

Kentucky

April 2007
Kentucky Humanities Council Inc.

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\$3.00



Hilltopping the Charts *page 2*

In the early '50s, the Hilltoppers soared out of western Kentucky and right up the pop charts.

Tales from the Exam Room...and Beyond *page 28*

Lynwood Montell has been interviewing Kentucky doctors. His diagnosis: they're full of stories.

Hell on the Ohio *page 17*

As the great flood of 1937 approached, Paducah wasn't very worried. It should have been.

Plus:

The New Poet Laureate
Photography by Frank Döring



The Kentucky Humanities Council Publishes *Kentucky Humanities*

Dear Friends,

This is the 20th issue of *Kentucky Humanities*, your source for Kentucky's stories. From Houston Baker's searing account of his father's struggle against racism to Lynwood Montell's lawyer stories to this issue's remembrance of the singing Hilltoppers, our fascination with Kentucky history and culture is endless—you love it, and so do we.

Carlton Jackson's article on the Hilltoppers is on our web site—www.kyhumanities.org—along with the rest of this issue. We invite you to join us online to hear a sample of "Trying," the song that launched the Hilltoppers' rocket ride up the charts in 1952. Also in this issue, historian John Robertson and a number of survivors look back at the 1937 Ohio River Flood and its impact on Paducah, the hardest hit of all Kentucky towns. The stories and pictures still amaze—even after 70 years.

Lynwood Montell is back, this time with doctor stories, his follow-up to the very popular collection of lawyer tales that appeared in our April 2005 issue. In keeping with Kentucky's great literary tradition, there's the evocative, clear-eyed poetry of Jane Gentry Vance, our new Poet Laureate. And we introduce you to the stunning central Kentucky landscapes of Frank Döring, philosophy professor turned photographer.

If you are seeing *Kentucky Humanities* for the first time, Welcome! If you want to keep seeing it, just give us a call at 859/257-5932. Or e-mail the editor at charles.thompson@uky.edu.

To our dedicated readers who already receive *Kentucky Humanities* by mail, my sincerest thanks for your overwhelming response to our survey. The results are in: You've told us that you don't want us to change it much, but you do want us to add Kentucky history and travel notes. Look for this addition in coming issues. The majority of you are recommending our articles to your family, friends, and colleagues. Bravo! We'd love to hear from them, too. Kentucky's stories are just too good not to share.

By taking your time to respond to our survey, you've given us more than information. You've awarded us a much appreciated vote of confidence, showing that you believe in the value of this publication and our desire to improve it. Thank you one and all.

Virginia G. Smith, Publisher





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Kentucky

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Kentucky Humanities is published in April & October by the Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc., 206 East Maxwell St., Lexington, KY 40508-2613 (859/257-5932). KHC is an independent, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C., and provides more than 400 public humanities programs for Kentuckians every year. Supporters of the Council's programs receive *Kentucky Humanities* by mail. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the KHC Board and staff. For information on our very favorable advertising rates, please call Charles Thompson at 859/257-5932.

On the cover: The Hilltoppers' first album from 1953

A genuine overnight success, the student singing group called the Hilltoppers roared out of western Kentucky and took the pop music world by storm in the 1950s.

Hilltopping the Charts

As the song from “Camelot” says, at least by implication, most of us experience a few “brief, shining moments” in our lives and careers. We remember those moments for their excitement and intensity and effect on our lives. Their very shortness adds a quality of wonder and even melancholia.

The young men who won international fame in the 1950s as the Hilltoppers could certainly relate to the concept of the brief shining moment, because they had a big one. These Hilltoppers—a singing quartet, not an athletic team—got their start at Western Kentucky State College (now Western Kentucky University) in Bowling Green. Disproving the adage that overnight success takes a lifetime to attain, they burst on the popular music scene in 1952, raced to the top of the charts, and survived as a group for more than a decade.

The founding father of the Hilltoppers was a recent Western graduate, Billy Vaughn, from nearby Glasgow. He played piano on weekends at the Boots and Saddle Club, on the southern edge of Bowling Green. One night, a young Western football player visited the club and sang a few songs with Vaughn, who was mightily impressed by what he heard. The athlete’s name was Jimmy Sacca, from the town of Lockport, in upstate New York.

Vaughn confided to Sacca that he had written a song called “Trying,” and he hoped to get some major recording



Courtesy of Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

star interested in it. In the meantime, he asked Sacca to sing it with him. The thought occurred to both that the song might harmonize better as a quartet than a duo, and an accompanying piano

The original Hilltoppers (clockwise from the left): Billy Vaughn, Jimmy Sacca, Seymour Spiegelman and Don McGuire.



should also help. Jimmy had numerous campus singing buddies and he talked two of them into joining the effort to sing, and possibly record, “Trying,” a wistful love ballad (“I’ll be trying to impress you, hoping to possess you”). The other singers were Don McGuire of Hazard, Kentucky, a basketball player at Western, and Seymour Spiegelman from the historic New York town of Seneca Falls, near Jimmy’s hometown of Lockport, attending school on a music scholarship.

and Kentucky be joined in a quartet that brought fame to itself, its school, the Commonwealth, and the nation.

They decided to record “Trying,” believing their tape would interest some studio or star who could put it on the airways. They needed a quiet place, and that was Van Meter Auditorium on the Western campus. The group picked a Saturday in early April, 1952, for their recording session. It became known many years later that Kelly Thompson, then an assis-

The Hilltoppers hit national television in 1952 on the popular CBS variety show “Toast of the Town,” hosted by Ed Sullivan. Left to right: Sullivan, Vaughn, McGuire, Sacca and Spiegelman.

From May to late summer 1952, “Trying” shot up the charts, played by just about every DJ in the country. Then, apparently, the public grew tired of it, putting it into a dizzying decline.

That two young men from New York and two young men from Kentucky could get together on a college campus was not really all that remarkable. Kentucky has always been known as a “compromise” between North and South, not only socially and politically, but geographically as well. It was therefore fitting that New York

tant to President Paul Garrett, unlocked the big doors to Van Meter and let the young men in.

They had a reel-to-reel tape recorder that cost about \$30.00. Billy was to play the seriously out-of-date piano as an accompaniment, and he sang as well. One immediate problem was that the piano’s

soft pedal was broken and would not stay down, giving a tone that Billy disliked. Their friend, Bill “Greek” Ploumis, put a book on top of the offending pedal and lay down with his head on top of it, to keep it in its proper position.

Around noon the boys finished a take of “Trying” that satisfied them. They had begun around nine that morning, so the entire session lasted some three and a half hours. They took the tape to a friend, WLBJ disc jockey Bill Stamps, who had a night-time program called “Whistling in the Dark.” He played “Trying,” and before the night was over had more than a dozen calls to hear it again. It was this quick acceptance that propelled the group toward marketing the song themselves rather than trying to interest an outside recording artist. They quickly came up with a name for themselves: The Hilltoppers. All of the sports teams at Western were called Hilltoppers, for one very good reason: the institution sat right on top of a big hill.



Lead singer Jimmy Sacca was drafted into the Army in 1953 at the height of the Hilltoppers' popularity.

Stamps was so impressed with the Hilltoppers' "Trying" that he sent the recording to his old boss down in Galatin, Tennessee, Randolph (Randy) Wood, who owned and operated Dot Records. Wood could recognize talent when he heard it, and quickly made plans to travel to Bowling Green and re-record the song (he did not at that time have any recording studios of his own). Again, Van Meter was chosen as the venue.

AT 6:00 P.M. on a May evening in 1952, the "Trying" re-recording session got underway with quite a crowd present: Wood and his colleague, Al Bennett, the four Hilltoppers, and eight or nine friends. The quartet sang the song so many times that they got tired of "Trying." Wood knew what he was doing, and frankly, some of the singers didn't. He began to nod agreement with what he had heard only after six hours and thirty takes. Even when he pronounced it a "wrap," he said ominously to the boys, "Now we've got to have a backside." This

was "You Made up my Mind." Wood smilingly approved it, then said: "That's fine, and now we need just one more recording of 'Trying.'" The Hilltoppers sang it perfectly, probably out of a desire to get some rest. Wood took the recording back to Galatin and began the process of putting it into the hands of as many disc jockeys as he possibly could, primarily in the eastern parts of the United States. It was only some time later that the group became highly popular West of the Mississippi River, particularly in St. Louis and Kansas City.

From May to late summer 1952, "Trying" shot up the charts, played by just about every DJ in the country. Then, appar-

ently, the public grew tired of it, putting it into a dizzying decline and making the group wonder if this was going to be their one and only shot at musical and entertainment greatness. Just as inexplicably, the song began to rise again. The Hilltoppers were in Wood's office one day talking about how to revive "Trying" when two telephone calls in quick succession came in to Dot Records. One was from a Cincinnati DJ, Izzy Nathan, and the other was from Cleveland's Dot distributor, Art Freeman. "Trying" had unexpectedly climbed toward the top of the charts again. (Ultimately, the song sold right at a million records.)

This pleasant turn of events led to another surprise. Ed Sullivan's popular variety show "Toast of the Town" called on a Wednesday to invite them to appear the following Sunday. Hopping into Jimmy's Buick, the quartet headed North. They felt the need to be properly dressed for this occasion. They wound up with sweaters with a large W imprinted on them, and each wore a beanie with another

emblazoned W. Complete with white buckskin shoes, they seemed to personify "Joe College." And, of course, they did, but to the consternation of some of their professors. Thanks to prolonged absences from classes, Jimmy Sacca says the Hilltoppers' academic performances were less than stellar.

Waiting for their Sullivan appearance, these four young men from Western Kentucky were nervous, even to the point of being edgy and jumpy. Their mood was not helped when a Sullivan functionary asked them, "How are you going to feel in a few minutes performing in a show that will be watched by at least 40 million people?" During their performance, Jimmy sang with his eyes closed, while the other three weaved away from and toward the microphone, a maneuver that some critics later called the "Hilltopper Strut." McGuire kept looking off into the shadows, while Spiegelman seemed downright ill. All appeared as though they would be happy when the "ordeal" ended. The live audience at the Sullivan show liked them very much, as did Sullivan himself. He signed a note to them that read, "You don't have to try anymore; you're home."

The live audience at the Sullivan show liked them very much, as did Sullivan himself. He signed a note to them that read, "You don't have to try anymore; you're home."

And speaking of home, it was not until the following Wednesday night that the Sullivan show aired on campus (there was no network TV affiliate in Bowling Green until 1964). Dormitories were filled with students waiting to see their heroes perform for a national audience. The Sullivan show opened the floodgates for the Hilltoppers, who were offered more bookings than they

could fulfill. Since they were still in college, they performed only on week-ends, piloted to their destinations by Louisville-based Wilbur Parrish Air Services. On Monday mornings, as Louisville *Courier-Journal* columnist Joe Creason wrote, many students in the same classes as the Hilltoppers weren't "aware that they're splitting infinitives and solving math problems with musical hotshots."

To be sure, there were other musical groups in the country similar to the Hilltoppers, including The Four Freshmen, The Four Aces, and The Platters, and they were justly popular throughout the country. What made the Hilltoppers unique, however, was the extraordinary singing voice of lead singer Jimmy Sacca. He had a habit, approved by most listeners, but scorned by some (one English critic said it was like reciting French poetry), of adding extended vowels to the end of a singing syllable. These were aspirations, or "explosions," as some critics claimed, of "Ehhhs," "Aahhhs," "Ehhrrs," and "Ahhhhhs," very much in the manner of many Italian opera singers. Even today one can hear some of these extensions in the singing of Luciano Pavarotti and other Italian tenors. For example, in the Hilltopper song, "P. S. I Love You," (their first million seller, written by Johnny Mercer), he sings, "the folks are fine, ehhh," "was it dusty on the train, ehhh," "to say, uhhh uhhh." With "Poor Butterfly," it was "Butterfly, ehhh, uhhh, uhhh, uhhh, uhhh." Jimmy says he was unaware of this technique until he read about it in reviews of Hilltopper performances. Actually, this same sort of delivery was used by old-time gospel preachers in the South; they'd get so worked up, they'd go "uhhh, ahhhh, ehhh," all through their sermons. Maybe the Hilltoppers' popularity was so great in the South because it reminded some listeners of going to church. Jimmy maintained this method of singing with just about all of the Hilltopper tunes, the most prominent being, after "Trying," and "P.S. I Love You," "Time Waits for No One," "From the Vine Came the Grape," "Only You," "A Fallen Star," "To be Alone," "Marianne," "If I Didn't Care," and "The Kentucky Song."

THE Hilltoppers were popular with just about everybody on the Western Kentucky State College campus and in Bowling Green, with one possible exception. The Dean of Faculties, Dr. Finley Grise, thought it fine for the Hilltoppers to gain national prominence, although he worried about their classroom absences. And he definitely did not approve of Jimmy's work during the week with various nightclubs,



Courtesy of Carol Braddy

As a teenager in Mayfield, celebrated Kentucky writer Bobbie Ann Mason heard the Hilltoppers on a Nashville radio station. Mason, shown here in 1957 with Carol Braddy, left, and Hilltopper Don McGuire, center, fell in love with the group and started a fan club, becoming national president. In her memoir Clear Springs, Mason writes that the day the membership cards and glossy photos arrived "seemed like the turning point of my life." It got better when the Hilltoppers introduced her to the audience at a concert in Cincinnati. "This may have been my defining moment," Mason writes, "my mothlike entry into the ethereal realm of stars. I was transported, as if I had just sprouted wings." Mason churned out newsletters, lobbied DJs, and attended Hilltopper concerts in several states, slacking off only after enrolling at the University of Kentucky in 1958. By that time it hardly mattered—the age of rock 'n roll had sent the Hilltoppers' popularity into steep decline.

which in the Bible Belt society of Bowling Green were generally called beer joints. Therefore, after a few months, the dean and Jimmy had "a history with each other."

The famous Metropolitan Opera tenor, Jan Peerce, was invited to sing on campus, at Van Meter auditorium, only a few yards away from Potter Hall, where the Hilltoppers lived. During the Peerce concert, someone in Potter began to sing "Give Me That Old Mountain Dew" at the top of his voice, which, of course, distracted the tenor at Van Meter. (This was well before air conditioning at Western and since the weather was warm, all the windows were open.) Dean Grise left Van Meter and stormed over to Potter to confront the "Mountain Dew" singer. Just as he appeared on the patio below the second floor, he was hit with a large bucket of water, soaking him from stem to stern. All he could do was stand there in a rage, soaking wet. Without a word, he angrily turned away and stalked back to Van Meter.

For years, around the campus and the town, it was thought that Jimmy Sacca threw water on the good dean. Actually, he didn't. As everyone knows, success invites imitation, and The Hilltoppers were no exception. A group of the quartet's friends (including Whitey Sanders, who went on to become a famous newspaper cartoonist) formed a group called The HillFloppers. They used primitive instruments such as wash-tubs for drums and saws for violins, but unbelievably, they did get a few gigs from time to time. They were practicing on the Potter plaza for an engagement when one of their fellow students, fed up with the noises—not only "Mountain Dew" and Peerce, but the HillFloppers as well—thought he would eliminate at least one of the offenders. He was aiming his bucket of water at the HillFloppers, but the dean showed up at just the wrong moment.

Jimmy sang some songs in a student production of "Moon Over Miami," and, for some reason, it upset Dean Grise (maybe it had something to do with two lovers waiting for a "little love" and a "little kiss" on Miami's shore). He sent Jimmy to explain himself to President Paul Garrett. The college's chief executive told Jimmy that "Moon Over Miami"

is my favorite song. Now sing it.” Jimmy did, for an audience of one. After this, his problems with Dean Grise lessened.

Another time the group was in New York riding to an engagement in a taxi.

was driving from Kansas City eastward toward St. Louis. Late at night, with all the gas stations closed and the fuel gauge on their car registering empty, they stopped at about thirty stations and



Courtesy of Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Jimmy Sacca (top) tried to keep the Hilltoppers going after the original members retired. In 1968, the replacement members included, from bottom, Chuck Ayre, Jack Grubel, and Karl Garvin.

They passed a subway station, and Vaughn, wanting to play the “Kentucky hillbilly,” asked, “How do they get the trains down there?” Spiegelman, always ready with a riposte, said, “Do you see those railings going down into the station?” Vaughn said, “Yes.” “Well,” replied Spiegelman, “they just put the trains on them and roll them down there.” By now the New York cabbie was convulsed with laughter. On another occasion, the group

drained the drops of gas left by previous customers. They made it to St. Louis.

THE Hilltoppers were not even a year old when reality interrupted their shining moment. The United States had entered the Korean War in 1951. In 1953, even though the conflict was winding down, Jimmy Sacca was drafted. Fortunately, Randy Wood had seen this event coming and put a dozen or so Hilltopper songs in the can, awaiting periodic release while Jimmy served Uncle Sam. These songs became hugely popular with the jukebox crowds throughout the country. Ironically, just as Jimmy was being released from military service in 1955, Don and Seymour got their greetings.

And so, through other opportunities and service to their country, the original group began to splinter. The first to leave had been Billy Vaughn. Wood offered him a job at Dot Records as the principal arranger; he moved to Gallatin, Tennessee, and then to California. His replacement in the quartet was Eddie Crowe. The Hilltoppers still performed, at least periodically, while Jimmy was in the Army. He obtained week-end passes and flew to wherever the group had engagements. This arrangement stopped when he was abruptly transferred to Guam, bringing their live performances to a halt.

Don and Seymour’s replacements were Karl Garvin and Lou Mastor. They joined Jimmy and Eddie in the summer of 1956 for their first tour of the British Isles. They were originally scheduled for six weeks, but by popular demand, they stayed for ten. There were distinct cultural differences to which the four young men had to adapt. “We speak the same language, the British and us, or at least we’re supposed to, so why can’t we understand them?” Driving on the left or “wrong” side of the road also took some getting used to. British newspaper reporters kept speaking about a mysterious “W” on Hilltopper sweaters, apparently too shy or embarrassed to ask what it meant.

While in England, Jimmy told reporters that a touring musical company has to be as physically fit as sportsmen. Accordingly, he and his three colleagues agreed with a proposed swim across the English channel, from Dover to Calais, the brainchild of England’s entertainment entrepreneur, Billy Butlin. The singers thought it would be neat to be known as the first singing group to make this swim. Various incidents occurred, however, and the Hilltoppers did not get to wet their swimsuits. Jimmy also ran laps with soccer great Colin Grainger, and invited him to appear on stage at the next Hilltopper show, and even to sing a song or two. He did, much to the delight of audiences.

In 1957 three of the original Hilltoppers—Jimmy Sacca, Don McGuire, and Seymour Spiegelman—were back together, joined by Eddie Crowe. Their reunion had been avidly anticipated by the members of their national fan club, whose president was Kentucky writer Bobbie Ann Mason, then a western Kentucky teenager.



The original Hilltoppers were honored at Western Kentucky University's homecoming in 1972, twenty years after they burst on the scene. From left, Spiegelman, Vaughn, Sacca and McGuire.

But times had changed since 1953, the year Jimmy was drafted. Bill Haley and The Comets had come out with "Rock Around the Clock," Elvis Presley was now on the scene with, among other songs, "You Ain't Nothing but a Hound Dog," and the message coming through was loud and clear: the future belonged to rock 'n roll. The military draft and changing musical tastes had decimated the Hilltoppers. Their record sales began to plummet. They did try to join in the spirit of the times with their recording of "Do the Bop," but it was too little, too late.

They were not, however, quite ready to hang it all up. There were still some great moments ahead. In 1958, featuring the same lineup as the previous year, the group took another trip to England, but this one was nowhere near the grand tour the previous one had been. Instead of

performing at British pleasure palaces as they had two years before, they now were booked into private clubs and military officers' clubs throughout Britain and on the continent as well. Spending Christmas 1958 away from their families did not ameliorate their gloomy moods. It put a couple of them in mind to leave the music business altogether.

They did go on other foreign trips, joining former member Billy Vaughn, who

who were growing up too fast, caused Don McGuire to announce his retirement in 1960. He said he had savored each and every minute of his eight years as a singing Hilltopper. "You can never get all the make-up off," said McGuire. "It stays with you." He went to work selling textbooks for the publishing firm of Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich. Eddie Crowe left the group to become a school teacher in his home town of Seneca Falls, New York.

At halftime they sang "Trying," and then segued into "P.S. I Love You." Courier-Journal reporter Larry Wilkerson summed up the effect: "Those red towels that Westerners are famous for might have been used to daub at a few eyes, as many alumni were in the audience."

found success as the leader of his own orchestra, for performances in various places in Japan and the Philippines. But the strain of traveling and missing his children,

Jimmy, Seymour, and Douglas Car-doza, who had previously done some substituting in the group, tried to keep the Singing Hilltoppers going as a trio, but it just didn't



Carlton Jackson's book on the Hilltoppers was published in March by the University Press of Kentucky. It is available from your local bookseller or www.kentuckypress.com



Author Carlton Jackson, left, and Hilltopper star Jimmy Sacca following a radio interview in Lexington on March 6, 2007. Sacca is now 77.

To hear a sample of "Trying," the song that started it all, visit the Kentucky Humanities Council website: www.kyhumanities.org

work. In 1963, they broke up. Jimmy went to Buffalo as a Dot distributor, but soon moved to Jackson, Mississippi (his wife, Ann, was a native of Mississippi). He opened the Celebrity Lounge, hosting entertainment shows and becoming widely known as a restaurateur. Seymour went to New York, where he distributed Dot Records and co-wrote children's songs and stories with his wife, Jeannie. Cardoza returned to his hometown of Tulare, California. Jimmy booked visiting musicians at the Celebrity Lounge in Jackson, but not being a part of the performances finally got to him. He traveled to Ft. Walton Beach, Florida, and bought into the entertainment concession at the local Holiday Inn. There, he put together a group of singers. He sang lead and the name, of course, was the Hilltoppers.

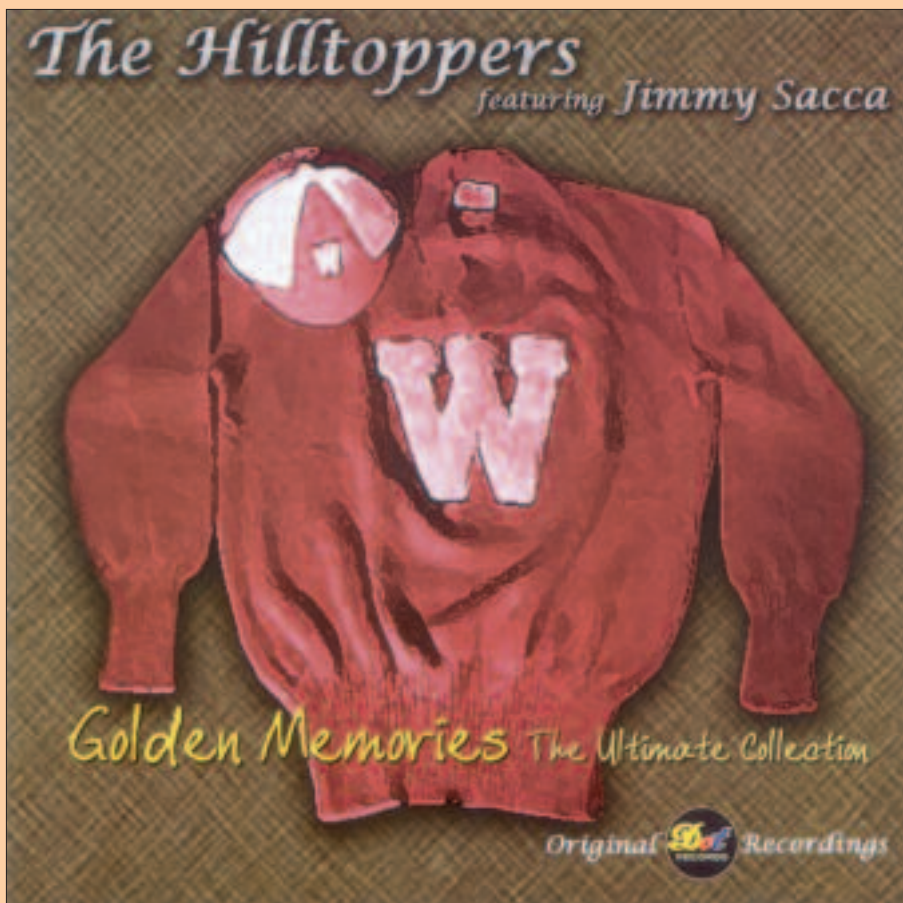
Except for Jimmy, none of the original Hilltoppers was in this Florida group. Over the years, there have been twelve singers who are entitled to call themselves singing

Hilltoppers: Billy Vaughn, Jimmy Sacca, Don McGuire, Seymour Spiegelman, Eddie Crowe, Karl Garvin, Lou Mastor, Clive Dill, Bob Gaye, Douglas Cardoza, Jack Gruebel, Chuck Ayre, and by extension, Terry Cano at the piano and Larry Boullion on the drums. In the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of fans around the world, however, the only Hilltoppers were the ones who had come from the campus of Western Kentucky State College.

The original singing Hilltoppers were reunited for a second time in 1972, at Western's forty-third homecoming. Billy, Jimmy, Don, and Seymour—all four were on hand at L.T. Smith Stadium. They loved it, and the crowd loved them back. At halftime they sang "Trying," the song that had started it all. And then they segued into "P.S. I Love You." *Courier-Journal* reporter Larry Wilkerson summed up the effect: "Those red towels that Westerners are famous for might

have been used to daub at a few eyes, as many alumni were in the audience." The group presented a replica of the million-dollar-selling "P.S. I Love You" to WKU President Dero Downing. Though Western lost the football game to Middle Tennessee, 21 to 17, it was indeed a homecoming to remember.

Jimmy Sacca kept the new singing Hilltoppers going for a while longer. The mid-seventies were not good years for traveling entertainers. The Arab oil boycott sharply curtailed gasoline supplies. The ownership of the Ft. Walton Beach Holiday Inn changed hands, and Jimmy and his Hilltoppers lost the entertainment concession. And, then, to top it all off, the group recorded some songs for MGM Records that were shelved and never released to the public. Despite all these setbacks, the Hilltoppers still performed at a few nightclubs, primarily in the eastern part of the United States.



Line One Studios/Richard Easterling

This CD, produced from original Dot Records masters, features 18 of the Hilltoppers most popular songs. It is available at: www.cdbaby.com

THE first of the original singing Hilltoppers to pass away was Seymour Spiegelman. In 1987 he died of heart problems at age 56. Funeral services for Seymour were held in New York for both Protestant and Jewish congregations. Billy Vaughn died in 1991, causing

During their short career, these singers from western Kentucky sold over eight million recordings.

the *Lexington Herald-Leader* to remark, "P.S. We'll Miss You, Hilltopper." He had gone into semi-retirement in the late '70s and moved back to Bowling Green. While

in "Topper Town" he formed the Dixieland Jazz band, which played for quite some time at the Golden Branding Iron on Bowling Green's 31 W bypass. But he and his wife missed their grandchildren (he wrote songs for his granddaughters: "Come Along Sweet Christie," "Traci's Tracks," and "Kelli"). Their decision to return to California practically traumatized the community. "We Hate to See the Vaughns Leave," the local newspaper, the *Park City Daily News*, editorialized. He suffered ill health almost from the time he arrived back in the Golden State. On the occasion of Vaughn's death in 1991, retired Western president Kelly Thompson affirmed that it had been he who unlocked Van Meter for the recording of "Trying," so many years before.

The two remaining original singing Hilltoppers, Jimmy Sacca and Don McGuire, both live today in Lexington, Kentucky. Jimmy and his son, Jimmy III,

run the Delta Entertainment Company, a booking agent for singers, dancers, and nightclub performers. Don is retired from the textbook business and real estate. As one might imagine, both are in demand for appearances at musical events and social affairs. They still receive fan mail from around the country and world. There are some definite hints that the popularity of the Hilltoppers is once again rising. They get their share of attention from the numerous radio stations dedicated to playing the "oldies," and Jasmine Ltd., a British label, recently released a 61-song Hilltoppers compilation on two CDs.

In the course of their brief, shining moments the singing Hilltoppers accumulated an impressive array of honors and accolades. In 1953, not even a year old yet, the group was voted the Number One vocal combination by both *Billboard* and *Cash Box* magazines. The Jukebox Operators of America also chose the Hilltoppers as Number One in the country in 1953. On through the fifties into the early sixties, the Hilltoppers consistently ranked among the country's top ten recording artists; *Billboard* listed twenty-one of their records in the Top 40 hit lists.

During their short career, these singers from Western Kentucky sold over eight million recordings. If, as sociologist Theodor Adorno says, popular music "holds the patent on the spirit of the times," then the Hilltoppers during their heyday in the 1950s were more than simply successful entertainers—they were shapers of the American musical landscape and, by extension, American culture. But it will always be the pure pleasure their music delivers, not the group's possible sociological significance, that keeps the Hilltopper name alive. ●

Carlton Jackson is University Distinguished Professor at Western Kentucky University and the author of numerous books and articles. The *New York Times* named Jackson's *Hattie: The Life of Hattie McDaniel* as one of the fifty most notable books of 1989.

**Frank Döring, a philosopher turned
photographer, captured the sometimes
fleeting beauty of the Bluegrass.**

Frank Döring

WHEN he first arrived in central Kentucky, Frank Döring had the same reaction many people have: “It was a landscape that was new for me. I just found it was beautiful.” And so he took its picture, many times. The seven photographs in this essay, taken in the mid-1990s, reflect the beauty he saw. “You explore it, and some of the pictures are just that, discoveries along the

roadside. But then very quickly it turned out to have a slightly darker note because things were changing so rapidly. I was taking a picture one month, printing it the next month, and I come back a month later and all of a sudden the trees that had been in the picture had been felled and there was a subdivision going up. What looked like pictures of an unchanged, nicely old-fashioned landscape turned out to be short-lived glimpses into something that was rapidly changing.”

Döring moved on to other things—veterinary medicine is his current photographic interest—but he says that if he returned to landscapes, his pictures would reflect the accelerating pace of change.

A native of Frankfurt, Germany, Frank Döring got interested in photography when he was a Boy Scout. He came to the United States to pursue an academic career. He holds a doctorate from Princeton University and was teaching philosophy at the University of Cincinnati when he decided to become a full-time photographer. Döring lives in Lexington and works mainly with a large-format camera (a camera that produces a four by five inch or larger negative). He says the large format helps him achieve superior artistic and technical results, but it is demanding: “You have to do everything yourself. You have to develop the film, you have to do your printing yourself. You commit yourself in a more serious way.” To lighten up, he likes to break out his 35mm camera, which, he says, encourages “playfulness.”

To see many more photographs by Frank Döring, please visit his web site: www.doeringphoto.com

Frank Döring at work in the Swiss Alps with his large-format camera and some rambunctious donkeys. He was shooting bridges.



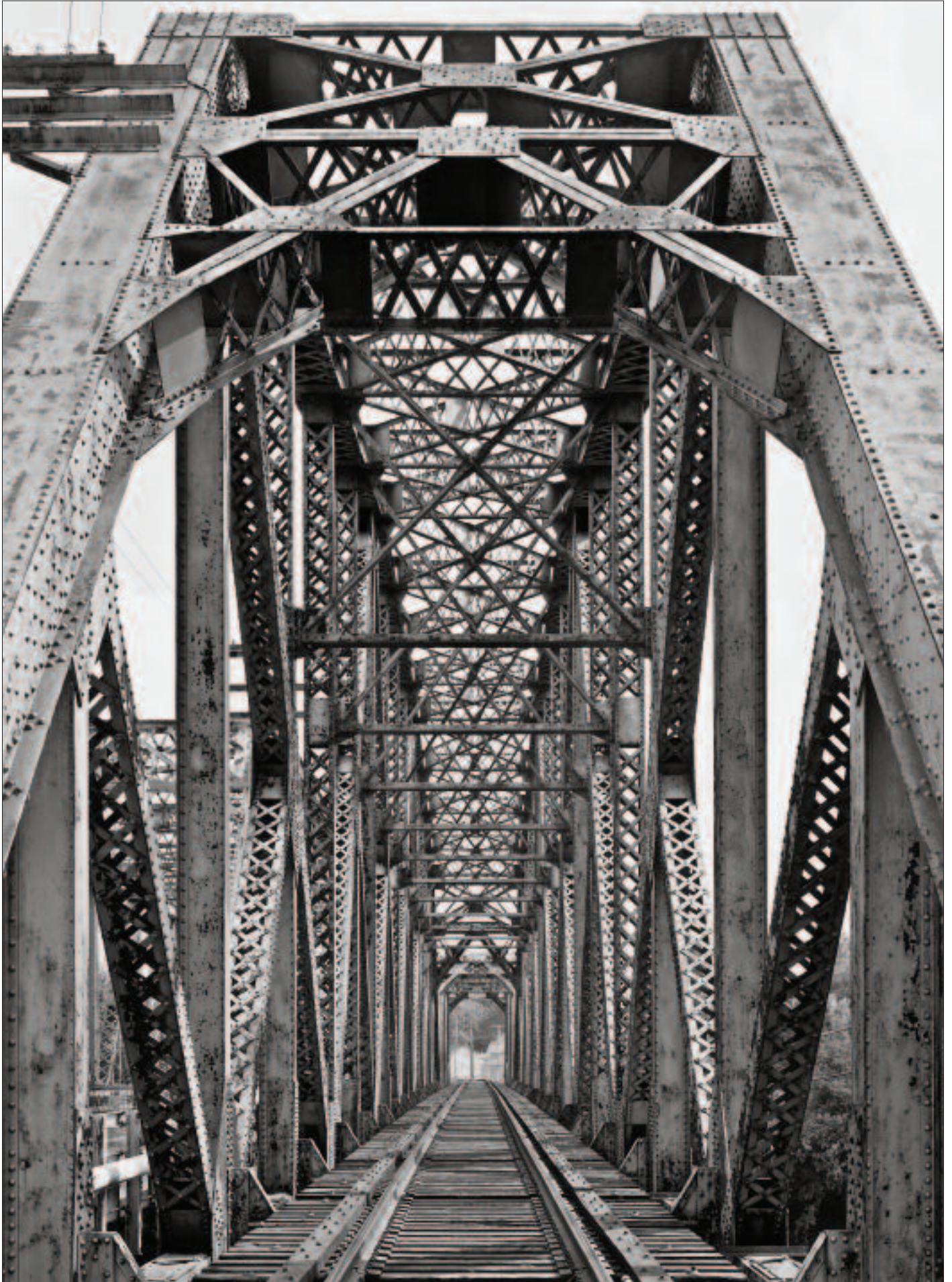
Photo by Wallis Miller



Tobacco, Barn, and Approaching Storm

Woodford County

Frantically tweaking my slow view camera before it would be drenched by the storm, I managed to get the focus about right but badly overdid the exposure, which resulted in an almost unprintable negative. The barn is now hidden from view by a high hedge, and the tobacco has been replaced with other crops.





Railroad Bridge

Frankfort

Behind my back, the track curves around a tight bend that conceals any approaching train. My hope was that the curve would also considerably slow down such a train. So it did.

Horse Barn

Lexington

In its day the most innovative horse barn in the region, this wonderful structure now finds itself in a deadly embrace by the crassest of “developments.”



Water Tower

Lexington

Photographers tend to have different views on the aesthetic potential of industrial landscapes than do their inhabitants. As I was reminded on this occasion, long-winded explanations, proffered in a German accent, are ill-suited to smooth out the differences. Pointing out my legal rights helped, but this was before 9/11.



Osage Orange Trees

Fayette County

I still like the beauty in this image, but I couldn't photograph it any more because that would be giving the lie to the wanton activity that is quickly realizing the bumper sticker premonition, "Growth Will Destroy Bluegrass Forever."



Outbuildings #1 & #2

Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill

During a teaching workshop at Pleasant Hill, I was made to share a bed (queen) with a stranger who was perfectly pleasant but given to snoring. When trying to fall asleep became pointless, I dragged myself and my camera outdoors, just in time to catch these austere buildings in the first glimmer of light. The second picture was taken with the first in mind. It happened in the ethereal glow just seconds before the sun burnt through the mist over the fresh snow.

Seventy years ago, the great flood of 1937 ravaged the Ohio Valley, killing hundreds and driving hundreds of thousands from their homes. As the flood raced downriver toward Paducah, the largest city on the lower Ohio, Paducahans weren't especially worried. They should have been.

Hell on the Ohio

In its report on the flood of 1937, the Red Cross noted that this natural disaster was bigger than the other two biggest disasters in recorded history in North America combined—the Dust Bowl and the 1927 Mississippi River flood. In January 1937, ten Kentucky communities received over twenty inches of rain. The Ohio Valley from Pittsburgh to Cairo saw enough rain in less than a month to cover nearly 204,000 square miles to a depth of 11.2 inches. The resulting flood submerged a total of 12,721 square miles containing 8,141,182 acres, more than half of them agricultural. From West Virginia to Louisiana, 196 counties in 12 states were affected by the flood. Refugees fled into 144 neighboring counties. Over one million people were homeless. Property damage reached an estimated \$7 billion in current dollars. Remarkably, today few people remember this catastrophe. Hydrologists, soothsayers, and town planners along the Ohio now propose to remove existing floodwalls, saying, as they once said about the big flood of 1913, that an event like 1937 will never happen again.

Paducah bore the brunt of the flood as tributaries all along the Ohio—the Wabash, Tradewater, Cumberland, and Tennessee as well as various creeks and bayous—added their excess to the growing waters heading toward the city. The river swelled to a width of twenty-two



Courtesy of River Heritage Museum, Paducah

miles at Paducah, covering seven-eighths of the city and reaching far into Illinois. The fact that the 1937 flood was the first recorded winter flood made conditions even worse. The largest city on the lower Ohio bent under the attack, but did not

To many this photograph, looking east on Broadway toward the river, captures the essence of the 1937 flood in Paducah. The bank clock on the left was the hub of the city's downtown shopping area.



This aerial shot of the Illinois Central Railroad's huge Paducah shops shows the extent of the devastation.

break. Bitter cold delayed relief and hampered communications. According to Dante and Paducahans who endured this flood, hell is very cold.

On January 10, a sleet and ice storm turned Paducah into a shining jewel; it also isolated the city from the rest of the Commonwealth for a time as the ice brought down telephone and telegraph lines along with prized shade trees. Repairs were still underway eight days

Bitter cold delayed relief and hampered communications. According to Dante and Paducahans who endured the 1937 flood, hell is very cold.

later when the river started rising fast. Bobby Marshall noted in her diary that “as Paducah had always been high and dry when other cities and towns on the Ohio and Tennessee were flooded, we felt no uneasiness.” Soon Paducahans began to realize that hard times were ahead. Few anticipated how hard.

FLOODS were not uncommon on the Ohio River at the junction with the Tennessee River at Paducah, just ten miles south of the junction of the

Cumberland and Ohio. This site flooded in 1815, 1822 and, after the founding of the town in 1830, in 1832, 1867, 1883, 1884, and 1913. A trend is apparent. Each flood exceeded the previous high mark. Only in 1884 and 1913 did water get into the core area downtown. On April 7, 1913 the river crested at 54.3 feet. This was one-tenth higher than the flood of 1884. The local *News-Democrat* proclaimed, “Paducahans didn’t let the flood bother them any more than the Paducahans of 1884 were bothered by that river rampage.” Crowds frolicked in water that came up to the curb at Third and Broadway. Trams and Model T’s gave daring spirits the means to test the waters. The populace felt relatively safe, the damage was slight, and the city proudly proclaimed that it needed no outside aid to deal with the problem. That would not be true of the flood of 1937.

The great flood did not discriminate by class, sex, or race. In that sense, it was a great social equalizer. In general, low lying areas housed poorer folk, but the waters continued on until they engulfed the rows of two-story houses of the more affluent on the west side of Paducah. As it approached its crest, it was not uncommon for those trying to ride out the flood by taking refuge on their second stories to

row into their living rooms, tie up to the stair landing, and climb up to the crowded, cold, dank second floor. Continued exposure to such conditions threatened the population with pneumonia, and simple acts of kindness—taking in others who needed shelter—increased the potential for spreading diseases such as typhoid and diphtheria. In the end, this was the threat that finally caused authorities to order the entire city evacuated.

Paducahans watched the progress of the flood down the Ohio, noting that Louisville had troubles but managed, as did other towns. While wary about the growing threat, two factors contributed to complacency: there would never be a flood higher than 1913, and even that had proved to be no great disaster. This flood came at surprising speed. On January 21, Bobby Marshall, wife of physician T. J. Marshall, wrote that “nobody felt that Paducah was in any danger. Certainly we never dreamed that our part of town would be inundated.” The Marshall house was at 110 Fountain Avenue, nine-



The 1913 flood on Broadway: The people of Paducah seemed to enjoy the 1913 flood, and never dreamed of anything worse.

teen blocks from the river. Dr. Marshall went on call and by the time he returned water was about two feet deep at Nineteenth and Broadway. The following day brought more rain and sleet.

Earlier on January 21, Charlie Jackson was working on Owen Island at the mouth of the Tennessee River. In his account of the flood he remembered being informed that the “river would rise over a foot an hour and to look for six feet higher than the thirteen (1913) flood.” Charlie rushed to his family’s machine shop on Kentucky Avenue near the river and helped his father and mother store records and other perishable items upstairs. He was lucky to find a pair of hip boots (at what he felt was an outrageous price of \$10) before they became extinct. Later, he built a boat out of what materials were at hand. By 9:00 P.M., the water was in the shop and his “boat was floating.” With appalling effort, Jackson paddled, pulled, and carried the clumsy craft to his house, often having to break ice to make a passage. The boat became an instrument of salvation for Jackson and his family. It also proved to be a personal purgatory for Charlie, who carried a Luger pistol on a string around his neck to ward off those who were desperate enough to consider attacking him for his boat.

Many others could not believe what was happening. Ruby Wise worked at the Sears, Roebuck, and Company store at 323 Broadway. She drove to work that morning to begin her stint as clerk-



Its location at the junction of the Ohio and Tennessee made Paducah especially vulnerable. At the height of the flood, the Ohio River at Paducah was 22 miles wide. It reached more than 20 miles inland to flood the town of Harrisburg, Illinois.

Rev. Robert M. Anderson, 86

“Anything could happen at any time.”

RETIRED from a career as a postal worker and minister, Anderson was 17 when the flood hit in 1937. He moved from his home on Tenth Street to a shelter in a school where, he says, there was lots of praying—“I’ve never heard that much praying in a church.”

Anderson was one of about a hundred people who were then evacuated to the town of Princeton. He says the mayor of Princeton complained about too many black refugees, so all the blacks in the group—about 85 people—were put on a train to Knoxville. There they were given brand new overalls and typhoid shots and lodged at the University of Tennessee. “The women stayed on the third floor,” says Anderson, “and men stayed on the second floor. They had nice food there. We would eat, but that’s all we would do—set up in that building, couldn’t get out, couldn’t go no place. They had a guard on the door.” To fight the boredom, says Anderson, “we’d go up where the women were.” He says his group was in Knoxville a couple of weeks before returning to Paducah by train.

The lesson Robert Anderson took away from the flood was simple: “I learned that anything could happen at any time. You’re not safe no place.”



Photo by John E. L. Robertson

cashier. “The day the water came rushing into our store we realized all should evacuate immediately. The boats started taking people out Jefferson Street to dry land because water was so high they couldn’t get to parking lots to their cars. Some did and were a blessing to others. Because everyone was helping each other as best they could.” Later, stalled cars became a hazard to navigation in the downtown area. They would rise and fall with the wake of passing boats, often damaging the crafts of unwary crews. Ruby Wise and Ruth Griffith, the cashier, were the last to leave, as they had to stay and enter the day’s transactions and put the cash in the safe. This task was completed by flash light as power began to flicker, “Looking at the water creep up the steps that we would have to go down was one of the creepiest feelings I think I ever had

in my lifetime.” Finally the two women finished and came down. “Our Boss beckoned for a Boat to come to the landing in the middle of the stairs by the time we left. As we were taken out by Boat, we could see tires and other merchandise

Two factors contributed to complacency: there would never be a flood higher than 1913, and even that had proved no great disaster.

being destroyed by force of waters. This was the middle of the afternoon and every one in town was leaving.”

MANY tried to find shelter in schools, churches, and the courthouse. In the latter, overcrowding reached tragic levels; still, seg-



Ann Anderson Freeman, 70, and Dorothy Anderson Conner, 75

"We never talked about the flood."



Ann Anderson Freeman (left) and Dorothy Anderson Conner

mother, Addie Schiff, who was visiting from Nashville at the time of the flood. When the boat capsized, Schiff drowned. "This is something that mother and daddy never talked about," says Conner. "We never talked about the flood and how terrible it was. They didn't have anything to say about it." Now, says Freeman, "We don't really have anything to pass on to anybody else because we don't know that much about it."

Freeman and Conner say they think the flood is the reason they're afraid of water. They also think they have been very fortunate. Conner says they've had "a good life, and we could have easily not had it."

AT the time of the flood, Conner was five years old. Freeman, her sister, was just four months old, but she became the star of a famous flood story. The boat carrying the sisters, their parents, and their great grandmother to safety capsized. Wrapped in blankets, Freeman floated away and, before she could sink, was rescued by a man who jumped out of another boat to save her. "Don't remember a thing," Freeman jokes, "I just go along for the publicity."

But there's no joking about the sisters' great grand-



Addie Schiff, a casualty of the flood.

The owner of the Oehlschlaeger drug store sold liquor out of the second floor window. After a couple of row-offs, he made sure to get the money before lowering the goods into the boat.

regation was strictly maintained. Charlie Jackson remembered that "the air was now unbearable . . . the Jailer was drunk [and] never tried to set up any rest room or keep people from using [the] halls." Many, like Jackson, looked for other shelter. Jackson found a deserted two-story house and broke the door and widened the entrance to allow his boat and family to pull up to the stairs. They determined to last out the ordeal. Even with heat from small coal fires, the air was so dank and cold that Jackson feared for his young son, Sam. Soon, pneumonia was developing and Sam was moved to the temporary hospital opened in the west end of the city. The Riverside hospital closed early on. The Illinois Central Railroad hospital at 1423 Broadway had water in its basement but tried to continue operations. David A. "Dody" Carlson's mother ran a boarding house just



Courtesy of River Heritage Museum, Paducah

Until the sewers were repaired, downtown workers had to use wooden privies placed over open manholes. They were called “secretaries.”

across from the hospital. Carlson recalled that the railroad ran a temporary track toward the hospital and parked a steam engine at the end. A pipe ran steam for heat into the hospital. This pipe was built on a wooden support that

was high enough for boats to pass under. “This stream line was about a block and a half long,” said Carlson. The jerry-rigged heating plant worked until water got into the first floor. The patients had to be removed. Dead bodies were wrapped and put on the roof to await the end of the flood.

The black community was hit particularly hard. In the west end, the West Kentucky Industrial School, a black post-secondary vocational school, provided shelter. Many on the south side clustered near the Lincoln High School. The white owner of a nearby grocery store realized he could not save his stock, so he invited the refugees at Lincoln to take what they could. Oscar Cross recalled that he and another man would row to the store and fill the boat with cans. Since the labels had washed off, every meal was an adventure—the menu was a mystery until the lid came off the can. Cross also made frequent runs to the water tower in the yards of the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad. A nearby coal chute supplied fuel. Health officials finally had



Courtesy of River Heritage Museum, Paducah

Looking west on Broadway from the roof of the Irvin Cobb Hotel.



David A. “Dody” Carlson, 84
“Well, come on in.”

DODY Carlson’s mother ran a boarding house catering to workers from the nearby Illinois Central Railroad shops. The Carlson house was on a high spot at Fifteenth and Broadway. As lower lying areas started filling with flood water, recalls Carlson, “people started coming to our house. Mother said, ‘Well, come on in. If you got any food in the home, bring the food.’ And they did. I don’t how many people was in that one house, but we was all just bunched up. It was just getting worse every day, coming up higher and higher, and then it started getting in our house downstairs and everybody had to go upstairs.”

That kind of enforced closeness was common all over Paducah, and produced some interesting experiences, to say the least: “My brother said that’s the first time he ever slept in a room with three pregnant women.” Probably the last time, too. Carlson’s niece was born on February 5, 1937, a few days after the water crested.

to remove all refugees from the area when potable water was no longer available. After the flood, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) visited the flood area. He was pleasantly surprised at the lack of discrimination in Louisville, but noted that doctors G.A. Davis and P.M. Fernandez did the same relief work in Paducah as their white colleagues but received less pay.

RELIEF was slow to arrive in Paducah, due in part to ice-damaged lines of communication. After water got into the city hall, the Irvin Cobb hotel served as the center of city relief. Later, city government set up temporary offices in the west end. A medical center was established in Clark School. The *Paducah Sun-Democrat* for January 30 was published in Mayfield. Complete evacuation of the city was under way. Captain



Courtesy of River Heritage Museum, Paducah



Left: The cow on the balcony was seen all over the country. The Coast Guard fed and milked her after her owner got sick.

Above: The cow house on Sixth Street is still there. Look closely—so is the cow.

Glen Peterson and Regular Army units from Fort Sheridan arrived along with state guards. The Red Cross also made an appearance. Charlie Jackson was a bit underwhelmed at their efforts: “The Red Cross is now here and they are a mess.” Refugees received only “a mangye mattress [and] a blanket.” Jackson wrote that a woman “who has a lot to do but don’t do it” was in charge. Meanwhile, “the poor souls who are on their own get icy stares; we rem[em]ber that.” The city was evacuated by January 30.

The pain from the bitter cold and exposure to the roiling, oily, contaminated floodwaters was not limited to humans. Walter Beasley noted in his journal seeing dogs, cats, birds, and even squirrels marooned on a shed roof. Apparently a truce was in effect as all faced the same peril. Charlie Jackson ended his account by recalling a “dog that had been on a floating gate for five weeks [with] no food and would not let any one take it off was barking with a mournful

Dulcie Womble, 90

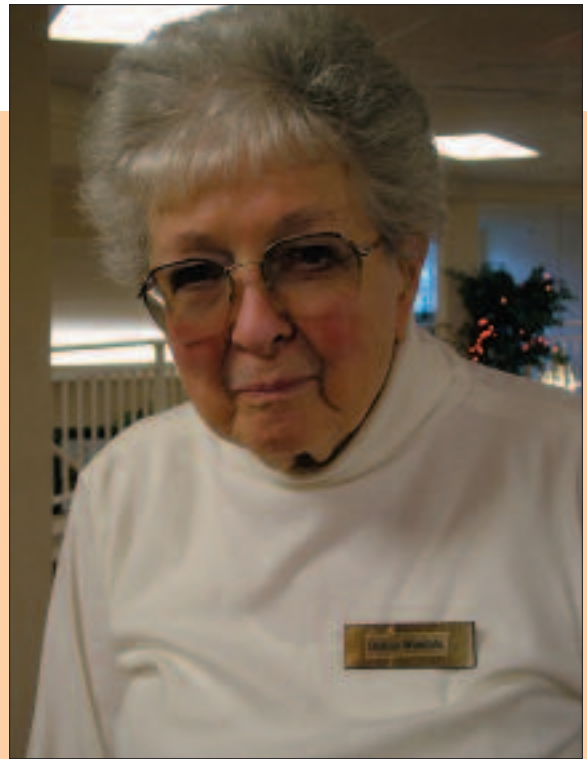
"And that was pretty cold."

DULCIE Womble remembers vividly the triple whammy that hit Paducah in early 1937: "The water came up, and then it snowed, and then it sleeted on top of the snow, and that was pretty cold." The house shown here is Womble's house. She says the waters had begun to recede by the time this photo was taken, but it was still too cold for the snow on the roof to melt. (This photograph was taken by Womble's first husband. They were married in 1938—he died overseas in World War II.)



Courtesy of River Heritage Museum, Paducah

At least a dozen members of her family congregated at her brother's small apartment where, she recalls, "there wasn't even room enough for everybody to lay down on the floor." Womble's uncle from Memphis eventually rescued the family and took them to Tennessee for three weeks, saving them from the flood and from a diet that had been way too heavy on red beans. "I still don't eat red beans," says Womble.



sound, his sides showing ribs." Cows also suffered, especially since long exposure to cold water destroys their hooves. One cow made national news. James L. "Jimmy" Huston and his mother's brother, Frank Lassiter, decided to move a milk cow to a safe site as the waters rose. The cow did not approve of Jimmy's choice—the second floor porch—and no amount of pushing or pulling could make her go up the stairs. Finally, Jimmy said, "This cow is going up those steps and once she gets started, she's not going to stop, so you need to stand clear and watch out for yourself." Huston grabbed the cow's tail and "crimped" it pretty hard. "I remember seeing the old man scrambling to get out of the way. She took the landing and the second set of steps without ever slowing down and never stopped until she reached the second floor. It was a comical thing to see. When we all got through laughing, we walked her through the second floor and through the outside front door, which opened out to the second story porch balcony. We didn't have to tie her or anything. Where was she to go?" A national audience saw photographs of the

cow on the porch in newsreels and in the *National Geographic*.

On February 2, 1937 the Ohio River crested at Paducah at 60.8 feet, eighteen feet above flood stage and six feet above the 1913 flood. The flood wreaked an estimated \$28 million in damages (around \$375 million in today's curren-

cy), leaving 310 buildings beyond repair in McCracken County and 4,059 structures suffering varying degrees of damage. On February 18, a newspaper headline announced "River's Long Reign at End," but the recovery was slow. More than 22,000 refugees from the flooded city had fanned out as far as Knoxville,

Courtesy of River Heritage Museum, Paducah



Countless Paducahans were rescued through second floor windows.

Planning for Paducah's flood wall began immediately after the 1937 flood. It was not completed until the mid '40s. A twelve-mile long combination of flood wall and earthen levees now protects the city.

where over eighty black refugees from Paducah were virtually incarcerated on the campus of the University of Tennessee. They were well-fed, but confined to a dormitory with a guard on the door.

Returning home, Paducahans faced all manner of unpleasantness, from silt and slime to broken glass and rotting bodies, animal and human. Restoring basic services was a slow process—for a while, the only usable facilities in downtown Paducah were wooden privies that stood over open manholes. An inspection committee, including local architects, issued permits for residences and businesses to restart their furnace boilers, which could explode if fired prematurely.



Schools and six Red Cross refugee camps provided shelter for returning refugees until they could make their homes and

businesses habitable again. One positive result of the disaster was that most of the refugees had been vaccinated against diphtheria and smallpox.

Remembering the flood brings back painful memories for many. A few blessed events also come to mind. There was one incident that encompassed both extremes. The wake of a speeding powerboat caused a crowded refugee boat to capsize, tearing a four-month-old baby from its mother's arms and hurling it into the icy sludge. The blanket-wrapped babe floated down Broadway until Tom Wilson, a young man just out of the hospital with pneumonia, leaped from his boat and rescued Ann Anderson Freeman, who turned seventy late last year. Ann's great-grandmother, who was also in the boat, disappeared under the water—one of the first Paducah casualties of the great flood of 1937. ●

Evelyn Huston, 86

"He almost died, but he remembered me."



EVELYN Huston was in high school when the flood hit. She lived beyond the reach of the water on 34th Street—the flood stopped at 28th and Broadway. There were 17 people at her house, and they slept in shifts. She and a friend walked to nearby George Rogers Clark School to do volunteer work at the hospital that had moved into the school. "The snow was up to your knees, so I wore riding boots and a short skirt. My friend and I worked for four or five weeks, giving aspirins, taking temperatures, doing little things to relieve the nurses."

Among the patients was Jimmy Huston, the young man who so famously put the cow on the balcony on Sixth Street. Soon after that exploit he came down with double pneumonia and landed in the hospital. He may have been under an oxygen tent, but there was nothing wrong with his vision, or his memory. "He was really bad off," recalls Evelyn. "He almost died, but he remembered me in that short skirt and those riding boots walking down the hall." A couple of months later, he looked Evelyn up—they were married for 61 years.

John E. L. Robertson, professor emeritus of history at West Kentucky Community and Technical College, has written numerous books about the history of Paducah.

Many thanks to E. J. Abell and the River Heritage Museum for invaluable assistance in developing this article. The museum is collecting materials on the 1937 flood in Paducah with support from a Kentucky Humanities Council grant.

“Usually what happens is that I don’t decide to write a poem—a poem just begins to make itself felt.”

Jane Gentry Vance

Kentucky Poet Laureate 2007-08

JANE Gentry Vance, who publishes her poetry under her family name, Jane Gentry, will serve as Kentucky’s twenty-third Poet Laureate. Vance has published two poetry collections: *A Garden in Kentucky* (1995) and *Portrait of the Artist as a White Pig* (2006). In a review of *Portrait of the Artist as a White Pig*, critic Wade Hall called Vance a “poet of the highest order.” She is a professor of English and also teaches in the honors program at the University of Kentucky. The main duty of the Poet Laureate is to promote the literary arts across the state. Official installation day for Vance is Kentucky Writers’ Day, April 24, 2007. She spoke with *Kentucky Humanities* Editor Charles Thompson.



Photo by William Strode

Reading fiction and poetry is not a frill. Stories are absolutely essential to our sense of being human.

How long have you been writing poetry?

I remember writing the first thing that I thought of as a poem when I was in the second grade. Since then I can remember having the impulse. I think the impulse is partly to stop some rich experience, an experience that feels deep and generous in some way, to stop that experience and pull it out of the stream

Kentucky Poet Laureate Jane Gentry Vance

of time and keep it, to preserve it somehow. And not only to preserve it, but to explore that moment and figure out its implications, which often one comes to know only through the process of writ-

ing the poem and reconciling the moment with language. There's a lot of knowledge that comes out of that—that collision between the experience itself and the language and its ability to embody that experience.

Usually what happens is that I don't decide to write a poem—a poem just begins to make itself felt out of some experience. As soon as I begin to sense some kind of shape emerging out of the rawness and immediacy of the experience itself, I often begin to jot things down. Sometimes it comes pretty quickly and other times it takes a while to find the sense of it, the words for it. The poem "A Garden in Kentucky" took a long time to percolate, while the poem "Portrait of the Artist as a White Pig"—I had the experience of seeing these pigs in this field made golden by the sunset light, and somehow the sense of that was fairly sudden. It took me many weeks to get it into the form that I thought would work as well as I was able to make it work at the time, but the whole sense of the poem was pretty much there from

the beginning—that vision itself and metaphors from Greek mythology and my sense of pigs from my childhood.

Did you know pigs in your childhood?

I definitely did. I grew up on a farm at Athens in southeastern Fayette County. It was not, and still is not, a particularly cultured kind of farming. Not many horse farms. It has traditionally been tobacco, cattle and corn farming. My father always had pigs. One of the great treats after supper was to go with him in the pickup truck to shovel the daily corn out to the pigs. That was always at this time of day that this poem is about. Several strains of unlikely experience came together to make that poem in my body and mind.

Do you revise poems?

Yes, but, as somebody said, a poem is never finished, it's just abandoned. I keep revising, but there comes a point, and the point is, I think, when you kind of move beyond the experience of any particular poem and have fresh thoughts and per-

The impulse is to stop some rich experience, pull it out of the stream of time, and preserve it somehow.

ceptions about the same kinds of things. You just think, "That's that poem from that time and as imperfect as it is, there it is. It's over."

What do you hope to accomplish as Poet Laureate?

I'm really excited about having the opportunity to go around the state and talk to various kinds of groups. I understand from previous poet laureates that you speak to many different kinds of audiences, not just people who see themselves as really interested in writing and literature. I look forward to going to parts of the state that I've never been to before, and I really am so happy to have the privilege of being able to talk about

Portrait of the Artist as a White Pig

At sunset on a November day, the world unrolls itself beside the Western Kentucky Parkway. Gilded in sunlight, bronze as a baby shoe, the dead leaves burn on the trees, red, gold, black, spread rich as an Oriental rug. Green flames of side-lit cedars burnish all.

Then, over the short horizon appears the hero, alien as brontosaurus, strange, but of a multitude: white pigs, a field full, eating, all snouts to the ground they've rooted up, plowed like furrows in the cognac-colored light. That earth should take the form of this strange beast, should eat itself and shift into this shape! The bows of their backs gold-leafed: snout and mouth to golden earth, as hungry as one breath for the next. Unnatural as Midas' kingdom in the sideways sun, what other brutes could translate this bright dirt? This heavy light? These showers of gold?

Penelope's Night Out

Last night the fall crescent drifted down a summer sky. The crickets sang their eternal one-note chorus. You and I went to a party in a lovely room filled with likenesses of the hosts in the beauty of their youth, and with the books they cherish. The room opened to a porch that gave upon a woods. I watched its stand of handsome tree trunks fade in the twilight. I chatted up a temptress in whose thrall you once were held. After we drained the sweet liquor from the last cubes in our glasses, we said good-bye to friends, and to the pleasant new acquaintances.

We stepped into a moonless darkness and drove, companionably touching hands, thighs in the golden light of the dashboard. At home, we stepped out of our clothes and laughed again at a conversation I had overheard. We spoke, too, of Calypso's presence there. Then as we lay beside each other, sleepily touching, with our mouths, our fingers, our viscous skin, a wakefulness surprised us like a wave, rolled us into the ecstasy of this unlikely night, and dropped us, sleeping soundly as you did, Odysseus, surrounded by all your treasure, on the strange shore of home.

Backstories: What She Was Thinking

I think one of the most important functions of poems that maybe we don't think about all that often is to tell stories. It is so basic a human impulse, the need to tell stories and hear stories, and I think that poetry is one way of filling that need. We don't think of it as storytelling in as direct a way as we think of fiction as storytelling, but I think it is.

"Sam's Club in Winter" is not strictly speaking a narrative poem, but it implies the story of going to a Sam's Club and seeing what you see there, and having the ominous feelings that one can have there: that all these goods stacked up in this thin, precarious, acres-big building—that all of that is quite artificial as it's gathered together in one place, that it makes our lives pretty precarious that we depend on such conglomerations of the material things that we need to live. And it all depends on technology to get it to that place and then to get us to that place. Let that strong winter wind be strong enough and it all falls down and we're right back where we started, struggling to provide for ourselves. We go to these places and underneath our acceptance of them as commonplace and everyday there's a feeling of unease about it. Its existence is actually very delicate, totally out of our control.

And "A Garden in Kentucky" is really about that same thing, about the great plenty one encounters in the big box grocery store and, in contrast to that, what the old man and the old woman in the house near the Kroger store are dreaming about in planning their own garden in the middle of the winter.

Sam's Club in Winter

Freezers long as freight cars chock full of rock-hard cakes, pies, lasagnas, plastic sacks of crucifers, (when I unseal a door, its breath resists and sighs).

Rows of hot, baked hens, taut with succulence.
Chicken breasts cradled in styrofoam, corded like firewood.

A spill of fresh fruits from the tropics and the underside of earth: beguiling little crates of clementines, nubile grapes in see-through plastic. A grove of greenery and banks of flowers, each blossom netted against bruising; shelves tall as trees, toilet tissue stacked up into darkness.

Outside, winter's first Alberta clipper nudges around the corners of the big box, pokes the thin skin of plenty.

A Garden in Kentucky

Under the fluorescent sun inside the Kroger, it is always southern California. Hard avocados rot as they ripen from the center out. Tomatoes granulate inside their hides. But by the parking lot, a six-tree orchard frames a cottage where winter has set in.

Pork fat seasons these rooms.
The wood range spits and hisses,
limbers the oilcloth on the table
where an old man and an old woman
draw the quarter-moons of their nails,
shadowed still with dirt,
across the legends of seed catalogues.

Each morning he milks the only goat inside the limits of Versailles. She feeds a rooster that wakes up all the neighbors. Through dark afternoons and into night they study the roses' velvet mouths and the apples' bright skins that crack at the first bite.

When thaw comes, the man turns up the sod and, on its underside, ciphers roots and worms. The sun like an angel beats its wings above their grubbing. Evenings on the viny porch they rock, discussing clouds, the chance of rain. Husks in the dark dirt fatten and burst.

—Jane Gentry Vance

the importance of literature generally in the culture of Kentucky. I think that reading fiction and poetry is not a frill of culture. Stories are absolutely essential to our sense of being human. To really read a poem or a story you have to imaginatively extend yourself into it and empathize with the characters and the sensibility that the poem or story comes out of. I think that empathy, being able

to put yourself in the other's shoes, the other's skin, is really the basis of non-destructive behavior. It's the basis of morality.

It's really important that we not lose the vitality we are so lucky to have in Kentucky in poetry and fiction. I think that television, and radio before television, and movies—these technologized forms of storytelling have to some

degree mesmerized us and leave some people thinking that they're really not interested in the written, more difficult forms of storytelling. But literary forms repay, of course, the extra effort of projection into them, and I hope to use the bully pulpit to reinforce a sense of the value of literary forms in the face of the deadening influences, the canned story that you're the passive recipient of. ●

Folklorist Lynwood Montell has been interviewing
Kentucky physicians about their careers.
His diagnosis: they're full of stories.

Tales from the Exam Room...and Beyond

LYNWOOD Montell's explorations into Kentucky folklore are by now legendary. As a follow up to his popular *Tales from Kentucky Lawyers*, Montell, a professor emeritus of folk studies at Western Ken-



tucky University, has prepared a book of tales from Kentucky medical doctors. We're delighted to present a preview.

Pea in Boy's Nose

One time this woman came in with a child that was about four years old. She said, "He's got the awfulest cold I've ever seen. The funny thing of it is, there's blood and everything running out of just one side of his nose."

Well, that's pretty well known when that happens there is something wrong. So, I cleaned what I could and looked back up in there, and there was a pea in there. And it was already sprouted! It had two little tiny leaves already, so I took the pea out and that stopped the bleeding. It had been there about one month, I imagine, but in the moisture it had sprouted.

—Dr. Darl B. Shipp, Dry Ridge, February 13, 2006

Baby Born in Commode

This is a maternity story. I had this woman whom I had been seeing pretty regularly, and she was in uncomplicated pregnancy with her first baby. After about eight and one-half months, her husband called and said, "Can you come up here? I think we are in trouble."

So I jumped in my car and drove up there, and she had had her baby in the commode! [Laughter] The baby did fine. I pulled it out of the commode and got it to breathing again. What happens is that when their head gets down on the mother's pelvis, she feels like her bowels have to move.

So she thought that was what was going on. So she had the baby in the commode and we pulled it out and got it going. It did real good. Usually with the first baby, the mother has a long labor, but she didn't have much of a labor. It happened that quickly.

They wouldn't let me take her to the nursery in the hospital though because of contaminated cases. But the parents kept the baby at home, and it did well.

—Dr. Harry Spalding, Bardstown, March 3, 2006

The Wrong Question

It was after the 1937 flood in Louisville that I got my first lesson about sex. We were driven out of our home by floodwaters and had to move to higher ground. While we were housed in a friend's home, my pregnant mother delivered an infant girl, and I heard her telling over and over that the doctor got there after the baby was born, so I said to her, "Mother, you always told me that the doctor brought babies in their bags, but you are telling people that the doctor came after the baby was born, so how could that be?"

Mother's reply was, "Shut your mouth."

—Dr. Donald Chatham, Shelbyville, April 25, 2006

Going to See Lonely Patient

When Tom Duke was old, I'd go to his place every night and put him to bed. Dr. Harry [Denham] and I took turns going to see him. Tom always said he couldn't get by unless one of us would come to see him. He was a warehouseman and farmer; had a lot of money, but he couldn't make it alone because he was lonely. A lot of my house calls were due to people being lonely.

—Dr. George Estill, Maysville, December 9, 2005

**It had been there
about one month,
I imagine, but in
the moisture it
had sprouted.**

Horse Pulled Buggy While Doctor Slept

Before my grandfather, who was a doctor, had an automobile, he made house calls in a horse drawn buggy. The horse was special; he seemed to have some homing pigeon in him. Grandfather would go on the house call that would sometimes be at night. When he was finished making the house call, he could get the horse started, then he could lean over and fall asleep in the buggy, and the horse would pull the buggy all the way back home. Sometimes he would be miles outside of town, and he was known to have been seen asleep with that horse just walking down the road on his way back home!

—Dr. Ralph Cash, Jr.,
Princeton, March 19, 2006

Disagreement between Two Doctors

Dr. Sherman didn't think this other doctor practiced good medicine. And every time Dr. Sherman had a chance, he undermined him without saying anything. The woman patient that Dr. Sherman had charged ten cents had been going to the other doctor every day for ten days to get a shot of penicillin. Well, the penicillin wasn't doing her a bit of good. Penicillin had just come on the market, and doctors were very prone to give it to patients for everything. Instead of this other doctor looking into what the woman's problem was, he just started giving her a shot and charged ten dollars a shot, which was unheard of in those days.

So when she came to Dr. Sherman, he treated her with medicine she needed. She really didn't have an infection. She had moniliasis, which is a fungus, and the penicillin was actually making it worse. So he gave her a preparation for that and charged her one dime!!

—Dr. Aubrey L. Embry, Millwood, November 18, 2005

Patient Flees to Avoid Surgery

I practiced with a Methodist in Louisa. He and I would have pretty heated conversations about our religion. I was a Baptist and he was a Methodist. Dr. George Phillip Carter was a great man. He and I never had any serious disagreements about ideologies, or how to practice medicine, except we would disagree about religion.

I gave the anesthesia; he did moderate surgery on tonsillectomies, appendectomies and things like that. We had a surgeon from Ashland that came to Louisa to do major surgery. I gave many, many spinals. I dropped a lot of ether. It was always given out of an ether can, and dripped on a mask and held in front of patients. Every once and a while we would get into trouble, but not very much. It was a fairly good anesthesia. I don't remember any specific bad reactions, or anything even close to trouble. I do remember one time having the patient to get off the table after I thought I had him anesthetized. I had given him a spinal, I believe, but it hadn't worked. So he got out of the operating room, and we had to chase him down!

—Dr. Forest F. Shely, Campbellsville, December 23, 2005

Woman in Her Seventies Thought She Was Pregnant

By the time I got into practice I had already delivered 500 babies, and I delivered more babies from 1980 until 2000. During that time frame I delivered another 2,500, and also did C sections. So, in 2000 I quit delivering. I'd done 2,000 deliveries.

One of the most interesting OB [obstetrics] patients I took care of was a lady who was in her seventies. She had remarried an older fellow, and she came in one day and told me that she thought she was pregnant. She had pseudo psysis, which means false pregnancy, and is a psychiatric disorder. She was convinced that she was pregnant, and it is a well-documented psychiatric disorder. She had a classic case of it. What happened is her breasts were enlarged; she actually got milk in her breasts; her abdomen enlarged, so she looked exactly like she was pregnant. You could actually put your hand on her belly and feel movement. I don't know how they did it; it was probably muscular movement, and stuff like that. Of course, she wasn't pregnant, but we did an ultra-sound and pregnancy test just to make sure.

She was truly anticipating the delivery. Her husband finished a nursery. They bought baby clothes and a baby carriage they would push up and down the street here in Marion with a baby doll in it. Everybody in town knew about it.

But what happened was a very difficult thing to deal with because you have to somehow convince them that they are not pregnant. Well, one day she fell real hard and I think she had a compression fracture of her back. She was put in the hospital, and was in a lot of pain. I don't know why I did this, but it worked. It might be borderline unethical, but I went in one day and told her, "Mae, you know you fell pretty hard."

She said, "Yeah."

I said, "When you fell I think you lost the baby."

She started crying and she believed everything I said, and within three-four weeks her abdomen was back to normal; her breasts were back to normal. She went through like a mourning period, and that was it. She was fine from that point on.

Her husband was older than Mae, and she told me, said, "I knew when I got pregnant," just like God had given them a child like He did for Sarah and Abraham in later life.

That's an absolute true story.

—Dr. Gary V. James, Marion, April 23, 2006

A Viagra Story

I took care of this man and woman for years, and we always kidded and joked around. His wife came in one day to the office with him. I don't remember what was wrong with him. It wasn't anything bad, but after we got done, we walked out in the passageway there to go up to the waiting room. His wife was standing at the window paying the bill. So, he and I finished talking, and just as we walked up there, I jokingly said, "Oh, by the way, Bill, how is your Viagra doing?"

Well, she turns and shouts out, "Well, if he's using Viagra, he ain't using it at home." [Laughter]

He says to me, "For God's sake, tell her the truth." [Laughter]

—Dr. Darl B. Shipp,
Dry Ridge, February 13, 2006

Oops, Doctor's Tie Got Dirty

A friend who was a physician here in Owensboro, but has since moved out of town, told me a story about why he wouldn't wear a tie any more. He'd been accustomed to wearing a tie in the office. He says that one day he was seeing a patient; had his tie on, but did not have a coat over it. He was in the process of doing a rectal exam, and as he started to do the rectal exam he noticed that his tie was part of the rectal exam!!

He said subject to what happened, he did not wear any more ties. [Laughter]

—Dr. William Tyler, Owensboro, January 30, 2006

Patient Viewed Lexington as Out-of-State

I'll tell you about a young man who came in to see me the first ten-fifteen years I practiced in Pikeville. I saw an awful lot of mine accident injuries, including a lot of hand injuries. This young man, age 19, had been injured in the mine two days before and had a broken finger, a badly unstable broken finger that needed repair. He told me he had been in the emergency room two nights before and they just taped it to the next finger and told him to see another surgeon in town the next day. The other surgeon was not of the mind to do any hand surgery, which is tedious. So he referred him to an orthopedic surgeon, a hand surgeon in Lexington.

The young man came to me and said, "Doc, I got up there to the edge of that town and I saw all them big buildings and all them cars, and all them people. And Doc, I hain't been out of Kentucky before and I comed home. Jist do what you can."

That was out of Kentucky for him!

—Dr. Mary L. Wiss, Pikeville, May 10, 2006

Death of Elderly Patient

I had an elderly gentleman that came in one day, and it was a bad day; we were as busy as all getout. He waited about an hour to see me, give or take a little. The girls said when he came in he said he was sure glad his turn had come because he really felt bad. He sat down in a chair and he was just as white as a sheet.

I looked at his eyelids and they looked pretty pale, so I said, "Looks to me like you might be anemic." That was the only complaint he had. He just felt terrible. I went out to tell the girls to go in and do a blood count, then went on to see somebody else while they did that. When the girls went in there to draw the blood, he was sitting in the chair dead.

He was having coronary trouble but he didn't complain. He sat out there very patiently.

The people who get upset, cry, holler, and carry on, don't let them worry you. They're not very sick.

—Dr. Jerry Mckenney, Sturgis, April 23, 2006

Three-Point Advice

My great uncle, when I went into practice with him before he became ill, told me, "Now you need to remember three things, young lady. You'll probably make some addicts; you probably won't realize it, but you'll probably make some addicts." He said, "Never let the patient know you don't know what they're talking about; and always remember to collect your fee; and tincture of time will cure more illnesses than you ever thought about."

—Dr. Mary Pauline Fox, Pikeville, May 10, 2006

Doctor Pulled the Poor Man's Wrong Tooth

I was called on frequently to relive an aching or decayed tooth.

In my neighborhood there lived a miser who would go through the winter without any socks, when they could have been bought for ten cents a pair. He had money, but he would prefer to suffer physical pain to spending a dime. At the midnight hour, this man rang my door bell. When I opened the door he proceeded to tell me he had a tooth ache which had been going on for about two days, and he believed it would kill him if he did not get relief. He suggested that I remove the tooth. I went out to my office and lighted a kerosene lamp. At my request he placed his finger on the offending tooth. Depending on him to indicate the aching tooth, I applied my forceps well and after having raised him from the chair seat twice, the tooth with all its roots came out. He proceeded to spit blood and continued to groan. In a few minutes he, with an agonizing look, informed me that I had pulled the wrong tooth. I assured him I had pulled the tooth he had suggested was aching. Seeing his agony I suggested he open his mouth and we would proceed to remove the other tooth. He hesitated for a time and finally requested that we have an understanding. I suggested he inform me of the nature of the required understanding. With tears in his eyes and a look of distress he asked, "If you pull the other tooth, will you charge me for pulling both of them?"

—Written by Dr. W. L. Tyler, Sr.; provided by Dr. William Tyler, Owensboro

Front Porch Practice

Living just three blocks from my office in Shively when I started practicing family medicine was a classical mixed blessing. Entirely too early some mornings, mothers would arrive at my front door with children in tow. They were desperate to know, "Does Charley have pink eye?" "Does this rash look like measles?" "Can you just check Mary's tonsils?"

Going to church or the grocery store also resulted in numerous curbside consultations. Sometimes on Sundays, I'd work the soda fountain at my father's drug store across the street from my office. At first, people would say, "You look a lot like the doctor down the street." Then they realized that I was, and came by for free medical advice with their ice cream sundaes. You do what you have to do to build a practice.

On the day that I arrived home from the hospital with my newborn daughter, a truck pulled into our drive behind us. It was Jimmy, a long-time patient. He followed us into the house, much to my husband's displeasure. I asked Jimmy what he wanted and he said, "I gog a hish hone in my froat."

Handing the new baby to Grammy, I got my kitchen pick-ups and, with my husband holding a flashlight, extracted a fish bone from Jimmy's throat. He was very grateful. Eventually we decided that it was good to be appreciated, wherever and whenever.

—Donne DeMunbrun-Harmon, M.D.,
Louisville, March 26, 2006

Oops, Husband Is Coming Home

I had one lady that came in when she was fifty-two, as I remember, and she wanted some of them birth control pills. I said, "You are 52 years old. What do you want birth control pills for?"

She said, "My ma had me when she was 52, and my old man has been in the pen for the past ten years for shining [moon shining]. He's coming home next week, and I ain't taking no chances!" [Laughter] That is a true story.

—Dr. Mary L. Wiss, Pikeville,
May 10, 2006

Seven Members Join Humanities Council Board of Directors

THE Kentucky Humanities Council has welcomed seven new members to its Board of Directors. Five of the new members were elected by the standing Board to three-year terms that are renewable for three additional years. Two new members were appointed to the Board by Governor Ernie Fletcher. Their terms are the same as the governor's. The governor of Kentucky is authorized to appoint a total of five members to the Humanities Council's Board.

These new members will represent the Council in their home areas, set policies, review grant applications, and raise money for the more than 400 public humanities programs the Council supports every year. These programs reached all but seven of the Commonwealth's 120 counties in 2006. The Council and its community partners invest more than \$1 million annually in public humanities programs for Kentuckians.



Kristen T. Bale (Glasgow) is a past president of Leadership Kentucky, former chair of the Board of Regents of Western Kentucky University, and served for eleven years as a member of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Bale is currently president of the South Central Kentucky Cultural Center.

Pat Bradley (Whitesburg) is the Associate Vice President—Arts, Culture and Entertainment at the Center for Rural Development in Somerset. She is also the Center's acting Development Director. Bradley worked for many years in the music business, founding her own label, Turquoise Records, and she served as executive director of the Mountain Arts Center in Prestonsburg.



Aristofanes Cedeno (Louisville) is a native of Panama. He earned a law degree there before coming to the U. S. for a Ph.D. at Michigan State University. Cedeno is now an associate professor in the Department of Classical and Modern Languages at the University of Louisville. He is also executive director and academic dean of the Governor's Scholars Program. (Governor's Appointee)



Kenneth R. Hixson (Lexington) is president and owner of Hixson Handling Inc., a Lexington company that provides material handling and storage equipment to manufacturers and warehouse, mainly in Kentucky. Hixson holds a degree in history from the University of Kentucky and is active in the Lexington Rotary Club and the Lexington History Museum. (Governor's Appointee)

William G. Scott (Frankfort) is executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association. KSBA provides training and other services to school officials statewide. Scott previously served as director of the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Student and Family Support Services. He holds two master's degrees and is a graduate of Leadership Kentucky.



Bob Willenbrink (Morehead) has been professor and chair of communication and theatre at Morehead State University since 2002. Willenbrink, who earned his doctorate at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, has extensive credits as a theatrical director, producer and playwright, including numerous plays written and produced for disabled artists.

Margie Wilson (Lexington) retired in 2004 after a career in the public schools, mainly in Fayette County where her jobs included Adult Education Counselor, English teacher, and associate principal at Lafayette High School. Wilson holds graduate degrees from the University of Kentucky, and has been active in Operation Read, YMCA Black Achievers and many other civic groups.



Gearing Up for the Lincoln Bicentennial

Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday is February 12, 2009. The Kentucky Humanities Council will play a major role in the observances.

ON February 12, 2008, national and international dignitaries will gather in Hodgenville, Kentucky to kick off a year-long celebration leading up to Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday. The guest list hasn't been revealed, but for the sixteenth president's 100th and 150th birthdays, the then-sitting presidents of the United States (Theodore Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower) made the pilgrimage to Lincoln's birth place in Larue County to pay their respects.



A federal commission, the (U.S.) Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, will be in charge of the festivities in Hodgenville next February. The Commission will emphasize the con-

tinuing importance of Lincoln's ideas and actions to the country and the world while sponsoring numerous projects, among them a series of Lincoln pennies and rededication of the Lincoln Memorial in May 2009.

The Lincoln observances most Kentuckians will encounter, though, will stem from the activities of a different commission: the Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission (KALBC). Established by the General Assembly in 2004, the KALBC will spend at least \$6 million dollars on Lincoln Bicentennial activities. Here's an overview:

- Kentucky Humanities Council:** The Council will have \$285,000 to support Lincoln-related grants, publication of a Lincoln chapbook aimed at heritage tourists, and the development of four new Lincoln-related Kentucky Chautauqua characters. For information on our Lincoln grants, visit www.kyhumanities.org
- Statuses:** Sculptor Ed Hamilton has been commissioned to create a Lincoln statue/memorial on the Louisville waterfront. Lincoln had friends in the city, and never forgot the sight of slaves being transported on the Ohio River at Louisville. The city of Hodgenville is planning a Lincoln boyhood statue, and Springfield is in the early stages of developing a statue project, probably related to Lincoln's parents.
- Publications:** There will be many, including scholarly articles, newspaper inserts, a coffee table book with photographs and information about Lincoln sites in Kentucky, and the Humanities Council's tourist-friendly chapbook.
- Plays:** The Kentucky Repertory Theatre (formerly Horse Cave Theatre) will do an original Lincoln play. Actors Theatre of Louisville also hopes to mount a Lincoln production.
- Exhibits:** The Kentucky Historical Society will present a Lincoln exhibit in 2009 at the Kentucky History Center, and there will be exhibits in local museums, some funded by Humanities Council grants.
- Music:** The Louisville Orchestra, the Lexington Philharmonic and others hope to participate although they do not yet have firm plans to report.
- Education:** Classroom initiatives are under development, the Humanities Council will send its Lincoln-related Chautauqua characters into the schools, and KET will broadcast several Lincoln-related programs.

For more information about Kentucky's Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial observances, please contact Steve Price at the Kentucky Humanities Council (859/257-5932 or steve.price@uky.edu) or visit www.kylincoln.org.

What You Told Us

Some numbers from last fall's *Kentucky Humanities* survey

TO say we were gratified by the response to last fall's *Kentucky Humanities* survey would be a major understatement. We were thrilled. You sent back more than 860 surveys, a response rate of 19.4 per cent—a surveyor's dream come true. Many thanks! Here are a few highlights from what you told us about your *Kentucky Humanities* reading habit:

- 70% read most or all of the magazine.
- 63% pick it up more than once.
- 95% rate its contents as excellent or good.
- 89% think the scholarly level of the articles is reasonable.
- 72% think the mix of long and short articles is about right.
- 75% feel the size of the magazine is about right.
- 62% want a section of Kentucky history and travel notes.
- 61% recommend articles to their friends and relatives.
- 56% think two issues a year is enough (40% want more).
- 80% are 50 or older.
- 75% are college-educated.

Again, thank you for your responses, which we are studying closely. Please send your comments or questions about *Kentucky Humanities* to charles.thompson@uky.edu.

Photo by Larry Neuzel



Lincoln-era Figures Head List of New Kentucky Chautauqua Characters

WITH celebrations of his 200th birthday beginning in less than a year, Abraham Lincoln and several other characters from his era are about to join Kentucky Chautauqua's incomparable living history lineup. As you'll see in the list below, the sixteenth president will have some fascinating company, including his wife and sister-in-law. All seven of our new Chautauquans will be ready to hit the road on August 1, 2007, the beginning of the next Speakers Bureau/Kentucky Chautauqua booking year. All told, in 2007-08 we will offer more than twenty Chautauqua characters—an unprecedented menu of great education and entertainment for program planners all over the state to choose from.

You'll find it all in the 2007-08 *Whole Humanities Catalog*, which as usual will also include dozens of speakers offering an amazing variety of talks. Look for the *Whole Humanities Catalog* in your mail box this July! Not on our mailing list? Call 859/257-5932. Or see the entire catalog online at www.kyhumanities.org.

Atta-kul'-kulla, **portrayed by Robert K. Rambo**

From the late 1750s until his death in 1780, the Cherokee Peace Chief Atta-kul'-kulla was the leader of the largest and most powerful Indian nation east of the Mississippi River. He negotiated the huge land deal known as the Transylva-

Our new Kentucky Chautauqua characters will hit the road in August 2007. Back row from left: Henry Dowell as Dr. Ephraim McDowell and Jim Sayre as Abraham Lincoln. Middle row from left: Angela Bartley as Mary Todd Lincoln, Betsy Smith as Emilie Todd Helm, and Erma Bush as Margaret Garner. Front row from left: Dick Usher as Pee Wee Reese and Robert Rambo as Atta-kul'-kulla.

nia Purchase, which included Kentucky, and his actions influenced subsequent land negotiations as well as relations between settlers and Indians.

Robert K. Rambo of Abingdon, Virginia, has portrayed Atta-kul'-kulla for more than ten years. A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, he is currently a graduate student in Native American Studies at Western Carolina University.

**Emilie Todd Helm,
portrayed by Betsy B. Smith**

Emilie Todd Helm was the younger half-sister of Abraham Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. Until her husband, Benjamin Helm, chose to fight for the Confederacy, Emilie Todd Helm had an unmatched perspective on the Lincoln marriage. And her post-Civil War life—she lived until 1930—was both very long and very interesting.

Betsy B. Smith, a resident of Cynthia, holds degrees from Georgetown College in history and communication arts and has extensive experience in speech and theater.

**Margaret Garner,
portrayed by Erma Bush**

Margaret Garner was a Kentucky slave who, along with her husband and four children, escaped across the frozen Ohio River to Cincinnati in January 1856. When slave hunters discovered the family's hiding place, Garner killed one of her daughters rather than see her returned to slavery. Garner herself was returned to slavery. Her story is the basis of the novel *Beloved*.

Erma Bush of Louisville is an experienced actress, director and playwright. Since 1998 she has portrayed Miss Dinnie Thompson for Kentucky Chautauqua.

**Abraham Lincoln,
portrayed by Jim Sayre**

Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States and a native of Kentucky, was recently ranked by the *Atlantic Monthly* as the most influential American of all time. Though Lincoln left Kentucky at an early age, the Commonwealth always played an important role in his personal and political life as he rose to high office and labored to save the union.

Jim Sayre, a retired transportation manager, resides in Lawrenceburg and has been portraying Abraham Lincoln for more than twenty years.

**Mary Todd Lincoln,
portrayed by Angela Bartley**

Raised in Lexington, Mary Todd moved to Illinois in 1839, and in 1842 married Abraham Lincoln, deepening the future president's ties to his native state. Like her husband, Mary Todd Lincoln was smart and ambitious. Politically, she opposed slavery and supported the union. Personally, her behavior was often controversial, and her life following Lincoln's assassination proved very difficult.

Angela Bartley, an actress and musician, is an honors graduate of the University of Louisville. She also portrays Rosie the Riveter for Kentucky Chautauqua.

**Dr. Ephraim McDowell,
portrayed by L. Henry Dowell**

On Christmas Day 1809 in Danville, Kentucky, Dr. Ephraim McDowell made medical history by removing a 22-pound ovarian tumor from Jane Todd Crawford, who lived another thirty years. Eminent surgeons of the time said opening the abdomen meant certain death. McDowell proved them wrong by pioneering an operation that saved many lives.

L. Henry Dowell of Nicholasville holds a B.A. in Theatre from Morehead State University. He has wide experience as an actor and director.

**Pee Wee Reese,
portrayed by Dick Usher**

A native of Meade County, Kentucky, Harold "Pee Wee" Reese was the star short-stop and leader of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team from the late 1940s through the 1950s. He helped the Dodgers win seven National League pennants. And, as his plaque in the Hall of Fame states, he was "instrumental in easing acceptance of Jackie Robinson as baseball's first black performer."

Dr. Richard H. "Dick" Usher is an emeritus professor of educational psychology at Murray State University. A lifelong baseball fan, Usher also has two decades of experience in local theatrical productions.



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High Hopes Realized

The High Hope Steeplechase delivers for horsemen, horse lovers and equine charities

THE High Hope Steeplechase may have turned forty last year, but it hasn't lost a step. Its organizers are gearing up for the biggest meeting yet on Sunday, May 20, 2007. Named for High Hope Farm where it was first held in 1966 (2,000 stalwart fans stood in the rain to watch), last year's sunny weather brought a crowd of 20,000 out to the steeplechase course at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington.

The High Hope moved to the Horse Park in 1974. Along with a single steeplechase per meet at Keeneland, the High Hope keeps alive a form of racing that has never been especially popular in Kentucky. The competitors come from all over. "It's not really local," says High Hope Executive Director Elizabeth Collier. "They come from Virginia, Mary-

land, Pennsylvania, the Carolinas—most of the steeplechasing in this country is done on the east coast. All of the big names, all of the big trainers, come."

The main race on the card is the Coca-Cola Sport of Kings Maiden Hurdle, carrying a purse of \$25,000. Another signature event is the Jay Trump Timber, a 3 and 1/8 miles "chase" over timber hurdles sponsored by Hagyard Equine Medical Institute. It's named for the legendary chaser Jay Trump. In 1965 he became only the second American horse to win the granddaddy of steeplechases, the Grand National in Aintree, England. He's buried at the finish line at the Horse Park.

If the racing at High Hope is top drawer, so is the fun. "It's become one of Lexington's social events of the year," says Collier. "I haven't heard one person say they didn't like it." If you want to park





Scenes from the 2006 High Hope Steeplechase by Equimage Media.



by the track and tailgate, admission is \$25 per car. The tariff for an elegant luncheon and unlimited drinks is \$75 per person (\$125 per couple). There's no organized wagering at the High Hope, but you can probably find plenty of action on the Jack Russell terrier races.

Most important, it's all for a good cause. Collier says it "gives back to the horse, which Lexington is all about." Since the early 1990s, the High Hope Steeplechase has donated more than a quarter of a million dollars to charity. Last year's four charitable beneficiaries were:

Maker's Mark Secretariat Center—A Thoroughbred Foundation Facility. Located at the Kentucky Horse Park, the Secretariat Center finds new homes for retired thoroughbreds. The Center has space for about 20 horses, and also provides office space for the High Hope Steeplechase Association Inc.

Central Kentucky Riding for Hope (CKRH). Also located at the Horse Park, CKRH is a nonprofit organization that helps people with a wide range of disabilities build confidence, coordination and a sense of achievement while learning horsemanship, tack and riding principles.

Kentucky Horse Park Foundation. The Foundation has provided funding for many of the Horse Park's facilities, such as show rings and barns for equine competition, landscaping projects, signage, publications, and more.

Blue Grass Farms Chaplaincy. The Chaplaincy is a faith-based outreach ministry that serves central Kentucky

horse farms by addressing the spiritual, emotional, material and social needs of horse racing's work force.

For more information about the High Hope Steeplechase, call 859/967-9444 or visit www.highhopesteeplechase.com.

HIGH HOPE STEEPLECHASE

MAY 20, 2007 *Kentucky Horse Park*



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