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University of North Carolina at Asheville

“Hear that racket down there? That’s your French Broad.”:
The Eternal Connection Between Wilma Dykeman and the French Broad River

A Senior Thesis Submitted to
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In 1908, Champion International Company opened the doors to its pulp and paper mill in Canton, North Carolina on the banks of the Pigeon River. The company brought tremendous economic growth to the area and was incorporated into the culture of the area while it also poured an exponential amount of waste water into the river.¹ Twelve years later a little girl was born to a couple whose home was also located on the banks of the same river system. This couple taught their young daughter that everything in the world is interconnected, and the same could be said about the small creek that ran behind her house and connected to the larger river system. This same little girl listened to an old timer of Western North Carolina years later tell the history of the same river system that little outside of the area knew of. “Hear that racket down there?” the old man questioned, “That’s your French Broad.”² The young woman was curious about this river because, of course, she had grown up on its banks and admired it since birth. This young woman was Wilma Dykeman, a talented writer and activist who called the town of Asheville, North Carolina her home. The reason for asking about the river was that Dykeman had the intentions of writing a book about this river, giving it the respect and acknowledgement that she believed it deserved. Little did she know that this work would gain her fame for being a gifted writer and actually designate it as being “her” river. This work also led to a lifetime of involvement in environmental activism for Dykeman, who fought endlessly to preserve the purity and beauty of the river.

Wilma Dykeman, was born, lived, and eventually passed away near the banks of the Beaverdam Creek and French Broad River, both part of the larger French Broad watershed system. This river system defined her life as it assisted her parents in instilling within her a love for nature and the interconnectedness of all things. Her first major public work, *The French*

¹ Shawn Clouse and John Tucker, “Pigeon River Interactive Program,” A Hyperlink into Environmental Law, <http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/John-Tucker/Courses/esc430/esc430mat/pig/pigriver.html> (accessed January 27, 2013).

² Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999), 5.

Broad, propelled Dykeman into fame as a talented author and a knowledgeable source on the history of the French Broad. Dykeman's past and book drew her into the fight to save the French Broad. Part of the river system now bears her name, a true testament to Dykeman's lasting legacy. Dykeman's connection to the French Broad is eternal. She was born near its banks and went on to have it define her career as a writer and activist before she was laid to rest near its flowing waters.

Over the past few decades, a great deal of information has been written and published about the different parts of Dykeman's life and her works, but none have discussed the entirety of her life and its connection to the French Broad. Many newspaper articles details of Wilma's life, upbringing, and scholarly work can be found. Quintin Ellison's news article "Dykeman Leaves Tall Literary, Civic Legacy"³ discusses her upbringing in Asheville and her life with her family. Ellison goes on to discuss Dykeman's married life and how she had travelled all across the world, meeting many famous people such as the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The same is true within Fred Brown's article entitled "Appalachian Journal: Author Catches Land's Grace on Paper."⁴ In this article Brown discusses Dykeman's upbringing and married life. He also talks about her connection to the family of Thomas Wolfe. Brown highlights the many literary awards that Dykeman was endowed with as well as the title of "Historian of the State of Tennessee" that was bestowed upon her by the Governor of Tennessee from 1982-2002.

³ Quintin Ellison, "Dykeman leaves tall literary, civic legacy.," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, December 24, 2006, <http://www.citizen-times.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200661223045> (accessed October 13, 2012).

⁴ Fred Brown, "Appalachian Journal: Author captures land's grace on paper," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, April 18, 2004, http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/news_columnists/article/0,1406,KNS_359_5235519,00.html (accessed October 20, 2012).

Other scholars have written on the topic of Dykeman in regards to her social justice work. In Oliver King Jones III's article "Social Criticisms in the works of Wilma Dykeman,"⁵ he discusses and highlights how in many of Dykeman's works a theme of social and civil rights prevails. Jones only grazes the surface of how these themes are present in her work, and does not discuss how she was an activist in her day to day life.

Pete Daniel also discusses Dykeman's fight for social justice in his book *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950's*. Daniel highlights how Dykeman and her husband, Jim Stokely, called for social equality in their books. With the publication of their book *Neither Black Nor White*, Dykeman and Stokely received some backlash over demanding social equality in the still racist south. Daniel talks about how Dykeman fearlessly stood up to her detractors and defended her call for social equality.⁶

Few scholars go into detail on Dykeman's work as an environmentalist, and even then the work done on the topic is shallow and vague. In James W. Clark's article "Wilma Dykeman: Her time and the River,"⁷ he states that Dykeman worked to promote environmental justice, but does not really explain how she did so. The same is true of Nancy K. Jentsch and Danny L. Miller's article "Lighting the Fuse: Wilma Dykeman and Sharyn McCrumb as Appalachian 'Activists'."⁸ Once again, Dykeman is pinned as being an activist for environmental justice, but her work and involvement in movements for environmental justice is not mentioned.

⁵ Oliver King Jones III, "Social Criticism in the Works of Wilma Dykeman," In *An American Vein: Critical Readings in Appalachian Literature*, (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2005), 73-90, *MLA International Bibliography*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 22, 2012).

⁶ Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950's*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: UNC Press, 2000).

⁷ James W. Clark, 2007, "Wilma Dykeman: Her time and the River," *Thomas Wolfe Review* 31, no. 1-2: 95-99, *MLA International Bibliography*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 18, 2012).

⁸ Nancy K. Jentsch and Danny L. Miller, 2005, "Lighting the Fuse: Wilma Dykeman and Sharyn McCrumb as Appalachian 'Activists'," In *Beyond Hill and Hollow: Original Readings in Appalachian Women's Studies*, (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2005), 75-94, *MLA International Bibliography*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 30, 2012).

The unique contribution that this thesis makes in the study of Wilma Dykeman is its focus on Dykeman's interconnectedness to the French Broad River throughout the entirety of her life. No other scholarly works seem to focus on this eternal connection, making this thesis pertinent to the study of Dykeman's life as a whole. This thesis will make a link between Dykeman's connection to the French Broad River and how this relationship also earned her the title of being an environmental activist.

"Watee comin' down!" These were the first words spoken by the young Wilma Dykeman in regards to the Beaverdam Creek, a tributary of the French Broad River, which ran behind her house and shaped the valley in which she lived, while it also shaped her future.⁹ Dykeman was born to Willard and Bonnie Cole Dykeman on May 20, 1920. She was their only child, but she did have an older half sibling through her father, named Jerome. Her father, Willard, was a native of New York who found his way to Western North Carolina when he was widowed after the death of his first wife. Her mother, Bonnie, was a native of Western North Carolina and had grown up on the banks of Reems Creek, a tributary of the French Broad watershed system. Bonnie's love for the water and forest were cultivated by the lush surroundings that encompassed her during her childhood. It was these same surroundings that drew the widowed Willard from New York to the mountains of Appalachia. Willard and Bonnie quickly fell in love and married, ignoring the wishes of her parents and their 37 year age difference. They established a house that was tucked in the woods and sat beside the Beaverdam Creek. Once Wilma was born, they found someone with whom they could share their love of nature. They wanted to educate Wilma about her surroundings and to teach her that everything

⁹ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

in the world is interconnected, and that it was the responsibility of the world's citizens to recognize and protect this relationship.¹⁰

Wilma grew up having her parents read stories to her out of the *New York Herald* and other newspapers, planting the seed for her love of writing. She especially loved the stories by Thornton Burgess. Burgess' stories personified animals and brought nature to life. Willard would always read the stories to Wilma, making the animals feel as if they were actual people in her life. These stories brought the interconnectedness of nature even more close to Wilma's heart, fueling a love and respect that would be forever.¹¹

The Dykeman's often took their daughter's hand and guided her to the bubbling creek behind their house to explain to her the water cycle and the other workings of nature, some things that were not often taught in schools at the time. Willard explained to Wilma that the water that ran through their little creek would slowly make its way to the larger French Broad River.¹² In a poem about things Wilma was thankful for, she wrote, "I heard a rippling sound... I saw a thing a moving, It glittered oh, so bright. I went around the bend, and I saw a wondrous sight... A brook."¹³

Wilma grew up loving the country home in which she lived, and her parent's love of nature rubbed off on her. At age nine she wrote, "I look from my bedroom window, At the hillside so bright and green, The oak, the birch, and the maple, With the laurel in between... Oh how I love the country, The air so fresh and free."¹⁴ As Wilma began school, she would often write poems and papers about how much she loved the surroundings of her small country home.

¹⁰ Wilma Dykeman, "The Past is Never Dead, It's Not Even Past," In *Bloodroot: Reflections on Place by Appalachian Writers*, Joyce Dyer, ed, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 46.

¹¹ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

¹² Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

¹³ Wilma Dykeman, "Thankfulness," In Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook, Jerome Dykeman Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

¹⁴ Wilma Dykeman, "From My Bedroom Window," In Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook, Jerome Dykeman Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

In her paper “Why the Country is a Good Place to Live” Wilma wrote, “We feel blessed in having such a beautiful sight.”¹⁵

Wilma cultivated her love of writing and nature at Grace School, now Ira B. Jones Elementary School. Wilma thrived in school, always receiving high marks in most subjects, except arithmetic and music. Wilma demonstrated special talents in writing and spelling, as she received many awards for winning spelling bees and writing competitions at her school. Many of Wilma’s poems and excerpts of her papers were published in the local paper. Wilma continued to flourish at school and in her home life, as she had parents who loved her and supported her deeply. No one predicted that this loving family’s happiness would come to a screeching halt when Wilma was only fourteen years old.¹⁶

In 1934, Willard Dykeman, the man who had engrained the love for the river in Dykeman’s heart, suddenly died of a massive heart attack. Even though Willard 75 years old, he was generally healthy and active, and his sudden death was a tragic loss to his family, but especially to Wilma.¹⁷ Wilma cited her father as being her one true hero, and the one who taught her a love for nature and to have a sense of curiosity. “...But he’s the greatest hero of them all to me, Because this man I am speaking of, he’s my Dad, you see.”¹⁸ Wilma had a hard time dealing with her father’s death, but had the loving care of her mother to soothe her. Wilma was also able to look up to her big half brother Jerome, because he was so much like their father in many ways. Jerome was involved in the conservation efforts of the Craggy Mountains, where he also assisted in developing a scenic overlook of the mountains for the public. The representative

¹⁵Wilma Dykeman, “Why the Country is a Good Place to Live,” In Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook, Jerome Dykeman Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

¹⁶ Report Card 1927-1928 Report Card promoting Wilma to 3a Grade, In Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook, Jerome Dykeman Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

¹⁷ “Willard J. Dykeman Dies of Heart Attack at His Home in Asheville, N.C.,” In Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook, Jerome Dykeman Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

¹⁸ Wilma Dykeman, “My Hero,” In Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook, Jerome Dykeman Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

of Buncombe County to the North Carolina House at that time, Roy A. Taylor, wrote to Jerome, in reference to his work on the Craggy Mountain scenic overlook development, stating “You have worked hard and deserve the most credit.”¹⁹ Wilma grew up having a supporting and loving family that taught her to love and respect the world around her. The lessons they taught her in her early years most certainly affected who she became to be in later life, and the lessons all started with the glistening creek in her backyard.

Dykeman spent her early college years at a college that kept her close to the French Broad River water shed. Upon graduating high school as the valedictorian, Dykeman decided to attend junior college at Asheville-Biltmore College, present day UNC Asheville. At Biltmore College, Dykeman further developed her love of writing as she wrote for the school’s literary magazine, the *Bluets*. Dykeman often graced the pages of the *Bluets* with her outstanding poetry. The different genres of poetry that Dykeman wrote in her early college years reflected the many types of genres she would write in her later life. Dykeman’s poetry was at times reminiscent of the home she had grown up in. “Yesterday I wanted to have a little cottage snug... With a window where the morning sun could shed its light to make things bright.”²⁰ Some of Dykeman’s poetry was not so carefree and airy though, as some was much more dramatic. “They said she died with a heart disease... The heart disease was you!”²¹ These poems pegged Dykeman as being a talented writer early on, but she had a different career path in mind as she moved on from Asheville-Biltmore College.

¹⁹ Representative Roy A. Taylor to Jerome Dykeman, Jerome Dykeman Papers, 5,1, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

²⁰ Wilma Dykeman, “Inconsistency,” *Bluets* 10, 2 (May 1937), University Archives, D.H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

²¹ Wilma Dykeman, “Autopsy,” *Bluets* 10, 2 (May 1937), University Archives, D.H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Dykeman traveled to the Chicago, Illinois area in 1938 to attend Northwestern University, where she received a scholarship, briefly breaking her close connection to the river that had been a steady presence in her life until then. At Northwestern, she studied acting, as she was certain that she was destined to be a famous actress upon the stages of Broadway.²² Dykeman graduated in 1940 with her sights set on New York City. She hoped she would land a job in New York City so that she would be close to Broadway and hopefully, eventually be discovered. Dykeman did get a job in New York City, working at Miss Finch's finishing school, and planned to move there in the fall of 1940.²³

During the summer of 1940, Dykeman came home to visit her family and spend time with them before she made the permanent move up North, but that changed when she met a man who shared her connection to the French Broad River water shed. As she was preparing to leave her child home behind for the bright lights of the big city, she never expected that someone would convince her to give up her dream of acting, and stay in the Appalachian Mountains. That is exactly what happened though after Thomas Wolfe's younger sister, Mabel Wolfe, introduced Dykeman to the strapping young man from East Tennessee named James R. Stokely Jr.²⁴ Stokely's family owned the Stokely Brothers Canning Company, which had bought out the Van Camp Company in the early 1930's.²⁵ Stokely had a lot in common with Dykeman. The pair both loved writing, poetry, music, and nature. The two shared the connection of the French Broad River water shed, as Stokely grew up in Newport, Tennessee, near the Pigeon River, a tributary of the French Broad. The two quickly fell in love and decided that only after a few dates that they were going to be married. Dykeman sent word to New York City to her potential

²² Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

²³ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

²⁴ James W. Clark Jr. 2007, "Wilma Dykeman: Her time and the River," *Thomas Wolfe Review* 31, no. 1-2: 95-99, *MLA "International Bibliography*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 18, 2012).

²⁵ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

employer to inform her that she would no longer be taking the job because she was getting married. The employer responded with, “This is the trouble with hiring young women.”²⁶

After only knowing each other for a short period of time, Dykeman and Stokely married in October of 1940 and moved to East Tennessee. The newlyweds bought a small house tucked in the English Mountains, near Carson Creek, another tributary of the French Broad River watershed.²⁷ The pair wrote a little and just enjoyed each other’s company during the first few years of their marriage. They began growing an apple orchard near their home in the mid forties, and they believed that was what they were going to do as a career for the rest of their lives. When the fifties began the price of shipping items skyrocketed, and it cost more for the Stokely’s to ship a bag of apples than they got paid for the apples. They decided that the apple business could no longer support their family, which now included two young sons. The two pondered about what their next career move should be, and they decided to follow their hearts and their passions. They wanted to make careers out of writing, and they started brainstorming about what would be their first major works.²⁸

Stokely approached Dykeman with the idea of writing a book about the French Broad River because they both had grown up near its shores, so they knew a great deal about it already. Dykeman became determined to write a book about the French Broad, the river that had been with her throughout her entire life. Both Dykeman and Stokely were aware of a new series being published by Rinehart and Company entitled the Rivers in America series. Dykeman decided that writing a book about the French Broad River from a historical and cultural perspective would be the perfect first major work for her to tackle, and that it would be a perfect addition to

²⁶ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

²⁷ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

²⁸ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

the Rivers in America series. She believed this was a good project for her because the river had always been an important part of her life, and she wanted it to get the due respect it deserved.²⁹

Dykeman and Stokely began travelling all around the French Broad River Basin collecting the necessary information to write the book. The couple spent endless hours gathering research through Asheville's Pack Library. The two also made their way through the country sides conducting interviews and collecting folk stories from the locals. Dykeman even interviewed factory owners, questioning them about their waste disposal systems. After collecting a vast amount of information, Dykeman began writing.³⁰

Dykeman wrote Rinehart and Company about if they would be interested in publishing a book on the French Broad River.³¹ Rinehart's editors thought that Dykeman's proposal was a joke, as they had never even heard of a river by that name. Eventually, one of the editors who had been to Western North Carolina confirmed that they had seen a small river named the French Broad during their visit.³²

After completing the first chapter of the book, she sent a copy of the manuscript to the Rinehart and Company publishers in hopes of receiving a favorable response. The first reaction that Dykeman received was not quite what she expected. The answer from the company was a resounding "no" as they believed the river was too small to be included in a series that discussed such great rivers as the Mississippi and Ohio. One editor added an after note stating that, "However, if it were done interestingly enough, we would publish a book on a river no bigger than a man's hand."³³ Dykeman noted that this was just the encouragement she needed to keep writing the book. After completing the second chapter of the book, she sent it back to Rinehart

²⁹ Bernadette Hoyle, "An Asheville Author Talks Shop," *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 15, 1954.

³⁰ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

³¹ Bernadette Hoyle, "An Asheville Author Talks Shop," *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 15, 1954.

³² "Wilma Dykeman- She Casts a Tall Shadow," *Southern Living*, June 1966.

³³ Bernadette Hoyle, "An Asheville Author Talks Shop," *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 15, 1954.

and Company who asked for her to send more. After the completion of the third chapter, Rinehart and Company offered Dykeman a contract.³⁴

Once the book was completed and submitted to be edited, Rinehart and Company told Dykeman that the book was great, but one chapter would need to be omitted. This chapter was entitled “Who Killed the French Broad?” and dealt with the horrendous water pollution that was degrading the quality of water in the French Broad. Rinehart and Company believed that the inclusion of this chapter would “tarnish the romantic feeling of the book”.³⁵ However, Dykeman would not budge on the subject matter, and made the offer of the whole book or nothing. Rinehart and Company eventually relented and agreed to publish the book including the water pollution chapter.³⁶

The French Broad proved to be a book that told the story of the French Broad River and its people in a beautiful way while also pointing out the dangers that threatened its pristine waters. Dykeman wrote of the French Broad region as being a unique place that was teeming with life. “For the French Broad is, above all, a region of life, with all the richness and paradox of life.”³⁷ She described the people of, what she referred to as, French Broad Country as being a strong and hardworking people. The book makes a strong case for how different the French Broad is from most rivers. “For a unique feature of the French Broad is that it begins with four large tributaries flowing from the four cardinal points of the compass and all called by the rivers’ final name.”³⁸

³⁴ Bernadette Hoyle, “An Asheville Author Talks Shop,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 15, 1954.

³⁵ Wilma Dykeman and Richard Marius, “The Rooted Heart and the Ranging Intellect: A Conversation,” *Iron Mountain Review* 5 (Spring 1989): 8-13.

³⁶ Bernadette Hoyle, “An Asheville Author Talks Shop,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 15, 1954.

³⁷ Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999), 10.

³⁸ Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999), 8.

Dykeman also shocked many with her chapter “Who Killed the French Broad?” by pointing out the dangers that threatened a river that had defined the region and its people for so long. The French Broad Country is particularly a region of springs that provides water for people to drink, farm, and run their businesses. She describes it as “...a living thing; it is life itself.”³⁹ Dykeman paints a picture of the importance and the demand for the river’s water, while also revealing the horrors of pollution that were destroying this critical natural source. “One by one we allowed ourselves and others to begin the rape which finally (in places) ended in the murder of the French Broad.”⁴⁰ She ended the chapter with a challenge for North Carolina and Tennessee, the states in which the French Broad water shed is located. “Let the people’s will, then, speak with a law saying this killing of the French Broad must cease. A law for both of the states of the river, affirming that each shall clean up its portion of the river.”⁴¹ With such a provocative chapter and wonderful stories of heritage, *The French Broad* proved to be a book that gained rave reviews, and propelled Dykeman into a career of professional writing.

The great success of *The French Broad* made Dykeman famous in the literary world, but especially in her small hometown of Asheville. In the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, they often promoted Dykeman’s book as being a great gift for anyone, especially for locals. “For a Christmas Gift of Lasting Pleasure Give... “The French Broad” By Wilma Dykeman.”⁴² The newspaper also published articles stating “With warmth, understanding and humor, Miss Dykeman unfolds the panoramic history of the river from the happy and peaceful yesterday.” Locals believed that “Miss Dykeman’s French Broad book matched the flow and beauty of the

³⁹ Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999), 282.

⁴⁰ Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999), 281.

⁴¹ Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999), 292.

⁴² “For a Christmas Gift of Lasting Pleasure Give... “The French Broad” By Wilma Dykeman,” *Asheville Citizen Times*, December 11, 1955.

river.”⁴³ National books reviews in publications such as the *Boston Post* claimed “There is enough material in this volume to satisfy the most ardent addict of folklore, history, and natural science...” These national book reviews brought more attention to the natural science aspects of the book than the local papers tended to. The local papers focused more on the cultural history and beautiful scenic imagery present in the book, and avoided the difficult topic of whom and what was damaging and destroying the river.⁴⁴

Publication of *The French Broad* gave Dykeman the push start she needed to become involved in activism around the Appalachian region and the inspiration to write other books and novels.⁴⁵ Dykeman wrote many historical books such as *The Battle of King’s Mountain 1780: With Fire and Sword*, *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander*, and *The Border States*.⁴⁶ All of these books usually centered on historical events and culture around the Appalachian area.⁴⁷ Stokely often assisted Dykeman in writing, particularly on the books about King’s Mountain and Will Alexander.⁴⁸ Writing together strengthened their relationship and their writing skills as they learned from one another. Dykeman was often called upon to write articles for newspapers and academic journals throughout the Eastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina regions. Every Sunday, Dykeman would write an article for the *Knoxville Sentinel* that discussed Appalachian culture and events.⁴⁹

⁴³ “Miss Dykeman’s French Broad Book Matches Flow and Beauty of River,” *Asheville Citizen Times*, April 24, 1955.

⁴⁴ Charles Lee Snyder, “River, Land, and People,” *Asheville Citizen Times*, November 14, 1955.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth S. D. Engelhardt, “Wilma Dykeman and the Women of Appalachia: The Ecology of Mid-Century Environmental

Activism.” *Women’s Studies Quarterly*. 29, no. 1 (2001): 155-169.

⁴⁶ Wilma Dykeman, *The Battle of King’s Mountain 1780: With Fire and Sword*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service: US department of the Interior, 1978).

⁴⁷ Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, *The Border States*, (New York, TIME-LIFE BOOKS, 1968).

⁴⁸ Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander*, (Chicago, Illinois, The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

⁴⁹ Fred Brown, “Appalachian Journal: Author captures land’s grace on paper,” *Knoxville News Sentinel*, April 18, 2004, http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/news_columnists/article/

Dykeman continued creating fictional works as she wrote novels that helped her gain a broader fan base and greater acknowledgement for being a talented writer, while also showing the influence the French Broad River Water shed had on all of her writings. One of her most loved works was *The Tall Woman*, which detailed the life and struggles of the fictional character Lydia McQueen as she worked to set up a school in her small southern town during the Civil War, a time of divided loyalties and opinions.⁵⁰ Many loved this novel for its ability to tell a remarkable story with beautiful scenic description of the Appalachian Mountains, especially the gorgeous springs of the mountains. "...tell me if you have ever set eyes on a bolder, finer spring than that? He went and looked. The natural bowl of water... stood clear and cold as glass."⁵¹ Throughout the novel, Dykeman often centers the scenery on the spring that Lydia McQueen is so proud of, showing the importance Dykeman put on the water shed in her own life.

Another famous novel written by Dykeman was *The Far Family*, a sequel to *The Tall Woman*. *The Far Family* details the life of Lydia McQueen's children and grandchildren as they live in the town of Thickety Creek in the post-Civil War south.⁵² This novel connects back to her first major work, *The French Broad*, in that it focuses on the importance of water in sustaining life and business. The storyline of *The Far Family* involves the family living along a long winding creek that locals claimed "...it's got as good water as I ever tasted" and was used to sustain the local saw mill.⁵³ Dykeman's ability to portray the citizens of Appalachia as passionate and driven individuals helped promote Appalachian literature, and even Southern literature as a whole.

0,1406,KNS_359_5235519,00.html (accessed October 20, 2012).

⁵⁰ Wilma Dykeman, *The Tall Woman*, (Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962).

⁵¹ Wilma Dykeman, *The Tall Woman*, (Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962), 87.

⁵² Wilma Dykeman, *The Far Family*, (Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966).

⁵³ Wilma Dykeman, *The Far Family*, (Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 52.

The work that Dykeman distinguished as being her favorite and the one she was “most proud of” was her novel *Return the Innocent Earth*, a book related back to her fight to save the water of the French Broad. The novel highlights the history and troubles of a canning company owned by the Clayburn family. The plot of the book centers on whether the family should use a new pesticide on their crops that is proven to prolong the life of a crop until it can be harvested. The struggle going on within the company is whether this pesticide is ethical and safe to use due to its toxic nature. The main character of the novel especially deals with this issue after he begins investigating the use of the pesticide after a crop harvester dies shortly after eating a crop freshly picked out of one of the Clayburn’s fields. The book discusses how the Clayburn’s fields needed “clean water to grow crops and sustain workers”, directly relating to the belief Dykeman lays out in *The French Broad* about how clean water is needed for human sustainability and for running successful businesses.⁵⁴ Dykeman would never say whether the novel was inspired by her husband’s family’s canning company or not. The book does however reflect Dykeman’s belief in the interconnectedness of nature as she has her main character argue that no pesticide should be used that can cause “damage to air or water or land, or to the health of a human being.”⁵⁵ Through this novel Dykeman was able to show her personal beliefs in a plausible situation, making it her favorite work she created.

The work Dykeman began with *The French Broad* continued on as she pushed for environmental justice. Dykeman participated in many environmental rallies throughout the region. One such rally was a march through the Smokies in protest of the proposition of tearing down a great deal of the national forest, in the Great Smokies National Park, to build a new road connecting North Carolina with Tennessee. Dykeman and Stokely participated in the march

⁵⁴ Wilma Dykeman, *Return the Innocent Earth*, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1973), 159.

⁵⁵ Wilma Dykeman, *Return the Innocent Earth*, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1973), 417.

because she believed “the road construction would destroy habitats and pollute nearby streams.” Dykeman also participated in protests of this nature to honor her late brother who had fought to save the mountain forests.⁵⁶

Publishing *The French Broad* prompted Dykeman to use her influence and knowledge to save the environment in other ways while always thinking about preserving the land of the French Broad River Country that she loved so dearly. She wanted to protect all facets of the environment and would choose to save the environment over gaining money. When the Stokely family hit hard times in the 1970’s while inflation was on the rise and gas prices rose exponentially. The Stokely’s were not sure what they would do for money to survive. That is when Jim Stokely proposed the family sell the land they owned in the English Mountains so that that the trees could be cut down for timber. Dykeman immediately rejected the idea, saying she could not live with herself after allowing those beautiful forests to be destroyed.⁵⁷ Dykeman took it upon herself to find a solution to the problem, and that is just what she did. She agreed to write a book that she had been approached about writing previously, but had declined due to the fact it was not really her style of writing. Dykeman made the book fit her style though and she ended up writing the book *Too Many People, Too Little Love: Edna Rankin McKinnon: Pioneer of Birth Control*.⁵⁸ Dykeman put her personal spin on the book by describing the use of birth control as not only being a human rights issue, but as being an environmental rights issue as well. When asked how the book could promote environmental preservation Dykeman responded, “We all read these books about the disappearing wild life, the disappearing elephant, all these endangered species-and yet the pressure of people and population on the land is the

⁵⁶ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

⁵⁷ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

⁵⁸ Wilma Dykeman, *Too Many People, Too Little Love: Edna Rankin McKinnon: Pioneer of Birth Control*, (Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974).

great pressure there. And yet apparently no one in all these various committees and environmental groups sees the relationship.”⁵⁹ Dykeman saw that there was a direct connection between feminism and environmentalism, but not as many others could make the same connection.⁶⁰

Almost half a century after the publication of *The French Broad*, Dykeman was brought into court to be the star witness in the case against the ‘killers’ of the French Broad River watershed. The personal belief of Wilma Dykeman was that “Everything is connected and will happen in due time”, and this certainly proved true in this case.⁶¹ In the late 1980’s, a group of approximately 2,600 citizens in the Eastern region of Tennessee, from Cocke, Jefferson, and Sevier counties, filed a class action law suit against the Champion International Corporation for polluting the Pigeon River, tributary of the French Broad.⁶² The Champion International Corporation owned the large Champion Paper Mill that was located in Canton, North Carolina, only about twenty miles east of the North Carolina/Tennessee line. The citizens of Eastern Tennessee complained in the law suit that

Champion's pulp and paper mill in Canton, North Carolina, discharges waste water into the Pigeon River which contains many toxic chemicals; that its paper-making process also discolors the river's water and makes it foul-smelling; that Champion's use of the river constitutes a private nuisance that unreasonably interferes with their rights as riparian property owners; and that this use is also a trespass contaminating their land and usable water.⁶³

⁵⁹ Wilma Dykeman and Richard Marius, “The Rooted Heart and the Ranging Intellect: A Conversation,” *Iron Mountain Review* 5 (Spring 1989): 8-13.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth S. D. Engelhardt, *The Tangled Roots of Feminism, Environmentalism, and Appalachian Literature*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 8.

⁶¹ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

⁶² “J. A. SHULTS, ET AL. v. CHAMPION INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION NO. CIV-2-91-33 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE, GREENEVILLE DIVISION.” http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/John-Tucker/Courses/esc430/esc430mat/pig/Pigeonlinks/class_act_6.5.htm (accessed January 10, 2013.)

⁶³ “J. A. SHULTS, ET AL. v. CHAMPION INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION NO. CIV-2-91-33 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE, GREENEVILLE DIVISION.” http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/John-Tucker/Courses/esc430/esc430mat/pig/Pigeonlinks/class_act_6.5.htm (accessed January 10, 2013.)

Locals claimed at times the river would be the same color as Coca-Cola and smelled like raw sewage. The problem had been persistent even before the writing of *The French Broad*, and by the 1980's citizens of Eastern Tennessee had had enough and decided to stand up to this large company and demand change. Areas of Appalachia had been fighting against the negative consequences of things such as coal mining, but before now little had been done about water pollution, making this lawsuit unlike any before.⁶⁴

The lawsuit against Champion not only created a rift between the parties directly involved, but also between the state governments of North Carolina and Tennessee, both of which Dykeman called "home". North Carolina had routinely reissued Champion's waste water discharge permit, clearly neglecting the high amounts of toxins and the high temperature of the waste water that was pumped into the Pigeon River.⁶⁵ The issue of the river's health clearly paled in comparison to the economic benefit that North Carolina, especially Western North Carolina, gained from the presence of Champion's Paper Mill.⁶⁶ Champion employed upward of 2,000 people in the Western region of North Carolina, and pumped about 210 million dollars into the local economy. Locals were terrified when Champion stated that in order to meet the standards that the EPA and lawsuit filers wanted they would have to reduce their operations and cut their work force in half.⁶⁷ The prospect of over 1,000 Western North Carolinian citizens being laid off did not sit well with many residents in Canton. Locals claimed that their city

⁶⁴ Shannon Elizabeth Bell and Yvonne A. Braun, 2010, "Coal, Identity, and the Gendering of Environmental Justice Activism in Central Appalachia," *Gender & Society* 24, no. 6: 794-813. *SocINDEX with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 20, 2012).

⁶⁵ David Treadwell, "Paper Mill Fights EPA Control: Jobs vs. Pollution: 2 States Clash Over River Cleanup," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-07-11/news/mn-3639_1_north-carolina (accessed January 10, 2013).

⁶⁶ Kathryn Newfont, *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina*, (Athens, GA: Athens University of Georgia Press, 2012), 21.

⁶⁷ David Treadwell, "Paper Mill Fights EPA Control: Jobs vs. Pollution: 2 States Clash Over River Cleanup," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1989.

would be “dead” without Champion. Tennesseans claimed that with Champion, they were dead. Some Tennessee citizens near the river had reported that the pollution from the river had caused family members to develop cancer, and in some cases die. The fight between the two groups was clearly against Dykeman’s idea of economic and environmental cooperation.⁶⁸ The growing dissonance among the rival groups eventually caused the governors of both states to step into the issue. The governors of both states had many heated arguments over the issue that never led to any type of agreement. The Governor of North Carolina at the time, James G. Martin, stated “North Carolina is being injured by an irrational attitude by the Tennessee government. We don’t like it.”⁶⁹ The legislators of each state got involved as well, with the legislators of North Carolina going as far as trying to ban the sale of Tennessee products such as Tennessee Sippin’ Whiskey. The battle even spilled over into the halls of Congress as representatives from different states weighed in on the issue.⁷⁰

The EPA’s involvement in trying to enforce North Carolina’s cleanup of the river caused Dykeman’s home states a massive amount of grief as well. Due to the complaints that the EPA was receiving from the Tennessee border citizens, the EPA vetoed the permit issued by North Carolina to Champion.⁷¹ After siding with the citizens of Tennessee, the EPA regional office in Atlanta received several angry letters and phone calls, some even threatening to kill those who

⁶⁸ Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition, (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999), 281.

⁶⁹ David Treadwell, “Paper Mill Fights EPA Control: Jobs vs. Pollution: 2 States Clash Over River Cleanup,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1989.

⁷⁰ David Treadwell, “Paper Mill Fights EPA Control: Jobs vs. Pollution: 2 States Clash Over River Cleanup,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1989.

⁷¹ Jack E Davis, 2004, “Lord, We’re Just Trying to Save Your Water”: Environmental Activism and Dissent in the Appalachian South,” *Journal of American History* 91, no.1: 340-342, *America: History and Life with Full text*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 17, 2012).

were involved with the case. A water qualities standard coordinator was quoted in saying “We have never dealt with an issue quite like this”, in reference to the Champion pollution case.⁷²

Few lawyers were willing to take on the case and demand justice for the French Broad water shed as Dykeman did in her book, because of the difficulty that presented itself in the chance of actually winning the case and achieving change. A young, energetic lawyer named Gordon Ball took on the case of suing the giant Champion International Company. A native of Cocke County Tennessee, Ball had witnessed the devastation of the pollution first hand. Ball saw the need for taking immediate action against the company as many local citizens claimed that the contaminated water produced three-eyed fish was also causing locals to develop various types of cancers. Doctors stated that it was possible that consuming this polluted water could lead to cancer, but no specific cases were ever proved to be a direct result of the river’s pollution.⁷³ Ball certainly took a huge gamble on this case as Champion had hired the very experienced and talented lawyer Howard Baker to defend their company against this lawsuit. He was the former Senate republican majority leader, Ronald Reagan’s Chief of Staff, a member of the senate committee that investigated Watergate, and part of one of the largest law firms in the world. The fight between the two battled on as settlements were offered, but no one could ever come to an agreement on an arrangement that would pacify both sides.⁷⁴

The fight for saving the French Broad water shed finally got its day in court as the case was brought before a judge in 1992.⁷⁵ The case was heard in a federal court in Johnson City, Tennessee. Both sides were confident in their case as Bob Turner, spokesperson for Champion International, stated, “We’ve said from the beginning that once we had the chance to state our

⁷² David Treadwell, “Paper Mill Fights EPA Control: Jobs vs. Pollution: 2 States Clash Over River Cleanup,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1989.

⁷³ Gordon Ball, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, February 5, 2013.

⁷⁴ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

⁷⁵ Gordon Ball, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, February 5, 2013.

case to the jury, we will prevail.”⁷⁶ Ball believed he had a great chance at winning the trial as well. “We’ve got a good case, a case we want the jury to hear.”⁷⁷ Also, Ball thought the case would be a monumental one, pledging that he was “...going to make Watergate look like a Sunday picnic.”⁷⁸ In preparing for the case, Ball searched diligently for expert witnesses who would assist in winning the case against Champion. It did not take long for Ball to reach out for the knowledge and assistance of Dykeman. Dykeman’s *The French Broad* was an excellent addition to the case, as it gave background information about the river and the problems that threatened its complete destruction.⁷⁹

Dykeman was called to the stand by Ball as his first witness so that she could establish the historic nature of the problem with the French Broad water shed and the grave consequences it created. In her testimony Dykeman recalled how she interviewed Reuben Robertson, the former Chairmen of Champion, in the 1950’s during her research for *The French Broad*. Dykeman stated that during the interview Robertson was asked how he felt about the constant odorous smell that enveloped the area where Champion was located to which he responded, “We don’t mind that. Just smells like money to us.”⁸⁰ She also recalled asking Robertson about when the company intended to clean up the pollution they were creating, Robertson simply responded “We will when we have to.”⁸¹ Dykeman also made the point of describing the grave affects the pollution was having on the area not only physically, but economically as well. She reiterated the points made in her book about how the Appalachian region is known as a place to go to for a retreat in nature. Many of these retreaters would participate in activities such as camping and

⁷⁶ John Satterfield, “Lawsuit Against Champion Ready to Begin.” *Knoxville News Sentinel*. September 14, 1992.

⁷⁷ Michael Weaver, “Lawsuit Against Champion Ready for Trial.” *Asheville Citizen Times*. September 14, 1992.

⁷⁸ Michael Weaver, “Champion Trial Gets Underway,” *Asheville Citizen Times*, September 15, 1992.

⁷⁹ Deposition of Wilma Dykeman Stokely, Monday, June 29, 1992, Gordon Ball Law Firm Files, Knoxville, Tennessee, sent via email to author on February 27, 2013.

⁸⁰ Wilma Dykeman Stokely Testimony, September 8, 1992, Gordon Ball Law Firm Files, Knoxville, Tennessee, sent via email to author on February 27, 2013.

⁸¹ Michael Weaver, “Champion Trial Gets Underway,” *Asheville Citizen Times*, September 15, 1992.

fishing, but the pollution of the river was making these activities impossible in the Eastern Tennessee area, costing the region millions in tourist money.⁸² The statements made by Dykeman in the opening proceedings of the case established how long the problem had been apparent, while also showing the blatant apathy of Champion on the issue.

The cross examiner from the Champion defense team, Louis Woolf, worked quickly to disprove the claims made by Dykeman. As Woolf approached the witness stand, he carried with him a glass of water that he claimed was taken directly from the Pigeon River in an area that was said to be highly polluted. Witnesses in the courtroom said Woolf had obviously used some chemical to transform the original color of the water, because they claimed it was not at all the same color of the water found in the Pigeon River near their home.⁸³ However, Woolf held up the water and asked the question “Is this really what we are fighting over?” He then asked Dykeman if the water looked bad to her, because it looked perfectly fine to him. Dykeman shocked Woolf and the rest of the room by asking the lawyer if he would drink that water himself. Woolf reluctantly stated that he would, only to add the disclaimer that he would not at the moment.⁸⁴ That interaction gained a lot of publicity in the case, especially when a photographer captured a picture of a young boy approaching Woolf with a glass of Pigeon River water as he exited the courthouse, only to have Woolf throw his hands up in disgust as he refused to drink the same water he claimed was not worth fighting over.⁸⁵

After Dykeman’s testimony, the case continued on for a great deal of time before it was eventually decided that the Champion International Company was indeed responsible for the

⁸² Wilma Dykeman Stokely Testimony, September 8, 1992, Gordon Ball Law Firm Files, Knoxville, Tennessee, sent via email to author on February 27, 2013.

⁸³ Gordon Ball, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, February 5, 2013.

⁸⁴ Wilma Dykeman Stokely Testimony, , September 8, 1992, Gordon Ball Law Firm Files, Knoxville, Tennessee, sent via email to author on February 27, 2013.

⁸⁵ John Satterfield, “Attorney Says He’d Sip From Pigeon,” *Knoxville News Sentinel*, September 16, 1992.

damages and pollution to the Pigeon River. The company was ordered to pay 6.5 million dollars to compensate the citizens who were personally affected by the pollution.⁸⁶ Dykeman and her expert knowledge and blunt questions were cited as being part of what helped win the case.⁸⁷ Even with the large settlement, the pollution did not completely cease. There are still countless news headlines over the past two decades about new law suits being filed against Champion and its predecessor, Blue Ridge Paper Products, in regards to their facilities polluting the river.⁸⁸

It might have taken several decades, but one of the major killers of the French Broad that Dykeman highlighted in her book was brought to justice. The problem was not solved in that moment, but Dykeman's theory of everything happening in "due time" was found to be true as others finally realized a need for change and intervention that Dykeman had recognized nearly fifty years earlier.⁸⁹

Dykeman spent the latter years of her life inspiring and challenging others, just as she did when she helped save the French Broad. Dykeman travelled all around the Appalachian area giving inspirational talks and lectures to many different organizations. Many of these organizations invited Dykeman to talk to their groups in hopes that she would praise the work that they were doing to help the environment or society. These people often got more than they bargained for though, as Dykeman was not afraid to call people out on their shortcomings, and she would challenge them to have the strength to stand up and take initiative to make the changes that were needed. One such instance of this bravery is when Dykeman was invited to give a speech before the high ranking members of the Forest Service. Dykeman called out these men

⁸⁶ John Satterfield, "Lawsuit Against Champion is Settled," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, December 22, 1992.

⁸⁷ Gordon Ball, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, February 5, 2013.

⁸⁸ Leah Beth Ward, "Workers Wait for the Fate of Canton, N.C., Champion International Paper Mill," *Knight Ridder Tribune Archives*, April 28, 1998, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-20541661.html> (accessed December 30, 2012).

⁸⁹ Gordon Ball, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, February 5, 2013.

and women for not doing enough to protect the land that was under their charge. Dykeman was not only in the business of writing, but trying to get others on board in believing that we all can make a difference.⁹⁰

One way in which Dykeman continued her work to save the French Broad after the Champion trial was by working with RiverLink. RiverLink is a nonprofit organization in the Western North Carolina area that works towards the environmental and economic revitalization of the French Broad River Basin.⁹¹ RiverLink holds true to the same philosophies that Dykeman proposed in her book *The French Broad*, making her the “patroness saint” of the entire RiverLink program. The director of RiverLink, Karen Cragolin declared “Wilma Dykeman’s *The French Broad* is our bible. She connected the dots between environmental justice and economic development, which is a strong part of our program.”⁹²

Besides working on keeping the French Broad safe, writing was still a prominent part of Dykeman’s life in her later years. Dykeman mostly wrote articles for newspapers, magazines, and academic journals, but she wrote a few books that she especially cherished as being reflections of her life and her mission in life.⁹³ One such book was *Explorations*, in which Dykeman recalled the important moments and influences of her life. A major part of the work deals with Appalachia and the role of water in nature, reflecting the influence of the French Broad on her entire life. She wrote, “Moving water is the voice of the Smokies. There is no still water here.” She finishes the book with the statement, “Old friend [Appalachia], your roots run deep into the earth and into my life.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

⁹¹ RiverLink, “Wilma Dykeman Riverway,” 2009, http://www.riverlink.org/wilma_dykeman.asp. (accessed November 30, 2012).

⁹² Karen Cragolin, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 30, 2013.

⁹³ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

⁹⁴ Wilma Dykeman. *Explorations*. (Newport: Wakestone Books, 1984), 264.

The large influence that Dykeman has left on the entire Appalachian area can certainly be seen through her work with the French Broad, but also through the various awards and honors she received near the end of her life. One of these major honors was that she was named official State Historian for Tennessee from 1981-2002 by Governor Lamar Alexander. Other rewards ranged from being named Tennessee Conservation Writer of the Year, North Carolina Literature Award winner, the Pride of Tennessee award, and the Sidney Hillman Award for best book on civil liberties. Dykeman also received many honorary doctorate degrees from universities such as Tennessee Wesleyan and Maryville Colleges.⁹⁵ She also was the recipient of the North Carolina Society Award in 2001, where she made her famous “Roots and Branches” acceptance speech. In the speech she detailed her life and how major events such as the publication of *The French Broad* changed her life forever.⁹⁶ In all of these acceptance speeches and also in personal interviews she always gave credit to the profound influence her parents, children, and husband had on her entire career, especially Stokely since he suddenly passed away from a massive heart attack in the mid 1970’s.⁹⁷

Dykeman continued working and supporting the causes she loved right until the end of her life. In late 2006 Dykeman suffered a fall that led to a hip fracture. After the fracture, Dykeman’s health slowly declined as she was placed in a hospice facility, where she sadly died on December 22, 2006. The whole of the French Broad Country, which she lovingly named, mourned her death as she was remembered as being “the First Lady of Appalachian Literature” and the savior of the French Broad. She was laid to rest in the Beaverdam Baptist Church’s

⁹⁵ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

⁹⁶ Wilma Dykeman, *Roots and Branches*, (Chapel Hill: North Caroliniana Society and North Carolina Collection, 2001).

⁹⁷ Jim Stokely, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 16, 2013.

cemetery, which is close to her childhood home and overlooking her beloved Beaverdam Creek.⁹⁸

A place where Dykeman has clearly left a copious amount of influence is on the French Broad River itself. Her involvement with RiverLink and the content of *The French Broad* led RiverLink to establish a seventeen mile stretch of the French Broad River entitled “The Wilma Dykeman Riverway.”⁹⁹ The plan for the riverway is to establish a place for the citizens of Western North Carolina to get out and enjoy nature while also providing a place for entrepreneurs to establish their businesses. The director of the RiverLink program, Karen Cragnolin, cites Dykeman as sparking her interest in water conservation and for inspiring the establishment of the RiverLink program. *The French Broad* is known as being “the Bible” of the RiverLink program, with Dykeman’s ideas of environmental preservation and economic growth being the foundation for their organization. Cragnolin believes that “The riverway is a way to honor Dykeman’s work and beliefs in economic and environmental connections.” The organization also credits Dykeman for making it possible for them to work on improving the French Broad River, because without her the area’s citizens might not be aware of the importance of protecting the river.¹⁰⁰

Dykeman’s unbreakable bond with the French Broad River basin lasted throughout the entirety of her life. Even through her early childhood she demonstrated her deep respect and fascination with Mother Nature’s miracle that ran continuously through her backyard. The love her parent’s bestowed within her for nature and all of its parts always kept a special place in her mind and soul. Her connectedness to the river almost ended in an attempt to move to New York

⁹⁸ Margalit Fox, “Wilma Dykeman, 86, a Writer on the Environment and Race, Dies,” *New York Times*, December 29, 2006.

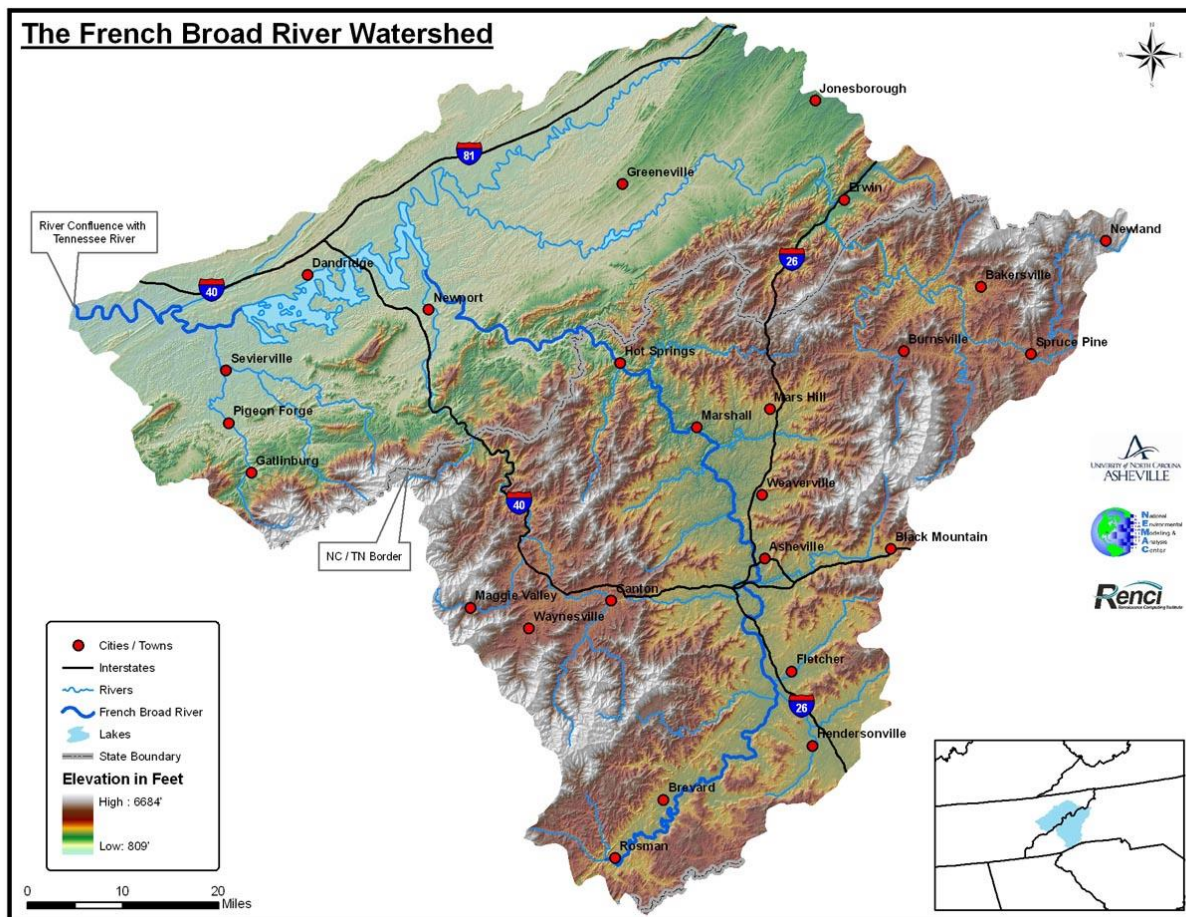
⁹⁹ RiverLink, “Wilma Dykeman Riverway,” 2009, http://www.riverlink.org/wilma_dykeman.asp. (accessed November 30, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Karen Cragnolin, interview by author, Asheville, North Carolina, January 30, 2013.

City, but fate saw that this connection should continue as she married Mr. Stokely and moved upstream. Their decision to make a living off of being authors ultimately defined Ms. Dykeman's destiny in her first publicized work, *The French Broad*. The attention that Dykeman brought to the French Broad's 'killer' did not have an immediate effect in cleaning up the river, but it did give her the distinction of being a successful author. It also gave her credit for recognizing the problem of water pollution years before Rachel Carson's famous book *Silent Spring* did.¹⁰¹ The writing of *The French Broad* led Dykeman to writing many other works and to be involved in various environmental rights movements. Though many of Dykeman's actions cannot be seen as an effort to protect the river at a mere glance, but at closer examination it can be seen that many of her actions always had the river and all elements of the environment in mind. Dykeman's want for justice for the river came along half a century later, as the people of eastern Tennessee decided to sue the 'killers' of the French Broad, Champion Paper Mill. Dykeman's expertise of the river and its pollution problem came primarily from her work that she had done many years before. Her wonderful testimony aided the people of Tennessee to win against Champion, and begin the process of bringing back life to the river. Dykeman spent the rest of her life inspiring others to do well and save the world in some way or another. She was not afraid to directly challenge people on their practices and dare them to do what was necessary to change it. After the sad and unfortunate death of Dykeman, her memory and link to the river was not forgotten, as she was immortalized by having a portion of the river bear her name. Her connection to the river is eternal and unending. The two are tied together in death as they were in life, and so should the connection remain between the river and the woman who saved it.

¹⁰¹ Anne Becher, *American Environmental Leaders*, (Millerton, NY: Greyhouse Publishing, 2008), 82.

Appendix



Courtesy of Western North Carolina Alliance. <http://wnca.org/programs/water-quality/save-the-french-broad/maps/>

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This is an interview with the Executive Director of the RiverLink program in Asheville, whom Dykeman had a profound effect upon.

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This is the personal deposition given by Wilma Dykeman in regards to the Champion pollution case.

Dykeman, Wilma. "Appalachia in Context." *An Appalachian Symposium: Essays Written in Honor of Cratis D. Williams*. Ed. J.W. Williamson. Boone: Appalachian State University Press, 1977. 28-42.

This essay explores what is considered to be the 'Appalachian Identity' and how that identity fits in regards to American identity.

---"Autopsy," *Bluets* 10, 2 (May 1937), University Archives, D.H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Dykeman was an editor and frequent contributor to this college literary magazine during her time as a student at Biltmore College.

--- *The Battle of King's Mountain 1780: With Fire and Sword*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service: US department of the Interior, 1978.

This book highlights the significance of the Battle of King's Mountain, while including Dykeman's literary brilliance and nature connections.

--- *Explorations*. Newport: Wakestone Books, 1984.

This book describes Dykeman's travels and includes her thoughts on things such as education and the environment.

--- *The Far Family*. Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966.

This novel continues telling the story of Lydia McQueen, from *The Tall Woman*, and her descendents as they try to adjust to life in the post-Civil War south.

--- *The French Broad*, reprint of the 1955 edition. Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1999.

This is Dykeman's first published book that put her on the map. It gives the history of the French Broad region and reveals the environmental hazards that threaten the river.

--- "From My Bedroom Window." Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook. Jerome Dykeman Collection. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

These poems are poems written by Dykeman at a very young age. The poems describe nature from the viewpoint of her window.

---"Inconsistency," *Bluets* 10, 2 (May 1937), University Archives, D.H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Dykeman was an editor and frequent contributor to this college literary magazine during her time as a student at Biltmore College.

---"My Hero." Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook. Jerome Dykeman Collection. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

A poem written by Wilma about how her father is her hero. It was written shortly before he died.

---"The Past is Never Dead, It's Not Even Past." *Bloodroot: Reflections on Place by Appalachian Writers*. Joyce Dyer, ed. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998.

In this writing Dykeman discusses her childhood and her life in Western North Carolina. She also explains why things such as nature are so important to her.

---*Return the Innocent Earth*. Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1973.

This book is about a young man who is struggling to stop companies from you using sprays on crops.

--- *Roots and Branches*. Chapel Hill: North Caroliniana Society and North Carolina Collection, 2001.

This acceptance speech for an award was given by Dykeman. In this speech, she speaks about things that matter most to her, especially the environment.

---*The Tall Woman*. Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962.

This book tells the story of a young woman in the Appalachian Mountains fighting to establish a school during the Civil War era.

---“Thankfulness.” Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook. Jerome Dykeman Collection. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

These poems are poems written by Dykeman at a very young age. The poems describe nature from the viewpoint of her window.

--- *Too Many People, Too Little Love: Edna Rankin McKinnon: Pioneer of Birth Control*. Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974.

This book gives a glimpse at a different type of genre Dykeman would sometimes write. It also shows how Dykeman believed everything was interconnected, such as population control and environmental justice.

--- “Why the Country is a Good Place to Live.” Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook. Jerome Dykeman Collection. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This short essay written by the young Wilma Dykeman highlights why she loves living in the country and demonstrates her love of nature from a young age.

Dykeman, Wilma and Richard Marius. “The Rooted Heart and the Ranging Intellect: A Conversation.” *Iron Mountain Review* 5 (Spring 1989): 8-13.

In this interview Dykeman reveals the things that have made the most impact on her writing, the environment and her family.

Dykeman, Wilma and James Stokely. *The Border States*, New York, TIME-LIFE BOOKS, 1968.

This book gives a social and physical description of the Border States, which includes Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

---*Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander*, Chicago, Illinois, The University of Chicago Press, 1962.

This book describes the South as it is trying to progress and overcome inequality and economic hardships in a modernizing America.

“For a Christmas Gift of Lasting Pleasure Give... “The French Broad” By Wilma Dykeman.” *Asheville Citizen Times*. December 11, 1955.

An ad in the newspaper describes Dykeman’s book as the perfect book to meet the needs of a lover of history and folklore.

Fox, Margalit. "Wilma Dykeman, 86, a Writer on the Environment and Race, Dies." *New York Times*, December 29, 2006.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/29/books/28dykeman.html?_r=0 (accessed December 1, 2012).

This is the news article in New York Times, announcing the death of Dykeman while also highlighting her accomplishments.

Hoyle, Bernadette. "An Asheville Author Talks Shop." *Raleigh News and Observer*. August 15, 1954.

This news article is an interview with Dykeman shortly after the publication of *The French Broad*, and she discusses the work that went into getting it published.

"J. A. SHULTS, ET AL. v. CHAMPION INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION NO. CIV-2-91-33 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE, GREENEVILLE DIVISION." http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/John-Tucker/Courses/esc430/esc430mat/pig/Pigeonlinks/class_act_6.5.htm (accessed January 10, 2013.)

This is the class action suit that the people of eastern Tennessee filed against Champion for polluting the Pigeon River.

"Miss Dykeman's French Broad Book Matches Flow and Beauty of River" *Asheville Citizen Times*. April 24, 1955.

This article is a review of *The French Broad* and it describes the beautiful writing of Dykeman.

Report Card 1927-1928 Report Card promoting Wilma to 3a Grade. Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook. Jerome Dykeman Collection. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Dykeman's report card from elementary school that details her talents in writing.

RiverLink. "Wilma Dykeman Riverway." 2009. http://www.riverlink.org/wilma_dykeman.asp. (accessed November 30, 2012).

This webpage highlights a program that is cleaning up the French Broad River, and it is named after Dykeman, undoubtedly for the attention she brought to the issue.

Satterfield, John. "Attorney Says He'd Sip From Pigeon." *Knoxville News Sentinel*. September 16, 1992. Microfilm from East Tennessee State University.

This news article highlights the famous moment in the trial when Dykeman dares the defense attorney to sip from a glass full of Pigeon River water.

--- "Lawsuit Against Champion is Settled." *Knoxville News Sentinel*. December 22, 1992. Knoxville, Tennessee: East Tennessee State University. Microfiche.

This article details the settlement given by Champion to the people who filed the class action law suit.

---“Lawsuit Against Champion Ready to Begin.” *Knoxville News Sentinel*. September 14, 1992. Knoxville, Tennessee: East Tennessee State University. Microfiche.

This news article from a Tennessee newspaper near Cocke County, discusses how Tennessee citizens feel about the trial and what they hope to gain from it.

Snyder, Charles Lee. “River, Land, and People.” *Asheville Citizen Times*. November 14, 1955.

This is another review of *The French Broad* which praises Dykeman’s informative yet beautiful work.

Stokely, Jim. Interview by author. Asheville, North Carolina. January 16, 2013.

This interview gives a more personal and in depth look at Dykeman’s life and connectedness to the French Broad River from the point of view and memories of her son.

Taylor, Representative Roy A. to Jerome Dykeman. Jerome Dykeman Papers. Jerome Dykeman Collection. 5,1. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This letter discusses Jerome Dykeman’s participation in establishing a scenic overlook at Craggy Mountain.

Treadwell, David. “Paper Mill Fights EPA Control: Jobs vs. Pollution: 2 States Clash Over River Cleanup.” *Los Angeles Times*. June 11, 1989. http://articles.latimes.com/1989-07-11/news/mn-3639_1_north-carolina. (accessed January 10, 2013.)

This news article discusses the beginning stages of the legal battle between the people of Tennessee and the Champion Paper Mill over river pollution.

Ward, Leah Beth. “Workers Wait for the Fate of Canton, N.C., Champion International Paper Mill.” *Knight Ridder Tribune Archives*. April 28, 1998. <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-20541661.html> (accessed December 30, 2012.)

This news article discusses the feelings of workers during the trial versus Champion.

Weaver, Michael. “Champion Trial Gets Underway.” *Asheville Citizen Times*. September 15, 1992. Asheville, North Carolina: Pack Library. Microfiche.

This news article gives the view of how people in Western North Carolina and the citizens of Eastern Tennessee were reacting to the beginning of the Champion trial.

--- "Lawsuit Against Champion Ready for Trial." *Asheville Citizen Times*. September 14, 1992. Asheville, North Carolina: Pack Library. Microfiche.

This news article gives the feelings coming from both sides of the trial as it gets ready to begin.

"Willard J. Dykeman Dies of Heart Attack at His Home in Asheville, N.C." In Jerome Dykeman Scrapbook. Jerome Dykeman Collection. D. H. Ramsey Library. Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This is a news article from Willard Dykeman's hometown about his death and funeral arrangements. The name of the newspaper, author, and date are not included in the clipping in the scrapbook.

"Wilma Dykeman- She Casts a Tall Shadow." *Southern Living*. June 1966.

Dykeman once again discusses the story of what it took to get *The French Broad* published.

Wilma Dykeman Stokely Testimony. September 8, 1992. Gordon Ball Law Firm Files. Knoxville, Tennessee. Sent via email to author from Gordon Ball on February 27, 2013.

This is the transcript of Wilma Dykeman's testimony during the Champion pollution case.

Secondary Sources

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This journal article highlights the beginning of environmental activism in central Appalachia in regards to coal mining and its environmental effects.

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This article discusses Dykeman's published works as well as her childhood, and what influenced her to want to be a writer of social and environmental issues.

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Clouse, Shawn and John Tucker. Pigeon River Interactive Program. A Hyperlink to Environmental Law. <http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/John-Tucker/Courses/esc430/esc430mat/pig/pigriver.html>. (accessed January 27, 2013).

This website developed by professors at the University of Tennessee, gives background knowledge about the pollution of the Pigeon River and the fight to save it.

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This book gives a broader historical view of what was going on in Southern Appalachian before Dykeman began to participate in environmental activism.

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