



# "E" -NOTES

the newsletter of the  
**Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition**  
www.ohvec.org

## Bush's Energy Plan Will Sacrifice WV Hills

by Vivian Stockman

On a bright sunny Tuesday morning, dozens of representatives of state environmental groups assembled along President Bush's motorcade route to protest the proposed Bush-Enron energy policy. That policy subsidizes (in billions \$\$) the "Clean Coal" lie and has grave ramifications for West Virginia's still-standing coal-bearing mountains.

We picketers at the Jan. 22 event represented not only our groups' members, *but also the 9 out of 10 Americans who favor alternative energy methods to solve shortages.* (Gallup Poll, Nov. 27, 2001: www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr011127.asp)

An energy task force made up of political donors and/or business executives wrote the energy plan during closed-door meetings. The plan smells so bad, the General Accounting Office has demanded to see the meetings' records. Vice President Dick Cheney won't hand those over, and the GAO is considering suing the Bush administration.

Apparently believing that Americans are so ga-ga

### Laura Forman: A Tribute

Laura Forman, OVEC's organizer and a driving force behind many citizens groups' efforts, died suddenly on Dec. 10, 2001, during a rally at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office in Huntington to protest mountaintop removal mining. She was 39.



She and her husband, Mike, moved to the area from New York in 1992 and almost immediately became involved in several environmental issues in the Tri-State. Laura and Mike have one son, Donald, age 5. A portion of this issue of *E-Notes* is dedicated to her life, her spirit and her memory.



**Getting the message out about Bush's plan are, from right, Vivian Stockman, Mike Forman and Dianne Bady, among others, by pointing out that West Virginia will become "America's Energy Sacrifice Zone."**

over his War on Terrorism he can get away with anything, Bush says his energy policy is all about National Security and Jobs.

But his visit was obviously a taxpayer funded cheerleading session for Coal and Capito, at taxpayer expense. The cost for all the security surrounding his visit must have been huge - his motorcade is so long, so full of gas-guzzlers, we could surely cut our dependence on foreign oil, thus boosting National Security, if he would only stay home. And did Bush's advisors study at Orwell U.? Jobs?

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# Eulogy for Laura

Words that arose from a broken heart

Dianne Bady

Dec. 15, 2001, (at Laura Forman's memorial service).

*"I lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help."*

Laura's spirit is alive. Laura, we love you. Help me out here folks – **Laura, we love you!**

Laura died while she was fiercely defending the mountains and the people she loved. Beneath her stunning beauty, Laura was *fierce*. She was fierce in her fight for the land and the people. She was fierce in her fight to leave a better world for her son Donald.

But it was a fierceness rooted in love. I have *never* known anyone with such a capacity for love. I've *never* known anyone who gave love so freely.

It's been my privilege to have spent much of the past five days with Laura's family. Her family is where her love was focused the most strongly.

Laura loved her husband, Mike, and her son, Donald, with a wild fierceness. She started dating Mike when she was only seventeen. There's never been any man for Laura but Mike. As Mike's mother says, they were soul mates. As Mike's father says, Laura was accomplished in everything she did.

Laura and Mike shared a passion for nature. When Laura found an injured screech owl a few weeks ago, she and Mike took care of it until they were able to get expert help. Together, they cared for stray animals, until their house held four dogs and six cats. And of course, they were a team in raising Donald.

Laura struggled mightily to balance her work with the time she spent with her family. I've seen her cry when she felt she'd not given enough time and care to Mike. I've seen her weep when she left home with sharp words to Mike, words that arose out of a too busy life.

Laura worked too hard. We all know that. Once she was focused on a task, the only way she could be pulled away was if Donald needed her. If Donald needed her, she dropped everything.

I see Laura's love of life, her love of LIGHT, shining through Donald's eyes. Please see the photo of Laura with many of her family members – a photo taken when Donald was still a baby. Everyone else was looking at the camera, but Laura's eyes were on Donald.

On gray days, I often saw Laura as a flash of brilliance. Where did that flash of brilliance come from? Where did she get that enormous capacity for

love? **Much of this is a mystery that I can only thank God for.** But it's also obvious that Laura was the product of a family filled with love.

From her mother, Geneva, Laura got her fire and her grit. Laura's immense energy, her fierceness, came from her mother, who loves her with wild abandon. Laura got her love for beauty, her love of flowers, from her mother

Laura's father, Jack, tells of how from the time she was very small, Laura *insisted* that they stop the car if a turtle was on the road, so the turtle could be rescued. When there were a lot of little toads in their yard, Laura *insisted* on walking in front of Jack's lawnmower so that she could chase the toads out of

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**Laura, left, at the coal rally put on by Rep. Capito, center.**

# Mountaintop Removal - Worse than Buffalo Slaughter?

by David Cooper

In the classic 1932 biography *Black Elk Speaks*, the Oglala Sioux holy man describes the great buffalo slaughter of the 1870s: “*The Wasichus (white men) did not kill them to eat, they killed them for the metal that makes them crazy, and they took only the hides to sell. Sometimes they did not even take the hides, only the tongues. You can see that the men who did this were crazy. Sometimes they did not even take the tongues; they just killed and killed because they liked to do that. When we hunted bison, we killed only what we needed. And when there was nothing left but heaps of bones, the Wasichus came and gathered up even the bones and sold them.*”

The Western prairie was once blackened by bison estimated to number between 30 million and 40 million, with herds reported to stretch 3 to 5 miles across and 60 miles long. The slaughter ended in 1883, and by the turn of the century only about 500 bison remained.

Today we shake our heads in disbelief and anger at the greed of the buffalo hunters and the insanity of the slaughter. How could people be so blind? Why didn't they think about the future?

We're not like the buffalo hunters today, of course. We've learned not to waste resources needlessly or to squander our precious natural heritage. How far we have progressed!

Well, maybe. Even though we no longer tolerate

uncontrolled slaughter, in many ways the massacre of our natural resources has increased since the 1800s.

Take the example of mountain-range removal as practiced in Kentucky and West Virginia. Environmentalists used to call it mountaintop removal before mining corporations began obliterating entire mountain ranges. They are blasted off with dynamite, and the “overburden” (what you and I would call the mountain) is dumped into the valleys in an operation called valley fill.



Once all the coal is removed by giant draglines whose operation requires only one or two people, reclamation mandated by the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act requires that the land be restored to a higher use.

Desperate attempts by the government and coal companies to comply with the law have resulted in huge cost overruns (\$40 million to stabilize the soil for a federal prison site in Martin County) and comical attempts to create wildlife habitat on barren, lifeless soil (imported elk herds and a duck pond at Addington's Starfire mine site in Knott County). Maybe a herd of zebra would be more appropriate for these alien mountaintop savannahs.

More than 600 coal slurry waste ponds created by these mountaintop mining operations are in Appalachian mountain hollows, destroying countless streams and threatening communities below the earthen dams.

Ignoring the Martin County coal slurry disaster, West Virginia has just permitted the immense Brushy Fork slurry impoundment near Whitesville that would hold 5 billion gallons of slurry in a pond deeper than the 900-foot New River Gorge. The dam is directly above an elementary school and the town of Whitesville, whose residents were hit with deadly floods in July as a heavy rainfall poured off the deforested mountain with its highly compacted, strip-mined soil.

It's the same story in Kentucky, where Coastal Coal wants to build a slurry pond in Perry County twice the size of the failed Martin County impoundment only a third of a

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## Bush Protest

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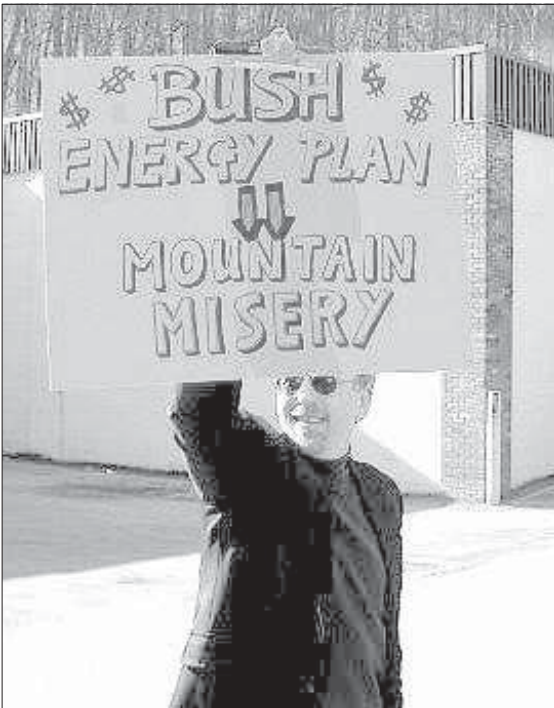
Decades ago, there were over 100,000 miners. Now there are about 16,000, despite record coal production. Bush visited a factory here that makes mountaintop removal equipment, touting more jobs - yet this equipment has thrown thousands of miners out of work.

National Security? Plu-eeze. What's secure about tearing down the mountains, fouling the air and water, pumping mercury into the air and ultimately into our bodies?

"Clean Coal?" Read my lips: There is no such thing as clean coal.

From extraction (mountaintop removal, black lung, acid mine drainage, abandoned mine lines, longwall mining, etc.), to processing (coal dust, sludge impoundments), to transportation (coal dust, dangerous overweight coal trucks and damaged infrastructure), to burning (global warming, acid rain, rising asthma rates, increasing learning disabilities), to disposal of the ash (even if "clean coal" technologies do manage to remove some of the coal combustion pollutants from the air, what happens to the pollutant-laden ash - it eventually makes its way into groundwater), there is no such thing as "clean coal."

It's likely the Prez didn't even see us picketers as his motorcade passed. Two limo's broke out of the motorcade line, practically buzzed us, keeping the president's limo on the inside, shielding him from DANGER: A different



**Rick Eades puts his own spin on mountaintop removal mining for President Bush's visit.**



**The air's not all that great in her town thanks to King Coal, and Pauline Canterbury wants to make sure George Bush knows it!**

point of view.

No matter. The Bush-Enron plan is a plan to keep Fat Cats' wallets fat, at great peril to current and future generations. The Bush-Enron energy plan is in for a battle. Though the House has passed an ecocidal plan, Senate Democrats are balking. Perhaps they recognize that the rest of the world is galloping towards that new energy economy, embracing cleaner alternative energy in a big way.

Perhaps the Senate can craft an energy policy that's a type of Marshall Plan for alternative energy, with it's true promise of jobs, tax revenue, revitalized local economies. An energy policy that let's us keep the lights on and keep the mountains - what a concept!

Governor Wise's own Energy Task Force can come up with a similar energy plan - one that recognizes the true toll from King Coal, begins to wean our state off coal, and moves us into the new energy economy.



# A "Sister of the Heart"

Laura came streaking through my life nine years ago like a rare and beautiful comet - trailing acts of kindness and love like stardust. For Laura, the little things **were** the big things.

## How Laura Loved Me (a partial list)

She held me when I was hurting.  
Brought me flowers.  
Listened to my frustrations.  
Fed my animals.

Sat with me and watched the river.  
Loaned me books, money, car, fill in the blank.  
Inquired about my body, mind, soul.  
Visited me when I was ill.  
Sent me love notes.  
Addressed our wedding invitations.  
Soothed my dying cat, Lenny.  
Picked Julie up any time I asked.  
Made my bank deposits.  
Bought my lunch when I was broke.  
Gave me presents for no reason.  
Made me laugh until we both cried.  
Screened my phone calls.  
Changed my cat boxes.  
Filled in for me at meetings.  
Made phone calls that I couldn't.  
Carried heavy things for me from the car up the steps, and back down for another load.



**Janet, Dianne and Laura, after winning the Leadership for a Changing World award.** *Herald-Dispatch photo*

Took my dog, Posey, to her house when we were out of town.  
Brought food to my dying father's home.  
Drove me over narrow back roads in the dark of night.  
Cried with me in times of sorrow.  
Celebrated my birthdays.  
Encouraged my growth.  
Held my hand.  
Shared fine wine and music.  
Overlooked my faults.  
Whispered her secrets, hopes and dreams.  
Defended me fiercely.

Loyal friend, remarkable colleague, kindred spirit, beloved, beautiful "sister-of-the-heart."  
How you loved, how you loved, how you loved.

*by Janet Fout, OVEC sister-of-the-heart*

## Eulogy for Laura

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harm's way. Jack says it took a long time to mow the lawn. But he loved Laura deeply, so he allowed her to slow down his lawn care. From Jack, Laura got her love of people, and her love of classical music.

I want to thank Geneva and Jack for allowing Laura to be who she was. For nurturing her uniqueness. I want to thank Geneva and Jack for not trying to push Laura into bland conventionality.

I see Laura's emotional intensity in her sister Lynn. I see Laura's endearing silliness in Lynn. Watching Lynn romp and frolic with Donald, I see Laura. When Lynn cussed a blue streak at a mistake one newspaper made in Laura's obituary, I saw Laura in her.

Laura's love of animals was shared with her sister Gayle. Laura talked about how as a child, she and Gayle would ride horses. Laura shared her fierce determination with Gayle, who has devoted her life to training and caring for horses.

And Eric was always Laura's baby brother. I remember how when Eric was in college in Virginia, Laura and Mike often drove there to bring Eric to spend the weekend with them. In Eric, I see Laura's kindness and her



**1994 - here we are, the three of us - Laura, Dianne and Janet, standing our ground at Apple Grove, W.Va. Where the biggest pulp mill on the continent ISN'T. Where chlorine bleaching is NOT causing dioxins to be dumped into the Ohio River. After this photo was taken, we went to Point Pleasant and bought so many chrysanthemums that Janet could hardly see out her car windows. Covered in flowers, we laughed all the way home.**

### *Just ONE of Coal's Costs*

Remember the Martin County coal sludge disaster last year? Well, that "act of God," as Martin County Coal called it, cost the city of Ashland, Ky., \$196,574.70, city officials said, mainly due to the shutdown and subsequent cleaning needed at the water treatment plant. Who says coal never gives us anything back?

gentleness. I see Laura's tender side.

How very much I've learned from Laura over the years. Who I am today has been immeasurably influenced by Laura. To all of Laura's family – Mike, Donald, Geneva, Jack, Lynn, Gayle and Eric – thank you for helping her to be such a special person.

I've been Laura's close friend and co-worker for nine years. At times, we disagreed. But she taught me how to disagree openly, how to resolve differences quickly rather than to let them fester.

Laura and I really only ever had *one* argument. But it seems like we had this one argument hundreds of times. It went like this:

"Dianne, I want to do ... such and such."

"Laura, you've already committed yourself ... to this, to this, to this, and to this. You

have to take care of YOURSELF too!"

Countless times, I begged, pleaded and threatened her - "Laura stay home tomorrow! Take some time off!" But it mostly didn't work. Sometimes I'd try to get her to PROMISE me that she'd take some time off tomorrow. Mostly, she refused.

But even when she did promise, too often it was this scenario – I'd call the office early in the morning and she'd answer the phone. When she heard my voice, she'd say, "Damn! I knew I shouldn't have answered that phone!"

For the past year, Laura has had a paid sabbatical coming to her. Janet, Vivian, Maryanne, Denise, Dot and I talked to her often about setting a date to begin her sabbatical time off. But there was always something to do that was more important to her. So her sabbatical never happened.

I want to share just a few memories.

Years ago, when Laura and Mike lived in Kenova,

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## Eulogy for Laura

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there was a public meeting that I remember most clearly. Ashland Oil officials and government regulators were at the Kenova town hall to hear residents' concerns about Ashland's then-pattern of pollution violations. While Laura spoke, one Ashland Oil official was talking to the person sitting next to him. This was more than Laura could bear. She looked him in the eye and shouted out, **"You wipe that smarmy look off your face! You listen to me!"**

As the meeting was winding down, that Ashland Oil official went to Mike and asked, "Can't you control your wife?"

Obviously, that man did not know Laura.

Last year, Senator Byrd tried to push through a legislative rider that would have made it easier and quicker to permit more mountaintop removal mines.

When folks from national groups told Laura to get West Virginians to Washington quickly, Laura organized a busload of people to travel to DC in one day – a phenomenal organizing feat. She had that bus chartered and filled with people in one day.

But she did run into a snag while trying to charter the bus. The bus company owner refused to let her use a bus. He said that pro-mountaintop removal miners had just used his buses to go to Washington to argue in favor of more mountaintop removal. So Laura called a reporter. The reporter called the bus company to get the story on why Laura was not allowed to charter a bus.

Within minutes, the bus owner called Laura to say that she could have a bus after all.

Senator Byrd's attempt to make it easier and quicker to permit new mountaintop removal mines was defeated.

And when the bus pulled back into Huntington, the bus driver said that this was the best group of people he'd ever driven for.

Please see the photo of Laura in a chicken suit, standing just a few feet away from Governor Wise. Bob Wise was smiling and waving to the crowd, trying to pretend that there was not a chicken in his face.

Laura nurtured me in ways that no one else did. Her passing leaves such a hole in my life. She picked me up when I fell. How I wish I could have picked her up when she fell on Monday – the worst day of my life.



**Laura sharing a lighthearted moment with mountaintop removal mining activist Larry Gibson of Kayford Mountain.**

Shortly before her death, Laura gave me an ornament for my Christmas tree. It's an angel holding a shovel. What an unusual image – an angel with a shovel. And it's not even a fancy shovel. The shovel looks rusted and well-used.

This angel isn't just hanging out in cosmic

bliss. This is a WORKING angel.

Laura, honey, please remember – you've got a sabbatical coming before you dig in up there.

*(The screech owl was released outside of Mike and Laura's home after Laura's memorial service. The owl flew strongly up into the air and away from the watching crowd.)*



Laura's family and OVEC's staff and volunteers extend our deepest gratitude to the hundreds of you who shared your thoughts of sympathy and encouragement, your pain, your monetary memorials, and your commitment to carry on in Laura's memory. Your outpouring of support has helped us immeasurably as we grieve and carry on.



# Memories and Thoughts.....

*"When the coal companies say it's an act of God, well, we have somebody on the Inside now!"*  
Larry Gibson, OVEC board member.

*"I am so sorry to hear of Laura's passing. In memory of her great spirit and tenacity we will rededicate ourselves to the work at hand."*  
Tom FitzGerald, KFTC



Above - On the Summer Solstice 2001 Sludge Tour: Laura, Rick Eades, Maryanne Maul, Freda Williams; front, Judy Bonds, Janice Nease, outside Marfork Coal Company, after touring the massive Brushy Fork Mine coal sludge impoundment.



*"May your delightful soul sit upon a tulip tree and guide us in our fight."*  
Dan Kash, OVEC board member



A rare moment of relaxation on a friend's porch, listening to the night sounds.





**In Logan County; a huge MTR mine is slated to go in above this house.**



**Above, Laura's car - just a few bumper stickers! ... at right, cleaning up after the summer 2001 floods in Bulghar Hollow, Raleigh Co. - a valley fill is just visible in top center of photo.**



***"We really HAVE to keep fighting now, she'll come back and get us if we don't."***  
**Anonymous**

# Was It Just a Chance Encounter, or Was It a Final Good-Bye?

by Monty Fowler

I have been putting together "E"-Notes for OVEC since 1997. This is the 13th time I have done so, and it has been the hardest. The detached objectivity that this former journalist applies to writing projects broke down this time, because so many of the pictures, stories and quotes are about someone I knew and admired, Laura Forman.

We were friends, colleagues, fellow eco-extremists...lots of different labels, none of which communicate what a wonderful and unique person Laura was. She was always telling me what a good job I was doing, when all I do most of the time is sit in the trench and pass the ammo - SHE's the one up on the firing line.

I decided to share this incident with the world at

## Buffalo Slaughter

*continued from page 3*

mile from the Kentucky River's North Fork. That's Lexington's drinking water supply.

The buffalo have returned, thanks to strict conservation laws, and one day great herds will roam once again on the Western plains. But 1 million years from now, thanks to our generation, the mountains of West Virginia and Kentucky will still be flat because of greed and the willingness of a few politicians to ignore the problem in exchange for huge campaign contributions - and because the residents of Kentucky and West Virginia didn't demand that it stop.

Imagine what people will think about us 100 years from now. Compared to us, the buffalo hunters will look like saints!

What should we say to the politicians who defend mountain-range removal mining, who spout the idiotic mantra "clean coal", who never showed their faces in Martin County after the sludge spill, who have accepted \$750,000 in soft-money campaign contributions from coal magnate Larry Addington while opposing reform of our campaign finance laws?

What would you have done if you had been alive in the 1870s, when President Ulysses S. Grant vetoed legislation that would have stopped the slaughter of the buffalo? Would you have raised your voice in protest? Or would you have fallen silent or simply turned away?

The slaughter continues.

*Published Sept. 7, 2001, in the Lexington Herald-Leader*

large, after telling Dianne, Janet and Viv, because I could feel Laura giving me a poke in the eye if I didn't:

"I was somewhat reluctant to tell anyone about this, kind of the feeling you get when you crack open one of those doors and hear the eerie wind blowing on the other side, but after I thought about it, I decided I *had* to.

"It was Tuesday morning, Dec. 11, the day after Laura died. I was working at my desk, which has a large window in front of it, and a bird feeder hanging on the pine tree right outside ( I mean, what else would be hanging there?).

"It was about 10 that morning when a bird started setting up an awful racket out there. I looked out, and immediately identified a Carolina wren as the source of all the noise. This was kind of odd, because I had never seen one at my feeder before, even though it had been up for more than a year. What was even odder was that this Carolina wren wasn't on the feeder - it was flitting among the branches, and more than once clung to the window frame, chattering all the while. It kept flitting around from the pine tree to the window frame, but never once landed on the feeder or the ground under it, and did not stop chattering.

"After about 10 minutes, it went away, and I have not seen a Carolina wren at that feeder since.


"I did not know that Carolina wrens were one of Laura's favorite birds until I went to the memorial service four days later and saw the picture of one she had painted.

"So now I am thinking, and feel that I have to believe, that that was Laura, coming to say good-bye."

## Take Time to Speak Out About Dirty Money in Our Democratic Process

Inserted in this issue of "E"-Notes is a fact sheet on the West Virginia Clean Elections Act. Read it and then call or write your legislators to tell them what you think about dirty money in politics. Here are the e-mail, phone number and mailing address for the West Virginia Legislature:

 <http://www.legis.state.wv.us>

 **Toll free: 1-877-565-3447**

 **The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_ (member's name)**

**WV Senate or House  
State Capitol Complex  
Charleston, WV 25303**

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When you're finished with this newsletter, please pass it on!

## ***Remembering Laura - Excerpts from Her Husband's Thoughts***

*by Mike Forman*

"Hi, I'm Laura Forman's husband." That introduction never failed to light someone's eyes up and I must have said it at least 1,000 times over the past seven years.

... I'm overwhelmed by the enormous outpouring of heartfelt love that has reached me, and those around me. I'm eternally grateful, and I fear I will be unable to thank each and every one of you individually. For those close to us, who were engulfed by her loving spirit, we'll always remember that she loved what she stood for.

If you ever wanted to see someone walk the walk, all you had to do was spend some time with Laura - at work, at home, at play. Laura was 24/7 - zealous and incorruptible. She didn't back down - in fact, she sent the bullies running for cover. She was a bad-ass, king of the jungle, watch out or I'll scratch your eyes out, lioness. She was a pussycat.

It was an honor to be loved by Laura, and I am so lucky to have been her man for 22 of her 39 years. Now I will continue to teach Donald Roy what Laura taught me:

The Big Picture.

The 3 R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Protect Mother Earth.

Think globally and act locally.

Love animals and remember that all living things deserve respect and protection.

Demand social justice.

Stand up for the oppressed.

Curse out the bad guys - to their faces, on their home turf.

Tell it like it is.

Give back more than you take.

Make a difference.

Love your friends.

Let your hair down - not your guard.

Walk the walk.

**We'll pick up the pieces and endeavor to continue Laura's sacred work. That's what Laura would have expected.**

*May Laura's life and love serve as an inspiration to us all.*



# On April 1, We'll Finish the Corps of Engineers Protest. Be There!

**At 11:30 a.m. on April 1, at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office, Eighth Street and Fifth Avenue in downtown Huntington. This will be worth taking the day off for!**

*We didn't finish our Dec. 10 protest - it ended at the beginning, when Laura collapsed. The press release below never went out. The plan was for Viv and Laura to add any final touches to their news release after the protest and then fax it out. We didn't sing our carols, nor deliver the sludge fudge. Laura didn't get to make all her statements. Please help us **finish this protest and send a strong message to the Corps of Engineers - stop issuing permits for huge, illegal valley fills! Mountaintop removal must be stopped, not promoted!***

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**For Immediate Release**

Dec. 10, 2001

Contact: Laura Forman, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, 304-522-0246

## Holiday Cheer? Groups give “sludge fudge” to the Corps

HUNTINGTON, WV - Santa dug his hands into the pockets of King Coal to fish out the holiday present he wanted to give the Army Corps of Engineers – a lump of coal and a piece of “sludge fudge.”

A group of citizen activists, including one dressed as Santa and one dressed as King Coal, protested outside the Huntington District Headquarters of the Army Corps of Engineers today.

“The Corps is permitting coal companies to obliterate southern West Virginia’s and eastern Kentucky’s streams and forested mountains,” Laura Forman, an organizer with the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), told the lunchtime crowd.

“For once it’s not only the citizens who are outraged at this Corps-enabled annihilation,” Forman added. “At the end of November, both the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) blasted the Corps saying their nationwide permits are taking an excessive toll on streams and wetlands throughout Appalachia.”

She was referring to letters the two federal agencies sent to the Corps criticizing its practice of issuing the streamlined nationwide permits, which should only be issued when projects have “minimal impact” on the nation’s waters. The EPA said no there are no data that indicate that valley fill permits have minimal impacts.

The FWS said damage to ecosystems from surface mining has been “unprecedented,” and noted that in 2000 alone the Corps had issued permits which “collectively destroyed almost 14,000 acres of aquatic habitat and nearly 88 miles of stream channels.” The agency said over 900 miles of streams have been buried in mining areas, mostly within the Corps’ Huntington District, which covers West Virginia and other parts of Appalachia.

The Corps contends it requires coal companies to create “environmental enhancement” projects to mitigate for wetlands loss.

As the group sang environmental versions of Christmas carols, Santa (OVEC board member Dan Kash) delivered a lump of coal and a tin of “sludge fudge” inside the Corps’ headquarters. The sludge, marked “Caution: Poisonous to humans and other life forms,” was a tiny bit of the 300 million gallons of coal waste that broke through from an impoundment at a mountaintop removal site in Eastern Kentucky in October 2000, in the nation’s worst-ever blackwater spill.

Forman noted that Senator Byrd has recently secured another \$9 million for the Corps to work on flood prevention in West Virginia.

“Byrd said this money will allow the Corps to continue to protect lives and property in the coalfields from significant flooding,” Forman scoffed. “Funding the Corps to prevent flooding in West Virginia is like giving money to the tobacco industry to do cancer research.”

The protestors called on the Corps to cease issuing nationwide permits for mountaintop removal-valley fill operations.

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# *MU Student Enviro Group Celebrates One-Year Anniversary*

OVEC applauds the first anniversary of Marshall University's Student Activism for the Environment (SAFE).

We're pleased that we've been able to be involved alongside dedicated students and faculty. We've been able to foster collaboration with WVU's Economic Justice Coalition at their April 2001 conference, engage students in

## **Laura Not Afraid to Speak the Obvious, and to Help Others Find Their Voice**

*by Frank Young*

President, WV Highlands Conservancy

I first met Laura around 1992, when the Apple Grove pulp mill campaign was getting organized.

By the mid-1990s, some folks, even some environmental leaders, were saying that the pulp mill was a "done deal," that it would happen, no matter what.

But Laura reminded us that the issue was not yet settled.

And Laura and OVEC continued to hold informational meetings and plan and sponsor public rallies about the project.

They helped organize in Point Pleasant where the public crowd on the outside was essentially shut out from the elitist movers and shakers meeting on the inside, and at the governor's mansion in Charleston where we repeatedly brought our pleas for justice and dignity, only to find that suddenly the governor had more important business elsewhere.

Laura was helping the people of southern West Virginia wage battle in the hills and hollows of communities that up until then had been told to know their place and to take whatever coal and its political army threw at them.

And just this year, when coal executives and their official government apologists were blaming God for the summer floods that wiped out entire communities, and were ridiculously suggesting that mountaintop removal mining actually helped prevent flooding, Laura showed that it was not a sin, and was not unpatriotic, to speak the obvious - that flooding was the worst where mountains had been leveled and where the streams nearby were completely filled with mountaintops, and the streams further below choked with sediment from above so that the storm water had nowhere to flow except through people's yards, through people's homes, through their workplaces, and through their very lives.

training on surface mine appeals and join with SAFE and Coal River Mountain Watch on the June 2001 appeal of the Brushy Fork coal slurry impoundment. SAFE members have attended hearings, conferences, and direct actions with OVEC on a number of occasions.

A growing movement is afoot. Students, not just at Marshall and WVU, but Fairmont State, Shepherd, and recently Concord have engaged in environmental initiatives.

Former Marshall group MAPS (Marshall Action for Peaceful Solutions) has also reorganized and is collaborating with SAFE - a model of collaboration is in the works. In addition, under Progressive Technology project funding, OVEC has hatched a MU intern program and is very pleased to have grad student Bobby Nutter on board to develop informational materials. Be sure and see his maps at E-Day!

To Chris Brady, Michelle Townsend, all the SAFE crew, Heath Harris and all the MAPS crew, keep up the good work!



**Laura Forman, dressed in a black mourning outfit, speaks passionately at the Funeral for the Mountains event in Charleston, W.Va., on Oct. 28, 2000.**

*photo by Chuck Wyrstok*

# 2002 International Year of the Mountains for This Threatened Resource

Jan. 29, 2002

by Christopher Doering, Reuters

WASHINGTON — Environmental damage to mountain ranges around the world could trigger more floods, landslides and fires, and bring famine to people living on their slopes, the United Nations University said on Sunday.

In a study, the Tokyo-based university said mountains were threatened by pollution, war, deforestation, agriculture, mining and too many tourists - all of which could lead to a slew of serious natural disasters.

Mountains, which play a crucial role in world water supplies, cover about 20 percent of the world's landmass and are home to about 10 percent of all humans.

"We can think of them (mountain regions) as the water towers of the world," said Jack Ives, senior adviser to the university and an expert in mountain ecology. "More than 50 percent of the water we use and need comes from mountains."

Among the most threatened mountain ranges are the European Alps, which feed four major rivers, and the Himalaya-Karakorum-Hindu Kush chain, which rises from monsoon-washed, subtropical South Asia and stretches 3,000 miles to arid peaks in landlocked Afghanistan.

The Alps have been hurt by growing tourism and a migration of people from lower levels into more mountainous

## ***Money, Materials Needed for Cabin-Raising Event on Kayford Mountain***

In November 2001, one of Larry Gibson's cabins on Kayford Mountain, W.Va., was burned down by vandals. Larry was home on the mountain when two strangers approached his main cabin. His presence evidently scared off the two ne'er-do-wells, but later that same evening they burned down another cabin near Larry's family cemetery on Kayford Mountain. The incident could have been tragic had Larry been asleep in his cabin.

Now Larry is planning a cabin-raising event to rebuild his gutted cabin. This event will take place shortly after Easter weekend. Donations of building supplies, tools and labor would be greatly appreciated at the cabin-raising. Right now monetary donations are most critical so Larry can have the lumber and other materials ready at the cabin-raising. Make checks payable to the Stanley Heirs Foundation (NOT tax-deductible) and send them to: Stanley Heirs Foundation, P. O. Box 96, Dawes, WV 25054-0096.

terrain. The Himalayas are being harmed by war, deforestation, drought, logging and overgrazing.

The researchers said more data was needed to design an effective policy to protect mountains. Eight other mountain ranges in Europe, Asia and North America were also cited as under great stress. 2002 has been designated the International Year of the Mountains.

Each of those ranges had problems that may not be as severe as in other parts of the world, or on only a small portion of the mountain, the study said. The problems, however, increased the risk that natural disasters could occur and affect people living in the shadow of the mountains.

Other ranges under stress were:

U the Rockies and Coast ranges of western North America, due to increasing pressure from recreational activities such as skiing and home-building in prime mountain land.

U Great Smokey Mountains in the eastern United States, due to air pollution.

U Amber Mountains in Madagascar, where 80 percent of forests have been lost to farming, mining and charcoal production.

U Snowy Mountains of Australia, where 250 plant species were threatened by a series of warm winters.

U Western Carpathians/Tatra Mountains in the Slovak Republic and Poland, impacted by air pollution and growth of tourism from surrounding urban areas.

U Sierra Chincua in Mexico, winter home of the monarch butterfly. Forest is being lost to logging and farming.

U Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan. Civil war has resulted in widespread devastation and poverty.

U Hengduan Mountains in southwest China. A ban on logging and a push to develop tourism threaten mountain cultures.

**The annual Treehuggers' Ball will be held Friday, March 22, at Calamity Cafe in Huntington, corner of Third Avenue and Hal Greer Blvd., starting at 9:30 p.m. Great music, great raffle prizes, and other cool stuff to buy, including a *newly-designed* OVEC T-shirt.**



## Some Thoughts on Laura Forman and Her Work

A few days after Laura's death, her friend Vivian Stockman wrote: "So many people have called the office sobbing, saying that she was one of their best friends, offering to do whatever they can. E-mails have been pouring in too. That was Laura, the most supportive, thoughtful person for those she loved, someone who brought out the best in people.

"And for those she didn't love - those who sacrifice the mountains without regard for coalfield residents or West Virginia's future - for those people, Laura was a force to be reckoned with. **What we are going to do now is redouble our efforts in Laura's memory.**"

•••••

"Vivian,

Your e-mail was the first news I heard about Laura. This is a great loss to all those around her and to the work she did so wonderfully. I feel indeed fortunate that we (HMWO) had an opportunity to work with her in the past and partake in the encouragement and inspiration which seemed so much a part of her spirit. Our hearts go out to her family and those that worked so closely with her. May each find comfort and courage.  
Renaë Bonnett,  
Heizer-Manila Watershed Org., Inc."

"I keep thinking that Laura would cite the old quote from Mother Jones, "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living". I know wherever she is that she'll use her influence to fight for the mountains.  
Take care, Bill McCabe"

•••••

"Dear Viv and OVEC Friends,

I was saddened by the news of Laura's death! Vivian has told me so many stories about her and how she valued her as a friend and the wonderfully fun times all of you had with her.

Your lives all will be changed by this. We take life so lightly and don't understand the meaning of it all but we are stopped in our tracks when we lose a valuable friend and loved one and are given a chance to reflect upon our own lives. The emptiness that you feel will be very difficult to fill, but life does go on and I know that **the fire that all of you have in your souls about the responsibility of taking care of our Mother Earth will burn even brighter and you will be even more determined to make a difference.** I have faith that Laura is safe and that her spirit will live on in each of you!

Much Love to all of You! Donna Stockman (Viv's Mom)"

## OVEC NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

Cut out and mail **today** to: OVEC, P.O. Box 6753, Huntington, WV 25773-6753

\_\_\_\_\_ New member or renewal (Dues: \$10 - \$30 yearly, pay what you can)

\_\_\_\_\_ Donation

\_\_\_\_\_ **Donald Roy Forman Education Fund**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Laura Forman Memorial Fund for OVEC**

\_\_\_\_\_ Keep me especially informed on this issue: \_\_\_\_\_

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**For more info call (304) 522-0246 or go to [www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org)**

*Remember - All donations to OVEC are tax deductible!*

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**In Memoriam: *Laura Forman, 1962 - 2001***



**One of the last photos of OVEC's Laura Forman, being interviewed at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers protest in Huntington on Dec. 10, 2001, just before she collapsed.**

*photo by Deana Steiner Smith*

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