

Questions

- 1) Who is the audience of Now and Then? What are the goals of the magazine which defines what you print?
- 2) How does the mission of Now and Then tie in, compare to, and work with other magazines printing Appalachian Literature? (i.e. The Appalachian Journal, Appalachian Heritage, Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel what other magazines would you include in this list?).
- 3) What sort of conflicts do you encounter by being connected to the University System? Is the goal of presenting "contemporary stories that reflect the reality of life in the mountains" ever at odds with the institution which supplies the money?
- 4) What is your connection to The Southern Appalachian Writers' Cooperative? In what ways does participation in this group contribute to your life as a writer and artist? What is your understanding of the primary goals of this group?
- 5) What went on at the October meeting in Highlander?]
- 6) Could you give a brief biography concerning your involvement with literature and the literary community?

There are many, many more questions that I want to ask but I think that answering these might already be burdensome. Please feel free to add any other comments you might feel are necessary.

NOW AND THEN

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Dear Chris:

I've just gotten back from vacation and your letter was here. I hope the information is in time to do you some good. I have copied a few columns from various issues of the magazine that will answer some of your questions, or at least nibble on the edges of your questions. Also enclosed are a couple of articles about some of the publications and organizations in the region, and a set of writer's guidelines and upcoming issues, which explain some aspects of our philosophy and operations. The lists of various focus issues will give you an idea of what we're trying to do, which is, essentially, to examine the region in all its diversity, to look at it from angles that haven't been examined closely. We tread on a line: fall off in one direction and we're in the land of romanticism, the pastoral way of life, self-sufficiency, granny rocking on the front porch smoking her clay pipe and giving out plain spoken wisdom and miraculous herbs; fall off in the other direction and there's the grim shack or trailer falling down the side of the eroded mountain, the water ruined by the strip mine up above, daddy with his hound dog and still, and a passle of inbreeding and sluts. Whew. Stereotyping is generally based on some truth, but making a whole people fit into a few phrases allows a quick dismissal, a shuffling off to a little pigeonhole, that's that. Now, we haven't got much access to the big media, to CBS or USA Today. I sure don't. And I don't think it's that productive to try to work on the consciousness of the big media that is based outside of Appalachia. They don't much care about the region and are not very successful in portraying the region accurately. In Now and Then I'm interested in us talking among ourselves. If someone living outside the region wants to listen in, fine, but it's not geared toward the outside. It's a vehicle for people in the region to examine their own lives, to discuss the complexity of it. That's why most of what you'll find in Now and Then will not be sensational, no two headed Appalachian babies taking rides on UFOs. This culture, for better or worse, is part of the larger American and world culture, and to deny that there are 4-lane highways, malls and McDonald's denies a very large part of what's going on here. So the reality of this place is probably less interesting and more diverse than

CBS would really like, which is why, when they come on down, they look for the crummiest washed out holler they can find and make sure that their shots have washing machines out lying around dirt yards. Our news is less extreme, and I hope, something that more people in the region can relate to. I'd like to think we discuss issues with a little more subtlety than the mainstream media could manage. (Well, they could manage, but I don't think they'd bother; it's just not sexy news.)

I would like to try to answer your questions in detail, but the piles on my desk will prevent me from being very detailed or specific I'm afraid. I have provided a marketing survey we did in 1988 for #1.

2. When we got N&T going, we didn't want to get in the way of Appalachian Journal or App Heritage. I saw AJ as the scholarly journal and Heritage as the literary one. There wasn't anyone doing journalism focusing on the mountains, and there wasn't much of a contemporary feel to the work I was reading. So we went for the contemporary reality of life in Appalachia. We tried to fill a gap and not step on anyone's territory. Pine Mountain came after we did and published pretty amazing stuff. They do have more freedom to do whatever the hell they want because they aren't tied to any institution or idea of what they should do or be.
3. Of course the goal of "presenting contemporary stories that reflect the reality of life in the mountains" is at odds with the institution which supplies the money.
4. I first went to a SAWC meeting a few years ago at Highlander and was impressed that my Yankeeness was not ever at issue. While the people in the group seem very interested in their regional identity, they seemed to accept me as a fellow writer and person living in the region, much to my relief. I had a big time. Subsequently, lots of SAWCers have become good contacts for the magazine (I wasn't with Now and Then when I first went to the SAWC).
5. It was great. When I get home tonight, I'll see if I have a copy of the correspondence I did after that, which tells about it, and if I do I'll forward a copy. If I don't, I don't think I can reconstruct it very well at this point, however.
6. Jeez, I don't know. I don't know if you want my involvement in Appalachian literature and this community or my personal involvement--they aren't exactly the same--but maybe some of the columns attached will answer some of the Appalachian parts of that question. I'll enclose my resume, too, which should give you some better notion of what I've been up to for quite some time, for what it's worth.