Interview with Karenne Wood

New Virginia Encyclopedia

VaBook! 2005 Wrap-up

National Folklife Festival

It’s safe to assume that when the English came ashore in the place we now call Virginia in the spring of 1607, Chief Powhatan was not surprised. He would have known about earlier European attempts at settlement in the Mid-Atlantic, and the arrival of a “people from the East” had been foretold to him years before.

Powhatan was smart; he was prudent, and concerned about this invasion, probably from the first. The English were well armed, aggressive, and obviously in no rush to leave. It’s easy to imagine his curiosity, mixed with heavy dollops of amusement and even disdain for these noisy, ill-prepared, and misplaced foreigners. But it’s still a wonder that he spared the blustering John Smith—prophecy or no prophecy—and allowed the Jamestown colonists to live through their first winter in Virginia.

We can only guess the reasons why. But if Powhatan hadn’t permitted it, Smith and his companions would almost surely never have emerged from the shadows of starvation and failure in the early years, or succeeded in establishing their fledgling colony, which to the Indians must have seemed as frail and tenuous as a hatchling sparrow. What if it was really Powhatan’s strength and imagination, more than Smith’s—the native people’s forbearance, even more than the settlers’ tenacity and resourcefulness—that ultimately ensured Jamestown’s survival? Should we honor Powhatan among the founders of Virginia?

The “New” World may have been new to the English: virgin, primordial, and savage in their colonial estimation. But it wasn’t new to Powhatan, or to the Mattaponi, the Pamunkey, the Nansemond, the Rappahannock, and the other tribes that comprised his paramount chiefdom.

It wasn’t new to the Monacan, the Chickahominy, the Saponi, the Meherrin, the Occaneechi, or the Patawomeck—to the 50,000 or more Native people living within...
Within every chapter and page of the state’s history, from the most inspiring to the most shameful, there are stories of survival, adaptation, persistence, creativity, and achievement that deserve to be told, and told again in new ways.

The VFH and 2007

Continued from cover

The present-day boundaries of Virginia at the time the English arrived. And it wasn’t new to millions of other Indians who by 1607 had formed complex, stable societies—keepers of faith, tradition, law, and vividly expressive cultures—from the Arctic Circle to Cape Horn.

In Virginia, in 1607, it was as if a needle pierced the skin of the New World, injecting the ideas of rights and property, commerce and Christianity, individualism and the germs of slavery as well as unfettered opportunity, and the seeds of revolutions and wars soon to come. Soon to come, as well, were centuries of conquest beginning with the Virginia tribes, and “manifest destiny” running alongside radical new ideas of human freedom, inalienable rights, and democracy—two springs, one light, one dark, from the same source, in Virginia.

In this serum also were the beginnings of what we now call globalization, the blending of cultures and traditions to make new hybrids, and a potent mix of economic pathogens and nutrients. It all began here.

In two years, Virginia will observe the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Jamestown Colony. The VFH will contribute substantially to this observance, and future issues of VFH Views will include more information and details about the Foundation’s 2007-related programs and initiatives.

We want to help ensure that communities throughout Virginia will participate, and that Virginia’s 400-year history is considered from as many perspectives as possible. We also want to use this occasion to look closely, wherever possible, at the relationship between Virginia’s past, issues in the present, and concerns for the future; and to do more than simply celebrate.

Virginia’s 400-year history is an infinitely complex web of stories, illustrious and painful. Jefferson, Madison, George Mason, and Patrick Henry—Virginians who gave birth to a new conception of human rights—were all slaveholders. This irony is an essential part of their legacy. The Virginia Declaration of Rights was written here, but so were the infamous Racial Integrity laws that effectively denied Indian people and others in the state the right to claim their own identity.

For more than 200 years, the Bill of Rights, drafted by Virginians, has inspired people and nations throughout the world to assert the rights of individuals and place limits on the power of government. But for many decades, African Americans in the state were systematically denied their most basic rights and opportunities under Jim Crow segregation. Likewise, Virginia, which established the modern concept of public higher education, was also the epicenter of massive resistance to school desegregation in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown v. Board decision.

Within every chapter and page of the state’s history, from the most inspiring to the most shameful, there are stories of survival, adaptation, persistence, creativity, and achievement that deserve to be told, and told again in new ways.

2007 is an opportunity, among other things, to take full accounting of the “Virginia Experiment.” It’s an opportunity for all Virginians, and for those who will visit the state, to understand the forces Jamestown set in motion, what Virginia has become, and why. It’s an opportunity to celebrate what is good and at the same time to acknowledge what’s been lost, sacrificed, and forfeited, and by whom.

This is an historic moment. How we observe the 2007 anniversary will also become a part of the Jamestown legacy, our own contribution to the Virginia story. Our challenge is to honor the achievements of Virginia’s past, but also to look straight at our shared history, refusing to blink or turn away from what we wish we didn’t see. VFH will work in this spirit, to help make the observance of 2007 as rich and meaningful as possible for all Virginians.
Speaking for Ourselves: History, Language, and Virginia Indians Today

A Discussion with Karenne Wood

Karenne Wood joined the VFH Board of Directors in 2004, after serving as a project director and advisor to several grant-funded programs and other initiatives sponsored by the Virginia Foundation. For more than 10 years, Karenne has been active in American Indian affairs and a leader working on behalf of Virginia’s Indian communities. She is an enrolled member of the Monacan Indian Nation and a member of the Monacan Tribal Council. Currently, she serves as Chair of the Virginia Council on Indians, an advisory board appointed by the Governor to work with the state and private agencies on educational and other issues affecting Indian tribes and people in the Commonwealth.

Since 2002, she has been the Director of the Repatriation Program of the Association on American Indian Affairs based in Rockville, Maryland, working for the return of Native American sacred and religious objects held in private collections. In 2004, she entered the University of Virginia’s Ph.D. program in Linguistic Anthropology, with the goal of recovering as much as possible of the Monacan native language.

Wood is also a highly regarded poet, the author of Markings on Earth (University of Arizona Press, 2001). She completed her MFA degree at George Mason University, also in 2001, and has worked with the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington to develop curriculum materials and exhibit programming, conducting new research on historic and contemporary tribes of the Mid-Atlantic region. She is a member of the National Congress of American Indians’ Repatriation Commission, the Native Writers Circle of the Americas, the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers, and the Virginia Indian Nations Summit on Higher Education. In 2005, she was awarded a three-year Ford Foundation pre-doctoral fellowship, one of six awarded to graduate students in anthropology nationwide.

In this second of an occasional series of interviews with distinguished friends and associates of the VFH, David Bearinger talks with Karenne Wood about issues of concern to Indian communities in Virginia.

David Bearinger: When you were a child in school, what were you taught about Virginia and American Indian history? How were Indian people portrayed?

Karenne Wood: I grew up in Virginia, but I was taught nothing about Virginia Indian history. It wasn’t discussed, except for the legend of Pocahontas and John Smith, which continues to misinform American children, even now. We were taught that American Indians lived out West, that they wore headdresses and rode horses, and that they had lost a long series of wars with the U.S. government. Indians were portrayed as stupid people who could never speak English properly and who didn’t understand the forces against them, as people who stood in the way of American “progress.” They participated in savage acts against innocent settlers and engaged in bizarre dances around the fire at night. If Indians existed at all in contemporary times, they must still be wearing braids and leather clothes; but generally we were taught that Indians were people of the past.

DB: When did you begin to question what you’d been taught about Indians and American history?

KW: I never bought into the mainstream view of American Indians. I was always reading other books on my own. I encountered biographies of Crazy Horse and Geronimo in the school library in about the third grade. I read them over and over—I can still recall whole paragraphs of those books. They were romanticized stories written by non-Indians, but they cast these Indian leaders in a favorable light, as men who fought for their...
people even knowing they couldn't win. I identified with them. Some Indian people today say that when they were kids, they rooted for the cowboys, because the cowboys were characterized as heroes and Indians weren't. Not me. I always wanted the Indians to win, and I was always disappointed.

**DB:** Obviously, you think, and I imagine most Virginia Indian people would probably agree that their history has been misrepresented in standard accounts, especially in the classroom. What can be done or what is being done to change this?

**KW:** We're working on a lot of educational initiatives. Our elders have always told us that education is extremely important—they themselves were denied public education until 1963—and that the information available about our peoples is wrong. Through the Virginia Indian Nations' Summit on Higher Education, we're developing a speakers' bureau and a curriculum, plus a summer institute so teachers can learn better ways to teach their students about our histories and cultures. A number of us have been speaking in schools and universities for years. And we're working now to develop a Virginia Indian Heritage Trail, like the African American Heritage Trail, that will guide Virginians and tourists to sites that have accurate interpretive content about Indians, and to the tribal locations as well. In addition, we plan to have representatives on the committee that will be revising the Virginia Standards of Learning in Social Studies.

**DB:** You've said on many occasions that it's important for Virginia Indians to take ownership of their history. How is this being done?

**KW:** Well, we're insisting on accuracy and fair representation. We’re involved with the Jamestown 2007 planning, making sure that the Indian participation in various events will reflect a sense of respect for our ancestors and their contributions to our collective history as Americans. We're constantly reviewing written documents that involve Virginia Indians—books, articles, scripts, and so on—for accuracy. Most importantly, we're getting more of our Indian students into Virginia universities, so that they can ultimately represent us as scholars and historians. We need to speak for ourselves.

**DB:** One of the consistent themes I’ve heard expressed by Virginia's Indian leaders, especially when they're speaking or writing to a non-Indian audience, is "we're still here." Why was this ever in doubt?

**KW:** It was never in doubt within the Indian communities. The problem is that the rest of the world doesn't know we're still here. We became invisible through a long process of marginalization, through state-sanctioned efforts that eradicated our identity on paper in the same way that earlier policies had stripped us of our lands, through omission in the textbooks and through the U.S. government's failure to formally acknowledge our tribes as they have others. People today don't recognize us as Indians because we're not readily identifiable—we're not wearing leather clothes. We have regular jobs and houses like everyone else. The difference is cultural—we have our communities, and we've always been different from American society in that way.

**DB:** Six of the Virginia Indian tribes are currently asking the U.S. government to recognize their tribal sovereignty.

**KW:** Sovereignty is the inherent, recognized right of nations to govern themselves. The tribes that are recognized by the U.S. government, more than 500 of them, are acknowledged as sovereign entities that pre-date the U.S., and they have status to interact with Congress. Our tribes in Virginia were never acknowledged in that way, and as a result we don't have the same access to federal programs and benefits designed for American Indian communities. More than anything else, it's an acknowledgement of our Indian identity. We were the first Indians to welcome the English colonists and, as we say, we're the last to be recognized.

**DB:** In an earlier conversation, you mentioned some essential differences between the Western scientific world view and a view that is common in many American Indian traditions. Can you talk about these differences and how they affect Indian people living within mainstream American culture?

**KW:** In the Western world view, history is seen as linear and evolutionary. There are natural laws governing the world, and people can learn to manipulate those laws to dominate nature for our own benefit. In this scheme, humanity is constantly improving itself as it marches toward some pinnacle of perfection. “Progress” is never really defined, but there’s an assumption that it is occurring. The Native view sees time as cyclical, or circular. Cycles repeat, as seasons do, and our history is a series of circles in which the same stories continue to recur. The important term here is “balance,” not ”progress.” People are supposed to live in balance within their communities, within the natural world, and we don't privilege human beings over other living creatures—it's about respect. Nature isn't separate from us—we're part of it, and we have responsibilities to our ancestors, our communities, and our future generations.

**DB:** So is it fair to say that Indian people sometimes find themselves living in two worlds at once?
KW: We walk in both worlds, and we function in both. Sometimes there is no way to reconcile our cultural beliefs with those of the dominant world view. Some of our people have assimilated to the point where they don’t value our traditional ways of thinking. Others have returned to our communities, disillusioned with American consumerism and its emptiness. Many of our young people are entranced by popular culture, by television and other social distractions. American culture seems “cool” in comparison to Indian ways, and so some kids resist their elders’ efforts to educate them about our cultures and histories.

DB: The tribes in Virginia have had a sometimes bitter—or at least at times an uncomfortable—relationship with non-Indian scholars, especially academic scholars. There have been some notable exceptions, but generally the tribes and the academic world have had little common ground. Is this changing and why?

KW: It’s changing slowly. We’re talking mostly about anthropologists—archaeologists, ethnohistorians, who have come into our communities to study our people and our past. There have been abuses of Native peoples, including the removal of sacred objects and human remains from graves. This was as true in Virginia as anywhere else. We even had two researchers come into the Monacan community, back in the early 1900s—after they’d won the trust of our people, they published a horrible little book called Mongrel Virginians, which was all about us. In the past two decades, attitudes have changed, due in part to the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990.

There’s a movement now within the profession of archaeology to communicate with descendant groups when an investigation is going on, which has resulted in some great partnerships, including several in Virginia. There’s also been an effort to document tribal oral histories. We now have more of a voice than we ever did in the past, in terms of representing our own cultures, but we’re tired of people from outside our communities who claim to know more about us than we do ourselves, or who think they’re entitled to speak for us.

DB: You are currently a Ph.D. candidate in linguistic anthropology. Why did you choose this field?

KW: Precisely because I think we can best represent what we ourselves know in terms of our culture. It seems to be so hard for many people to “get out of the box” in terms of their own world view, and it’s also hard for many non-Indian scholars to envision themselves as students of our cultures and not as “authorities” on our history and way of life. I chose linguistics to work on reconstructing our tribal language, called Tutelo. Words are important. Our value systems, our ways of understanding the world and ourselves, are embedded in our language. So it seems crucial to know the language that your ancestors spoke. I hope to put what I learn into a form that our people can use, to teach themselves.

DB: You’ve also developed and taught university-level courses in contemporary Native American literature. What are some of the themes you see emerging from this literature? Who are some of the Native writers who’ve influenced you?

KW: The emerging themes are the ones I’ve been talking about, really—that Native people are still here, still adaptable, still surviving, and still able to project a sense of humor even while acknowledging the tragedies we’ve experienced together and individually. The literature emphasizes our resilience, our dedication to family and community, our love for our homeland, and our continued resistance to the forces that try to separate us from our people. I love Linda Hogan’s poetry and Leslie Marmon Silko’s prose, the raging hilarity of Sherman Alexie’s stories, and the lyrical novels of James Welch. There are others, but these are the writers whose works I wish I’d written.

DB: What inspires your own work as a poet?

KW: I tend to focus on collective memory, on American Indian histories, and on the natural world and my own place in it; on issues pertaining to women and the challenges of being an Indian woman, from both historical and contemporary perspectives. I’m inspired by acts of human heroism and love, by the beauty of nature, but also by the need to act as witness to events that outrage or wound us as Indian people. For me, poetry is a way of describing things in order to come to terms with them. To our way of thinking, words are powerful—when you can name the thing that hurts you, you can confront it, and that’s when the healing begins.

DB: What are your views on the 2007 anniversary and its meaning for Virginia Indians?

KW: I’m still not sure whether it has a meaning for us. Our history didn’t start in 1607, and we don’t see ourselves or our ancestors in the story that’s been told about us. If anything, the anniversary is a moment for us, one in which the American public might focus on our part in the story, an opportunity we can use to direct their attention to the inaccuracies of prior accounts. Most of all, it’s a time to assert our ability to speak for ourselves and to demand our rightful place in the American story, not just by riding on a float, but by using our voices so that people can hear us.
VFH undertakes creation of the online
New Virginia Encyclopedia

BY ANDREW CHANCEY

Quickly.
How long is the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel?
After whom was Dinwiddie County named?
Why is Irene Morgan sometimes considered a forgotten hero?

For answers to these and countless other questions, internet users will soon click their way through a new online reference resource to be developed by the VFH. Far from being simply a good tool with which to play a Virginia trivia game, however, the New Virginia Encyclopedia will become a first point of reference for persons seeking information on a wide range of topics related to Virginia.

Virginians are a diverse lot and need a comprehensive resource that reflects their diversity, chronicles their rich history and culture, and helps explain what being a Virginian means. This need intensifies as attention turns toward Virginia with the commemoration of 2007. Journalists, tourists, students, and others will find the encyclopedia a ready reference guide that provides answers to their questions and that points them to numerous other resources for deeper background. The encyclopedia will fill a niche never before filled by any other of the rich and valuable resources on Virginia.

The VFH received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop plans for the online encyclopedia and has received funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia and a private donor to begin implementing these plans this summer. Efforts will continue to raise funds for full development of the encyclopedia and for its long-term life. This project is labor intensive in the creation of content and in the application of information architecture technology.

The encyclopedia will be developed over a period of years, coordinated by a staff at VFH, and supported by more than a dozen section editors and hundreds of writers. It will have the traditional encyclopedia components of cross-references, bibliographies, and thematic essays. In addition, it will have many of the new components possible in online projects, including hyperlinks to other online resources, advanced search functions, audio and video excerpts, and mapping and timeline capabilities.

Similar projects are already underway in other states, the most sophisticated of which debuted in Georgia in 2004, www.georgiaencyclopedia.org. Usage for the New Georgia Encyclopedia has grown, in just over a year since its launch, to more than 450,000 hits per month. This phenomenal growth illustrates the popularity of this kind of resource for Georgia and gives a good indication of how a similar resource on Virginia might be used.

As an online resource, the New Virginia Encyclopedia will last into the future and remain relevant and current because its long-term maintenance will include updating and expanding content. Long after the events and observances surrounding the 400th anniversary have passed, Virginians and the world will be able to visit again or anew the encyclopedia, a lasting and fitting legacy for Virginia.
When people feel strongly about an issue and speak out about it, they can make a difference. Humanities advocates have spoken out in recent months, and they are having a positive influence.

On January 13, friends of the VFH and the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM) met in Richmond to let members of the General Assembly know of their support for the humanities in Virginia. The House and Senate Galleries and all floors of the General Assembly Building resounded with the words humanities and museums, thanks to the energy, enthusiasm, and lapel buttons of our advocates.

Their collective presence sent the message that the humanities are valued by the citizens of the Commonwealth and demonstrated to representatives that their constituents support continued funding for the humanities. Both of the key issues—funding for the New Virginia Encyclopedia and passage of Abandoned Property Legislation—met with success in this session. Collectively, our teams saw 38 members, or 27% of the General Assembly, many of whom represent key committees.

Later, in April, VFH President Rob Vaughan and Director of Development Sheryl Hayes worked with two groups of advocates in Washington, D.C., to let Virginia’s U.S. Congressional delegation know that the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) plays an important role in the Commonwealth and to ask for an addition to the NEH appropriation. Though small by some agency standards, NEH funding is essential to the work of state humanities councils, scholars, teachers, museums, and other organizations engaged in the work of the humanities. These funds (through a direct State Council grant and the competitive grant process) are particularly important to the VFH; almost all of our programs depend on these funds, without which some programs would be seriously impaired.

During one of the visits, author and VFH Board member David Baldacci delivered a witty and inspiring address to members of Congress and representatives of NEH, Library of Congress, Federation of State Humanities Councils, and the country’s state humanities councils. Other participants included Bob Brink, Delegate, Virginia General Assembly and VFH Board member, Mary Jo Binker, Associate Editor, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Beverly Bunch-Lyons, Associate Professor of History, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Margo Carlock, Virginia Association of Museums; Philander Chase, Senior Editor, The Papers of George Washington; Bill Davis, Executive Director, American Anthropological Association; Steve Herrick, Director of External Relations, American Academy of Religion; Penelope Kaiserlian, Director, University of Virginia Press; Roy Rosenzweig, Director, Center for History & New Media, George Mason University; and Jennifer Weiskotten, Virginia Association of Museums.

To all of our advocates who have written letters and made phone calls or visits to General Assembly members or Congressional representatives, we offer a heartfelt thank you. Your support has been extremely helpful in increasing funding to the NEH and to the VFH.

We encourage and invite all of our constituents—board members, donors, project directors, grantees, fellows, staff, and program participants—to join in advocacy efforts in the future by visiting your delegate, senator, or representative, or by writing letters of support. Letter-writing tips, fact sheets about the two organizations, and a General Assembly Budget Process and Timeline are available on our website, virginiafoundation.org.
Making connections, changing lives

I start the [festival] of the Book with scant knowledge of authors listed; I end up being so excited and leaving with a handful of them.

—Program evaluation

Having the chance to meet and talk with other writers was stimulating and fun. I work alone at my desk in a rural area for most of the year, and making contact with the real world of writers was a wonderful thing.

—Andrea Sutcliffe, author of Steam: The Untold Story of America's First Great Invention

I talked to an author, who upon hearing that I wrote of Vietnam, mentioned that he had met Art Beltrone the day before, the man who wrote Vietnam Graffiti. When he mentioned the U.S.N.S. Walker, I was kind of shocked, as that was the ship that took the first party guys from my division to Vietnam. To make a long story short, I have made two contacts with soldiers who were on the Walker and Art and Lee [Beltrone] have contacted them, and there will be others at our reunion over the Memorial Day weekend who will be excited to talk to the Beltrones, who are continuing their research on the troopship Walker.

So, thanks again.

—Tom Lacombe, author Light Ruck: Vietnam 1969

According to returned program evaluations, most of that audience came from the Charlottesville/Albemarle area (67%), but this year the festival saw an appreciable gain in attendees from elsewhere in Virginia (24%) and even from out of state and country (9%). The festival discovered that 40% of its audience reports that they return annually and 30% were first-timers who would come again.

And if the writing talent VABook! 2005 attracted is any indication, the number who return annually will continue to increase. Participants included rapid-cognition chronicler Malcolm Gladwell, lecture room and courtroom thrillers Linda Fairstein and David Baldacci, and the wildly prolific serial novelist Alexander McCall Smith. Some attendees witnessed the last public reading by the influential American poet Robert Creeley, who died at age 78 shortly after the Festival.

VABook! 2005 appeared to be among the more inquisitive festivals, whether the question was Where Have All the Nurses Gone? (Faye Satterly’s book on the nursing shortage) or Who Knew? (Holley Watts’s reflections on being a Donut Dolly in Vietnam) or What Is a Book? (poet David Kirby’s essays on reading, writing and criticism) or, opening speaker Mark Edmundson’s question at the heart of it all, Why Read?

Edmundson shared with the audience the first book that spoke to his teenage disillusionment was One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest by Ken Kesey. Reading and writing raise and encourage us to struggle with questions about ourselves and the lives we live. Edmundson also noted that it was Ralph Waldo Emerson’s work that influenced the great American poet Walt Whitman: “I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil.”

Appropriately enough, a stream of programming in the festival was examining Leaves of Grass; 2005 was the 150th anniversary of its publication. The Virginia Quarterly Review held a conference to track the influence of Whitman on popular culture and poetry, and coordinated with the University of Virginia Harrison Institute/Small Special Collections Library’s exhibit of its rare Whitman materials.

C-SPAN2’s “Book TV” recorded a number of programs for broadcast, including “Race in Virginia”
Letters About Literature

Winners Announced

“...my heart was lost in your story, entirely satisfied with a book for the first time,” wrote 11th-grade student Hannah D. Pierce of Radford, Virginia. Hannah’s letter to Ellen Raskin, author of The Westing Game, was one of only six letters from a pool of over 46,000 that received first place recognition in the national Letters About Literature writing competition. As a national winner, Hannah will receive a $500 gift card to Target Stores. In addition, Target Stores will send her and her family to Washington, D.C., to attend the National Book Festival on September 24 where she and the other national winners will read their letters.

Hannah also was honored at the March 16 Opening Ceremony of the Virginia Festival of the Book as the Virginia Level III winner. Also honored were Natalie Kim, a sixth-grade student at Haycock Elementary School (Falls Church) for her Level I winning letter to Christopher Paul Curtis, author of The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963; and Kristin Lannetti, an eighth-grade student at Blair Middle School (Norfolk) for her Level II winning letter to David Pelzer, author of The Lost Boy. Each of the three honorees received a check from the VFH Center for the Book, a Target gift card, and a certificate of recognition.

In addition to the engaging letters from students in grades 4-12, there are letters from teachers who take advantage of the curriculum materials and educational resources on the Letters About Literature website at www.loc.gov/letters. Sue Washko of Sutherland Middle School in Albemarle County wrote to thank the organization for the opportunity to be a part of Letters About Literature. “In a high-stakes-testing world, it was sheer pleasure to hear my students so joyful about the act of reading, and then so thoughtful about what books have given them.” The VFH Center for the Book thanks the many teachers and parents for the guidance, encouragement, and support they give students every day.

Letters About Literature is an annual competition organized by the VFH Center for the Book in cooperation with the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and with the national sponsorship of Target Stores. Guidelines for the 2005-06 competition will be available from the VFH after September 15.

Letters About Literature winners: Kristin Lannetti, Hannah D. Pierce, and Natalie Kim.
The VFH Virginia Folklife Program is proud to announce its partnership with the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) and City Celebrations to bring one of the country’s largest and most prestigious celebrations of the arts, the National Folk Festival, to Richmond for a three-year tenure beginning October 7-9, 2005.

The National Folk Festival is the oldest multicultural festival in the nation and the first event of national stature featuring the arts of many nations, races, and languages in the same event, on equal footing. Now entering its 67th year, the National Folk Festival is an exuberant traveling festival that showcases the nation’s finest traditional musicians, dancers, and craftspeople. The NCTA, which has produced the National Folk Festival since its creation, chose Richmond over several other strong contenders, based in part on the region’s unique natural resources, cultural assets, and strong community spirit. The festival will be held downtown on the banks of the James River in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

While the Virginia Folklife Program will be involved in nearly all aspects of the festival programming, its central focus will be the planning and production of the Traditional Craft Demonstrations. For 2005, this component of the Festival will feature the handiwork of Virginia’s instrument makers, heirs of a tradition that includes the first incarnations of the five-string banjo in the Tidewater, the intricately crafted stringed instruments of Appalachia, and more recently, the variety of instruments from newer immigrant communities throughout the state. The Traditional Crafts presentation will not only display these fine instruments but also engage the audience in dialogue with the instrument makers, thus educating the audience about the process of the instruments’ construction, and, just as importantly, how these instruments and instrument-making shops operate within the daily lives of their surrounding communities.

A special focus for this year’s presentation will be the “luthiers”—the makers of fretted, stringed instruments such as fiddle, guitar, and mandolin—of Southwest Virginia’s Grayson County. This beautiful place, which encompasses the peaks of Mt. Rogers and Whitetop Mountain, the New River, and the Virginia Creeper Trail, was once home to Albert Hash, a fiddle-maker to whom many refer as the “Stradivarius of Southwest Virginia.”

By day, Hash worked in the machine shop of an explosives factory, but in his spare time he made fiddles of startling beauty and dynamic tone. Hash’s shop became a critical center of music and fellowship throughout the region, and his list of apprentices is a veritable who’s who of luthiers: National Heritage Fellowship Recipient Wayne C. Henderson, Gerald Anderson, Randall Eller, Tom Barr, and his daughter, the 2002 Virginia Folk Master Audrey Hash Ham. All of these and many other luthiers have enthusiastically committed to participating in the National Folklife Festival.

The Traditional Crafts presentation will recreate the look and feel of the various instrument-making shops throughout Virginia. The participants will have access to fully working shops, replete with the proper tools and work tables covered by 20’ by 20’ tents that are open to festival visitors to observe, ask questions, and take notes. There will be ample opportunity, as well, for festival-goers to bring their instruments to the artists for consultation, advice, or even to “pick a few tunes together.”

The Material Culture Stage will operate much like a “workshop stage,” in the style of the Smithsonian Folklife or other NCTA festivals. And, as many of the greatest instrument makers are also terrific musicians in their own right, the Traditional Crafts stage will also be used for performances. Virginia Folklife Program Director Jon Lohman, a member of the festival Steering and Programming Committees, will host the stage as well as direct all aspects of the research, programming, and production of the Traditional Crafts demonstrations.
Many of the participants in the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship program will be featured at this year’s festival. **Gerald Anderson**, 2004 Master mandolin maker, along with his apprentice, award-winning mandolin player **Spencer Strickland**, as well as **Audrey Hash Ham** will participate in the Traditional Craft Demonstrations. Spencer will also be performing in a special “Crooked Road” stage presentation along with the amazing 2003 fiddle apprentice, 12-year-old **Montana Young**. The Paschall Brothers, 2002 Folklife Apprentice Master Artists, will be gracing the large festival stages with their *a cappella* Tidewater-style singing, and 2004 Master Artist Irish flute-maker **Patrick Olwell** and his apprentice **Aaron Olwell** will be participating.

Other acts confirmed at this time for the 2005 National Folk Festival include Virginia’s own acoustic blues duo Cephas and Wiggins, as well as the Khmer Classical Dance Ensemble, the Frank London Klezmer Brass Allstars, *Los Pleneros de la 21* (Puerto Rican dance music), Mountain Heart (bluegrass), and *Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano* (Mexican Mariachi).

Governor Mark Warner (**left**), Appalachian musician and instrument-maker Wayne Henderson (**center**), and Virginia Folklife Program Director Jon Lohman participated in the recent Discover Appalachia press conference to celebrate Virginia’s prominence on the Appalachian tourist destination map created by *National Geographic Traveler* magazine and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The initiative showcases the music, culture, and heritage of Appalachian Virginia to a worldwide audience and supports the region’s economic development. The map highlights Virginia’s portion of the Appalachian geo-tourism initiative and is available at [www.nationalgeographic.com/appalachia](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/appalachia).

**VFH Donor Spotlight**

**Dick and Marty Wilson**

When Dick Wilson (Richard T. Wilson, III) left the Navy in 1964, he stepped off the ship and into the world of financial management, remaining there until his recent retirement from RBC Dain Rauscher. Over the course of his long career, Wilson has volunteered with many nonprofit organizations across Virginia, including the Virginia Law Foundation Board, the Boy Scouts, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. “The VFH is unique,” said Wilson, who is completing his second six-year term as a board member. “There’s nothing else like it. It’s been my most important and cherished volunteer job.”

In addition to his time, Wilson has also contributed liberally of his talent by serving on numerous VFH working groups, including the recently created Planned Giving Advisory Council. His work on this committee has been valuable in establishing policies and in securing planned gifts. He is especially enthusiastic about Planned Giving because it is “donor-centric,” helping donors to solve problems while supporting the nonprofits they love.

Dick’s partner in life and philanthropy, Marty (Martha Richmond Wilson), who recently retired from the Henrico County school system, has been equally enthusiastic in her support of the VFH. They see designating the VFH as a beneficiary in their will as a way to serve the needs of children and adults in Virginia long after their lifetimes. The Wilsons felt that it was important to restrict their bequest to endowment: “Without endowment, organizations are always indebted to current donors and the vagaries of state and federal funding.” By restricting their gift to endowment, they have helped ensure that the programs they know and love will continue.

Although they clearly believe in the value of endowments, the Wilsons are also Humanities Associates who have supported the VFH Unrestricted Annual Fund. Such unrestricted gifts give the VFH the flexibility to apply funds to the areas of greatest need.

Dick has recently been appointed by the Governor to the State Commission on Aqua Culture; the Wilsons are avid oyster farmers at their home on the Rappahannock River, where they plan to spend their retirement enjoying the river and their granddaughters, Sarah Berkley Whitley, age five, and Rachel Elizabeth Whitley, age three. The VFH extends its deepest thanks to this wonderful couple, wishing them a happy (and productive) retirement!
Fatheread comes to Doswell