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We Are...Marshall, October 6, 2010

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Kopp delivers State of the University Address Sept. 29

President Kopp's State of the University address was part of the fall General Faculty Meeting, which took place Wednesday, Sept. 29.

[Click to view video of General Faculty Meeting.]

Marshall Physician Addresses International Bodily Injury Congress

Dr. Mohammed Ranavaya, chief of the Occupational Medicine Division at the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine and president of the American Board of Independent Medical Examiners board of directors, was a keynote speaker at the International Bodily Injury Association Congress Sept. 20-24 in Madrid, Spain.

Co-sponsored by the European Association of Personal Injury Evaluation Physicians, the meeting included more than 1,000 physicians involved in evaluating personal injury claims.

[Read more.]
Researchers awarded more than $1 million for breast cancer studies

Two researchers at Marshall University have been awarded federal funds totaling more than $1 million to assess the effects of omega-3 fatty acids on breast cancer development.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Breast Cancer Research Program has awarded Dr. Elaine Hardman, associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology at the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, and Dr. Philippe Georgel, associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, competitive grants of $460,249 and $320,750, respectively. Hardman and Georgel received two of only 18 grants awarded nationwide through the program.

Debra Hart named Director of Equity Programs

Debra Hart is the new Marshall University Director of Equity Programs.

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Ziegler’s trio will perform at 7:30 p.m., Friday, Oct. 15 at the Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center, presented by the Marshall Artists Series as part of Hispanic Heritage Month.

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Marshall University Visiting Writers Series announces fall readings
The Marshall University Visiting Writers Series has announced its fall schedule of author appearances on the Huntington campus. Noted poets and prose-writers from around the nation and West Virginia will be reading from exciting new work.

Professor Art Stringer, coordinator of the series, calls this fall's calendar "a fresh collaboration" between the College of Liberal Arts and local patrons.

Read more.

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The walk, scheduled from 4 to 6 p.m., will take place on Buskirk Field on the Huntington campus. Registration fee is $20, and each walker registered by Monday, Oct. 11, will receive a t-shirt.

Read more.

Faculty Achievements
Dr. Rachael Peckham, an assistant professor of English, has won the 2010 Robert Watson Poetry Award sponsored by Spring Garden Press, located in Greensboro, N.C., and storySouth.

Read more.

Note of Thanks
To My Marshall Family:

Many, many thanks for attending my retirement celebration. Your gifts, cards and well wishes were very much appreciated. I have met and worked with so many wonderful people during my 20 years at the university, and you will always have a special place in my heart.

Selma Johnson

Profile: Ginger Fannin - a series on interesting Marshall University people
On leisurely weekends, while some like to hit the golf courses, visit the mall, or just hang out at home, Ginger Fannin likes nothing better than to don a long print dress, grab a big iron skillet and start rustling up grub over an open fire. That at some point there will be the smoke from muskets and the rumble of a cannon doesn’t bother her at all.

Fannin, who is an administrative secretary for the Empowering Appalachian Talent Search, is one of a group of dedicated Civil War re-enactors who regularly travel to battle sites throughout the region to stage battles or skirmishes as authentically as possible. She’s an old hand by now, having traveled to sites for years as part of an artillery unit based in Virginia.

Read more.

The next issue of We Are...Marshall will be distributed Oct. 20, 2010. Please send any materials for consideration to Pat Dickson by Oct. 18.

This issue is also available online at http://www.marshall.edu/ucomm/newsletters/2010/nl_100610.html.

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This e-mail has been forwarded at the request of the Office of University Communications, 304-746-1971.
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Co-sponsored by the European Association of Personal Injury Evaluation Physicians, the meeting included more than 1,000 physicians involved in evaluating personal injury claims.

He is a co-author and associate editor of the most recent edition of the reference book which is used by most U.S. states and many nations around the world in the legal resolution of personal injury, worker's compensation, impairment and disability claims.

Ranavaya is a professor of occupational and environmental medicine and he also is director of the Appalachian Institute of Occupational & Environmental Medicine in West Virginia. He has performed several thousand independent medical evaluations, and has taught skills for performing independent medical evaluations to more than 10,000 physicians in the U.S. and abroad.

A past president of the American Academy of Disability Evaluating Physicians, Ranavaya is one of the founders of the American Board of Independent Medical Examiners and helped develop the certifying exam for physicians seeking credentials as certified independent medical examiners.

He has authored several chapters and numerous articles on disability medicine. He also has served as the chair of the editorial board of the Medical Disability Advisor, a book on workplace disability duration guidelines for various injuries and diseases. He is editor in chief of the Journal Disability Medicine and serves on editorial board of the AMA Guides newsletter.

Holding degrees in both medicine and law, Ranavaya is a certified independent medical examiner. He is a fellow of the American College of Preventive Medicine, the American Academy of Disability Evaluating Physicians, the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians, and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.
Researchers awarded more than $1 million for breast cancer studies

Two researchers at Marshall University have been awarded federal funds totaling more than $1 million to assess the effects of omega-3 fatty acids on breast cancer development.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Breast Cancer Research Program has awarded Dr. Elaine Hardman, associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology at the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, and Dr. Philippe Georgel, associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, competitive grants of $460,249 and $320,750, respectively. Hardman and Georgel received two of only 18 grants awarded nationwide through the program.

Over the next two years, Hardman and Georgel will use the funds to confirm earlier observations that consumption of canola oil, as a source of omega-3 fatty acid, in the maternal diet of mice could reduce risk for breast cancer in the offspring, and to identify the genetic changes associated with a maternal diet that contains omega-3 fatty acid. They hope to find out how canola oil is altering the expression of genes, with the goal of developing a panel of biomarkers to assess risk for breast cancer development in humans.

A third grant of $266,000 to Hardman from the National Institutes of Health will fund the final year of a related four-year study.

According to Hardman, the studies highlight the importance of diet in altering - either reducing or increasing - cancer risk and the importance of maternal diet in cancer risk of the offspring.

"Clinically, this is exciting! We know that maternal diet is important for the immediate health of the baby but are just beginning to learn of the importance for long-term health," she said. "If a woman can be very careful of her diet for the time of gestation and lactation, the baby may have reduced risk for not only cancer but also heart disease and diabetes."

Hardman said collaboration is the key to success in today's research environment.

She said, "At the conclusion of a previous study, I realized that the maternal diet containing a small amount of omega-3 fatty acids from canola oil was reducing breast cancer risk in the female offspring, even if the baby was weaned to a usual diet. This had to be an epigenetic influence - changes in gene expression not due to a mutation but due to markers placed on the chromatin. Dr. Georgel is an expert in changes in chromatin structure, so I needed his expertise to find out what was going on."

Hardman said their brief preliminary studies demonstrated a change in chromatin structure associated with changed gene expression that could reduce risk for breast cancer, and paved the way for the new DOD grants.

Hardman said, "This research illustrates the importance of collaboration in modern research. Dr. Georgel has important skills and knowledge that I do not have and vice versa. Together we can do far better than either alone."
George added that the team’s work also highlights the importance of studies of epigenetic events, or events that alter the activity of genes without changing their sequence.

“The generation of disease-specific epigenome maps will provide complementary and crucial information to the already well-established genome map,” he said.

Hardman also said the grants will serve as a good foundation for the new Marshall University Nutrition and Cancer Center, which will support multiple researchers.

Dr. John Maher, vice president for research and executive director of the Marshall University Research Corporation, congratulated Hardman and George, adding that these newest grants help build on the university’s growing reputation for its outstanding biomedical research programs.

Maher said, “The fact that Dr. Hardman and Dr. George’s work was selected for funding by the Department of Defense from more than 100 proposals is further proof that Marshall’s faculty and cancer research programs are top-notch. Their studies will lead to better prevention and treatment options for some of the most pressing health concerns of our time.”

Hardman said once these studies are complete, she and George may turn their attention to exploring whether or not diet changes later in life will also reduce cancer risk by the same or different mechanisms.

For more information about the Marshall University Nutrition and Cancer Center, visit www.marshall.edu/cncc.

Photo: Dr. Elaine Hardman, right, and Dr. Philippe George of Marshall University are investigating the effects of omega-3 fatty acids on breast cancer development. They recently received two of only 18 grants awarded nationwide by the U.S. Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program.

Debra Hart named Director of Equity Programs

Debra Hart is the new Marshall University Director of Equity Programs.

Hart’s duties include working toward diversifying the student body, staff and faculty and the educational programs of the university; providing public services and expanding the body of knowledge about Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action; and promoting equitable and fair treatment in every aspect of university life, including education and employment.

Hart previously served as the executive director of the Mental Health Association in the Greater Kanawha Valley, Inc. Prior to that she was employed with the Management and Training Corporation in Charleston, W.Va., as the Center’s first business and community liaison.

She was appointed to the position of Director of Equal Employment Opportunity for West Virginia during Gov. Cecil H. Underwood’s administration. Through her leadership, the Governor’s Minority Business Task Force was formed and she served on the Equal Pay Commission, where she worked to review the salaries of women and minorities in state government.

In addition, Hart worked for 14 years in the utility industry as a human resources generalist and affirmative action officer for Allegheny Energy in Fairmont, W.Va. She is a certified diversity trainer and serves as a frequent presenter at EEO group and training seminars, for businesses and non-profit corporations.

Hart received a bachelor’s degree from West Virginia State University and is a graduate of the American Institute for Managing Diversity. She has received numerous awards for her work with youth in the community.
Dedicated to community service, she serves on the executive board of First Family Foundation and is an active member of Ferguson Memorial Baptist Church in Dunbar, W.Va. She also is a member of numerous associations, including the United States Commission on Civil Rights, League of Women Voters, Charleston Women’s Club and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Hart resides in Cross Lanes, W.Va., with her husband, Dana. They are the parents of one grown daughter, Terri.

'Nuevo Tango' concert is next event in Hispanic Heritage Month

Tango with a unique twist--a splash of jazz--is the forte of Latin Grammy-winning pianist Pablo Ziegler, the leading artist in this newly emerging blend of music from Argentina, titled Nuevo Tango.

Ziegler’s trio will perform at 7:30 p.m., Friday, Oct. 15 at the Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center, presented by the Marshall Artists Series as part of Hispanic Heritage Month.

After more than ten years of working with music legend Astor Piazzola, who revolutionized tango by introducing Nuevo Tango, Ziegler emerged as the new master of the style, which is still evolving as Ziegler adds his own unique elements. His distinctive style uses sharp percussion and extended improvisations.

The ensemble includes a bandoneon player, Héctor del Curto. This complex concertina instrument is a staple in Argentinian tango. A talented musician, del Curto won Best Bandoneon Player under 25 when he was only 17 years old. He directed the Broadway show “Forever Tango” and has performed and recorded around the globe with some of the leading tango musicians.

Rounding out the trio is Claudio Ragazzi, a world-class guitarist who has composed pieces for television, film and theatre. He has performed with renowned musicians, including cellist Yo-Yo Ma and a host of jazz legends.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about tango and Nuevo Tango twice before the performance. Argentina native Dr. Oscar Ballester will discuss the evolution of tango and Nuevo Tango at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 6 in Drinko Library, room 402. Additionally, he will provide a discussion one hour before the Pablo Ziegler Trio performance, at 6:30 p.m. in the Francis-Booth Experimental Theatre in the Joan C. Edward Performing Arts Center.

Tickets can be purchased by calling ext.6-6656 or online. They are also available at the Marshall Artists Series box office in the Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center, which is open Monday through Friday from noon to 5 p.m. The sponsors for the event are the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Reger Funeral Home, WKEE, WVHU, The Herald-Dispatch, Marshall University and The College of Fine Arts.

Marshall University receives NSF grant for Undergraduate Mathematical Biology Research program

The National Science Foundation has awarded a group of Marshall University faculty members funding to develop a program that will encourage undergraduate research and participation in biology and mathematics.

The grant was announced by U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, who congratulated Dr. Marcia Harrison, Dr. Simon Collier and Dr. Jeffrey Kovatch from the Department of Biological Sciences, and Dr. Anna Mummert and Dr. Scott Sarra from the Department of Mathematics for the $236,659 award to establish an Undergraduate Mathematical Biology Research (UBM) program.

The UBM program will include a number of initiatives designed to prepare math and biological sciences undergraduate students for graduate study and future careers that combine the two fields. Teams of students will
participate in a summer research program and will continue their projects into the following academic year. The students also will participate in a seminar, where they will present their work and prepare for presentations at local and national symposia and conferences. Students can apply for a second year of support to continue their research projects.

Harrison, who will serve as the UBM program coordinator, said students will work with faculty to conduct research in topics like genetics, plant and animal physiology and environmental sciences. She added that the program is geared for freshman and sophomore students, with a particular focus on attracting female, minority and Appalachian, first-generation college students.

"Rahall said, "Hats off to the team that put this proposal together. Marshall University attracts top students and faculty to the Huntington area, helping to grow our community, and produce exciting new research and top-notch professionals. The UBM program is one more tool Marshall University now has in its belt to help students to reach their goals and achieve their dreams."

Dr. John Maher, vice president for research, added his congratulations for the faculty members who received the grant.

“This grant is outstanding news,” he said. “I’m particularly pleased that the proposed research projects and other enhancements will complement Marshall’s new critical thinking curriculum. By increasing collaboration among undergraduate students and faculty in mathematics and biological sciences, the grant activities also will encourage interdisciplinary research and help strengthen the university’s overall research enterprise.”

Harrison said applications for Marshall’s 2011 UBM summer research program will be available next spring. For more information, contact her at 304-696-4867 or harrison@marshall.edu.

Marshall University Visiting Writers Series announces fall readings

The Marshall University Visiting Writers Series has announced its fall schedule of author appearances on the Huntington campus. Noted poets and prose-writers from around the nation and West Virginia will be reading from exciting new work.

Professor Art Stringer, coordinator of the series, calls this fall’s calendar “a fresh collaboration” between the College of Liberal Arts and local patrons.

Poet Grace Bauer will appear at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 7 in room BE-5 of the Memorial Student Center. She is the author of six poetry collections, including Beholding Eye and Retreats and Recognitions, which won the Lost Horse Prize from the University of Idaho Press. Widely recognized with awards from Arts Councils in Virginia and Nebraska, she has taught at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1994, where she serves as Coordinator of Creative Writing and as a guest editor for Prairie Schooner.

Poet Heather Hartley, who grew up in West Virginia, will read at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 28, in the Memorial Student Center’s Shawkey Room. She is the author of Knock Knock, a new poetry collection from Carnegie Mellon University Press. Her poems, essays and interviews have appeared in Tin House, Mississippi Review, Post Road, among others. She is currently Paris Editor for Tin House magazine, curates Shakespeare & Company Bookshop’s weekly reading series, and teaches creative writing and poetry at the American University of Paris.

Writer Dinty Moore will read from his work at 8 p.m. Monday, Nov. 15, in the Shawkey Room. He is the author of five books of prose. His memoir, Between Panic and Desire, was winner of the 2009 Grub Street Nonfiction Book Prize. Moore has published essays and stories in The Southern Review, Harpers, and The New York Times Sunday Magazine, among many others. Writers Digest Books has just released his new book, Crafting the Personal Essay: A Guide for Writing and Publishing Creative Non-Fiction. His awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Fiction. He teaches at Ohio University and directs the Creative Writing program.

Area writers Chris Green and Marie Manilla will read from their newly published work at 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 2, also in the Shawkey Room. Green is the author of the poetry collection Rush Light and teaches writing and Appalachian literature at Marshall. Manilla is a graduate of Marshall and author of two books: Shrapnel, a novel,
and Still Life with Plums, a collection of short stories from West Virginia University Press.

All readings are free to the public. The Visiting Writers Series is supported by the Marshall English Department, the College of Liberal Arts, the Office of the Provost, and the law firm of Jenkins-Fenstermaker.

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The walk, scheduled from 4 to 6 p.m., will take place on Buskirk Field on the Huntington campus. Registration fee is $20, and each walker registered by Monday, Oct. 11, will receive a t-shirt.

Various fundraising booths will be located along the walking path for walkers to visit. Proceeds from the walk benefit the American Cancer Society.

Registration forms may be obtained by e-mailing Kristina Isaacs at isaacs17@live.marshall.edu. Once completed, they may be returned to the American Cancer Society, 611 7th Ave., Huntington, WV 25701.

For more information, e-mail Isaacs or call her at 304-419-2810.

MU assistant professor receives poetry award

Dr. Rachael Peckham, an assistant professor of English, has won the 2010 Robert Watson Poetry Award sponsored by Spring Garden Press, located in Greensboro, N.C., and storySouth.

Her winning manuscript - Muck Fire - will be published as limited-edition, letter-pressed chapbook in fall 2011. In addition, Peckham will receive a cash award of $500.

A recipient of the M.F.A. in creative writing from Georgia College and State University and the Ph.D. in creative nonfiction from Ohio University, Peckham joined Marshall’s faculty in 2009. She currently serves as advisor to Et Cetera, the university’s literary and arts journal for students, and as a writing mentor for Yeager Scholars.

In addition to creative writing classes, including a creative nonfiction workshop, Peckham teaches courses in memoir and autobiography and contemporary literature.
Profile: Ginger Fannin: A series on interesting Marshall University people

On leisurely weekends, while some like to hit the golf courses, visit the mall, or just hang out at home, Ginger Fannin likes nothing better than to don a long print dress, grab a big iron skillet and start rustling up grub over an open fire. That at some point there will be the smoke from muskets and the rumble of a cannon doesn’t bother her at all.

Fannin, who is an administrative secretary for the Empowering Appalachian Talent Search, is one of a group of dedicated Civil War re-enactors who regularly travel to battle sites throughout the region to stage battles or skirmishes as authentically as possible. She’s an old hand by now, having traveled to sites for years as part of an artillery unit based in Virginia.

“We have 24 people (20 families) in our unit and we reenact in both Virginia and West Virginia. We try to be as authentic and as period correct as possible and go to the actual site of the battle whenever possible,” Fannin says. “We replicate the history of each battlefield whatever the outcome. History books may record who won and lost but they don’t show what life was really like for the soldiers and that’s what we want to do.”

She’s always been an outdoors person. As a free-spirited child, she loved nothing more than to roam the woods and streams near the Wayne County home where she grew up with her two brothers. Years later, to no one’s surprise, she became active in 4-H and the Boy Scouts when her two sons, Mitchell and Zachary, now both in their 20s, were members. Even though her sons are no longer involved, Fannin still continues to work in Scouting now as a committee chair for her Huntington troop. For her ongoing efforts she has been inducted into the Order of the Arrow, an honorary branch of scouting into which members are voted by their peers. In addition, two years ago she also received the District Award of Merit.

After graduating from Vinson High School, Fannin attended a business college, where she trained to become a dental assistant and worked as one for the next few years. After marriage and the birth of her two sons, she was a stay-at-home mom until 1998, when she decided to re-enter the workforce. Fortunately, there was an opening in Marshall’s Upward Bound Program, a part of the TRIO programs, which are Federally-funded initiatives to help low-income students. She admits it was a little intimidating going back to work in a whole different field, but “the TRIO staff was wonderful. They helped me get through those early days.”

The Upward Bound Program, Fannin explains, works with approximately 60 high school students in Cabell and Wayne Counties. Beginning with Grade 10, counselors meet with students, talking with them about time management, study skills and peer pressure. As the students approach college age, they are given “how-to” sessions on such topics as applying for admission, financial aid and studying for tests. Each summer the students come to the Huntington campus, where they spend six weeks attending classes and participating in other activities.

Seven years ago, Fannin moved to another TRIO program, Empowering Appalachia Talent Search, which serves Cabell County. Despite its name, TRIO actually incorporates five programs, all geared to help low-income or first-generation students enter college, graduate and succeed after college, she explains. In addition to her program and Upward Bound, there’s the Heart of Appalachia Talent Search, which serves youth in Wayne and Mason
counts; the Educational Opportunity Center, which provides services to encourage adults interested in completing their education; and Student Support Services, which helps Marshall students improve their reading, learning and study skills. The two Talent Search programs are actually sister programs to Upward Bound in that they serve middle and/or high school students, but with larger numbers. They each work with up to 600 students, she says.

Now with her sons out of the house and on their own Fannin could sit back and give herself a little leisure time, but she can’t wait to take to the great outdoors. She grew up roaming the woods, exploring rock cliffs, hanging out in their tree house, hunting and fishing. And her family was tight knit, just as they are today. She feels blessed that the whole family—sons, brothers, parents, a grandparent and aunts and uncles—still live in close proximity. In fact, she’s able to stay in very close contact with her brother, Lonny Muncy, who also is a Marshall employee working in Animal Resources.

She credits her parents, Bill and Karen Muncy, with fostering her love of nature. “Some of my best memories are of really simple things, like the wiener roasts we had in our backyard when I was growing up. My dad and I loved to stay out and look at the stars and we talked about everything. But sometimes, we didn’t say anything. We just gazed at the sky and it was just us and the universe and God. We would just look at how amazing the universe is. My parents made sure they spent time with each of us. We always had dinner together, no excuses.”

She made sure her sons felt that close connection to nature as well. “We had a tent set up in our backyard more or less permanently when they were growing up. We’d build a big fire, sit around it and they slept in the tent as long as the weather permitted.”

It was in fact her fascination with the outdoors that led her to become a re-enactor. The experience peels back time to reveal in minute detail what life would have been like on an early 1860 battlefield. It was the level of authenticity that she found fascinating and where her considerable sewing skills came in handy.

“Everything is as period correct as possible—the clothes, the cooking utensils, all the living arrangements,” she says. “When you go into a camp, it’s like being transported more than a century back in time. Modern accommodations are there but you won’t see them. For example, we now use coolers but they will be covered up with canvas. You may sleep in a tent on a wooden cot with a down mattress, but you won’t see that either because it will be covered with an old quilt.”

But one thing that has to be absolutely authentic is the clothing. Soldiers wore uniforms made of 100 percent wool, with no zippers or modern-day fasteners. Buttons were made of wood, metal, bone or in some cases, deer antlers. Basically, anything that could have two holes bored into it was used. As a lifelong seamstress who learned to sew from her mother and grandmother, Fannin’s sewing skills were indispensable in crafting uniform parts, not only for her sons but for others as well. She made pants and shirts for them as they were growing up and continues to make shirts for other re-enactors today. The buttons are the biggest challenge, she says.

“Wooden buttons are very hard to find today. Any time I run onto them I buy up the whole lot. I have used deer antlers, but I don’t like working with them. They have to be sliced very thin so I let someone else do this because they are really smelly!”

It goes without saying that she makes her own outfits. They’re practical work outfits, “camp clothes” she terms them, without frills. They’re made of the simple print fabrics she seeks out, suitable for the hard labor women put in cooking and working with the troops. You can forget the layers of flouncing petticoats and the graceful hoop skirts so beloved by Gone With the Wind fans as well. “Hoop skirts were reserved for dress-up occasions and mostly for dancing,” she reveals. “I do wear petticoats in cold weather, but it’s for the added warmth.” Her quilting skills have come in handy as well. She’s made several quilts that have been used regularly in the re-enactments.

Women of that era typically wore tight corsets and that was daunting for her, but she gamely donned one, which of course she had made. “They are very uncomfortable; I don’t know how women wore them all the time,” she says candidly “But after I had worn it a few times I was shocked at how much better my back felt at the end of the day. It was amazing. All day long you’re lifting heavy skillets, carrying water and wood, bending and lifting. These women did really hard labor and in addition at home they would be looking after children and raising a garden. Everything they did required exertion, it was constant bending and stretching. When people say they want to go back to the good old days, I don’t think they have a clue. It was a rough life.”
Today she and her fiancé Paul try to make it to at least five re-enactments each year. Their favorites are Droop Mountain in Pocahontas County and Cedar Creek in Virginia, where groups regularly come from all over--other states, Canada, and even a couple from England who show up because they are captivated by this particular chapter of American history. An avid photographer, she's found the re-enactments fertile ground for her camera. It's one of several hobbies she's tried and she never hesitates to take on a challenge. "I just like to try everything; to attempt something new. It keeps life interesting!"

She's the great-granddaughter of Dorothy Cyrus of Louisa, Ky., and wouldn't miss the annual Cyrus family reunion held in Kentucky at the original home place. More than 300 people attend, a gathering of relatives from all over. With her deep family roots and love of the land, it's a real affirmation of what she holds dear.

"When things are going bad in my life I stop and remind myself to look at what I have. I am truly blessed."