

Ronald D. Eller. *Uneven Group: Appalachia Since 1945*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008. Pp. 376. Cloth, \$29.95; ISBN 978-0-8131-2523-7.

The poet William Blake once wrote that "Great things are done when men and mountains meet. This is not done by jostling on the street." Ron Eller quietly has done "great things" for those who live in Appalachia, assuredly through intense "jostling" with academics, local leaders, poverty agencies, environmental groups, and with state and national policy makers and planners. As a former Director of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky and also as a scholar, activist, advocate, and writer, he uniquely is qualified to tell us much of what has occurred in Appalachia since 1945. In all, he has devoted most of his adult life to studying and examining the nexus between Federal antipoverty programs and their impact upon the lives of those who live in Appalachia. The title of his latest work, *Uneven Ground*, reflects his belief that those designs and plans frequently have an ill-matched yield.

First, *Uneven Ground* should be looked upon not as a comprehensive history of Appalachia since 1945 but rather as a chronicle of the politics of economic development within the region. Little of topics like southern mountain music, crafts, religion, or the history of African-Americans, Hispanics, and women can be found. Yet as a monograph it simply stands alone as the best analysis and account of the attempt since 1945 to "modernize" Appalachia through social engineering and economic development. As such, it should prove indispensable to any study of Appalachia, whether academic or otherwise. Indeed, most classroom teachers would welcome Eller's *Uneven Ground* into the assigned readings for almost any course on Appalachia and, from that, of appropriate regional or state histories. It both informs and frames debates on any number of subjects like grassroots activism, Federal programs, growth development, civic leadership, the economy, poverty, coal mining, the environment, labor unions, education, floods, industrialization, class structure, political manipulation and corruption, and the effects of interstate highway systems in Appalachia. Still, the idea that Eller's work should only be used in the classroom diminishes its importance. Almost anyone involved in public policies concerning the southern mountains, especially any in civic leadership, would benefit from his thorough analysis. In truth, general readers also will find much in Eller's well-written *Uneven Ground* that is both provocative and enlightening.

Perhaps Eller's last chapter on "the New Appalachia" not only is his longest but his best. In it, he ended by quoting Larry Gibson, the "keeper of the mountains," who obstinately kept his family farm in West Virginia from being ravaged by Massey Energy Corporation, the very symbol of all that seemed to be wrong with development in Appalachia. Surrounded by 180,000 acres of dead trees, Gibson declared that "We have a conversation with the land here.... This is a symbol of what the history of the

mountains is about." So is Eller's *Uneven Ground*. This work just might be Eller's disquieting parable for his long career as well.

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J. M. Dempsey, ed. *Sports-Talk Radio in America: Its Context and Culture*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 2006. Pp. 222. Paper, \$17.95; ISBN-10: 0-7890-2590-6.

The obsession with sport in America is responsible for the growth of sports-talk radio, an often crude and ugly manifestation of the national sporting culture extolling sexist and racist attitudes. With professional athletes and coaches earning enormous sums of money, frustrated fans seem to believe that as the ticket-buying public it is their prerogative to verbally assault athletes, and this activity is encouraged by radio personalities. While sports-talk radio does not include a large audience, the demographic of males between ages 25 and 54 is an attractive one for advertisers.

The phenomenon of sports-talk radio is addressed by J.M. Dempsey, an associate professor of radio/television at Texas A&M University-Commerce, who also serves as a play-by-play announcer for the university. Dempsey's collection of ten essays, prepared by academics from communications and journalism departments, analyzes the format of successful sports-talk radio stations across the country. These essays indicate that there is a degree of diversity within this niche market. For example, KTCK in Dallas-Fort Worth does not hold broadcasting rights for any big-league sports franchise and relies upon a format of man talk extending beyond the realm of sport, while WEEI in Boston, headed by a rare female general manager, prides itself as providing more sophisticated "adult" sports commentary for its audience. Nevertheless, WEEI radio personalities were censured in October 2003 for comparing a gorilla escaping from a local zoo to an African-American student.

In July 1987, WFAN in New York City became the nation's first all-sports radio station, carrying New York Mets baseball and the controversial *Imus in the Morning*. The success of WFAN encouraged such stations as KOZN in Omaha, KJR in Seattle, WIP in Philadelphia, WGR and WNSA in Buffalo, WHB in Kansas City, WWLS in Oklahoma City, and WQTM in Orlando, all of which form case studies for the Dempsey volume. Despite the growth of national programming such as ESPN Radio and the syndicated *Jim Rome Show*, this collection of essays suggests that localism remains a significant factor in the sports-talk radio format. Dempsey concludes that sports-talk radio will continue to play an important role in the market, but he implores program directors to keep tighter reins on their radio personalities to restore a degree of civility to the nation's air waves.

The essays in *Sports-Talk Radio* tend to rely upon interviews with radio personnel and will constitute a relatively easy read for students. Accordingly, *Sports-*