

APPALACHIAN FREE PRESS



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A Real Dandy

By Stanley Kitchen

My grandfather had one of the biggest arrowhead collections in eastern Kentucky. Some of the pieces rare enough for college professors to come have a look see. I have this hazy memory of going hunting with him, I went several times but this one time in particular sticks out in my mind. I'm around ten years old and we are somewhere on the Kentucky side of the Ohio river scanning a freshly plowed corn field for points or anything of interest the earth might have been hiding for the last century. We were down close to the river when I find this busted up piece of flint that some novice had hacked around on then gave up and discarded. I run it over to pap stumbling around on the loose mounds of fresh dirt, there's a dog running with me but I don't remember who's it is or even if the dog of my memory looks the same as the real dog. Papaw is drinking water from the old Army canteen he brought home from the war, the same one I still have. He kneels down on my level and trades me the canteen for the flint. I drink and he admires the piece. He whistles through his teeth and says, "Boy....now that's a real dandy. We'll have to hang on to that." He puts the flint in his satchel with a few pieces that he's found and later after we get home he carefully places the flint in his display case among some of his best pieces. We smile at each other as he slides the glass door shut. We go inside the house and eat at the kitchen table and I tell my grandmother all about our day and I have no idea there will come a day when I can no longer do that. I don't know what became of that piece of flint but I still carry around that memory of a man who made a boy feel like an equal over a scrap piece of stone, but that was my granddad, that's just how he was.

My Secret Valley

By Adam Dickerson

I may no longer live here, but this valley's still my home.

It's here to where my heart returns, no matter where on Earth I roam.

In majestic, time-work mountains, in rolling fields of fresh-mown hay,

In peaceful, winding rivers, there's God's full glory on display.

The gentle slopes of the Blue Ridge, ablaze with autumn leaves,

The lonesome call of the mourning dove, they put my soul at ease.

The Shenandoah's a holy place, a valley steeped in history.

Ancient voices echo from the mountains and bid me home as if they miss me.

My heart stays in this valley, no matter where on Earth I roam,

And I pray the Lord brings me back here before he calls me home.

Every Good Story has an End

By Tara Peck

Spindle-limbed branches pass by on the right,

fresh picked apples by you, grab a basket.

Car radio blares The Tokens and the lion sleeps tonight under cold periwinkle skies,

crisp wind,

autumn conclusion.

I point at all the lights with a chubby, stubbed finger,

at Whitetail ski trail river flowing down the mountain, not realizing

the fireworks glow of astigmatism.

I'll take you to see all the Christmas lights,

you promise

and kept in December of that year.

It's a long stretch of road requiring high beams,

shining for deer eyes.

You flick off the lights at oncoming traffic and I wonder aloud, *why?*

Because it's the neighborly thing to do,

driving down the mountain at night.

Civilization lies fallow in the distance.

I fall asleep against fog-breathed window glass

to the intermittent warm yellow high beams,

seatbelt cradled.

Older Than the Trees

By Ethan Godsey

Appalachia is an ancient place that predates countless things we take for granted in the modern day. Everyday we live in the shadow of mountains that are so old it boggles the mind. Be it the rings of Saturn, trees, or even the aligning of the north star, the mountains are older and more ancient. The history of these mountains are astounding and date back to even the early life of our very planet.

History of the Appalachian mountains dates back over one billion years ago, 500 million years before even Pangea, when two tectonic plates collided and began the range's formation. These violent collisions that formed the mountains was the formation of a super continent called Rodinia. This was the first instance of mountains in these regions, and the rocks from this formation are still found in the Appalachians to this day. After surviving the separation of Rodinia the Appalachians were slammed back together 500 million years later into the formation of Pangea. During this time many other mountain ranges were formed that connected with the “Young” Appalachia. These mountains would eventually be spread through France, central Europe, and even Scotland when pangea broke into pieces. This is why there are many similarities to the stone of mountain ranges that are far and seem unrelated. It is astounding to know that our home is one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world.

It can be hard to truly understand the age of the Appalachian mountains as saying 500 million is just as incomprehensive as saying 1 billion. To help truly show how ancient our home

is, there are three good examples to help understand. Yes, like the song says the mountains are older than the trees. Trees evolved around 400 million years ago, this makes the Appalachians over twice as old as the beautiful green scenery we see everyday. Another is The North star. While the star itself is over twice the age of the mountains it was not actually true north until the middle age that it lined itself north. For most of history it was the constellation itself that was north and not the star itself. And to me the most astounding thing is that the mountains are older than the rings of Saturn. Similar to the north star the planet itself is much older than the mountains. However, the rings themselves only first formed some 100 million years ago. It is astounding to think that these rings are relatively recent in the eyes of our beloved home.

While being in no way scientific I believe that anyone sitting and enjoying a quiet moment far from the bustle of human life can feel these ancient bones of our home. The most early humans arrived only around 16 thousand years ago, it is strange to think we are new strangers in the mountains' eyes. In the little time we have called this place our home we have carved out the innards and decapitated these ancient beings. And that is why it is so important to sit and enjoy our home, and learn its history. It is good to know that no matter the damage we have done to them these mountains are older than the trees and will likely outlast all of us. Our forever home.

To be a slime.

By Micah Abshear

When I was young I had this dream
where I was a slime,
a fantasy creature just inching along in a field,
consuming the grass and bugs where I go.
I didn't have a name,
gender
or any type of true identity,
I was a slime.
Just a slime.

I feel this distinct problem
where I try to find myself,
label these murky, unknown parts of myself.
Like some fog blocking my way,
illuminated by a dim flashlight.
I have to comb through the muck
like a diver looking for a ring buried in rocks.

I hide away these portions of me
so that they might not be gazed upon by those I care for.
I shrink,

making myself small and unknown.

A mysterious and cryptic tangle of emotions

much too tight to parse.

I fear being who I am,

not for some lack of love for myself,

but for the uneasiness of the foundation I fear to break.

I know I need to stop caring,

to be who I am.

Toss the labels aside.

Rise above my ideal of myself

and step into the light of love,

shone upon me by those who care for me.

I know I slight them by my fears.

I deny them the chance

to have my head placed upon their shoulder,

given the love I show them.

I need to be myself,

unbroken and unbridled.

Myself, by name alone to define me.

Labeled not as some form of false Identity,

but as a moniker of who I am.

A given to define myself as the I in I am.

Some René Descartes fanfiction of a self-personification.

I love, and am loved.

To define myself by anything more

feels as an attack on everyone who I consider a friend.

Me, myself, and I.

A slime,

in a field,

eating grass.