



Contact: Topper Sherwood
topper@toppersherwood.com

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**WV Journalist in Berlin
Publishes Labor War Novel, ‘Carla Rising’**

Veteran journalist and book author Topper Sherwood has written and published a new novel that offers a fascinating, well-researched personal drama about the “coalfield wars” of West Virginia during the early part of the 20th century.

Sherwood has issued his book *Carla Rising* as a paperback for regional distribution, working from his current home in Berlin, Germany. The book is being distributed to retailers in West Virginia and around the Appalachian region by Charleston-based [West Virginia Book Company](http://www.wvbookco.com) (www.wvbookco.com). Sherwood says *Carla Rising* is the result of his research into labor conflicts of the early 1920s, both in the United States and Europe.

“*Carla Rising* is about a woman who finds herself caught between two rival leaders in a workers’ rebellion against the regime of a brutal county sheriff and the coal company that pays him,” Sherwood said. “Personal conflicts are resolved during the final battle, based on the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain. The characters in the drama include labor organizers, a coal executive, the state governor and military leaders who command 2,500 U.S. troops and a squadron of bombing planes – actually part of the 1921 federal intervention in West Virginia.”

Information about the book is available at www.carlarising.com.

The “bad guys” in Sherwood’s novel include a local sheriff, who hires large numbers of strike-breaking “mine guards” as deputies. It was common practice for county sheriffs to sign on private-company “detectives” as strike-breakers, suppressing labor organizations in hundreds of small mining communities across the region. The state government of West Virginia banned the practice in 1935.

“I believe I’ve written a very good, literary romantic novel about this amazing and little-known American conflict,” Sherwood continued. “In five years of writing it, my work was inspired by the literature of German playwright Berthold Brecht, British journalist George Orwell and American novelist John Steinbeck.”

Sherwood is also the co-author of [Just Good Politics: The Life of Raymond Chafin, Appalachian Boss](#), published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1994. His imprint, Appalachian Editions,

has some experience with the subject. It was the publisher of a popular 1991 nonfiction book about the historic labor conflicts, *The West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology* by David Corbin. The book went out of print before Sherwood moved to Germany, in 2008.

“David’s work and other books offer great insight about American labor battles of the time,” said Sherwood. “I was also surprised to find a lot of other interesting literature on the subject here in Berlin.”

For now, *Carla Rising* is only available as a paperback, with limited distribution in the United States by the West Virginia Book Company. Sherwood, who sees his current publishing venture as “something of a 21st-century experiment,” says he is considering when and how to issue the book in other formats for wider distribution.

“I worked hard to make this a great physical book,” he said. “It’s an exciting ‘page-turner’ with great cover art, something I hope people want to keep on their shelves. I also want to give the book its chance in the traditional, ‘bricks-and-mortar’ regional market – which offers us a better return than a lot of the newer venues.”

Starting in June, *Carla Rising* will be available in Europe and the United Kingdom as a print-on-demand volume from global book distributor, the Ingram Content Group.

Other Appalachian Editions titles, now out of print, include:

- David Corbin’s [West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology](#) (1991, 1998);
- Richard Lunt’s [Law & Order vs. the Miners](#) (1992); and
- John Alexander Williams’ [West Virginia: A History for Beginners](#) (1993, 1998)

In West Virginia, beginning in 1984, Sherwood’s journalism career included work at the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Charleston Daily Mail*, West Virginia Public Broadcasting, and The Associated Press. Living in Charleston and (after 1995) in Martinsburg, he worked as a freelance journalist, writing stories for *Time* magazine, *BusinessWeek*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Mother Jones*, *Smithsonian Air & Space*, and others. He was a contract writer for the Smithsonian Institution, from 2000 until 2008, when he moved with his family to Germany.

He continues to work as a journalist, living in Berlin with his wife and two children.

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