North Carolina Folklore Journal

58.1 Spring-Summer 2011

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Philip E. (Ted) Coyle, Editor
Sandra L. Ballard, Special Guest Editor

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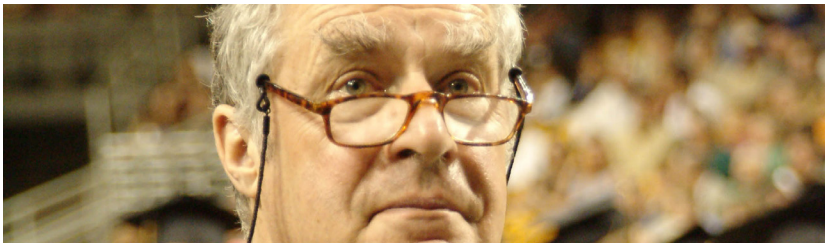

North Carolina Folklore Journal

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Frame photo: Tom McGowan at Appalachian State University commencement ceremony (detail). Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.

Front cover: Tom McGowan at Appalachian State University commencement ceremony. Back cover: Tom McGowan, recipient of the UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Editor's Foreword

By Philip E. "Ted" Coyle

This special issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* is dedicated to Tom McGowan—long-time editor of this journal—who retired from a heralded career at Appalachian State University last year. *Appalachian Journal* editor Sandy Ballard co-edited this special issue, and she organized the reflections on McGowan's exploits in teaching that appear in the following pages, as well as the photos that help to document McGowan's unique presence in ASU's English Department. These reminiscences and images were initially gathered together for a tribute to Tom McGowan that was held on May 1, 2011, at the Jones House in Boone, North Carolina.

Tom McGowan was the most enduring and productive editor in the long history of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*. For the past fifteen years, since his last issue as official editor in 1997, he has continued to play a vital behind-the-scenes role in the publication of the *Journal*, editing special issues, soliciting manuscripts, seeking out Society members to serve as editor, laying-out pages, and generally giving good counsel and guidance. In addition to serving as editor of the *Journal*, he also published the *Newsletter of the North Carolina Folklore Society*. This newsletter featured an abundance of material over the years, and was important for keeping members up-to-date on folklore-related events around the state in the pre-Internet era. He also wrote numerous nominations for our state's folklore award-

Frame photo: Tom McGowan working on the North Carolina Folklore Journal *in his office. Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.*

winners, a veritable pantheon of North Carolina's best tradition-bearers, scholars, and folk-life organizations. Indeed, McGowan helped to establish several of these awards, and is so far the sole awardee of what may be the North Carolina Folklore Society's most prestigious award, The Thomas McGowan Award, a lifetime achievement award presented to him in 2001 at the Society's annual meeting in Cullowhee, North Carolina.

Nonetheless, and despite all of his many accomplishments, it seems strange to me to devote an issue to Tom McGowan alone, when both his teaching and research always emphasized a dialogic approach. His former students—including Sandy Ballard, in an article written for this issue—remember the joyful interplay and sense of community in his classes, a bantering back-and-forth that brought old books to new life. His colleagues remember a generous and supportive friend who went out of his way to help new faculty members and build a sense of greater purpose in his department and the university at large. His scholarly research was similarly based on what has become the key insight of folklore studies: that folklore emerges from the ongoing face-to-face dynamic of a folk group, and can never be reduced to collected texts. Members of the North Carolina Folklore Society will certainly remember annual meetings enriched by McGowan's dialogical approach, as he shared—and often disrupted—the stage with a long list of co-nominators through the years. It saddens me to think that students of the future, locked into their computerized training modules, may one day not even know what they have missed. But if McGowan has taught us anything, it is that the human spirit—as it emerges in dialogue with others—is strong; that the subversive folk traditions, and tradition-bearers, that McGowan worked so hard to document and perpetuate will continue; and that young men and women of noble sentiment and strong back will come forward to demand the kind of heartfelt education that Tom McGowan gave generations of students at Appalachian State University.

From McGowan's Students

"Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour…"

These words from Chaucer's "Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales* were often recited to me by my mother. I later memorized the first 18 lines of the "Prologue" in Middle English for her AP senior English class at Central Davidson High School in Lexington, North Carolina. Little did I know that the professor who required my mother to memorize the same passage at Appalachian State University would one day be my teacher too.

My mother, then Carolyn Branson, took Tom McGowan's "History of the English Language" class as a junior at ASU in the mid-1970s. She recalls the story of when she failed to bring her tape recorder to class one day and McGowan commented with his good-natured laugh, "What's the matter, Carolyn? Run out of tape?" My mother never forgot Tom McGowan's enthusiasm and boundless energy for teaching and has carried that with her in her 34 years of teaching English, and by the way, she requires each of her students to recite Chaucer's "Prologue" in Middle English, too.

As a second generation "McGowan student," I am grateful for his support and enthusiasm for his students' (and my) success. He pours that same boundless energy into helping his students grow as he did teaching his classes. I admire his desire for a good story

Frame photo: Tom McGowan bounding up the stairs on his way to work at Appalachian State University (detail). Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.

and attention to sharing them with others. He graciously offered his expertise on Glenn Bolick during my video documentary project on Glenn and his faith in my endeavors has been steadfast, whether it was musical or academic. It meant a lot to see him at my "premiers," and the book he gave me, *The Sound of the Dove*, will always have a special place on my bookshelf. Thank you for believing in me, Mr. McGowan.
—Rebecca Branson Jones

***

I am probably one of the more recent individuals in the lineage of folks who were fortunate enough to study under Mr. McGowan, yet I am equally proud as any to claim him as both an irreplaceable friend and a welcome influence on my life and scholarship. Prior to my introduction to "the culture of McGowan" (as Tom likes to term it) I understood folklorists, especially the dreaded "Yankee folklorists," to be a shifty class of people who historically had pillaged their way through the Appalachians and left in their wake the individuals who had shared with them their cultural traditions. In Mr. McGowan, I found an individual who, by his sincere nature, displayed how very much mistaken I was in holding up such a stereotype.

Tom bestowed upon me the badge of "tradition-bearer," and I want him to know that each time he has referred to me by this title has felt like a highpoint in my life. There will never be an award ceremony or medal pinned to my chest which means as much as the moments he used this phrase. At my graduation from Appalachian State he made a point to sift through the crowd and congratulate me. The few moments I spent with Mr. McGowan and my family meant more to me than walking across the stage for my diploma. His remarks to my parents and the jokes about my "Shakespearean" writing style touched my soul by the mere thought that someone of his merit cared about my life and my future.

With the same spirit which has instilled pride within me, I return the title of "tradition-bearer" to him. Mr. McGowan is a "tradition-bearer," and I hope he knows it. His honest interest in the promotion and proliferation of this region's living heritage makes him, in my mind, as integral a player in the storytelling tradition as any Hicks from the slope of Beech Mountain. He is "McGowan of the Stories," and he continues to leave his own wealth of anecdotes as part of the cultural landscape of these mountains.

Tom's affection for this region's stories and community memory goes beyond simple academia. He is much more a neighbor

than an impersonal collector: he shares as much as he receives. He has shared with me and I have been all the better for it.
—Trevor McKenzie, "Tradition-bearer"

***

Thomas McGowan has been a prominent figure for the development of both my college experience as well as my interest in Appalachian studies. His guidance and knowledge regarding local culture, paired with Dr. Sandra Ballard's literary talents, led me to realize a love for Appalachian culture which I had not formerly recognized.

Mr. McGowan's interaction with the local community gave insight into how students like me could become active members of Boone beyond the university. Spending a semester with such vibrant faculty revealed a rich world of traditional and modern understanding of my own family history and vitality.

I am thankful for the experience of meeting Mr. McGowan both as a professor as well as a member of a wonderful community. To him I extend my gratitude for being a beacon of knowledge for the students of Appalachian State.
—Cecilee M. Stephens, Class of 2012

***

Moxie: Sass, courage, spunk, determination, attitude

My plan was to thank McGowan (as he trained us to call him) for pushing me to go to graduate school, which I did, for a very long time. But at the moment, I am sitting in an interminable faculty meeting in which people are debating the mathematics of quorum, and it occurs to me that if I hadn't gone to graduate school, I wouldn't be trapped in this endlessly beige room wishing for straight instead of bent pretzels so that I could use them to put my eyes out.

I will pull myself together, though, and refocus on the beautiful and lasting influence Professor Tom McGowan has had on my education, and my life as an educator. After studying English at Appalachian, I decided to move to Massachusetts to study for my M.A. and Ph.D. Upon reflection, I suspect that I probably went to Massachusetts to find more people like him.

The first day in his History of the English Language class (circa 1989) was unforgettable, not least because this wild-haired man instructed us to call him Mr. McGowan, or just McGowan, but not "Professor McGowan," nor "Doctor McGowan," because, he explained, "if one of you breaks a leg in here, I cannot save you."

Tom McGowan bounding up the stairs on his way to work at Appalachian State University. Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.

He was a Yankee Liberal from Massachusetts, he explained, and he was uncomfortable with the hierarchies embedded in the language of deference. So we called him McGowan, and he called us by our last names, too, and suddenly the ground was more even and great learning could take place. You might say my level-ground teaching style is inspired by him.

It was impossible to separate laughter from learning in McGowan's classroom. I wish I could remember more of his one-liners, but it's been more than two decades now (yikes), and my memory is shot. But I can certainly give impressionistic testimony: Every day was a blur of fascinating facts (from the *Story of English* texts which I still treasure and keep on my own professorial bookshelves), mesmerizing anecdotes (like the one about "moxie," a word we didn't know, but which was a snappy term of his own youth—even a soda brand), and a steady percussion of giggles (usually mine). I also have trouble separating the man from his material: I have used my understanding of the English language as a living, breathing, changing organism to deflect many a grammar snob (and in my line of work, I am surrounded by them). I know why the *ea* in my name sounds like it

does thanks to McGowan's explanation of the Great Vowel Shift. You might say I know myself and my subject better because of him.

Mostly I want to thank McGowan for feeding my hungry undergraduate brain and pointing me toward the path that was right for me. It happened in two easy steps: He told me I should "not stop" at teaching high school, that I should go on to graduate study. This option had *never* occurred to me. He was smart, and if he thought I was smart, maybe I was smart. The second step was that he told J.W. Williamson that I had "clean copy," which landed me a job as editorial assistant, for *Appalachian Journal*. This was the taste of academe that I needed: a year of reading, writing, editing, researching, more giggling, and the good camaraderie of book-loving, quick-witted, copy-editing chair-flingers, and, well, I was sold.

Which brings me back to this faculty meeting. It ended on time, and we voted to shrink quorum, which I think means I don't even have to go to faculty meetings anymore. Plus, I've got tenure, anyway, so next year I'm on sabbatical, and headed to Galway (I broke out my *History of English* textbooks to review Irish English so's I can train my two small daughters well). In other words, it took some moxie to make it here, but I do live the sweet life. Thanks, McGowan, for giving me the nudge I needed.

—Anna Creadick
Associate Professor, Department of English, Hobart and William Smith Colleges (Appalachian State University, Class of '91)

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Mr. McGowan is one of the very best teachers I have ever had. He brings a passion for literature to the classroom. One thing that he does especially well is to engage students in the classroom. He creates a comfortable atmosphere in which he respects and values students' opinions. Through questions, jokes, and stories Mr. McGowan creates an open conversation in the classroom.

Outside of the classroom, Mr. McGowan is very approachable. He has an open door and is always willing to discuss ideas and provide students with useful information on books, authors, graduate schools, and a range of other topics. He is the kind of teacher that students love to visit long after his class is over.

Mr. McGowan is also gifted in helping students develop as writers. He gives frequent writing assignments that are creative and effective because they give students the incentive to read and reflect upon the material. His feedback on these writing assignments is one of the best incentives because his comments are always extensive, helpful, and encouraging.

Mr. McGowan is generous with both his time and personal resources, even loaning books and essays from his own collection. After the completion of one project, Mr. McGowan sent me information about several contests that he thought were appropriate for me to enter. With his encouragement, I revised my honors thesis to submit to the North Carolina Folklore Society's student essay competition, and I won the W. Amos Abrams Prize for best undergraduate essay. I certainly would not have had the confidence to enter such a contest without his guidance and support.

Mr. McGowan is simply a phenomenal teacher. His depth and breadth of knowledge, his enthusiasm for what he teaches, his interest in his students, and his incredible kindness and generosity make him the rare kind of teacher we all should have at least once in our lives.

—Ruth Ellen Blakeney

***

Dr. McGowan's Lesson about Maturity

Once in an Old English class, Dr. McGowan was introducing us to the last half of *Beowulf*, in which the hero, now much older than when he fought Grendel, must face a dragon. Although very careful to point out the heroic conventions in the poem, Dr. McGowan was equally concerned that his students see the humanity of the hero, as in lines 2518-2523, when Beowulf confesses that if he didn't have to confront the dragon the way he did Grendel, he wouldn't. But since he knows of no other way to fulfill his obligations, he has to put on his mail and take up his shield to battle against "steam and poison." If the pathos in Beowulf's reluctance weren't moving enough, Dr. McGowan added, "Keep in mind that Beowulf has no delusions about how different he is from that young warrior who fought Grendel. Certainly, he's more mature, and that virile thickening of the waist that comes with male maturity also makes a person more circumspect about engaging monsters where they live."

Over the last thirty-five years, in moments of deep self-doubt when I've perhaps too often sought comfort in food, I have cheered myself with that image of Beowulf, and McGowan's assurance that heroism can be found in reluctance just as virility can belong to a thick waist.

—Donald Secreast
Radford University

***

Tom McGowan questioning authority at Appalachian State University. Photo courtesy of McGowan's personal archives.

Thank you for being an important mentor in my life. I appreciate all the inspiration and guidance you have provided over the years. You taught me how to be a rigorous scholar, a motivated educator, and most importantly a good person. I hope I can pass on all those qualities to my students. —Sandy Hartwiger, ASU, Class of '96, Class of '02

***

A few quick thank-yous:

1. Thank you for the ASU 2005 NCAA division championship hat that you gave Rick. I'm not sure exactly how this happened, but somewhere along the way I sort of usurped control of that hat. I still wear it to this day!

2. Thank you for warning me that history as an academic discipline is a "men's club." Because WVU's history department is fairly gender-balanced, I wasn't initially inclined to believe it. Then I attended a Southern Historical Association annual meeting. Now I understand!

3. Thank you for modeling unconventional teaching methods. Someday perhaps I too will have the courage to pose as letters to key terms in my classes the same way that you did in yours.

4. Thank you for reminding me via Facebook that I am actually allowed to take a break from my graduate studies once in a while, especially during University holidays.

5. Most importantly, thank you for your kindness, good humor, and willingness to help your students, even long after they have graduated.

—Jinny Turman-Deal

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Sonnet 2010-103

O muse, bestow upon us ability,
And help us to convey the joys of our class.
We studied Sir Gawain's agility,
The bob and wheel made reading a blast.
We journeyed with Chaucer and his sundry folk.
The best of all was the Wife of Bath.
She often found herself in a quandary
With husbands but she always made us laugh.
Mr. McGowan has taught us Shakespeare,
And to write in standard written English prose.
With his chalkboard stance, his writing was clear—
A teacher like McGowan really knows.
Like Johnson, we must show some restraint here,
So we only wish for one more half year.

—Kelly Young, Ruthie Blakeney, Trish Kilby-Fore and Susan Kilby, authors of the infamous sonnet written at the end of the Intro to British Lit class

***

Of all the teachers I've ever had, Mr. McGowan's classroom lessons are the ones I recall almost daily. I love, LOVE to tell a story. I have one for every occasion, most of them highly inappropriate

to the situation I'm in and all of them trying to one-up the other storyteller (because these things always happen in a group).

He is probably not aware that he gave me a very Powerful Weapon in my act of storytelling: Dell Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic. Seriously. There is not a day that goes by that I don't fuss at Eddie Huffman for interrupting what is definitely the most excellent story ever told. I always say, "You are messing up the mnemonic! Dell Hymes! Dell Hymes!" Of course, only another person who'd had his class or knew about Dell Hymes can relate, but saying that to the unaware works, too. At least it stuns them. So I thank him for that nice handy tool that lets me just go on and on in my storytelling!

I also appreciate all of the work he's done with Orville Hicks. I think about "researcher and subject" (I hate those terms) relationships a lot, and I think McGowan has done Appalachian State, and Folklore, a great service by the way he's worked with Orville: they are friends. I've tried to model my own fieldwork after his, to be sure.

I enjoyed the class I took with him. I remember laughing a lot and major class participation. He made a very good case for calling him "Mr. McGowan" instead of "Dr. McGowan." I liked that. The class was never boring. I learned how to listen and hear stories, and the difference between the two.

I am sad for the students that will never get to take a class with him, but I wish him the most luck, and many, many opportunities to tell and hear a good story.

—Sarah Poteete
M.A. '03

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For the last year or so, I've been working on an essay (which is now running way too long) about the interrelationship between Appalachian Studies and Appalachian literature. Wanting to be prepared (and wanting to have "the real thing"), I ordered back issues of the *Appalachian Journal*. Volume 9, issue 2-3 from 1983 was titled "Assessing Appalachian Studies," which contains amazing essay after amazing essay, including ones by Herb Reid and Dwight Billings. Therein they describe the pedagogy of their Appalachian Studies classes upon which I had been raised. "So," I kept saying to myself as I underlined passages that I felt were like pieces of my own intellectual DNA, "that's what they were doing."

Then I noticed what to me seemed to be something odd: Tom had edited the issue! Now, that may not seem odd, but I was surprised because for me he was the professor from whom I took a graduate Seminar on Chaucer in Spring of 1992.

I remember coming to his mysterious basement office where he did all kinds of odd things for pleasure, like listening to wayward graduate students belch forth the first twenty-four lines of "The Prologue." To be honest, I only now remember the first four, but after typing them out, I found I got all but one word correct (not including myriad misspellings). And because it feels right to do so, here are those lines:

> Whan that Aprille, with hise shoures soote,
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
> And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
> Of which vertu engendred is the flour ....

I'm sure that he survived our renditions only by virtue of his great humor. To keep everyone's eyes bright, I remember him doing such things as bringing a rubber chicken to class the day we were reading the "Nun's Priest's Tale." In turn, I did such things to entertain him as drawing a colored-pencil sketch of the "The Merchant's Tale" where I had old January blindly feeling up the pear tree where a naked Damyan waited (and yes, I had to look up those names!).

His presence and laugh filled the small seminar room across from the T.A. office (then at the end of the hall closest to the street and nearest the quad), so I loved coming to class, toting the Chaucer tome (which still sits on my bookshelf). Although I have since lost my sketch from "The Merchant's Tale," my files house the seminar essay I wrote about "The Clerk's Tale" wherein I claimed that Griselda was actually the Clerk's transsexual self-projection representing his own feelings about his lack of power. Of course, the essay is worthless to anyone by myself (who keeps such tokens of my own wandering path to somewhat better understandings), but which of us hasn't felt as I claimed the Clerk did during our sojourns in the university?

Another kind piece of work that I remember him doing was to typeset the *Cold Mountain Review*. One day near the end of my last year (the Spring of 1993), he and I crossed paths in the hall, and he raised his eyebrows at me and repeated a risqué bit (something about condoms in a bedside cereal bowl) of a poem of mine that he had typeset and laughed. I hardly knew what to do!

He might be pleased to know that it is in my own later poetry that Chaucer (and via Chaucer, himself) lives. Two poems (both, alas long unpublished…) demonstrate my learning. First, is a six-page rhyme royal I wrote (in a gangly hexameter) called "The Bee Keeper," a quite dark and serious poem in which a man returns to his mountain farm to pick up his son's dead body. Second, is another long poem (131 lines in rough tetrameter!) called "Suburban Venery"—a very

silly poem—about someone whose heart has leapt out of their chest to go chasing through the suburban night, like a deer (a hart) gone wild. For this, I thank my reading of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* in Tom's class, a 1,000+ line poem that I pulled forth again and read out loud (such as I could) about ten years ago when I was working on my aforementioned poem.

So though Tom may or may not remember my drawings, I thank him for helping me (the red-bearded guy who loved and loves contemporary poetry and Appalachia) grope his way across those bridges that swing back and forth across the centuries. Let us hope my luck keeps as I work on my current book that seeks to tell this history of Appalachian literature from the get-go because something tells me that laugher will sooth the path as I fumble along!

—Chris Green
Marshall University

***

I was not a student who hated *The Canterbury Tales* or thought they were dead when I read the modern English version in high school. However, I had questioned the assumption that Chaucer was great. Although I rather liked the characters in the prologue and the two tales that we read, the rhyme scheme sounded childish to me, the tales themselves not so memorable.

And then I took a graduate course on *The Canterbury Tales* with Dr. McGowan. I was nervous (okay, terrified) when I had to memorize and present the first 14 lines of the prologue in Middle English. I was annoyed when first he said that the Wife of Bath was a Middle-Ages type rather than an individual. I was appalled at the number of pages he assigned. But as the semester progressed, *The Canterbury Tales*, which I had found "cute" and mildly entertaining, came to life for me. Once I had memorized and performed the first 14 lines, I could hear the beauty of them. As I wrestled with the text, too, I grew to love the work and the complexity of it—particularly the stories the pilgrims told and what those stories gave away about their tellers.

Dr. McGowan questioned my assumptions, opened the work, and gave me much to appreciate and wonder about. I left that class loving *The Canterbury Tales* and knowing I had experienced a great teacher.

A few years later—I can't quite remember what this was about or how it happened—but I was giving a workshop that he attended. Talk about terrified. When I saw him enter the room, my confidence was perced to the roote and not with gentle shoures soote. I'd have

rather quoted those 14 first lines, which I still vaguely remembered, than stood in front of him as a presenter. What could I possibly teach him?

But he was the ideal student. He did the assignment I gave, shared his work with the class, and seemed to enjoy himself thoroughly. Later, I realized that Tom McGowan had the ability and the humility of Chaucer's Knight, the energy and exuberance of the Wife of Bath, the wondrous, good example of the Persoun. But most of all he had the essence of the Clerk: "And gladly woulde he lerne and gladly teche."

—Maggie McKinney
Morganton, N.C.

***

Tom McGowan is a dear friend, and he helped me, like many, many others, get my master's degree in Appalachian Studies, somewhat in spite of himself.

I wanted to do an independent study with him about Appalachian English, which he didn't want to do—said I ought to go to NC State and do it with Walt Wolfram. I finally convinced him to let me do it, but as part of the deal, I had to pass his class in the History of the English Language. Somehow, many years ago, I made it through a BA in English without taking such a course, but I settled in with a class full of his students, and did every assignment, test, exercise, exam, et al. At mid-term I had a C. I finally began to get it, and to see its value in regard to the study of Appalachian Speech. I got an A by the end of the semester—but it wasn't easy!

The work I did in that semester was some of the most valuable I've ever done and has added an element of understanding and respect for the region and its people I would have never had otherwise. His folklore class was the icing on the cake. And then, poor soul, he served on my thesis committee too.

Thanks, Tom, for fostering another scholar.

—Betsy Williams
Assistant Professor, Learning & Research Services
Appalachian State University Libraries

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I was fortunate to have Thom McGowan as my Introduction to Literature professor back in 1982. I was a local kid fresh out of high school and a little intimidated to be in college. I was a first generation

college student so the academic world felt pretty alien and strange to me. It was such a relief to be in a class where I felt at home.

I remember that class so clearly. We studied a variety of works including *Fields of Fire* by James Webb—an experience made even more meaningful by the fact that James Webb visited campus and our class that year. I became so interested in Vietnam that later I bought and read every war novel of that decade. Mr. McGowan—as he told us to call him—was the quirkiest, sweetest teacher that you could imagine. One rare sunny spring day when we all had spring fever, we were studying a poem about a groundhog. In an effort to divert our attention back to the class and away from the birds singing outside, he stretched himself prone on the floor and pretended to be the dead groundhog. It worked. I've never forgotten that poem or Mr. McGowan's funny little smile as he lay there on the floor.

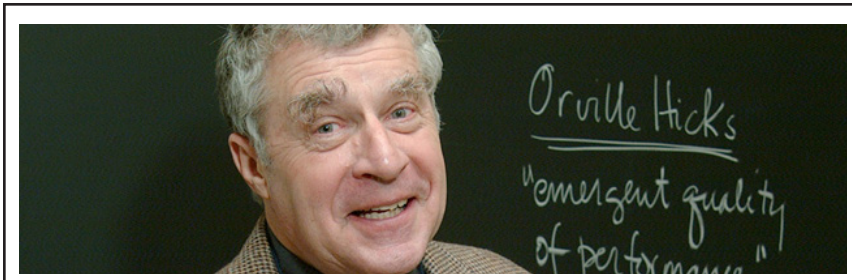
It was Mr. McGowan who encouraged me to take honors, who took me in person to meet Alan Ward, the honors professor, and who kept in touch me the rest of my undergraduate career. I wasn't an English major, but he made me want to be. He made me feel that I had something special to offer. Although we lost touch after I graduated and went off on my own set of adventures, it was because of his influence that I later went back to graduate school in English. And when I came back to teach at ASU twenty years later, it was Mr. McGowan's example I thought of as I first walked into my own Introduction to Literature class. I didn't lie down on the floor and pretend to be a dead animal as I recall, but I did do my best to take a sincere interest in my students and to encourage them to be all that they could be.

It was a little strange, even after all of that time, to be back at the English department and to get to know my former professors in a different way. To my amazement and relief, Mr. McGowan remembered me and with time, I learned to call him Thom. I've been honored to serve with him in the English department for the last eighteen years. And in all that time, he has always gone out of his way to make me think that I had something special to offer the department.

The other day, I was standing outside my office chatting with a student. Thom walked by and looked at the student. "I hope you know how lucky you are to have Ms. Conway as your teacher," he said sternly. As he walked off not even paying any attention to our response, I smiled and told the student about how Thom McGowan had been my teacher when I was her age, and how he was probably the reason that I was standing right there talking to her that moment.

It's very clear that I am the lucky one.

—Betty Miller Conway



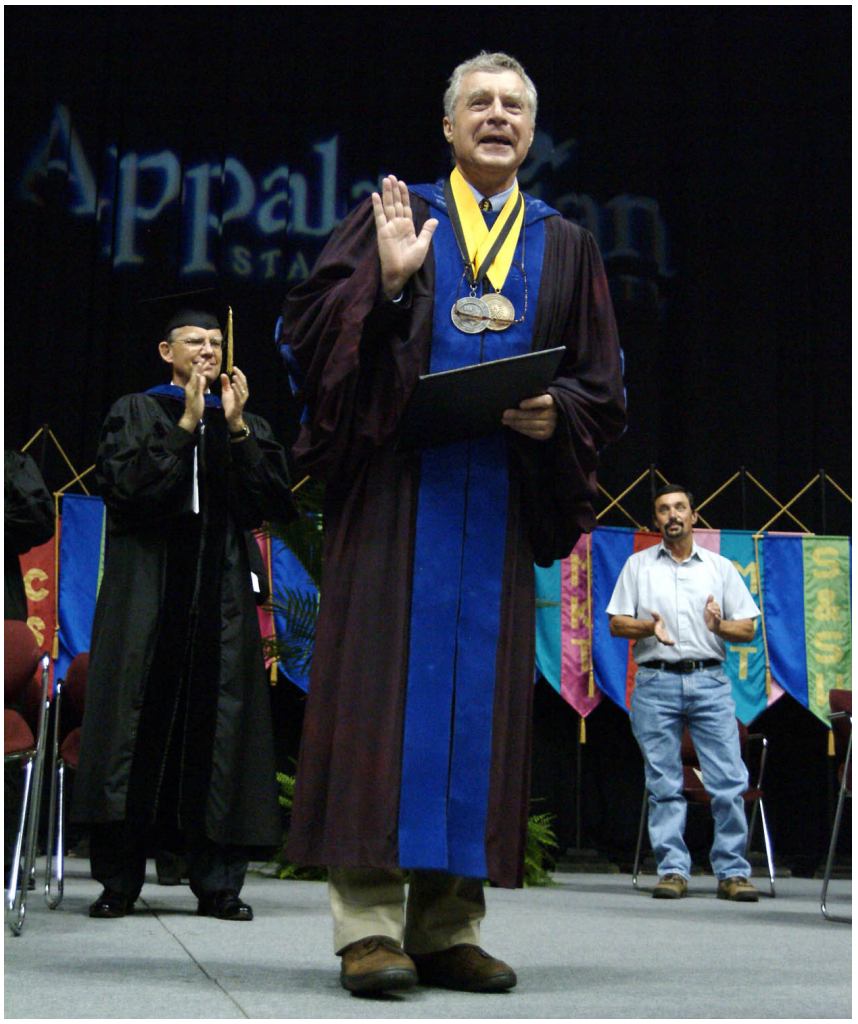
Teaching by Way of Invitation, Local Stories, Call and Response: A Celebration of Folklorist Thomas A. McGowan's Teaching Career

by Sandra L. Ballard

Tom McGowan taught as a member of the English Department at Appalachian State University for thirty-nine years (1972-2011). During that time, he received recognition as a teacher and a folklorist, with the highest awards for teaching from the University of North Carolina system and Appalachian: the UNC Board of Governors 2003 Award for Excellence in Teaching and ASU's 1996 Outstanding Teacher of the College of Arts and Sciences. For his research in regional folklife and oral narratives and his service as editor of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* for twenty years, the North Carolina Folklore Society presented him with its Brown-Hudson Folklore Award in 1988, and later presented him with a life-time service award named in his honor. The compact disc/cassette he co-produced, *Orville Hicks: Mule Egg Seller & Appalachian Storyteller*, received the Paul

Sandra L. Ballard was a student of Tom McGowan's in the late 1970s—and she became his colleague in the English Department at Appalachian State University in 2000, when she moved to Boone, NC, to become editor of Appalachian Journal: A Regional Studies Review.

Frame photo: Tom McGowan leads a discussion about the story-telling style of Orville Hicks. Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.



Tom McGowan receives acknowledgement at Appalachian State University. Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.

Green Media Award of the N.C. Society of Historians. Those details are part of the official record of McGowan's teaching career, but the unofficial record is also impressive.

From August of 1972 until May of 2011, Tom McGowan met students at every level, from freshman composition, sophomore literature, and team-taught honors courses to junior-senior and graduate courses in literature, linguistics, and folklore. He was instrumental, along with Tom McLaughlin in the English Department, in advocat-

ing for an honors program, which has been in place for more than thirty-five years at Appalachian. No matter the course, his students heard about Notre Dame (his undergraduate alma mater) and the University of Virginia (where he earned the M.A. and Ph.D.) and Lawrence, Massachusetts (his hometown).Because of his respect for U. Va. founder Mr. Jefferson, students learned to call their professor Mr. McGowan—or Captain McGowan, his rank when he served in the Marine Corps (1963-67) and spent a little more than a year in Vietnam. He wasn't afraid for students to know a bit about his life or to learn about theirs—such exchanges supported learning and community. If I were a better hand with numbers (and had access to his "permanent record" in the personnel file that is located somewhere on campus), I could do the math on the number of students he has taught at Appalachian. Four classes each quarter, then each semester, with an average class size of twenty-five students in each one—and he often taught summer school—for nearly forty years…you can see the bleachers filling up with his former students. He made himself memorable to many of them by learning their hometowns, the teams they followed, the work they did, the work they wanted to do, and then by showing up at graduation to meet their families.

As one of McGowan's former students, and as a colleague he invited to team-teach with him, I can easily identify several features of his classes that made him an award-winning teacher. In the first place, he knew how to create a syllabus—a model document offering a thoughtful plan, with detailed descriptions of class policies, procedures, a day-by-day schedule of activities and assignments, and some built-in flexibility. Second, he showed up early to class and greeted students by name, creating a congenial atmosphere as they settled in and he set up film clips and web sources he planned to use in class. He often had students smiling before class began. He introduced his students to each other, to other faculty, and to his contacts who might help them. Third, his way of reviewing information from a previous class was to call on individual students, to invite them to recall what they knew: where are "study helps" for the exam? (on the class website); what's a good way to review? (take the practice test); why is it a good idea to give wrong answers? (to get explanations of why the right answers are correct). He repeated this pattern throughout many classes, guiding students in a teacher's version of "call and response" to practice explanations, to offer a chance to rehearse what they were learning, to go through problem-solving steps to arrive at answers to questions. His classes were lively and well-paced, with

humor and contagious enthusiasm. Students in a medieval literature class laughed to hear McGowan say that if he had a rock band, he'd name it Venerable Bede. History of the Language students grinned at his jokes about the Great Vowel Shift. They paid attention to his audio/visual samples—from *The Story of English* programs to a demonstration of the "advanced search" feature of the on-line version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Aware that some students were future English teachers, he incorporated "teaching tips": on the subject at hand, on contingency plans when a lesson doesn't go exactly as expected. But best of all was the example he set—as much as what he taught them, his students will surely recall his love of language and stories, his entertaining and self-effacing sense of humor, and his lively interest in both the subject and in them. "I teach a lot of interesting stuff that I get credit for," McGowan said when he received the UNC teaching award and was interviewed in *The Appalachian*, the student newspaper. "I think English majors don't expect certain classes to be interesting and I get credit for making it interesting when it already was to begin with" (Schneider).

Team-teaching with Tom McGowan was the best teaching experience of my career. During three different semesters, we worked together in teaching an honors course that focused on "local stories," family and regional narratives. His knowledge of narrative theory and practice, his expertise with technology, his energy for planning presentations tailored to the needs of our students, his openness and humility, and his way of getting to know our students' names, hometowns, majors, interests—all combined to teach me a great deal. He knew the importance of getting students out of the classroom once in a while. He narrated a walking tour of campus, pointing out landmarks and their connections to our readings, university history, town history—and for some of the students, family history. We sent them to tour the W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection in our library, and McGowan told us a story from Margaret Agle, Leonard Eury's sister, about "his taking afternoon naps in the Library in Appalachian's first administration building that burned down before my hiring. At those times, Mr. Eury put up a hand-lettered sign: 'Library Closed'" (McGowan 30). We sent students on a self-directed fieldtrip to a local family pottery, and prepared them for this excursion with background readings and a good map. As a follow-up to the fieldtrip we showed an award-winning documentary film (by McGowan's former student Rebecca Jones) about one of the multi-talented potters, Glenn Bolick. McGowan knew that teaching from Richard Chase's

Jack Tales and William B. McCarthy's *Jack in Two Worlds* would create the ideal context for inviting storyteller Orville Hicks to visit our class and share some Jack tales. Students conducted their own "collecting projects," which involved recording an interview with a family member, transcribing parts of it, and writing about it, often using sociolinguist Dell Hymes' model to analyze the "speech acts" and "cultural context" of the storytelling event. Students took themselves to the library to discover events in newspaper headlines and in magazines at the time when their parents were born. The course offered students opportunities for conducting primary research and exploring their own families and local places in ways that led to revelations. Of course, some of the revelations were my own—including the teaching strategies and assignment ideas, which he added to my repertoire, and which will be a part of every class I teach from now on.

He has also been generous in sharing his editorial expertise with *NCFJ* and *Appalachian Journal*. In addition to his work as associate editor of *AppalJ* from Volume 8, Number 1 (Spring 1981) to Volume 11, Numbers 1-2 (Winter 1984), he served as guest editor for a special issue of *Appalachian Journal* on "Assessing Appalachian Studies" (9.2&3, Winter/Spring 1982), a hefty 148-page issue, containing proceedings from the 1981 Appalachian Studies Conference held at the University of Kentucky. The issue was divided into three parts: I. Appalachian Studies: Its Roots, Its Current Context, Its Future, with essays by John Stephenson, Jim Wayne Miller, David Whisnant, Bob Snyder, Dwight Billings, Herbert Reid, Steve Fisher, Jim Foster, Mary Harnish, Helen Lewis, and Archie Green; II. The Development of Appalachian Studies featured essays by Richard Blaustein, Loyal Jones, Richard Drake, Frank Einstein, and Robert J. Higgs; and III. Bibliography by Steve Fisher. More than a decade ago, McGowan agreed to join the *AppalJ* editorial board in Fall 2000 (28.1), and he continues in that role, helping with everything from untangling html codes to recommending potential editorial assistants.

At his retirement party on May Day in 2011, past and current English Department colleagues, friends, and former students gathered to celebrate Tom's teaching career with a spread of food and stories. One by one, as people stepped forward to speak, we listened, laughed, applauded—and enjoyed Tom's responses, for he had stories to offer in reply to each one. Our gathering turned into a spontaneous "call and response" of sorts. If it had been a class, he might

have directed our attention to Richard M. Dorson's *Handbook of American Folklore* and "the 'call and response' structure which placed the individual in continual dialogue with the community… [and] allowed for both individual and communal expression" (342), for we were clearly part of this community, and being "in dialogue" brought us together.

All in attendance knew of the deep friendship and respect between famed Beech Mountain storyteller Orville Hicks and Tom McGowan, so when Orville stepped up to speak, here's what we heard:

> Tom, I want to say you've been a real good friend and more like a brother to me.
>
> The first time I met Tom was on a softball field. We whipped everybody over there, and here come Tom with a team on the field. He had a coat with a necktie on, and I said, "Boys, this is going to be easy." Me and Tom was traveling through Washington one time, and we stopped at a café up there to get something to eat. Walked up there, and the woman said, "You can't come in here without a necktie on!" Well, Tom had his suit on, and I had my overalls on—didn't have no necktie. We walked back to the car, looked around, looked around…Tom found his necktie. Being the friend he was, he gave me the necktie to wear. Tom looked around, and there was a set of jumper cables in there. He took them, put them around his neck, and tied them in a knot. We went back up to the door. That woman looked at us—looked at me, looked at Tom—said, "Well, I guess you boys can come in here, but tell your friend try not to start nothing!"
>
> I used to have six brothers. Now, I've got seven brothers. Thank you for everything, Tom.
>
> Tom's response: "One of the nice things about Orville is that he never lies."

Then he added that during an annual faculty review session, he had learned from a department chair that one of his strengths was "collaboration"—and he credited his travels together with Orville for giving him "graduate training in collaborating." McGowan counted as one of his finest accomplishments that in the spring of 2009 he secured a title (and a university paycheck) for Orville Hicks,

winner of the 2007 North Carolina Heritage Award, as the Doc Watson Folk Artist-in-Residence. They taught two courses together, an Appalachian Studies course for undergraduates and a graduate colloquium on "studies in regional folk narrative." The graduate course resulted in a publication: "'Waaaaay Back Up In The Mountains': An Interview with Storyteller Orville Hicks," a collaborative effort that reached readers of *Appalachian Journal*.

When English Department member Susan Staub stepped forward to describe Tom as "the soul of our department" and to recount his legacy of being a generous and gracious colleague with a reputation for giving books of special interest to those who might enjoy them, his response was "Thanks, Susan, but I've reached the point in my career where, when I see any kind of excuse to get rid of book, well, I act on it! I'm glad some of them were interpreted as being gracious!"

As the party progressed, McGowan said, "I've now taught long enough that I am teaching the children of my former students!" And he told the story of another teacher he admired:

> Dr. Henry Lilly taught Chaucer here before me. He had been a retired faculty member from Davidson. When he retired from Davidson, his wife was hired by the College of Education at Appalachian. He taught Chaucer, and one thing he would do when he talked about the Wife of Bath's portrait, where it said that she was "gap-tooth-ed"—he would explain that in medieval physiognomy that that meant you were inclined to sexual lasciviousness. Then he would smile and show that he had space between his teeth.
>
> When Dr. Lilly came and gave a talk to Watauga College, Kay, my wife who has supported me during all these adventures, was interested in the talk. Kay's dad had gone to Davidson, so she had heard about Dr. Lilly. She went to the talk, and afterwards she went up to Dr. Lilly and said, "Oh, Dr. Lilly, it's so good to meet you." Kay said she was so pleased to meet Dr. Lilly and that her dad had gone to Davidson. And Henry Lilly said, "What was your maiden name?" And Kay said, "Kell." And Dr. Lilly said, "Ah, Bob Kell. He

> played for the football team and was president of the student body in 1929."
>
> And there I was! I couldn't even remember the names of my Watauga College students, and this guy had remembered her dad!

At the party was McGowan's former student Rebecca Jones, who had once told him in class that he had taught her mother (who was also there at the party). "What was your mother's maiden name?" McGowan had asked. She said, "Branson." McGowan got excited: "I said, 'Karen Branson! She was a really good student!' So I had emulated Dr. Lilly!"

"I have gone through this double passage thing," McGowan said. "The first time that ever happened was pretty early in my career. This young woman said to me, 'Mr. McGowan, you taught my mother.' I kind of looked at her, and she said, 'Last year.' Her mother was a non-traditional student." Then I had another student, I called roll—called this one young woman's name, and I said, "If you want to get a grade as good as your mom, you're really going to have to work in this course." And I said, "But you if want to get your uncle's grades, you won't have to do much at all!"

In constructing this brief "history" of McGowan's teaching career, we have examples of "reported speech" and "anecdotal evidence" of his effectiveness in the classroom, but, of course, that doesn't tell the whole story. For years, McGowan's e-mails have ended with lines from a song by The Badgett Sisters—"I don't want nobody stumblin' on my life/That is why I pray so hard." Celester Sellars, Connie Steadman, and Cleonia Graves—The Badgett sisters, singers of spirituals and Jubilee gospel and family tradition bearers—received a Brown-Hudson Folklore Award in 1988, the same year McGowan was recognized with the same award. As the lines from their song suggest, to live in a way that doesn't trip others up is a fairly tall order, requiring a little assistance. The individual who admits with humility to want to be a good example and a spiritual person is fairly rare—and even more rare is the one who is a good citizen, who teaches by example, who invites us to pay attention to local people and places, who writes letters to the newspapers, as well as scholarly articles. Folklore in all its forms can be "valuable," says folklorist Richard Dorson, in helping us "to gain some sense of a people's angle of vision, to better understand the inner dynamics of a group and the attitudes of its members, and to comprehend the strategies and mechanisms a people

employ to guard their values and maintain their sense of worth. Folklore helps us to overcome what William James called 'a certain blindness in human beings'" (343). Thomas McGowan is that rare one who values stories enough to study them, to share them, to nominate culture bearers for local, state, and national heritage awards. From university classrooms to all the circles where he travels, he helps us to open our eyes to recognize and celebrate those who deserve to be remembered and honored. And no matter what he says, he's among them.

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From McGowan's Colleagues

Diplomacy

In my first year here, I wasn't on the English Department's personnel committee, and when the call went out for help with candidates' visits, I volunteered. I didn't realize that I wasn't encouraged to volunteer to pick up a candidate from the Hickory airport. So I was told that a committee member would need to accompany me. I don't know if Tom also volunteered or was chosen, but we drove together to Hickory. I had dyed my hair red that day and tried several ways to get Tom to say something about it: Did he notice anything? Did the light in here make us look different? He was very evasive. Finally, I asked him if he noticed I'd dyed my hair, and he said, scandalized, "Well, I certainly wasn't going to say anything about that!"
—Georgia Rhoades

Unique Teaching Style

Tom certainly is a colorful character. I've never been able to figure out how he has been able to cram so much stuff in his offices, and he probably has the loudest lecturing voice in the department. I feel that I've taken his History of the English Language course multiple times (Bill Ward once asked him if he was holding a revival meeting).

I'll also remember Tom's impish sense of humor. When the department honored me by holding a celebration for my first book, he informed my kids (who were bored stiff) that page 127 of my volume was a good one to color on.

Frame photo: Tom McGowan participates in a training session with his colleagues. Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.

He will be missed by students and colleagues, and the department will be less fun without him.
—Bill Brewer

***

During my first week teaching at ASU, in the fall of 2002, I was in the office, probably giving my syllabi to Amy, when I heard a blood-curdling yell from a classroom down the hall. "What was that?" I asked, truly expecting mayhem and violence. "Oh," Amy responded, not even looking up, "That's just Tom McGowan. He always does that."
—Holly Martin

***

During one of my early years in the English Department, I was in my office, waiting for yet one more advisee to come talk about registration options. Suddenly the young man I was expecting burst into my office, clearly agitated. He blurted out, "There's a professor down the hall SHOUTING at his students!"

A bit alarmed, I asked, "What's he shouting about?"

"Beowulf, I think."

"Oh," I said, relieved. "That's Dr. McGowan. He's a very enthusiastic teacher. That's probably his Early English literature class he's teaching right now."

"I don't care what class it is," said the student. "I want to sign up for it."
—Grace McEntee

***

What a sad day it is for the English department when you retire. It is also sad for those of us already retired to know that the department no longer has you to influence decisions and to bring graciousness to its business. So here is my love letter to a colleague who was devoted to his students, his colleagues, and to education itself.

Do you remember when you and Kay came to our first Christmas party, before you were hired, and how gracefully you entered into our revelry.

Then when you came to join us professionally, how quickly you became as concerned as any of us at how we should go about teaching and what we should teach?

I remember sitting many an hour on the front steps of Sanford plotting with you how to instigate a curriculum which would give our students the best we could do.

And do you remember those bold and eager students who challenged us, yet who were willing to follow our lead, and let us follow theirs? And remember the exasperating and exhilarating colleagues with whom we were able to argue, yet to respect, and to celebrate with every chance we got? Surely we did teach at Appalachian in a "golden age."

I remember too your brilliance (and I mean that) as a teacher. Many a time I would linger in the hall outside your classroom to hear you dramatize "Beowulf" or make beautiful the poetry of the age. Many thanks for those days.

How dynamic you are as a teacher. And how absolutely frustrating and lovable you are as a colleague, frustrating for having us consider at length on the rightness of a decision we seemed ready to make, lovable in that you always did the right thing and supported your colleagues with all the energy you could muster.

None of us will forget the danger it was to step into your office, yet the joy of being there with you to discuss, complain, or to laugh.

It was almost embarrassing to come to you always when we needed just the right touch in a tribute or an elegy because we came so much.

But no one else has your flair for fitting the words to the recipient and doing so with style and humor and sincerity. Thanks for the many times that you have said the right thing.

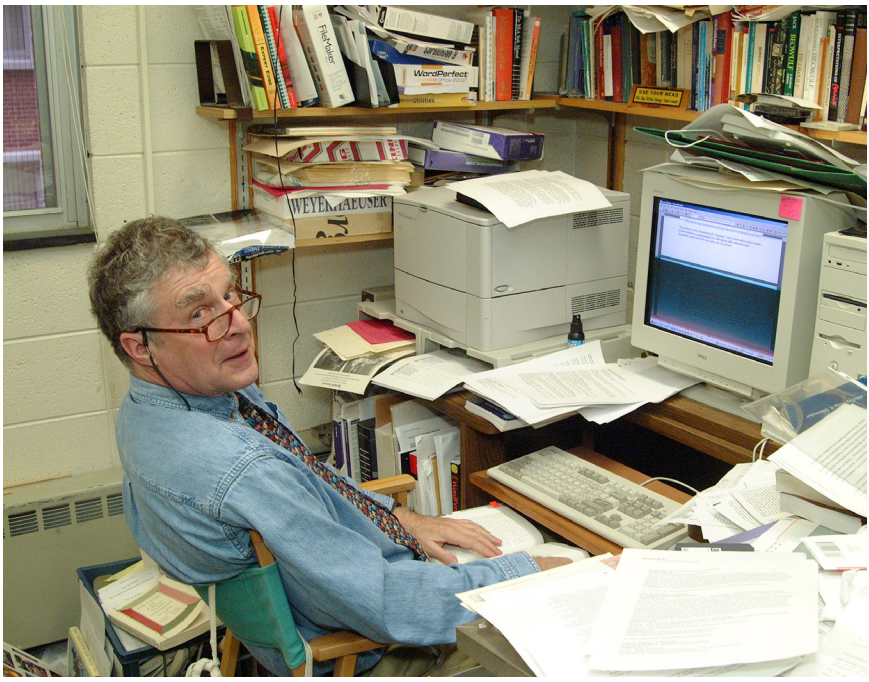
Thank you for those years when you were a faithful colleague, generous with your time and with your appreciation of others. And now I look forward to having you for a long time as my wonderful retirement friend.

Sincerely with love,
—Mary Dunlap

***

With the coming fall, I will have known Tom McGowan for a full 40 years. During that time, among many other things, he has:

1. Partially wired my house;
2. Helped to roof my house;
3. With Kay, acted for a semester *in loco parentis* for my daughter, making no really, really serious efforts to convert her to Roman Catholicism during that period;



Tom McGowan working on a research project in his office.
Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.

4. Repeatedly lent me his tiller so that the deer and raccoons might have a garden to eat;

5. Hauled landscaping trees through Boone to my house in his pickup, laughing at me in the bed as I squandered whatever professional dignity I might previously have tried to claim;

6. Joined me in cutting down large trees for firewood with what amounted to toy chain saws;

7. Played a mostly reliable second base for the Watauga County Champion Naturals softball team—unlike the Ancient Mariner, he stoppeth *two* of three;

8. Shared with me road trips of scholarly purport but with recreational undertones (e.g., Christiana Campbell's Tavern, Williamsburg; the Tune Inn, Washington DC; Baggett's Truck Stop, Tuscaloosa);

9. Assisted me in the emptying of countless pitchers of beer on Friday afternoons at the Grubstake Saloon, Holley's Tavern, the original Library Club and other establishments now of purely archaeological interest;

10. Won and lost numerous bets with me concerning football games and the correct plural forms of assorted words and terms (see Grubstake Saloon, etc., above);

11. Contributed invaluably to the enhanced reputation and traditionally collegial environment of the English Department of Appalachian State University.

I have never known and never expect to know a better human being than Tom McGowan, issues of professional housekeeping aside. With the clearing of his office, I anticipate the possible discovery of several new species of small mammals. But even more, I look forward to his continued friendship as a new member in the brotherhood of supine indolence that retirement is imagined to be. For him, I'm confident that it will be something far different and far better.

—Bill Ward (Also known to McGowan, to whom I had just pointed out a hyphen error in his brand new issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, as "You punctilious son of a bitch." He even had the etymology right.)

***

There have been at least two chancellors at Appalachian who thought there was an Irish guy in the English department named Tom McGlahmin who had an *amazing* array of interests and who did the work of two men! Both Tom and I have taken praise and blame for each other's work—if it was misguided praise, we usually just said thanks, but if it was misguided blame, we set the record straight. So once and for all, it was *McGowan* who put the damn bird on the university logo!!

Tom had a big influence on me at the beginning of my own career. I was impressed with his energy as a teacher, his commitment to scholarship, and his integrity as a member of the university community. I think Tom has always been guided by a strong moral compass and by a commitment to quality and integrity. And as a morally dubious fallen-away Catholic, I have always admired his clarity.

The strongest visual image I have of Tom is on the basketball court, where he was the last person in the Western world to take a two-handed set shot. Sometimes the ball would come to him, and with an agonized expression that said, "I should pass the ball, that would be the moral thing, but it seems I must take this shot," he would drill it.

—Tom McLaughlin

Tom McGowan (at right), Lieutenant with India Company, Third Battalion, Ninth Marines, at the An Hoa Combat Base in Vietnam in July, 1966. Photo courtesy of McGowan's personal archives.

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Here's to Tom McGowan, the only man at Appalachian State University who insisted upon calling me "Charles," and who managed to say it in such a way that it invariably translated as "Charles (you idiot)."

Tom is the man with the saddest face, yet is possessed of the brightest, most charming laugh in the mountains.

With his retirement and therefore his greater availability, the world gains access to his many and splendid gifts and talents. Orville Hicks, of course, loses a driver, but what the hell, it's a fair trade.

All the Best Wishes for Tom in this Next Chapter of His Life,
—Chuck Watkins

***

Captain McGowan, I have always appreciated your military service to our country, and it has been an honor and a pleasure serving alongside you in the civilian halls of Sanford these many years.

Your booming voice in the classroom will be sorely missed.

Nor will I ever forget the sweet two-handed set shot at the top of the key and the violent collisions at second base as you broke up the double play, even when it was unnecessary.

You and Kay were the first colleagues to invite us to dinner at your old place in Fosco when we arrived at ASU in 1977, a kindness we will never forget. I wish you luck and health in your retirement and quality time with your grandchildren. I'd jump in your foxhole any day.
—Gene Miller

***

I remember Tom McGowan when he first arrived in the ASU English Department (in 1972, I believe). I was ahead of him into these trenches by a couple of years, so I was cozily dug in and could watch the new kid from the smug comfort of the already familiar.

We had started a little knitting circle for English majors to come together in a friendly faculty's livingroom to share their scribblings and deep thoughts, and being the voyeurs we were, and wanting to see how he might stumble, we invited Mr. McGowan to come share some choice meats with those students.

We had not reckoned with this particular medievalist's sense of wickedness. Most of the students in that livingroom that evening were young women. They sipped alcohol-free fruit punch, ate gluten-free cookies, wiped their mouths on cloth-free napkins, never suspecting what was coming. Neither did we.

It came Tom's time to read, and this poem came out of his mouth:

> I have a gentil cok,
> Crowyt me day;
> He doth me rysyn erly,
> My matyins for to say.

May have been my imagination, but I believe Tom emphasized "cock" more than was entirely necessary for the meter. The second stanza arrived with similar stress:

> I have a gentil cok,
> Comyn he is of gret;
> His comb is of reed corel,
> His tayil is of get.

The squirming of the young ladies was by now more than perceptible, and I could scarcely conceal my own hilarity. Tom pressed on relentlessly:

I have a gentyl cok,
Comyn he is of kynde;
His comb is of red corel,
His tayl is of inde.

By the time he had gotten through all five stanzas, everyone in the room knew that Tom McGowan had a gentle cock, of multiple colors and a lively disposition, and I knew that we had a really accomplished new trouble-maker in the English Department!
—Jerry Williamson
Chief Chair-Flinger (retired)

***

When I interviewed for this job, someone told me—I think it was Tom McLaughlin—that Tom McGowan was the soul of the department. I wasn't quite sure what that meant, but I quickly discovered. On my first day of teaching, I found in my mailbox a book on Shakespearean folklore, with the inscription: "To Susan on her assumption to Blue Ridge heaven. Best wishes for a delightful and inspiring career learning boys'n' girls about the Bard. Thomas McGowan." Since then, all sorts of books have appeared in my box on things that Tom thought I might be interested in. In fact, just the other day I found a pamphlet on Early English garden books. I don't even remember telling Tom that I was writing on this topic, but there it was, and it was something I hadn't seen.

Through the years, I've gone to Tom with questions about Chaucer and Medieval literature, language and grammar, and no matter what he was doing, he always stopped to help me. Most of the time, he knew the answer, but if he didn't, he'd start pulling out books from the piles in his office to find out.

I've learned a lot from Tom—not just about literature and language, but about being a good colleague. I feel lucky that he was here for such a large part of my career. While I'm happy for Tom at the start of his retirement, I'm sad for the department. We are losing our soul! You will be missed, Tom.
—Susan Staub

McGowan celebrating his retirement by hiking in Ireland. Photo by Jerome Paull, McGowan's hiking partner and USMC comrade. Courtesy of McGowan's personal archives.

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As someone who for many years routinely snuck in Tom's classes and saw his raw enthusiasm at work, I do have some stories. Who hasn't heard his voice echoing down the hall and his wild laugh? Numerous students have commented on his ferocious intensity as he teaches.

Yet, the quiet stories are more lasting. I watched his careful advising of students, and his willingness to go far beyond the call of duty. I saw the many students he accepted in his classes beyond the everyday limits, and the agony he went through to help troublesome kids. Tom was one of those people who held the department together and left us with a good name. I would travel to godawful millions of high schools and nearly always one of our graduates would come forward to give a testimonial about Tom. By far, he was mentioned more than any other colleague.

His example as a colleague is the real story—his humor, his range of knowledge, his willingness to do the horrible daily work of the department, his ability to take responsibility for when the Chair or others needed help, his unselfishness.

He quietly produced a varied range of scholarship, and nurtured colleagues, and always had time for others. When he was awarded the University of North Carolina Board of Governors Excellence in Teaching Award, he set a standard which no one else could match. He was the best teacher I have ever seen.

When my wife and I came for our interview here Tom picked us up at the airport. He already seemed to know everything about us, and right away he described the region and the university. He had his baseball cap on and his energy won us over right away. I liked some other people on the interview committee, but Tom right away showed he cared about English Ed and linguistics and literature and composition and the whole discipline. And—he cared about us.

I want Tom to be really happy in his retirement, but he should know that he can't be replaced.
—Mark Vogel

***

I first "met" Tom when he called to invite me to an MLA interview for his own position—an interview taking place at the conference in Chicago, despite the fact that I actually live about two blocks from the ASU campus. Tom was kind and generous over the phone—apologizing for asking me to go to the trouble and expense of attending the MLA meeting—and later in person, clarifying that when a new medievalist came to the English department, he would no longer teach the medieval courses while he was on phased retirement so that his replacement could jump right in.

He was true to his word and welcomed me with a new copy of the *Riverside Chaucer* as well as many books from his personal library as he began the apparently unending task of cleaning out his office. Tom has continued to be generous with his friendship, advice, and help.

I'll end by saying that the $400 for a trip to Chicago (plus another few hundred dollars in after-Christmas shopping) was well worth it. I've found a wonderful home in the Appalachian English department and a wonderful colleague in Tom. (My retirement gift to Tom was a t-shirt with a picture of Chaucer and an apt quote from the Clerk's portrait in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*: "And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.")
— Alison Gulley

***

Thomas McGowan is an inspiration to so many people. He is highly respected as a teacher, colleague, and friend. I will always appreciate his kindness, thoughtfulness, and friendship when I worked in the English office. No matter how busy he was he would always take the time to provide assistance and give advice when needed. It was a joy to work with him, and I have a lot of wonderful memories. Congratulations on your retirement and best wishes to you and your family!
—Janet Wellborn Smith

***

I credit Tom McGowan with inspiring the only poem I've written in my adult life. It was 2001, and we were at a retirement party for four of the great, grizzled "old guys" of ASU's English Department. I was still a fairly new assistant professor, and Tom, serving as master of ceremonies, gave a testimonial that I came to think of as "A Paean to Patriarchy." That became the title of my poem, which I passed along to Tom anonymously. When I confessed to its authorship a long time later, Tom roared with laughter. He was delighted to learn that one of his younger female colleagues—and not one of the "old guys," as he'd assumed—was responsible for that bit of cheek.

That story tells a lot about Tom: his love of a joke, especially on him; his enjoyment in playing the role of curmudgeon and patriarch; his generosity and kindness toward all of his colleagues, but especially toward junior faculty. When I was in the uncomfortable position of being an internal job candidate in the department, Tom and Kay took me out to dinner while visiting candidates were being squired around campus. When I launched a (futile) one-woman campaign against the sale of study aids in the University bookstore, Tom twitted me with a complimentary copy of Cliffs Notes in my mailbox. When I was confronted with my first editing job, Tom brought me books and answered my clueless questions. For fifteen years, whenever I showed up at his door, Tom dropped what he was doing in order to help me.

Tom's retirement leaves a great gap in the ASU English Department. His legacy inspires us to be better teachers and scholars, but also better colleagues: kind, good-humored, and generous in spirit.
—Tina Groover

***

I am so happy for Tom, and especially for Kay, that they are getting to enjoy lots of time with each other and with their children

and grandchildren. And, of course, it's a good thing they have built an addition to their house if Tom is going to pack up his office.

First, I would like to speak about Tom as a teacher and mentor. Most of us don't have the chance to see our students at a retirement party, so Sandy Ballard and I represent a large group of folks who have Tom to thank for their successful careers. I took the Early English literature survey course from Tom when I was a freshman in 1974, and a few years later he volunteered to supervise an independent study in folklore while I did my student teaching in Scotland. That involved teaching a course through letters, because we did not have the internet in 1977. And I took Tom's graduate Chaucer course as well, where I learned the meaning of the term "expert lecturer" (including the one in a chicken costume, of course).

When I left Boone to attend the Ph.D. program at Chapel Hill, Tom advised me to take some folklore courses, and with that advice he sent me to the very best teachers in the English department there, Dan Patterson and Terry Zug.

As an undergraduate and graduate student at ASU, I had always realized that Tom was a great classroom teacher and lecturer, and also a great advisor. It was only when I returned here as a faculty member that I realized that teaching for him is also mentoring, and I've been fortunate to have him as a mentor for a number of years now. He asked me to serve as his assistant editor for the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, and I know it was because he realized I was having difficulty finding time for scholarship while teaching 4 courses and having a family. Working with him on the journal taught me to collaborate, a skill that I was able to carry over into other scholarly and administrative endeavors.

That caring and concern for the career of his former student is something that Tom has demonstrated many, many times with many, many students. I am one of the lucky few who has also gotten to have him as a colleague.

And to demonstrate the kind of colleague Tom has been, I looked through my e-mail archive recently, and here is a sample of the topics and exchanges I found:

> May I look at his folklore syllabus from last semester and copy some things?
>
> *Of course, and here are all his power points as well that I may use. And also the quilt slides that he sent me for a material culture lecture. And the last remaining department cassette player because some students still use those for collection projects.*

Can he give me some help with the smartboard?—and my computer? and printer?

Yes, of course, he'll meet me in the classroom and show me how it all works, and then come to my office to see what new computer I should request.

He's checking on me and my family after my dad's death; I thank him for the whiskey for the wake.

Negotiations about the folklore course rotation, every semester for the past decade.

He was always generous.

Would he print up certificates again for our department honors ceremony? (Of course, these certificates were his idea the first time.) Would he make sure that other faculty attend?

He did.

I thanked him for hosting a department party where he and Kay saw to it that all the kids had a great time too.

He also gave my children the gift of a collection of children's folklore so that Jim and I could be entertained at dinner with Helen Keller, blue baby, and potty jokes for many years!

Would he be one of the first faculty members to teach the new Freshman Honors Seminar?

Of course, and he tolerated an entire semester with a class of 11 sets of roommates—my great idea—and their hyper-bonding—that means they were basically sitting in each other's laps during class in the honors lounge.

And would he teach General Honors again? And again? And again?

Yes. But only if he could teach in a normal classroom with desks! Would I help a student graduate with both University and English honors? He will offer her an independent study to complete her hours; all I have to do is sign the papers.

How about if his freshman honors class and mine join up to clean the river as our service project? And can we feed them afterwards?

He was out in the river on a Saturday hauling out old tires. And then he made sure my vegan student had something to eat other than chicken and ham biscuits at Shatley Springs later.

What suggestions does he have for the honors living-learning community?

A long e-mail in reply with great advice, including the offer to hold special honors office hours in East if I could give him a space there. Here are some beekeeping books that my husband Jim might find interesting. And here is an Ojibwe immersion camp that his friend runs that my daughter Laurel might find interesting.

Will he help me on my book manuscript?

Yes.

And will he help me find another reader?

He did.

Will he make arrangements for Orville Hicks to come to my class?

Yes, many times.

Will he arrange for Orville to tell stories at the Honors Dorm of Doom?

Yes, many times.

And will he fill out all the paperwork to get money for Orville to do all of this?

Of course.

And may I just stop by his office, standing in the doorway, of course, because there is no place to sit, and ask his

advice—about my classes, my students, our department, honors, first-year seminar, my life?

Yes, for many, many hours.

I know many others have had the same experience of asking Tom for help—a book reference, advising for a student, problems with technology—and he's had the same patient response—always yes, always accompanied by a good joke.

I just can't imagine Sanford Hall without him.
—Lynn Moss Sanders

***

At the top of the list of my many memories of Tom McGowan is my initial inability to understand exactly what he was "driving at" when he spoke. After having lived in the urban North for over a decade, Elizabeth and I, both Kentuckians, were eager to return to the South. Tom and Kay were the first to visit us at our new home in Boone, and I was delighted when, in response to a question as to the name of his pet fish, their young son Michael replied, "Fliiiiipper." "Far out!" I thought, "We're *so* back in the South!" But we had a devil of a time making sense of Tom's curious Irish/Massachusetts-istic way of speaking. Southerners, like Michael, prefer to extend syllables far beyond their normal sonic value. For example, we pronounce a word like "*Pea*body's" something along the lines of "Peeee-baaah-deeeze." Tom, however, crunches the word down to "Peebdy's"—barely over one quick syllable. A typical McGowan sentence: "Billy, Oi'd loike ter ahsk yer ter stop boy Peebdy's an' boy ah hoff-quot erve soder fer da potty," spoken in fewer than three seconds. We were astonished: *this* from a man who professes proficiency in the English language?! (But the English have always had trouble understanding their Celtic neighbors.)

Another memory evokes images of Tom's manic behavior while playing centerfield for The Naturals, the English Department's softball team. Tom (weak bat, fair glove) played hard and with gung-ho abandon, stretching his aging and overworked legs to the limit. So it was no surprise that during one game—SNAP!—Tom blew out one of his exhausted hamstrings. After a too-brief absence, Tom, ever the gamer, resumed playing, bouncing about the outfield like a one-legged kangaroo, all the while shouting out exclamations, in French, at unreachable fly balls: "*Sacré bleu!*" "*Allez-vous en!*" "*Mon Dieu!*" (For some reason, The Naturals took up the practice of speaking French on the field, yelling both short phrases—"*Alors, donc!*" "*Zut,*

Tom McGowan on MacRae Peak, a favorite place on Grandfather Mountain. Photo by Thomas McGowan.

alors!"—and longer ones—"*Honi soit qui mal y pense!*" and "*Mon oncle est mort!*"—when key plays occurred. Opposing players thought we were a bunch of jerks, not knowing that we had very little clue as to the precise meaning of these expressions.) But to everyone's horror, Tom insisted on still wearing shorts to the games, displaying his hideous bruise, ghoul-like in coloration, to grossed-out players and spectators alike, as though it were some kind of blueblack badge of courage. All ended well, however, when The Naturals won the league championship, beating out the Appalachian House of Upholstery in extra innings. *Formidable!* indeed.

Other memories are of the several trips Tom and I took together, back when we enjoyed access to a now-long-forgotten perk known as "travel funds." One was to Philadelphia, with Cece Conway, another folklorist. Once we had come to terms with Tom's psychotic sense of direction (based mainly on his navigational tool of choice, "dead reckoning"), we had a pleasant time singing folksongs and telling urban legends, as one might expect. A highlight of the trip was a stop at Gettysburg, where Cece and I sat on the very rocks that protected Union forces as they repelled Pickett's Charge, while Tom, bringing his military background to bear on his narrative, enthralled us with explanations of strategies, troop deployments, and various

kinds of maneuvers. It's hard to imagine a better tour guide. Tom made it so real that it gave me the willies. We later overshot Philly so far that we were seeing lighthouses and hearing seagulls, while Tom insisted that we were within two blocks of Market Street. (Cece caught another ride back to Boone.)

Our best trip was perhaps the one to the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, where Tom and I had been invited to be presenters at the Folklife stage. Kentuckians do not ordinarily like having much to do with Tennessee—"Nothing sucks like a big Orange!" we enjoy saying—but that was where the Fair was. And, as is usually the case, the folklore contingent was disrespected by the arrangements people—we are, after all, the "country cousins" of the mainstream academic community—and they had provided only one bed for three persons (Tom had brought Michael to help out with directions). I, of course, took the high road and gave them the bed, sleeping for the next few nights on the floor of a moldy closet. But it wasn't all that bad, really, because most nights I, and quite a few other residents, was in mighty fine fettle. As a way of trying to break down stereotypes of mountain folks, the Fair had hired Hamper McBee, a lifelong moonshiner, to construct a working still on the grounds. Each day, as TV newscasters, burrowing around for something novel, stopped at the still and asked what happened to all that fresh "mountain dew," McBee would grin widely at the cameras and pour out a portion of his product. A very small portion, however. Secretly, he put aside jugs and jugs of the stuff, which he would later distribute to all the "folk people" at the site. Stokely Foods, Inc., which was sponsoring the Folklife Festival, was then pushing Gatorade, gallons and gallons of which were placed backstage to help us adjust to the brutal Dog Day heat. It hadn't taken us long to discover that a mixture of Gatorade and white liquor was especially refreshing. Consequently, evenings back at the house were very special. We sat on the creaky front porch, Tom rocking Michael to sleep, and listened to people like the Foddrell Brothers, Etta Baker, Cora Phillips, Stanley Hicks, and others make music that was magical. These moments were better than the Fair itself. And I believe that it was these sessions that inspired Tom to take up the mandolin (including a couple that didn't belong to him: bada-bing, bada bang).

There were many other memories as well: Tom's failure to find even the slightest bit of humor in my complaints about his scandalous, uncovered landfill of an office and his wildgrowth kudzu-like eyebrows; his good work with *AppalJ* and the *NCFJ* (even though he once misidentified a picture of the WLS star Arkie The Arkansas Woodchopper as "Arkie the Woodpecker" in a piece that I had trusted him with; his promotion and protection of some of

our region's most important active bearers of tradition, such as Bertha Cook, Stanley Hicks, Frank Proffitt, Jr., and Orville Hicks; the profoundly tender and touching card of consolation that he sent to our family when Elizabeth died; and his help in seeing to it that a plaque in her honor was installed in Edwin Duncan Hall, where she had worked for so many years. Well. "A long, strange trip," for sure.

Welcome to the ranks of the retired, Tom! And by the way, if you see Kay... please give her my best.

—Bill Lightfoot
Folklorist, Professor Emeritus, Appalachian State University

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Tom McGowan is a man of renowned service, an exceptional scholar, and an extraordinary teacher.

Tom's collegial service is vast. He leaves special photos and gifts in our mailboxes. Tom helped hire many of us. He drafted us into professional roles and editorial positions for the NC Folklore Society and *Journal* and published many of our early articles.

Tom's scholarship with Orville Hicks and other tradition bearers preserved their knowledge and expertise in articles and special CDs they could take on the road. His state and national nominations have spread the accomplishments of community artists across the region and country and helped perpetuate their traditions.

Thirdly, Tom is well known for his fine teaching—which ranges from students' memorizing a passage of Chaucer to appreciating *The Canterbury Tales*. He provides extensive prompts for each dramatic and witty class and gives students the incredible opportunity to learn from Orville Hicks.

Tom has also trained us in office layout and organization. Like his, my office looks like a whirlwind fallout. In preparation for today, while rummaging through several sets of papers—organized in the McGowan manner, I found a copy of Tom's nomination to the National Endowment for the Arts Heritage award for banjo and dulcimer maker Clifford Glenn. This nomination reveals many of Tom's special qualities in his own words.

In paragraph one, he begins with scholarship. He quotes imminent folklorist Henry Glassie, who helped bring material culture studies to this country. Henry's first book, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*, contains drawings of Leonard Glenn's banjos and dulcimers and considerable appreciation for his and Clifford Glenn's artistry.

In another paragraph, Tom addresses the tradition, artistry, and significance of Leonard Glenn and his son Clifford.

McGowan honors the flag at Appalachian State University. Photo courtesy of Appalachian State University.

In the last paragraph of the nomination, Tom turns to the emotional qualities of Clifford Glenn: In the last illness of Tom's dad, he "shared a nursing home room with Leonard Glenn, who was terminally ill. I remember the sadness of seeing Mr. Glenn's strong hands and mind no longer able to support his instrument making, but was heartened during those visits to talk with Clifford Glenn, a faithful son both in tending to his father but also in continuing

family and community traditions in music playing and instrument making."

To conclude, Tom is a one-man band, who has helped and inspired each of us. His soulful music remains in our hearts and minds. Thank you, Tom, for being you.
—Cece Conway

***

I first met Tom well over 30 years ago, about the time he was beginning to edit the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* (a job that sort of turned into a life's work). He was walking across the campus at UNC with his old friend, George Lensing, a fellow Notre Dame graduate. Now, George sounded like everyone else, but Tom only had to say one word, and I knew he wasn't from North Carolina. And that's truly ironic, because few people have done more for the traditional cultures of this state.

I've lived some up in New England, so I knew exactly where Tom had come from. I can tell you the winter gets pretty long up there in the Hyperborean climes around Boston. And I expect I know why Tom eventually headed south. You know the old story about Lou Holtz, the football coach, who was asked, when did he leave his native West Virginia? "Well," he responded," as soon as I reached the age of reason." It took Tom a little longer to get there, but we're all glad that he did. And to his credit, Tom has never compromised his Boston accent.

Like a lot of people in Folklore—myself included—Tom came here pretending he could teach English so he could get a respectable job and a decent salary. But as you all now know, he was a closet folklorist. And it's too late for all you administrators at Appalachian to do anything about it; he got away with it (most of us do). In part he succeeded through subterfuge. Many times I heard this—people would ask him where he taught, and he would say, "The University of Tweetsie Railroad."

Tom did teach folklore along with English, but I know that he was one of the finest teachers at Appalachian State University. Some years ago he won the highest teaching award given by the UNC system (I know, because he took George and me to the 42nd Street Oyster Bar in Raleigh to celebrate). Moreover, I have heard from his students, some of whom came to UNC as graduate students, that his classes were lively, challenging, and humorous. Tom, as you may have noticed, has an irrepressible sense of humor.

Nowhere is this trait more apparent than in his long friendship with mountain storyteller Orville Hicks. If you've never seen this

duo on stage, you've missed a performance that rivals Laurel and Hardy or Abbott and Costello. For example, Tom plays the straight man to Orville in a reenactment of the old tall tale about the wily mountaineer selling a "mule egg" (a.k.a. pumpkin) to a city slicker, or in this case, a "perfesser" (the Boston accent helps here). They have literally traveled around the state, performing at, yes, other universities, providing audiences with a multi-layered portrayal of North Carolina folk culture. And they even team-taught a course at Appalachian, all of which does make me a bit concerned about the future of American education.

For all of us in the North Carolina Folklore Society, the high point of our annual meetings was always the Treasurer's report. Tom was Treasurer for 21 years and was the master of the opaque but reassuring delivery. Tom was sort of Bernie Madoff before his time. There was talk of offshore accounts and credit default swaps, but somehow the Society always muddled through. Only Tom could make finances entertaining.

On a more serious note, what Tom did for the North Carolina Folklore Society is just extraordinary. He edited the *Journal* for 22 years, introducing new technologies and greatly improving the appearance and quality of each issue. He initiated an accompanying *Newsletter* and edited that for 21 years. And he greatly extended the range of the Brown-Hudson Awards, which are given annually to people who have contributed to folklore studies in North Carolina. Appropriately, in 2002 the Society established the Thomas McGowan Award, which is given "for outstanding service to the Society." Tom, not surprisingly, was the first recipient, and I'm not sure we've given it to anyone else, probably because no one can ever match what he did.

Tom, in short, is one of the most giving, generous friends any of us could ever hope for. He is the kind of person willing to do the tasks most others don't want to do, like writing grants or editing articles or nurturing issues of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* into print. This is the kind of work that is necessary but doesn't bring any great credit or acclaim. And in that same spirit he has worked for years with his friend Orville, helping Orville find new gigs or producing CDs that would help Orville establish his career.

We are all fortunate that this hardy New Englander finally reached the age of reason and headed south. Thank you, Tom, for choosing the University of Tweetsie Railroad and North Carolina as your home. Now enjoy your retirement and do some of the things you want to do . . .

—Terry Zug

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I knew Tom McGowan first through the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* and then through the NC Folklore Society Annual Meeting. I feel lucky to know Tom, and I knew I was lucky because he liked to tell his crazy jokes around me. He never missed an opportunity to wryly insert a bad pun or draw me into a corny joke. His hearty laugh lifted the veil of academic solemnity at every annual meeting I ever attended and for that I am eternally grateful. I have to admit, however, that I also ribbed Tom after every report of yard work accident or calamity that trickled down the folklore grapevine from Boone. I hope that in his retirement he chooses a hobby that does not include trips to the emergency room.
—Barbara Lau

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Some people, to paraphrase Shakespeare, are born Appalachians. Some achieve Appalachianhood. Some have it thrust upon them. Tom McGowan was not blessed with the first of these roles, and he is too grateful an Appalachian ever to charge that it was "thrust upon" him. So we want to honor him for having earned his Appalachianhood.

And we must recognize that he achieved this against great odds. He was born far from Appalachia—far from it in almost every sense. Born, regionally speaking, in Massachusetts, where the local ideal has been from of old to speak only to the Cabots, who speak only to God. In Appalachia, where this latter role is sometimes said to be taken by a denomination or two outside his own faith, he triumphed over his Massachusetts birth by enthusiastically speaking with Appalachians from the moment he got to North Carolina. Ethnically also, he was far from Appalachianhood by birth. He was a hybrid, bred of both Irish and Lithuanian stock, neither of which richly stocked the Appalachians. But from his own traditions he brought a keen sense of humor and directness of speech, a strong and companionable interest in people, and kindness of heart. These are qualities that naturally endeared him to Appalachian people and led them to welcome him as one of their own. He reciprocated by offering warm friendship and a deep appreciation of their stories, music, and crafts. And Tom McGowan went further. He used his professional training to bring well-deserved honor to them and to Appalachia.

It is important to note that Tom McGowan always had the good sense never to buy into popular stereotypes. We cannot state from personal knowledge that he never hoisted a jug of moonshine and

never tried picking a banjo or strumming a dulcimer. We can testify, however—after a diligent research in both court records and weekly newspapers—that he has at least never been convicted here of making moonshine or of fist-fighting to the endangerment of the peace and the public on Saturday night (an activity for which his earlier service in Viet Nam would have prepared him for great success). We ourselves are also not Appalachians by birth or achievement, but as North Carolinians we are proud of Appalachian cousins and proud that Tom McGowan is now also one of these. We wish him many more years to enjoy this well-earned honorable standing.
—Beverly and Dan Patterson

Tom McGowan: Editor of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*

By Philip E. "Ted" Coyle

Tom McGowan's first issue editing the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* was 25.1: May 1977. He edited the issue with Appalachian State University professor Rogers Whitener, whose seniority and connections with Amos "Doc" Abrams allowed Tom McGowan, an untenured junior professor, to succeed Leonidas Betts of North Carolina State University as editor. McGowan had served as the Society's Secretary-Treasurer and had secured some funding through the Folklife Section of the North Carolina Arts Council, which allowed him to also begin publishing a newsletter for the Society. He also proposed moving the Society's annual meetings from Raleigh's long-running Culture Week to a rotating series of sites around the state, which also helped to encourage a wider range of contributors to the *Journal*, and to the work of the North Carolina Folklore Society as a whole.

The first year of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* at Appalachian State University featured three important issues: a special issue on Bascom Lamar Lunsford, including a moving obituary of the "minstrel of the Appalachians" by Loyal Jones; a unique unbound collection of cards, each representing a mountain folk artist or

Philip E. (Ted) Coyle is the current editor of the North Carolina Folklore Journal. *He teaches anthropology at Western Carolina University.*

Frame photo: Tom McGowan in the office of the Appalachian Journal. *Photo courtesy of the* Appalachian Journal.

craftsperson, sponsored by the Appalachian Consortium, which at the time was providing funding for collaborative work with the National Park Service; and finally a "regular" issue, which featured a number of themes that would characterize the issues to come.

With this last issue of Tom McGowan's first year as (co-)editor, Watauga County artist Norma Farthing began contributing her graceful line drawings to each issue of the journal, giving it a sense of continuity, as well as a connection to the mountain culture of the Boone area. The issue also included two manuscripts from that year's winners of the North Carolina Folklore Society's annual student contest. The work of student contest winners would feature prominently in subsequent issues. Indeed, two of our Society's most prominent figures—Cratis Williams and Amos Abrams—would eventually be honored as the namesakes for these awards, which unfortunately have not been awarded in recent years. This last issue of McGowan's inaugural year also included two short pieces by Dan Patterson, who, with Terry Zug and a few others at UNC, NC State, and, of course ASU, were the active core of the North Carolina Folklore Society at the time. This issue also included a review of *The Treasury of Afro-American Folklore*. African-American folk traditions would feature prominently in the *Journal* during McGowan's tenure.

Tom McGowan became the sole editor of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* with *NCFJ* 26.1: May 1978. He continued this position for the next eighteen years, with the help of a number of assistants drawn from students and staff at Appalachian, as well as family members and friends. Tom McGowan's wife, Kay, remembered this time to me as one of household hustle and bustle caught up in the happy whirlwind of college activity. In ASU's English Department, secretaries Janet Wellborn and Amy Greer—as well as various student assistants, like ballad-singing ASU graduate student Laura Laughridge —assembled the bulk mailings. McGowan himself did the lay-out work, putting his experience as editor of his high school yearbook to good use. He began with a strike-on typesetter in the ASU student newspaper office and later moved to a Compugraphic chemical machine in the university's Office of Printing and Publications. He would take the long galleys of type-set work, cut them up, and paste them on to non-photo reproducible lined paper with hot wax and an Exacto knife. For many years, there was a blood streak on the wall of the Office of Printing and Publications, a reminder of one particularly bad injury sustained by McGowan during this era of journal production. As computer technology developed, he moved to PageMaker, a much

easier arrangement, although including photos was challenging because he had to do additional chemical halftone work.

The first issue of McGowan's inaugural year as sole editor was dedicated to Arthur Palmer Hudson, co-namesake of the North Carolina Folklore Society's long-running Brown-Hudson Folklore Award, given each year to our state's most prominent tradition-bearers and folklorists. The issue had a special focus on folklore and education, with a brief reprise of a debate between famed folklorist Richard Dorson and Foxfire-founder Eliot Wigginton about the differences between what Dorson considered true folklore, on the one hand, and revivalistic "fake-lore," on the other.

The second issue in McGowan's first volume as sole editor became one of his most popular, and one whose theme remains close to McGowan's heart to this day: Jack Tales. It contains the often reprinted "Four Beech Mountain Tales," as well as an article on defining the genre of Jack Tales by C. Paige Gutierrez, a young folklorist at the time who has gone on to a productive career as a folklorist in the Cajun country of Louisiana. This issue also included an article about Marshall Ward, a well-regarded Jack Tale teller who grew up steeped in the Beech Mountain tradition. Like many of the early years of McGowan's editorship, this volume had an "extra" third issue, this one devoted to student essays.

Volume 27 (1979-80) contained a number of articles on African-American folk culture in North Carolina, including articles on African-American music by Bruce Bastin, basket-making by Glenn Hinson, and material culture by Rodney Barfield. It also included articles by two regular contributors to the *NCFJ*, C.W. Sullivan on folk medicine and Terry Zug on the folk pottery of Burlon Craig. This volume again contained a third issue, this time focused on that year's NCFS folk heritage award-winners. One notable Brown-Hudson Award winner of that year was Rogers Whitener, whose citation was (not-surprisingly) written by his former co-editor, Tom McGowan.

McGowan's next volume began with an issue devoted to student award-winning essays, and ended with an issue devoted to a series of manuscripts on Southern instrumental music originally presented at the previous year's American Folklore Society meeting in Los Angeles: one by Blanton Owen on Cherokee fiddler Manco Sneed, one by Bill Thatcher on the still-active Roan Mountain Hilltoppers, and one by Gary Stanton on country blues fiddle tunes. This second, and last, issue of the volume also contained Brown-Hudson Award citations.

McGowan at the *Appalachian Journal*, which also benefitted from his editorial work. Photo courtesy of the *Appalachian Journal*

Volume 29 was the first to include the Spring-Summer and Fall-Winter designation for its numbers. The Spring-Summer issue comprised selections from Rogers Whitener's *Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech*. The short Fall-Winter issue contained an obituary for folklorist and novelist Guy Owen, as well as an assortment of other material, including a piece by Lucy Long that points out her early dedication to understanding the politics of folklore.

If Volume 29 was a bit shorter on material than previous issues, then Volume 30 marks a new and improved style for the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, a style that would continue well into the future. This volume begins the clean and readable classic "look" of the *Journal*, a lay-out that continues, with some breaks, up to the present day. Sandra Ballard also began her association with the *NCFJ* with this issue—as a student editorial assistant—and Lynn Moss Sanders, another former student who has become an ASU colleague, has worked with the *NCFJ* and developed an association that, counting the present issue, continued off and on for 30 years. This issue included Brown-Hudson Award citations, including one for Tommy Jarrell written by Cece Conway, as well as an award to

Wiseman's View:

The Autobiography of Skyland Scotty Wiseman

By Scott G. Wiseman

Introduction by William E. Lightfoot

A Publication of the North Carolina Folklore Society

The popular "Scotty Wiseman issue" of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal.*

a Foxfire-inspired group called "Kin'lin'," which foregrounds the establishment of the North Carolina Folklore Society's Community Traditions Award. Well-known folklorist Polly Stewart served as the student-award judge for the manuscripts that also appeared in this issue.

The second issue of this volume was equally rich, with a manuscript by Geraldine Johnson about her research on quilting traditions, which she completed as part of the American Folklife Center's ethnographically inspired Blue Ridge Folklife Project, under the direction of current *NCFJ* Editorial Board member Alan Jabbour. Former North Carolina Folklore Society President Mary Anne McDonald's Abrams Award-winning undergraduate essay appears in this issue. This issue also contains Brown-Hudson Award citations for legendary North Carolina musicians Etta Baker and Cora Phillips, as well as a complete index of Brown-Hudson winners from 1970-1981. It concludes with a fascinating—and timely, given the commonalities of industrial exploitation through the years—analysis of women-led protest songs in the Gastonia textile strike of 1929.

Volume 31 (1983) began with a short issue of assorted news items and brief articles. The second issue contained an article by Paula Hathaway Anderson-Green, more recently known for her study of the history of string-band music, *A Hot-Bed of Musicians: Traditional Music in the Upper New River Valley-Whitetop Region*. This issue also includes the year's Brown-Hudson Award citations, including one for the fiddler Ora Watson and another for renowned folklorist Joe Wilson, written by George Holt, whose own work organizing folk festivals in North Carolina was influenced by Wilson's work with the National Folk Festival.

Volume 32 began with more awards citations, including one for story-teller and ballad-singer Bobby McMillon written by Dan Patterson, who at the time was working on research for his book *A Tree Accurst: Bobby McMillon and Stories of Frankie Silver*. The issue also includes a Cratis Williams Student-Award winning manuscript on Pittsboro's vernacular architecture, an area of folklore studies that has been rarely included in the *Journal* through the years. The second issue included Brown-Hudson citations for African-American quilters Lilly Lee and Jennie Burnett by long-time NCFS member Mary Ann McDonald, and African-American medicine-woman Mrs. Emma Dupree by former *NCFJ* editor Karen Baldwin. It also had an article on African-American folk artist William Young by Elizabeth Fenn. Finally, the issue also contained an on-the-ground history of

the Naomi Wise ballad by Robert Roote that reminded me of Kevin Young's recent history of the Broadus Miller murders in the pages of this journal.

Volume 33 has been one of McGowan's most enduring: the "Scotty Wiseman issue." The volume covered two years (1985 and 1986) and it contained 90 pages in a single, beautiful issue. There are no editorial assistants included on the masthead. This issue became one of McGowan's most-requested back issues, and is one of the few *NCFJ* issue to go entirely out of print.

1987's Volume 34 contained Brown-Hudson Award citations to, among others, Bertie Dickens, by McGowan's long-time ASU colleague Cece Conway, and one for George Holt written by Dan Patterson. Luke Powers' Cratis Williams Award-winning student essay on North Carolina blues and gospel tradition is included in this issue, as well as a genealogical and historical analysis of the tale-telling Hicks' family of Beech Mountain. This issue also has a review by John Burrison of Terry Zug's *Turners and Burners*, which remains the definitive book on North Carolina folk pottery. The second issue of this volume contains assorted award citations and student papers.

The slight lull of the last issue of the previous volume is followed by a number of strong issues. By this time, McGowan had been editing the *Journal* for more than ten years, and the steady and strong productivity displayed by these issues reflect his easy competence at the job. The first issue of Volume 35 included the results of two useful library projects—a description of quilt patterns in the Frank Brown Collection and a bibliography of folklore-related material in the *North Carolina Historical Review*—and a literary analysis, an attempt to see the ballad "The Wanton Woman of Bath" as it would have circulated in the oral life of people at the time it was written. The second issue had some notable Brown-Hudson Award citations: One for fiddler Lauchlin Slaw by Wayne Martin, one for Guy Johnson by long-time *NCFJ* Assistant Editor Lynn Moss Sanders, and one for Leonidas Betts by Tom McGowan. Finally, in addition to some student essays, the issue had the Brown-Hudson Award citation for the Badgett Sisters, who sang the words that Tom long used as part of his digital signature on email correspondence: "I don't want nobody stumblin' on my life/That is why I pray so hard."

The next volume began with a special issue: A Singing Stream, about the African-American gospel-singing Landis family of Granville County, released in conjunction with the film of the same name by Tom Davenport, who has gone on to create and host the

very popular folkstreams.net. Allen Tullos of Emory University wrote a discussion of the film for this issue, and helped in the editorial process. In addition to Brown-Hudson citations, including one by long-time NCFS supporter Connie Mason for down-east blues man Richard Henry, the second issue contains an article on Stanley Hicks by Morganton-native and Western Piedmont Community College faculty member Cheryl Oxford—who published a number of pieces in the *NCFJ* during these years—and a review of outsider art by Joey Brackner, who went on to head up the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture.

Volume 37 started with a student issue, including essays from students at Appalachian State, UNC-Chapel Hill, and Warren Wilson College, notably one by Music Maker Relief Foundation's Tim Duffy on the dynamics of a musical "picking party" in Black Mountain, North Carolina. This issue also includes reviews of books by UNC professors Glenn Hinson and James Peacock. The second issue had the year's Brown-Hudson Award citations, as well as articles on the folklore of food blessings and a study of ballad themes in Thomas Hardy.

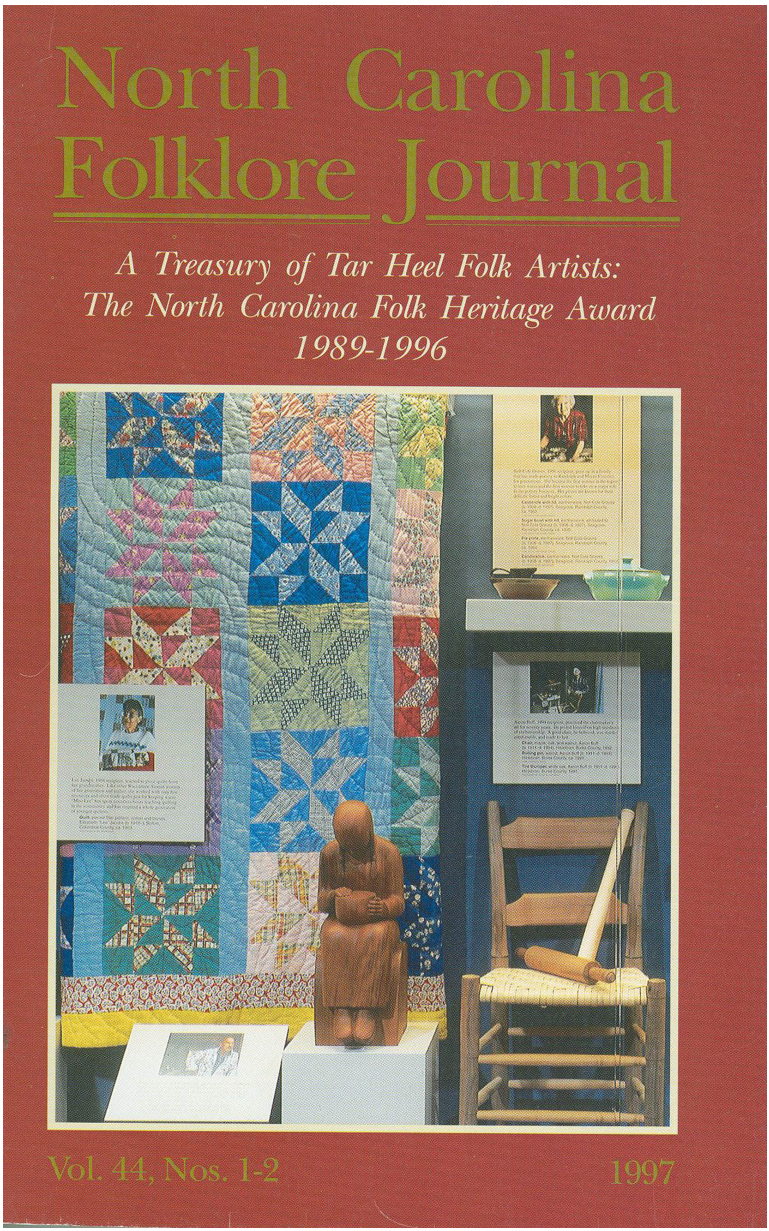
The first issue of 1991's Volume 38 began with a list of Brown-Hudson Award winners from 1970-1991, and included Brown-Hudson Award citations for Cherokee crafts advocate Molly Blankenship by George Holt, one for local radio impresario Ralph Epperson by long-time NCFS-supporter Jack Bernhardt, and one for Terry Zug by Tom McGowan himself. The issue also included an Abrams student-essay award for a paper on CB radio folklore by a student of Karen Baldwin, another early contribution by her to a journal for whom she would eventually become the editor. The second issue included two contributions by Cheryl Oxford, an analysis of story-teller Ray Hicks as a shaman, and a review of the work of story-teller Don Davis. This issue also includes a review of Patterson and Zug's *Arts in Earnest: North Carolina Folklife*.

Volume 39 begins with a short special issue devoted to Zug's *Little Boats: Making Ship Models on the North Carolina Coast*. The follow-up issue had a variety of short materials: Brown-Hudsons (to fiddler Otha Willard by Wayne Martin, to African-American writer Dorothy Spruill Radford by Tom McGowan and Karen Baldwin, and to Karen Baldwin herself by Polly Stewart); local character anecdotes; a profile of a folk art collector; and a Joseph Campbell-inspired analysis of Jack Tales by Joseph D. Sobol, "Jack of a Thousand Faces."

The first issue of Volume 40 had an article on biker folklife by Karen Baldwin, one on blacksmith Bea Hensley by Craig Stinson, and a number of student essays. This issue also includes a rare advertisement: an ad for Tom Davenport's film *Blow the Tannery Whistle* about Brown-Hudson Award-winning Sylva, NC, story-teller Gary Carden. The second issue included an article by legendary folklorist Archie Green on Dan Tucker, a folk hero from Roanoke Island, and one by former NCFS President Mary Anne McDonald on African-American quilting. This issue also included Brown-Hudson citations from a number of important folklorists of the time working with a culturally diverse range of tradition-bearers: Elon Kuli on African-American cultural heritage worker Mattye Reed; Barbara Lau on Cambodian Buddist monk Phramaha Somsak Sambimb; Glenn Hinson on African-America doll-carvers George and Donnis SerVance; Everette James on Haliwa-Saponi artist Claude Richardson; George Holt on writer David Whisnant, as well as a Community Traditions Award citation to the Guilford Native American Association by Tom McGowan. This very rich issue also had a curriculum guide by Patricia Gantt for using Glenn Hinson's *Eight-Hand Sets and Holy Steps*, an album of early African-American dance tunes, in the classroom.

Volume 41's first issue features student essays, including the student-award winning "A Woman at the Wheel: Issues of Gender in a North Carolina Pottery Tradition," by Barbara Lau. The second issue features impressive Brown-Hudson Award citations: Archie Green by David Whisnant; Bessie Mae Eldreth by Patricia Sawin; Julie Jarrell Lyons by Cece Conway; Glenn Hinson by Terry Zug and Mary Anne McDonald; and a Community Traditions Award to PineCone by Jack Bernhardt. This issue also includes, in addition to some student work, another article about story-teller Don Davis, this time by Joseph Sobol and focusing on Jack Tales.

1995's Volume 42 continued what had become an annual cycle for the *Journal*, swinging between issues focused on Brown-Hudson Award citations and those focused on student essays, which was the focus of the first issue of this volume. It included student essays by Adrianne Hollifield on the Sodom Laurel ballad tradition and by student Ronan Peterson on his grandfather's ginseng-picking tradition. The subsequent issue turned to awards, with Brown-Hudsons to story-teller Bobby McMillon, musician Tommy Thompson (by Cece Conway), filmmaker Tom Davenport, and folklorist Beverly Patterson. This issue also had three feminist-inspired articles from



This issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* featured NC Folk Heritage Award winners from the previous seven years.

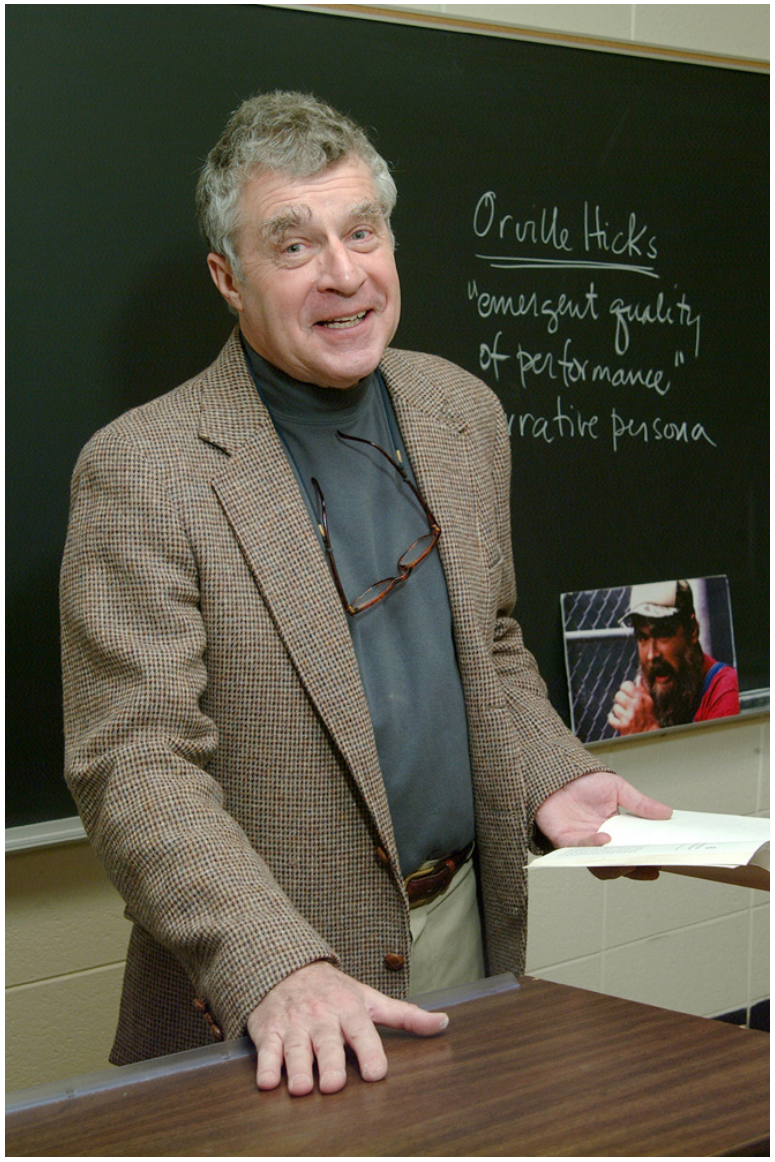
a session organized for the American Folklore Society's annual meeting by Cece Conway: an article on Bessie Mae Eldreth by Patricia Sawin, who would expand this research into her book *Listening for a Life*; "Women in Appalachian Literature," by Patricia Gantt, and two discussions of women in the fiction of Lee Smith.

Volume 43 started with a student-oriented issue, with papers judged by Erika Brady, who at the time edited the journal *Southern Folklore*. It also included a Community Traditions Award citation written by future *NCFJ* editor Carmine Prioli for the Core Sound Carvers. This was McGowan's last official issue as sole editor of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*.

The second issue of volume 43 was co-edited with Karen Baldwin, who would go on to edit the *Journal* for several years, with the on-going crucial support of Tom McGowan. Carmine Prioli's Community Traditions Award citation of the previous issue is followed up in this one with an article on Harker's Island work-boats. This issue also contained a Brown-Hudson Award citation for a Harker's Island carver. Additionally, the issue had articles on African-American stepping traditions written by UNC Curriculum in Folklore students Amy Davis, Alicia Rouverol and Lisa Yarger; African-American narratives by Stephen Criswell; an article on North Carolina pottery; and an article on Santería offerings found on Wrightsville Beach.

Volume 44 of 1997 was unusual: a single large double-issue that was devoted entirely to documenting North Carolina Heritage Award winners from the previous eight years. This issue, with a vibrant color cover such as would be associated with the issues produced by new *NCFJ* editor Karen Baldwin, also included a review by Lucy Allen of music produced by selected award-winners. McGowan would continue to play an important role behind the scenes during Baldwin's years as editor, ghost editing several issues and supplying material and expertise, a valued role that he has continued up to the present day with the *Journal*'s current editor.

Tom McGowan's many years as editor and advisor to the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* will very likely never be duplicated. He had a gentle and nurturing resilience that is fundamentally rare in the human experience. Like the wandering saints of old, he built relationships far and wide, and used them to establish a happy monastery of scholarly devotion and productivity in his home region. We will not see another like Tom McGowan, but we are better off for having experienced his grace.



A Tribute to Thomas McGowan

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