The Queen's English
Elizabethan English in the Speech of Southern Appalachia

By Mary Patrick

The speech of the people from the mountains of southern Appalachia is the closest living relative of the Elizabethan language of Shakespeare and the King James Bible. Many of the words and phrases that we use, as well as the ways we pronounce the words, the ways we spell them, and the ways we use them, actually pre-date the Elizabethan period and come from the Middle English of Chaucer and even the Old English of the Anglo-Saxons (Hendrickson iii).

When we speak of true English or pure English, we are speaking of fiction (Mencken 88). All living languages are in a state of flux; they are constantly changing. Even our speech today has changed in our own lifetimes. Think of all the new words that have come into our vocabularies as a result of the Cold War and the missile program and those that we have had to learn in order to keep up with the computer age. Can you imagine how confusing it must be to a Chinese student just beginning to learn English in kindergarten when he encounters the word *blackberry*: He knows that a *blackberry* is a little gadget that he carries in his hand and does whatever one can do with those little gadgets, but what is this phrase *blackberry jam on toast*? Poor child. Many of you will remember studying in high school of the *Carib`bean*. When I finally got there, it was called the *Car`ib`be`an;* now it is the *Carib`bean* again. Language changes to meet the demands of the society which it serves, or sometimes, it appears, at the whims of newscasters.

For just a minute, let us look at the history of the English language. The tribes living in Britain before the Roman Conquest, the Scots, the Picts, the Celts, and others, spoke various languages derived from a common Endo-European ancestor. When, in 55 B. C., Julius Caesar first visited Britain, he was so impressed with the riches that Rome could exploit, the tin, jet, coal, lumber, furs, and more, that he decided the islands were definitely worth conquering. It was not until almost 100 years later, however, in 47 A. D., that the Roman legions began arriving and settling, bringing with them not only their elaborate buildings with hot and cold running water, their system of government, and their social system, but their language as well. So, Latin became the language of Britain with, of course, a generous sprinkling of the old languages. In the more remote areas of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, where the indigenous peoples were warlike and hard to control to the point of requiring the Romans to erect Hadrian's Wall in an effort to keep out the Scots and Picts, the old languages lasted much longer.

The Romans remained in Britain until roughly 410 A. D., and almost immediately the Vikings (the Angles, the Saxons, and the Danes) started moving in, bringing with them their own languages into the Dark Ages of Britain. These various languages became what we know today as Old English, the language of *Beowul*f, a language that is almost impossible for us to read unless we have studied it.

1

It was not until 1066 that the Anglo-Saxon language (Old English) was replaced by French, when William the Conqueror defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings, and made French the language of the court. Though the common people continued to speak their own language, French words increasingly became a part of the speech of Britain, and from 1066 until 1485, we have what came to be known as Middle English, the language of Chaucer. If you remember Chaucer from senior English, you remember how difficult it was to try to memorize the *Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales*; we could neither read it nor pronounce it.

1485 is generally considered the beginning of the Renaissance in England and the period of Modern English, the language of Shakespeare and the King James Bible. For those of you who had Miss Helen McBee for senior English and had to memorize passages from *Julius Caesar*, the memory of how difficult that so-called Modern English is probably remains with you.

Those of us growing up in this area were much more familiar with the King James Bible than we were with Shakespeare, and we know something of the "freedom and expansiveness" (Mencken 127) of the language. Though many of us use more modern translations of the Bible because they are more easily understood, we must admit that they have lost much of the beauty and poetry of the King James Version. There were other Bible translationstranslations before the King James Version: We had the Bibles of Venerable Bede, Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Matthew, and the translation that Miles Coverdale did for Henry VIII's Church of England, a Bible that became known as "The Great Bible" because of its size (Fischer 71-72). None of them, however, has had the influence on the language that the King James Version has had.

A study of both Shakespeare and the King James Bible will reveal a language that is fluid. For example, Shakespeare used double negatives, inconsistent tenses, lack of agreement between subject and verb, and double superlatives, as we see in *Julius Caesar*, when Antony, pointing out where Brutus stabbed Caesar, says, "This was the most unkindest cut of all" (Charney 54). By the mid 1700's, there were those among the upper classes in England who complained about the lack of stability in the language; and perhaps the most vocal of those complaining was Dr. Samuel Johnson, who, according to James Russell Lowell, "… began to pontificate, restrict, and freeze British English" (Mencken 127). In 1755, Johnson published his *Dictionary*, thereby insuring that the speech of the upper classes in England could retain a "pretentious and stilted style" (Mencken 93) Some of the words that Johnson would not allow, for one reason or another, were *wobble, bamboozle, swap, budge, coax, touchy, stingy, fib, banter, row, glee, jeopardy,* and *smother*. He also insisted that the Anglo-Saxon word for sick be replaced with *ill* because it sounded more elegant. Other banned words that we have kept in our regional dialect included *kilter, kiver, yarb, ary, nary, pesky, snicker, to slick up, to scrimp,* and *heft*. We have kept not only the vocabulary, but also the syntax and the pronunciation (Mencken 126-129). But more about that later.

After 1755, the language of England, at least among the upper classes, remained essentially static (Mencken 93). In the meantime, the poorer people continued to use the

language of Shakespeare and the King James Bible, more or less oblivious of the pretensions of their "betters."

Many of the people who settled in our area were from the poorer classes, but by no means all of them. Many of the Scots who came were descendents of the nobility; however, we must remember that Scotland was considered a wild and more or less barbaric country of independent people who felt no need to conform to English ways or speech. The Scots who went from Scotland to Northern Ireland about the time that Jamestown was being settled spoke an already archaic form of English that they brought with them to America, (Williams 9-10) as did those settlers from Ireland and Wales, as well as Englishmen from the border country, all outposts of the empire that kept to their own ways and couldn't have cared less about Dr. Johnson's rules for the language. The language that they brought with them is the oldest living English dialect; it is closer to the language of Chaucer than that of Shakespeare. Whether our ancestors were dirt-poor or upper-class, they spoke essentially the same English (Williams 1-3). Their speech has been described as "the dialect of your genuin' Scottish border-country man" (Williams xv).

Many of our ancestors settled first in the Cape Fear River Basin in the 1700's. After the American Revolution, when some had fought with the Continental Army while some of their neighbors fought equally hard for England, many of them moved into the mountains of southern Appalachia in the late 18th century. Few were here before 1825 (Montgomery and Hall xii).

Isolated as the highlanders were in southern Appalachia, their speech patterns remained relatively unchanged, while the British upper-class continued to "gentrify" their own speech. Loyalists who fled to Britain after the Revolution found the speech to be contrived and pretentious, and the British officers who came to this area remarked that even the upper class colonists were still speaking the English of the 17th century (Williams 9-10). And isolated as we were in this area, we continued, more or less, to speak the oldest living English dialect until the advent of television.

Does speaking Elizabethan English and even older forms of words in many cases make us somehow superior? No, of course not. Does it mean that we are backward, as we have often been accused of being? Yes and no. Backward, yes, but not necessarily in the negative sense that we have often been told. We were an isolated area; we spoke the only language that we knew, the language of our ancestors. While much of our speech in southern Appalachia is non-standard, it is not "wrong," but a unique variety of English and a part of our linguistic heritage (Williams xiii).

Enough of background. Let us turn to the language itself.

MULTIPLE NEGATIVES:

One of the characteristics of both Chaucer and Shakespeare is the use of multiple negatives. This is a practice that comes down to us from Old English and is found in every stage of the development of the language (Montgomery and Hall liv). It was a method of strengthening a negative in the Teutonic languages, and English is, of course, a Teutonic or Germanic language. Chaucer uses double negatives in describing the Knight in *Canterbury Tales,* when he writes, "He never yet no villeiney he sade" (Quinn 120). Shakespeare does the same thing in *Romeo and Juliet* when he writes "I will not budge for no man's pleasure."   In *Richard III*, we find Shakespeare using triple negatives. He writes, "I never was nor never will be" (Mencken 469). We grew up here in Mitchell County saying things like, "I don't know nothing," and "Oncet you been burned, you hain't never goin' to stick yore hand in no far no more."

PLURALS OF NOUNS

Here in the mountains, at least when I was growing up, we used the older English plural form *es* for words ending in *sp, st, or sk*.

For example: wasp became waspes (wasper became waspers)
                            nest became nestes
                            joist became joistes
                            post became postes (Montgomery and Hall xxxvii)

The lack of an *s* on words like fish and deer sometimes carried over to other nouns, (xxxvii) as in the sentence, "We've got a lot of bear right here in Mitchell County now."

We also tended to omit the s when it followed a numeral or another word denoting quantity or measurement (xxxvi). For example, "That old hog weighed four hundred pound iffen hit weighed a ounce," or "How many cabbage you plant, anyhow?"

PRONOUNS

We inherited some interesting pronoun forms and uses. The English of Shakespeare's day used the subjective form of the pronoun and the objective form interchangeably, as in "That's me." Christopher Marlow did the same: He wrote, "Tis her I esteem," and "It is him you seek" (Mencken 454). I doubt that any of us who grew up here in Mitchell County would have answered the phone—if we had had a phone—by saying, "This is she."

Poor Miss McBee and Mrs. Brummit and Mrs. Barron and Mrs. Willis must have torn their hair out trying to get us to stop using the wrong possessive pronouns. We came to school saying hisn, hern, ourn, yourn, and thern, the same as Chaucer did (Mencken 448-449).   In John Wycliffe's translation of the Bible (c. 1380), the first sentence of the Sermon on the Mount (Mark V: 3) says, "Blessed be the pore in spirit for the kingdom in hevenes is heren." *Heren* did not always mean "hers". It also meant "theirs." In Luke XXIV: 24, we find "And some of ouren wentin to the grave." With all due respect to

modern English, we have lost something of the beauty of the language when we use the modern possessive pronouns. The *n* at the end of a word is more melodic than the *s* or the *z*. *Hisn, hern*, and *ourn* sounds much more poetic than his, hers, and ours (Williams 18).

The reflexive pronouns proved a problem for us, too, even though they were good enough for Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare. Shakespeare uses *him* for *himself*, *her* for *herself*, *me* for *myself*, and *them* for *themselves*. In the 1950's, we said, and I suspect some of us still say, "I made me a pot of soup," and "I cut me a big old hickory and wore him out." Sometimes personal or possessive pronouns were used instead of the reflexives (Montgomery and Hall xxxix). We said, "We made us a big far," or "Git yer plates." Of course, we said *hisself* and *theirselves*, words that came from Old English into the 16th century and were good enough for the dramatists of the time, one of whom—Sir Philip Sidney—wrote, "Each for hisself" (Mencken 454). Why, then, wouldn't we say, "They left that pore little young'un there all night by hisself"?

We also used indefinite pronouns that came from Queen Elizabeth's time. We said *ary/nary, a body,* and *ary'n/nary'un* (Montgomery and Hall xi) and used them in sentences such as "I wouldn't trust nary one of them," and "You recken a body could git work over there?"

We also combined the demonstrative pronouns with here and there, just as our British ancestors did, (Montgomery and Hall xi) and said such things as "Them there's not turnip greens; they's mustard," and "That there's Aunt Tillie's old housecat."

We also used the pronoun *them* as Old English used their *thaem*, as a noun to designate people or things closely associated with the subject. If we are of Irish descent, we were simply being true to our heritage because to say "Them's mine" is perfectly good grammar in Gaelic, the ancient Irish language (Mencken 45l). Many of us still say "Ruth and them ain't comin'."

ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Straight from the 16th century, we get the demonstrative adjectives *them, them there, that there, these here,* and *this here* (Montgomery and Hall xi). And we used them in such sentences as "Them there fellers is horse thiefs," and "These here 'maters haint half ripe." We also used the old endings of *en* or *ed* to form adjectives, such as blood-shotten eyes, store-boughten shoes, a growed man, and a foresakened house (Williams 28).

We also used adjectives as adverbs, as Chaucer and others did right up to the 18th century. Chaucer wrote, "…and soft unto himself he sayed." Sir Thomas More wrote, "He will answer trewe." And the Authorized Version of the Bible says, in Nehemiah XII: 42, "…the singers sang loud." Here in Mitchell County, we said, "He walked slow," "He behaved bad," and "He was frightful ugly." We were not misusing the language; adjectives and adverbs were often the same in Middle English. Chaucer says, "wounded very bad," "I sure was stiff," "drank out of a cup easy," and "He looked up quick"

(Mencken 465-467). And we said, "I'm real tard," "I beat him easy," and "I wanted to git rich quick.

VERBS

Using singular subjects with plural verbs was common in Elizabethan English. In *Henry VI*, III.ii.303, Shakespeare writes, "There's two of you," and we said, "Here's two dollars," and "We was tard might nigh to death."

In 1712, Jonathon Swift wrote to the Earl of Oxford, the Lord High Treasurer of England, to try to stop the new practice of omitting the *ed* in pronouncing the past tense verb forms. He argued that, in 200 years, the Queen's English (Queen Anne) would be unrecognizable. He was correct in that we no longer pronounce the *ed* but use only a *d* or a *t* for most past tenses. *Disturbed* has become *disturb'd, drugged* has become *drug'd, drudged* has become *drudg'd, rebuked* is now *rebuk't,* and *fledged* is *fledg'd* (Quinn 82). In church, if you listen to the Lord's Prayer, you will notice that many people still say *hallowed* instead of *hallow'd*.

In *Smoky Mountain English*, Michael Montgomery and Joseph Hall list numerous verbs and their past tenses that have come down to us from our British ancestors. Many of these are familiar to those of us who grew up in this area.

Present tense	Past tense
blow	blowed
bring	brung
catch	cotch
climb	clum
come	come
cost	costed
do	done
drag	drug
dream	dreampt
drink	drunk
drown	drownded
eat	eat/et
fetch	fotch/fotched
fight	fit
forgive	forgive
give	give
grow	growed
hear	heared
help	holp
hold	helt
kill	kilt
know	knowed
lean	lent

6

learn	learnt
overheat	overhet
reach	retch
ride	rid
ring	rung
rise	riz
run	run
see	seed/seen
set	sot/set
skin	skint
slink	slunk
spoil	spoilt
spring	sprung
stab	stob/stobbed
strew	strowed
swell	swole
take	tuck
think	thunk
throw	throwed
wrap	wrop/wropped/wropt
wrote	writ
yell	yelt (xliv-xlviii)

To this list, I have added the following:

ask/ax	ax/axt
fling	flung
sing	sung
sit	set/sot
steal	stold

Other verb features that we retained included the use of the progressive forms to denote mental activity, as in the sentence "We was a-wantin' to go to the revival"; the use of *did* and *done* to show completed action or emphatic action, as in "I never did know of anybody that mean"; and the use of *done* for *already* or *completely*, as in "They done gone by the time we got there."

Sometimes we used the old practice of omitting completely the helping verbs *have* and *had* and said things like, "I been working way too hard lately." At other times we added extra verbs, forming structures like *might could* (might be able), *might should* (probably should), *liketa, useta couldn't, boundta,* and *supposeta* (Montgomery and Hall 1). We then said things like, "He liketa had a fit when she come home an' said she done married that no-good feller," or "We might shoulda put a little more sugar in that cobbler."

CONJUNCTIONS AND PREPOSITIONS

In the 1950's there were still many people using the conjunctions of our Elizabethan ancestors. My grandfather said things like, "I left afore he come home," and "I'd sooner take a beatin' as do the washin'," It was common to hear *being as* for *because, iffen* for *if,* and *lessen* for *unless* (Montgomery and Hall lxi).

We also often used *of a* plus a noun for prepositions that indicated frequent or habitual activity, (Montgomery and Hall lxi) as in "We always went to church of a Sunday," or "We put up our crops of a summer and eat 'em of a winter."

Cratis Williams, in *Southern Mountain Speech*, lists what he calls "clustered prepositions" that are more elaborate than those of Chaucer (48). He says that *nunder* is a contraction for "in under," as in "Quick, hide nunder the bed." *Outnunder* means "out from under", as in "Git outnunder that table right now." *Alongst* means "alongside of"; *offen* means "off from on", as in "Git offen that davenport and git to work." *Outen* means "to come out from in," as in "Git yourself in outen the rain," and *orten'er* means "ought not," as in "He really orten'er done that."

We turn now to the pronunciation of our mountain words.

PRONOUNCION OF *A'S*

In Old English, the long vowel *a* was pronounced like *au* in autumn, hence our "You aul come back now" (Craig 60). We said *nahrr* for narrow and *bahrl* for barrel.

We also flattened our *a's* to an *aah* sound just as English speakers did in the 17th century (Williams 13). We said *paahth, caahf, graahs, laahf*, and *staahf*.

The broad *a* was also turned into *u*. That is how we got *whut* instead of what, *fur* for far and for, and *ruther* for rather (Mencken 359-360).

From Old English we also received the practice of putting *a's* in front of words (Montgomery and Hall liii). This practice passed into Middle English and on down to Shakespeare, who wrote in *Hamlet,* when Hamlet is debating about killing Polonius while he is at prayer and thereby sending his soul to heaven rather than killing him un-confessed and dooming him to hell, "Now might I do it pat, now he is a-praying" (Hendrickson v). We said things like "I been a-settin' here a-studyin' 'bout all evenin'" and "I'm a-goin' to whup you good."

Here in the mountains, we also added a *y* to the ends of some words instead of the final *a*. We said *sody, Santy*, and *extry* instead of soda, Santa, and extra. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives no ancient roots for these words and labels them as dialectical and/or colloquial. The earliest example I could find was in Jack London's *White Fang*, where

he writes, "Swallow a spoonful of sody, an' you'll sweeten up wonderful." It is no surprise not to find Santy in our Elizabethan heritage, since Santa Clause originated in the United States.

In Chaucer's time, a short *a* was often used for *e*, (Williams 13-14) making wrestle into *wrassle*, thresh into *thrash*, and learn into *larn*. A terrapin became a *tar'pin*. Beg became *bag*, peg became *pag*, egg, became *agg*, and leg became *lag*. We also said *thar* for there, *whar* for where, *hyar* for here, *war* for were, *har* for hair, *far* for fire, *war* for wire, *flare* for flower, *haus* for house, *wal* for well, *pank* for pink, *thank* for think, and *santer* for saunter (11-12). This is also where we got our word *sarvice* for the serviceberry tree. Its name goes back to the earliest days of settlement here in the mountains and is tied to the circuit riders, the itinerant preachers who made the rounds of the settlements a few times a year, or even less, before the establishment of churches. If spring came early, the preacher might be able to start his rounds when the serviceberry trees were blooming, their clouds of feathery blossoms glorious against the dead gray of the winter forests. The preacher and his *sarvices* (the old Scottish pronunciation of the word) came to be associated with the blossoming of the tree, hence the name.

SUBSTITUTION OF *I'S*

The *i* sound was frequently substituted for *o* in Middle English. This practice went to Ireland and, from there, to our part of the mountains (Mencken 345-346). My grandfather said *bile* for boil, *hist* for hoist, *jine* for join, *spile* for spoil, *pisen* for poison, and *rile* for roile. Ex. "They's sompin' got 'n the chicken house last night an' got them chickens all riled up."

We also replaced *e* with a short *i* before *n* and sometimes *t*, making get into *git*, pen into *pin*, and men into *min* (Williams 13-14).

Occasionally, we followed the old pattern and turned an *i* into *k* or *ck*, as in *vomick* for vomit (Williams 13-14).

USING *R'S*

One thing that we did with *r* was to substitute it for *l;* likewise, we substituted *l* for *r*, an Old Saxon practice (Williams 10-11). My grandfather said *warnet* for walnut, *flusterated* for frustrated, and *flitter* for fritter.

 Another Old English practice was to substitute *r* for the final *ow* sound. We used words such as *narrer, swaller, bellar*, and *pillar* for narrow, swallow, bellow, and pillow. As a rule, the OED calls such substitutions dialectical or slovenly. Hollow was already spelled *holow* in 1542 and *holloe* in 1642. *Yeller* is listed as dialectical and vulgar use in the U. S. *Wider* is used for widow in the *Huntington Records* of 1662. I found one example of *winder* from 1683; it says, "Nan seeke' th winder-board and mack it darke." *Foller* is not in the OED, and the earliest example I can find for *feller* is 1825. *ArrerArrer* is not in the OED, but *arwe* is given as an early form of arrow and comes from the Old English *arh,*

9

which I often heard the older people say when I was a child. I also heard *shadder,* though I cannot find a source for it.

Sometimes mountain people followed the speech patterns of their Scottish and Scotch-Irish ancestors and added *r*'s to words, as in *womern, breakferst, rurn, tobaccer, potater, dorter*, and *rurnt*, as the past tense of *rurn*. My grandmother always said she had to *warsh*. One source says that we added *r* to *idea*, but Miss McBee is the only one I can remember from around here who said *idear*. My father always said *idy*. Evidently a great many people before him had done the same because the OED lists *idey* and *idee* as obsolete forms and gives a 1542 example from Udall, who writes of "The idees, that Plato devised…."

Our grandparents also added a second *r* in words like worm, warm, world, corn, and paradise, giving them two syllables; hence *worrum, warrum, worruld, corrun,* and *parrydise* (Williams 10).

Our ancestors also omitted *r*'s in words such as curse, further or farther, horse, nurse, and pursley, giving us *cuss, futher, hoss, nuss,* and *pusley* (Williams 10). I have heard my grandfather talk about "pullin' pusley to feed the hogs." (I have examples and sources for the other words when we talk about the vocabulary itself.)

USING *T*'S

The early settlers to this area did some interesting things with *t*'s. They retained the 13th-century habit of changing final *d*'s to *t*'s, as in *helt* and *tolt* for held and told (Mencken 438).   We also have *sallet* and *kilt* for salad and killed and *skeert* for scared. They also simply added *t*'s to the ends of other words, such as cliff, which became *clift*, unless, which became *unleste*, and orphans, which became *orphants* (Krapp 232). (I still want to spell orphans with a *t*.) Other words that we pronounced with a *t* at the end were *clost, wisht, oncet, chanct, and trought*, (Mencken 352) as in the sentence*, "She left her sister dancing in the hog trought."*

From Old English, we also inherited a tendency to omit the *t* at the ends of words. We said *slep, lep, swep,* and *wep* for slept, lept, swept, and wept (Mencken 437).

Mountain speech retained the Elizabethan practice of pronouncing letters that are now generally silent in American English. The *t* was retained in often. In fact, *oft* was common in standard English in the 16th century, and the British still say often, while we have adopted the silent *t*. The word *salmon* was spelled *salmonys* in 1375, *samown* in 1426, *salmons* in 1515, and in 1604, Shakespeare used *salmons*. The OED lists the same retention of the *l* in calm; Chaucer uses *calme* in 1450; we find *cawme* in 1526, but Shakespeare goes back to *calme*.

ADDING AND DELETING LETTERS

Like Chaucer, mountain people added *y* to the end of some words (Williams 15). I can remember hearing *crookedy, stripedy, raggedy*, and *streakedy*. We omitted the *g* in many

10

words ending in *ing,* creating *goin' gettin'* and *settin'*. From our Welsh ancestors, we inherited the practice of dropping initial letters, creating '*uz* for was, *'bout* for about, '*un* for one, as in *young'uns*, '*im* for him, and *ain't* for hain't. We added letters creating extra syllables in words, such as *wrest(e)ler* or *ras(e)ler, assemb(e)ly, ent(e)rance,* and *ath(e)lete.* We also left out syllables, as in *journiin', abslute, for'd, incent,* and *vilet* (Craig 60). My sister and I used to spend Sunday afternoons picking vilets, not violets. Back in the days before we spoke of road-kill, my grandfather called it *kharn* instead of carrion. Wright lists variants of carrion as *ka'rin, kae'rin* and *carron,* and the OED lists *karyn,* but gives no history.

CONCLUSION

Much work remains to be done on the roots of our southern Appalachian dialect. With the influence of television and with more and more of our youth going to college, the loss of our unique speech patterns will become more certain and more rapid. Though we need to conform to the acceptable standard language of our culture, it seems a shame to lose completely a dialect that has its roots in the distant past, especially one with such lyrical and colorful expressions as ours. As our speech patterns continue to evolve, we should remember that the language many of us grew up with was not necessarily the speech of ignorant country bumpkins. We were simply so isolated here in our mountains that we had little opportunity to do anything other than speak as our ancestors did. Thank goodness for that isolation; otherwise, we would already have lost what is today the world's oldest living English dialect.

THE VOCABULARY

The following is by no means an exhaustive vocabulary for the speech of the southern highlands, but it is representative.

ACROST = across. The earliest example of the use of *acrost* comes from William Caxton in 1448. By 1523, it was spelled *a-crosse*, and Shakespeare spells it *acrosse* in 1591. In 1615, Hall wrote that "The squint-eyed pherisees looke a-crosse at All the actions of Christ" (OED).

ADDLED = dazed; mentally weak; confused. This word comes from the Old English meaning a mire or puddle and is related to *koadel*, which means cow urine, which, no doubt, would make a puddle. By 1593, it meant a sudden qualm, idle fear, or sullen care. By 1616, it was used to describe one confused by drink. In 1693, Robertson said, "I wish him an ounce more wit in his addle head" (OED).

AEG/AIG/AGG = egg. The OED shows *aeg* and *aig* as early ways to say egg. In 1000, it was spelled aege, so our pronunciation goes all the way back to Old English. By 1377, it was written *egge*, and by 1657, it had evolved to egg.

AFEARD = afraid. *A-fear* goes back to 1000 A. D. Chaucer wrote in 1560 in *Testament of Love, "*He that is afearde of his clothes, let him daunce naked" (OED).

AFORE = in front; in advance. This word comes from the Old English *on foran*, meaning not frequent. It became *afore/aforan* in the 14th century and was in common use. In 1665, Digges wrote, "Methinks it is somewhat requisite you did send one afore" (OED). Our grandparents said, "I got there afore he did."

AGIN = again. This word comes to Old English from Old Norse. In 1400, we find that the wife of "…Loth…looking agen, was turned in to an image of salt." In 1480, Caxton wrote that the Welshmen were so strong that they "dryuen the englysshmen ageyne." By 1569, Shakespeare spells it *againe* (OED).

AGGERVATE = aggravate. In 1530, the word meant to burden, to weigh down, to make heavy, and by 1597, it meant to make worse. By 1611, it meant to exasperate or provoke. This last meaning was and still is used in the southern mountains, (Quinn 41-42) as in the sentence, "Them young'uns is a-aggervating me to death!"

AIM = to intend; to plan. In 1604, Shakespeare says in *Othello,* III.iii.223, "My speech should fall into such wild success which my thoughts aym'd not" (OED).

AIN'T/HAIN'T = am not; are not; have not or has not. Hain't comes down to us from Middle English when it was a contraction for had or have not and was spelled *ha'n't* and later *han't*. Ain't comes from the tendency to omit initial letters (OED). We were using our inherited words correctly when we said, "Now hain't that jist awful?"

ALL THE = for only; as far as; as good as. *All* is found in Old Teutonic, Old Saxon, Old Norse, and Old English (OED). We used *all the* in the following ways: "You need a 4-wheel drive; that's all the way you can get up that mountain." "Is this all the further we can go?" "Is this all the best you can talk?"

ALLOW = to think, suppose, believe; to accept as true or valid. In 1548, Coverdale says, "If any man allowe not the understanding of Rome by Babylon…." The 1611 Bible says in Acts XXIV, "Hope towards God, which they themselves also allow" (OED). Here in the mountains, we said, "I 'lowed you 'uz already spoke fur."

ALLUS = always. In 1230, the spelling was *alles*. In 1297, we are told that something "…was alles wropt." By 1400, in *The Romance of the Rose,* it is a more elaborate *alleweyes,* and in 1852, Charles Dickens wrote, "He was allus willin fur to give me somethink, he was" (OED). Dickens sounds like our grandparents .

ANCHER = answer. This word comes from the Old English, and one variant is *ansquare*. In *Beowulf*, about 800, the word is spelled *andswaru* and is beginning to resemble more closely the modern spelling. In 1480, Caxton uses *ansure*, and Shakespeare uses the modern spelling that we still use (OED). Some of the older people I knew growing up said things like, "I don't have to ancher to nobody."

ANT = Yes, I do mean that tiny black creature that comes, uninvited, to all our picnics. When we were growing up, many of the local people gave the lowly ant a first name, one my mother did not allow us to say. That name came straight from the Old French *piss-ier* into Middle English as *piss-en*. In 1661, we find' "A multitude of pissants and vermins" (OED). The ant was given this name because it secretes a tiny drop of folic acid.

ANXIOUS = eager. I have been unable to find this use for anxious in any source before 1849. I did, however, find that an *anxious bench* was a seat at the front of a church or at a revival meeting, a seat reserved for those with particular concerns for their souls (Craigie). This term apparently is the equivalent of our mourner's bench.

AOUT = out. Wright lists several variants for this word: aght, aut, awt, eawt, and eaut. He says that these various pronunciations are found in Scotland, the Orkney Islands, Ireland, England, and America. The OED says that *owt* was used in 1375 and says that *outan* is obsolete for out-taken. *Outan* suggests that the word is from Anglo-Saxon. Here in the mountains, we sometimes divided the word into two syllables, as in, "We're plumb ao-ut of farwood."

APE = to imitate; to mimic. In 1632, Massinger, in *City Madness*, asks, "Why should you ape the fashions of court ladies?" And in 1634, Herbert writes in *Travels*, "The women ape the men" (OED). Once when I was in high school, one of the younger students ran into the office and said, "Mr. Brummit, you'v got to make So-and-so stop aping me! He's makin' me look like a monkey."

APT = likely; inclined or disposed. Shakespeare has Benvolio say in *Romeo and Juliet*, III.i.34, "And I were so apt to quarrel as thou art…." In 1660, Samuel Pepys wrote in his diary on August 28, "Beginning to teach my wife some scale in musique, and found her apt beyond imagination" (OED). One wonders what he thought of the poor woman's

13

intelligence in the first place.   I suspect that there are still people right here in Mitchell County who say, "He's not apt to come this late."

ARGY = argue. According to the OED, *argy* was never a variant of argue. I did, however, find *argefy*. It was listed as colloquial or dialectical, and the earliest date for an example was 1862, when Norton, writing in *Army Letters*, said, "I can dispute and 'argefy' with a man, but I never quarreled with a woman yet but I got the worst of it" (Craigie).

ARN = iron. This pronunciation does not come from English. As early as 1154, the word was spelled *iren,* in 1250, it was *irin*, and by about 1630 , *iron* was universal in England. It comes, instead, from Wales, the Old Welsh being *eharn* and *iharn* (OED).

ATTER/ATTERDS = after/afterward. According to the OED, these words were never used for after or afterward. We certainly grew up hearing them here in the mountains in such sentences as "I sent them young'uns atter a bucket a water a hour ago, and they hain't come back yit."

ATWIXT = between. This word comes to us from the Middle English of 1150-1500 (Hendrickson v). Our grandparents used it in structures like "She dropt her comb an' hit got lodged atwixt the floorboards."

AWF = off. I can find no etymology for *awf*, but Wright does give two variants, *orf,* and *oft*, and two examples for *aff*. "The free-kirk's an aff-back fae the Aul' Kirk," and, "The cornet's horse was just five years aff." We said, "Them people's from awf someplace."

AX/AST/AXED = ask; asked. The OED lists these forms of ask as obsolete or dialectical. *Ast* comes from the Teutonic to Old English to Middle English. By the 15th century, *asse* and *ast* were already reduced to dialects, but we find Chaucer using axe in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue.* In 1597, Coverdale, in his translation of *Ecclesiastes,* says, "It is axed at the mouth of the wise."

BAR/BARR = bear. The word *bear* comes from the Old Teutonic *beron* and is also spelled *barre* and *bare*. By 1200, it was *bere* and by 1501, it was *beir*. Neither the OED nor Wright admits to ever finding *bar* or *barr* as an early form of *bear*, yet those are the pronunciations that our ancestors brought to this country (Williams 13) and the ones that our grandparents used.

BEDLAM = confusion; total chaos. In 1247, the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem was founded in London as a priory. In 1330, it was converted into a hospital, and in 1402, it became a lunatic asylum. The name gradually changed to St. Mary's of Bethlem and was eventually shortened simply to Bethlem. By 1528, it had become *Bedlam* (OED). What does this have to do with our word for confusion and chaos?? Simply this: During this period, entertainment must have been as hard to come by as good TV programs today because bear-baitings, beheadings, and hangings were occasions to take blankets and food and spend the day at the sites of such events. The same was true of the lunatic

14

asylum; people could spend a penny and be admitted to the hospital, where they could enjoy watching the poor mad inmates who were locked up, neglected, and probably abused. Shakespeare frequently used *bedlam* to refer to a mad-house or total confusion. My grandmother used it in, "Git them young'uns outta hur; I can't stand no more of this bedlam."

BEHOLDEN = obligated. This use of the word goes back to at least the 12th century. In 1340, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, we find, "I am hugly bihalden, and ever-more wylle Be servaunt to your-selven." By 1489, Caxton spells it beholden (OED).

BEYANST = beyond. The word *beyonden* comes to Old English from Old Teutonic. Wyclife uses *biyendis,* but the OED does not list beyanst. *Beyanst* may be an example of changing *d* to *t*, or it may be a pronunciation that developed here in the mountains. At any rate, my grandfather told me not to "go off and git beyanst my raisin'."

BLESS OUT = to scold severely. This term comes from Old Teutonic to Old English, to Middle English and is related to making the sign of the cross to cast out evil. In 1589 Nash wrote, "One Pope or another…blest me into a stone to stoppe my mouth" (OED). Here in the mountains, we said such things as, "I blessed her out from here till next Sunday."

BODE NO GOOD = a premonition; an omen. This word comes down from the Old Teutonic. Chaucer uses it, and in 1700, Dryden writes, "Whatever now the omen proved, it boded well to you" (OED). My grandfather said, "Them clouds don't bode no good."

BRAR = brier. Brier comes from Old English to Middle English. Chaucer and Spenser both spelled it *bryar* (OED). Was the *a* silent, making it *brir*, or was the *y* silent resulting in *brar*, or were both vowels pronounced as in *br yar*? I cannot find an answer. The OED lists no *brar*, but Wright lists *brare* and says that it comes from Nottinghamshire, but he gives no dates or examples. Whether or not we know the exact ancestry, we know that we did have brars around here, especially if we went barefoot in the summer—except that we didn't go *barefoot*; we went *barfoot* or *barfooted*.

BUNG = the mouth of a jug or a hole in a cask; also the stopper for the hole. In 1669, we find the following instructions in Warlidge's *Systematic Agriculture*: "Put into a vessel, and stopt with a Bung and Rag" (OED). If any of your ancestors were runnin' shine around here, I'll bet they knew what a bung was.

BUSS = kiss. The OED says that this word possibly derives from Old English or Middle English. In 1596, Spenser writes in *The Faerie Queene* "Every satyre first did give a busse To Helenore." Before that, in 1570 in *Ladie Venus*, we find "He that brings him home againe, A busse? Yet not a busse alone shall have."

BUT = used to mean except or only. In Old English *but* was used as both an adverb and a preposition. From the Wyclife Bible of 1380, we find, "Othir God is noon but I." In

1599, Green wrote, "He is the man and she will none but him" (OED). Here we said and still say, "She's pretty smart for someone who's not but six."

CANKERED = corroded. In *Romeo and Juliet,* I.i.102, the Prince is threatening Montague and Capulet, who are about to fight. He says that this is the third time they have disturbed the citizens, who have enjoyed peace so long that their hands are corroded from lack of using the swords. He says, "Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate:" (Craig). We said, "Don't use that old bucket; hit's plumb canker'd."

CHUR, CHAR, CHER = chair. This word came from Old French into English, where it was given three syllables, which were later reduced to two (*cha-yer*) and, still later under French influence again, reduced to one, *char*. The OED gives three old spellings: *chare*, *cheyar,* and *char*. The French *char* was widely used in English until the 19th century. In 1500, in *Lancelot*, we find, "Mony o strong chariot and cher." In 1555, we find, "Thynges necessary to be used, as cheyars." Here in the mountains, we said all three.

CHAW = chew. *Chaw* was very common in the 16th and 17th centuries. In 1530, we find that "There be mo beestes than the oxe that chawe their cudde." In 1558, Queen Elizabeth herself said, "I…chaw them…" (OED).

CHIMBLEY, CHIMLEY = chimney. The OED lists variants of chimney as *chimlay*, and *chimblay*. I can find no example for *chimbley,* but in 1558, Croft writes in an inventory, "Item, one Iron Chimley."

CLEAN = completely. In *The Comedy of Errors,* I.i.134, Shakespeare writes, "Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia" (Craig). We said, "I clean forgot to make the gravy," and "I shot that deer clean through the heart."

CLEAR/CLER/CLAR = completely; entirely. Variants of *clear* are *cler* and *clar*, both of which were used here in the mountains. In 1600, we find Holland writing in *Livy*, that "The Romans went clear away." In 1688, L'Estrange wrote in *Historical Times*, "He is Now got into Clear Another story." Shakespeare used *clear of* to mean *rid of* in *Twelfth Night*, where he writes, "Let me be cleere of thee," and again in *The Merchant of Venice*, writing "How to get cleere of all the debts I owe" (Montgomery and Hall lvii). We used *cler* in the same way that we used *clean*, in such sentences as, "We walked cler down to Toecane." Some of the really old people said, "We could see clar into Tennessee."

CLOMB = as a past tense for climb. This word comes down to us from Middle English (Hendrickson v). I did not hear this form as often as I heard things like, "I clum clean to the top o' that big old poplar."

CLOSE/CLOST = for almost. We used these words as both adjectives and adverbs. We said, "I come clost to getting' run over," and "I hope I never in my life have that close a shave again."

CONFOUND = to ruin; to un-do. Shakespeare, in *The Comedy of Errors,* I.ii.38, writes, "Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself…" (Craig). We didn't use confound in quite the sophisticated way that Shakespeare did; we said, "Confound you! You're drivin' me crazy!" We also said, "Well, I'll be confounded!"

CONSARN = concern. This appears to be strictly from the United States. The only examples I could find dated from the early 1800's, and neither of those used it to mean concern. In 1825, Neal wrote in *Brother Johathan*, "…con-sarn it all…." In 1843 Stephens in *High Life* wrote, "I was a consarned sight more to blame than you was" (Craigie). We used *consarn* as both of these writers did, but I have also heard old people say, "Hit hain't no consarn of mine."

CORRUPTION = decomposed or putrid matter in a sore or boil; pus. Shakespeare frequently used this word to create images, as in *2 Henry IV*, III.i.77, when he writes "That foule Sinne gathering head, Shall break into corruption." In 1688 R. Holme in *Armory* writes that "Hooked instruments…termed Drawers are to scrape out Corruption in a Wound or Bruise" (OED).

CUARD/KAERD = coward. The OED gives *cuard* but not *kaerd*. By 1500 it was spelled *cowert*. I grew up hearing the old people saying kaerd, a softer-sounding word than *cuard*.

CULL = to choose; also something rejected as being inferior or worthless. In 1430, in the *Chronicles of Troy*, we find, "Coyle the chefe jewels." In 1617, it is still spelled the same way in Markham's *Cavalcade*, where we find, "The Colt…which is to be coyled and cast away" (OED). People here used to cull their apples and use the culls in cider.

DAOWN = down. The OED is no help with this word. As early as 1320, it was spelled *downe*. Wright shows a Yorkshire spelling of *dahn* but gives no dates or examples. It appears that we either inherited the Yorkshire pronunciation or added a syllable of our own.

DAST/DASN'T/DURST/DAR = dare/dare not. In 1059 in *Beowulf,* we find *derst;* in 1205, *darest;* in 1385, Chaucer uses *daryst;* and in 1578, we find, "How dar thow for mercy cry?" (OED). I have heard my grandmother say, "I dasn't walk in them high weeds," but mainly, we just said *dar*.

DONE = already. *Done* was used by the 16th century Scottish poets for emphasis (OED). The Scots brought that use to this area, and we used it in such sentences as, "She woulda done left him 'cept she wadn't 'bout to work fer a livin'."

D'RECKLY/ THE RECKLY = immediately; at once; after a little while. The only *reckly* in the OED is a Scottish word meaning "rickety or tumble-down." I can offer no source for this word, but it was in common use here in Mitchell County in the 1950's in sentences such as, "I'm busy right now, but I'll do hit the reckly."

DRUG = past tense of drag.   The origin of this word is uncertain, but it appears in Middle English. Chaucer spells it *drugge* in 1500, but by 1593, Shakespeare is using *dragg'd* (OED). My father once grew a pumpkin so large that he couldn't carry it, so he drug it down the hill on a toe sack.

DRUNK/DRONK = drunken. Dronke came from old English to Middle English. Chaucer uses it in 1386, and in 1450, we find, "One counsailed to make hym gret chere tyl he were dronke" (OED). I've heard, "He were drunker'n a boiled owl." (The use of *were* with first and second person was not uncommon among mountain people. My grandfather and his brother said, "I were" and "she were" but "they was.")

DRUTHER = would rather. The OED says that this is a U. S. dialectical alteration of "would rather." Rather comes from the Old English *rathe*, meaning quickly or ahead (Funk 358). *Druther* has no roots in British English. The fact that the word lacks a pedigree never stopped people in Mitchell County from saying, "I druther not be seen in a place like this."

The F-WORD = This word did not originate in the court of Henry VIII, as is popularly believed, and it is not an acronym for "Fornication Upon Command of the King." According to the OED, the etymology is unknown, but examples go back to around 900. Its use was by no means limited to this region, and it is now understood by people who speak not one other word of English.

FAHR/FAR = fire. This word comes to us from Old Teutonic. In 1205, it was *fur*; then it became *fer*; by 1547 the *Nottingham Record* spells it *fyar* (OED). Fifty years ago, *far* was a common pronunciation here.

FELLER = fellow. Fellow comes from Old English and has been spelled *felowe* and *felawe*, but there is no such word as *feller* in the acceptable forms in the OED, which says that it is dialectical and vulgar. Such a label didn't make any difference to folks in Bandana who just kept right on saying *feller*.

FETCH/FOTCH = to bring. In 1000, Aelfric spells this word as *feccon*; in 1200, it has become *fecchenn*. In 1610, Shakespeare writes, "I will fetch off my bottle (*The Tempest,* IV.i.213). *Fotch* is listed as a variant of *fetch*, but the OED gives no examples of its use. I never heard *fotch* very much, just occasionally as a past tense, but *fetch* was common in sentences such as, "Go fetch me the butter out of the milk box."

FIGUR = figure; to solve; to understand. The OED gives *fig(o)ur* as one spelling but gives no examples. By 1340, Hampole wrote, "A devil in his fygur right." By 1386, Chaucer spells it *figure*. We generally used this word to mean that we had thought through something, as in, "I figur we ort to leave by daylight," or "I don't figur he'll be a-comin' this late."

FITTEN = proper. The OED says that this word is obsolete except in the U. S. dialect. It did not become obsolete before 1642, however, for H. More used it in *Song of the Soul*.

18

He writes, "Sensation The soul some fitten hint doth promptly lend To find out plant all life." My grandfather used to say that it "warn't fitten for a womarn to wear red."

FIXIN' = to prepare; to plan; to get ready to do something. The OED says that this word originated in the U. S. Practically everyone I knew in Bandana said things like, "That big old copperhead was a-fixin' to bite me, so I tuck off jist a runnin'."

FOUNT = found. This word goes back to Old English and appears in *Beowulf* as *fonte* and *fint* (OED). Our ancestors said, "I been huntin' all morning, and I still hain't fount my headache powders."

FRACTIOUS = cross; fretful; peevish. The OED gives no history of the word, but it does give an example from DeFoe's 1725 *Voyage Around the World*. "Having had an account how mutinous and fractious they had been." Grandma used the word often, usuallyusually to say something like, "Them young'uns is too fractious; send 'em on home."

FRAZZLE = fatigued. The OED shows no British roots for this word. Neither does Craigie, but he does give an 1888 example from *Century Magazine*, suggesting that it is of American origin. He writes, "Pore little creetur, he's all frazzled out." That is how we used the word. We also said, "I'm plumb tuckered out."

FLUSTERATE/FLUSTRATE = frustrate. The OED says that *flustrate* is vulgar but lists one example from 1712: "We were coming down Essex Street one Night a little flustrated." Nowhere could I find the extra syllable that we inserted to make *flusterate*.

FUR = for. The OED lists origins for the preposition in Old English but says that it was used for the conjunction no earlier than the 12th century. Wright says that this pronunciation came from Scotland and Ireland. We said *fur* instead of *far*, but we also used it for *for* and *furrow*. We said, "Jist keep goin'; hit hain't fur now," and "He couldn't a-plowed a straight fur if his life depended on it."

FURRINER = foreigner. I cannot find any history of this word, nor can I find an example before 1849, when Charlotte Bronte used it in *Shirley* (OED). Plenty of people in this area used the word, however, and many of them pronounced it *furr'ner*.

FUSTY = stale; lacking in freshness; musty; moldy; damp. The OED gives no origins for this word but does provide several examples. In 1398, we find, "Wine and other liquor taketh infection of a vessel that is fusty." In 1491, Caxton wrote, "He found bread which was not fair, but fusty and spotted." Shakespeare said in *Troilus and Cressida*, "If he knock out either of your brains, he were as good crack a fusty nut with no kernel."

GAUM/GAWM/GOM = to mess up; to make sticky; also to handle, especially in some improper fashion. In 1656, R. Fletcher in *Martial* said, "Each Lad took his Lass by the fist, and when he had squeez'd her and gaum'd her until The fat of her face ran down like

19

a mill He…" (OED). I don't think Mitchell County folks knew the latter use of the word. All I ever heard was, "Don't you go an' gom up my clean kitchen now."

GIT = get. The OED lists *gite* and *gitte* as two of the several variants of *get* but gives no examples before Mark Twain in 1869. Probably half the kids in school in the 1950's said *git* instead of *get*.

GUESS = suppose. The OED offers examples of *guess* for *suppose* from the Middle English of Chaucer, Wyclife, and Gower. It was still used by Shakespeare, who wrote in *Henry VI*, "Not all together; better far, I guess, That we do make our entrance several ways" (Mencken 128). We said, "I don't guess we'd better pour concrete if it's startin' to rain."

HANT = haunt; ghost. The OED says that this word is obsolete except in certain areas of the U. S. Wright says the word is Scottish. The old people in the mountains used to tell stories about *ghostes* and *hanted* houses.

HEER/HUR/HURD/HYUR/HEARED/HEERED = hear; heard. The OED lists *hure, hearde, heorde*, and *harde* as alternative forms of hear and heard. The earliest example listed says, "Though ye deserve not to be harde for your selfe, yet he wylle graunte you your askynges." Shakespeare used *heere*. In the mountains, people generally used *hur* and *hured* in such sentences as, "I can't hur a word you're sayin'," and "I hain't never hured tell of nothin' like that in my life." The earliest example that I found of *hear tell* comes from 1773 from the *Modern History Magazine*, but the one I like best is found in Throwbridge's *Three Scouts* in 1865 and says, "Wal, I heered that affair had got into a book," and sounds like Mark Twain. Craigie says that our pronunciations are "common in the U. S. in ignorant or dialectical speech." *Ignorant* does not, of course, mean *stupid*. How could we not be ignorant of the changes in our speech patterns? After all, our mountain people had been living in virtual isolation for nearly 200 years.

HEARTEN/DISHEARTEN = to encourage; to cheer up; to discourage. *Hearten* came into English from German from the Old Teutonic word *herten*. In 1579, North wrote in *Plutarch*, "This did hearten him…to follow his purpose" (OED). My grandmother said, "I was right heartened by the news."

HELT = held. This word comes from both Old Frisian and Old Norse into Old English. In 1000, it was spelled *helt* (OED). In 1400, the past tense was *holt*, as in this sentence from Moundev: "Prester John holt fulle great land." Wright gives variants as *hawlt, holte, hoult, owlt, holt*, and *hilt*. Here we said, "I helt on as long as I could, and then I couldn't holt on no longer."

HESH/HESHT = hush; hushed. The OED does not have the word *hesh*, but it does give a 1613 example: "She husht him, thance, he sung no more." Wright, however, lists variants of *hush* as *husht, hisht,* and *hesht*. It seems logical that, if the word *hesht* existed, the present tense of *hesh* also existed. Ex. "That young'un jist wouldn' hesh till I

rech up over the door and tuck down my big old willer switch, and that hesht him up in a hurry."

HET = heated. This word comes from the Old English *hat*. In1517 Torkington wrote, "The water was het to wash the ffete" (OED). We said, "Don't git all het up about it."

HIGH-FALUTIN' = pretentious, putting on airs. According to the OED, this term is U. S. slang. Southern mountain people may have been backward in their speech, but they were fiercely proud, and they didn't take to outsiders and their high-falutin' ways.

HIT = it. This pronoun comes from Old English and Old French. During Middle English, it lost the *h* for emphatic forms and later for all forms. The *h* was preserved for much longer in Scotland, and it was not completely superseded by *it* until the late 1600's. In 1000, the *Old English Chronicles* says, "He hit forsok."   In 1440, we find in an ancient cookbook, "Do hit in a pot, and let hitte seethe." *Hit* was good enough for Queen Elizabeth herself, who said, "To trust my life in anothers hand and send hit out of my owne" (OED). When *hit* is used in mountain speech, it is usually in a stressed position, (Montgomery and Hall xxxvii) as in "Hit's a-gonna rain, for shore." Often *hit* and *it* will be used in the same sentence: "Hit don't hurt nothin' to feed a baby when its hungry, 'stead of keeping it on a schedule."

HOLP = helped. The Old French word *halpa* came into Old English as *holpen*. By 1500, holp was in common usage and continued in frequent use until the 17th century. It is now rare except here in the southern mountains. In 1523, we find "The kyng of Cypre holpe them." In 1571, in Campion's *History of Ireland*, we find, "who…holpe the Saxons" (OED). I'll bet whoever it was who *holp* the Saxons didn't live to brag about it.

HOVE = to raise; to lift. In 1570, we find, "Hove up his head upon your spear, lo, here a joyful sign." Spenser wrote in *The Faerie Queene*, "Astound he stood, and up his heare did hove" (OED). Mountain folk also used *hove* in the sense of appearing, as in, "After while, he hove into sight around the bend."

HUNKER = to squat with the haunches, knees, and ankles bent to bring the hams near the heels and throw the weight on the front of the feet. The earliest example from the OED is from 1720, when Pennecuik wrote in *Streams of Helicon*, "And hunk'ring down upon the cold Grass." In the late 1700's we find the word *hunch* for a similar position.

INSTID = instead. In 1297, we find, "…in stude of…." In 1449, we find a church congregation being charged to do certain things *in stide* of the old sacraments (OED). Many of us who grew up here in Mitchell County probably said *instid* all through high school, and many of us may still say it.

JANDERS = jaundice. Now obsolete, this word comes to us from Middle English. In 1508, we find, "Whey is …holsome for them that have ianders." In 1563, we find yellowe ganders." In 1607, we find that something is "…Very profitable against the

21

yellow-jaunders. As late as 1879, we find that *janders* was still sometimes used.   I have heard jaundice called "yaller janders" (OED).

KEAR/KEER/KHAR/KUR = care. The Old Norse version of care was *kara*, and the Old English was *caru*. The OED also lists *kar* as one form. By 1250, *kare* was in use, and by 1300, we had *care*. But here in the mountains, we didn't kur how they talked in the rest of the world.

KIND OF A = type. This term comes from the Old English (OED). In 1591, Shakespeare wrote in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III.i.262, "I have the wit to think my master is a kind of a knave." We said, "This must be some kind of a snake egg."

KITTLE = kettle. This word comes from Old Norse and Old Saxon. In 700, the form is *cetil*; in 1000, it is *cytele*; in 1100, it is *cytel*; by 1300, it has become *ketel* (OED). Mountain people made apple butter in a big brass kittle.

KIVER = cover. In 1400, we find, "Kever the rotes agene with some erthe," but by 1664, we find, "Cover with dry straw" (OED). Here, we made quilts for bed kivers.

LARN/LEARNT = learn, learned. In 1420, we have, "Thus have I lurnet at gentile men." In 1629, Maxwell, in *Herodian,* says, "Then, secretly torturing them, he learnt out all their treachery" (OED). I have no justification for *larn*, as in the sentence, "Them teachers never did larn me nothing." Obviously, he never learnt nothing." However, in 1450, we are told that a man ought to learn his daughters with good examples (OED). Rarely did I hear *larn,* but I heard *learnt* when I was growing up.

LED = lid. The OED lists *led* as one variant of *lid* and gives an example from 1000, when the plural was spelled *ledon*. (This suggests an Anglo-Saxon ancestry since the Anglo-Saxons made plurals by adding *en*. If one had one shoe and then got another one, he had two *shoen*; one hose became two *hosen*. About the only remaining Anglo-Saxon plurals we use now are *oxen* and *children*.) Here in the mountains, we put both ox in the stable and went home and lifted up a pot led to see what was for supper.

LIEF = gladly; willingly. This word comes from Old Teutonic, and we find it used in 900 in the *Old English Chronicles*. In 1643, Trapp writes, "He had as lief have parted with his very heart-blood" (OED).   The older mountain people, even in the 1950's said, "I'd as lieflief take a beatin' as have to be in a crowd like that ever agin."

LIKETA/LIKE TO = just about; almost; nearly. *Like* comes from Old English. In 1508, Dunbar, in *Poems,* wrote, "Noro danced merry, now like to die." *Like to* was used by Shakespeare, who wrote in 1600 that he "like to have had a fight" (OED). It was also used by Samuel Johnson, Daniel DeFoe, Jonathan Swift, and Charles Dickens, but it came to be regarded as vulgar at some point in the 19th century (Wright). We used it in such structures as, "I liketa broke my neck."

LIGHT = alight; to descend, dismount, or get down; to settle in one place. In 1490, Caxton wrote, "That egle that lighted amonge the hope of swannes." In 1603, Knowles wrote in his *History of the Turks*, that the invaders were "Making spoile of whatsoever they light upon" (OED). The mountain man said things like, "Why'nt youns light and set a spell? We also said, "If hit starts to rain, we better light out for home," but *light out* is listed as U. S. slang. Wright says, however, that *lit* comes from Scotland and gives the example of, "We lit on to him," but gives no date for the quote.

LIKE = as. In 1380, Wyclife wrote in a sermon, "If I see, I know him not, I shall be like you, a liar" (OED) In the 1950's we heard, "Winston tastes good, like a cigarette should." Here in the mountains, we used the word as our ancestors had done, but what excuse did the cigarette companies have?

MEDDLE = to interfere. In 1470, Malory wrote in *Arthur*, "For and I had sene his black shield, I wold not have meddled with hym." In 1600, we find an account of priests having found favor in civil courts because they had "…cleared themselves of all state meddles." The word is now listed as obsolete or rare (OED). In our area, we said things, and still do, like, "I can't stand her; she's always meddling in other people's business."

MIND = to remember; remind; be mindful of. The only example I have of the use of *mind* in this way comes from 1422, when we find in *Secreta Secret*, "I ne may not mynde me that the Emperours of Rome…were vnlettrude while that hare lordshupp was well gouernyd in his streynth" (OED). We said, "I mind me of one time when I was little."

NABEL = navel. This word goes all the way back to 725, when we find *nabula*, which is Germanic in origin. In 850, it is *nafelan*. In Malory's *Arthur* (1470-85), we find, "Launcelot smote hym on the sholder and clafe hym to the nauel." In 1592, the word is *navil,* and in 1695, it is *navel* (OED). I can remember saying *nabel* myself when I was young.

NAR/NER/NUR = nor.   The OED says that *nor* comes from the Old Frisian and gives an example from 1440 which says, "I may not eate your benys nor your cale." It lists no variants of the word. According to Wright, *nar* comes from Scotland, and *ner* and *nur* come from English dialects, but he gives no origins or examples before 1866.

NARY/ARY = not any; never; neither; either. The OED says this is chiefly a U. S. dialect, but Craigie says that it appears in some English dialects. The earliest example of *nary* that I can find comes from 1746 and is found in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Registry*. It says, "There was no 'spile' dunne on nary side" (OED) Here in the southern mountains, we said things like, "I don't like nary one of them," and "Ary one of them is all right with me." In the latter sentence, we were following our ancestors' practice of dropping initial letters.

NASTY = to make dirty. The OED lists this word as obsolete except in dialect. We used it as a verb, as in, "Don't you nasty up my kitchen," and as an adjective, as in "You ort

23

not to be givin' me them nasty looks." We also used it as an adverb in, "You gonna get a whuppin' fer talking nasty."

NAUGHT = nought; nothing; worthless. This word comes from the Old French to Old English to Middle English, where we find Sir G. Haye, writing in *Law Arms*, that he "…can nocht ellis do bot sitt on the felde." By 1600, it is already being spelled *nought* (OED). Several of the books I consulted listed this word as being characteristic of the southern Appalachians, but I don't remember its being used in this area.

NEKKED = naked. *Naked* comes from Teutonic into Old French, where it is spelled *naket*, to Old English, where we find *steort* naked, meaning stark naked. Shakespeare uses *nakede*. Malory, in *Arthur*, says, "There syr Launcelot took the fairest lady by the hand…and she was naked as a nedel" (OED). We said, "I don't want nothin' but the nekked truth."

NUSS = nurse. This word comes to us from the time of Henry VIII. After the death of his third wife, Jane Seymore, a ballad written by one of the common people contains the following verse: "The babe it was christened, And put out and nussed/ While the royal Queen Ann/ She lay cold in the dust" (George 576). I have not been able to find a history of the word.

OFF'N = off. The OED says this word is dialectal in the U. S. We know that, of course, since we've been hearing the word since we were children. (Southerners have a habit of using the progressive form of the verb rather than the past tense.) The first example is taken from *Blackwood's Magazine,* where we find, "Set down that bottle, quoth I, wiping the saw-dust off'n't with my hand" (OED). We said, "He'd give you the shirt off'n his back, but he'd try to tell you how to ware it."

ORNERY = mean; cantankerous. The OED lists this word as dialectical and colloquial, chiefly in the U. S. and gives the earliest example as 1816. In the mountains, we didn't have much use for ornery neighbors.

OWN = used as a type of emphatic reflexive. This use of *own* goes back to Old English. We find it in 900 in Baeda's *History* in "His own son…." In 1620, we are told that a trespasser was convicted and sentenced to death at his own hand" (OED). I'm not sure how they planned to accomplish that. We said, "I recken I can do hit my own self."

PARLOUS = perilous. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* III.i.14, Quince, Snout, and Bottom are talking about the play they are going to put on and are concerned that it may offend the ladies because of the violence. Snout says that they had best leave out the killing because of the "parlous fear" (Craig). My grandfather said, "That's a right parlous trip to make by yourself."

PASTAR/PASTUR = pasture. I found no etymology for this word, but I did find a 1660 spelling of *pastur* in the *Hempstead Records* (Krapp 171). A 1670 example in the *Derby*

Record says, "A soficyent high way down to his pastar" (Craigie). We had to call the cows in from the pastur at milking time.

PARTIAL = in favor of someone or something. Shakespear said in *The Comedy of Errors,* I.i.4, "I'm not partial to infringe our laws" (Craigie). We said, "I'm right partial to cornbread and buttermilk."

PARTLY = not wholly; partially. In 1523, we find, "Partly by your councell…." In the Middle Ages, partly was used for partially but not in reference to the various parts, as it is used nowadays, as in something that is partly red and partly blue (OED).

PERT/PURT = lively; brisk. Shakespeare, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* I.i.13, has Theseus say to stir up the youth of Athens to merriment and to "Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth" (Craig). The mountain people said *purt,* as in, "I hain't been feelin' too purt lately."

PLUMB = straight; completely; all the way. This word comes from the Latin *plumbum,* which means lead. A plumb line is a string with a lead weight which makes it fall in a straight line. This is also where we get out words *plummet* and *plumber* (Funk 330). In 1587, in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, we find, "Then rowles and reeles and falles at length plum ripe" (OED). (Apparently someone was "drunk as a skunk.") Here we said, "He's just plumb lazy," and "He acts like he's plumb crazy."

POKE = bag; sack. The OED says this word is limited to dialects now. In 1386, Chaucer wrote in *The Reeve's Tale*, "They walwe as doon two pigges in a poke." We would have said, "They wallered around like two pigs in a poke."

PORE/POUR/PORELY = poor; poorly. *Pore* was common in Middle English, as was *poyr*, and *poure*. In 1475, we find, "The pore commons." In 1592, we find, "Against the pore child." By 1677, however, the spelling has changed to *poore* (OED). Our saying *pour* for *poor* is essentially the same as Californians who say they sleep on a *cot* and that they *cot* the ball.

POX = often used for smallpox, but generally referring to the later stages of syphilis; a curse. This word came into general use after 1492, when Columbus' sailors brought syphilis to the Old World. Before the Columbian exchange, only gonorrhea was known in Europe. How do we know this? The exhumed bones tell the story: Syphilis, in its later stages, does terrible damage to the bones, damage not evident in bodies that died prior to 1492. In 1494, there were syphilis epidemics in every major seaport in Europe. The epidemic started in Spain, then moved to Italy, from there moved to France, and from there to England. One of Shakespeare's favorite curses was, "A pox on you!" He also liked, "A plague on you." My grandmother liked, "A plague on you," and she also liked to say, when she was irritated, "Plague take you!"

PUNY = petty; weak; of inferior size. I could find no etymology of *puny,* but I did find a Shakespearean quote from 1596. In *The Merchant of Venice,* III.iv.74, we find, "And

25

twentie of these punie lies Ile tell, That men shall sweare I have discontinued schoole Above a twelve moneth" (OED). Here in the mountains, *puny* was generally used to denote weak or sickly, as in, "She's allus been puny."

PURTY = pretty. The OED says that this word came to the U. S. from Ireland. Wright shows *perty* and *pirty* as variants, also, and gives the following examples: "A smart purty little schoolmistress," and "I've barked my shin purty well before yees." *Barked* is another Irish term that we frequently heard; it meant to scrape the skin off. We also used *purty* to mean *fairly, rather,* and *very*, as in "He's a-doin' purty good in school this year."

QUARE = queer; strange; odd. The OED says that this word comes from Ulster English. In 1561, we find the following: "A Quire bird is one that came lately out of prison." Anyone who didn't see eye-to-eye with my grandmother was quare.

QUICK = the nerve; the living flesh, as in "the quick and the dead." In 1697, Dryden wrote, "The raw rain has pierc'd them to the quick" (OED). I usually associate the word with cutting my nails "to the quick." (My fanger nails, you understand.)

QUINSY = sore throat. This word comes from two Greek words, *kyon* (dog) and *ancho* (choke). The Middle Latin *kynanche* became *quinancia,* and entered Middle English as *quinesye* and later became *quinsy* (Funk 241). In these mountains, the old women would have had herbal treatments for quinsy.

QUIRL/QUERL = twirl; coil. The OED says this is strictly from the U. S. The first reference comes from 1787 and records a woman complaining of a quirling pain in her side. In 1853, B. F. Taylor wrote about a grapevine that had "…two or three dainty quirls therein." In the mountains, we knew that grapevines and morning glories had quirls, but we used *quirl* as a verb, too, as in, "She just sets there a-quirling her hair around her finger."

QUIT/TO BE QUIT OF = to be rid of someone or something. Shakespeare uses this term in *The Comedy of Errors*, I.i.23, and says, "To quit the penalty and to ransom him" (Craig). We said, "I wisht we could be quit o' him oncet and fer all." We also said, "I wisht we could be shet of him." *Shet* probably came from our Scottish and Irish ancestors (Wright).

RAGLER = regular. The OED says that this word, now obsolete, came from the Welsh word meaning the chief officer, a sheriff or constable. Mountain people used it in such constructions as "Our ragler mailman got transferred."

RANKLE = to irritate. This word comes from the Greek word *drakos*, meaning "eye'; and *drakon* was the word for serpent, apparently because both dragons and serpents have flaming eyes. The Romans changed the spelling to *draco* and used it to refer to ulcers because they said an ulcer felt like the gnawing of a little dragon. From Latin, the word passed into Old French as *draoncler*, became *rancler*, and finally got into Old English as *rankle* (Funk 107). In this area, we used it in such sentences as, "She jist rankles me to

death." We also said our clothes were *wrankled*, but apparently we were just mispronouncing *wrinkled*.

RAPSCALLION = a rascal; a rogue. The earliest spelling I can find is *rascallion*, in 1649. In 1699, Ward wrote in *London Spy*, "A parcel of Poor ragged Rapscallions" (OED). I remember hearing the word used only in connection with naughty children, as in the sentence, "Why, you little rapscallion, you!"

RECH = reach. As a noun, the word is obsolete, but the West Saxon verb was still in use in Middle English. In 1530, we find, "I reche a thing with my hande…I can not reache it, myne arme is to shorte." By 1591, Shakespeare is using *reach* (OED). Old mountain people said something like, "I rech my hand in fer them aggs an' come out with a blacksnake by the tail."

RECKON = to calculate; to work out. In 1400, Malory uses *reckon* to mean calculate, and in 1603, Sir. R. Cecil says, "He is, I reckon, no wise man that looketh this way to heaven" (OED). Southern mountain people used it the same way we used *I guess*, as in the sentence, "I reckon we better go if we're gonna git home 'fore dark."

RECOLLECT = to remember; to recall to mind. This word comes originally from Latin, but the first example I could find was from 1712: "A famous Grecian General whose Name I cannot at present recollect" (OED). When I was twelve, I had a friend who was in her 80's, and I used to love spending Sunday afternoons with her and listening to her stories about growing up right here in Mitchell County in the days when the Indians still killed settlers and burned their cabins. She would start her stories with, "Well, I recollect one time…," and I knew I was in for a good afternoon.

REST EASY = to be comfortable. This term came from Old French and Old English. In 1600, Shakespeare wrote in Sonnet cix, "As easie might I from my selfe depart," and in 1695, Blackmore wrote, "The sick grow easie, and the feeble strong" (OED). In the mountains, we used it to refer to mental states, also, as in, "I can't seem to rest easy not knowing where he is."

RID = rode. The OED lists variants of this word as *ryd, rydde*, and *rud*. In the *Hollinshed Chronicles*, we find, "He rid and made plaine a great part of the country ouergrowen with woods and thickets." The old folks would have said, "Them boys rid from Koney down to Toecane on inner tubes."

RIGAMAROLE = rigmarole; confused; disjointed. Edward I wanted to control Scotland, and the Scots were unable to resist; so they presented the king with documents of allegiance in 1291. These documents were a confusing collection of papers and signatures. From this *ragman roll* came *rigmarole* (Funk 20-21). We added the extra syllable. The word was used in this area in sentences such as, "I never hured sich a rigamarole in my life."

27

RIGHT = used as an adverb. The use of this word as an adverb comes from Old Norse into English. A writer in 1400 says someone cut his head right off: "He smote right of his hede" (OED). We used it the same way: "I used to travel a right smart before they started blowing up airplanes right often."

RILE = to make angry. There appears to be no record of the use of *rile* for *roil* before 1825, when Neal wrote in *Brother Jonathan*, "Being afeered he might ryle my blood" (Craigie). Old people around here said things like, "I jist get riled up ever time I go down there."

ROUST = arouse. In 1658, D. Lupton, writing in *Flanders*, said, "Who will … ere long roust them out of this Hole, and make them look out another kennel" (OED). Mountain women would have said, "I recken I better go roust us up a little supper."

RUNT = small; inferior. The OED gives no etymology for this word but does give a 1614 example from Ben Johnson, who writes, "Sir, you are a welsh Cuckold, and a prating Runt, and no Constable." Mountain folk used it to mean the smallest animal in a litter or sometimes disparagingly in referring to a small person, usually a man or boy. The word is not limited to this area, by any means.

SALLET = salad. I could find no origin for this word, but I suspect that it came from France during the Middle Ages because that is when salads were introduced to England from France. One writer said that the sallet was the glory of every French dinner and the disgrace of most in England. In 1601, Shakespeare wrote in *All's Well That Ends Well,* IV.v.18, "She was the sweete Margerom of the sallet, or rather the hearbe of grace" (OED). In the 1950's, I remember the older people going out to pick sallet in the very early spring, and what they gathered was winter cress or creecy greens. They also cooked poke sallet.

SANG = sing. The OED does not give a source for *syngan* or *syng*, but I suspect, judging from the *an* ending for *syngan,* that it comes from Old English. Wright says that the Scots say *sang* for *song*. One Scottish song speaks of "the *sangs* my mother *song*." Many mountain people enjoyed going to all-day sangings with dinner on the ground.

SCOTCH/SKOTCH = to place a block under a wheel or cask, etc. to prevent moving or slipping or rolling. In 1639, we find, "Behind there is a skatch to stay the wagon in some steep descent." In 1663, Dryden wrote in *Wild Gallant*, "Then will I first scotch the Wheeles of it, that it may not run" (OED). In *Macbeth*, after Macbeth has killed Duncan, and Malcolm and Donalbain have escaped, he says that he has not killed the snake, only scotched it. Numerous texts give a footnote that says *scotched* means *wounded*. That is one of the more recent meanings, but I say those editors should have checked with some of our mountain people or at least have looked for older meanings of the word.

SCROOCH = crouch. The OED says this word originated in the U. S., but Wright says it is used in England, also. He gives an example from Nottinghamshire that says, "She was

Mary Patrick 3/9/11 8:21 PM
Deleted:

scrooching down to pick up the beads." We would have said the kids were scrooched down behind the couch so they could eavesdrop on the adult conversations.

SCROUDGE = crowd. Wright gives a variant as scrouge and says that the word is used in Scotland, England, and the U. S. He gives the following example from Ireland. "If there was a purty girl, it's there the scroodging, and the pushing, and the shoving…would be." We used it the same way: "Can youns scrouge over just a little bit and make one more seat?"

SICH = such. Wright lists *sech* as a variant, says the words are used in Scotland, Ireland, England, and the U. S., and gives this example: "It's sech a fine life." The OED gives an example from 1550: Cheke's translation of *Matthew* III:15 says, "Let sich things go now." Mountain folk would have said, "I never heared of sich a thang in my life."

SHORE = sure. The OED says that this dialectical and colloquial and offers no examples before 1890.

SKEERT/SKAIRT = scared. The OED offers *skar, scart, skear*, and *skeer* as variants. *Skeere* is Middle English. In 1400, we find *skerrit*, in 1470 we find *skar*; in 1558, we find *skere*. In this area, we said things like, "I'd be plumb skeert to go into Lost Cove during rattlesnake season."

SMART = to sting; to hurt. This word comes from the Middle English. In 1200, it was spelled *smirte*, and in 1440, it was *smerte*. In 1596, Barlow, writing in *Three Sermons*, says, "Even the Prophets…have felt the smart of hunger" (OED). Mountain people said, when someone pulled out a splinter for them, "That smarts."

SMELL = scent. The OED gives no derivation for this word, but it does give a 1576 example: "To have a smack and smell of ancient Latium." The old folks said, "Them flares hain't got no smell 'tall."

SOT = sat. According to the OED, *set* was the past tense of *sit* before the 15th century. It does not list *sot* at all. Wright, however gives two esamples: From Sussex, we get, "I set down under his shadder." From Ireland comes, "Dick sot awhile." If their ancestors could say *set* and *sot*, I think our grandparents could justify saying, "I been a'settin on the porch an' a-rockin all evening."

SOUSE = a sudden plunge into water. I can find no etymology for this word and no example before 1706 when Farquhar writes that a machine "went souse into the Sea…" (OED). Our grandmothers would have said to "souse them clothes up and down real good to get all the soap out."

STRAIGHT = immediately. Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, I.v.73, speaking of Queen Mab, says that she gallops through lovers' brains and they dream of love and over lawyers' fingers, "who straight dream of fees" (Craig). (Shakespeare didn't like lawyers.

Nor did Chaucer.)   Our grandmothers might have said, "You git straight in there and in that bed right now."

SUNK = sank. I have no history of this word, but the OED gives a 1660 example: "Leaving his other ship to the mercy of the water, which in a moment sunk before his face." We said the same thing: "His boat sunk right out from under him."

SUT/SUTT = soot. The OED lists *sutt* as one variant. We have a 1648 example: "The smoak…filleth the thatch and the rafters…with sut."

TAR/TAHR = tire. This word comes from Old English to Middle English. Variants include *tyre, tyr*, and *tyar*. In 1573 in the *Nottingham Records*, we find, "A horse that was ther tyard" (OED). We also retained *ther* or *thur* as our mountain way of pronouncing *thorough*. We said, "I got to give this house a good thur spring cleaning."

TEJUS = tedious. This word is not found in the OED, but Wright lists the variants of tedious as *teejous, teejus,* and *tegious*, among others. He gives the example, "Poor Sal is gone a tejus way." Some of the older women whom I knew as a child didn't make tatted lace because they said it was too tejus.

TETCH = touch. This word comes from the Middle English *tecche* (Hendrickson iv). Wright lists *tetchus, tetchy, titch*, and *tech* as variants. The mountain people said things like, "She was so techus," or "Don't be so techy," or "Don't tech that pan; hit's hot."

THEY'S/THEY IS/IT ARE/IT WERE = not totally without precedent. In Old English, *it are* and *it were* were used until Middle English replaced them with *they are* and *they were*. In 1460, we find, "It were my death" (OED). Southern mountain people said, "They's something real strange about them."

THRASH = thresh. The Old Teutonic meaning of this word was probably to tramp or stamp heavily with the feet, including both the action and the noise. It was used as early as 850. In 1588, Shakespeare, in *Titus Andronicus*, writes, "First, thrash the Corne, then after burne the straw." In 1638, Sir T. Herbert, in *Travels*, says that swarms of gnats and mosquitoes pestered them and they were "…thrashing them like mad folks" (OED).   In this area, the word was used to refer to threshing wheat, but I generally heard it used in reference to corporal punishment, as in "You do that again, and I'll thrash yore hide off."

THROW OFF = to belittle; to disparage. This expression appears to have no roots in Britain. The OED does not list it, and Craigie gives no example before 1876, when Mark Twain has Tom Sawyer say, "I ain't going to throw off on di'monds." In 1904, the *Charlotte Observer* says, "Charlotte can no longer throw off on Lincolnton for being behind the times" (Craigie). Apparently this term was not limited to the mountains.

TOTE = carry. The OED does not give an etymology for this word, and the first example it lists is a 1959 Sears Roebuck Catalogue for a "tote" bag. That is by no means the first

time the word was in general use. I'd be willing to bet that it came into these mountains with the very first settlers.

TRIFLE = to make trivial; to divert or deceive; to cheat, delude, or mock. This word comes from Middle English. In 1440, we find, "These are butt triffolys and delayes." In 1602, Shakespeare uses it in *Hamlet,* II.i.112, writing, "I feare he did but trifle, And meant to wracke thee" (OED). Here in the mountains, we heard, "Don't trifle with me," and "He's so triflin' he wouldn't strike a lick at a snake."

TROFT = trough. The OED lists variants for this word, but it gives no *troft* and no etymology. I have been unable to find anything of the history of this word, yet we used it in such sentences as, "She left her sister dancing in the hog troft."

TUCK = took. Wright gives the past tense of take as *taked, tuck*, and *tyuk*, but he gives no early examples. He offers the 1848 Irish example of "I tuck his horse." and the 1867 Lancastershire, "T' walk she tuk," from a work called *Folk-Lore*. It goes without saying that anything that is included in folk lore has been around for a long time.

TUTHER = the other. If the OED lists a word as obsolete, it usually gives no etymology for the word. The earliest record of *tuther* that it gives is from 1539 and that sentence comes from the *Abstracts of Protocols of the Town Clerks of Glasgow. "*The messis to be said…the tane half…the tane day, and the remanent of thame the tuther day." By the 1950's most of the old people I knew used tuther only rarely, and then they used it in structures like, "I don't want one nur tuther'n."

UPPER CRUST = socially superior; aristocratic. This term comes from the practice, common during the Middle Ages, of giving the higher-ranking members at the dinner table the upper crust of the bread and giving the tougher bottom crust to those who were seated below the salt. The salt cellar was used as a line of demarcation; the nobility sat above the salt, and the clergy, merchants, and any other non-nobility sat below it. People here in the mountains, though they were proud and independent, didn't have much use for the upper crust.

USED TO = used to show past existence or action. This term was in frequent use from about 1400. In 1464, we find, "Dyvers persones have gretely used to shep wol…" In 1670, Milton, in his *History of England*, wrote, "The English then using to let grow on their upper-lip large Mustachios" (OED).

VITTALS/VITTELS = food; provisions. Wright says that this word is of Scottish derivation and offers a 1693 example from the Orkney Islands: "To beg vitals." Old mountain women would have said, "I guess I better git up from hur and see to them vittles."

WALLER = wallow.   I can find no history of this word, but Wright does give two examples both without dates or sources. "It was a tough job; but I wallered through,"

and, from Yorkshire, "He's fair wallering I' wealth." Mountain folk used the word the same way.

WANT = being without; lacking. The Old English form of *want* was *wand*, but by the Middle Ages, it had become *want* (OED). Shakespeare used it the same way that we did in *As You Like It,* II.vii.126, "And take upon command what help we have That to your wanting may be ministered." My grandfather said, "We hain't got much, but we ain't wantin' fer nothing."

WARRANT = assure. This word comes to us from Old English. Shakespeare used it in The Comedy of Errors, I.i.140, where we find, "Could all my travels warrant me they live" (OED). Pa said, "I warrant you he'll end up in jail."

WHELK = pimple or postule; a raised red mark. This word goes back to Old English, to Aelfric, to Chaucer and Wyclife, and, in 1599, to Shakespeare, who spells it *whelks* (OED). The mountain people used it to mean red marks on the body such as those made from scratching or from a willow switch, as in the sentence, "She whupped that pore young'un till he had whelks all over his lags."

WHO/WHOM = These words have been in a state of flux since man first learned to speak, I think. They certainly were in 1653, when we find in Walton's *Angler*, "Comparing the humble espistles of S. Peter, S. James and S. John, whom we know were Fishers, with the glorious language …of S. Paul, who we know was not" (OED). Mountain folk, as a rule, didn't bother with *whom*.

WHUP = whip. The OED says this word is dialectical and colloquial and leaves it at that. Wright says that it was used in Scotland and in parts of England. Our ancestors certainly used it. There probably isn't a person here under the age of fifty—if he is a local, that is--who didn't get a whupping at one time or another with a willer switch.

WRIT = wrote. As a noun, this word derives from Old Norse and Old English. As a verb, it was in use before 1561, when T. Hoby, in *Castiglione*, writes, "A letter which she writt unto her lover." My grandmother would have said, "I writ him a letter, but I'm a-waitin' for somebody to back it fer me." The use of *back it*, for "address it" comes from the days before envelopes, when the letter was folded, sealed with wax, and addressed on the back. I can remember my aunt using the term during World War II. We also said, "I have wrote twice this week." *Have wrote* was considered good usage until the mid-18th century (Mencken 436).

YARB = herb. This word is another that has changed from time to time during its use. It comes from Middle English where it was also spelled *yerb*. In 1290, it was *herb*. Chaucer used *erbe* in 1385. In 1526, it was *yerb* again (OED). Wright says that *yarb* was common in many parts of England and gives this example from Yorkshire: "I was gathering yarbs 't mak yarb beer." It is now *herb* again, but the British have not dropped the *h* from the pronunciation, as we have done in America. The women in these

Mary Patrick 3/9/11 8:21 PM
Deleted: ,

Mary Patrick 3/10/11 11:51 AM
Deleted:

mountains put great store in their yarbs because they were virtually the only medicines available.

YE = you. When *ye* is used, it is pronounced as *ya* with a short *a*, like yuh, not the *ye* of the King James Bible (Montgomery and Hall xxxvii). "You can't see the Roan from here, can ya?" "Some o' them old-fashioned remedies 'ud cure ye if they didn't kill ye first."

YISTERDY = yesterday. In 1382, Wyclife, in his translation of Job viii, writes, "Wee ben as yistai born…." In 1387 and in 1450, yesterday was spelled *yisterday* (OED). *Yisterdy* was common in this area in the 1950's.

YIT = yet. The oldest forms of this word use *i* instead of *e*. In *Beowulf*, it is spelled *yit,* as it is in the 1400's (OED).

WORKS CITED

Charney, Maurice. *How to Read Shakespeare*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971.

Craig, Hardin, ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1951.

Cragie, Sir William A. *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938.

Fischer, David Hackett. *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Funk, Wilfred. *Word Origins and Their Romantic Stories*. New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1978.

George, Margaret. *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

Hendrickson, Robert. *Mountain Range: A Dictionary of Expressions from Appalachia to the Ozarks*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., Vol. IV, 1997.

Mencken, H. L. The *American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941.

Montgomery, Michael B., and Joseph S. Hall. Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004.

Oxford English Dictionary. Ed. R. W. Burchfield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Quinn, Jim. *American Tongue and Cheek: A Populist Guide to Our Language*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

Williams, Cratis D. *Southern Mountain Speech*. Berea, KY: Berea College Press, 1992.

Wright, Joseph, ed. *The English Dialect Dictionary*. New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1898.