of hair he wore in that portrait had given way to shorter, graying hair hidden under the straw hat of an Amish farmer. He spoke softly, not as an angry, iconic anti-war protester of the Vietnam era, but a wise scribe at peace with the books he sold.

A young female customer came in and asked for Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood.* Robert steered her to a gentler tome. "I try to avoid books like *In Cold Blood* and *Helter Skelter,* gory, bloody books about murder," he said.

Robert said the atmosphere of Lewisburg, often ranked in the nation's top-ten small towns, was a good discovery for him and Darlene. Its amenities fit well his anti-automobile sentiment expressed in *Vultures Eat the Dead & Jets Eat the Living* .

"I don't own a car; I walk," he said. "I think automobiles are very destructive, and I think we are in Iraq because of the automobile."

Lewisburg gave him access to culture, the arts, and learning. He'd recently become interested in what he called the "soccer ball molecule," a complex manifestation of carbon. That interest inspired him to take chemistry courses at the local community college.

Language, however, remained his first love. He taught himself Coptic, Greek, and Latin to better comprehend the minds of great poets. "When you read (poetry in) another language, you read each word more carefully," he said. He also learned Portuguese.

"Mostly, I read Portuguese poets," Robert said. "They seem to be more serious than Americans."

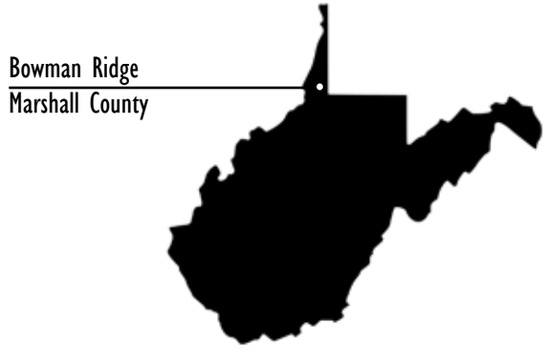
Aside from having his poetry widely published and sold, Robert Head could find no avocation more fitting than Bookstore in Lewisburg. All the knowledge of the world was at his fingertips, except that one obvious question: How many books are in Bookstore?

"I let the books count themselves," he said, spoken like a true poet.

Robert Head's Bookstore was still in business the last time I traveled through Lewisburg, 2023. I looked for him in the doorway, but perhaps he was in the backroom reading an esoteric volume or playing a Bach invention on his upright piano.

Chapter 3

The Old Fiddler



As we settled into our chairs in his Bowman Ridge living room, Ivan Gorby tossed out a comment that caught me off guard and set a relaxed, jovial tone for visit in April 2004: "A man told me the other day that he'd give $100 to see you."

"Really?" I naively inquired. "Who is he?"

"Some blind man," Ivan quipped, his eyes twinkling with the delight of a 90-year-old who'd just pulled a big bass from the old fishing hole.

Ivan was, by its citizens' proclamation, the Mayor of Bowman Ridge and had the paperwork to prove it. The ridge is one of myriad Allegheny Mountain foothills that rise abruptly east of the Ohio River in Marshall County. A casual traveler who ventures into this maze of ridges and hollows knows his location only by the signpost at the last intersection where he turned. I suppose you could enter this maze in spring and still be searching for an exit come fall unless you swallowed your pride and asked for directions back to Route 250.

Ivan's house stood at the corner of Bowman Ridge Road and Rosby's Rock Hill, which descends the steep ridge to its namesake community

(Book 4). To the southeast is Sallys Backbone Ridge; to the west, Roberts Ridge; and to the east, Glen Easton and Goshorn Ridge.

There's no Gorby Ridge, however, a mystery given the family's ubiquitous presence in these parts since 1835, when Ivan's great great-grandfather John Gorby purchased 500 acres on this mountain. Of that original acreage, Ivan owned only six, sufficient for his garden, house, and apple trees.

More significant to our story, however, is the land that the Gorby family once owned but donated for the community's common welfare. The donation included the knoll upon which the Bowman Ridge United Methodist Church and Bethel Cemetery rise a couple of miles east of Ivan's home, and, a half-mile to the west of his house, the land upon which three Gorby schoolhouses were built.

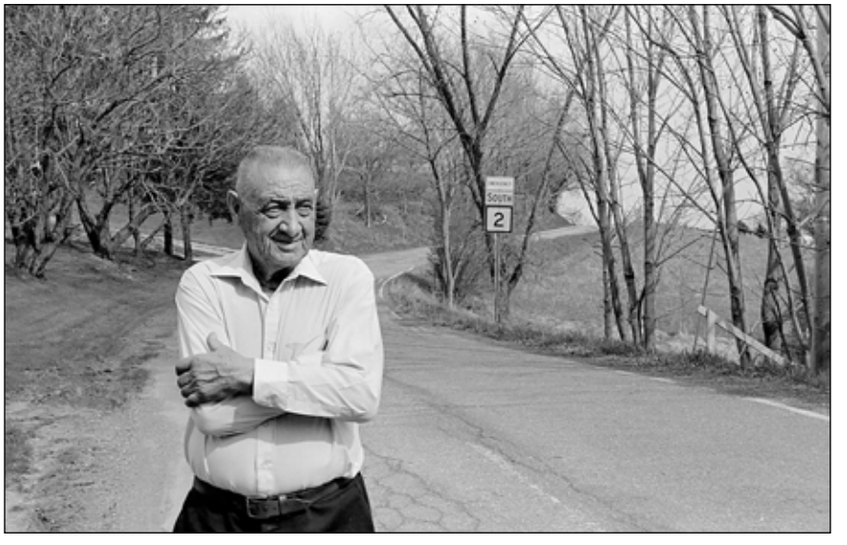
The first one was a log structure. Ivan said it stood on the south side of the road, a spot now a parking lot. The second was built 1894-95 and served the community until May 1923, when lightning struck it and it burned to the ground. The community rallied and built a third one. Ivan said it was constructed off-site in sections then shipped to Rosby's Rock on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. From there, it was hauled to the top of Bowman Ridge and assembled on the site of its predecessor's ashes.

Ivan attended seven grades at the Gorby schools, from 1920 to 1927. When busing became available in 1932, the board of education abandoned the building. The original Gorby grant provided that if the property were no longer used for education, the land and any structures on it would revert to Gorby heirs. The school board, however, saw things differently and scheduled an auction.

The day of the sale, Ivan's grandfather, Ezekiel Grant Gorby, showed up and challenged the proceedings. "Grandpa said, 'You can't sell it,'" Ivan said. "And they said, 'Yes, we can.' And Grandpa said, 'Let's go to the courthouse and read the deed off.'"

Ezekiel thus proved his point and halted the auction. Ivan said the school-board member declared that the building could rot for all he cared. "And Grandpa said, 'OK, let it rot!'" Ivan said.

The school did not rot; indeed, it was revived as a meeting hall for community groups like 4-H and the Farm Women (Bowman Ridge Extension Homemakers), which was organized June 24, 1937. With Grant's blessing, these groups leased the building from the school board for several decades.



Ivan Gorby stands outside his home on Bowman Ridge, April 2004. He was declared "the Mayor of Bowman Ridge" by citizens of the area, a show of appreciation to him and his ancestors for providing land for their community center.

Georgia Leach Jordan, who grew up on Bowman Ridge, joined Farm Women in 1947 after her husband came back from the service and they settled down on Bowman Ridge. Georgia's mother, Ethel, and daughters, Connie Crow and Shelley Jordan, were members, as well.

"We learned to do things, like make crafts, or we'd give to anybody who needed help," Georgia told me, summing up the organization's work. "We'd have socials there, too."

By the late 1980s, most of the Farm Women had moved away or graduated to one of the graves that dot the spines of these ridges like sandstone and granite goose bumps. They decided to surrender the building.

Bowman Ridge residents wanted to maintain a local place for voting, social gatherings, and playing music. They formed the Bowman Ridge Community Association and approached Ivan about using the building, which was technically still under the school board's control. "So, what I do is just lease it from the board of education for a dollar a year," said Ivan, who served as president of the association.

Membership in the association was $10 a year; a roster of paid-up

Originally built as a school, the Bowman Ridge Community Center served a small but vibrant community of residents who gathered at the center on Saturday nights for music and camaraderie.

members was displayed on a sheet of florescent orange poster board on the meeting-room wall. The roster, however, had not been updated since 2003, and Georgia guessed that total paid memberships amounted to only thirteen or fourteen.

The community center was one large room with a wooden floor and light-blue walls. One section of the room had been the schoolhouse and retained the blackboards upon which Ivan and many other Bowman Ridge students learned to cipher and spell. The tattered roll-up maps, which were more historical oddities than useful learning tools, still hung atop some of the blackboards.

The original section of the community center also included a small kitchen and a unisex restroom that put the privy out of business. To make the building more accommodating to square dances, the association added a 16-by-38-foot section to the original schoolhouse, doubling the space available for community dinners, bingo games, dances, and jam sessions. Robert Harness, Gene Leach, Delbert Farnsworth, Shelly Jordan, Nick and Jean Frohnapel, and Bruce Diane Midcap did much of this work.

Ivan Gorby tunes his banjo as he prepares for a evening of music and camaraderie at the Bowman Ridge Community Center, Marshall County, in April 2004.

Decorating the walls were photographs of musicians who performed in the center, fair ribbons from the days of 4-H use, and a proclamation that shed light on how Ivan Gorby became mayor: "Important notice: After the votes have been counted and recounted, including the absentee ballots, by the Bowman Ridge Official Vote Counting Committee, the incumbent Mayor, Mr. Ivan Gorby will retain the office of Mayor the next term. Good luck Mayor Gorby. Truly a friend to all. 'Exceptence' [*sic.*] speech tonight 11/11/00."

An oak rocking chair, purchased by members of the association, was designated as the "Mayor's Chair" by a brass plaque on its headrest. It rested under a portrait of Abraham Lincoln.

Pointing to the portrait, Ivan told me that old Abe spoke to him when he stopped by the center earlier in the week.

"I said, 'What are you doing, Abe?'" Ivan said, setting me up for another joke. "You know what he said?"

"What?" I asked, knowing that, once again, I've been had.

"He said 'Nothing. Nothing at all,'" Ivan said.

Humor & music

Ivan credited Ezekiel Grant Gorby for this sense of humor that kept folks on their toes.

"Grandpa always liked to have fun," Ivan said. "I guess I was raised that way."

Ivan, the first of five children born to Perry and Pearl Martha Gorby, made his appearance on the ridge March 16, 1914.

"When I was born, my mother lacked just one of having twins," Ivan said.

Ivan's parents divorced when he was four or five years old. His father headed to Alabama. Ivan and a brother went to live with Grant and Amanda Gorby on their farm across the road from Ivan's birthplace home. The three girls—Ada (Gonta), June (Barger), and Alice (Hummel)—went to live with their mother at her family's homestead.

His grandfather's farm covered about 130 acres. "We had cattle, sheep, horses, hogs, and we raised a lot of our grain," Ivan said. "In the morning before my brother and I went to school, we got up at five o'clock, cleaned the barn out, fed the stock, milked the cows, and separated the milk. Grandma would have breakfast ready, and we ate breakfast and walked to school."

Fortunately, the walk to school was less than a half-mile, thanks to the generosity of his ancestor. When the evening chores were done, Grant got out his fiddle and played it for the boys. Ivan says his grandfather never told him where he got the fiddle, but he knew it came into the family about the same time John Gorby purchased his land on the ridge.

"Grandpa's fiddle has been in the family 168 years," Ivan told me in 2004. "He was just a young kid when he got it. But I never heard him say how he got it."

Grant sensed that Ivan had some latent musical talent, and when Ivan was either eight or nine years old, he asked him, 'Will you try to play a banjo if I go to town and get you one?'"

A few days later, Grant presented Ivan with a basic, inexpensive, five-string banjo.

"I had no idea how to play it," Ivan said. "Grandpa tuned her up, he showed me chords on it, and I got to playing with him."

Ivan doesn't recall the first tune his grandfather taught him, but he imagines it was a hymn.

Ivan Gorby plays his violin at the Bowman Ridge Community Center, where Abraham Lincoln kept a watch on the activities.

"He liked the church music, like 'The Old Rugged Cross,' stuff like that," Ivan said.

Like his grandfather, Ivan played by ear.

"I listen to it and play it. That's all it takes," he said.

Once Ivan demonstrated his ability to play a banjo, his grandfather showed him how to play the fiddle and mandolin, as well.

"(Ivan) can play anything that has strings on it," Ivan's oldest son, Robert, told me.

"The way I think about music, if it's not born in you, there's not much use in trying to learn to play," Ivan said.

Several other musicians from neighboring ridges joined Ivan and Grant in playing music when he was growing up. They included Lawrence Games, a guitar player from Blake Ridge; Russell Emory, a banjo player; and Buna McClintock, an organ player,at whose house the musicians gathered for their jam sessions.

Tunes were learned from other musicians and by listening to the radio. His grandfather had the second radio set on the ridge. Grant and a friend who was manager of the Army airfield at Moundsville, spent six months building a battery-powered set and stringing antennas from Grant's farmhouse.

"They strung an aerial wire, I expect 200 feet long, about 30 feet in the air, and the first station they got on there was Omaha, Nebraska. Everybody was tickled about that. We'd have people over there every night listening to that radio," he recalled.

A social at the school, informal gathering at a neighbor's house, or church service provided venues for the ridge's musicians. A local musician rarely had the chance to play beyond the ridges or Moundsville. Many of the musicians attended Wheeling's WVA Jamboree, but rarely made it to the stage.

"This is the truth if I ever told it," Ivan said. "There was a feller out here on Lindsey Lane, about nine miles out, he drove a school bus; at that time you bought your own bus (and contracted with the board of education to provide student transportation). He'd come out to the forks of the road on a Saturday night, and if anybody wanted to go to the Jamboree, all he wanted was the 55 cents to get in, and we'd have a bus load to go in. Anybody who wanted to go to the Jamboree, he'd stop for you. All he wanted was enough money to pay his way to get in. Bonar was his name."

Ivan went to Gorby School through eighth grade. He said going to high school would have involved catching a train at Rosbys Rock and taking it to Cameron, the nearest high school.

Ivan Gorby makes music with Carl Ebert at the Bowman Ridge Community Center, April 2004.

"There weren't that many who went to high school here, there wasn't anywhere to go," he said.

He worked on his grandfather's farm until he was 15, then got a job with a housing contractor named Ed Masters. Masters built new homes along Route 250 during The Depression. When the Ohio River ravaged Wheeling Island in 1936, Ivan worked on the clean-up crews.

He was on a crew building a skating rink when his draft notice arrived in July 1941. His assignment at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, was to Ivan's liking.

"I was always crazy about airplanes," said Ivan, who served on the

Playing cards against a backdrop of bluegrass music was one of the options for camaraderie and relaxation at the Bowman Ridge Community Center.

Marshall County Airport Authority. "In 1927, Lindberg landed here at Moundsville, and it just seemed like I got attached to airplanes."

Ivan recalled being eight years old when he had his first ride in an aircraft, a German Fokker. As a result of his grandfather's friendship with the airfield's manager, Ivan spent a fair amount of time around the airfield. He recalled the day an Army pilot flying from Dayton, Ohio, to Washington, D.C., stopped at the airfield for fuel. When he was ready to leave, he asked the manager how to get to his destination.

"He says, 'All right, you take off and fly due east until you hit the Summit Hotel, and you'll hit Route 40 there. Follow 40 to the Chesapeake Bay, turn north and then into Washington, D.C.' That's the way they navigated back then," Ivan said.

Ivan's innate mechanical ability and interest in flying earned him stateside positions during World War II. In August 1942, he was shipped to the Army Air Forces Bombardier School in Big Springs, Texas. He received B-17 and B-24 crew-chief training, as well as co-pilot and aircraft maintenance

Bluegrass musicians (from left) Carl Ebert, Ray Cohen, Don Geary, and Frank Tharp jam together at the Bowman Ridge Community Center, formerly an elementary school, April 2004.

instruction. He became an instructor, teaching cadets headed for the war overseas. As a co-pilot, he was responsible for the aircraft once it was in the air.

While stationed in Texas, Ivan met his wife, Jayne Smith, an Austin native who was volunteering at a USO canteen. They were married September 19, 1942. After Ivan was discharged November 4, 1945, he and Jayne headed back to Bowman Ridge.

"I wanted to come back here," Ivan said. "That's what I wanted; to come back and build a house here."

Five children were born to the couple: Robert, Betty Ann (Estep), Linda (Delbert), Alice (Martin), and Jimmy.

Lumber was in short supply when Ivan returned to the ridge and purchased his plot of family land. He heard about a house in Glen Easton that needed to be moved, and Ivan purchased it for $100. He disassembled the structure and hauled the lumber to the ridge, where he and his grandfather built a modest dwelling.

"All we got out of that house were the floor beams, studding, and siding," he said. "It wasn't too bad of a house. They were wanting the ground where it stood, so I bought the house and tore it down."

Ivan wired the house for electricity, and in 1946, power finally came to Bowman Ridge. "We got a new electric stove, and the day we got it delivered, they turned the electric on," Ivan recalled.

To introduce the wonders of electric appliances to residents of the ridges and hollows, the power company set up a makeshift outdoor movie theater on the front lawn of Ivan's house and entertained the youngsters. Meanwhile, their parents received a sales pitch for electric appliances.

Ivan was hired by Triangle Conduit in Moundsville in 1946 and worked there until retiring in 1965. He supplemented his income by repairing cars and other machinery in the shop he built in the basement of his house.

"He was Mr. Fix-It in the community," Robert Gorby said.

One of Ivan's traditions, growing horseradish for the community, came out of his car-repair business. Ivan said he did a brake job for a man who didn't have the $7 to pay him for the work. He paid the debt with an old-fashioned cider press, which Ivan used to make cider from the fruit raised on his property. He discovered that he could process horseradish roots in it, as well. In 2003 he raised, processed, and canned ninety-eight pints of horseradish that he grew.

Grant Gorby entrusted Ivan with the family violin a few years before Grant died. For more than 60 years, Ivan played the well-worn instrument throughout the Moundsville area at church socials, nursing homes, and community jams.

Every Saturday afternoon, Ivan packed up the violin and drove the half-mile to Bowman Ridge Community Association Center. With Georgia Jordan's help, he made the coffee and set the potluck table for the weekly "Bowman Ridge Opry," a jam session of bluegrass, country, and traditional artists. No one could recall when the jam sessions got started, although photographs on the wall suggest it was going on as early as 1990.

"We've been here ever since we started it," Ivan said.

There was no cover charge for this gathering of friends, which got underway by 7 p.m. and continued until 11 p.m. every Saturday night, regardless of weather, crowd size, or lack of pickers. Sometimes there were just enough musicians to form a bluegrass quartet; other times, as many

Gene Leach and Pauline Beckett dance to the music of a bluegrass ensemble during a Saturday evening gathering at the Bowman Ridge Community Center in Marshall County, April 2004. Pauline and her husband, Ed, drove to the ridge from across the river in Ohio.

as two-dozen performers gathered to jam and learn from each other. Ivan joined them on the violin or banjo and usually performed a solo or two.

The association offered hot dogs and sloppy Joes for a donation, and just about every person attending contributed a bag of snacks, a cake, pie, bowl of fruit, or plate of vegetables to the food table. After the meal, men formed foursomes to play cards while their wives doted on babies and shared family news. Those wanting a breath of fresh air gathered under a small picnic shelter alongside the road.

Ivan, the "ambassador" of the Bowman Ridge Community Association, welcomed each person who came through the door.

"These people treated us like we were family, like they've known us all our lives," recalled Dobro player Frank Tharp of his first visit to the community center in 1993. "It was just like homecoming. It's a good bunch of people. They enjoy what you do."

"It's about the fellowship mostly," said Don Greary, a bass player from Follansbee. "It's a nice place to come. We truly have fellowship."

Frank drove an hour to get to the venue, which didn't pay its musicians. Like the other musicians, he did it for the camaraderie and smiles.

"If you can get them people sitting back there grinning like a butcher's dog, you know you are doing something right," he said.

An adviser with the nationally acclaimed Wheeling Park High School Bluegrass Band, Tharp described Ivan as "an old-fashioned fiddle, old-fashioned banjo player."

"He gets a little off key, but that's part of the fun," Tharp said. "The fun is getting back on key."

Some opry-goers, like Ed and Pauline Beckett, drove over from Ohio to enjoy the camaraderie and music. "Everybody has been treating us like we're family, ever since we came here," Ed said.

Even Howard Lee "Biggie" Byard, a Marshall County commissioner, occasionally stopped by to sing a few songs with the band.

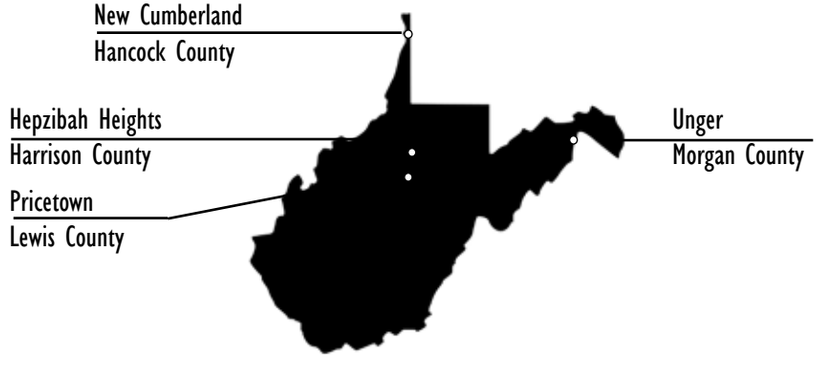
"He's a fine gentleman," Howard Lee told me, summing up "Mayor" Ivan Gorby. He told me how Ivan had recently used an innocuous question as a springboard for one of his jokes.

"I asked him how he was doing, and he said, 'I'm getting so old, it took me two hours the other night to watch *Sixty Minutes*.'"

Ivan F. Gorby died April 3, 2013, at the age of 99. His wife, Jayne, died in 2009.

Chapter 4

Art from Old Stuff



I was wandering through Harrison and Marion counties on Route 19 when a red airplane twirling atop a 9-foot pole and a half-buried rocket caught my attention.

With a stagecoach, numerous deer figures, and a drive-theater movie screen also in this yard, I had a hunch that the person who lived on this steep hillside would make an interesting story. And that's how I came to meet George Harvey back in 2005.

George was friendly, chatty, and a bit quirky. A retired coal miner, his life centered on his faith, lawn ornaments, and a hobby hidden behind his garage door.

When I asked about the town's strange name, George said Hepzibah (that's pronounced HEP-zee-ball), was to the north of his property. George lives in Hepzibah *Heights*. Serviced by a one-lane road that is a straight shot up the steep hill, the heights consists of about a dozen houses and mobile homes. His neat, one-story, white house fronts Route 19 and is just a few doors down from the Hepzibah Baptist Church, where the town's name reportedly originated.