

# APPALACHIAN FREE PRESS



March 2024 - Volume 3, Issue 5

# THE APPALACHIAN FREE PRESS

## VOLUME 3, ISSUE 5

<b>Porches by Marjorie Gowdy.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Appalachia in Spring by Jo Ann Bullard.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>“Within Appalachia” by Jasmine Kowalkoski.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Response: Advocacy groups supporting legislation to make cockfighting a felony in Kentucky by Jim Keen.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Educated People Do Not Speak Like That: A Reflection on Gettin’ Above My Raisin’ by Julie Marshall.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Big Ol’ Oak by M. Sanders.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## **Porches**

By Marjorie Gowdy

Where I sit, a pipeline's going in  
No stopping it  
No liking it  
Powers that be  
Players all

Where you sit, the road is sliced  
No stopping it  
No liking it  
Grand plans cut trees  
Cut hearts

## Jo Ann's Corner: Appalachia in Spring

By Jo Ann Bullard

Good morning. Welcome to Jo Ann's Virtual Café 2024. Come on in and help yourself to a breakfast beverage. Let's talk.

Well, it is finally here. It's the first day of Spring. Spring has always been a welcome season. The preachers around here think it's a time of new beginnings and part of life's renewal. I don't know about them. I just love this season where the flowers bloom and everything seems to come to life after a dark, dull winter.

You can measure how warm and good the Spring season is going to be just by watching Spring wandering up a mountain. At the first signs of Spring, the green leaves and flowers start budding at the base of the mountains. Slowly the green starts its yearly hike up the mountains. Finally, the green color reaches the top.

That's not the only thing that starts at the bottom and goes to the top in Spring. Years ago, some mountain folk would make a little maple syrup in the early spring. You see, the sap of maple trees starts working its way up the tree in late winter and early spring. That's when some folks would tap a tree and make a little maple syrup. This was started in the mountains by the Cherokee Indians long ago.

Spring is also the time of planting everything from potatoes, corn, vegetables to tobacco. When I was little, I knew it was spring when Grandpa would start his tobacco hot bed. Grandpa would find a good spot for it on a hill slightly sloping to the east to catch the good warm sunshine. Then he would put small branches of dry wood in a rectangle and burn it. He said this would kill the weeds in the soil.

Now, my Grandpa would sow some tobacco seeds after tilling the soil. Grandpa would put thin white sheets over it to protect plants from late frosts. So, when I saw the burning and white sheets, I knew spring had arrived. In my day, grandpa's tobacco crop could mean a good Christmas or poor one. It was one of grandpa's few cash crops.

Spring in Appalachia is a time of change. They say to watch out for bears. They come out hungry after sleeping all winter. So don't leave any food or trash around. You start hearing more and more songbirds in the early morning. Singing happily as the sun rises in the early morning light. We watch robins and other birds in the yards looking for insects and worms after a soft Spring shower. They start building their nests for a new generation of birds to come.

The Spring flowers start blooming like the daffodils. Then when we see the Dogwood trees blooming with their white flowers, we know that Easter is near. There's the smell of the earth being tilled for gardens or flower beds.

Finally, we hear the lawn mowers cutting grass. People planting flowers. Yes, Spring is a time of the awakening of a new season that brings joy and hope. Another cycle of life begins and is renewed.

I still love watching Spring slowly climbing up the mountains as it renews the mountains and brings them to life.

Some people think that the rising of the green trees and plants are like earth's thermometer as the warm temperatures moves the thermometer higher each day.

I guess you can see Spring in the faces of people. There are more smiles and more expectations for the season to renew our fellowship with each other and nature.

Having said that, let's share a breakfast beverage and a Native American Proverb. The Proverb of today goes like this:

“When the Spring rains comes, the green grass will follow. Life will begin again as Mother Earth makes another circle of the Grandfather Sun for another year of new beginnings.”

Thanks for coming. Enjoy your gift of today. Have a great day! We look forward to seeing you next time!

## “Within Appalachia”

By Jasmine Kowalkoski

It is within these mountains which I reside,  
That I find peace.  
Peace within the tallest oak trees, within the squirrels darting about,  
Making their way through the crunchy leaves of late autumn.  
Peace within the black eyed doe, hair thick with the expectations of the oncoming winter,  
Of the bright male cardinal, a reminder of those long gone.

It is within these mountains which I reside,  
That I find promise.  
Promise that many years after I have returned to dust,  
These holy mountains will still stand.  
Older than Pangea, older than Saturn's rings.  
Promise that while many things may change,  
Appalachia will not.

It is within these mountains which I reside,  
That I find hope.  
Hope that the oncoming generations will break free of this poverty,  
Will craft a life that is bigger than themselves.  
Hope that regardless of what path they may take,  
It will always lead them back home.

It is within these mountains that I reside,  
That I find beauty.  
Beauty within every sunrise and sunset,  
Every rolling field and valley.  
Beauty within the great stones bursting up through the soil,  
And the vast lakes and rivers of the region.

It is within these mountains which I reside,  
That I find my ancestors.  
Ancestors such as Johann Dolly,  
For which Dolly Sods name became.  
Ancestors of unknown men and women whom I share a bloodline,  
But not a memory.  
Ancestors whose legacy I will pass on,  
And cherish for the remainder of my life,  
As an Appalachian with no plans of leaving.

## **Response: [Advocacy groups supporting legislation to make cockfighting a felony in Kentucky:](#)**

By Jim Keen, DVM, PhD

As a graduate in biological sciences at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, I strongly support Senate Bill 243, by Senator Elkins, to make cockfighting a felony under Kentucky state law.

Kentucky is a beyond beautiful state, especially in the eastern Appalachian forests and mountains. However, there is a terrible, cruel, and dangerous underground activity flourishing in Kentucky, especially in the eastern backwoods: illegal cockfighting.

Kentucky is one of just seven states where cockfighting is only a misdemeanor at the state level. Cockfighting is a felony under federal law and there have been several federal prosecutions in Kentucky in recent years. The Kentucky Association of Chiefs of Police and the Kentucky Sheriffs Association support SB 243.

My perspective is unique as Director of Veterinary Science for Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. I am an agricultural veterinarian with a doctorate in infectious disease epidemiology. I have also worked as a food animal clinician, a veterinary infectious disease researcher at the USDA's Meat Animal Research Center in Nebraska for two decades, and as faculty at the University of Nebraska School of Veterinary Medicine for 13 years.

Cockfighting activity brings with it a plethora of social pathologies, ranging from illegal drugs to gang activity to prostitution and even murder. As a seasoned infectious disease veterinarian, I can also tell you from personal experience that cockfighting also creates serious avian and zoonotic (human) disease risks.

Virulent Newcastle disease (vND), along with avian influenza (Bird flu) are the two most dangerous avian diseases, and global in impact. Birds infected with, or exposed to, vND and bird flu that have not already died from these viral infections are immediately euthanized to control viral spread.

For six weeks in Spring 2003, in my capacity as a scientist with USDA, I worked with a large team to control an enormous vND outbreak in Southern California. The vND virus is endemic in Mexico, and virus fingerprinting, as well as epidemiologic investigations, pinpointed this outbreak to smuggling of gamecocks across our border for illegal cockfighting. Ten of the 15 vND outbreaks in the US originated from gamecocks smuggled for cockfights. Furthermore, cockfighting is also a major means of virus spread within the

US, as many persons involved in cockfighting activity also work in commercial poultry operations. More than a billion taxpayer dollars were spent on controlling vND outbreaks, mostly linked to cockfighting, since the first outbreak in 1972.

Of great concern is the ongoing Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 virus. This bird flu virus has killed 82 million US poultry in the past 2 years, by far the largest and most expensive animal disease outbreak in American history. Poultry in 472 commercial flocks and 636 backyard flocks have died. In addition, millions of wild birds, from mallards to eagles, and hundreds of wild mammals, from raccoons to grizzly bears, have died from this bird flu strain.

Kentucky's poultry industry is valued at \$1.2 billion (the eighth largest in the US), producing 308 million broilers and 1.2 billion eggs annually on 928 poultry operations. Kentucky has been fortunate in that only two backyard and two commercial farms were infected with HPAI H5N1, causing the death of 284,000 poultry in the state.

Avian influenza H5N1 normally spreads in birds but can also infect humans. Globally, 882 cases of human infection with avian influenza H5N1 virus were reported from 23 countries, including the U.S. Of these 882 cases, 461 were fatal (52%), one of the highest fatality rates for any human infectious disease. Even worse, a simple mutation could make bird flu H5N1 spread rapidly and infect/kill people. Unfortunately, the USDA does not report cockfighting operations among the 636 "backyard flocks" so far infected with H5N1 bird flu, but I am certain many are illegal cockfighting farms. In southeast Asia, where bird flu H5N1 first emerged, most human cases are among persons with close contact with poultry, including cockfighters.

For the health and welfare of the people and poultry in the Commonwealth, we must support SB 243. Cockfighting is a barbaric practice with no acceptable place in our civilized society.

Jim Keen is Director of Veterinary Science for Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy, two animal protection non-profits.

By Jim Keen, DVM, PhD  
Director of Veterinary Sciences  
Animal Wellness Action  
Email: [jim.keen@animalwellnesaction.org](mailto:jim.keen@animalwellnesaction.org)



## Educated People Do Not Speak Like That: A Reflection on Gettin' Above My Raisin'

By Melissa Comer

Growing up in the Appalachian region I never read books whose characters talked like me. Early on, stories, for the most part, focused on Dick and Jane's stilted language patterns and, later, on characters who spoke grammatically correct Standard English. For that matter, I did not hear my speech coming from the mouths of classroom teachers and was, more than once, admonished to say knew instead of knowed, grew instead of growed. I recognized that my use of the word youns as the plural for you would cause my teachers to cringe, thus signifying my lack of intellect. After countless reprimands that "educated people do not speak like that," I attempted to change my spoken dialect only to be told by Mamaw, my grandmother, that "I was gettin' above my raisin'."

My language lessons concerning what was wrong with how I talked continued throughout my academic career. Fast-forward to graduate school where I encountered a linguistics professor and learned that the primary purpose of language is for communication and that no one individual dialect is superior to another, similar to O'Mahony's (2018) stance that each dialect has its own merits and a right to exist alongside other dialects. Yet, the very educator who shared this insight corrected my pronunciation of Appalachia, insisting that my native use of the short /a/ in the third syllable was wrong. She modeled the "correct" way to say it (long /a/ in the third syllable) and told me if I failed to change it I would, effectively, be telling the world that I knew nothing about language.

This seemed to contradict her earlier assertion and left me contemplating language in general. Were my speech patterns, word pronunciations, and vocabulary usage wrong? Was I (and everyone in my region) somehow lacking in intelligence because of the Appalachian dialect that characterized the way I talked? Fast forward again to a middle school English language arts (ELA) classroom where I, the teacher, after much soul-searching and interaction with students who spoke rich Appalachian dialects, finally, arrived at an answer. No. No, my dialect is not wrong and has no bearing on my intelligence nor on that of the students who occupy my classes. Having reached my own epiphany, I vowed that I would never make students feel that they are somehow inferior because of their vernacular.

Today, as a professor at a university situated within the Appalachian region, I celebrate dialect diversity within the courses I teach. Appalachian English, a recognized marginalized language variety (Siegel, 2006; Clark & Hayward, 2013; Cummings-Lilly & Forrest-Bank, 2019), is my own dialectical heritage and that of my students. As such, I especially focus on it while reinforcing the notion that home languages, i.e., dialects, have

a place in educational circles. I routinely share with the pre-service teachers who populate my classes that Standard English is a dialect just like Appalachian English and other dialect varieties. But it has to go beyond this one statement. I want them to build their future students up in their use of their home languages, to help children see the value in native speech patterns and to know, as Winchester (2020) shares, no single voice can represent an entire region.

Finding one's place on the map is not always easy when speaking a language variety that is not conventional. Yet, we all long to see ourselves, our culture, our language, our voiceplace, that place where "the ruggedness of landscape and life [shape] the language," ((Lyon, 2014, p. 185) represented in the mainstream.

There is no escaping the impact Appalachia as a place has on a speaker and, much like Lyon, I too believe that you must "trust your first voice—the one tuned by the people and place that made you—before you can speak your deepest truths" (p. 187). "You can't be a voice box for your own feelings and experiences, much less for those of your place," she continues, "if you've accepted the teaching that your first speech was wrong" (p. 192). She's, of course, right.

#### References:

Clark, A. and Hayward, N. (Ed.). (2013)., Talking Appalachian: Voice, identity, and community, Appalachian studies. 27.

[https://uknowledge.uky.edu/upk\\_appalachian\\_studies/27](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/upk_appalachian_studies/27)

Cummings-Lilly, Karen T. and Forrest-Bank, Shandra S. (2019) "Understanding Appalachian Microaggression from the Perspective of Community College Students in Southern West Virginia," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: 46(2), Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol46/iss2/5>

Lyon, G.E. (2014). Voiceplace. In A.D. Clark & N.M. Hayward (Eds.), *Talking Appalachian: Voice, identity, and community* (pp. 185-192). University Press of Kentucky.

O'Mahony, C.T. (2018). An analysis of dialects and how they are neither linguistically superior nor inferior to one another. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences*, 4(5), 221-226. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.20469/ijhss.4.10004-5>

Siegel, J. (2006). Language ideologies and the education of speakers of marginalized language varieties: Adopting a critical awareness approach. *Linguistics and Education*, 17(2), 157-174.

Winchester, K. (2020, Dec. 11). 15 books about Appalachia to read instead of Hillbilly Elegy [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://bookriot.com/books-about-appalachia/>

## Big Ol' Oak

This giant oak tree in my yard is the tallest in the entire neighborhood. It towers over my house, the power lines, and radio towers (from where I stand). I couldn't count all the branches (not pictured) or the hundreds of birds that return each day to perch in its safety and cry their hearts out.

Oak Trees are symbolic for honor, wisdom, nobility, strength, resistance, prowess, and protection. Thor, Zeus, Jupiter, Perun, gods of thunder and lightning and storms, all celebrated the Oak for its ability to hold so much inside and still stand so tall.

The bark of an oak tree can be boiled/processed and turned into medicine for healing wounds. Its pulp was historically used to make black ink. The shape of its leaves decorates mythology and military regalia.

I berate this oak tree for drowning my beloved gardens in waves of leaves that are so thick I can not clear them without gaining injury or a bad attitude.

I grumble under my breath about the acorns that constantly drop from its branches, ricocheting off my house, enticing squirrels to run and leap and scratch across my roof into the providence of this oak tree.

But when I can't sleep, it has the perfect view of the Moon in all of its phases. When Spirit or my hormones or whatever else it is that makes me wake so often and feel anxious and alone, that tree is alive and buzzing with quiet, little life.

When I feel certain ways I don't know how to speak about, or when my heart is so broken it would not do any good to even try, I sit weeping into its roots.