

THE RAISE H DEAD E



– Study Guide for the Documentary Film –

“I would appreciate very much people in the states of North Carolina, Mississippi, Virginia, West Virginia, Eastern Kentucky to write me for the location of the tent revival meeting that is to be held in your state.”

—H. Richard Hall, *notice to supporters from the 1950s*

H. Richard Hall

On the platform, H. Richard Hall freely weaves anecdotes from his past into a rambling monologue, relaxed—as most evangelists are—before an audience. But one-on-one, he becomes visibly uncomfortable. Persistently, though ever so politely, he will evade requests to talk about himself. “You don’t want my background,” he will protest, “I really like to give this.” And then he will expound on the history of pentecostalism or on the late 1940s and early 1950s, those many-miracled, pre-television days of mammoth tents and magnetic men when revivals attracted tens of thousands and evangelistic publications abounded with testimonies boldly headlined WOMAN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, ONCE TOTALLY BLIND SEES AGAIN, GIRL WITH SEVERED VOCAL CORD SINGS OVER RADIO. But gradually his face will warm, and his account is no longer that of an outsider. He has been there. He has known the thrill of a packed tent and of watching the lame walk and the blind see at the laying on of a hand—his hand.

The first time I heard his account was April 1981 as I was embarking on a book about tent revivals. I remember being enthralled with his telling of the story, as I am now almost twenty years later. It was partly because of the way that he told it, partly because of his candor and enthusiasm.

I had not expected to really like him. From the photograph in his bi-monthly tabloid, he had struck me as a mean-spirited, fire-and-brimstone preacher, and in person he at first looked no less forbidding. He is a tall, gaunt man with long, dark hair that he combs straight back to his collar and is given to wearing somber three-piece suits. His face is as creviced as the North Carolina hills of his birth and when in repose can be dark and menacing, but as I soon discovered it is like a rubber mask that changes with his mood: brooding, smiling, glaring, winking, condemning, brightening, bantering.

The morning of our first interview, it took on a special radiance and his kind, easy-going manner came through as he recalled how, during the developing days of Pentecostalism,

his own mother was among the first in the western hills of North Carolina to receive the baptism of the Spirit and to speak in tongues. For a time that occurrence caused her father, a Baptist minister, to bar the widow and her five-year-old son from the family home. The stern rebuke did not stop the mother from embarking on her own ministry and from surrounding young Homer Richard with the fervent new converts. From then on, he was captivated by voices and visions.

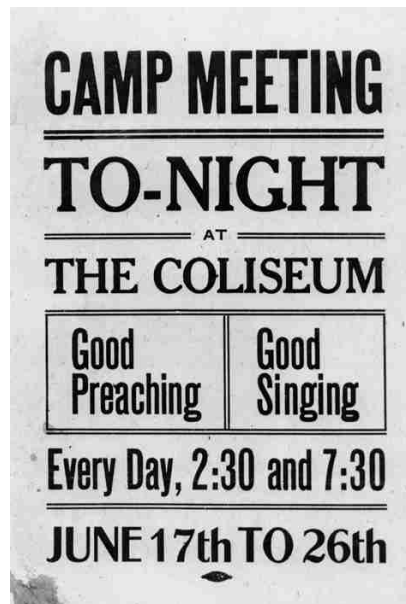
He will tell you about waking to an unnatural light swinging over his bedstead and about God coming to deliver him from tuberculosis, adding good-humored disclaimers that it could have been a figment of his imagination, that he knows the first sign of insanity is hearing voices. “I mean to be as honest with you as I can,” he will tell you.

He received the baptism of the Spirit at age thirteen and a year later began preaching on street corners and in prayer meetings and churches whenever the elders would let him. One Sunday he preached barefoot to six or seven hundred people at what looms in his memories as a large Church of God. “There was eleven people

converted that night, grown people. Maybe because I was a child,” he says, adding one of those typical disclaimers. “People kinda go along with a child.”

After high school, he attended the Church of God of Prophecy Bible Training School and at age twenty-four was ordained. Over the years he also studied at the Atlanta Institute of Speech and Expression and a Knights of Columbus school in New York and picked up an honorary degree from the William Carter Bible College in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

All along, however, he harbored a private ambition to become a lawyer and for a time studied under a private attorney with the hope of passing the Georgia bar exam. That dream ended when he developed tuberculosis and was told by doctors he would never again be able to speak publicly. Three months later God appeared at the foot of his bed and healed him, and Hall took that as a sign he was meant to stick with preaching.



In the 1940s he worked as state overseer for the Church of God of prophecy in Colorado, Utah, and western Texas, leaving the denomination in 1952 to begin his own sign-gift ministry during the glory days of tent revivals. From the beginning he patterned his ministry after those of revival giants like A. A. Allen, William Branham, and Jack Coe, though on a smaller scale with healing and the Word of Knowledge a vital part of his services.

The strongest influence on his life was Branham, a simple Baptist preacher who gained national prominence in the mid 1940s because of his ability to detect and diagnose diseases through supernatural vibrations in his left hand and to “discern the secrets of people’s hearts” through a gift known as the Word of Knowledge. Those who encountered the late evangelist have remarked on the striking similarities between Hall’s style both on and off the platform and that of Branham. The two men indeed had much in common: Both were raised in Appalachian poverty—Branham in Kentucky; Hall, in North Carolina; and both seemed to put little stock in worldly possessions. At the height of his popularity, Branham frequently arrived at gatherings in a battered old truck, wearing a mismatched jacket and trousers. While Hall dresses in tasteful three-piece suits, a member of his evangelistic team once likened him to Mahatma Gandhi, insisting, “He doesn’t have nothing! We buy him his suits, and his home is all broke down. Sometimes I think, Why doesn’t he fix it up for his wife, but he doesn’t have the time or the desire.” Another worker confided that Hall usually cut his own hair or had a member of his staff do it.

Like Branham, Hall has seldom stressed money during his revivals, often collecting the offering at the end of the service after many people have left. Even then, he will tell those who make financial pledges to his ministry, “If you can’t pay, don’t worry about it. You’ve got enough to worry about without worry about some preacher.”

Over the years Hall has earned a reputation as a successful small evangelist with a far-flung congregation of followers who sometimes drive hundreds of miles to attend his meetings. His appeal has been to the unsophisticated, often the social outcast, and he takes a special pride in the inmates his ministerial association has licensed within prisons. During the youth

rebellion of the 1960s he detected a hungering he felt he could satisfy and did, surrounding himself with bright, young college dropouts who willingly cut their hair, swapped faded dungarees for three-piece suits, and joined him on the sawdust trail and at his Cleveland, Tennessee, headquarters. Today, some of those same men remain committed to Hall and to evangelism.

The heart of his ministry has always been the arduous four and five-hour revival services that keep him on the road all but one day a week—a day he, like the rest of his staff, spends cranking out newsletters, tinkering with automobiles, or working on construction projects. Since suffering a heart ailment in

1980 he no longer erects his own tent, but instead preaches the last few services at the longer tent revivals staged by his young proteges and in between conducts services in churches. Although he has sometimes ventured into Pennsylvania and Illinois and Iowa, even to larger cities like Chicago and Washington, D.C., he travels primarily in the South, logging a hundred thousand miles a year, most of them by car.

In the early days his wife, Amelia, led the song services, but eventually she developed her own circuit in the Caribbean with the two crossing paths only every few months. The couple has no children, and while Hall himself is reticent about admitting it, many of his young workers have become like sons, especially organist Don Warren who joined the Halls as a teenager.

At his services, it is apparent that Hall is having a good time, even fun. Near the end of one service I attended, he asked the crowd, “Who says you have to come here and be sad? Tell ever’one you came and had a good time.” That night as I watched him singing, clapping, clowning, dancing in the aisle, it occurred to me that after his staid Pentecostal upbringing and decades of conducting revivals six nights a week, he had turned the services into a night’s entertainment for himself as much as for his audience.

In many ways his platform style is unconventional, different even from most other tent evangelists I encountered. The late A. A. Allen, for example, was heralded with a flourish not unlike the nightly introductions of Jay Leno and David Letterman. After the audience’s emotional batteries had been charged, his platform man would boom, “And now, HERE—HE—IS—God’s man of faith and prayer, BROTHER—A—



A—ALLEN!” Hall, however, chooses to move unobtrusively onto the platform and without fanfare takes the microphone from his song director in the midst of the congregational singing, his smooth, mellow baritone soaring above the rest until the crowd stops to listen.

He is indeed a showman but of a different variety than his more gregarious counterparts. He mimics and clowns, sometimes flinging his long hair over his face and parting it to play Indian or some other role, then removing a large comb from his hip pocket to slick it back into place, yet his humor is low-key, his delivery a leisurely, strolling-along pace. Even his shouting has a soft edge. His sermons begin as rambling epics laced with homespun philosophy, personal anecdotes, and folksy stock phrases like “Preach on, Brother Hall” or “Boy, that didn’t set so well.” In the end, however, his goal is that of all revivalists: to evoke response, to whip his audience to an emotional frenzy. He is like a conductor orchestrating the people’s emotions, drawing them into a dialogue, encouraging them to complete his scriptural quotations and to punctuate his pronouncements with an exclamation, a gentle nod. As the altar call nears, his pace will quicken and his delivery becomes rhythmic, repetitive, like the chanted sermons of older black ministers, unleashing swarms of amens.

His views too are equally unconventional. In spite of the role of divine healing in his services and in his own life, he also believes in medical sciences and has been hospitalized at least once. He openly expresses doubts that manifestations of the Spirit, including speaking in tongues, are always genuine, and is skeptical of “way-out religious fanatics,” conceding, “When I hear people start talking all the time about God told me, about every sentence or ever’ three or four minutes saying

God told me, I get a little leery. I get a little worried, a little afraid.” In a sermon on creation he once insisted, “I’m not worried about by what means. If it was a process, all right, or if it was a big BANG! that’s all right. It don’t bother me at all. God did it.”

During the time I followed Hall, he spent little time around the tent, usually arriving just before each service and disappearing immediately after the benediction. Between his arrival and the start of a service, he would remain in his copper-color Cadillac, alone, in view of the people but seldom mingling among them. Even when the members of his evangelistic team went out for late-night suppers, he never joined them. “I have four or five hours that I’m totally involved with people,” he once told me. “The rest of my time I like to be mine with a Bible or book or just relaxation or thinking or whatever.”

During the day his time was often spent driving to nearby communities to visit a sick follower or to conduct a funeral. “If people are with you when they’re well and don’t need you, then where are you when they need you?” he said with a shrug. “I mean that’s my idea of a minister.”

A rod of clothes always hung across the backseat of the Cadillac, and I came to realize the big, expensive car was not a luxury: It was his transportation, his office, his home, his place to sleep and find solitude. Hall was quick to stress that he did not sleep in the car out of necessity.

“People are good to me. There’s been a lot of money gone through my hands—I kid you not,” he said, not boastfully, but to explain the guiding philosophy of his organization. “My idea of the disciples and Jesus was altogether different from a lot of people’s, and if that’s the type of ministry I want, then I should make my life-style like that.” —*Patsy Sims*

How Mike Ferree Saved the Film

I met Mike Ferree in 1993 at an empty lot along a highway outside Kannapolis, North Carolina. Mike, his wife Sally and their eight kids, were raising the tent for a series of revival meetings that would culminate with the arrival of H. Richard Hall two weeks later. 51 year old Vaudry Tucker, pastor of a local church, had brought his family to help out.

Mike’s son Josh was only 12 at the time but was helping the big Tucker men pound the 44 stakes that outline the tent’s footprint. It is arduous work, especially on a hot and sticky June day. But for the Ferree kids, this was summer vacation. Young Aaron and Missy were using the tent trappings as a makeshift playground; the older girls were helping Sally lay out the smaller stakes and throw sawdust. They lived in two

trailers behind the tent during the summer months, the high holy season of mountain holiness religion.

It is a style of ministry that Mike adopted early in his career. Dozens of disaffected countercultural types traveled with Brother Hall in the late 1960s and ’70s, and Mike was among those who ultimately established careers of their own. Back then, he and others like Mike Shreve, Pat Hayes, Kent Sullivan, and Charlotte Murray traveled ahead of Hall to raise tents and promote his meetings or helped out at the home base in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Mike fell right into the itinerant lifestyle and in love with the people he met along the way. Like Brother Hall he feels a pull toward the disenfranchised, to “the man that’s down.” He

“No preacher that I personally know, likes to talk about a lot of things right before he goes into the pulpit We deal, we believe we’re dealing in a, in a spiritual realm. Paul said that we compare spiritual things to spiritual. So somehow you’ve got to get earthly things off your mind, carnal things and worries of life and get your mind pointed in the direction of God to help your people. So you don’t want to talk about a lot of things. You know, the car broke down, the horse broke its leg. You don’t want to talk about that right before church.”

—Mike Ferree

likes the direct contact of a grassroots ministry and feels this is what God is directing him to do. “I liked the sincerity of it,” he told me, “it just felt like something real. Some people feel called to be doctors or lawyers, this is my call.”

Mike had grown up in southern Indiana, not that far from where I was raised in eastern Iowa. We had both come of age in the late sixties and been influenced by the counterculture of that time. Years later we both had difficult careers and families to support.

He was laboring in the highly competitive field of itinerant evangelism. Hundreds of hungry young evangelists crisscross the back roads and byways of the American South, sending VHS demo tapes ahead to secure bookings at small church revival meetings. If the Spirit is with them and the meetings go well, they will likely be invited back the following year. But one’s style or personality may not take hold in a particular congregation, and meetings don’t always catch fire.

When I asked Mike about the insecurity of having a big family to support and being on the road keeping his career alive, he confided, “There are always people who can preach better than you, who can attract a bigger crowd. But you have to trust your call.”

As a sometimes independent filmmaker, I understood what he meant. I had been writing grant proposals for two years, hoping for some interest in the film and finding little. I had barely enough money to complete this first shoot and knew there would have to be others. I would have to edit the film between paid professional jobs, and I was feeling uncertainty every step of the way. Would this ever be a film? Would it ever catch fire on screen?

Years later, when I finally showed the first rough cut of *Raise the Dead* to my advisors and a few friends, these questions remained unanswered. My test audience found the film engaging, but they were confused about the relationships between char-

acters and some felt the need for more background information.

I knew the use of a narrator could eliminate the confusion, but I was concerned about how that would alter the film’s point-of-view, which had evolved into that of the three central characters themselves. I wanted Brothers Hall and Ferree and Sister Shelton to tell their own stories, but their field interviews simply could not be pieced together to give the turns of phrase that bring nuance to a scene or help ease a transition to another.

It felt like the Spirit had taken flight.

I don’t remember where I was or what I was doing when the idea came to me, but I have to think there was some kind of divine intervention at work: Mike could narrate the film. He had a resonant voice with the right sound. He had conviction, inflection and—after all—this was his story too, one he knew from the heart. I had listened to his interviews many times and knew his voice well. Once I started writing, the words came quickly.

In December 1997, I traveled to Calvary Christian Assembly in Creswell, Maryland, where Mike was preaching at the time. I screened the rough cut with him and Kenneth J. Eller, the church’s pastor. When the film

ended, Mike walked to a table in the basement, sat down with the script and began crossing out whole passages. I was stunned but quietly read his changes.

I had written the line “Holiness people have always gone where the Spirit leads them.” Mike rewrote it as “Holiness people have always sought to go where the Spirit leads them.” A subtle but significant theological distinction. We talked through other script issues. I slowly realized that a real collaboration was happening, something beyond what either of us could have done alone. The film was becoming deeper, more authentic.

My last trip to work with Mike was five years after our first meeting, when I traveled to Cleveland to the Ferree family home. By then it felt like a family reunion; Josh was 16, 6’ 5”,



a star basketball player at his Christian school. Mike and Sally's oldest daughters Amy and Beth had jobs and an apartment nearby, Aaron and Missy had grown unrecognizable. It was a bit embarrassing to be working on the same film so many years later, but—hey—wasn't Mike still working on his ministry?

I wanted Mike to record a line I had written to follow up on an interview piece where Mike speaks about the worldwide revival he believes is on the way. My line led with "...an Awakening that will make what Brothers Branham and Hall saw seem like a warm-up." Mike rewrote it as "...an awakening that will make Brother Branham's day and Brother Hall's day

seem like a warm-up," reminding me of the unique ministry Brother Hall had developed more than thirty-four years after Branham's death.

It is a ministry that has inspired many to preach, like the shy Eula Shelton of McDowell County, and others around the world. Glenn Hinson, who advised me throughout the making of this film, describes Brother Hall as "a master of words and faith and song." And I believe he is right. But Brother Hall's lasting legacy may not be as much in his words as in the Spirit contained within them and in the listeners who have been moved by it. Mike Ferree is part of that revival.

—James Rutenbeck

William Marrion Branham

The post-World War II healing revival that erupted in American pentecostalism began in the ministry of William Marrion Branham, a "Holy Ghost" independent Baptist preacher from Jeffersonville, Indiana. In 1946, Branham claimed that an angel commissioned him to be a prophet with the message of divine healing for the world. For the next nine years, Branham conducted a healing ministry that only Oral Roberts could match. He ministered to packed tents throughout the country; miraculous healings were claimed by thousands and *Time* magazine, while a skeptic, reported his popularity. Branham was also the first post-war American healing evangelist to tour Europe.

The Pentecostal masses revered Branham's legendary healing gifts, the ability to detect diseases by the vibration of his hand and the ability to discern the secrets of a person's heart (usually identified as the Word of Knowledge in I Corinthians 12:8, but when other evangelists claimed the gift, Branham insisted his gift was a unique duplication of Jesus' method of healing). The visions given through the second gift were infallible, according to Branham. The person who sought healing was to place faith in Christ the healer and to believe that Branham was God's prophet who declared the healing. Still, Branham's quiet humility and avoidance of doctrinal conflicts endeared him to the different Pentecostal subgroups. He modeled, for other evangelists, the method of holding citywide

inter-evangelical tent meetings among Oneness and trinitarian Pentecostals.

Healing revivalism declined in the late 1950s. Successful evangelists transformed their ministries into a broader charismatic revivalism which gave greater emphasis to all the gifts of the Spirit. Branham did not readily adapt. During the peak

revival years, his ministry flourished despite his seventh grade education, lack of sophistication and poor business acumen. When the revival fires began to wane, Branham experienced financial difficulty. Attempting to cope with declining popularity, he increasingly asserted "prophetic" dogmatic doctrinal revelations. These teachings, referred to as the "end-time message" of God, made Branham increasingly controversial in Pentecostal circles.

The "Message" consisted of several important "revelations." Denominationalism was called the "mark of the beast" and believers were to "come out." Branham advocated a "Jesus only" antitrinitarian position regarding

the Godhead and baptism, views he had avoided during his heyday. A revelation that embarrassed many former admirers was the doctrine of the serpent's seed. According to Branham, Eve and the man-like serpent had sexual intercourse and Cain was born. Consequently, every woman potentially carried the literal seed of the Devil. Branham's constant warning to "modern Jezebels" who cut their hair, wore make-up and swam in public,



“Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”

—Mark 13:11

was poorly received as the charismatic movement reached beyond traditional Pentecostalism and touched the broader American society of the 1960s.

The most controversial revelation dealt with the identity of the “end-time Laodicean church age prophet” whose “message” would prepare the elect Bride of Christ for the imminent rapture. Although Branham never claimed it directly, with the help of some devoted disciples, he clearly came to believe that he was this prophet. In the 1960s, he preached that Billy Graham had taken revival to the “nominal” church, Oral Roberts had done the same for Pentecostals, but like the biblical father of faith, Abraham, the name of the prophet of the last days had seven letters.

As the “end-time” prophet, Branham and his followers yearned for an unparalleled ministry, a final gift to “speak the Word” and perform greater miracles than ever witnessed before. Branham believed this gift had been previewed several times, for instance, in the resurrection of a fish, the “creatio ex nihilo” of three squirrels and the calming of a Colorado blizzard by his command of “thus saith the Lord.”

Branham died in an automobile accident in December, 1965. Persons who admired his healing ministry mourned his

death. Some independent Pentecostal evangelists, including H. Richard Hall, of Cleveland, Tennessee, W. V. Grant, Jr., of Dallas, Texas, and Neal Frisby, of Phoenix Arizona, claimed Branham’s prophetic mantle. Many veterans of the healing revival were saddened that Branham had disobeyed his calling to a healing ministry and had become entangled in doctrinal heresy.

Branham’s devoted followers were shocked at his death. Some expected an Easter resurrection in the spring of 1966.

Today “Message” believers exist in a variety of independent groups. An accurate estimate of committed followers is impossible, though 300,000, (or thousands more) worldwide adherents have been speculated. While beliefs differ, Branham is at minimum ac-

knowledged as the “end-time prophet,” the Elijah figure of Malachi 4:5-6. A few churches have even deified him. Branham’s sermons have achieved scriptural status for most followers as the infallible “voice of God” to the Bride of Christ. “Voice of God” publishing in Jeffersonville, Indiana, is led by Branham’s son, Joseph, and sends tapes and written sermons, translated into several languages, throughout the world.

—C. Douglas Weaver



Eula Shelton

Brad McElhinny’s four-column review of *Raise the Dead* in the West Virginia *Charleston Daily Mail* (February 1999) is titled, “Film highlights W.Va. minister’s life,” with a photo of Brother H. Richard Hall preaching in War, West Virginia. When I first glanced at the review I thought, “But Brother Hall is from Tennessee.” Then I read it. The review’s first sentence introduces not Hall but Eula Shelton. By the third sentence it is clear that the headline to McElhinny’s review refers not to Brother Hall but to Sister Shelton.

McElhinny writes, “The documentary filmmakers were relaxing in a hotel when a soft-spoken, silver-haired woman walked up and offered them possibly the most meaningful

bologna sandwiches they’d ever eaten. The meal was the first step toward getting to know Eula Shelton, a McDowell County widow who became a central figure in *Raise the Dead*, a documentary examining the Pentecostal faith.

“The filmmakers recorded Shelton’s personal revival her story of becoming a Pentecostal preacher, starting her own church and stopping cancer treatment to prove her faith in divine healing. As for why she offered the cold cut sandwiches that day after a revival meeting in War, that’s anyone’s guess.”

Eula Shelton is part of a long tradition of Holiness preachers, women and men, going back to the Great Revival on the Appalachian frontier at the turn of the nineteenth century. Out

“Appalachian people were not joiners. They felt no allegiance to any particular denomination so long as they felt they were preaching the Word of God.”

—from *Dorie, Woman of the Mountains* by Florence Cope Bush

of that period of revival emerged the Holiness and Pentecostal movements part Methodist, part Baptist in heritage. In the mountains of Appalachia, Holiness churches generally are independent, like the church Sister Eula set up in War, West Virginia. Outside of Appalachia, and for people whose understanding of religious life in the United States does not stray far from the frameworks of denominational categories, churches such as Eula Shelton’s are Pentecostal, because mountain Holiness people also practice speaking in tongues (the feature distinguishing Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the nation’s largest, from Holiness denominations such as the Church of the Nazarene, the nation’s oldest). Apart from these standard conventions of definition, in their own vocabulary mountain people who worship in churches such as Sister Eula’s call them Holiness, and they always have.

Appalachian Holiness people fellowship (worship) in each other’s churches, going to other Holiness churches over a wide area as often as they go to their own home church. These churches usually have no denominational affiliation at the state, regional, or national levels. Their preachers are not “ordained” after obtaining a seminary degree and serving under the jurisdiction of a denominational body, as are Holiness preachers’ mainstream Protestant brothers and sisters in the ministry. Through apprenticeship and practical experience, and by the informal authority of the local community in which they live and worship, a man or a woman comes to be recognized as a Holiness preacher. Like becoming a preacher, Holiness churches are fluid in their organizational life and even in their location, but individual churches are often long-lived, going back decades in the local community.

It is not uncommon for Holiness people, and Holiness preachers in particular, to worship in a large host of denominational and nondenominational church traditions other than their own, a tradition of fellowshipping with roots deep in the region’s religious history. Although they have never been counted in any national census of church populations because of their seeming invisibility, Holiness churches most likely make up the largest of all church traditions in Appalachia, whether Old Time Baptist (like the Old Regular Baptists, Free

Will Baptists, and Primitive Baptists) or mainstream Protestant (such as the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Episcopalians). Because of their typically small size frequently less than a dozen regular members or participants, like in Sister Eula’s church independent Holiness churches tend to be regarded by those outside Appalachia, or in Appalachia’s valleys and larger towns, as no more than a blip on the region’s religious landscape. They appear to have no real, temporal power. As for their *spiritual* power, well, who knows?

The bonds of Appalachia’s independent Holiness people with each other are tight and strong, worshiping not just in each other’s churches but wherever the Holy Spirit leads them. People often travel several hours to worship at other churches over a large area, and usually do so more than one night a week. Holiness churches in particular hold full services mostly on week nights, which means not just on Sunday and many Holiness churches do not meet on Sunday. These worship patterns in terms of frequency, time of day, and day of week go back to the worship patterns characteristic of the Great Revival on the Appalachian frontier in the early 1800s. They are realistic patterns adapted over more than two centuries to the everyday lives and needs of people for whom communal worship is of paramount importance, however small the gathering of believers may be on any given day, or under the revival tent.

Brad McElhinny continued in his *Charleston Daily Mail* film review of *Raise the Dead*, “Shelton, 78, had a mastectomy in 1993. ‘I never took chemotherapy after that,’ she said. ‘They were making the different appointments at the hospital, and I came home and prayed and told them to cancel me; I wouldn’t be back. God has stretched my life. Yes, he has. He certainly has been good to me.’

“Shelton, who has seen part of the film,” McElhinny writes, “said she thought it would be more about Hall’s ministry. ‘It wasn’t really what I expected,’ she said. ‘I guess it’s all right.’” In typical Appalachian style, Sister Eula deferred to the work of Brother Hall, not because he is a man or more visibly prominent in the world’s eyes but in order not to do any violence to the work God would have her do, as long as she still draws breath in this life

—Deborah Vansau McCauley

For further reading

All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America by David Edwin Harrell, Jr. (Indiana University Press).

This classic work places William Branham in the context of the postwar pentecostal revival and examines the career of H. Richard Hall until 1975.

“Harrell has produced a book about healing revivalists that takes them seriously and treats them fairly. It is a fine book.” —*Journal of Southern History*

Appalachian Mountain Religion by Deborah Vansau Mccauley (The University of Illinois Press).

This book examines Appalachian mountain religion and depicts the interaction and dramatic conflicts between it and the denominations that compromise the Protestant mainstream.

“...a monumental achievement.” —*Loyal Jones, founding director, Appalachian Center at Berea College*

Can Somebody Shout Amen! Inside the Tents and Tabernacles of American Revivalists by Patsy Sims (University Press of Kentucky).

Includes essays on H. Richard Hall and Mike Shreve. Named a noteworthy book of 1988 by the *New York Times Book Review*.

The Healer Prophet, William Marrion Branham: A Study of the Prophetic in American Pentecostalism by C. Douglas Weaver (Mercer University Press).

A scholarly examination of the career of William Branham.

“C. Douglas Weaver’s book is an intriguing story, with many bizarre twists and turns. Weaver has researched thoroughly and written an objective and fascinating book.” —*David Edwin Harrell, Jr.*

Discussion questions

1. What are the parallels between the lives and careers of William Branham and H. Richard Hall? What distinctions would you make?
2. In the film, Mike Ferree states that he has been influenced by H. Richard Hall. What might those influences be?
3. What factors within the ministry of William Branham contributed to his decline in popular appeal? Speculate about societal changes that may also have contributed.
4. Eula Shelton’s church was purchased, renovated and supported by the tithes of four McDowell County women. This is a typical practice in many mountain holiness churches. How does this organizational structure differ from that of the local mainstream Protestant denominations? What aspects of the faith experience of people like Mrs. Shelton contribute to a resistance to denominational control?
5. Using evidence in the film, explain how H. Richard Hall encourages others in their own ministries.

Film Credits

Directed, Written and Produced by: JAMES RUTENBECK

Cinematography: STEPHEN McCARTHY

Film Editors: ROBERT TODD, JAMES RUTENBECK

Composer: NICHOLAS CUDAHY

Consultants: ALEXANDRA ANTHONY, D. WILLIAM FAUPEL, DAVID E. HARRELL,
GLENN HINSON, DEBORAH V. McCAULEY, PATSY SIMS,
JOHN CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

This film was made possible by grants from: Southern Humanities Media Fund • These state programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities: North Carolina Humanities Council, West Virginia Humanities Council, Tennessee Humanities Council, & Kentucky Humanities Council • The New England Film/Video Fellowship Program of the Boston Film/Video Foundation, through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council • LEF Foundation

Study Guide Contributors

DEBORAH VANSAU McCAULEY is an independent scholar, writer and editor specializing in American religious history. She is the author of *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*, which won the W.D. Wetherford Award and was supported by the Columbia University Bancroft Award and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Dr. McCauley is a section editor on the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*.

JAMES RUTENBECK produced, directed and wrote the film documentary *Raise the Dead*. His earlier work *Losing Ground* (16mm, 57 minutes, 1988) has been screened internationally at festivals and museums, including the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He is the editor of both dramatic and documentary films, including work for Channel Four (UK), the BBC and PBS. He is a two-time recipient of the New England Filmmaker Fellowship and numerous humanities grants.

PATSY SIMS is the author of *The Klan, Cleveland Benjamin's Dead: A Struggle for Dignity in Louisiana's Cane Country*, and *Can Somebody Shout Amen!: Inside the Tents and Tabernacles of American Revivalists*. She has been the recipient of creative writing fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities and two Associated Press Awards for investigative-interpretive reporting. She coordinates the Creative Nonfiction Writing Program at the University of Pittsburgh.

DOUGLAS WEAVER is Chair of the Division of Religion and Philosophy and Associate Professor of Christianity at Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, Georgia. He is the author of *The Healer-Prophet: William Marrion Branham: A Study of the Prophetic in American Pentecostalism*.

For further information, contact: James Rutenbeck, 106 Oliver Road, Waban, Massachusetts, 02468; (617) 969-6533.