

Kentucky

October 2007
Kentucky Humanities Council Inc.

\$3.00

humanities



Cutting a Swath *page 8*

The amazing career of William Sheppard, human rights advocate and Louisville pastor.

A Kentuckian on Bataan *page 20*

William Gentry fought heroically and survived the biggest American defeat of World War II, but many of his comrades from Harrodsburg weren't so lucky.

Channeling Socrates in the Bluegrass *page 29*

Why the liberal arts are endangered and why liberal education is worth saving.



Celebrating the Lincoln Bicentennial—the Council Takes the Lead

Dear Friends,

Kentuckians are justly proud of their native son, Abraham Lincoln. Yes, it's true that during the Civil War he was, to put it mildly, unpopular in the Commonwealth. But our attitude toward the sixteenth president of the United States shifted radically following his assassination, and recognition of his greatness and pride in his humble origins in Larue County have long since replaced the bitterness of the war.

The Kentucky Humanities Council is proudly and enthusiastically taking the lead in the celebration of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday on February 12, 2009. Observance of the Lincoln Bicentennial will actually last two years. It begins in 2008, and the Council is presenting the first kickoff event on Sunday, February 10, 2008—*Our Lincoln*, a gala to be held at the University of Kentucky's Singletary Center for the Arts in Lexington.

Some of Kentucky's finest talents—UK Opera director Everett McCorvey, the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra, violinist Nathan Cole, Poet Laureate Jane Gentry Vance, and many others—are working together to make this celebration truly memorable. You will thrill to their performances, and come away with a renewed appreciation for the great leader who inspired them. Please plan to be there!

You'll find all the details about *Our Lincoln* and the council's other Lincoln Bicentennial activities on page 35. Between this page and that one, you'll also find some of the great reading you expect from *Kentucky Humanities*. Kentucky History and Travel Notes makes its debut in this issue. This is a section you asked for in last fall's survey. Let us know what you think.

The remarkable Reverend William Henry Sheppard spent nearly a quarter of his life in Kentucky, but few know of his career as an internationally renowned missionary, anthropologist, and defender of human rights. Peter Morrin tells Sheppard's amazing story. And Chris Kolakowski and Berry Craig have amazing stories to tell of Kentuckians whose work abroad did not win fame—just World War II.

Do the liberal arts have a future in the 21st century? In a provocative essay, Jeffrey Freyman argues that they do as he tells us why liberal education is endangered and why it is worth saving. In our photo essay, you'll discover the amusing work of Louisville photographer Keith Auerbach, a patient man who doesn't harvest the picture until it is "perfectly ripe."

As always, thank you for your faithful support of our efforts to bring the humanities to all Kentuckians, and mark your calendars for *Our Lincoln* on February 10—we'll be sending reminders closer to the date.

Virginia G. Smith, Publisher





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© 2007 Kentucky Humanities Council ISSN 1554-6284

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: *Glancing Naive Swooper* by Stephen Rolfe Powell. Photograph by David Harpe. For more, see page 4.



Vinson's renovated birthplace, the former Lawrence County jail, was dedicated as the Louisa Welcome Center and Museum on September 7, 2007.

Louisa Honors Native Son

Fred M. Vinson was one of Kentucky's greatest statesmen

FRED M. Vinson, born in jail in Louisa, Kentucky, rose to the heights of American government. His political career, one of the most significant in the history of the Commonwealth, was honored September 7, 2007 at the dedication of the renovated Vinson

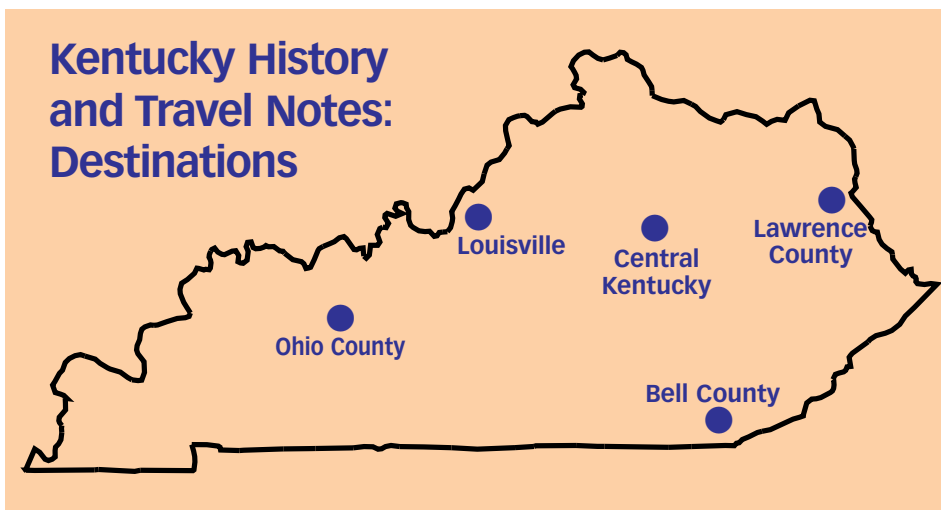
birthplace in downtown Louisa. It is now officially the Louisa Welcome Center and Museum, and is already stocked with some of the artifacts of Vinson's career. The dedication was the culmination of years of work by the Fred M. Vinson Foundation.



James Vinson was the Lawrence County jailer when his son Frederick Moore Vinson, who always preferred to be known as Fred M. Vinson, was born in the front of the jail on January 22, 1890. The young Vinson studied law at Centre College, and at the age of 21 hung out his shingle in Louisa and began a career in law and politics. In 1924 he won a seat in Congress, launching a Washington career that included distinguished service in all three branches of government.

In Congress in the 1930s, Vinson emerged as an influential expert on tax policy and as a staunch supporter of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. He described himself as "a little left of center" in politics. In 1938, Roosevelt appointed Vinson to the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia. During World War II, Roosevelt recalled Vinson to the executive branch, where he ably handled several difficult and important jobs, including director of economic stabilization.

The *New York Times* described Vinson as "genial, affable and kindly, hearty and sincere, amiable and unaffected . . . a dignified man of grave demeanor, calm judgment, a great amount of patience, and an easy manner." His winning personality, political acumen, and hardworking nature were a potent combination, leading to close relationships



with presidents Roosevelt and Harry Truman, especially the latter.

After Roosevelt's death in 1945, Truman appointed Vinson Secretary of the Treasury. The next year, banking on Vinson's skill at bringing warring parties together, Truman sent him to preside over a floundering U. S. Supreme Court, which was riven by bitter squabbling among the justices. One of only seventeen men to hold the position of Chief Justice of the United States, Vinson brought a

measure of harmony to the court during his seven years at its head. He died suddenly on September 8, 1953. In opinions he had written in civil rights cases, Vinson said racial segregation had no place in American education, but he did not live to participate in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in the schools.

Fred M. Vinson is buried in the Pinehill Cemetery in Louisa. His birthplace is on Madison Street, on the left just before you cross the bridge to West Virginia. Be sure to try the onion rings at Dee's.



As shown in this Washington Post cartoon, President Truman appointed Fred M. Vinson Chief Justice in hopes he could heal a fractured Supreme Court.



Viewing mementoes of Vinson's career at the highest levels of government.

Autumn Mist

Mist is the translucent stuff of memory and reflection

BY RAYMOND F. BETTS

Raymond F. Betts, teacher and humanist par excellence, died in February 2007. A retired professor of history at the University of Kentucky and founding director of the Gaines Humanities Center, Betts was also a longtime friend and supporter of the Kentucky Humanities Council. He sent us this little essay a while back, and we are happy to publish it in his memory.

ALONG with falling leaves, early October in Kentucky brings rising morning mist. The sight is appealing—if the viewer is not behind the steering wheel of a car heading in the direction of this atmospheric condition.

Mist, unlike fog, its opaque cousin, causes graceful and appealing metaphors to rise. The mist of time, misty eyes, the mist of perfume—or W. H. Auden's sad world "mantled in mist." Fog befuddles and disorients; it disturbs and disrupts. Fog is the vaporous setting of crime and mystery. Fog may be dense or thick, heavy or impenetrable, widespread and rather enduring.

Mist is none of these. It is the translucent stuff of memory and reflection. It is so because it is light and low, quickly evaporated or dissipated as the day gathers itself together and casts off the deep cold of early morning.

The brevity of mist accounts for much of its appeal; the rest comes from its location. There, in hollow and bottomland, along river edge or around forest cover, mist, like the halo of the saint, defines the unspoiled, and briefly separates the natural from the contrived and manufactured.

The morning mist reminds us that there is more to life and thought than the clarity of reason. Mist suggests ambiguity, the ill-defined, therefore rather shapeless, space that separates dark and light, the depth of night from the brightness of day.

I can think of no better place to enjoy an early morning Kentucky mist than along Route 68 as the road twists downward to the Kentucky River and then pauses before it rises toward Shakerstown. The sight is one that allows the viewer to grasp, in appealing and proper proportions, the artistic notion of "The Sublime," the awe-inspiring presence of nature before the introspective individual.

Mist disappears quickly. Its momentary hold on our sight, our imagination, our spirit is as it should be. The appeal is in the long reflection inspired by the short phenomenon.



Glass Master

A Louisville exhibit looks back at a quarter-century of glass art by Stephen Rolfe Powell of Centre College

FOR Stephen Powell, the urge to make glass art is consuming—“what a drug is to an addict” is how he describes it. The cost, for Powell, is the difficulty of coming down from the high, of subsiding into normal life. The benefit, for everyone, is glass art of great beauty, an evolving body of work that celebrates the ways in which color and form combine to stunning effect.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Powell graduated from Centre College with a degree in art in 1974. At the time, he was a painter. He taught art—in a prison and at a private school in Alabama—while turning his personal focus to ceramics. At age 28, he entered the Master of Fine Arts Program at Louisiana State University. By the time he finished, he had thrown over ceramics and taken up with glass. In 1983, he returned to Centre to teach art and is still there, winning awards for his teaching and international renown for his glassmaking.

Master Makers: Stephen Rolfe Powell, A Retrospective Exhibition at the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft in Louisville (see box for details) chronicles Powell’s glassmaking career. So does the book *Stephen Rolfe Powell: Glassmaker*, published by the University Press of Kentucky to coincide with the opening of the retrospective exhibition, which runs through February 2, 2008.

Photographs by David Harpe
 Stephen Rolfe Powell: Glassmaker
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Playing with fire: One reason Stephen Powell likes glassblowing is simple enough—“I’m a pyromaniac.”

**Master Makers:
Stephen Rolfe Powell,
A Retrospective Exhibition**

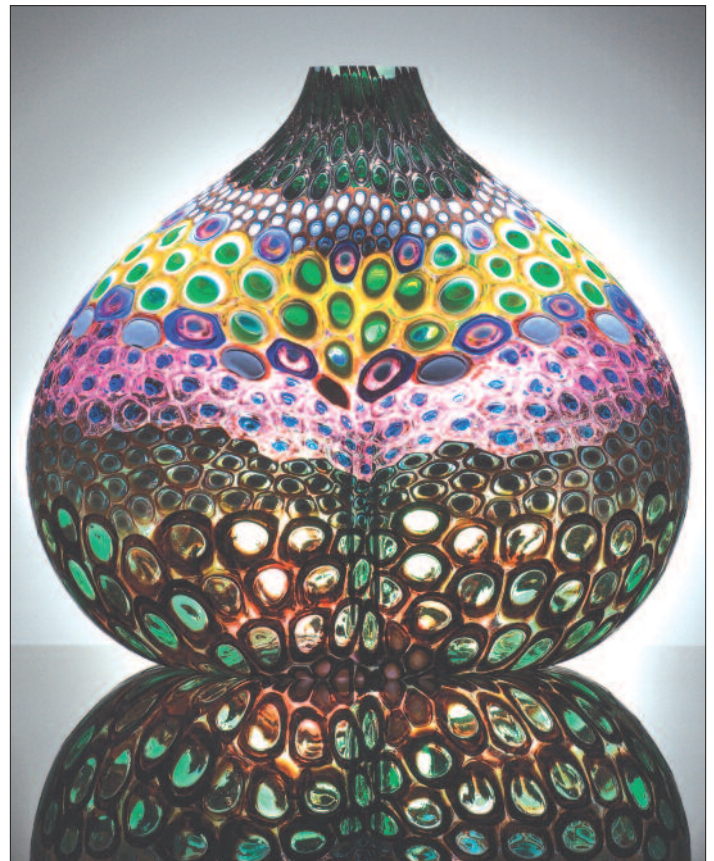
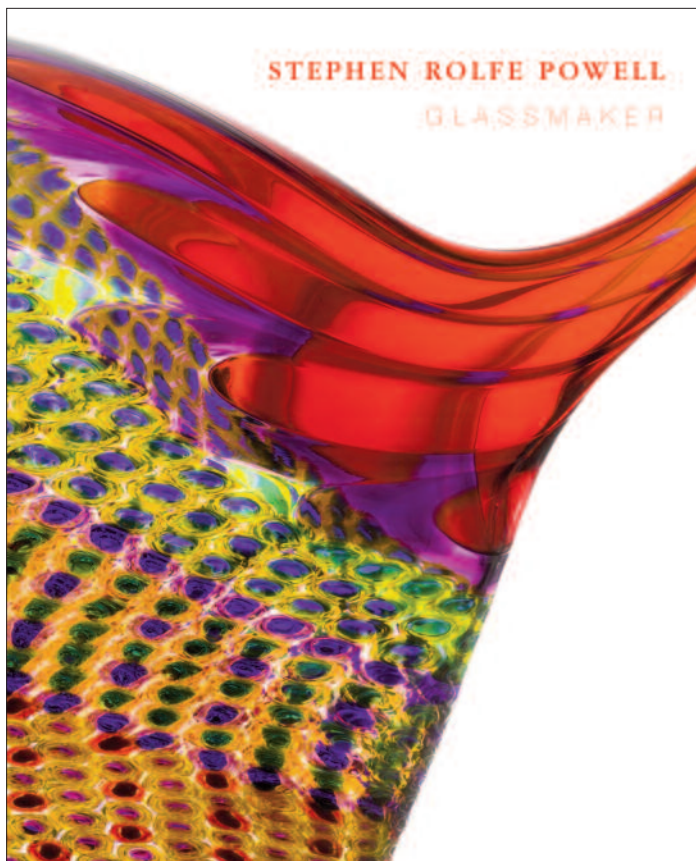
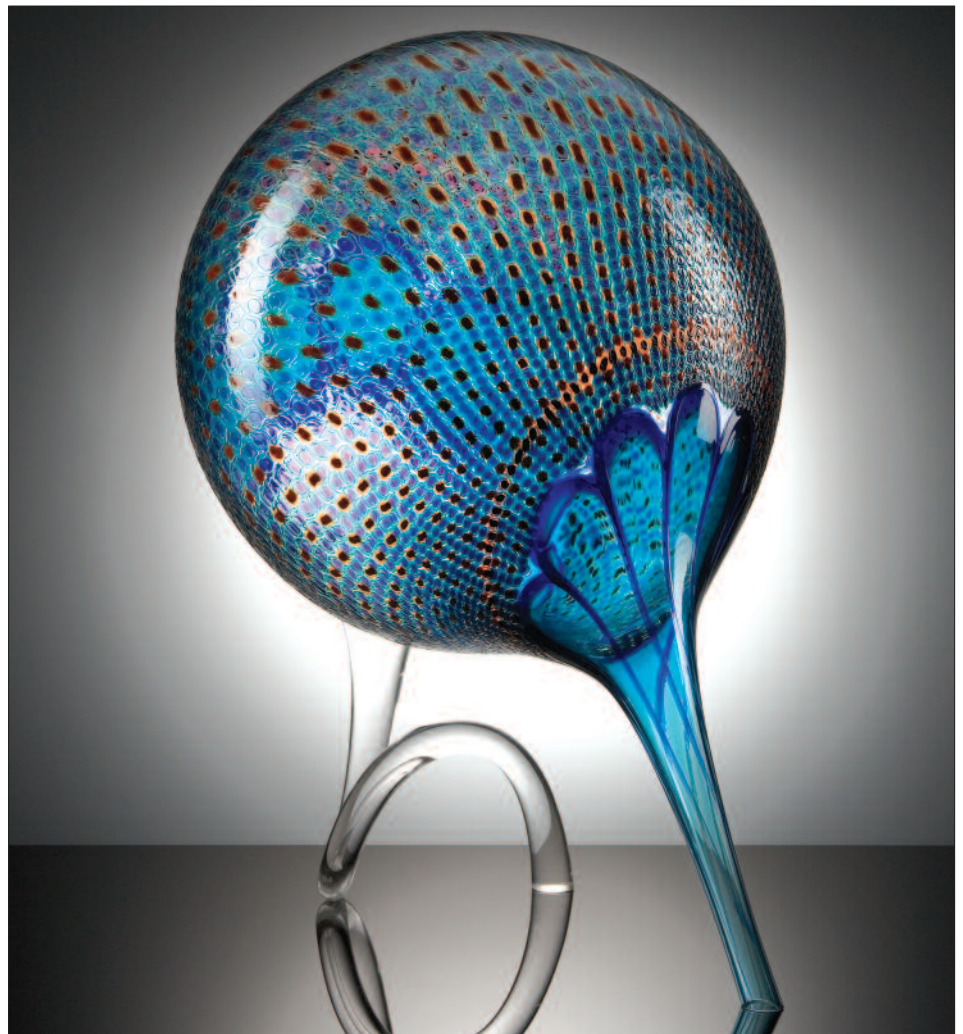
October 20, 2007-February 2, 2008
Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft
715 West Main Street
Louisville, KY

Hours:
Monday-Friday 10-5; Saturday 11-5
Admission: FREE
502/589-0102
www.KentuckyArts.com

*Right: Pushy Violet Throb, 2005.
This recent work is what Powell calls
a Whacko, an asymmetrical shape
that allows him to “explore more
challenging sculptural concerns.”*

*Bottom left: Published to coincide with
the Louisville exhibit, this University
Press of Kentucky book chronicles
Powell’s career in brilliant color.*

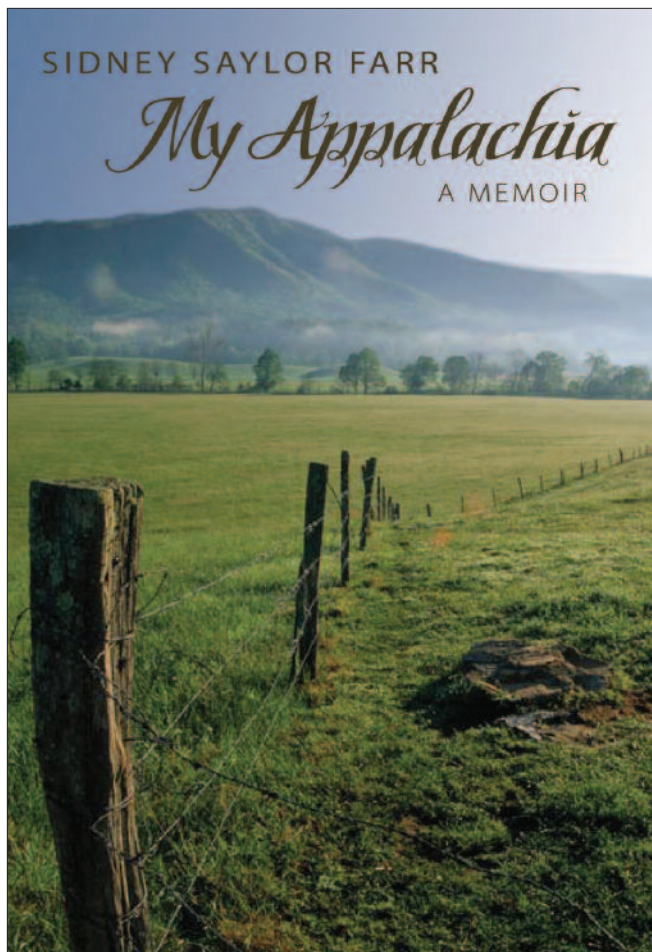
*Bottom right: Peacock Cheeks Johnson,
1988. This is the vessel shape Powell
favored early in his career.*



The Power of Riddles

In her new memoir, Appalachian writer Sidney Saylor Farr recalls her childhood in remote Bell County, Kentucky. Riddles, she writes, were a favorite form of entertainment.

BY SIDNEY SAYLOR FARR



Sidney Saylor Farr is the former editor of Appalachian Heritage and a former staff member at Berea College. She has written numerous articles and books about Appalachian life and culture.

TELLING riddles is both an intellectual exercise and form of entertainment that goes back as far in history as we have any knowledge of man's intellectual doings. Even the Bible contains riddles. The Anglo-Saxons evidently loved riddles because they preserved many elaborate ones. Down through the years, poets have written riddles in verse. Riddles have been used for various kinds of tests. But the fun of riddles comes

ren in southeastern Kentucky. One collector suggested that the children ask their parents and grandparents for riddles they might remember. One child came back saying, "My mommy said she knows other old riddles that are kinda bad. She said she would tell them to you if you come and see her."

Here are some of my favorite "good" and "bad" riddles, heard in my childhood.

from the riddles themselves, not from the discourses about them.

"Riddling" has been a traditional form of social activity in Appalachia; sad to say, though, young people these days know fewer and fewer of the old riddles.

Perhaps the most famous riddle still to be found in Appalachia is the Riddle of the Sphinx, which Oedipus answered in order to become King of Thebes. *What goes on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the afternoon?* Answer: *A human being.*

In the mountains the most suggestive riddles—"bad" riddles with innocent answers—always seemed to be the most popular. The shock of the innocent answer added to the overall impact.

A number of years ago, riddles were gathered from schoolchild-

Crooked as a rainbow,
Teeth like a cat,
Guess all night and
You can't guess that.
(Answer: a briar)

Back to the ground,
Belly to the sun,
Tails begin to wiggle,
And the good begins to come!
(Answer: sow and pigs)

Up she jumped and out she run,
Down she squatted,
And the good began to come.
(Answer: milking a cow)

Green as grass but grass it ain't.
Black as ink but ink it ain't.
What is it?
(Answer: a blackberry)

As I went across London Bridge
I met a London scholar.
He tipped his hat and drew his cane,
And in this riddle I told his name.
(Answer: Andrew)

In yonders lot there is a cup,
And in that cup there is a drop,
And of that drop we all must taste.
(Answer: death)

Round as a biscuit, busy as a bee,
Prettiest little thing you ever did see.
(Answer: a pocket watch)

A hill full, a hole full,
But you can't get a bowlful.
(Answer: fog or mist)

Four stiff standers,
Two lookers, two hookers,
One dirty switch-about
Lags along behind.
(Answer: a cow)

Belly to belly,
Hand on the back.
A little piece of flesh
To stop up the crack.
(Answer: a baby nursing)

Excerpted from My Appalachia by Sidney Saylor Farr © University Press of Kentucky 2007 www.kentuckypress.com Used by permission.

Splish Splash: Hydrotherapy, 1830s-style

Did Kentuckians of 1830 bathe enough?
Not according to a letter writer from Indiana

On August 1, 1830, Rebecca Conduct of Warrick County, Indiana, wrote to her sister, Mary Conduct of Ohio County, Kentucky. Rebecca Conduct devoted a large part of the letter to the benefits of frequent bathing. The spelling and punctuation (or lack thereof) are her own.

I have nothing particular to write that I know of. only I want to reccommend something to you if you will do it I think it will help you or cure you of your sick spells that you are subject to, that is bathing or washing. you may think you have not time to attend to it, but I can tell you it will not take you more than five or ten minutes, I know you have plenty of watter and boys to pack it. you can have it in a tub in the house, when you get reddy to go to bed then you can wash. If you think you can't stand it as cold as it comes out of the spring you can take the cold off of it a little the first time or two, but after you wash a few times you will not mind the cold, the first time you wash you had better take a little soap and a cloth and rub hard. have some one to

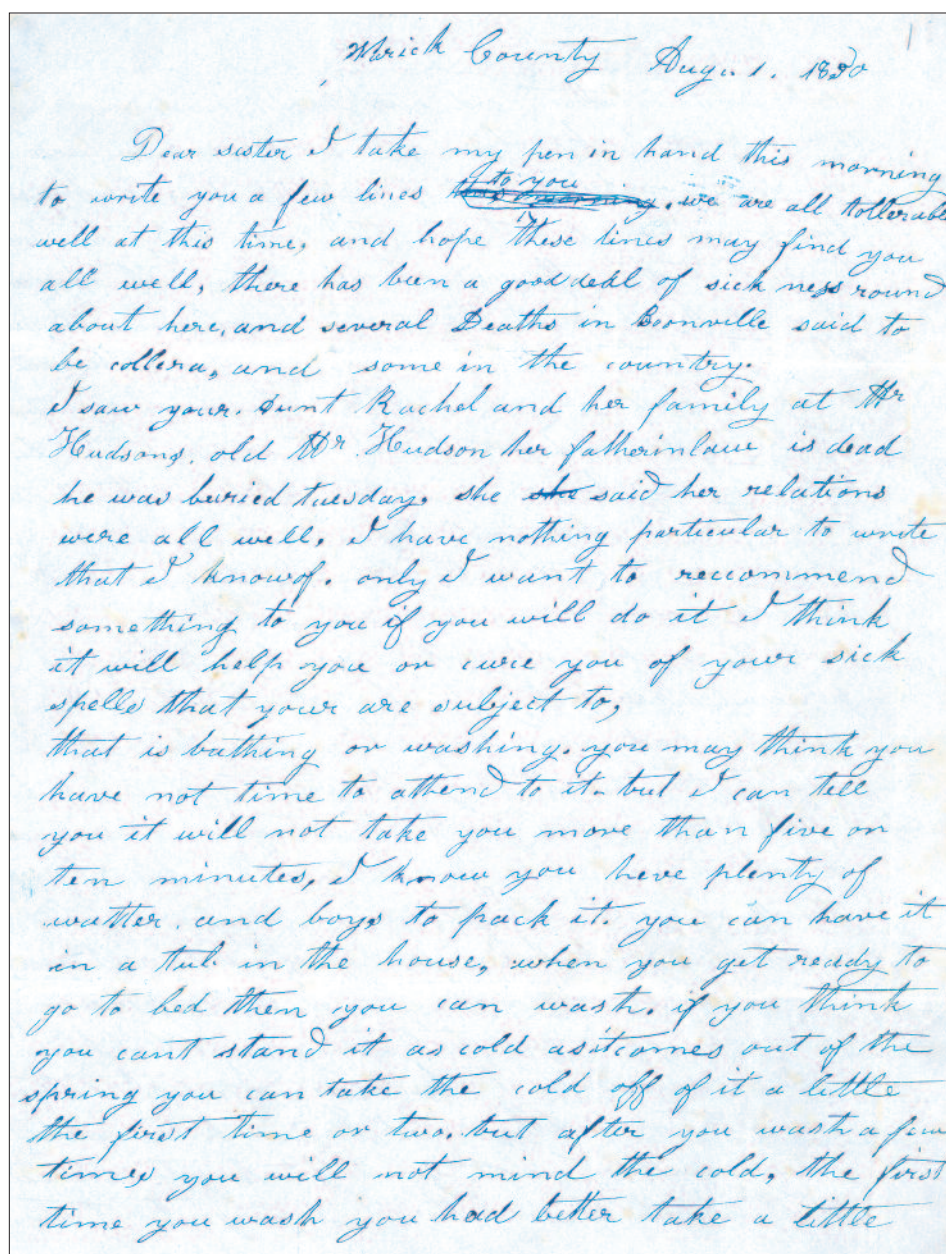
**"We have tried it all
of us and we think it
makes us feel better
every time we do it."**

rub your back where you can't rub, when you are done washing rub off with a dry cloth every time, you need not use the soap only the first time, but the cloth every time. You must commence at your head, put the wather on your head plenty of it put it on with your cloth or pour it on if you can stand it. we have tried it all of us and we think it makes us feel better every time we do it. Rhada thinks it helps her she has not had the headache for a good while until last Saturday she

had a spell of the collera morbus and headache, she was afraid at first to try the cold water on her head but I persuaded her to try it she said it did not ache so bad any more, I washed her off that night, the next day she went about her work I feel anxious for you to try it. you need not think it will cure you rite in a

hurry I think if you will follow it up for a while it will be sure to help you if it does not cure you, it will make you feel very warm for a while after you bathe if you feel like I do it is said that the healthy must bathe to keep them healthy, and the sick to make them well, I want you to let Angetine read this I think she had better be trying it two I will send you a pamphlet to read if I can get one enough of this for the present . . .

Courtesy of Manuscripts and Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky University



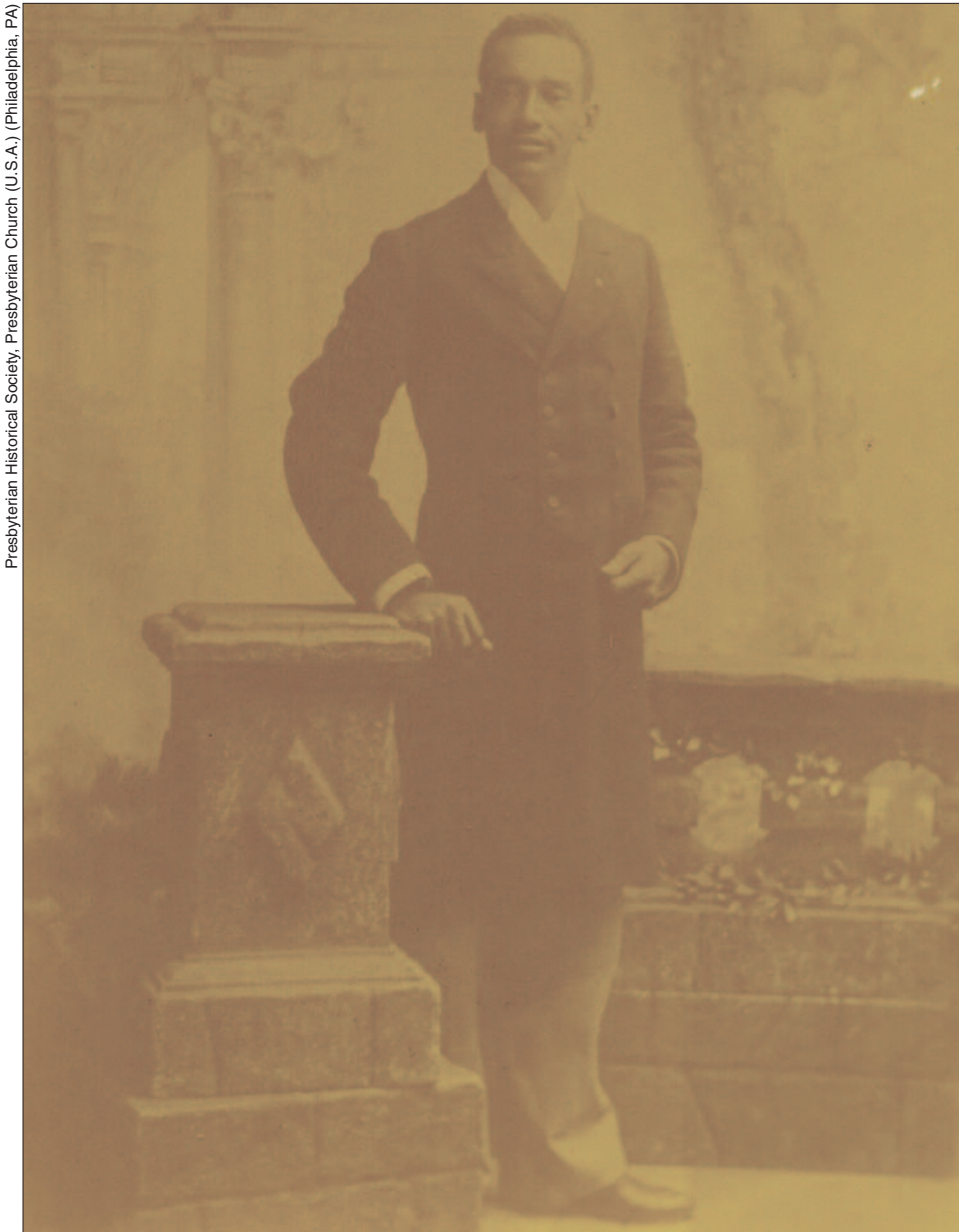
Warrick County Aug. 1. 1830

Dear sister I take my pen in hand this morning to write you a few lines ~~to you~~ we are all tollerable well at this time, and hope these lines may find you all well, there has been a good deal of sick ness round about here, and several Deaths in Booneville said to be collera, and some in the country. I saw your Aunt Rachel and her family at Mr Hudsons, old Mr Hudson her father in law is dead he was buried tuesday she ~~she~~ said her relations were all well, I have nothing particular to write that I know of, only I want to reccommend something to you if you will do it I think it will help you or cure you of your sick spells that you are subject to, that is bathing or washing. you may think you have not time to attend to it. but I can tell you it will not take you more than five or ten minutes, I know you have plenty of watter, and boys to pack it. you can have it in a tub in the house, when you get reddy to go to bed then you can wash. if you think you cant stand it as cold as it comes out of the spring you can take the cold off of it a little the first time or two, but after you wash a few times you will not mind the cold, the first time you wash you had better take a little

Page one: The letter is three pages in all.

William Sheppard spent the last fifteen years of his life as a Presbyterian pastor in Louisville—an existence that bore little resemblance to his previous role as a world-famous defender of human rights.

Cutting a Swath



Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Philadelphia, PA)

DESPITE living in an era of virulent racism, the Reverend William Henry Sheppard cut a wide—indeed a worldwide—swath. Sent to the Belgian Congo as a Presbyterian missionary, he conducted anthropological research that earned induction into Britain’s Royal Geographical Society at the age of twenty-eight. He documented and publicized the murderous abuse of the Congo’s people by Belgium’s King Leopold, leading to international fame, high-profile speaking tours, and a sensational trial in which he prevailed. He was among the first Americans to appreciate and collect African art, and to endeavor to educate others to that taste. Though still well-known in Belgium, and a hero to the people of the Congo, William Sheppard is little known in Kentucky, where he spent his final fifteen years. But he was hardly anonymous at the time of his death in 1927 in Louisville—an interracial crowd numbering more than a thousand attended his funeral.

William H. Sheppard at the time of his induction into the Royal Geographical Society in 1893.

WILLIAM Henry Sheppard was born in 1865 in the last days of the Civil War in Waynesboro, Virginia. His father, William, was the sexton of the First Presbyterian Church there, and his mother, Fannie, worked in the summer at the spa at Warm Springs. His parents were African-American but his mother was a freedwoman. He was not born a slave since offspring of a free mother were also legally free. As a boy, Sheppard went to a white Presbyterian church, where he and the white children were separated for Sunday school instruction. He attended Waynesboro's "Public Colored School," but learned more while working as a servant for a white dentist and his wife, Dr. and Mrs. S. H. Henkel. The Henkels, Sheppard said, "spent much time in instructing me in my books at night." William and the Henkels remained lifetime friends and correspondents. It was surely a highly unusual relationship at that time.

As a teenager, he worked as a waiter and saved enough money to enroll at Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Hampton, Virginia, a high school for training African-Americans and Indians as teachers. Sheppard

William Sheppard is now little known in Kentucky, where he spent his final fifteen years, but he was hardly anonymous at the time of his death in 1927 in Louisville—an interracial crowd numbering more than a thousand attended his funeral.

attended the night school headed by Booker T. Washington, whose students worked ten hours a day, followed by two hours of instruction. On Sundays, Sheppard worked with the chaplain at Hampton in establishing a mission Sunday school in Slabtown, a nearby African-

American community. He was a person of remarkable energy—his schedule at Hampton was typical of his work ethic throughout his career.

Sheppard went from Hampton Institute to the newly formed Theological Institute (now Stillman College) in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, originally organized to "secure as soon as practicable missionaries from among the African race on this continent who may bear the gospel of the grace of God to the homes of their ancestors." With ordination came appointments to Presbyterian churches in Montgomery in 1887 and in Atlanta in 1888, but William continuously applied to the church hierarchy for missionary service in Africa.

Eventually, Sheppard's application was approved and he was given a partner, a white Alabaman named Samuel Lapsley, the son of former slaveholders and a year younger than Sheppard. Lapsley had distinguished himself during an outstanding academic career at the University of Alabama, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, and McCormick Seminary in Chicago. Doing pastoral work in Chicago, Lapsley discovered, as he explained to his brother, "I like black folks very much."

Lapsley and Sheppard were charged with establishing a mission in West Central Africa, removed from the coast, separated from other missions, yet not too distant from the base of supplies on the Atlantic.

They traveled the East Coast raising money for their mission, including a visit to President William Henry Harrison, who encouraged them and provided letters of introduction. Among their supporters was a former Confederate Brigadier General,

Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama, whose encouragement was based in part on the premise that their mission would pave the way for the departure of African-Americans from the United States to the Congo and open new markets in Africa for American goods. Laps-



Sheppard and his partner, Samuel Lapsley, established their mission at Luebo. There is still a Presbyterian presence in Luebo.

ley and Sheppard took support wherever they could obtain it.

The endeavor was very controversial, and Lapsley regretted in a letter that they were advised not to visit Richmond and St. Louis, "as we might thus sooner remove prejudice and indifference which remains in some minds toward our work." The controversy stemmed from white Southern Presbyterians' misgivings about the fitness of African-Americans for missionary work, indifference to the salvation of Africans, the cost of the venture, or doubts about the mass exodus of African-Americans back to Africa which Senator Morgan hoped for. Ironically, some of the support for the mission, as well as opposition to it, was based in racism.

With the approval of the Foreign Missions Committee of the southern Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church in the United States), Lapsley and Sheppard departed. After visits to London and Brussels, they arrived at the mouth of the Congo River on May 9, 1890. Lapsley's letters to his family are all full of high admiration for Sheppard. The Alabaman wrote of his very favorable regard for his partner's diplomatic skills, for his recruiting ability in rounding up laborers, and for his athletic abilities—all skills Lapsley apparently lacked. Lapsley described Sheppard as "a man of unusual graces and strong



Sheppard the hunter with Kuba tribesmen. His attempts to convert the Kuba to Christianity met with scant success.

points of character.” Sheppard was very good at sign language and practical matters while Lapsley was the one who, because he spoke French, dealt with government officials and political affairs. In the era in which Jim Crow (racial discrimination) laws were being enacted in the United States, these two missionaries became more than partners—they became friends.

They had different missionary styles. Lapsley tried to impress the Africans with the power of the Christian God, and was not above purchasing slaves so that they would become converts. Sheppard, on the other hand, attempted to befriend the people first, and did so by breaking the ice in a new village with his pet monkey, or by providing food. He was an excellent big game hunter, and won the favor of the Kete people by providing them with hippopotamus steaks.

LAPSLEY and Sheppard headed inland to establish their permanent mission. In his memoir, *Pioneers in Congo*, Sheppard recounts their journey. They went by steamer to Boma, then 230 miles overland to Leopoldville, named after King Leopold of Belgium, the man who

owned the Congo Free State. (Leopoldville is now Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.) The author Joseph Conrad made the same trip in the same month. Since he was English-speaking and there were only 950 Europeans in the vast expanse of the Congo at the time, it is highly likely the missionaries met Conrad, who based his famous story “Heart of Darkness” on what he witnessed in the Congo.

Lapsley and Sheppard selected Luebo, a village on the Kasai River, as the

Sheppard, as historian John G. Turner observed, embraced the role of intrepid explorer. Africa gave him a stage upon which to display a “robust masculinity” that a black man could never have gotten away with in the racially oppressive United States.

site for their mission. From Kinshasa they took a wood-burning steamer owned by the Baptists, the *Henry Reed*, to the confluence of the Kwango and Kasai Rivers. The *Henry Reed* had been shipped from New York in 1884 and carried overland by bearers in 500 loads before being reassembled in Kinshasa. These missionary steamboats were a key to effective proselytizing in the Congo. They headed

up the Kasai to Luebo on another steamer, the *Florida*, a far smaller boat whose captain insisted that his vessel could only take half of their supplies. They had one misadventure after another: an attack by natives, the rescue of a captured member of their work crew, and an encounter with a dangerous storm and flood currents. Sheppard’s description of the trip is reminiscent of the movie *The African Queen*.

Though he was a committed missionary who believed in the Christian message he had come to deliver, Sheppard also, as historian John G. Turner observed, relished and embraced the role of intrepid explorer. Africa, Turner wrote, gave Sheppard a stage upon which to display a “primitive and robust masculinity” that a black man could never have gotten away with in the racially oppressive United States. At one point during the boat trip, he chided the Africans with him for being too timid to swim out and tie a rope around a hippopotamus he had shot. They refused because the area was infested with crocodiles. Sheppard recounted, “Taking the rope and putting the loop on my arm, I jumped in and swam to the hippo. As I began to tie the rope around her nose, up came a monster crocodile and made a terrible lunge at her neck. Not a moment did I tarry to see what

effect his sharp teeth had on the hippo... Many times in Central Africa foreigners get into serious difficulties from which they cannot extricate themselves, by disregarding the advice of natives.”

IT took the missionaries a month to reach their destination. The steamer departed downstream, with a vague promise to return in nine months. Lapsley and Shep-

pard were 1200 miles from the coast and 800 miles from the nearest doctor or source of pharmaceutical supplies. Sheppard survived 22 bouts of fever in his first year in Africa, but in eleven months Lapsley was dead. A Presbyterian stern-wheeler built at Richmond, Virginia for Congo missionary work was named for him. Within a year it sank. Eventually it was replaced by a second, sturdier SS *Samuel N. Lapsley*, built in Glasgow, which lasted on the Congo and Kasai rivers for several decades. Lapsley's successor was William M. Morrison, who worked with Sheppard for the next nineteen years in the Congo.

The day after receiving news of Lapsley's death, Sheppard set out, as a memorial tribute to his friend, to explore the Kuba kingdom located not far from Luebo. He convinced members of the mission settlement to accompany him by urging them to make the trip in Lapsley's memory. The Kuba were a large, reclusive tribe that discouraged visitors by beheading intruders. No Europeans or members of any other African tribe had ever visited the Kuba capital, Lukenga. Sheppard aimed to change that. He had taught himself the Kuba dialect by listening to Kuba traders who came to Luebo to barter goods. He had also learned the general direction of Lukenga, the names of towns along the way, and the distances between them.

At the first Kuba village, he persuaded the chief to send someone with his (Sheppard's) guide to the next town to buy eggs. Using this egg ploy, he found his way from village to village, winning the favor of the chiefs with gifts of cloth and cowry shells and by joining them on hunting expeditions. He sometimes stayed in a village for weeks, trying to discover the next step toward Lukenga. Eventually, word of the intruders reached the Kuba king, who sent a troop of forty fighting men led by his son, Prince Maxamalinge, to intercept and kill the invaders, or at least drive them back. When confronted by the prince, Sheppard's first words to him were to plead for the life of the chief of the village he was in, since he knew that chief would be in danger for harboring foreigners. The prince was so astounded to hear a black man dressed in European clothes speak in the Kuba language, and for his words to be an expres-

sion of concern for a Kuba chief, that he decided to go back to the king for guidance. The king's council quickly concluded that Sheppard was a royal ancestor who had returned to life and, therefore, they received him warmly when he reached Lukenga. Sheppard wrote in his memoirs:

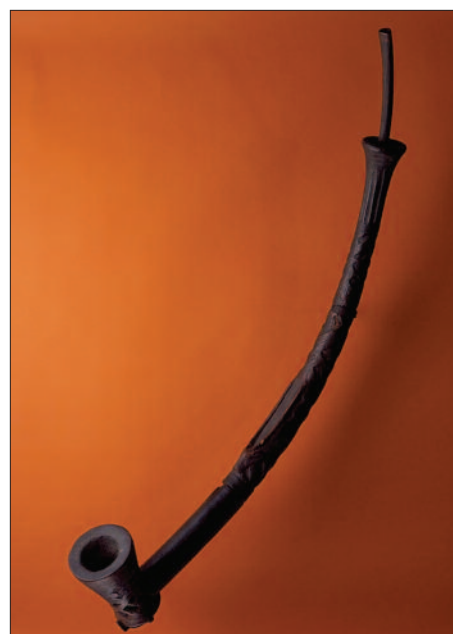
Early in the morning we heard the blast of ivory horns calling the attention of the people to put on their best robes and be in the town, men and women hurrying to and fro. Soon two stalwart Bakuba with their red kilts on and feathers in their hats appeared before my house and announced their readiness to accompany me before King Lukenga.

They noticed an old brass button tied by a string around the neck of on one of my men. Very politely they

removed it, saying, 'only the king can wear brass or copper.'

I was dressed in what had once been white linen. Coat, trousers, white canvas shoes and pith helmet. The officials on either side took me by the arm; we walked a block up the broad street, turned to the right and walked three blocks till we came to a big town square. Thousands of the villagers had already taken their position and were seated on the green grass. King Lukenga, his high officials and about 300 of his wives occupied the eastern sector of the square. The players of stringed instruments and drums were in the center, and as we appeared a great shout went up from the people. The king's servants ran and spread leopard skins along the ground leading to his majesty. I approached with some timid-

Speed Art Museum photos

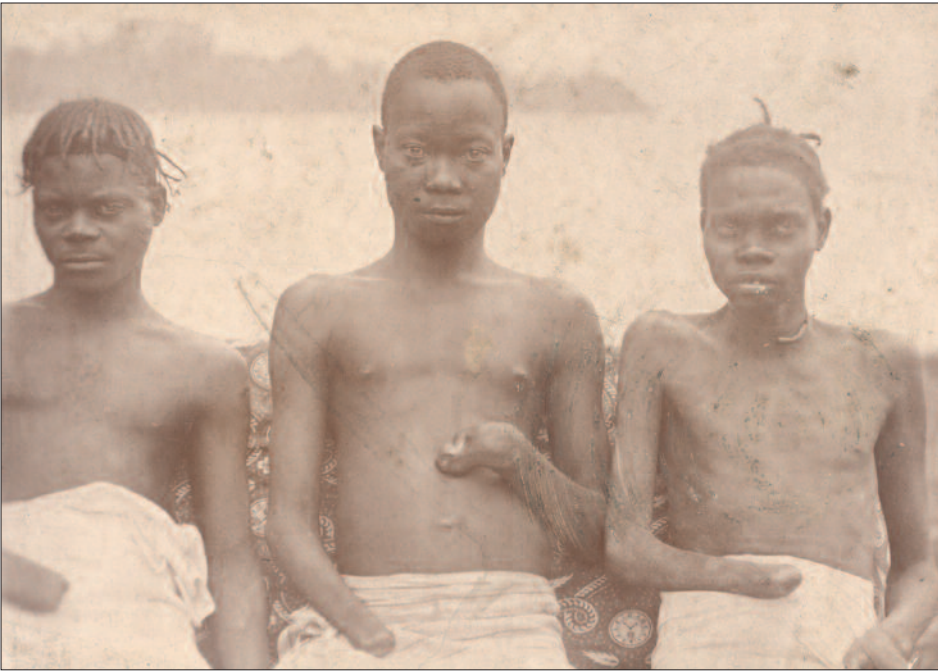


Sheppard collected these objects in Africa. His wife, Lucy, gave them to the Speed Art Museum in Louisville.

Top left: Axe, iron and wood. Unknown Kuba artist

Top right: Pipe, wood. Unknown Kuba artist

Left: Cloth, raffia, dyes. Unknown Kuba artist



King Leopold's agents sometimes cut off their victims' hands without killing them. The agents needed only the hands to claim their bounty.

ity. The king rose from his throne of ivory, stretched forth his hand and greeted me with these words, 'Wyni' (You have come). I bowed low, clapped my hands in front of me, and answered, 'Nyidini, Nyimi' (I have come, King).

Sheppard was a fine ethnographer, and provided excellent descriptions of the Kuba. Lukenga, he reported, was a very orderly urban community. "The town was laid out east and west. The broad streets ran at right angles, and there were blocks just as in any town. Those in a block were always related in some way. Each block has a chief called Mbambi, and he is responsible to King Lukenga for his block." Sheppard was especially sensitive to the way the Kuba decorated the surfaces of all their household goods. "They have a decided taste for the beautiful," he wrote. "They decorate everything." If he had done nothing else, Sheppard would have a place in the annals of anthropology for his descriptions of Kuba society before extensive Western contact. For his explorations of the Kuba Kingdom, Sheppard was inducted into the British Royal Geographical Society in 1893.

The complex political system and elaborate public ceremonies of the Kuba fostered the most highly developed court art in central Africa. "Their knowledge of weaving, embroidery, wood carving, and smelting,"

Sheppard wrote, "was the highest in equatorial Africa." The art historian and anthropologist, Jan Vansina, has noted, "No introduction to the visual arts of Africa omits the Kuba, for theirs is no doubt one of the great artistic traditions on the continent." Sheppard began collecting artifacts soon after he arrived in Africa. Hampton Institute purchased most of his collection in 1911. It predates other African collections in the United States, with the notable exception of the collection of the University of Pennsylvania. Sheppard was one of the first Americans to foster an appreciation of African art.

WILLIAM Sheppard had one further great role in history, and that was to play a part in the chain of events that ended King Leopold of Belgium's private ownership and exploitation of the Congo. Leopold demanded that all Congolese work at least one out of every four weeks for him, hunting elephants for their ivory or harvesting the sap of the rubber trees. In 1899, Kuba tribesmen came to Sheppard at his mission with tales of great atrocities committed by the Zappo Zap tribe. The Zappo Zaps had become mercenaries and slave traders for the Belgian trading company, the Compagnie de Kasai (Kasai Company). Their job was to punish those who failed to deliver their quota of ivory or rubber.

Sheppard was reluctant to help because the cruelty of the cannibalistic Zappo Zaps was well known. He feared them, but, on orders from William Morrison, the head of his mission, he did investigate. The Zappo Zap had plundered more than a dozen villages and killed scores of people who had fallen short of their ivory and rubber quotas. Because he had once saved the life of Mlumba, the Zappo Zap raiding party leader, Sheppard was allowed into the cannibals' camp, where he found partially eaten bodies and eighty-one severed human hands being cured over a slow fire. The hands would prove to Kasai Company officials that the Zappo Zaps had done their job. Sheppard's findings, confirmed by another missionary, were rushed to Belgian authorities, who denied responsibility and took no action. King Leopold is said to have commented, "I would happily cut off any of the rest of them but not the hands. It's the only thing I have need of in the Congo!"

Sheppard wrote about his grisly discovery in missionary magazines. The articles were widely quoted in Europe and America and helped build an association in the public mind between severed hands and the Congo. They also gave impetus to an international reform movement that sought to end the Congo's slave-labor holocaust, which by most estimates took the lives of millions of Africans (what Sheppard saw was only a drop in the bucket). Sheppard and his colleague Morrison spoke about the horrors on both sides of the Atlantic, and the reformers, led by the tireless English journalist E. D. Morel, attracted some prominent support, including Mark Twain. In *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905), Twain imagined the Belgian monarch complaining about the photographs that damned him: "The Kodak has been a sore calamity to us. The most powerful enemy that has confronted us, indeed... The only witness I have encountered in my long experience that I couldn't bribe."

BUT the reform movement generated only tepid responses from governments. The British House of Commons managed only to unanimously condemn "bondage under the most bar-

barous and inhuman conditions, maintained for the motives of the most selfish character." In America, the same Senator Morgan who had earlier supported Sheppard's mission now discounted the reliability of the Presbyterians as witnesses in the Congo, remarking that it "was not

of the most prosperous and intelligent of all the African tribes...

But within these last three years how changed they are! Their farms are growing up in weeds and jungle, their king is practically a slave, their houses now are mostly only half-built single

they cannot live upon it... One can only join them in their groans as they must say: 'Our burdens are greater than we can bear.'

Sheppard wrote about his grisly discovery in missionary magazines. The articles were widely quoted in Europe and America and helped build an association in the public mind between severed hands and the Congo.

necessary for idealistic missionaries to leave Virginia to find Negroes abused." Elihu Root, then U.S. Secretary of State, later wrote: "The very people who are most ardent against entangling alliances insist most fanatically upon our doing one hundred things a year on humanitarian grounds, which would have led to immediate war. The Protestant Church and many good women were wild to have us stop the atrocities in the Congo. The fact that we were parties to some earlier treaties gave some basis for an interest... People kept piling down on the Department demanding action on the Congo. We went the limit which wasn't far."

ONE of the many tragic aspects of the Congo holocaust was the devastation of the Kuba culture William Sheppard so admired. In January 1908 in the *Kasai Herald*, the newsletter the mission published for supporters back home, Sheppard documented the destruction of the Kuba, who were being fined, flogged, imprisoned and killed.

These magnificent people, perhaps 400,000 in number, have entered a new chapter in the history of their tribe. Only a few years since, travelers through this country found them living in large homes, having from one to four rooms in each house, loving and living happily with their wives and children, one

rooms and much neglected. The streets of their town are not clean and well-swept as they once were. Even their children cry for bread.

Why this change?... There are armed sentries of chartered trading companies, who force the men and women to spend most of their days and nights in the forests making rubber, and the price they receive is so meager that

SINCE the article was technically published in the Congo, the Kasai Company, though not named in the article, sued Sheppard (and Morrison as publisher of the *Kasai Herald*) for libel, demanding punitive damages of 80,000 francs or six years in prison. The case was called at Leopoldville, 600 miles downriver from the Presbyterian mission. The missionaries did not try to get a lawyer because they assumed the court would automatically rule against them. But their supporters took action. At the request of reform leader E. D. Morel, the leader of the Belgian Socialist Party, Emile Vandervelde, took the case pro bono. The trial, postponed to give Vandervelde time to get to Africa, commenced in October 1909. The case against Morrison had been dismissed on a technicality, so Sheppard was the only defendant. He had recruited Kuba tribesmen to testify on his behalf. The judge did not allow them to testify, but all present agreed that Vandervelde mounted a stirring defense of Sheppard.

Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Philadelphia, PA)



Sheppard with his wife, Lucy Gannt Sheppard, and their children, Wilhelmina and Maxamalinge.



Sheppard, second from the left, with Dr. John Little, head of the Louisville missions (left), and the Reverend Coxe (second from right). The man at far right is unidentified.

Two weeks later, the judge ruled in Sheppard's favor, saying that since he had not named the Kasai Company in his article, referring only to "chartered trading companies," he was not guilty of libeling the company. In fact, the judge said, the article did not, by name or implication, refer to the Kasai Company at all (even though there was no other company operating in the area that it might have referred to). It was a political ruling which, by not convicting a U. S. citizen, protected Belgium from the wrath of the United States. At the same time, it finessed the ticklish question of the Kasai Company's responsibility for the Congo atrocities.

Even before the case was decided, the Belgian government had finally forced King Leopold to give up ownership of the Congo. He was handsomely compensated (and died in 1910). This was a victory for the reformers, but much less than they had hoped for. Though conditions improved somewhat under Belgian government ownership, a system of forced labor persisted in the Congo for many years.

THE libel trial made William Sheppard an international celebrity. He went on the lecture circuit, sometimes on the same bill as his former teacher, George Washington Carver. In his book, *The Crime of the Congo*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle suggested that the Congo missionaries' courage

provided a finer display of the principles of liberty than Bartholdi's recently erected Statue of Liberty in New York harbor.

Sheppard's work in the Congo ended in 1910. He asked to retire because of ill health, but the real reason was his admission of adulterous liaisons (he was married with children) with Congolese women. He returned permanently to the United States and was suspended from the ministry for a year. Presbyterian officials did not publicly

reveal the reason for the suspension.

In 1912, Sheppard was recruited to work at the Hope Mission and Grace Mansion in the Smoketown neighborhood of Louisville. The two churches (later merged as Grace Hope Presbyterian Church) were the centerpiece of an extensive urban ministry led by Dr. John Little, a white Presbyterian minister. According to John G. Turner, Sheppard quickly adapted to the deferential manner Louisville's southern racial etiquette required of even a celebrity like him. When he spoke at white church luncheons, he left before the meal to spare his hosts the discomfort of wrestling with the issue of segregated dining. An article in the *Courier-Journal* observed that he went about his work quietly, "as if he had never carved a hippopotamus for a flank steak."

But his fame had followed him, and it was useful. Within one year of arriving, he had increased the size of the congregation by fifty percent (it had grown tenfold by the time of his death). He increased activities at the two missions, and began writing a series of children's stories about African Christians. Following a program like the one at Hampton Institute, the Grace and Hope Missions provided classes in practical skills such as carpentry, sewing, weaving and shoe repair. Recreational, social and sports activities were also offered at the missions, which continue to this day as the Presbyterian Community Center.

Sheppard lived with his wife and two children near the corner of Breckinridge and Jackson Streets in Louisville. Older Louisvillians remember Dr. Sheppard riding his bicycle through Smoketown, always waving to children. He was known as "The Children's Friend." His wife Lucy became a social worker in Louisville, and his daughter Wilhelmina a kindergarten teacher. She is well remembered locally, especially for the interest she fostered in art. A son, Max, named after the Kuba prince Maxamalinge, became a sign painter and an artist. The late artist G.C. Coxe, whose father was a Presbyterian minister and a colleague of Sheppard's at the Smoketown missions, remembered learning about African design from Max Sheppard in the 1920s and 1930s.

Though he had to put aside the robust and commanding persona of his Congo days, William Sheppard still made his mark in Louisville. In his honor, the city opened the William H. Sheppard Park at Seventeenth and Magazine in 1924. The park provided a swimming pool and playground for the surrounding community. And in 1942, the Sheppard Square public housing complex opened. William Sheppard suffered a stroke in 1926 and died in November 1927. He was 62. More than a thousand people attended his funeral, where he was eulogized by black and white ministers alike. Though still little known here in the Commonwealth, where he spent nearly a quarter of his life, his legacy of dedication to human rights and courage in the face of oppression deserves both study and celebration. ●

Peter Morrin is Director Emeritus of the Speed Art Museum, and a member of the Department of Fine Arts, University of Louisville.

Sources/Further reading:
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Phipps, William E., *William Sheppard: Congo's African-American Livingstone* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2002). This highly readable and comprehensive biography encompasses all of Sheppard's major roles and places him firmly in his historical context.

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Louisville photographer Keith Auerbach looks for the humor in life. He finds it by patiently waiting until 'the picture is perfectly ripe.'

1 Keith Auerbach

KEITH Auerbach was eighteen when he first saw a photograph emerge from the chemical bath in a darkroom. He was hooked for life. Now 58, Auerbach holds a degree in art history from Northwestern University and has also studied at the San Francisco Art Institute, the California College and Arts and Crafts, and privately with many distinguished photographers. A native and current resident of Louisville, Auerbach is a member of the PYRO Co-op Gallery. For almost fifteen years his photos were featured weekly in the *Louisville Eccentric Observer* (LEO). His images have been published and exhibited widely, most recently at New York's Soho Photo Gallery.

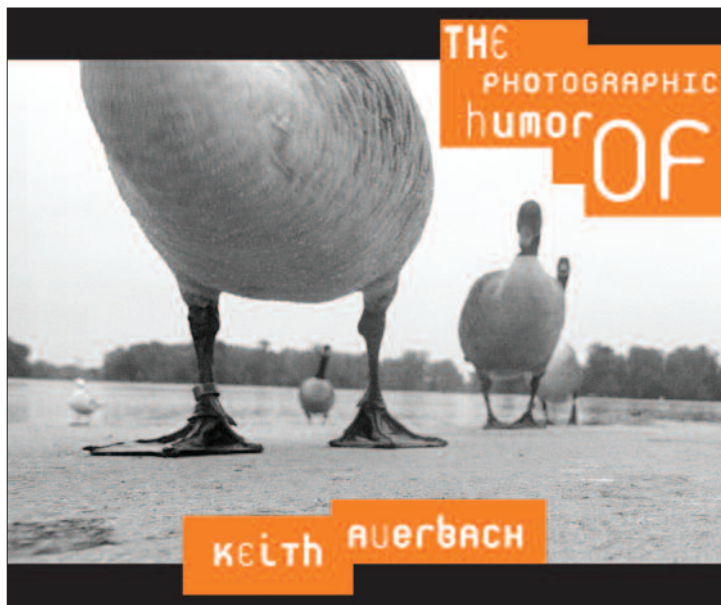
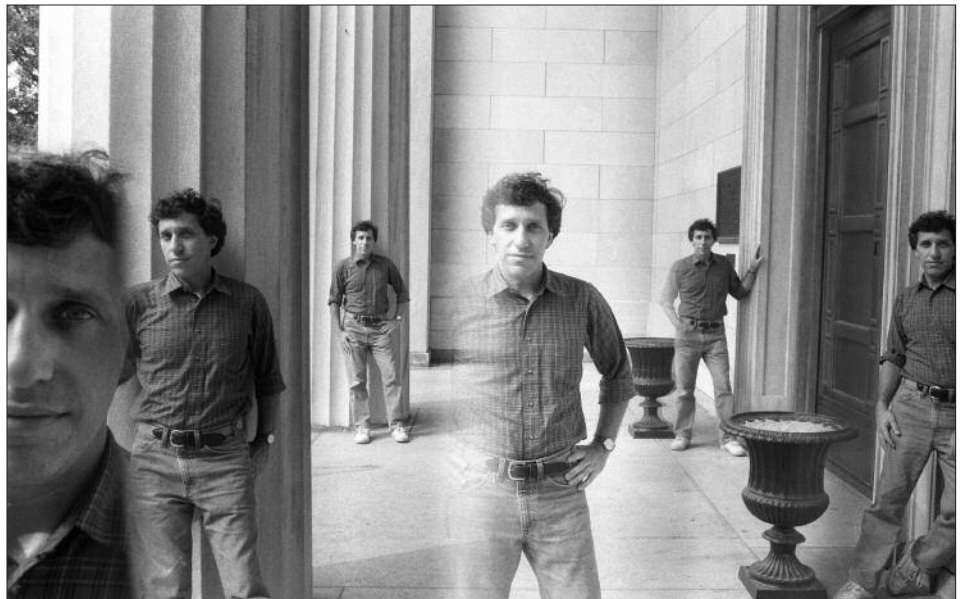
In *The Photographic Humor of Keith Auerbach*, published in 2007, he made this artist's statement:

"I love taking pictures.

"I see humor in ordinary instances, and I try to photograph in such a way that the images become intimate comments on living. I photograph feelings and moods and enjoy anticipating, then capturing, the one moment when the picture is perfectly ripe.

"I love telling stories.

"I have been told there is always a human presence in my photographs whether or not there are people in the image. And I enjoy creating visual puns, unexpected pairings, and a friendly but unfamiliar view of the familiar. Mostly, I watch and wait for that one decisive moment when the ocean can be measured in a drop."



Above:
Auerbach calls this
"Self-Portrait
with Multiple
Personalities."



Duckzilla

One patron had this image blown up very large and hung it above his bed. When one turns the corner and enters his bedroom, there is a sensation of being run over by a gigantic duck... always a laugh.



Emergence

An eternal ephemeral magic moment.

English Binoculars

I think the man who designed the English road system such that one must drive on the left side was actually dyslexic.



Falling Diver

Sensitive timing, this is the only picture I took of this.





Cow Convention

I called this convention by mooing. The cows were scattered all over the field until then and they congregated when I began. I am bilingual—English and Cowese.



The Conversation

Taken from the horse's point of view.

Intimate Moment
Shared by a longtime couple.



Zurich Monster
When you are young, you look for monsters under your bed. When you are older, you ignore them when they are in front of you.



William Gentry was a member of a National Guard unit from Harrodsburg that ended up in the middle of the biggest American defeat of World War II. He survived, but many of his comrades didn't.

A Kentuckian on Bataan

A small crowd gathered in Harrodsburg's Spring Hill Cemetery on May 6, 2000, to lay one of the town's better-known citizens to rest. Many of those in attendance were family members, friends, and people from his church. Among the mourners that day were members of a very exclusive club, one whose numbers could only dwindle: the men of Company D, 192d Tank Battalion, who had survived the Battle of Bataan, the Bataan Death March, and three long years in Japanese prisons. These men, known collectively as the Harrodsburg Tankers, had come to bury one of their officers: William H. Gentry.

Company D of the 192d Tank Battalion was a Kentucky National Guard unit that had been in existence since the early 1930s. It was based in Harrodsburg, drawing most of its membership from that town and Mercer County. Sent to the Philippines just before the outbreak of the Second World War, the company and its battalion won numerous citations and performed great feats before succumbing to the Japanese tide. One of the most prominent and decorated of the Harrodsburg men was First Lieutenant William Gentry, who on one occasion saved the American forces in

the Philippines from destruction and won the first U.S. tank-vs-tank victory against Axis tanks in the war.

Proviso School Bataan Research Project



Lt. William Gentry of Harrodsburg, 1941. His comments in this article come from an interview in the Oral History Collection of the Kentucky Historical Society.

WILLIAM Gentry was born in Mercer County on November 19, 1918, the youngest of three children of James and Harriet Gentry of

McAfee. He graduated from McAfee High School, and there befriended two future comrades: Archibald Rue and James Van Arsdall. All three joined the National Guard in 1936, lured by the uniforms, the steady paycheck, and the dim prospects for employment elsewhere during the Great Depression. They couldn't have imagined what fate had in store for them.

Private Gentry was assigned as a mechanic to the local National Guard unit, the 38th Tank Company in Harrodsburg. The 38th was a relatively new unit, formed in 1932. It was the only tank unit in Kentucky's National Guard, and one of a very few in the entire United States. This gave the men some pride and feeling of exclusivity. Almost all of the unit's members came from Mercer County, and its roster read like a list of well-known local families. The company had no armory—it met above a restaurant for weekly drill. The tanks (old World War I era models) were housed at members' homes, and soldiers were paid for the time it took to drive back and forth to drill. The 38th passed its inspections every year and frequently paraded at events like the Kentucky Derby. In 1937, the company responded to flooding in Frankfort, and later helped quell labor unrest in Eastern Kentucky.



U.S. Army National Guard Bureau

In September 1940, the 38th Tank Company was officially redesignated Company D, 192d Tank Battalion. This change placed them into a larger unit with Guardsmen from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Ohio. All four companies first met in November 1940 when the Harrodsburg men were called into Federal service and sent to Fort Knox for training. Just before the unit shipped out for Knox, those who wished were given discharges. “All the men who left Harrodsburg... were volunteers,” Gentry later remembered proudly. By then a Staff Sergeant and trained radioman, Gentry was part of a group that numbered five officers and 86 enlisted men. Conditions were primitive: “When we arrived at Fort Knox, the buildings were not complete, and the area was covered with a sea of mud . . . the mud would be six inches deep on the barracks floors.” Manpower shortages forced sergeants like Gentry to pull latrine duty,

a task usually reserved for the lowest-ranking private.

After just a few weeks at Fort Knox, Sergeant Gentry entered an officer training program and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in early 1941. He was assigned to the 192d’s new Headquarters Company as communications officer. He supervised the 192d’s radiomen, taught radio communications and electronics at Fort Knox, and assisted with processing incoming draftees: “We were able to handpick the men that we wanted in our battalion to fill us up . . . we were able to build a battalion of extremely good men.”

During the spring and summer of 1941, the 192d coalesced as a unit under the command of Colonel Bacon Moore, the former commander of Company D. For the first time, each unit received a full complement of modern M1 and M2 tanks. Officers and men became proficient with weaponry and tactics “to the

This painting vividly portrays a U.S. Stuart tank in action in the Philippines. This tank is from the 194th Battalion, a National Guard unit to which many of the Harrodsburg tankers were assigned.

nth degree,” according to Gentry. In September 1941, the 192d participated in large-scale maneuvers in Louisiana, where the weapons, units, and men of the modern U.S. Army were tested under simulated wartime conditions. A group of officers from Washington (including General George Patton) observed the maneuvers, and they concluded that the 192d was an outstanding unit and ready for overseas service.

By the fall of 1941 tensions with Japan and Germany were high, and U.S. garrisons around the world were being strengthened in expectation of hostilities. A U.S. embargo of Japan was pushing that nation’s resources



Lingayen Gulf is off the map to the north, and Japanese troops are marked by red arrows. Cabanatuan is along the map's north edge, and Fort Stotsenburg/Clark Field is to the west near the Zambales Mountains. Calumpit and Plaridel are in the center of the map, and Gentry's unit is marked with the armor symbol.

to the breaking point, while in the Atlantic the U.S. Navy fought an undeclared war against German submarines. The largest U.S. garrison overseas was in the Philippines, where General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the U.S. Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) was pleading for reinforcements and equipment. The Philippine Army had been called into U.S. service in July of 1941, and was feverishly training to fight the Japanese.

After the Louisiana maneuvers, the Harrodsburg men knew they were headed overseas, but the destination initially was a mystery. Less than an hour after first seeing the code word for their destination (PLUM), Gentry and his comrades had figured it out – Philippines, Luzon, Manila. As the men prepared to go, the army forcibly discharged all men judged too old for overseas service, including Colonel Moore at age 56. Colonel Theodore Wickord of Illinois, age 34, took his place. Anyone who did not want to go overseas could get an automatic transfer, but Gentry noted that “again, the 66 who had left Harrodsburg going to the Philippine Islands, volunteered for the second time for the mission we had to accomplish.”

THE 192d went by rail to the West Coast and sailed from San Francisco in early November 1941. For 29 of the 66 Harrodsburg men, that was the last time they would see the United States.

After an uneventful voyage, the 192d landed in Manila on November 27, 1941. One Filipino general wrote at that time that “the war for all practical purposes is on in the Orient,” and his opinion was shared throughout MacArthur’s USAFFE. The tankers’ greeting at the dock brought home to the men that they were in the thick of it: “Draw your firearms immediately; we’re under alert. We expect a war with Japan at any moment.”

The battalion was stationed at Fort Stotsenburg, one of the largest supply depots in the Philippines. Next to Fort Stotsenburg was Clark Field, the largest airfield in the islands and one of only two that could support heavy B-17 bombers. The Kentuckians soon developed unofficial ways of informing the folks back home they had arrived safely. Gentry later remembered “that within a very few hours [of the arrival] at Fort Stotsenburg we were in contact with the States, using the ham band... In fact, we were in contact with Dix Dam right on Herrington Lake within a matter of two or three hours after we had our first radio in operation. In fact, I sent a message to my mother.”

The 192d now joined the 194th Tank Battalion (two companies of West Coast National Guard tankers that had been in the islands since September) and formed the Provisional Tank Group under Colonel (later Brigadier General) James R.N. Weaver, a conscientious officer determined to prepare his men for the

coming struggle. (Most of the Harrodsburgers—Company D of the 192d—were transferred to the 194th to fill out that unit, but Lieutenant Gentry stayed with the 192d as communications officer.) On paper, the Provisional Tank Group looked fierce, numbering some 998 officers and men with 108 tanks. As the men unloaded their M3 Stuart tanks, however, they soon discovered that the designers had not reckoned with prevailing conditions in the Philippines. For one thing, the Stuarts were too heavy for most of the bridges on Luzon. Most of the tankers had trained on earlier models—they needed practice on the new M3s. Ammunition, gasoline and spare parts were misplaced or not available. As General Weaver later said, “Accordingly, tank operation was not accomplished to familiarize the personnel – 35% new to any kind of tanks, all new to the M3 tank.” Despite these limitations, Weaver’s group was posted around Clark Field in early December to bolster the air defense of that area.

FOR William Gentry, the Second World War began with a radio report from Hawaii in the early morning hours of December 8, 1941 (because of the International Date Line, Manila is almost a full day ahead of Honolulu). The tankers assumed their duty stations while Gentry’s radiomen gathered what information they could about the Japanese bombing of the U.S. base at Pearl Harbor. Despite pleas to MacArthur’s headquarters, the 35 B-17s at Clark Field did not receive orders to strike. As a precaution, all of Clark Field’s more than 100 planes took off that morning to avoid getting caught on the ground by a Japanese raid. Seeing no enemy planes after several hours, the Americans landed and by 11:45 A.M. most pilots and antiaircraft crewmen were having lunch. At that

moment, a Japanese raid hit Clark Field. Lieutenant Gentry and his comrades were in the mess hall. "Most of the men . . . stood there with their mouths open, observing the planes, watching the bomb bays open and the bombs start to fall." Japanese fighters zoomed in and strafed the field, despite American anti-aircraft and tank fire. In less than an hour, Clark Field was knocked out of action, with over 53 planes destroyed against just seven Japanese planes shot down. Seventeen of the 35 precious B-17s were smashed. At a stroke, MacArthur's forces had virtually lost their air cover.

The next weeks were spent preparing for the inevitable Japanese invasion of Luzon. "From [December 8] on we never saw the inside of a barracks," Harrodsburger Ralph Stine recalled. Japanese air raids harassed the tankers as they moved around Luzon to bolster the American and Filipino (Filamerican) infantry units defending likely landing beaches. MacArthur's command was divided in two: the North Luzon Force under Major General Jonathan M. Wainwright, and the South Luzon Force under Major General George M. Parker. The 194th (including the Harrodsburg company) supported Parker's command, while William Gentry and the 192d moved north to assist Wainwright's forces on the beaches at Lingayen Gulf. The 192d's men began improvising the tactics required by their new defense-oriented mission: "Our training had all been offensive training. I can't remember any particular phase of our training at Fort Knox that we ever had defensive action; it was always offensive," remembered Gentry.

On December 22, 1941 General Masaharu Homma's Japanese 14th Army began landing at Lingayen Gulf in northwestern Luzon. Two days later another force landed on the Bicol Peninsula in southeastern Luzon. MacArthur planned to defend on the beaches and throw the invaders back into the sea, but Filamerican counterattacks on the 22nd and 23rd failed due to poor reconnaissance, poor coordination, and poor logistics. Much of the 192d was kept out of action, but a platoon from Company B (Illinois National Guard) met Japanese tanks on the 22nd and suffered one tank knocked out and four damaged out of five engaged. Japanese tanks proved

to have heavier guns (47mm v. American 37mm) and sloped armor which helped deflect shells. This was the first tank-against-tank action by U.S. forces in the war, and it was a decisive defeat for the Americans.

By Christmas Eve it was apparent that the Lingayen Gulf landing represented the main Japanese effort, and it was aimed at Manila, about 140 miles to the southeast. The 194th moved to the North Luzon Force to help stall the 14th Army's advance. MacArthur also realized that his plan to defend the beaches had failed; the only hope now was to withdraw in the face of the Japanese advances. Prewar planners had prepared a scheme for withdrawing to the Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor Island (on the western end of Manila Bay), and on Christmas Eve MacArthur ordered the plan put into effect.

The withdrawal plan, known as WPO-3, called for an intricate series of delaying actions as the North Luzon Force held open the road to Bataan from southern Luzon. The North Luzon Force was to occupy successive defense positions while Parker's South Luzon Force raced north and west around Manila Bay to reach Bataan by New Year's Eve. If Wainwright's men could not hold, the southern contin-

eastern flank. The southward-flowing Pampanga River divided the Filamerican lines in half. The direct road to Manila was on the east side of the river along with the key road junctions of Plaridel and Baliuag and the bridge at Calumpit. The forces east of the river (two Filipino infantry divisions plus part of the 26th Cavalry Regiment and Gentry's tank force) would face the main Japanese effort to capture Manila.

One of the major defense lines was at Cabanatuan, a place that would later mean much more to all the Americans on Luzon. At first, the Americans had problems communicating with the Filipinos, many of whom had never seen a tank before. The tankers were often the last to pull back, shielding the infantry operations. As Gentry later related, "We spread out on a wide front, some times as many as twenty-five miles with a single company [15 tanks], with no support to speak of." Officers and men alike went days without sleep, and supplies (especially gasoline) were sometimes hard to come by, but despite these hardships the tankers successfully held off the Japanese.

Wainwright's men slowly withdrew southward during the last week of 1941, and by New Year's Eve the tankers and infantry were just north of Plaridel and still

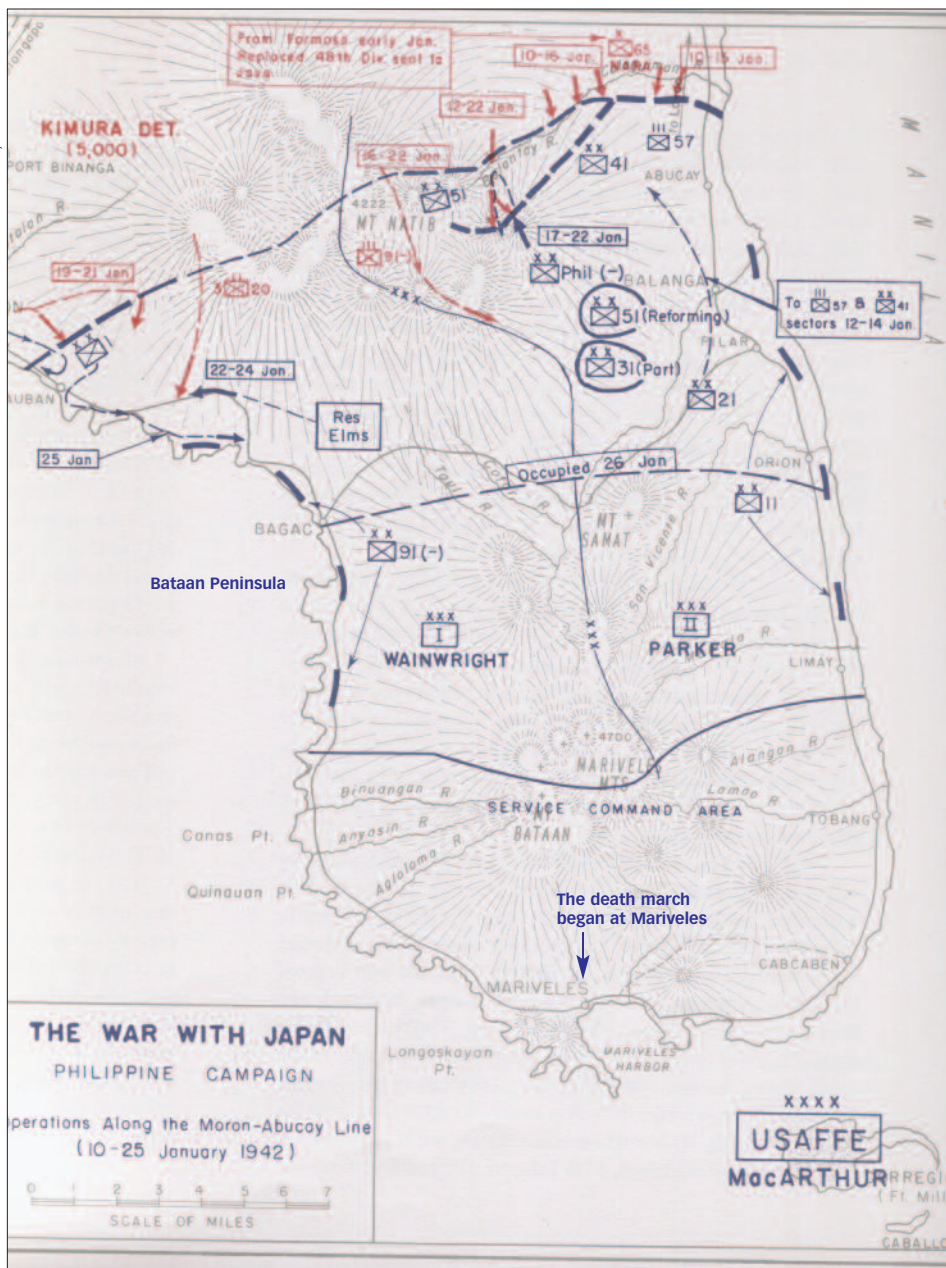
The 192d went by rail to the West Coast and sailed from San Francisco in early November 1941. For 29 of the 66 Harrodsburg men, that was the last time they would see the United States.

gent would be cut off and annihilated. American armor would play a critical part in delaying the Japanese advance; as Illinoisan William Hauser said later, "There would have been no Bataan if the retreat hadn't been covered by the tanks."

JUST before WPO-3 was activated, Lieutenant Gentry was sent to Company C of the 192d to "help out" the Ohio officers. He took command of the company and became responsible for helping shield the North Luzon Force's

waging a successful defense. The South Luzon Force arrived and began crossing the Calumpit Bridge, detaching some troops to hold Plaridel. Once the columns had crossed the river, the Plaridel force (including Gentry's tanks) would withdraw and the bridge would be blown by 6 A.M. on New Year's Day 1942. It appeared that the withdrawal to Bataan would be completed without a hitch.

Suddenly a command misunderstanding upset this careful design. General MacArthur gave Brigadier General Albert



After MacArthur's forces fell back to the middle of the Peninsula on January 26, the Japanese attempted landings at Canas Point, Quinauan Point, and Longoskayan Point but were repelled in the Battle of the Points. The Battle of the Pockets took place along the Toul River.

M. Jones command of all troops east of the Pampanga River, but for some reason General Wainwright was not informed of this change. At noon on New Year's Eve, thinking everything was clear, Wainwright ordered the infantry at Plaridel to cross the bridge. But General Jones still had troops on the road to the Calumpit Bridge, and Wainwright's order removed their protection just as the Japanese showed signs of mounting

an attack. The situation was critical—something had to be done to keep the road open.

General Jones turned to the only force available to him: two platoons of Company C, 192d Tank Battalion under Lieutenant William Gentry, numbering 10 tanks. The tankers were sent north of Plaridel to the village of Baliuag to delay the Japanese as long as possible. Gentry and his men encountered enemy patrols on the way north, so “we knew that they were well on us.” As the armor arrived they found that the Japanese were securing the northern and eastern approaches to Baliuag, and had lookouts in a church steeple.

One platoon was placed south of town, while Gentry took the other into Baliuag and disguised the tanks in nipa huts, with the cannons pointing out win-

dows. By mid-afternoon the ambush was ready as the Japanese started to move into town. Gentry was about to spring the trap when a major from headquarters drove into Baliuag and alighted at Gentry's hut. In a tone that must have strained military decorum, Gentry explained that “we were sitting there looking at a collection of Jap tanks out in the field and, also, the Jap lookout in the church steeple was quite excited as to why he was there... the only thing for [the major] to do was to get in the jeep and drive out of town just as though nothing happened.” Chastened, the major did as he was told and sped southward.

At about 4 P.M. the American tanks opened fire, surprising the Japanese tanks and infantry. The platoon south of town drove the enemy into the streets of Baliuag, whereupon Gentry's tanks exploded out of their hiding places. For the next two hours, a wild melee ensued. Gentry later crowed, “We were chasing the tanks up and down the streets of the town, under buildings, through buildings. We... left the town burning” and put all the Japanese tanks and infantry to panicked flight. When Company C pulled back that evening, eight Japanese tanks had been destroyed without a single loss on the American side. Gentry's tank accounted for four of the destroyed Japanese tanks. The only U.S. casualty, said one participant, “was a sprained ankle when one of the boys attempted to get off the tank in a hurry to tell his part of the story after the fight was over.” The men had every right to be excited: Harrodsburg native William Gentry and his Ohioans had just won the first American tank-vs-tank victory over Axis forces in the Second World War.

GENTRY'S success stalled the Japanese long enough for all Filipino forces to pull across the Calumpit Bridge, and by 6 A.M. on New Year's Day the bridge was blown. After one more short stand, the tankers retired into Bataan and had their first rest and refit since the war started. By January 7, 1942, MacArthur's forces stood ready on Bataan to repel any further Japanese advances. However, in the hasty withdrawal not enough food made it to the

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peninsula in time; the Bataan garrison immediately went on half rations.

MacArthur's line stretched across the peninsula's base from Abucay to Mauban, with a break around rugged Mount Natib. Wainwright's force, renamed I Corps, held the western sector while Parker's command (II Corps) took over the east. The Japanese repeatedly attacked the Abucay position head on, but failed to break through. Flanking operations over Mt. Natib finally succeeded in driving the Filamerican forces back. On January 22 MacArthur ordered a retreat to a new position halfway down the peninsula, running from Orion to Bagac. Four days later his forces were in position and reorganizing for their last stand on Bataan.

Flushed with victory, Homma's men closed with this new line and attacked immediately. Most of the assaults were repulsed after several days of intense fighting, but a deep penetration in Wainwright's line (later known as the Pockets) took three weeks to wipe out with the assistance of Gentry and the rest of the 192d Tank Battalion.

In addition to the frontal attacks, Homma sent several battalions of infantry to land on the west coast of Bataan and smash supplies and rear-area

Troopers of the 26th Cavalry Regiment move past a Stuart tank belonging to the 192d Battalion during the retreat to Bataan. An Illinois survivor said the tank is either from Company B or Company C of the 192d. Company C was the one Gentry led to victory at Baliuag.

installations. These landings (named the Points) were met with a scratch force of Philippine Scouts, pilots converted to infantry, and other rear-area troops. Gentry's company also assisted with eliminating these beachheads, which the Japanese defended to the last man. He later described the tactics used by Company C's Lieutenant John Hay and some of his men: "[Hay] would force the Japanese into their foxholes [with the tanks] and, as they passed over the foxholes, the men walking behind [each tank] would leave each one a present of a hand grenade." By mid-February the exhausted Japanese pulled back to regroup, and for the next six weeks a period of calm settled over Bataan.

The defeat of the Points and Pockets attacks was the first time Allied forces had stopped a Japanese offensive, and was the first American victory in the Pacific War. More importantly for MacArthur, the victory ensured the continued survival of the Bataan forces for the time being. However, poor rations soon began to wither the men, and disease also took its toll. By April 1 the Bataan garrison's 76,000 men were down to only 25% effectiveness. They also had a new commander: MacArthur departed for Australia on March 11, 1942, turning over his command (renamed U.S. Forces in the Philippines, or USFIP) to General Wainwright.

The final Japanese blow fell on Good Friday April 3, 1942. By the evening of April 6 the Luzon Force's line was irreparably broken; Japanese units raced down the east coast of Bataan. Their objective was Mariveles, a harbor at Bataan's southern tip where the headquarters, hospitals, and supplies of the Luzon Force (previously the Bataan garrison) were located. Troops gathered around Mariveles for a last stand, but everyone sensed the end was near. To save his men from massacre, General

U.S. Army Signal Corps



Edward P. King surrendered his Luzon Force on April 9, 1942—the largest capitulation in U.S. history.

GENTRY and his tankers were on the west side of Bataan during all this, and participated in the effort to repel the Japanese attacks. On the morning of the 9th the men received the code word CRASH and destroyed all their tanks, weapons, and other equipment. After two

**To save his men from massacre,
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the Death March.**

days of waiting the Japanese took charge and sent the men to Mariveles. There they began the Bataan Death March, one of the worst atrocities of the Pacific War. Of the 76,000 Filamericans who surrendered on April 9, only 54,000 survived the Death March—a nightmare that began on April 10, 1942 and lasted two weeks. It consisted of a 46-mile forced march from Mariveles to San Fernando, followed by a train ride north to Capas. The surviving prisoners then walked the final eight miles to a prison camp at Fort O'Donnell, a former American base.

Gentry, wracked with malaria, spent 11 days on the march with only one rice ball to eat and seven canteens of water to sustain him in the tropical heat. He would later say that “three or four days of it I don’t even remember. The fellows in the unit took turns carrying me along the road.” His men undoubtedly saved Gentry’s life, as most stragglers were shot or left for dead on the roadside.

After several weeks at Camp O'Donnell, the American prisoners moved to a new compound at Cabanatuan. There they joined other Americans from Corregidor, which had surrendered on May 6. Filipino prisoners were released as part of a gener-

al amnesty. In October 1942, Gentry was moved to a farm on the southern island of Mindanao, where he grew rice as a forced laborer. Although the rations were somewhat better than at Cabanatuan, Mindanao was a “nightmarish memory” for those who were there. On June 6, 1944, Gentry’s ill health compelled a return to Cabanatuan. He caught a case of dysentery later that year which kept him at the camp while thousands of his more able-bodied comrades were sent to

away on Hell Ships to Formosa, Japan, or China.

Meanwhile U.S. forces had advanced back toward Luzon. MacArthur, fulfilling his famous promise to return, landed at Lingayen Gulf on January 9, 1945,

and within three weeks had driven to near Cabanatuan. Freedom came to William Gentry on January 30, 1945, when the 6th U.S. Ranger Battalion liberated the camp and evacuated him and over 500 of his fellow prisoners to American lines, an event later immortalized in the 1945 film *Back to Bataan* and 2005’s *The Great Raid*. Three weeks later he was sent back to the United States, and spent several months in hospital before being promoted to Captain and discharged from the Army. For his actions on Luzon and Bataan, Gentry was awarded two Silver Stars, one Bronze Star, one Purple Heart, the Philippine Defense Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

CAPTAIN Gentry went home to Harrodsburg after the war, one of only 37 men from the original Company D to return from Bataan. He spoke about his experience shortly after returning home and friend Louise Dean remarked that “as always, he had that wonderful smile.” Gentry later married and had two sons and a daughter. He worked at Corning Glass in Harrodsburg for 25 years, and Dean remembered him as “a good and honest man”

with “a twinkle in his eye for all whomever he came to know.”

Gentry was active in veteran’s organizations, and appeared at the dedication of a monument to the Harrodsburg Tankers in 1961. Like a good officer should, he checked on the other survivors to see how they had adjusted to life back home in Kentucky. He transferred to a Corning facility in Danville, Virginia, and later retired to Florida. William H. Gentry died in Roanoke, Virginia on April 25, 2000. He was buried in Harrodsburg on May 6, the 58th Anniversary of the surrender of Corregidor.

For students of Kentucky’s military heritage, the 192d Tank Battalion and the Harrodsburg Tankers rank as a significant part of the state’s legacy. In 1945 the U.S. Army awarded two Presidential Unit Citations to the Provisional Tank Group for their actions in the Philippines. William Gentry and his comrades played a key part in earning these honors, and the citation is the last word on their careers: “This unit contributed most vitally... to the protraction of the operations and the successful withdrawal... These units [also] maintained a magnificent defense and through their ability, courage, and devotion to duty contributed in large measure to the prolonged defense of the Bataan Peninsula.” ●

Christopher L. Kolakowski has spent his career interpreting and preserving American military history. He has worked for the National Park Service and the Civil War Preservation Trust, and is now executive director of the Perryville Battlefield Preservation Association. Kolakowski holds an M.A. in Public History from the State University of New York at Albany. He has written numerous articles. This one is based on a talk he currently offers through the Kentucky Humanities Council’s Speakers Bureau.

Note on Sources: An interview with William Gentry is in the Oral History Collection of the Kentucky Historical Society. The author wishes to thank Jim Opolony of the Proviso School (Illinois) Bataan Research Project for pictures and sources, and Louise Dean of Harrodsburg for sharing her memories of William Gentry. Stuart Sanders and Don Rightmyer of the Kentucky Historical Society provided sources and encouragement, as did Colonel Arthur Kelly of Frankfort. Special thanks to Jerry Sampson and the Harrodsburg Historical Society for their assistance and for helping keep the 192d’s memory alive.

**Frank Kolb of Paducah led the first American soldiers
'to set foot on German ground' in World War II.
If only Andy Rooney had spelled his name...**

First Men In

FIRST Lieutenant Frank Kolb and his infantry company went down in history as the first U.S. troops “to set foot on German ground” in World War II, but the Western Kentuckian never claimed credit for the feat. “It was a good day anyway,” he said in a 1999 interview. “I didn’t lose anybody.”

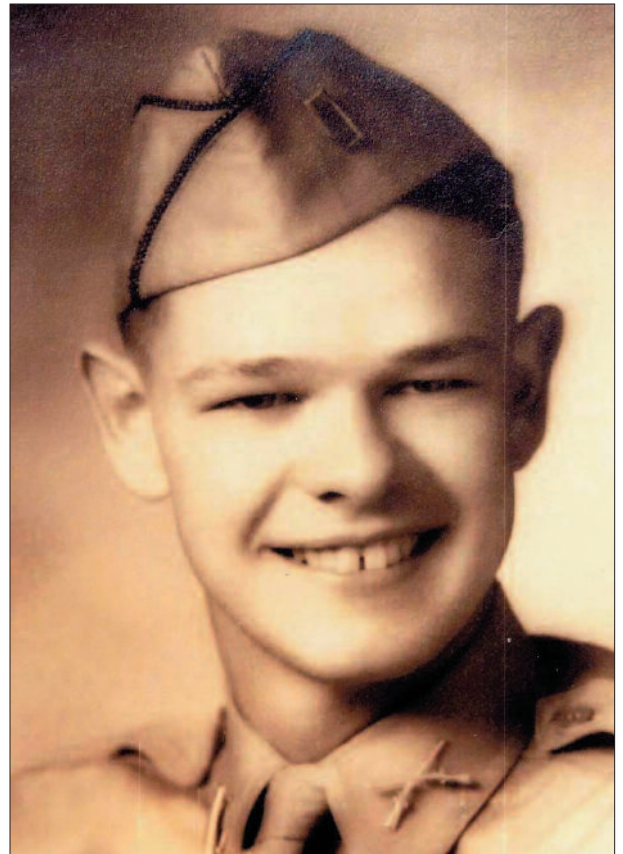
Kolb died in 2000 at age 77. He was retired from Kolb Brothers Drug Co. in Paducah, his family’s business. A Paducah native who lived in Mayfield after the war, Kolb earned four Silver Stars, a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart in seven campaigns with the First Infantry Division. He might have been the youngest company commander in the storied “Big Red One.”

**“The back door
would fly open, and
the Germans would
come running out.
They found a woman
with one group, a
good-looking blonde.”**

Kolb was 21 when he fought his way through the Siegfried Line, Adolf Hitler’s vaunted defense barrier, and trod German soil near Aachen. The date was Sept. 13,

1944. Kolb made headlines in the *Stars and Stripes*, the GI newspaper. “The story also got in the *New York Times* and a lot of other papers,” he said. Kolb made it into a history book, too. “Kolb’s men were the first American soldiers to set foot on German ground,” wrote Irving Werstein in *The Battle of Aachen*. “At least my name was spelled right in the book,” Kolb said, grinning. “It was wrong in all of the papers.”

After Kolb and his men breached the Siegfried Line, a *Stars and Stripes* reporter interviewed the young lieutenant. He got the story right, but not Kolb’s name. “After ten years of talk about the Siegfried Line, 21-year-old 1/Lt. Bob Kalb, of Paducah, Ky., took his company through it without a casualty,” the reporter wrote. “Since Kalb and his men forced the first opening, the armored unit working with this crack infantry division has been pouring through the gap.” Lieutenant “Kalb” told the reporter, “We knocked out about 15 or 20 pillboxes, I guess.” Kolb kept a clipping of the *Stars and Stripes* story. The reporter is still a journalist, but on national network TV—Andy Rooney of CBS’s *60 Minutes*.



On the day he led the first American unit into Germany, Frank Kolb “was just glad none of my men had been killed.”

Kolb said other First Infantry soldiers may have beaten his outfit into Germany. Some Third Armored Division tank crews claimed they were the first. “What does it matter who was first?” Kolb asked. “I didn’t think it was that important then. I still don’t.”

By September, 1944, Kolb was already a battle-hardened veteran. The Germans captured him in combat in North Africa, but he escaped. He fought through Sicily. He landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day and then fought across France to the German border, guarded by what the enemy called the “Westwall.” The Allies nicknamed it the “Siegfried Line.” Three miles deep on average, the concrete and barbed-wire bulwark bristled with “hundreds of mutually-supporting pillboxes, troop shelters and command posts,” wrote Charles B. MacDonald in his book *The Mighty Endeavor*. “Where no natural antitank obstacle existed, German engineers had constructed pyramidal concrete projections called ‘dragon’s teeth,’ draped in parallel rows across hills and valleys like some scaly-backed reptile.”

Similarly, Rooney described the wide defense belt as “a series of strategically-placed pillboxes. In the hilly country of the border, roads run through the valley, and the Germans placed the fortified concrete igloos in positions which commanded the only possible entry for vehicles. On both sides of the roads, concrete ‘dragon’s teeth’ extended for miles, preventing tanks from rolling over the open country between the road networks.”

“Kolb’s men were the first American soldiers to set foot on German ground,” wrote Irving Werstein in *The Battle of Aachen*.

When Kolb and his troops attacked on the morning of Sept. 13, 1944, they were out front in “a general offensive along every mile of the Westwall from Holland to Switzerland,” Werstein wrote. Kolb and his men ducked and dodged through the dragon’s teeth, meeting unexpectedly light enemy resistance. “The line would have been tough to crack if the Germans had had enough men to man it the way it should have been,” Kolb suggested to Rooney.

Even so, Kolb knew he needed armor to knock out the German “igloos.” A platoon of tank destroyers—Sherman tank-



like vehicles with open-top turrets and powerful guns—got the job done. “Our... [tank destroyer] fired at some of them from about 20 yards and blasted them wide open,” Rooney quoted Kolb as saying. “They’d roll right up and fire a 90-millimeter shell through the aperture,” Kolb recalled in 1999. “The back door would fly open, and the Germans would come running out. They found a woman with one group, a good-looking blonde.” Sometimes, Kolb said, the Germans surrendered as soon as a 31-ton

It was during the Battle of Aachen (top right of map) that Kolb’s unit entered German territory.

his outfit. “I told Skippy, ‘Don’t forget to duck.’” A German tank shell killed Skinner hours later.

Looking back, the historian Werstein wrote that by punching through the Siegfried Line and capturing Aachen, the Americans won a great victory, “a harbinger of what was to befall the nation whose people and leaders had dreamed of ruling the world.” Kolb, who made captain before he turned 22 and fought all the way to the German surrender on May 7, 1945, said victory and defeat don’t always seem so clear to a soldier in combat. He recalled an incident when he was fighting in Italy.

“My little walkie-talkie could pick up the BBC [British Broadcasting Corp.] if I was up high enough. I remember climbing up on this hill in Sicily and hearing all about ‘the victorious American army.’ We’d had the hell beaten out of us that day and hadn’t gained a thing.” ●

Berry Craig is a professor of history at West Kentucky Community and Technical College in Paducah and a member of the Kentucky Humanities Council Speakers Bureau.

Are the liberal arts still useful in the twenty-first century? A Transylvania University professor argues that they are—and that liberal education is endangered by the emphasis on making students not just better, but successful.

Channeling Socrates in the Bluegrass

“WHAT’S the use?”
That’s how one
of my colleagues
responded to the
announcement

that Transylvania University intended to host a seminar on the meaning of liberal education for faculty members from liberal arts colleges throughout the nation. Entitled “Twenty-first Century Liberal Education: A Contested Concept,” the symposium invited the presidents and academic deans at 215 of the nation’s most prominent small colleges to nominate members of their faculties to attend a conference in August 2006 to talk about the future of liberal education. The seminar was sponsored by Transylvania with the assistance of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, the nation’s oldest and most respected liberal arts honorary society. In all, 21 people, including two representatives from the national headquarters of Phi Beta Kappa, participated in the four-day event. Its sessions were led by Transylvania faculty members associated with the school’s Center for Liberal Education. (Transy conducted a similar seminar

Transylvania University/Joseph Rey Au



Participants at the 2006 Transylvania University symposium “Twenty-first Century Liberal Education: A Contested Concept.”

in 2007, and plans to continue to do so annually.) “I mean,” my skeptical colleague hastened to explain, “don’t we already know what a liberal education is?”

He certainly had a point. We should know what liberal education means. After all, we were all professors at institutions of higher learning which were explicitly dedicated to precisely that. My colleague’s question revealed the fear that our seminar would be little more than yet another dreary talkfest, full of insipid and gaseous platitudes. Something rather like sitting through a four-day-long commencement address.

My colleague’s skepticism is precisely why such a seminar is so necessary today. The fact is that those of us who are engaged in liberal education don’t have a clear understanding as to what we are all about. We’ve been confused about it for some time. As long ago as the 1940’s, a report of the Progressive Education Association put

This state of confusion will probably not surprise many people outside the academy. The public’s perception of academics is that we are a pretty woolly-headed lot. The befuddled, absent-minded professor is a stock comic figure. This image has been around for a very long time—as long as there have been individuals who think for a living. Consider the case of Thales, the first of the Greek nature philosophers, who is reported to have fallen into a well as he walked along looking up at the stars in contemplation of the order of the cosmos. Or consider Socrates, who was lampooned in one of Aristophanes’ comedies for living in “cloud-coo-coo-land” and ruining the students at his “Think Academy” for anything useful, at least as usefulness was defined by their fathers. (And recall what the Athenians finally did with Socrates. Sometimes the popular image of intellectuals is no laughing matter.) Such anti-intellectual sentiments

the liberal arts. Daniel Webster was speaking for many Americans of his day and ours when he observed, “Indeed, it appears to me that what is now called a liberal education disqualifies a man for business.” In the 1970s, a book entitled *The Overeducated American* presented statistical evidence that corporations were less and less interested in hiring liberal arts graduates. At a recent public forum on postsecondary education in the Commonwealth sponsored by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, an executive at a manufacturing firm in the Bluegrass stated that he actually discouraged his employees from pursuing further education “so they don’t become too mobile.”

While pointing in somewhat different directions, both the book and the businessman betray a profound skepticism about the practical value of liberal education for career advancement. Of course these views are breathtakingly short-sighted. But my point is that they express a no-frills pragmatism characteristic of our nation, in which the business of American education is, indeed, business. Whenever I talk to students here at Transylvania my audience wants to hear how a liberal education will prepare them for future careers in their chosen professions. Their focus, like that of the society at large, is on utility. Given today’s intensifying competition for employment, its growing imperatives for specialized and technical expertise, and the spiraling costs of higher education, who can blame them?

The Greek idea of education entailed the formation of character according to some cultural ideal of human excellence. It was intended to make people better rather than merely successful.

it bluntly, “Liberal arts college faculties seldom state clearly what they mean by liberal or general education. Perhaps they do not know.” This really hurts, given that knowing things is the job of college professors. Perhaps our problem is just the opposite. Maybe we know too well what liberal education means because it has too many meanings for us. As the chair of the New York City Board of Higher Education stated, “There are about as many characterizations of the meaning of liberal arts as there have been writers on the theme.” Part of this embarrassment of conceptual riches may be due to the fact that we are more like faculty members at research universities than we think. We tend to see ourselves as political scientists or biologists or musicians, rather than as liberal educators. As a consequence, our understanding of liberal education—to the extent that we think about it at all—is framed by our separate disciplinary blinkers.

prevailed even in the Golden Age of Intellect. The Renaissance dramatist Giordano Bruno expressed the opinion of many at the time when he had a character in one of his plays utter the lines, “But, if the truth were known, these pedants are nothing but worms, who do not know how to do anything well, and are born only to gnaw, soil and hurl their dung upon the studies and labors of others; and being incapable of becoming illustrious through their own virtue and talent, they seek to advance themselves through the vices and errors of others.”

In our society as in Bruno’s, it is widely felt that too much education is useless, perhaps even deleterious to one’s well-being. We Americans have urgent things to accomplish, and we are impatient with the sort of navel gazing that interferes with our practical concerns. We all know that those who can, do, while that those who can’t, teach. This is all the more true when it comes to

NEVERTHELESS, vocational training is not liberal education. What makes education liberal is its distinctive purpose. Liberal education aims at the development of a theoretical appreciation of things. In this context, teaching means revealing to students that secret garden which is the life of the mind. It involves sharing with them its delights, inviting them to visit it on their own, showing them how to get there, and training them how to distinguish the flowers from the weeds. But liberal education is more than a journey to a pleasant spot. It is also a process of liberation. It presents students with a world of alternatives standing in opposition to the despotism of the conventional. Liberal education is thus the activity of challenging one’s theoretical and moral commitments.

Our goal is to make students conscious of their own perspectives and sensitive to the implications of their choice. The awareness of one's standpoint is a necessary precondition of emancipation from the tyranny of intellectual parochialism. It is the very foundation of free thought and action.

To put the point somewhat differently, liberal education seeks to confront our students with themselves—as individuals, as members of a community and as part of the human species. Liberal teaching, then, is much more an act of guiding self-discovery than it is an act of conveying a body of knowledge or a set of skills. Specific course material is the vehicle for liberal education, but it is not the destination. Whatever the subject matter, the real objects of the inquiry in liberal education are the students themselves. Liberal education proceeds from the Delphic injunction to “Know Thyself.” It takes seriously the Socratic aphorism that “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Liberal education introduces students to what Robert Maynard Hutchins called the “Great Conversation” which humanity has been having with itself about what it means to be human. Its emphasis is on the plurality of answers and on their vigorous cross-examination, for liberal education is much less about providing students with the answer to the big questions of life than it is about instilling a sense of importance of the questions themselves. What is known as the “Socratic method” is precisely this dialectical enterprise of constantly questioning one's suppositions in order to arrive at a better understanding of the truth.

Needless to say, liberal education is not everybody's cup of tea. But for people who value it—and they are often those who took the liberal arts while they were undergraduates—it tends to be one of the most significant and transforming experiences of their lives. Just ask them. And a bit more thoughtfulness about the meaning of life probably wouldn't harm anyone.

WHAT motivates Transylvania's seminar is not just that the public is confused and skeptical about liberal education, but that we liberal educators are too. But before we throw up our hands in exasperation at these feckless

pedants, we need to remind ourselves of two things. First, some kinds of confusion are constructive, especially if they lead to keener insights about the matter at hand. And second, despite the many disagreements over the years as to the meaning of liberal education, there has also been a continuing sense of what it is. Seeing it through the thicket of academic disputation, however, it is a bit tricky. Will Rogers used to quip, “The problem isn't what people don't know. It's what they do know that really isn't so.” He probably wasn't thinking about liberal education at the time, but he might have been. For the challenge in finding liberal education is made more difficult by

Transylvania University/Joseph Rey Au



The author, Jeffrey Freyman, directs Transylvania University's annual symposium on liberal education.

those who point us in the wrong direction. The task of the Transylvania seminar is to separate the gold ore of liberal education from the copper pyrite of its imitators. To do this, we need to review a bit of history.

The Roman statesman Cicero is the first person who is recorded to have used the term “liberal arts.” The fields of study which he identified as “liberal”—philosophy, mathematics, music, literature, rhetoric, geometry, astronomy—all derived from the classical Greeks to whom Rome was deeply

indebted. The century between 420 and 322 BCE in Athens witnessed the emergence of both a consensus about liberal education and many of its enduring debates. The consensus was, in the words of an eminent historian of ancient education, “... that education is the making of men [and in those days it was males], not training men to make things.” Aristotle famously distinguished between liberal education, which was appropriate for free individuals pursuing the “good life,” and “servile education,” which was appropriate for slaves or wage-earners who had no choice but to pursue the “mere-life” of remunerative employment. Needless to say, times have changed. But this should not blind us to a crucial understanding. The Greek idea of education entailed the formation of character according to some cultural ideal of human excellence. It was intended to make people better rather than merely successful. Athenian educators such as Socrates and Isocrates united in their opposition to the Sophists, for whom higher education was nothing other than a process by which technical skills (specifically, rhetorical ones) were acquired solely as instruments for the pursuit of wealth and power. Socrates and Isocrates strongly disagreed over questions such as: What should be studied and how should it be taught? and at what human ideal should education aim? These are important issues to be sure, but they both presumed a common aim of education, which is the human development of the person being educated.

These debates have continued to the present day. Of course they have also evolved. The conflicting ideals of human excellence, and hence the aims of liberal education, have undergone a number of transformations in the more than two millennia since Socrates. Consider the vast discontinuities in what people living at the time of the Roman Empire, medieval Christendom, the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, or modern industrial society have thought about human nature and human purpose. Despite their significant differences, however, what all of these conceptions shared was an emphasis on a cultivation of the self, whether understood as one's moral character, immortal soul, creative and artistic spirit, enlightened mind, well-rounded personality or engaged citizenship.



John Churchill speaking at the 2006 Transylvania symposium on liberal education.

FAST forward the story to mid-19th century America, where one finds 700 institutions of higher learning, almost all of which (despite the appellation of “university”) were liberal arts colleges dedicated to the educational ideal of the “Christian gentleman.” Their curricula focused heavily on the mastery of Greek and Latin texts, culminating in a seminar on moral philosophy often taught by the college’s president, who was usually an ordained minister serving at a local church. Students were generally the sons of the local gentry. Teaching relied on rote memorization of largely irrelevant material about which they had little choice and even less interest. Liberal education of this sort was hardly edifying. Small wonder that the experience had severe critics both within the academy and the larger society. Its elitism and classicism were attacked for being incompatible with the democratic impulses of the first new nation, increasingly confident in its self-emancipation from the dead-hand of all things past and European. Its literary and theological orientation did not square with the emerging scientific and technological spirit of the age. And its focus on personal cultivation was considered a wasteful luxury that had no place in America’s competitive, commercial society.

Americans saw little use in such an education, and they voted with their feet. In the decades immediately prior to the

As John Churchill, national secretary of Phi Beta Kappa, explained: “For years as a dean I told the first year students: ‘You are not our customers. The college does not exist to satisfy your desires. The college exists to bring it about that you have different desires.’”

Civil War, many old time colleges hemorrhaged students and faced financial collapse. The situation was so grave at Transylvania by the 1840s that plans were drawn up to convert the college into a normal school for training teachers to make ends meet. Following the Civil War, the surviving liberal arts colleges confronted an even more severe challenge from the newly founded large and often state-supported universities which embraced a democratic, scientific and utilitarian ethos so contrary to their own. The competition for students and funds posed by these new institutions led to dire predictions of the impending demise of the liberal arts college.

Like Mark Twain’s comment upon reading his own obituary, we now know that statements concerning the death of liberal education have been greatly exaggerated. Since the beginning of the 20th century, two types of friends of liberal education have tried to preserve it against the onslaught of the specialization and utilitarianism in universities. Both are partially right and partially wrong about the meaning of the tradition they are defending. With the best of intentions, each confuses questions about the purpose of liberal education with questions about its content. One group—let’s call them the traditionalists—has sought to promote education’s humanistic aim by reasserting the virtues embodied in the curriculum of the past. Their inspiration is a mythical Golden Age. Just as the antebellum liberal arts college defined liberal education in terms of the mastery of a limited set of classical texts, so 20th century traditionalists such as Robert Maynard Hutchins and Allan Bloom have tied it to a specified canon of “great books” representing The Best That Has

Been Thought And Said In Western Civilization From Plato To NATO. But liberal leaning should never become idolatrous in this way, that is, too worshipful toward particular pedagogical sacred cows or golden calves. While this material is much broader than the required Latin and Greek texts studied in the 19th century, it nevertheless inevitably ignores the very real experiences of much of humanity. No wonder traditionalism is widely rejected for its elitism, dogmatism and exclusivity. In fact, the way traditionalists have tried to defend liberal education has probably done more to hurt its cause than have its worst enemies.

The other group—the modernizers—has proceeded from the notion that liberal education is not defined by a particular subject matter. This group includes followers of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, who welcomed virtually any subject matter which reflected student interests and needs as the basis of a liberating educational experience. Contemporary modernizers such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) seek to blur the distinction between humanistic and utilitarian education. For example, the AACU recently sponsored a conference encouraging colleges to adopt undergraduate courses in the field of Public Health as part of their liberal education curriculum. It is not an accident that this field is a projected growth sector of our economy, especially given the heightened concern for homeland security. It is a vitally important subject to be sure, but is it liberal education?

One modernizer linked to the AACU has recently written of a “third way” in education, in which “higher education is evolving a new paradigm for undergraduate study that erodes the long-standing

divide between liberal and professional education.” True to its philosophical foundations, this move is nothing if not pragmatic. As our modernizer explains, “The initial impetus for bridging the liberal-professional divide was practical. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s struggling liberal arts colleges found they could maintain enrollments by offering career-related subjects.” Necessity, it is said, is the mother of invention. What modernizers propose is that liberal educators respond to enrollment imperatives by merely re-inventing liberal education as vocational training. If prospective students want pre-professional training rather than liberal education, they say, why then let’s just call the former by the latter and give them what they want in the name of liberal education. Try as much as modernizers might, their invocation of Deweyan philosophical precepts cannot perform the alchemy of turning base opportunism into golden principle.

There is a very short step indeed from dismissing any distinction between liberal education and vocational training to actually defining liberal education in terms of vocational training. And, unfortunately, liberal educators are becoming very adroit at taking this step. Consider the comment made to me by my skeptical colleague (remember him?) who reluctantly had attended a talk on liberal education which I gave to prospective students and their parents at our college. All that talk about self-development is well and good, he said, but for him liberal education means the broadest possible training in a set of skills that will be useful in the ever-changing job market of the 21st century. He is not alone. A radio series on educational reform at Eastern Kentucky University, aired on WEKU in the fall of 2006, similarly emphasized this vocational dimension of liberal education. Proposals at ECU for teaching more courses in “critical and creative thinking” were justified as producing “graduates who know how to evolve as the economic machine evolves, so there is always a demand for their services.” Liberal education as the cultivation of one’s humanity is thus transformed into the accumulation of one’s human capital.

Taking the argument a step further is a recent issue of the AACU publication *Peer Review*, which is explicitly dedicated to

“Liberal Education and the Entrepreneurial Spirit.” One of its contributors offers the thesis that liberal education is not merely good for entrepreneurs, but that entrepreneurship is actually a liberal art in its own right. Just consider the implications of such a proposition. Instead of relying on tedious instruments like examinations or term papers to assess student performance in our liberal arts courses, professors could now merely calculate the total return on their investment portfolios. This gives a whole new meaning to the phrase “value added” used by those who want to measure the changes brought about by four years of liberal education. It is enough to make any self-respecting Socrates reach for his bottle of hemlock. What is at stake is whether education should foster the appreciation of principle or principal.

THESE notions are a far cry from the traditional meaning of liberal education. It is probably true that almost any subject in the hands of a Socrates could be turned into material for liberal education, but real-life Socrateses are hard to find. For the rest of us, subject matter does matter. As Phi Beta Kappa explains in one of its publications:

“Liberal education seeks to quicken the mind and spirit by encouraging the full development of human capacities. It is true

Will Rogers used to quip, “The problem isn’t what people don’t know. It’s what they do know that really isn’t so.” He probably wasn’t thinking about liberal education at the time, but he might have been.

that often a liberal education may have a definitive market value and may in a sense be considered vocational. It is true also that vocational programs sometimes contain liberal content. Nevertheless, the main lines of cleavage can, in practice, be seen. It is not difficult to distinguish between broad cultivation and technical competence.”

The real occupation for which liberal education prepares students is the job of being human. The spirit of liberal education was wonderfully expressed by a former stu-

dent of the late Raymond F. Betts, who died in 2007. She said that Betts, retired professor of history at the University of Kentucky and founding director of UK’s Gaines Center for the Humanities, “imbued students with the value of education as inspirational and life-changing, not vocational. I dearly loved and admired him.”

Modernizers offer a deceptively appealing ideal. The appeal is that students should decide for themselves what is useful and interesting to them. Education is thus reduced to catering to student preferences, however enlightened or not these might be. But the whole point of liberal education is to show students that the world is larger than their experience of it. As John Churchill, national secretary of Phi Beta Kappa, explained in his plenary address to the Transylvania seminar, “For years as a dean I told the first year students: ‘You are not our customers. The college does not exist to satisfy your desires. The college exists to bring it about that you have different desires.’ It takes courage to accept that invitation.”

So the modernizers want to refer to vocational training as liberal education. What difference does any of this make? Why worry about what activities we call “liberal education”? Isn’t it merely a semantic dispute, a tempest in an academic teapot? From an academic point of view, it is certainly nice to know what we are talking

about when we discuss (endlessly it seems) liberal education. This is particularly important when the ideas are about what we are supposed to be doing as liberal educators. Our current confusion is reflected in the incoherence of our schools’ curricula. We simply do not know what to teach our students because we do not know why we are teaching it to them. We continue to invoke the liberal education ideal at ceremonial moments such as commencement addresses, but these are increasingly acts of academ-

ic ritualism performed without conviction. No wonder that an insightful observer of the challenges facing liberal education today concluded, "At many of the hundreds of schools that call themselves liberal arts colleges, the term represents nostalgia more than curriculum."

IT is not only the colleges which pay the price of our amnesia about the purpose of liberal education. Our students also lose the opportunity of receiving the dis-

phers have captured the anxious, dispirited spirit of our age in their pronouncement of the "death of the subject." Others have characterized our postmodern condition as living in an ersatz world of "simulacra" in which reality has become nothing more than spectacle in which we are "amusing ourselves to death." We come to sense that, according to one contemporary cultural critic, "all that is solid melts into air." In a world starved for substance, liberal education is a kind of soul food. In

If not as undergraduates, then when will they ever rigorously engage the big questions about who they are and what they might become? And if they never ask themselves these questions, what sort of life will they, and the rest of us, live? This is the reason for preserving liberal education.

tinctive rewards from one. This is certainly not to suggest that liberal education is the only valuable type of education. People are people before they are lawyers or physicians or accountants, and the role of liberal education is to attend to their development as such—but when you need one, it is nice to have a competently trained lawyer or physician or accountant handy. For much of its history, critics have argued that too much emphasis was being placed on the humanistic ends of liberal education at the expense of other goals. This is a valid debate, and we in academe and in our society should not shy away from engaging in it. However, the modernizers' sleight-of-hand means that liberal education, properly understood as self-questioning, somehow gets lost in the shuffle.

In many ways, this sort of education is all the more critical today. We live in a world where technological imperatives, information overload, the "creative destruction" of market forces, and the totalizing logic of instrumental rationality appear to reduce human beings to the status of things. Postmodern philoso-

phers have captured the anxious, dispirited spirit of our age in their pronouncement of the "death of the subject." Others have characterized our postmodern condition as living in an ersatz world of "simulacra" in which reality has become nothing more than spectacle in which we are "amusing ourselves to death." We come to sense that, according to one contemporary cultural critic, "all that is solid melts into air." In a world starved for substance, liberal education is a kind of soul food. In

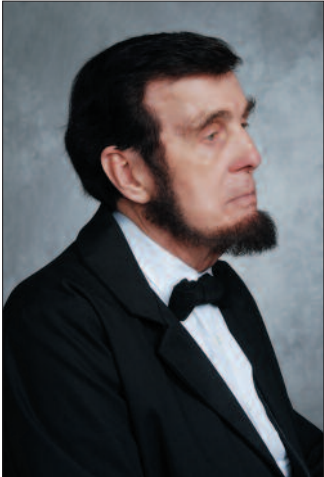
such circumstances, serious inquiry about purpose in their lives is more than just a distraction for today's college students. If not as undergraduates, then when will they ever rigorously engage the big questions about who they are and what they might become? And if they never ask themselves these questions, what sort of life will they, and the rest of us, live? This is the reason for preserving liberal education, however dimly understood by its caretakers in academe. Liberal education is a precious but fragile thing which requires our attention in our frantically utilitarian age. Lacking that attention, it is easily lost. And with it, so are we.

Which brings us back to the Transylvania seminar. Those of us who serve as the stewards of liberal education need to be reminded about what it is we are charged with protecting. Caught up in the teaching of our particular specialties, we tend not to worry about the vitality of liberal education at all. When we do concern ourselves with it, we tend to think about liberal education in ways which reflect the flawed suppositions of its traditionalists or modernizers. The former

conceives the tradition too narrowly and dogmatically. The latter treats it too broadly and superficially. Both have lost touch with its distinctive purpose of critical self-examination.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander. Transylvania's seminar on liberal education is also an example of liberal education. The focus of our conversation was constantly on our own self-examination as liberal educators. What does it mean to be engaged in liberal education? How did we get here? Where should we be going? Once the questions were raised and alternative answers presented, participants were allowed—indeed encouraged—to decide these matters for themselves. Part of the task of the seminar was to recognize the worth of those positions with which we may not agree. And participants did just that. One wrote to me after the seminar that he had been chosen to serve as the director of his institution's liberal education committee and had begun to revise its curriculum to reflect more centrally the goal of self-discovery. Another informed me that he was starting a similar seminar for faculty at his own college. Needless to say, I found these developments quite heartening. However, another participant sent me a copy of an article he had just published lambasting the Transylvania seminar for its foolish insistence on the old-fashioned distinction between liberal education and vocational training. Upon reading his piece, I'm afraid my first thought was, "What's the use?" ●

Jeffrey Freyman is the Bingham-Young professor of political science at Transylvania University in Lexington, and director of the university's Center for Liberal Education.



Kentucky Chatauqua characters Abraham Lincoln, Mary Todd Lincoln, Margaret Garner and Emilie Todd Helm will perform vignettes at the Our Lincoln gala. (Photos by Larry Neuzel)

Our Lincoln Gala Kicks Off Bicentennial Celebration

The Humanities Council will bring together a sparkling constellation of Kentucky talent for a Lincoln gala at the University of Kentucky's Singletary Center for the Arts

MARK Sunday, February 10, 2008 on your calendar! That's the day to be in Lexington for *Our Lincoln*, a grand gala marking the beginning of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth in Hodgenville, Kentucky on February 12, 1809. Lincoln's big birthday won't actually arrive until 2009, but the observances will run for two years, starting in 2008.

Presented by the Kentucky Humanities Council, *Our Lincoln* will give the observances a flying start. Everett McCorvey, Director of Opera at the University of Kentucky, and Virginia Smith, the Council's executive director, will produce the gala. Jim Rodgers, former head of theater at UK, will direct. They have planned a multi-faceted event that will showcase outstanding Kentucky talent:

- Nathan Cole, violin, and Akiko Tarumoto, violin: A medley of Civil War songs
- Margaret Garner, Emilie Todd Helm, Mary Todd Lincoln and Abraham Lincoln: vignettes from four new Civil War-era Kentucky Chatauqua characters
- Kentucky Poet Laureate Jane Gentry Vance: A reading of her favorite Lincoln poem
- *One Man's Lincoln*: A cameo, performed by the Kentucky Repertory Theatre, from Wade Hall's drama about Lincoln as seen through the eyes of his law partner and fellow Kentuckian, Billy Herndon

Our Lincoln promises to be both exciting and edifying as it artistically illuminates the ideas and themes that make Abraham Lincoln Kentucky's own. Please be a part of this once-in-a-lifetime experience in honor of the Commonwealth's greatest son, made possible in part by support from the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government.



Poet Laureate Jane Gentry Vance will read a Lincoln poem.



Nathan Cole will play a medley of Civil War songs.

Our Lincoln

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www.uky.edu/SCFA/tickets.php

Lincoln Bicentennial: The Rest of the Story

We're also offering Lincoln grants and talks, and preparing to publish a pocket-size book on Lincoln's life, written by Wade Hall, as well as a special Lincoln edition of *Kentucky Humanities*

Grants

A limited number of \$1,200 grants are still available to nonprofit organizations planning humanities events related to Abraham Lincoln and his era. For guidelines and application forms, please visit www.kyhumanities.org or call Kathleen Pool at 859/257-5932. Using funds from the Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, the Council has made the following Lincoln grants:

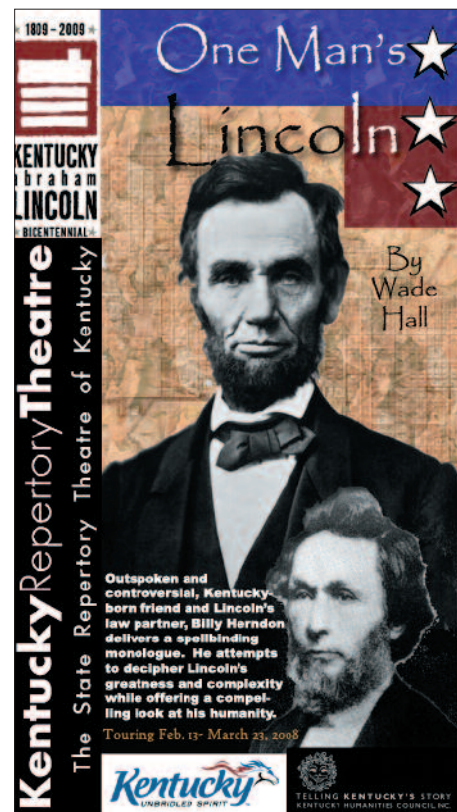
- A House Divided (Mary Todd Lincoln House, Lexington—\$10,000)
- Abraham Lincoln at Farmington: Three Weeks in Louisville in 1841 (Farmington Historic Home, Louisville—\$10,000)
- Abraham Lincoln, the Shakers, and the Civil War (Georgetown Scott County Historical Museum, Georgetown—\$3,300)
- Forever Free: Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation (Boyle County Public Library, Danville—\$4,000)
- Forever Free: Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation (Hardin County Public Library, Elizabethtown—\$7,700)
- Forever Free: Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation (Lexington Public Library, Lexington—\$10,000)
- Hardin County, Kentucky: Lincoln, Family and Friends (Hardin County History Museum, Elizabethtown—\$10,000)
- Interpreting Slavery at Kentucky Historic Sites (Liberty Hall Historic Site, Frankfort—\$1,200)
- Kentucky Music and the Lincoln Family (Lexington Philharmonic Society, Inc., Lexington—\$9,954)
- Kentucky Repertory Theatre presents *One Man's Lincoln* by Wade Hall (Kentucky Repertory Theatre, Horse Cave—\$38,000)

- Lincoln's Legacy: A Musical Tribute (Hardin County Schools Performing Arts Center, Elizabethtown—\$10,869)
- The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: A Catalyst for Emancipation (Frazier Historical Arms Museum, Louisville—\$1,200)
- The Presidents of Mount Rushmore: Leadership in Crisis (Nancy Hanks-Thomas Lincoln Wedding Reenactment Festival, Springfield—\$10,300)

Talks

The following Lincoln-related talks are now available from our Speakers Bureau. To see the details, visit us online at www.kyhumanities.org or call our office at 859/257-5932 and request a copy of the 2007-08 *Whole Humanities Catalog*.

- *Margaret Mitchell's Tara: Myth and Reality*—Diane M. Calhoun-French
- *History Comes Alive: The Henry Bibb Project*—Diane P. Coon
- *The Freedmen's Bureau in Kentucky*—Diane P. Coon
- *Lincoln the Unloved*—Berry Craig
- *Secret Women: Three Civil War Spies and Their Stories*—Donna M. Elkins
- *Wanted: Freedom—Dead or Alive*—Daryl L. Harris
- *Memorializing Mr. Lincoln*—Jonathan Jeffrey
- *Kentucky's Abraham Lincoln*—John E. Kleber
- *Perryville: Battle for Kentucky*—Christopher L. Kolakowski
- *Pariah: The Dark Legacy of General Stephen Burbridge*—James M. Prichard
- *A Surgeon's Tale: Life and Death in the Orphan Brigade*—Hugh Ridenour
- *Lincoln and Clay: Great Orators in the Age of Oratory*—Allen Share
- *The Food and Culture of Abraham Lincoln's Kentucky Childhood*—Mark F. Sohn



The Kentucky Repertory Theatre will perform One Man's Lincoln in Horse Cave with the support of a Lincoln grant and will do a scene from the play at the Our Lincoln gala.

Kentucky Humanities Special Edition

In October 2008, the Council will publish a special expanded edition of *Kentucky Humanities* commemorating Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday. Noted Lincoln scholars will offer new perspectives on Lincoln's private life, political career, and intellectual development.

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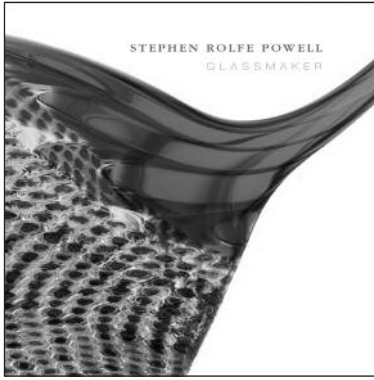
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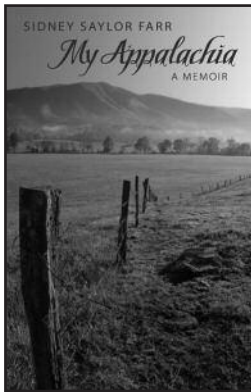
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