

Appalachia's Poverty a Puzzle in Rich America

By **BENNE WATSON**
Special to The Courier-Journal

The Cumberland Mountains of Kentucky, their beauty remaining despite a century of man-made devastation, do not lie dried and docile.

Scared by strip mines and denuded of their priceless virgin timber, the mountains and the lonely people who live in them can still leave a few marks of their own.

A visitor who takes one of the crumpled roads in Appalachia is living at Father Ralph W. Bell's, a native Kentuckian, who may have a D for diploma but may not get an A or B for appreciation.

Census work, to hunt lost Catholics and advertise the Church, has a strange history in many hilly porch chairs. And into conversations with people who seem to live in another century, at least the last one.

A barefoot mother leaned her chair back against the porch railing and argued Biblical theology with Father William Poole. He is a quiet priest with a sense of humor drier than the pervasive mountain dust.

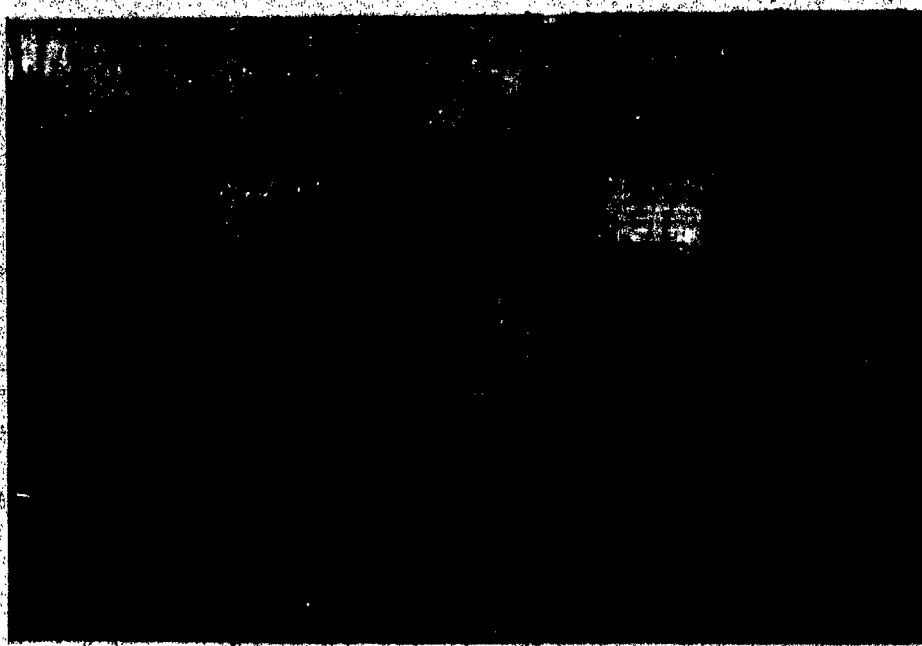
"No, an underlined all of it, it's wonderful to take the Bible for what it says. I know enough to know what to do to be saved," she said.

"But we all need help on the Bible, we can't know it all without study," argued the young priest. He always introduces himself as "Reverend" Paul, not Father — when he meets a strange mountaineer.

"We can know the things He wants us to know. Once saved, always saved." She grabbed up her baby daughter, who was toddling off the porch.

"But the Bible says the just man falls seven times daily," countered Father Poole.

"I don't think that, no sir. God can't leave you, but you can leave God. Only way you



Be it ever so humble . . . humble is hardly the word for homes in poverty wracked Appalachia area.

can judge a region is by the life they live and fruit they bear."

She interrupted herself once to show the visitors a large jar full of alcohol, containing the preserved remains of a rattlesnake her husband had shot.

Father Poole, a native Kentuckian, is accustomed to what a Bostonian might consider the eccentricities of a wonderful, unlearned, people.

In mentioning nearby Rockcastle County, which has eight Catholics in 14,000 natives, he said one might as well be a Buddhist.

One afternoon he took three or four volunteers to visit a family which lived in a hollow of blue clay and was at its most desolate apex served by St. Paul's in McKee in the "holer" a family with seven children had once existed in conditions described by Father Bell as "the worst I have ever seen human beings live."

The shack visited had one and a half rooms. It was made of green tar paper and was reached obliquely, down a rutted road and through the remains of discarded automobiles which surrounded it.

It looked at first as if the shack was on fire. Smoke constantly poured from an iron stove through the filthy rooms. The stovepipe apparently did not work. There was not the barest evidence of cleanliness, sanitation or dignified human existence in this stay.

Fires crawled over the piece of white curtain which covered the two-year-old boy, lying on dirty covers. There were sores on his tiny legs. His mother inefficiently swished away the flies from the curtain.

Her two blonde-headed daughters grabbed wordlessly at the suckers given them by strangers — pushing the gifts into toothless mouths. These destitute hill tots wore hand-made dresses. Without donations from the federal government and the mission they could not survive. Their mother pat their uncombed heads and sent them outside.

With her three illegitimate children, she is one of the numberless unfortunate whom the priests are trying to reclaim. She sends her six-year-old girl up the road to school. "So she can learn to read and write her own name."

Her daughters, like so many mountain children, can barely talk. Many youngsters there whose life is only a fight for survival, become socially and mentally retarded, observed Father Poole.

A lot of the more fortunate Jackson County residents, whose average is productive, might call this woman "sorry," paying for her own mistakes.

That she is illiterate, perhaps morose, and her children blamable, is meaningless to persons with no social conscience. Father Belling hopes to develop a greater sense of community spirit and show the need for work projects like his greenhouse and machine shop, which will be ultimately effective than stop-gap charity.

THE SCENES of automobile carcasses despoiling the landscape of skull-eyed children hiding behind defeated parents, of a mother tearing threads out of a faded bag to use to weave clothing — these are mixed with other memories —

Like the two small boys and four little girls who came to the voluntary variety show and sat apparently unmoved by efforts to entertain them. Yet when taken back to their home, miles deep from the lifeless town of McKee, they asked if please couldn't the Bostonians stay all year.

On the affluent farmer who gave Father Poole a free jar of honey and professional advice on how to begin a profitable bee-business.

And the young mother who asked volunteer Jean Kerrigan if it was true Catholics wanted to kill all baby boys.

Once in a bleak grocery store at the fork of two hills roads, a mother explained how she was curing the sores on her little son's face.

"Why, he's got the 'breath,'" she said. "You just take the seventh child of a seventh child or take a child what never seen his daddy and he blows into the mouth and it goes away. You don't need any doctoring for the 'breath.' It's never failed so far not with any of 'em."

Grammaw" snorts at these conditions, just as she does at religious which "do nothing for the people but about and save."

Grammaw is 73-year-old Mrs. Marie Henshaw, of Ciddman, who visits the missions once every few months and spends a week or two cleaning, cooking and philosophizing. She believes that "the good Lord has been good to me" so she keeps coming back to tidy a rectory or visit with a lonely, prematurely aged hill mother whose son is jailed in North Carolina.

One of the liveliest parishioners at St. Paul's in McKee is an ex-miner named Paul Esmond, 74, a small man who loves to talk about the days when the United Mine Workers were organizing against armed opposition from mine owners.

"We called it 'baptism,'" he says. "That was 1933 and 1936 in Tennessee and we wanted 'em all to quit workin' and join up. We was on the picket line and sent the foreman in to get 'em out and die."

"We lined 'em up and put old tin cans and buckets around their necks and marched 'em to the water. A couple of men would pitch 'em in. One feller went down and said 'I'm goin' down a scab but I'm comin' up a union man!'"

Paul seems a rarely among old miners. For some technicality, he is ineligible for a union pension, but he said he loves the years he spent in the mines and unlike too many malmed old miners, he has just a deformed finger to show for his life underground.

Twilight mercifully covers the far-flung shacks of Jackson County with the serene panorama of a mountain sunset. Several volunteers watched a vivid orange sunset one night from the apple orchard at one of the cooperative properties, named the farm - where - both lived.

A \$20 abandoned shack with a million-dollar view stood at the edge of a pale green field, full of Father Belling's cattle collection. A colts trotted down the powdery road, and out of sight.

The "sticked" tobacco lay drying in the fields, looking like dehydrated miniature tepees. Darkness came before anyone had time to look enough. Night always comes that way to the Cumberlands.

Lords Chose Catholic, First Since Reformation

London — (NC) — The Earl of Longford has been appointed Secretary Patrick Gordon Walker.

Britain's upper chamber of parliament — the first time a Catholic has held the post since the Reformation.

The earl, a devout convert, socialist and supporter of Harold Wilson, the new Labor Prime Minister, becomes the government's chief representative and spokesman in the Lords, where he takes charge of affairs much as the Prime Minister himself does in the House of Commons.

Lord Longford also became the first Catholic since the last Labor government 13 years ago to join the British cabinet. He was named Lord Privy Seal, the holder of this senior government post with a medieval title is unattached to any specific ministry, but is given special jobs according to circumstances.

Lord Longford, for instance, as an authority on foreign affairs, will for the present assist Foreign Secretary Gordon Walker.

COURIER-JOURNAL Thursday, Nov. 5, 1964

FOR BETTER MOVING
Call Geo. M. Clancy Jr.
Geo. M. Clancy Carling Co., Inc.
4 Circle Street OR 8-3120
A Subsidiary of NORTH AMERICAN VAN LINES

Xmas gift idea:
give a **STETSON** gift certificate!
He'll love you for letting him choose the Stetson he likes best! Remember . . . for any season or any reason, there's a special gift certificate, complete with miniature hat and box. Priced from \$12.95 - \$20.00 and will be delivered to the bearer of the gift certificate at any Stetson Hat Store in the United States.
RAFF'S CERTIFICATES \$795 to \$1195
RAFF'S HATTERS FURNISHERS
187 EAST MAIN ST., COR STONE LINC. KOCH. TRUST BLDG.
Use Our Credit Charge American Express Club Martine McCard

Church is Free In Cambodia

Phnom-Penh — (NC) — Despite the sometimes anti-Western attitude of the present government of Cambodia, the Catholic Church here is able to carry on its work in freedom. The Church is actively preaching the Gospel and dispensing the sacraments without any interference. It has an extensive educational program and is active in the social and charitable fields.

Church officials point out that Christianity was founded in Cambodia by Portuguese missionaries in 1576 and had a firm foothold long before any anti-French colonialism of the West developed. As a result, none of the stigma attached to colonialism has ever been placed on the Church.

While the number of Catholics in this southeast Asian nation is small — some 58,000 in a population of almost six million — the Catholic faith goes back many generations and is not looked upon as something foreign.

Since Buddhism comprises about 85% of the population, the Cambodian constitution makes Buddhism the official religion, but at the same time it proclaims "tolerance" for all religions.

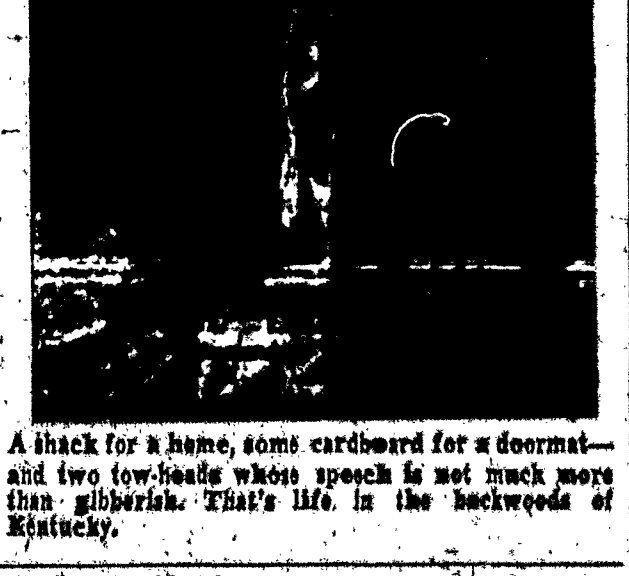
This official policy of tolerance permits Catholics to practice their faith without interference by the government in contrast to the situation in neighboring Vietnam, where relations between Catholics and the Buddhists have been very friendly in Cambodia.

This country is headed by Sihanouk as chief of state, who avoids the title of king though he is entitled to it. He has set his country on a course of neutralism and socialism. He has friendly relations with the Chinese community in the north and is critical of American military presence in South Vietnam.

Despite its limited means, the Church in Cambodia has a series of small schools educating some 140,000 pupils. About 5,000 of youngsters are Catholics, the rest mainly Buddhists. The Church's educational effort is concentrated in the primary grades. Its activity in higher education is restricted by the fact that its personnel does not have the necessary degrees to teach on this level. The chief teaching communities are the Sisters of Providence, a diocesan institute of nuns and the Christian Brothers.

The Catholic Sisters are also active in the social and charitable apostolate. They run several infirmaries to assist the sick and some nuns are working in the state hospitals where they have made their special apostolate the care of children of leprosy.

Of the 200 nuns in Cambodia,



A shack for a home, some cardboard for a doormat — and two tow-heads whose speech is not much more than gibberish. That's life in the backwoods of Kentucky.

To Aid Jews Escape Nazis

Priest Forged Passports

Notre Dame — (NC) — The story of a French priest who with the help of the Vatican aided thousands of Jews in escaping Nazi persecution during World War II is recounted in an article by Father John A. O'Brien, research professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

Father O'Brien describes the organization built up by Father Pierre Marie Benoit, O.F.M., Cap., to smuggle thousands of Jews to safety in the November issue of *Paganist Magazine*.

At a leader in the French resistance movement, Father Benoit transformed his Capuchin monastery in France into one of the headquarters for the lodging and feeding of Jewish refugees.

With the assistance of the Vatican, Father Benoit undertook the task of transporting some 30,000 Jews, for safety in North Africa. However, when preparations were complete, the unconditional surrender of Italy occurred and halted the plan.

Father Benoit then transferred the library of his monastery into a huge passport factory to aid in moving refugees out of the reach of the Gestapo. Turning out the crude documents on an old hand press, he then convinced a number of Swiss, Hungarian and Rumanian consuls to sign them "in the name of God and of our common humanity."

This passport factory, constantly in danger of being detected by the Gestapo, was run for several years, according to collaborators of Father Benoit whom Father O'Brien interviewed. One described how the monastery was swarming with refugees, who were regarded as "Father Benoit's over-increasing flock."

At a testimonial dinner after the war the Jews hailed Father Benoit as "Christianity's noble ambassador to the Jews" and "a man ensnared in our hearts forever." He also was honored by France and Italy for his work.

"Beneath all the debris of human depravity and cruelty that was piled mountain-high in the wake of Hitler's conquests," Father O'Brien writes, "there was uncovered an ineradicable core of decency, courage and heroism in defending the proscribed and defenseless. In that inextinguishable well of human sympathy lies the hope of a brighter tomorrow."

"We must find solutions which will be constitutionally sound, not involve the teaching of any sectarian dogma, but will affirmatively succeed in developing those higher cultural and spiritual values which must be instilled in our youth. Clergymen of all faiths will be asked to contribute their thinking," Denoyan said.

Educator Urges Ethics Study

New York — (NC) — The head of the board of education called upon this city's public school system to exert maximum efforts within constitutional limits to instill "fundamental concepts of ethical conduct and sound morality" in pupils.

James B. Donovan, president of the board of education, told the 51st annual Communion breakfast of the Catholic Teachers' Association he intends to make the recommendation to all organizations concerned with the public school system.

"We must find solutions which will be constitutionally sound, not involve the teaching of any sectarian dogma, but will affirmatively succeed in developing those higher cultural and spiritual values which must be instilled in our youth. Clergymen of all faiths will be asked to contribute their thinking," Denoyan said.

Three Faiths Publish Bible

New York — (NS) — The first two volumes of a new translation of the Bible — the work of distinguished Protestant, Catholic and Jewish scholars and reflecting archaeological and philological research during the past century, and especially during the past two or three decades."

Called the Anchor Bible and published by Doubleday & Co., the initial volumes were issued in conjunction with the start of National Bible Week (Oct. 18-25).

Launched with Gettelle and the Epistles of James, Paul and Jude, the complete Bible will have 35 volumes. Other volumes will be published at the rate of six each year.

As described by editors of the publishing project, each of the volumes — which include introductory criticism, documentary notes and commentaries — is aimed at making the Bible accessible to modern readers.

The Bible is under the general editorship of William Foxwell Albright, professor emeritus of Semitic languages and literature at Johns Hopkins University, and David Noel Freedman, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

The editors said the Bible seeks to present "the meaning of Biblical literature through exact translation and extended exposition, and to reconstruct the ancient setting of the Biblical story."

"The chief criterion was to bring the knowledge of the tremendous new world recovered by

KING OF THE QUARTS LIONS SHARE OF VALUE!

BARTON
RYE
YOUR BEST BUY HERE'S WHY . . .
FULL QUART 90 PROOF
BARTON RESERVE
\$4.99 FULL QUART Fifth \$4.29 Pint \$2.79
Bartons Distilling Company, Bardonia, Nelson County, Kentucky