evans recorded his hunting experiences and reflections, a practice he continued for 65 seasons. These journals were the source materials for countless magazine articles and books that established him as one of America's most respected sporting authors.

Born George Washington Evans Jr. in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, in 1906, Evans spent his formative years exploring the countryside around his hometown with his first hunting companion, Ted, the family's English Setter. His parents enthusiastically encouraged his early passion for fishing, hunting, and the arts.

After studying at the Art Institute of Chicago and working as an illustrator in New York, Evans found his career disrupted by the Great Depression. By then, he was married to Kathryn "Kay" Harris. He returned to Uniontown, where Kay supported the family as a teacher while Evans devoted himself to hunting in the Allegheny Mountains and refining his artistic skills.

In 1939, the Evanses purchased an 18th-century farmhouse and surrounding property near Bruceton Mills. Although much of the land consisted of open fields leased to local farmers, the property also contained a 10-acre stand of virgin hemlocks that eventually lent its name to their homestead, Old Hemlock.



George Bird and Kay Evans pose with their English Setters, Blue and Ruff, while Kay holds a copy of the couples' first novel, *Death In Four Colors*, published under the pen name Brandon Bird in 1950.

All images courtesy of WVU Libraries, West Virginia and Regional History Center

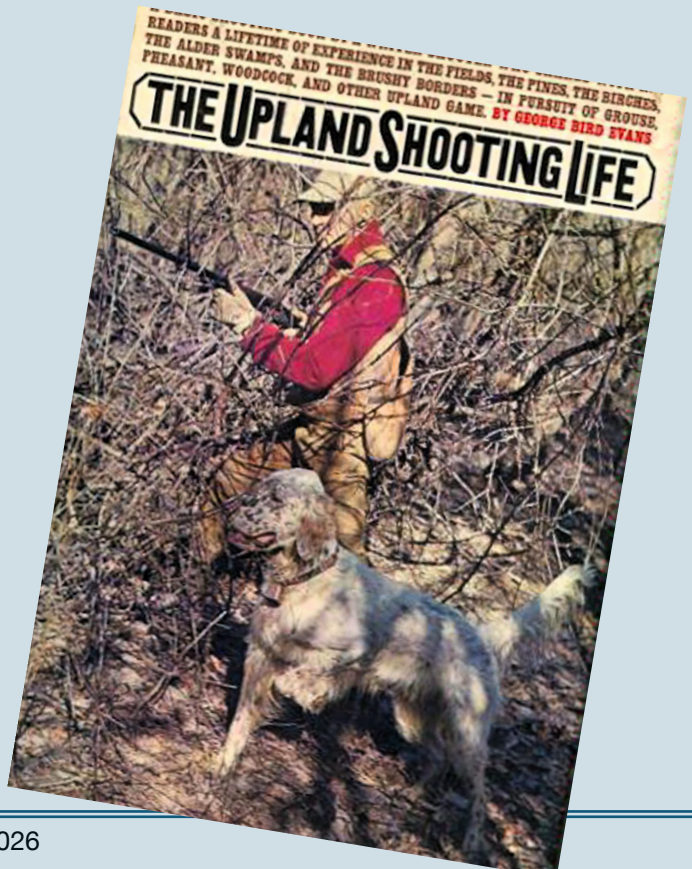
During World War II, Evans served in the U.S. Navy, producing illustrations for training manuals. After the war, he and Kay returned to Old Hemlock and embarked on a literary career. Together, they wrote mystery novels under the pseudonyms Brandon Bird and Harris Evans while also adapting stories from the journals into magazine articles about hunting and life in the uplands.

Evans' first sporting article appeared in *Field & Stream* in December 1956. Over the following years, he published several articles annually—primarily in *Field & Stream* and *Pennsylvania Game News*—gradually building a devoted readership. Many of these articles later appeared in *Gun Dog Magazine* and *Pointing Dog Journal*. During this period, the Evanses also began breeding their own line of what they termed Old Hemlock Setters. They ended their farming leases in order to reforest the property, creating the woodland landscape that exists today.

For Evans, hunting was never simply about the harvest. It was about the entire experience: the companionship of the dogs, the beauty of nature, and the ethical responsibilities that accompany the pursuit of game. He believed that respect, restraint, and fairness should guide every hunter who enters the woods.

In 1971, Evans published his first major work on the sporting life, *The Upland Shooting Life*. Centered on his hunting philosophy and the peaceful existence he and Kay had created at Old Hemlock, the book quickly became a classic. In its pages, Evans articulated a then-unconventional vision of sportsmanship: the experience of the hunt was more important than the kill. He established principles that would define his work and expressed deep admiration for forests, game birds, and bird dogs.

Before he was done, Evans wrote more than 20 books and hundreds of articles and essays, many with Kay's help. What distinguished him from other sporting writers was not simply his knowledge of bird dogs or upland hunting but his





The Evanses' cherished Old Hemlock farmhouse, built in the late 18th century near Bruceton Mills, Preston County.

ability to describe the experience in an engaging way for all readers. Trained as an illustrator, he brought an artist's eye to the page, describing landscapes, weather, and animals in poetic detail. His writing focused as much on the smell of the woods, the behavior of his dog, or the tree-filtered sunlight as it did on the outcome of a hunt.

Evans' legacy extends far beyond hunting instruction. His writings champion a philosophy of conservation, ethics, and personal restraint that still resonates with readers today. He argued that choosing to take fewer game birds was not merely sound conservation practice but the mark of an intelligent and discerning sportsman.

Following George's death in 1998 and Kay's in 2007, Old Hemlock came under the stewardship of The Old Hemlock Foundation, whose mission is to preserve and promote their legacy.

The foundation transferred its extensive collection of publications, manuscripts, illustrations, audiovisual materials, and personal papers to the West Virginia and Regional History Center, part of WVU Libraries. The collection is available online (gbe.lib.wvu.edu). Among its treasures are all 65 seasons of Evans' hunting journals.

The West Virginia Humanities Council has supported WVU Libraries' collections and public accessibility through past grant awards. More information about George Bird and Kay Harris Evans, and their old Hemlock homestead, may be found at oldhemlock.org. A bibliography of their publications is also available there.



Evans' wildlife sketches are scattered throughout his detailed hunting and fishing notes.

Erin Riebe is the grants administrator for the West Virginia Humanities Council.

Support Humanities Council Programs

Since 2017, expert mentors have paired with dedicated apprentices on a yearlong journey to teach and learn traditional music, dance, crafts, foodways, storytelling, and more. Our popular **West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program** passes on the techniques, artistry, stories, and traditional knowledge found within the Mountain State.

The program is kicking off a new cohort of apprenticeship pairs for 2026-27, unfortunately this time with a reduced budget. You can help support our pairs by making a gift to sustain this unique learning opportunity for folk and traditional artists. We'll introduce this year's participants in the next issue of *People & Mountains*.





Online readers may view short films of the 2024-25 Apprenticeship Showcases, filmed by Rebecca Branson Jones and Clara Haizlett. For other readers, visit: wvfolklife.org/folklife-apprenticeship-program

The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

For 44 years, the **Betsy K. McCreight Lecture in the Humanities** has brought nationally recognized voices to Charleston by presenting *New York Times* bestselling authors and Pulitzer Prize-winning historians. The free event is open to the public. Save the date, October 15, for this year's McCreight Lecture, and please consider making a donation to support the Humanities Council in bringing inspiring speakers and ideas to West Virginia audiences.

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In Memoriam

The Humanities Council remembers **Carol Nutter** and **Jeremy Brannon**—two people who contributed in different ways to the success of the West Virginia Humanities Council.



Carol Nutter, December 17, 1944 - May 8, 2026

Our friend and former coworker Carol passed away quietly at her home, surrounded by family, earlier this year. Anyone who called our offices was likely greeted by her pleasant, calming voice. She began her career with the Council at its West Virginia State College (now University) offices in the late 1980s as a part-time clerical worker. Not long after, she helped with the Council's move to the 8th floor of Charleston's Union Building and became a full-time secretary. Carol held that position until her retirement in April 2018. She was always available to help. Her professional demeanor, and her smile, were a mainstay for the many employees and Board members who had the pleasure of working with her through the years.



Jeremy Brannon, March 30, 1980 - April 14, 2026

Jeremy devoted a lot of time to preserving the Humanities Council's history. He volunteered at the MacFarland-Hubbard House as a Preserve WV AmeriCorps member to digitize, organize, and archive photos and records for the Council's 50th anniversary in 2024. He was known for hosting a quasi-satirical podcast, *Mothman in the Bible Belt*, about the Appalachian experience. We are thankful to have had Jeremy as part of our staff, and will continue to benefit from his work in the years to come.

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APPALACHIAN VISUALS







The West Virginia Humanities Council is sustained by people who believe the humanities matter. Your generosity protects the traditions, voices, and memories that help define who we are as West Virginians.

Recent reductions in federal funding make your support more important than ever and help ensure humanities programs continue to reach all 55 counties.

Give online at bit.ly/donatewvhc or mail contributions to
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For questions or to learn about more ways to give, contact Katie Morris, Director of Development, at morris@wvhumanities.org or 304-346-8500.

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