

1-1-2024

## Hillbilly Roots

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### Recommended Citation

Shea, Timothy (2024) "Hillbilly Roots," *The Peregrine Review: Vol. 37, Article 54*.  
Available at: <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/peregrinereview/vol37/iss1/54>

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## Hillbilly Roots

*Timothy Shea (Adjunct English Professor)*

A pilgrimage home—  
to *Dukes of Hazzard* territory,  
a place that Flannery O'Connor would say was  
“haunted by Jesus”—  
a place that felt like  
a shadow  
from the past.

Somewhere between Tennessee and Pennsylvania  
my family took a detour and  
wound up among the misty hills of  
Appalachia—  
close to the “holler” where I was born—  
in Whitesburg, Kentucky!

I showed my kids  
the hospital where I came into the world and  
the college campus where I lived for  
my first year of life.

I can just imagine  
my optimistic father,  
newly married,  
just graduated from college,  
and with a newborn in tow,  
Trying to build a home out of this  
haunting place,  
A place the rest of the world seemed to have  
forgotten,  
a place that was a far cry from  
his gritty Baltimore neighborhood.

Did it drive him crazy?  
Did he weep at night for  
the familiar?  
Did he find a way to connect with  
the unconventional locals with their  
rituals and conspiracies and  
their moonshine?  
or  
was it too much  
for someone with such a big heart but  
who had no money or  
resources and who was  
just a bit homesick, too?

The road to my roots  
may have been windy and  
circuitous  
and maybe even  
a metaphor for  
my own life journey,  
one that seemed so far from  
my current reality and yet  
also strangely  
familiar!

## sunset climb

*Benjamin Gates*  
(Civil Engineering 2024)

