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My Curious and Jocular Heroes: Tales and Tale-Spinners from Appalachia

Melanie Dunn

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

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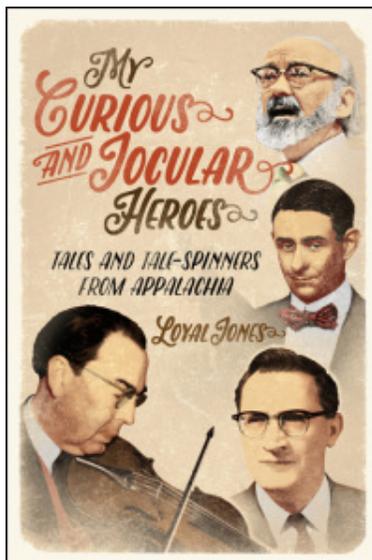
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exciting relationships with her four husbands, coworkers, family, friends, and various boyfriends. She worked with Paramount, MGM, Goldwyn, RKO, and Warner Brothers. Allan R. Ellenberger, the author, in addition wrote five other books such as *The Valentino Mystique: The Death and Aftermath of the Silent Movie Idol* and *Celebrities in the 1930 Census*. The recommendation for audience is anyone interested in dazzling film and theatre and film and theatre celebrities. The astonishingly detailed stunning success on Miriam Hopkins is perfect for public and academic libraries.

Melinda F. Matthews
University of Louisiana at Monroe Library

My Curious and Jocular Heroes: Tales and Tale-Spinners from Appalachia. Loyal Jones. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017. ISBN 978-0252041136. \$95.00 (Cloth). ISBN 9780252082672. \$25.00 (Paper) 246 p.



Anyone who appreciates entertaining stories, plaintive ballads, and ribald humor will enjoy this collection of biographies of four of the pre-eminent folklorists of Appalachia. In *My Curious and Jocular Heroes: Tales and Tale-Spinners from Appalachia*, Loyal Jones, a recognized scholar in Appalachian folk life and lore, provides biographical sketches and samples from the collections of four Appalachian folklore luminaries: Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Josiah H. Combs, Cratis D. Williams and Leonard W. Roberts.

The former executive director of the Council of Southern Mountains and later director of the Appalachian Center at Berea College till 1993, Loyal Jones is a noted scholar in Appalachian studies with significant publications to his credit. His profiles of these four individuals and the selected material he includes to represent them, highlight the importance he places on entertaining to illustrate and instruct.

While all four men were eminent in their field, each brought something unique to the study of Appalachian folklife. Hailing from North Carolina, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, music collector and performer, was perhaps best known for his tireless promotion of the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in Asheville, the first festival to focus on authentic Appalachian dance and music. Generous with his time and knowledge, he donated hours to recording memorized tales and songs for the archives at Columbia University and the Library of Congress.

Josiah H. Combs, born in the Kentucky mountains, achieved scholarly recognition with his dissertation from the University of Paris in 1925, *Folk-Songs of the Southern United States*, that was both a collection and examination of the Appalachian ballad tradition. Author of several other books devoted to the Kentucky highlands, he was also a dialectician and instrumental in applying his linguistic knowledge to studying the speech of his native mountain Kentuckians.

Cratis D. Williams, another Kentucky native, received academic kudos for his 1600 page dissertation *The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction* (New York University, 1961), and was an authority on Appalachian folklore and traditions, as well as a performer and raconteur. From 1946 to 1976 he served at Appalachian State University, formerly Appalachian State Teachers College, as faculty and later administrator.

Leonard Roberts, author of several books on Kentucky folklore, collected and documented the folktales and songs from his native East Kentucky and studied the evolution of tales and stories through expression and performance. He recognized that while the tales themselves were important, it was more crucial to understand how people thought about and told the stories, to truly comprehend Appalachian culture. He's remembered for his performances and narratives of local families with their collections of Appalachian folk tales and songs.

The charm of the book, however, lies in the ballads, tales, humorous stories and songs accompanying each of the short profiles. From the chosen selections, the reader gains an understanding of each man's interests and performance repertoire and can appreciate their contributions to the study of Southern Mountain folklore. With footnotes, bibliographical references, pictures and index, the book serves as an introductory resource to celebrated scholars in the field of Appalachian folklore, while also delighting the reader with samples of the oral traditions of the southern highlands. Recommended for academic and public libraries.

Melanie Dunn
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga