

The Hillbilly Poet

“as a student of the ’80s”

by Walter Lane

The Hillbilly student
being from the farthest creek,
the Mt. Dream College professors
trashed his essays on
snake handling and other
creeker ideas as too strange.

The Hillbilly wannabe poet
was teaching himself to write
like an anthropologist
studying native dialect
of another culture—
nobody was a stranger
just a potential character
in a forthcoming work
(editors later were to call prose poems.)

The dean of the college was a psychologist
who refused to let the petite
blonde English professor run the
future poet off for writing
about fishing with dynamite—
a reputation as an explosive
specialist merits professional courtesies.

The Hillbilly student was usually asleep
when the Mt. Dream creative writing class
met often late into the winter night,
the writing students were asleep
when early one spring morning
he mailed his first poem to the
Appalachian Journal.

He hitchhiked to Mt. Dream College
and his published poems came to be
labeled “redneck chic”—
using poetic license to portray his professors
as humorous Appalachian caricatures.