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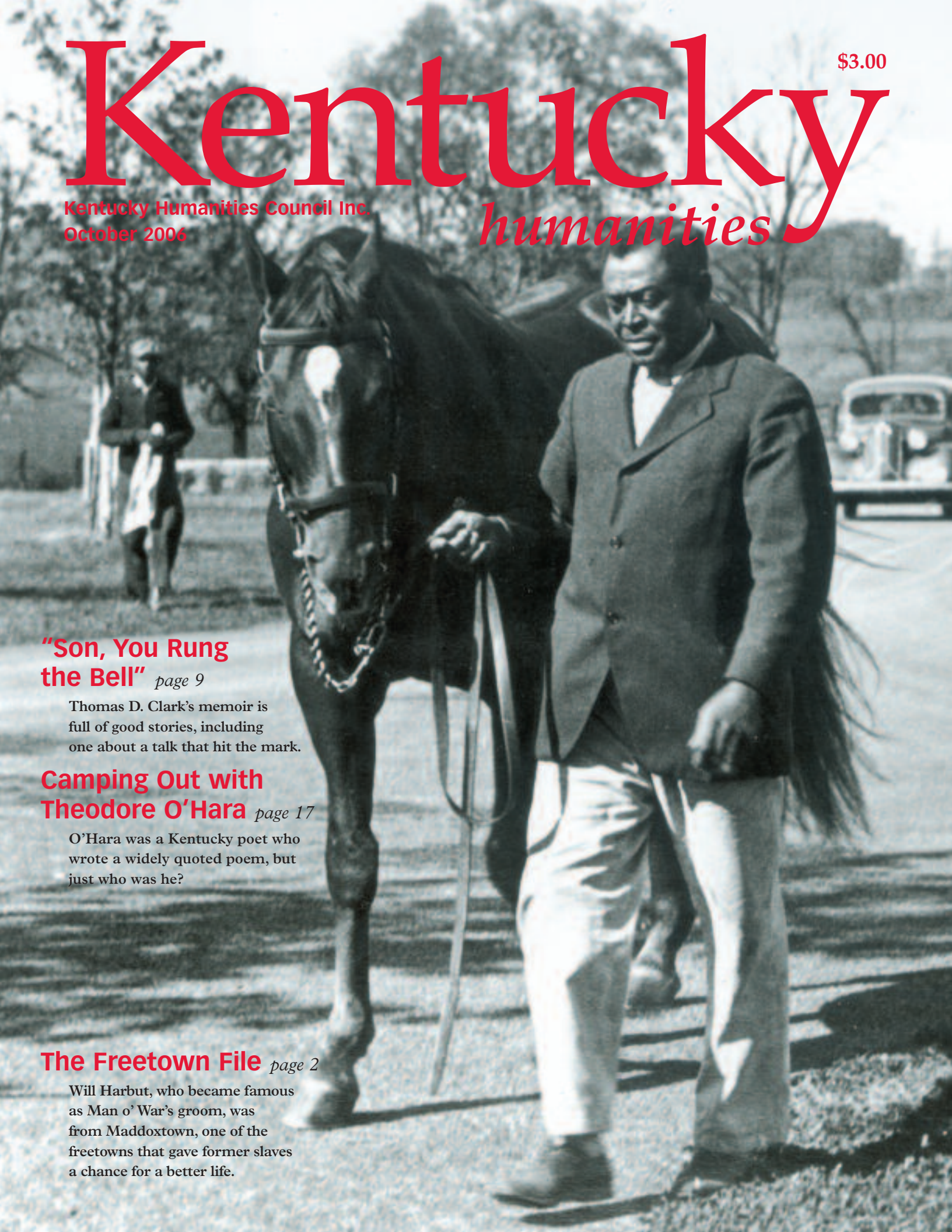
Kentucky humanities

Kentucky Humanities Council Inc.
October 2006



"Son, You Rung the Bell" *page 9*

Thomas D. Clark's memoir is full of good stories, including one about a talk that hit the mark.

Camping Out with Theodore O'Hara *page 17*

O'Hara was a Kentucky poet who wrote a widely quoted poem, but just who was he?

The Freetown File *page 2*

Will Harbut, who became famous as Man o' War's groom, was from Maddoxtown, one of the freetowns that gave former slaves a chance for a better life.

Kentucky Chautauqua

How sweet it is—Ruth Booe founded a candy dynasty.

Seeing Kelly Brengelman portray candy maker Ruth Booe may make your mouth water, but don't try to snatch a piece of the stage candy—it's wax. Not to worry—the real thing is readily available because Rebecca-Ruth, the company Booe and her friend Rebecca Gooch founded, is still going strong.

In 1919, dissatisfied with their poor-paying jobs as substitute teachers in Frankfort, Ruth and Rebecca decided to change careers—from teaching to chocolate. It was unusual in those days for women in their twenties to become entrepreneurs, but these two had uncommon nerve and imagination. They marketed their candy by staging loud conversations about how wonderful it was in theater lobbies and on busy street corners. They also bought a used car, stripped it down to a racer, mounted Rebecca-Ruth signs on the sides, and drove it all over central Kentucky.

Rebecca-Ruth prospered, but Ruth left the business in 1924 when she married Douglas Booe. She returned after his death in 1927. Rebecca left to marry in 1929 and Ruth bought her out, just in time for the Great Depression. Determination and a genius for marketing got her through the 1930s. First, she invented the Mint Kentucky Colonel—a mint center surrounded by pecans and coated with dark chocolate. The taste of the "Colonel" helped revive the company's sales. Then came the topper: the Bourbon Ball. This famous confection was inspired by a chance remark to the effect that bourbon and chocolate are the world's two best tastes. Booe worked for two years to perfect the Bourbon Ball, which was an immediate sensation. Business boomed, but then came World War II and sugar rationing. Her customers apparently couldn't live without Rebecca-Ruth—they brought their personal sugar rations to Booe so she could keep making candy throughout the war. In 1947, the company got a boost when the food editor of the *New York Times* recommended Rebecca-Ruth candies. Many other national publications have followed suit over the years.

Ruth and Rebecca decided to change careers—from teaching to chocolate.

Ruth Booe retired from Rebecca-Ruth in 1964. She died in 1973 at the age of 82. Her son, John C. Booe, had taken over after her retirement. He expanded the business, developing many new liquor-flavored chocolates, but nothing could replace Ruth's Bourbon Balls.

Kelly Brengelman as Ruth Booe, Bourbon Ball Belle. (Photo by Larry Neuzel)

Her original recipe is still in use, and is still a closely guarded secret. John's son Charles, who bought the company from his father in 1997, is now at the helm as Rebecca-Ruth Candy closes in on a century of service to Kentucky's sweet tooth.

When we say our mission is Telling Kentucky's Story, we're talking about Kelly Brengelman as Ruth Booe and our many other great Chautauqua performers. To learn more about Kentucky Chautauqua, please visit our web site: **kyhumanities.org**. ●

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FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

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On the cover: Will Harbut with Man O' War in 1937. Photo: Keeneland—Meadors

BY D. CAMERON LAWRENCE

The freetowns of the Bluegrass re-created the unequal labor relationships that had existed before the Civil War, but they also gave former slaves the chance to own land and move up.

The Freetown File

They sit among fields and hills, circling Lexington like a necklace. Their names evoke the power of place and of hope: Frogtown, Fort Spring, New Zion, Zion Hill. Founded just after the Civil War by emancipated slaves, Kentucky's Bluegrass freetowns—sometimes called "the black hamlets of Lexington"—were established on land freedmen and women purchased from farm owners or land speculators, or on small tracts given to them by wealthy estate owners eager to rebuild their labor force after the war. Some of the freetowns are almost gone, just a few old houses standing sentinel against Lexington's urban sprawl. A handful thrive, as young people return to homeplaces and build among historic houses and churches. The freetowns hold in their history a rich and difficult chapter of Kentucky's—and the nation's—past.

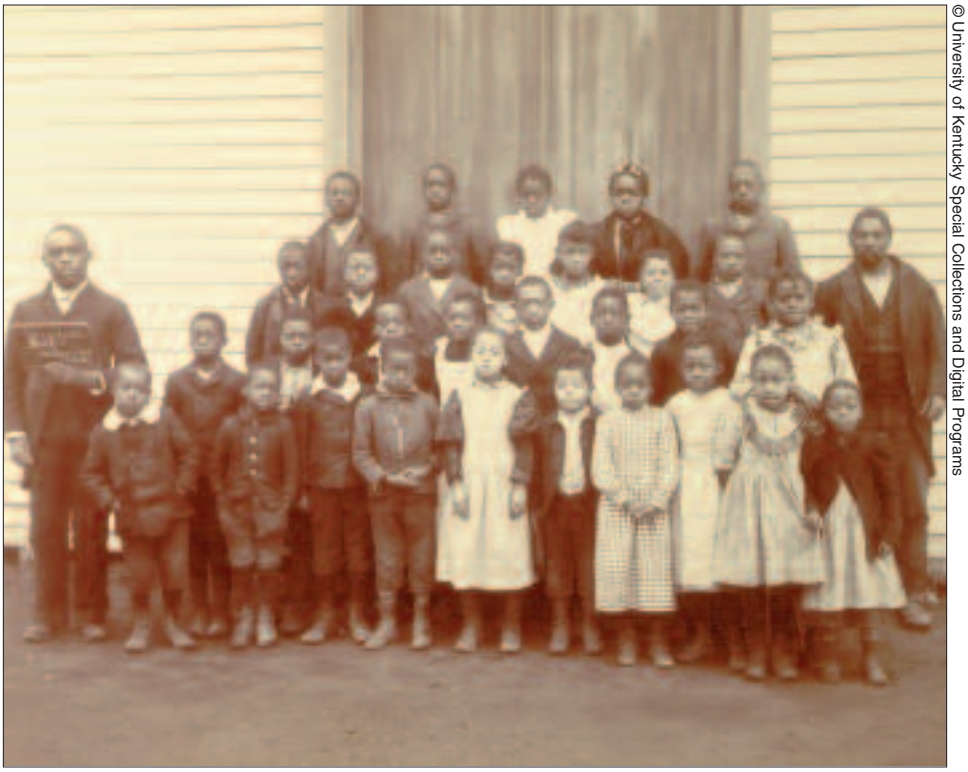
After emancipation on December 18, 1865, Kentucky's 225,000 former slaves were on their own. Literally overnight, tens of thousands of black Kentuckians were scrambling for the basics of life in an often hostile environment. What were they going to do? Where were they going to go? Most had no money, no housing, no transportation, no jobs and no land. The state offered no aid of any sort, and the underfunded federal Freedmen's Bureau, which operated in Kentucky from 1866-69, could offer only limited assistance. For the freedmen and

Atlas of Kentucky © 1998 University Press of Kentucky

Some 30 freetowns, also known as black hamlets, arose in Fayette and surrounding counties in the decade following the Civil War.

women of the Commonwealth, the years after the war were dangerous, disorienting and extraordinarily difficult. Many joined a mass migration to the cities, but some found stability in the unique, semi-feudal economy that developed in central Kentucky in the years after the Civil War.

"A number of individuals (farm owners)…out in the country developed ways of attracting an African-American population out of the cities back into the countryside," says Dr. Karl Raitz, chair of the geography department at the University of Kentucky. "That was through the gift of land, the sale of land, the renting of land, onto which a house could be built, and usually these were built in clusters, or what we call hamlets, small villages." These hamlets, or freetowns, reconnected former slaveholders with the labor force they had once enslaved and still needed. "The labor relationships that existed before the Civil War were strongly replicated after the Civil War," says Raitz. For the freedmen, the advantage was that "work would have been available nearby, within walking distance across the road, doing the same things for the same individuals… that's what makes this settlement pattern interesting and so different from what you would find elsewhere in the country."



Bracktown: Students at a Bracktown school in 1901. This sizable freetown is right in the path of Lexington's expanding northwestern suburbs.

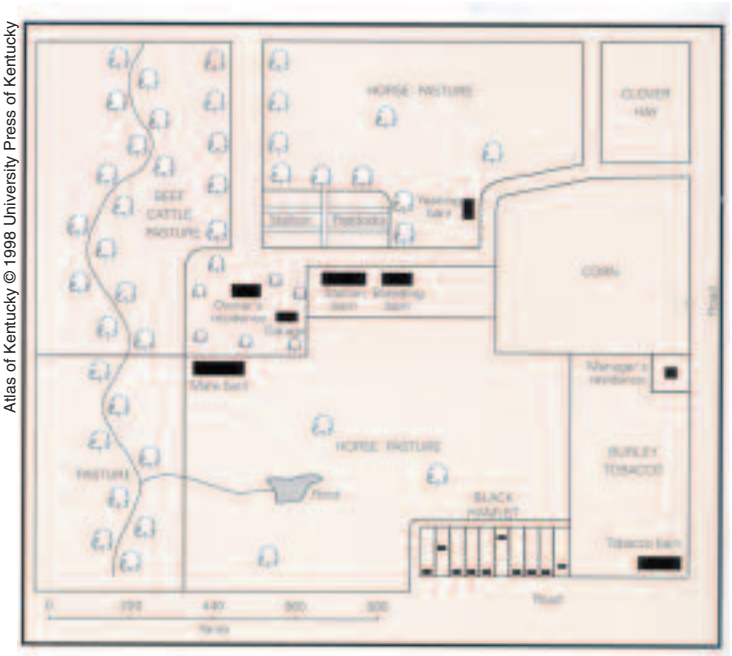
Raitz says that in just a few years—from about 1869 to the middle 1870s—some 30 to 35 black hamlets took shape. Nearly all formed next to large estate farms. Some of the freetowns, such as Firmantown in Versailles, are set up on a square grid and look much as one might expect a planned labor village to look. Others are almost linear, like Maddoxtown, which is laid out straight along Huffman Mill Pike beside Mt. Brilliant Farm, a major Thoroughbred horse operation northeast of Lexington.

Maddoxtown was named for Samuel Maddox (or Maddocks—the name is found both ways in old land deeds), a farmer and land speculator from Scott County who bought a large tract of land in 1853.

This indenture, made and entered into this first day of March, 1853, between Abram Ware and Nancy, his wife… and Samuel Maddocks… that whereas the said parties of the first part hath this day bargained and sold a certain piece of land… at the price of sixty three dollars per acre, and whereas the said party of the second part has paid the sum of three thousand dollars…

A white man buying land was nothing new, but other deeds in Fayette County's courthouse sketch the beginning of a new chapter in the nation's history: the end of slavery and newly emancipated blacks becoming landowners. In 1871, an African American, Margaret Hollum, purchased a piece of land from Samuel Maddox and became a founding member of the new community of Maddoxtown, Kentucky.

This indenture, made this 8th day of December, one thousand eight hundred and seventy one, between Samuel Maddox and Sarah A. Maddox, his wife… and Margaret Hollum… in consideration of the sum of one hundred and seventy dollars...the parties of the first part do bargain, sell, convey, release and



The layout of a typical post-Civil War Bluegrass farm and its adjacent freetown.

Maddoxtown: This freetown supplied labor to Mt. Brilliant Farm, directly across Huffman Mill Pike, and other area farms. The Harbut family home is on the right.

grant to the party of the second part… a certain tract of land situated in said county of Fayette near Huffmann Mill Pike… and containing two acres… to have and to hold… to the parties of the second part and their heirs and assignees forever…

Today, this transaction seems ordinary, but at the time it represented a stunning change. (I was unable to find further information about Margaret Hollum. Chances are good that she was employed on one of the nearby farms, perhaps as a domestic worker.) By 1877, there were seven families in the small community of Maddoxtown. Eventually, Maddoxtown supported its own church and school, and had three thriving "roadhouses," popular eating and drinking establishments. Most freetown residents, according to Marion B. Lucas in *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, "built their own houses, drew water from a community well, tilled small garden plots to supplement their incomes, and worked for wages on the nearby estates on the white man's terms." It was a difficult paradox: while the freetowns were indeed free and offered residents the very important step of land ownership, the only work in these outlying, rural areas was low-paying, grinding toil on the horse farms, especially because transportation was extremely limited.

I first heard about the Bluegrass freetowns nearly ten years ago from Carridder M. Jones of Louisville, who'd learned about them from a friend. At the time, the freetowns—or black hamlets, as most people were calling them then—seemed to be an undiscovered story except among people who had grown up there or among the handful of researchers exploring their history. Outsiders didn't know much about them because much of their history was unwritten, held in the memories of older residents, passed on in oral stories.

Carridder and I produced a public radio documentary about the freetowns in 2000. With grant support from the Kentucky Humanities Council, I am now in the process of bringing the story to KET in a television documentary titled *People of Freetowns*. Through one family with deep roots in Maddoxtown, the Harbuts—from Will Harbut, groom of the famed racehorse Man o' War, all the way down to his great grandson—we're researching and exploring the history, achievements and challenges facing people of the freetowns. Did the freetown blacks have to leave their communities to advance their lives? What did they lose by leaving? What did they gain? In our transient contemporary society, are there lessons here for all of us? Will the history of the freetowns die as we lose their older residents? Our documentary explores these questions.

A Family's Heritage

Late on an afternoon in July, as the sun puts a warm glow to his weathered face, Tom Harbut stands on the front porch of the house his father built 80 years ago and looks out over a rolling landscape where horses graze in rich green pastures.

"The labor relationships that existed before the Civil War were strongly replicated after the Civil War… that's what makes this settlement pattern interesting and so different from what you would find elsewhere in the country."

Harbut lives in Maddoxtown, in the heart of the region that holds more Thoroughbred stud farms than any other place in the world. Amid the expanses of undulating fields, board fences and handsome barns that are Kentucky hallmarks, the finest blooded horses have been bred, foaled and raised for more than 150 years. From his

front porch, Harbut can see several horse farms, including what used to be Faraway Farm, where Man o' War stood in retirement. A modest walk leads to other illustrious stables, including Elmendorf, Castleton Lyons, Spendthrift and Dixiana. The graceful ghosts of equine legends seem to linger in the late afternoon shadows.

Most freetown residents "built their own houses, drew water from a community well, tilled small garden plots to supplement their incomes, and worked for wages on the nearby estates on the white man's terms."

At 86, Harbut still moves with a hint of athletic grace even as crutches support his weakened knees. Join him for a conversation and it becomes clear very quickly that he knows a great deal about horses. "I grew up around horses," he says. "I rode and we had workhorses. Every one is different. With Thoroughbreds, there's the fleetness, the nervousness. That's what makes a good horseman: You get to know your horse and you let your horse get to know you."

Harbut is one of a long line of African-Americans from the Bluegrass freetowns who were expert horsemen. The tight relationship between freetown African Americans and horses has deep historic roots, going back to colonial Virginia, where slaves with horse savvy became favored jockeys and handlers. Kentucky was originally a part of Virginia and took on that state's love affair with finely bred horses and racing. In 1792, when Kentucky became a state, the Thoroughbred breed, a cross between Arabian stallions and English mares, was well established in the Commonwealth. The *History of Fayette County*, published in

Similar Yet Unique

The freetowns share some characteristics: they were all founded as free, largely agrarian communities. All provided labor to nearby businesses, mostly the large horse farms, though this is not always so.

Keene, southwest of Lexington, was a spa prior to the Civil War, its white sulphur springs esteemed for their supposed medicinal value. The spa was a popular weekend destination for white Lexingtonians, who stayed in large hotels in the town; one of these hotels stills stands. When faith in the sulphur springs' healing wonders faded, so did Keene's popularity as a resort. African American slaves who had worked at the spas stayed in the area and built small houses. After the Civil war, Keene became a black settlement, though in recent memory the town has been integrated.

Linda Smith, Lexington Herald-Leader

The Keene Springs Hotel in the winter of 1868. The building still stands.

Other hamlets have similarly interesting histories. In Scott County, along Route 922, survives New Zion, one of the bigger freetowns, a community established in 1872 by freedmen Calvin Hamilton and Primus Keene. Hamilton and Keene bought 23 acres of land, then divided it up and sold it to other freedmen. They named the town Briar Hill (for the many brambles, apparently.) The community's oral history has it that the two men were investigated by whites who could not believe that two black men had the wherewithal to buy the land legally. The same tradition holds that the men did it with a small down payment and credit. No one is quite sure when the name was changed to New Zion. Today, the community is a thriving place of some 20-odd houses, an active church and a hilltop cemetery with tombstones dating back to the late 1800s.

A marker in the New Zion cemetery.

Several researchers in the state are now digging into the history of Kentucky's freetowns. And the documentary *People of Freetowns*, with Kentucky Humanities Council support, will feature rare, archival footage and interviews with several freetown residents. But as Lexington sprawls outward, many of these communities are at risk of disappearing. As older residents die out, they take their stories with them. What we are at risk of losing is an immensely rich history of people founding cohesive communities, raising generations upward and gaining a foothold on the American Dream.

1881, noted, "There is no region of America so highly favored for the rearing and breeding of fine horses as the Bluegrass region of Kentucky."

During the 1800s, blacks did most of the work on the big Bluegrass farms. By the latter half of the century, this relationship with horses led to high achievement: at least 12 of the 15 riders in the inaugural Kentucky Derby in 1875 were African American. Black jockeys won 15 of the first 28 Kentucky Derbies. There were also talented black trainers and outstanding black grooms, the men who worked with the horses day-to-day and held everything together with their knowledge and attention to detail. Many of these men hailed from the freetowns. The work was as grueling as ever but, unlike slavery days, these workers at least had the possibility of benefiting from their labor, of beginning to accumulate assets and climb upward.

As a teen-ager, Harbut, who first climbed aboard a horse at the age of six, broke yearlings and exercised horses on local farms. In those days, farms exercised retired stallions and Harbut rode War Admiral, winner of the 1937 Triple Crown, and War Relic. Both were celebrated sons of Man o' War. The Harbut connection to racing started in the 1920s with Tom's father. Will Harbut, a Maddoxtown farmer with a reputation as a skilled horseman, went to work for a local farm manager, Harry B. Scott, at a farm just outside Maddoxtown. When Scott took over the operation of Faraway Farm a few years later, Harbut went with him. The most famous tenant at Faraway was Man o'War, perhaps the single greatest racehorse in American history, who stood at stud there. He became one of Harbut's charges.

Over the years, Will Harbut showed Man o'War to more than one million visitors from around the world who made their way down colorfully named roads like Lemon Mill Pike, Russell Cave Road and Ironworks Pike to Faraway Farm. "You can't imagine the tourists that came out here even with the Depression and the gas rationing (during the war)," recalled Harry B. Scott Jr., who managed Faraway from 1961 to 1989. Entertaining tourists with a poetic monologue about Man o'War, Will Harbut became famous. He and the horse appeared in magazines; in one classic *Saturday Evening Post* cover in 1941, Man o'War rests his head gently on the crook of Will Harbut's arm. They were described at the time as inseparable friends.

"They just melded into one," says Tom Harbut. But there was more to his father than the legend, he adds. "He was well respected, and I admired him for his accomplishments because for one thing, he was closer to the slave era. At that time, he wasn't allowed to read or write. And to get where he did was amazing." Will Harbut and his wife Mary raised 12 children in Maddoxtown. The family kept a small thriving farm and three teams of horses. Before he started working for Scott, Harbut broke horses for other owners. He was something of a horse whisperer, his son says, someone horses responded to.

Yet even as Will Harbut's fame grew, racism cast its long shadow, as revealed in his son's recollection of Man o'War's 21st birthday party, in 1938. It was a big do, with a national radio hookup and visiting dignitaries. But when it came time to eat, Harbut had to sit at a table by himself. "That kind of woke me up," says Tom, who was 18 at the time. "I didn't know what was going on. We didn't really think about segregation."

In the late '30s, Tom Harbut headed to Belmont Park in New York to work for top trainer Henry McDaniel, who saddled the 1918 Kentucky Derby winner Exterminator. Now too heavy to ride, Harbut "rubbed horses," the term horsemen use to describe a groom's work. Two brothers had also gone into the horse business and it was a happy time. Then came World War II. Harbut was drafted, sent first to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, later to the Pacific. He served in the infantry for four years.

After the war, Tom's father asked him to come home. He did, working briefly at Faraway with his father, then taking a temporary job at Leslie Combs II's Spendthrift Farm. Soon after Tom's arrival home, his father suffered a paralytic stroke that also took his eyesight. Tom stayed in Maddoxtown to help. On October 4, 1947, Will Harbut, 62, died. His obituary in the *Blood-Horse* magazine said he was survived by "his wife, six sons, three daughters and Man o' War."

One month later, on November 1, Man o'War, who had been weakening for a year, died in his stall. Samuel Riddle commissioned a huge bronze statue of Man o' War that today marks the horse's grave and greets visitors at the entrance of the Kentucky Horse Park, the Lexington equestrian museum and farm showcasing the relationship between humans and horses. Though the Harbut family declined a request to move Will Harbut's grave from the Maddoxtown cemetery to a spot next to the Man o' War memorial, a plaque next to the statue tells the story of the famous duo.

For the next 30 years, Tom Harbut stayed at Spendthrift Farm. First, he worked for Clem Brooks, another groom who achieved fame handling the great Nashua, the first horse to sell for more than a million dollars. Later, Harbut became head of the stallion barn. In its prime, Spendthrift was the top Thoroughbred breeding operation in the United States. From 1949 to 1963, it topped all sellers at the Keeneland July Yearling Sale, a premiere Thoroughbred sales event. Cosmetics queen Elizabeth Arden kept horses there. So did movie mogul Louis Mayer. A total of eight Derby winners stood at the farm for all or part of their stallion careers.

Entertaining tourists with a poetic monologue about Man o' War, Will Harbut became famous. He and the horse appeared in magazines; they were described as inseparable friends.

Keeneland–Estes

A famous team: Man o'War and Will Harbut, his groom, at the great stallion's 21st birthday party in 1938.

"It was millionaire row," Harbut says. "There were millions of dollars' worth of horses in there and that's a whole lot of responsibility." During breeding season, the farm bred 20 mares a day, many two or three times. Handling the stallions was a "dangerous and rough job," says Harbut. In the late 1950s, his pay was about $30 a week. There were never any benefits—no health care, no retirement.

On the side, Harbut began buying and training his own horses. "I was already into breeding at Spendthrift so I said, 'I'm going to breed, train and race my own horse. I can do that.'" His first horse was a broken down filly named Free Thought. He paid $50 for her, brought her around and raced her. She actually won a few. It was a colt named Touch Bar, though, that took Harbut the farthest. Someone gave him a broodmare named Queen O' Night and P.A.B. Widener of Elmendorf Farm let him breed her to his stallion Nahar. The result of that breeding was Touch Bar, a promising colt who built his stamina on training runs on Maddoxtown's dirt roads and pastures.

Harbut knew the horse could go places, but he needed a backer for racing. "It's very expensive," he says. "And I didn't have the connections." At that time, he says, it was hard for an African American man to break into the Thoroughbred field as an owner and trainer. So he sold a half interest in Touch Bar to a Louisiana businessman, who got the colt into the 1962 Kentucky Derby. Harbut still owned half of the horse, even though his name does not appear on the race program. Touch Bar finished 11th out of 15th, with Decidedly winning. "He didn't run last," he laughs. "I'll put it that way, he didn't run last."

Despite his father's accomplishments in the horse business, Gregory Harbut, one of Tom's three children, determined early not to follow the same path, despite his love of horses and his admiration for his father. "I had the opportunity to work on the same farms that he did," says Gregory. "There just weren't a lot of open doors like there are now for African Americans. I remember many days he was supposed to have been off and had to go in and water and feed just to get the rest of the day off. There was not a lot of money. No health insurance. No sick days."

Gregory's decision was common for his generation coming up and out of the freetowns. Most sought economic opportunities in Lexington or other cities. Today, many of the Bluegrass freetowns

Suzie Picou-Oldham

Tom Harbut (left) visiting Spendthrift Farm with his grandson, Greg. Harbut worked at Spendthrift for 30 years. Greg is considering a career in the horse business.

have disappeared or are dying out. Only recently is the trend toward young people coming back to live.

In a suburban home outside Lexington, Gregory and his wife Monica are raising three children. Gregory works for the city. Monica teaches. The horses are a lifetime away. And yet, quietly, somewhere, when no one was looking, desire took hold of a young man's heart and mind. Four years ago, young Greg Harbut, son of Gregory, grandson of Tom and great grandson of Will, began pursuing a career in the Thoroughbred horse business. Gregory Harbut remembers his son talking during high school about wanting a horse. Greg says it started with a field trip to the Kentucky Horse Park, where he learned details about his great grandfather and Man o' War. "My interest has grown into a love for me," he said.

That love manifested in a determination to learn the business. In the summer of 2003, Greg got a job hot walking horses at Churchill Down's summer race meet. He worked in the stables of well-regarded trainer Tom Amoss, learning how to work around spirited race horses. It wasn't easy, and Greg's first attempts were clumsy. One horse pinned him against the wall of a stall. By his own admission, he was a "nervous wreck." He started calling his grandfather for advice. And, he says, he got real spiritual. "It can be life and death every day."

But he persevered. Next came a job at Winstar Farm, which bred 2003 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Funny Cide. Then, in 2005, Greg was accepted into Flying Start, an intensive two-year training program that prepares young people for careers in racing and breeding. The program, in its third year, was the brainchild of Darley Stud's Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum of Dubai, a top name in Thoroughbred circles. Students study at Darley Stud operations in the United States, Ireland, Australia, England and Dubai. From among 200 applications, 12 students were accepted for 2005. Greg was one of three Americans. Greg stayed with the program for one year. He's now evaluating career options, unsure if racing will be his future work or a side interest. Either way, one family's story carries on, alive in the memories that inspired a young man's dreams. ●

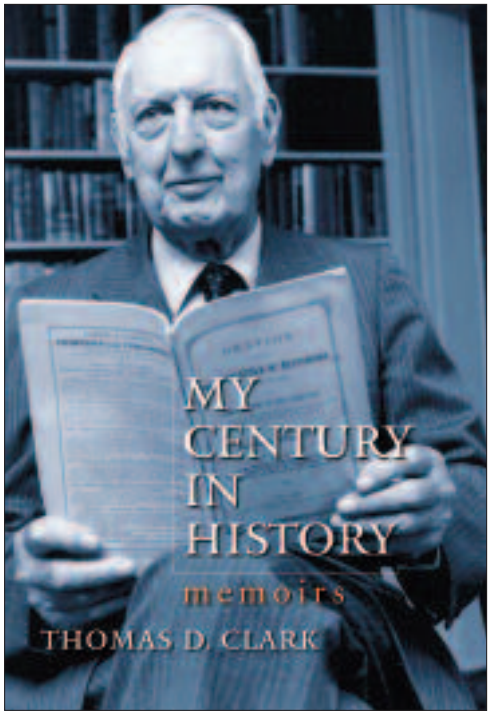
Handling the stallions was a "dangerous and rough job," says Harbut. In the late 1950s, his pay was about $30 a week. There were never any benefits

D. Cameron Lawrence of Louisville has extensive experience producing documentaries and other programming for public broadcasting. She also writes for regional and national publications. Lawrence is the recipient of a Peabody Award, a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, and other recognitions.

BY THOMAS D. CLARK

In these excerpts from the late Thomas D. Clark's memoirs, the legendary Kentucky historian recalls his first visit to Kentucky, recounts his amazing and amusing adventures on the speakers circuit, and reflects on the rewards of a life in history.

'Son, You Rung the Bell!'



Thomas D. Clark was born in Louisville, Mississippi on July 14, 1903, and died in Lexington, Kentucky on June 28, 2005. He taught history at the University of Kentucky and other schools for almost 50 years. He wrote or edited more than 30 books. In 1990 the Kentucky General Assembly appointed him Kentucky Historian Laureate for Life. This cover photo was taken in 1986.

A fateful flip

A native of Louisville, Mississippi, Tom Clark dropped out of school at sixteen to work on a dredge boat. After two years of hard labor, he returned to high school and graduated at the age of 21. In 1928, he completed a B.A. at the University of Mississippi and in September headed for graduate school at the University of Kentucky. The train trip he describes here began in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Clark did the final part of his undergraduate studies.

My decision to seek a master's degree at Kentucky was actually a chance one. The previous spring I happened to meet the University of Mississippi chancellor while walking across the campus, and he mentioned that the president of the University of Kentucky was looking for a scholarship applicant. He suggested that I apply. I corresponded with William Delbert Funkhouser, the dean of graduate studies at Kentucky, who offered me a $200 scholarship in history. I had also applied to the University of Cincinnati and was offered a like amount there. I delayed making a decision because I was in a quandary as to whether I wanted to become a professional educationist or give in to my innermost yearning to pursue graduate studies in history. I received an impatient telegram from Dean Funkhouser asking for my decision. On a rainy morning I slipped away from the Ole Miss campus and went to the telegraph office at the Oxford courthouse square, still not fully certain which scholarship I should accept. I literally flipped a buffalo nickel, and it came down Kentucky.

Shamefully I had only the meagerest knowledge of either Kentucky or its university. I had read one or two books by James Lane Allen and John Fox Jr. I knew of the state's distilling industry because in my youth, prior to Prohibition, some of the few pieces of mail we received included the colorful advertisements for Kentucky whiskey. We knew too about the Owensboro Wagon Works, from which my family had purchased wagons. That was the extent of my knowledge of the state. The only Kentuckians I had known were H. L. Lewis, captain of the dredgeboat on which I had worked; an instructor in the department of English at Ole Miss named Kenneth Demaree from Frankfort; and Grady Roundtree, Ray Moore, and Rebecca Edward, students in the Virginia summer school. That summer I had heard another Kentuckian, Senator Alben W. Barkley, speak at the

Tom Clark arrived in Lexington for the first time not long after a June 1928 flood put parts of the University of Kentucky, including Alumni Gymnasium, under water.

University of Virginia summer school convocation.

My extremely skimpy knowledge of the University of Kentucky was gleaned from its 1927–1928 catalogue. That document provided only limited information and made exceedingly shabby use of graphic arts in its presentation of the institution. Even I, an unsophisticated Mississippi country boy, recognized the typographical deficiencies of this publication. In time I learned that the catalogue was the product of a highly political state printer who gained his position by political manipulation rather than mastery of the printer's trade.

Once the *George Washington* got under way from Charlottesville there arose considerable excitement and bustle on the train. People were rushing up and down the aisle as if life itself depended on their getting to the rear. A chatty lady in the seat in front of me was accompanied by two young girls who were on their way to Louisville, Kentucky. She asked me if I knew who was on the train. I said that I did not but that whoever he or she was was creating a commotion. She informed me that Senator Charles Curtis, the Republican nominee for vice-president on the Hoover ticket, was aboard.

The next morning the porter awakened me at Ashland, Kentucky, so that I could get dressed preparatory to detraining in Lexington. Totally ignorant of Kentucky geography, I got shaved and dressed in double time. When I came back into the car from the lavatory the porter had made up only one seat, and it was occupied by a round-faced man with a cropped moustache. I recognized Senator Curtis from his pictures, which had appeared in the newspapers. He motioned to me to come and sit by him. He was the first Republican I ever met. As we traveled down through the rugged hills of eastern Kentucky we talked, though not about anything much. When the train stopped in Morehead the porter came in and informed Senator Curtis that a crowd had gathered at the station and wanted him to come out and make a speech. He patted me on the knee and said, "Keep your seat. This is a bad place." While the senator spoke to the crowd I stared out the window at the drab and shabby town, wondering what besides its appearance was bad about it. Years later, when I learned something of Morehead and its "troubles," I wondered if Senator Curtis really knew about the Tolliver-Martin feud or the Rowan County War. He surely had never read the frank and revealing Kentucky adjutant general's report on the troubles. This report had painted a grim picture of semibarbarians running wild in the hills. Later I was to learn something of the Rowan County feud from Dixon Shouse and "Tickey" Evans, Morehead natives who roomed with me at the Bender house. Shouse later became mayor of Morehead, and "Tickey" Evans inherited his father's lumber business there.

I was unprepared for the pandemonium that awaited the arrival of the *George Washington* in Lexington. When the train arrived before the old Central Station on time, at 8:05 a.m. on September 15, it was met by a howling mob, which the *Lexington Leader* later said numbered 25,000 Republicans. Many were crowded into the station, while others stood on the circle out front and along Main Street. One would have thought they were there to celebrate the Second Coming. As Curtis stepped from the train, the high school bands sent up a great crescendo of welcome that would have rivaled Gabriel and his horn on the Day of Judgment. With considerable effort, loaded down with my overstuffed suitcase and my set of golf clubs, I was able to stumble off the car. Happily the rest of my worldly belongings were

I recognized Senator Curtis from his pictures, which had appeared in the newspapers. He motioned to me to come and sit by him. He was the first Republican I ever met.

stowed in my trunk and checked to the baggage room at the station, where they remained until the Republican storm simmered down. That would not be until Senator Curtis had tolled them away to Woodland Auditorium to describe the glorious new day that lay just ahead for America following the election of Hoover.

That afternoon I read in the *Lexington Leader* that a thousand-car cavalcade had stormed into Lexington from Louisville and that special trains and buses had brought Hoovercrats and high school bands to warm up the throng before it marched on Woodland Auditorium to listen to an unmemorable speech by the future vice-president. In the meantime a welcoming committee had rushed Senator Curtis away to the Phoenix Hotel, a block and a half from the station, to sit down to a breakfast with two hundred select supporters. The breakfast was sponsored by the Republican women of Kentucky. In the milling crowd that morning were former governor Edwin Morrow, Congressman John Robsion, Senator Frederic M. Sackett, Christine Bradley South, and the whole Woman's Republican League delegation. Also present was a Republican congressman of note, John Wesley Langley, who had been charged with accepting a bribe to get a sizable shipment of Belle of Anderson whiskey released from a warehouse and onto the open market during Prohibition days.

Almost miraculously I was able to secure a taxicab and set off over South Limestone Street to the university campus. As I rode along that grim, cluttered street I thought it was the ugliest one I had ever seen. Not even the street that circled the Lafayette County Courthouse in Oxford, Mississippi, was as dismal in appearance. Every individual telephone patron must have had his own private line strung along South Limestone. The Kentucky Utilities Company had added its adornment of sagging wires, and to cap off the scene the trolley company had a power line down the middle of the street suspended from cross wires. The tall red-brick houses along the street reflected the poor taste of a multiplicity of builders.

The taxi entered the university campus through the north gate and stopped on the top of a rise before a tall and somewhat grim administration building. When I was out of the taxi and trying to find directions, I encountered a slender, lean-faced man coming toward me. He was, I later learned, Alfred Brauer, assistant professor of biology. He directed me to the office of Columbus Melcher, the dean of men, in the basement of the building. The dean was head of the German Department and wore an impressive array of organization keys strung across his vest front. From there I was directed to Mrs. Joe Bender's residence at 450 Rose Lane and told that it was a desirable rooming house. Her place was three blocks off the campus, and for the next three years, off and on, I was to make it my home.

After I had deposited my baggage in the room, I set out to find a boarding-house that served meals. Walking down Euclid Avenue I overtook a dour-faced man who introduced himself as Russell Hocker, a watch repairman. He directed me to Mrs. Cooke's boardinghouse on South Limestone Street, just across the street from Boyd Hall, a women's dormitory. Mrs. Cooke was the veritable embodiment of all boardinghouse ladies who had ever populated the North American continent. Her dining room was dark and gloomy, with a long table extending from one end to the other. At that board she fed a mixture of college boys and a few straggling citizens. I think surely she must have been a heavy stockholder in the brown-bean trade because beans were the central item of her menu.

The other student boarders at Mrs. Cooke's were country and small-town boys who had fixed opinions on every subject, including the coming November election. I learned early that my erstwhile friend Russell Hocker was romantically interested in Mrs. Cooke's daughter "Tootsie." Tootsie had an upper front tooth missing, but that was no deterrent in her pursuit of a husband. I wondered what it would be like to kiss a girl with such a dark hole in her mouth.

On Sunday I set out up Euclid

Clark remarked on the proliferation of wires on South Limestone. This 1920s shot shows the corner of Limestone and Main.

The podium was a second home for Clark, who didn't dare to even guess at how many talks he had given.

Avenue to see my new world. The Ashland Subdivision was new, and the houses, in contrast to the older Limestone section, were impressive and attractive. This was the first planned modern subdivision I had ever seen. I walked on to the university farm off Nicholasville Pike, where I was interested in the heavily laden apple trees until one of those neanderthal specimens of watchmen who prowl university campuses descended upon me as if I were the prince of apple snatchers. Thus it was that I came beneath the benevolent sky of James Lane Allen's domain.

"Son, you rung the bell"

After earning a master's degree in Kentucky, Thomas Clark did doctoral work at Duke University. When he returned to Kentucky to join the University of Kentucky faculty in 1931, he had a double assignment: to teach, and to help the new library build up its collection of historical materials. Dr. Clark soon became one of Kentucky's most popular speakers, and was in constant demand right up until his death in 2005 at age 101. He gave countless talks, including scores of them for the Kentucky Humanities Council Speakers Bureau. Here he recounts some of his more memorable moments at the podium.

At the time I joined the faculty of the University of Kentucky in 1931 I had gone through a dormant public-speaking period. The nature of my job, however, required me to speak in public as a way to make the acquaintance of possessors of historical materials or of persons who could give me leads to persons with collections. Many of the early audiences I addressed were patriotic societies, male and female, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Society of the Cincinnati. Long ago it became a hard and fixed fact in American organizational history that every meeting of a group of people, from chicken farmers to the Sons of Kingdom Come, had to have a speaker as part of its ritual. Members of these societies expressed a passionate love of the past, whether or not they had read an up-to-date book in American history. Figuratively they were armed and at the ready to shoot Shawnees along the Licking River and Cherokees in Cumberland Gap. The white crosses on the chest of British Regulars were dead-set targets. Kentucky audiences seemed never to grow weary of listening to tales of frontier adventures and wars.

It would be unforgivably self-serving if I failed to admit that I got a thrill out of the challenges and excitement of speaking to a wide diversity of audiences. I could never imagine what unusual thing might happen, but I always tried to be prepared for any unexpected occurrence. I recall occasions when a program chairman would get things mixed up and two speakers would appear. When that happened, I would eat the proffered meal and leave my fellow speaker to carry on.

One could write an extensive essay on those creatures who roam at large as introducers, or on those intrusive expert raptors who glide down to grab the microphone in their talons and throw the whole system awry. There must have been a time far back in history when the microphone was used as an amplifying device. Not so anymore. It has become a plaything for the self-appointed, diploma-mill electrical engineer in every audience. I shall never be able to reconcile the facts that we can put human beings on the surface of the moon but we can never place a workable microphone at a speaker's podium.

Introducers range from those oratorical florists who scatter sweetness and errors of fact with lavish hands, to the cryptic introducers who simply turn to a speaker and say, "Now it's time for you to say your piece." Many times I was baffled about who was being introduced, myself or the introducer. One thing was clear: in most cases, neither my mother nor Saint Peter could find grounds for objection.

I learned early that persons designated as "introducers" could draw together an egregious number of misstatements of fact and that it was a mistake to attempt to correct them. Other antsy introducers were concerned less with what speakers said than with the requirement that they sat down at the end of twenty minutes pre-

cisely. There were even occasions when the introducer could not recall my name, if in fact he or she had ever known it. I had a startling experience of this sort in 1947. I had been invited to deliver the Fleming Lectures in Louisiana State University. Professor James Silver of the University of Mississippi invited me to come to Oxford and spend the night there. He would drive me to Baton Rouge the next day, since he had been asked to introduce me. When the moment came for him to do so, he could not recall my name, and I had to tell the audience who I was.

There were nearly always present in these ritualistic gatherings one or more self-glorifiers who had to say their bit, relevant or not. Impressed deeply in my memory was the performance of a lady in Frankfort who had taken on the ominous duty of introducing me at a meeting held in one of the stately old mansions of that city. She came stocked with data wholly unrelated to the objective of the assembly. She had bundles of newspaper clippings, a rack of old clothing, charts, and family photographs. After she had recited a listing of family breeding records reaching all the way back to Father Abraham, the timid chairman gave the lady a gentle nudge. She called out my name and sat down to catch her breath for another go at the audience in an after-speech commentary on her version of social history.

Then there was the occasion when I spoke to a group of women's club members. The bosomy lady who presided was the type who had to make certain every napkin was folded correctly, the flowers were perfectly arranged, and everybody was seated properly. When it came time to introduce me, she took a flight of eloquence into the blue yonder and introduced me as a professor "EM-U-Ritis." I pinched myself to see if I was still alive…

In the years after 1930 I spent much time "out there" in the great Neverland of organizations and public speakers. At the outset I learned that the art of speaking involved generous expenditures of patience, humanity, and good humor as well as time to season understanding. I was called on to exercise all of these when I visited the settlement school at Hazel Green in Wolfe County. The principal sent me precise directions to the school, but just as I reached the door of my office to start the trip, my phone rang. The call was from Goebel Ratliff, a banker in West Liberty. He asked me to come to West Liberty and have dinner with him. I knew Goebel, and it turned out that his invitation was also to a meeting of the local Kiwanis Club. We wasted what I thought was precious time, but Goebel assured me that he was chairman of the Hazel Green board of trustees, and nothing was going to happen until he arrived there. Finally we set out from West Liberty to wind our way through the Wolfe County backcountry. It seemed to me that Goebel and I drove over enough winding narrow roads to reach Paducah before we finally arrived at the Hazel Green school.

We found the place in pandemonium. The heavily perspiring boys were busy cutting a pine log into blocks on which to place pine seating. The scene must have been comparable to the building of Noah's ark. The principal told Goebel and me to go ahead and seat ourselves on the platform at one end of the room, and he would join us when he had seated the crowd. Occupying the entire front section were young women, each of whom had a baby at breast. When the infants were not sucking away, they were crying. I sat there amid that commotion wondering how I could say anything worthwhile to that audience. I resorted to giving a simple description of the discovery and settlement of Kentucky. When I concluded my speech the ancient school patriarch jumped up and grabbed my hand, saying, "Son, you rung the bell!" I think that was the most heartening thing I ever heard at the end of a speech.

High school graduation programs were always colored by some unusual incident. I was invited once to deliver a commencement speech in Virgie, deep in the highlands of Pike County. So far as I could discover, in those days there was no restaurant on the road between Winchester and Pikeville. I assumed I would be invited to dinner in Virgie. When I arrived at the school, the building was deserted. I finally located a somewhat addled local son who told me where the school's principal lived, up a creek. Somebody that evening was frying country ham, and its aroma filled the air and whetted my appetite.

I had to cross a footbridge to reach the principal's house. He greeted me bare to his waist and instructed me to return to the school building and await his arrival. He made no mention of a meal. I doubt that any other Kentucky commencement speaker ever sent a graduating class out to face the world while on the verge of starvation. I drove back to Lexington that night after every country store in Eastern Kentucky was closed. I must have been the hungriest commencement speaker in the history of Kentucky. Years later the secretary of the Kentucky Education Cabinet asked me to go to Virgie to represent her and the state library and archives at the dedication of the town's new public library. This time I was royally received and well fed.

Tootsie had an upper front tooth missing, but that was no deterrent in her pursuit of a husband. I wondered what it would be like to kiss a girl with such a dark hole in her mouth.

Soon after the Virgie commencement caper I was invited to deliver a commencement address in Tompkinsville High School in Monroe County, in south-central Kentucky. That morning I taught two classes and attended to some departmental problems before I began the long drive south across the waist of Kentucky to the Tennessee border. I arrived in Tompkinsville almost exhausted, but fortunately I had some time on my hands. I went to the local hotel and sought a room in which to take a nap. The

Thomas Clark in his office in Frazee Hall in 1955. During 23 years as chair, he raised the University of Kentucky History Department to national prominence.

clerk did not ask my name, and I was too weary to give him any information. I fell sound asleep, but before long there was a pounding at the door. The clerk asked my name and said the school principal was looking for me.

That night I spoke in an impressive rural Kentucky adaptation of a Gothic chapel. The graduating class was small, but the chapel was crowded with parents and well-wishers. When I finished my speech there was not a single hand clap or any other sound, and not the slightest show of emotion. As I watched the seniors receive their diplomas I wondered if I was not still lying in a comatose state on a hotel bed. Later other speakers told me they had had the same experience. Audiences in that area of Kentucky, they said, never applauded a speaker.

Kentuckians are so enamored of festivals that some counties have difficulty finding something unique to celebrate. There are hound dog days, tater days, morel mushroom observances, sorghum molasses stir-offs, and so on down to wild onions. I have spoken to audiences at some of these festive gatherings, and I believe that it is not a true festival if the program does not get fouled up in some way. On one occasion I was asked to speak in a festival in Perryville (the central theme of which I have forgotten, if I ever knew it). There was the usual milling around of a full battalion of hot dog munchers. The arrangers of the festival had scheduled at least twice too many events, among which were my speech and a flyover by a squadron of the 101st Airborne Command from Fort Campbell, followed by the sale of a pig at auction. The pig sat in a cage directly in front of the speaker's stand. The flyover was late in arriving, and I was left to sit facing the pig. I think that poor animal had the most forlorn expression I ever saw on man or beast. By the time the planes finally arrived, most of the allotted time had been lost. In fact, the pig and I had only three minutes left. I hardly had time to say, "Mr. Chairman." After giving a short speech about nothing, I left the platform to the sad-faced pig, who would meet his foreordained fate as best he could.

I got trapped in an almost identical situation in Barbourville. Some ingenious souls dreamed up a scheme to breathe life and excitement into that flood-ravaged town. They came up with the idea of negotiating a "treaty" with the North Carolina Indians. The citizens of Knox County would allow the Cherokees to sell an assortment of goods along the main highway and to trim cane along the banks of local creeks in exchange for a guaranteed year of freedom for the whites from warriors of the Cherokee tribe. I think I can say with assurance that the Cherokees had no plans to raid Knox County—ever. The festival intended to amuse tourists with the firing of muzzle-loaded guns and a grand display of baskets, colorful blankets, and plaster casts of animal and human figures. On top of all the pow-wowing there were to be a speech and a basketball game. I was invited to speak, and after the usual loss of time on such occasions, the chairman announced that the audience could choose to stay and hear my speech or go and see two high school basketball teams fight it out. Hardly had the chairman finished his announcement than there was a rush to the basketball court. I was left with only the halt and lame as an audience. This was one of the few times in my life when I lost my sense of humor and my temper in public. As I was stepping into my car to return to Lexington, the

I recall occasions when a program chairman would get things mixed up and two speakers would appear. When that happened, I would eat the proffered meal and leave my fellow speaker to carry on.

chairman came running up, begging me to come back and speak to the token audience. As I drove home that night I was convinced that only a damned idiot would ever agree to speak to anyone, anywhere. I hoped the Cherokees would abrogate their treaty and scalp the entire festival committee…

There are many audiences and speeches that I recall with genuine joy. I remember the deep satisfaction I derived from addressing the annual meetings of the Kentucky rural electric cooperatives. I could bond spiritually with that assemblage. The introduction of electrical energy had meant a new way of life to rural Kentuckians. I could address that audience conscious of the fact that the Rural Electrification Administration had improved the lives of my own parents.

There was a truly exciting moment when I spoke at the dedication of the great Durrett Collection in the safekeeping of the new University of Chicago library. Almost the first thing I heard when I arrived in Kentucky in 1928 was that the state had lost the Durrett Collection of books, papers, documents, and other basic historical materials. Making the dedicatory speech on that occasion was truly memorable. I had similar feelings about a speech I was invited to make to Daniel Boone's descendants in the Northwest. A Mrs. Buchanan had come to Athens, Kentucky, to attend a Boone dedicatory occasion. She asked me if I would speak at the Boone assembly when I came to Seattle to teach in the University of Washington. I had supposed there would be fewer than a dozen persons present. When Beth (Clark's wife) and I arrived at the church, situated literally on the shore of Puget Sound, the building was overflowing with Boone descendants. Presiding over the meeting was a Boone descendant who was president of the Boeing Airplane Company. At that date the mammoth 747 was under construction. Facing that impressive assembly of Boones and their guests was a unique experience. I concluded that Daniel Boone had sowed his seed all the way across the continent…

There were at least two other speaking engagements that reached deep into my emotions. One was the dedication of the $39 million tunnel under Cumberland Gap. On hand that cool, rainy morning in October 1996 were three or four governors, a gaggle of congressmen, state officials from Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and a large assemblage of ordinary citizens, all standing in the rain at the mouth of the tunnel. In that seminal moment, with a sense of the historic changes the tunnel would bring about, I felt I was taking part in the opening of a new chapter in American frontier history. Almost simultaneously with the opening of the tunnel, barriers went up across both ends of the ancient road over the saddle of the gap to permit its reconversion to the contours of the ancient Indian-buffalo path. I had the privilege also of making the dedicatory speech at the reopening of the historic trail in October 2002.

When I concluded my speech the ancient school patriarch jumped up and grabbed my hand, saying, "Son, you rung the bell!" I think that was the most heartening thing I ever heard at the end of a speech.

As I look back from the perspective of 2005, I have no idea how many speeches I have made or where I made many of them. One thing I have learned is that the word gratuity has stringent limitations. If I had framed all the certificates I received in lieu of cash, I would have to build a tobacco barn to find wall space for them. I received ballpoint pens by the handful and enough mugs to drink a good portion of Colombia's production of coffee beans. Many times I have driven home at night along a winding country road after making a speech, wondering if I was not, after all, the victim of an incurable cranial deficiency called "emuritis."

"You touched my life"

Looking back on a career that covered three-quarters of a century, Tom Clark wrote that teaching had been a great privilege, and that his one regret was that he would not be around to see how future scholars revised and appraised the work done by his own generation of historians.

Advances in so many areas of human endeavor have come so rapidly in the twentieth century as to constitute a revolution in the American way of life. How challenging it has been to be alive and to experience these transformations. The latter three quarters of the twentieth century were a seminal era in which to launch a career in the field of history. During those decades I read perhaps hundreds of books and turned countless pages of primary documents, but none made such a deep impression on me as the slender primary reader of 127 pages that I first encountered as a child. The very first thing I learned from it was that a hand-drawn circle was a B A L L, or so the inscription said in both type and script. Nearly a hundred years later, I can observe that my simple little circle has been expanded to become a W O R L D—marked, and often abused, by its human occupants, actions that will challenge generations of historians to explain.

Over the broad scope of years I have frequently pondered the wisdom of decisions I made and roads not taken. Often I have wondered whether, had I expended as much time and energy in practicing another profession or engaging in some business, my life would have been richer and more materially rewarding. Yet, after all, those are idle questions. I have accumulated precious riches that thieves cannot steal nor moths destroy. No human can earn a sweeter reward than when, after the passing of years, a former student, well away from the grade book, says, "You touched my life."

One of Tom Clark's favorite characters from Kentucky history was Louisville socialite Sallie Ward. Here he is with Suzi Schuhmann, who portrays Sallie Ward for Kentucky Chautauqua.

Through a half century of standing before rooms full of students, I never lost sight of how easy it is to snuff out a student's interest in history. Figuratively, I sat beside my students and endeavored to instill in them both interest in and comprehension of the vital meaning of history to them personally. I held steadfastly to the conviction that every human being, no matter his or her social or intellectual level, has a warranty claim on at least a microscopic stone in the arch of history and the scroll of mankind's experiences.

If at this confusing moment in the first decade of the twenty-first century, I were asked if I would again choose an academic career, the answer would be yes, without reservation. My forty-nine years in the classroom have been the most wonderful experience any human could hope for. I do, however, reserve the privilege to wish that I had been a better teacher, written a better book, or done other things more effectively. But those surely must be the essential quandaries of life itself. In a more positive vein, I owe a heavy debt of gratitude that I had the privilege of standing before classes in free classrooms.

I humbly offer a benediction by once more standing, vicariously, in a classroom facing an assembly of youthful students from whose ranks would come governors, physicians, lawyers, judges, authors, and good and productive historians and archivists. Just as rewarding, however, was that wide-eyed young woman whom I saw years later bearing the marks of a lifetime in a schoolroom. She glorified her fellow man when she faced a classroom full of primary scholars and drew a chalk circle and proclaimed it a B A L L. For the first time in their lives her charges received a glimpse of learning. For them the naked circle would in time be converted into the W O R L D, a greater symbol. Deeply etched within the circle would be the historical accounts of civilized man's successive triumphs and defeats as recorded by historians throughout the ages, ever challenges to new historians searching for truth.

From my own modest and limited pinnacle, I look back into the opening decades of the twentieth century with considerable wonder. It was near the end of the first quarter of the century that research, writing, and the teaching of history underwent a process of expansion. Greater emphasis was placed upon the collection and utilization of documentary sources and the development of better techniques for reentering these basic source materials. The phenomenal advances made and promised in the latter part of the century have lifted historical research onto a new plane. The introduction of ever-expanding electronic and technological devices has placed historical research in a new time frame. Even so, there linger the basic and essential questions of how much historical information is needed for the populace to make informed decisions in matters political, economic, and cultural.

I have found both intellectual and spiritual satisfaction in the profession of historian. I cherish those exciting moments of collecting and examining records never before seen by a historian, and of writing from a new perspective or revising an earlier one. As I approach the sunset of my career, I have one haunting regret. I would cherish an opportunity to read the revisions of younger historians appraising the works of historians of my era. Future scholars will have greater access to larger volumes of primary materials and will have the electronic and technological devices to facilitate their searches. Will they come nearer to the truth? Therein resides the virtue, or lack of it, of every individual who has borne the title "historian." ●

Figuratively, I sat beside my students and endeavored to instill in them both interest in and comprehension of the vital meaning of history to them personally.

BY THOMAS C. WARE

A professor of English sets out on the trail of a distant relative who wrote the famous poem, "The Bivouac of the Dead."

Camping Out with Theodore O'Hara

In the early 1790s Kean O'Hara made the arduous journey from the oppressions of western Ireland to the Commonwealth of Kentucky, by comparison a land of rich opportunity. This article is also a journey, an account of my search to discover how Theodore O'Hara, the richly talented son of Kean, came to compose a poem that became part of American culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—while its author remained virtually unknown.

I grew up hearing frequently about Theodore O'Hara, a name often referred to by my father with a certain reverence. The man who bore that name was a relative on my mother's side of the family, yet all I suppose I ever knew about him for years amounted to the fact that he was a "Poet" and author of a work entitled "The Bivouac of the Dead." My father had copies of that poem among the yellowing papers he kept in his desk, and he would from time to time read portions of it aloud. When my mother, Marie Ware, gave birth to her seventh child, Dennis, he was awarded the middle name of O'Hara, giving him a kind of euphonic double Irishness. We were by no means what is now described as Irish American, yet there existed in the family a sort of assumption that, on my mother's side, we were somehow closer kin to the distinguished Theodore than we actually were.

Theodore O'Hara circa 1850. This was about the time he wrote "The Bivouac of the Dead."

Branham was my mother's maiden name, sounding vaguely Irish but in fact distinctly English. While in Ireland on several occasions, I never once found a "Branham" in any telephone directory. My disreputable uncle Bud liked to refer to himself as "Irish Buddy Brennan," as if somehow that tag gave him an authentic quality of street toughness in the old Limerick neighborhood of west Louisville, where he grew up. From the increasingly coarse and lumpy quality of his face over the years, however, it appeared that he did not win many of his fights. My maternal grandparents were William P. Branham, known to us as "Pop," and Rose Harkins Branham. Early in their wedded years—one may indeed say early days—a bitter quarrel permanently alienated Rose from Marie O'Hara Branham, Pop's sister. That alienation encompassed Marie and Pop's mother, Mary O'Hara

Thomas C. Ware

Lines from "The Bivouac of the Dead" are inscribed in gold on both sides of the McClellan Gate, one of the entrances to the Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

Branham—the beautiful great grandmother whom my siblings and I knew only from photographs. The granddaughter of Kean, Mary was our actual link with the O'Haras. It was her memories, letters, newspaper clippings, and other personal items, treasured for decades by her daughter Marie and finally coming into the possession of my father, Lindsay Ware, that ultimately motivated my own research and made it fully possible.

It is an indication of how deeply separated we were from that portion of our family that I did not meet my great aunt Marie O'Hara Branham until I was twenty-four years old, while attending the funeral in Danville, Kentucky, of a child of one of the O'Hara branches. She was certainly a commanding presence, regal in bearing and in voice, insisting always that she be called "Auntie Marie" in the broad British pronunciation, not "ant"—as if, she said, she were some sort of insect. She and I ultimately became quite close, yet it was not until after the death of my maternal grandmother Rose Ann Harkins Branham, who had lived with my parents in her waning years, that Auntie Marie ever came to Sunday dinner and to the other traditional gatherings of our family. She never married, small wonder, given her fierce independence. As a young woman at the turn of the century, she had been trained as a registered nurse at Norton Memorial Infirmary in Louisville and was for a time, as I heard the story, a mule-back circuit nurse in the back roads of Kentucky. An inveterate reader and collector of memorabilia, she was responsible for many donations of books and papers both to The Filson Club (now Filson Historical Society) and to the Louisville Public Library—and, of course, a caretaker of the items on Theodore O'Hara, many of which she gave my father.

On a motor trip back south from Manhattan early in the 1960s, my wife and I thought it would be instructive to show our children Arlington National Cemetery. In those days, one could still drive leisurely through the place. As we approached the General George McClellan Gate, the original entrance, I noticed faded gold lettering over the archway: a passage from "The Bivouac of the Dead." How, I wondered, could that have possibly gotten up there? And as we later made our way out, I noticed that the other side of the archway also featured a gold-lettered passage from the poem. My curiosity stirred, and I made a mental note to look into the matter, although at the time I had no notion of where to turn for an answer. I had temporarily forgotten those yellowing letters and newspaper clippings in my father's desk.

Yet there existed in the family a sort of assumption that, on my mother's side, we were somehow closer kin to the distinguished Theodore than we actually were.

And so it remained, merely one of a million such fragmented notes, tucked

remotely away in my mind, until I stopped at the Gettysburg National Cemetery for the first time twenty-plus years later. There, on an oval path surrounding the site where Lincoln delivered his Address, was a series of rectangular metal plaques, each with a quatrain from "The Bivouac of the Dead"—a stunningly appropriate use of the poem, it seemed to me. But again, how did it get there?

I noticed faded gold lettering over the archway: a passage from "The Bivouac of the Dead." How, I wondered, could that have possibly gotten up there?

And a more pressing question: why? None of the rangers at the information desk could provide an answer, even though a brochure about the Gettysburg Center referred to that circled area as "The Bivouac Walk." Yet nowhere on any of the plaques did I find the title of the poem or the name of the poet. The mystery darkened; and the post historian, who might have provided some light, was absent that day.

I did obtain her name and mailing address and through her I learned that the only information available at Gettysburg about the origins of the plaques was an invoice from the Rock Island Arsenal, in Illinois, dating from the 1880s. I subsequently wrote to the National Archives, and visited there, obtaining a copy of the authorizing letter which had inaugurated the entire project, signed by the Quartermaster General at the time, Brevet Major General Montgomery Meigs. This letter to the Ordnance Office, dated June 10, 1881, stipulated 500 castings of the tablets. An accompanying draftsman's sketch specified the size of the tablets as one foot six inches by three feet, but no document seemed to exist indicating specifically where these castings were to be sent. Nor have I ever found any mention of the title of the poem or its author in correspondence available in the Archives. The only conclusion to be reached, it still appears, is that the elegy from which the various passages were taken had become so well known that there was no need to identify it. This lack of specific information made it impossible to determine where General Meigs may have seen the elegy.

Theodore O'Hara wrote "The Bivouac of the Dead" to honor and commemorate members of the Kentucky Regiment of Foot Volunteers who were killed during the battle of Buena Vista in the Mexican War (1846-48). He composed the work—at least an early version of it—sometime between the fall of 1848, when he returned to Frankfort from that war, and 1850, when it first appeared in the Frankfort *Yeoman*, as a document in the archives of The Filson Historical Society testifies. O'Hara did not, as some accounts state, read the poem at an 1847 Frankfort ceremony honoring the fallen Kentuckians. He was still a soldier in Mexico in 1847. According to family lore, the first reading of the poem was to friends in a saloon across from the statehouse in Frankfort. So by the time General Meigs chose "Bivouac" to be the official memorial utterance for the new national cemeteries in 1881, the poem had been widely disseminated for some thirty years, in reprints, anthologies, magazines, and newspapers, especially on what was then referred to as Decoration Day, May 30. In short, the poem became widely famous, although it seems evident that the poet was never quite as renowned as his work. Nor, it appears, did his family know of its use.

Theodore O'Hara led a restless life. Raised in Frankfort, he was a fine student. After attending St. Joseph's College in Bardstown, Kentucky, he taught there briefly, but soon moved on to read law in Frankfort with the demanding Judge William Owsley. Admitted to the Kentucky bar in 1842, he soon drifted into journalism and Democratic politics. After his former taskmaster Judge Owsley, a Whig, was elected governor in 1844, O'Hara headed for Washington, D. C. He landed a clerical job in the Treasury Department, but was bored and left in

Thomas C. Ware

A plaque with lines from "The Bivouac of the Dead" at Gettysburg National Cemetery in Pennsylvania.

June 1846 for the U. S. Army. Despite his lack of military experience, he was commissioned a captain. He served with some distinction in the Mexican War but was mustered out. He worked for a time as a newspaperman in Frankfort, then signed on to a disastrous expedition to invade and "free" Cuba from Spain. Wounded, he returned to Frankfort, often seeking comfort and inspiration at the Frankfort Cemetery. During this low season of his life he composed the two elegies for which he is now known: "Dirge for the Old Pioneer" (an homage to Daniel Boone) and "The Bivouac of the Dead." Brought to trial for treason in New Orleans for his role in the Cuban escapade, O'Hara was acquitted and returned to newspaper work, becoming part owner and sole editor of the *Louisville Times*. J. Stoddard Johnston, a contributor to the *Times*, described O'Hara as "…about 5'8" with black hair and a deep hazel eye, and with a healthy peach-blow complexion… His figure was shapely and he bore himself so erectly yet gracefully that he seemed really taller than he was… he would have attracted interest in any company as a cultivated, intellectual gentleman of the best breeding." In fact, he was famously convivial and a welcome guest on social occasions.

O'Hara did not, as some accounts state, read the poem at an 1847 Frankfort ceremony honoring the fallen Kentuckians. According to family lore, the first reading of the poem was to friends in a saloon across from the statehouse in Frankfort.

O'Hara relinquished his Louisville newspaper career for a second commission in the U. S. Army, a venture that ended in an accusation of drunkenness while on duty. The charge, brought by Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee, severely damaged O'Hara's reputation. After several years as the editor of the *Mobile Daily Register* in Alabama, he enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1861. It is entirely probable that the lingering stigma of his disgrace and Robert E. Lee's well-known ability to nurse animosity were the real reasons for O'Hara's failure to receive promotion to Colonel during his service in the Confederate Army, a service which by most accounts was certainly meritorious. He was an active participant at the battles of Stone's River and Shiloh, where he was invited to join the staff of General Albert Sidney Johnston. There is certainly irony in the fact that General Meigs chose to commemorate the Union dead from the Civil War with lines from a poem written by a man who fought valiantly for the Confederate cause.

The author, Thomas C. Ware, with a "Bivouac" plaque at the national cemetery in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

My own pattern of research during the year or so after my Gettysburg encounter and the discovery of the order for the plaques with quatrains from "The Bivouac" involved mainly weekend traveling to Southern battlefield cemeteries in the national system, where, I presumed it likely, these plaques might be found. That is to say, in cemeteries where Union soldiers were officially interred, places where no Confederate soldiers, even veterans who died much later, were permitted to be buried until well into the 20th century. In addition to those at Gettysburg, I found the plaques at Antietam, Fredericksburg, Shiloh, Stone's River, and Vicksburg; and when I found them at Cave Hill in Louisville, I realized that they had probably been sent to other plots set aside for the burial of veterans of all U.S. wars. I did not, however, find them at the site of the notorious Confederate prison at Andersonville, Georgia, which was surprising to me.

Also, I learned that the disappearance of the plaques from Arlington National Cemetery, where they were once prominent, had brought a series of protests and negotiations which reached all the way to the U. S. Congress. A House Resolution (H.J. 20) in January of 1935, referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, stipulated that a tablet containing an entire version of the poem, with the poet's name, be placed in the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater, adjacent to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Nothing ever came of this resolution, and my many inquiries yielded no satisfactory answers.

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Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.

There is certainly irony in the fact that General Meigs chose to commemorate the Union dead from the Civil War with lines from a poem written by a man who fought valiantly for the Confederate cause.

And so it seemed at this point that I had almost exhausted the topic, yet with many unanswered questions. I submitted an essay about my findings, along with appropriate slides, for presentation at the Graves and Gravemarkers section of the American Culture Association meeting in Louisville. The paper was accepted. During the question-answer session someone remarked, "I've often wondered where those plaques came from. I pass by them every morning going to work."

"Where is that?"

"Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis."

So I knew the quest was far from over, and in some ways it had just begun. The article, entitled "Where Valor Proudly Sleeps," was published in the annual "Markers." And later I did find the usual cluster of the plaques at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis, and still later in the burial ground at Little Big Horn in Montana. I found also that the plaques had once been placed in the Chattanooga National Cemetery, but they had been removed and despite official protests simply disappeared. The superintendent was unable to account for the removal or disposition of them.

Later, in serendipitous fashion, I personally found excerpts from the poem on concrete or marble slabs in other cemeteries, such as in Greenville, South Carolina, and in Perryville, Kentucky on the site of that major battle between Union and Confederate forces. In Perryville, an obelisk with quatrains from the poem sits in the mass grave plot of the Confederate troops who fell there; curiously, there are no plaques at the cemetery in nearby Camp Nelson, where the Union dead from that battle were transported for interment.

I had read of people encountering passages from the elegy on memorials on the Boston Common, which I looked for but never found. I learned of reports of sightings in a London cemetery, and in a military plot in the Crimea in present-day Ukraine—and have seen photographs of tomb markers featuring lines from the poem in other spots, such as Mount Hope in Rochester, New York, where some 5,000 Union soldiers are buried in a Civil War section.

The Bivouac of the Dead

by Theodore O'Hara

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on Life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.
On fame's eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And glory guards, with solemn round,
The bivouac of the dead.

No rumor of the foe's advance
Now swells upon the wind;
Nor troubled thought at midnight haunts
Of loved ones left behind;
No vision of the morrow's strife
The warrior's dreams alarms,
No braying horn or screaming fife
At dawn shall call to arms.

Their shivered swords are red with rust,
Their plumed heads are bowed;
Their haughty banner, trailed in dust,
Is now their martial shroud;
And plenteous funeral tears have washed
The red stains from each brow,
And the proud forms, by battle gashed,
Are free from anguish now.

The neighing troop, the flashing blade,
The bugle's stirring blast,
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,
The din and shout, are past;
Nor war's wild note, nor glory's peal,
Shall thrill with fierce delight
Those breasts that nevermore may feel
The rapture of the fight.

Like the fierce northern hurricane
That sweeps the great plateau,
Flushed with the triumph yet to gain,
Come down the serried foe.
Who heard the thunder of the fray
Break o'er the field beneath,
Knew the watchword of the day
Was "Victory or death."

Long did the doubtful conflict rage
O'er all that stricken plain,
For never fiercer fight did wage
The vengeful blood of Spain.
And still the storm of battle blew,
Still swelled the gory tide—
Not long, our stout old Chieftain knew,
Such odds his strength could bide.

Thomas C. Ware

The grave of Kean O'Hara, father of Theodore, in White Sulphur, Kentucky.

Some time after my article appeared, I had a series of conversations with Nat Hughes, a noted historian of the Civil War, which revealed that we had in common a fascination with the elusive Mr. O'Hara. We decided to divide the labor and organize what we knew and could discover about him. My own endeavors included visiting some of the areas in the west of Ireland where, records indicate, O'Haras have been property owners since at least the ninth century. I found the tiny village of Collooney, where it appears Kean and probably five members of his immediate family departed for this country in the early 1790s, rather than abjure their Catholic faith. They came to St. Mary's, an active Catholic enclave in Maryland, where Kean met Helen Hardy, who became his wife (and the mother of Theodore). They settled in the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, where Kean had frequently traveled selling household supplies. Ultimately, he became a prosperous land owner and a widely renowned teacher, mainly in schools he had established, and for a time was on the faculty of Transylvania College in Lexington. He is buried in a small, relatively untended plot near St. Francis Church in White Sulphur in Scott County. I found a clearing near a small brook which had evidently been a traditional spot for baptisms since ancient times, and was fortunate also to discover the ancestral home (the "Big House") and meet the present paterfamilias, Dermot O'Hara, who informed me that the only

Twas at that hour his stern command
Called to a martyr's grave
The flower of his own loved land,
The nation's flag to save,
By rivers of their father's gore
His first-born laurels grew,
And well he deemed the sons would pour
Their lives for glory too.

For many a norther's breath has swept
O'er Angostura's plain—
And long the pitying sky has wept
Above its moldered slain.
The raven's scream, or eagle's flight,
Or shepherd's pensive lay,
Alone awakes each sullen height
That frowned o'er that dread fray.

Sons of the Dark and Bloody Ground,
Ye must not slumber here,
Where stranger steps and tongues resound
Along the heedless air.
Your own proud land's heroic soil
Shall be your fitter grave;
She claims from War his richest spoil—
The ashes of her brave.

Thus 'neath their parent turf they rest,
Far from the gory field,
Borne to a Spartan mother's breast
On many a bloody shield;
The sunshine of their native sky
Smiles sadly on them here,
And kindred eyes and hearts watch by
The heroes' sepulcher.

Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead!
Dear as the blood ye gave,
No impious footstep here shall tread
The herbage of your grave;
Nor shall your glory be forgot
While Fame her record keeps,
Or Honor points the hallowed spot
Where valor proudly sleeps.

Yon Marble Minstrel's voiceful stone
In deathless song shall tell,
When many a vanquished age hath flown,
The story how ye fell;
Nor wreck, nor change, nor winter's blight,
Nor Time's remorseless doom,
Shall dim one ray of Glory's light
That gilds your deathless tomb.

American O'Hara who interested him was "Scarlett." But a number of questions remained unanswered. How, for example, did Kean O'Hara as a young man in Collooney in the latter decades of the 18th century receive a classical education sufficient for him to set up as a school master when he settled in Kentucky in the late 1790s? Until the Emancipation Act of 1829, Roman Catholics in Ireland were severely restricted in a number of ways, including no access to higher education, even had there been such institutions in western Ireland. It was also illegal for Catholics to send their sons abroad for such purposes.

In most treatments of early Kentucky history, several patent falsehoods about Kean's arrival not only in Kentucky but in this country were repeated, and still are. He did not leave Ireland in the wake of the infamous 1798 "Rising" in Ireland but had been in the U.S. almost five years by that time. He was not invited by Isaac Shelby, first governor of the state (1792-1796), to come to Kentucky. Kean would have earned no such distinction by that time. Why is there a plaque in the town square of Danville stating that Theodore was born there on February 11, 1820, when evidence of Kean's opening of a new school in January of that year in Frankfort almost certainly indicates that Theodore's birth place was the latter city? And perhaps the most pressing question of all: Why were no steps taken by the appropriate Kentucky officials, as well as O'Hara family members, to see that the stipulations of the 1935 House Resolution (HJ 20) were carried out? It would not have been too costly, nor would it be today. The answers remain for others to provide.

Albert Brackett, an army compatriot, wrote that O'Hara "did not appear to have that stability, which is necessary to secure success." Alcoholism was the likely culprit.

The University of Tennessee Press accepted our manuscript and published the book: *Theodore O'Hara: Poet-Soldier of the*

Thomas C. Ware

The grave of Theodore O'Hara in the Frankfort Cemetery. He was buried there in 1874. The marker was erected 39 years later.

Old South (1998). It was nominated for several awards, including The Governor's Award in Kentucky, for which it was one of ten finalists. Perhaps our most gratifying response, however, has been from a number of people across the country who have written and called about their delight in discovering information about the poet, to whom their own families claimed kinship, and recounting their own efforts in tracing lineage back through those generations of Irish men and women who contributed to this country's achievements.

Perhaps because of his nomadic habits, Theodore O'Hara never married. At the end of the Civil War, he settled near Columbus, Georgia, entering a cotton-warehousing venture that ended in a disastrous fire. He retreated to an Alabama plantation, probably owned by a relative. His health declined and he died on June 7, 1867. He was 47. The stated cause was "bilious fever," a generic term that was used to cover a number of conditions, including cirrhosis of the liver. O'Hara was always a heavy drinker. Albert Brackett, an army compatriot, wrote that O'Hara "did not appear to have that stability, which is necessary to secure success." Alcoholism was the likely culprit.

Some six years after his death and burial in Columbus, a bill was introduced in the Kentucky legislature requesting that O'Hara's remains be brought to his home state. The General Assembly approved a joint resolution on February 2, 1874. His body was disinterred and placed on a train. O'Hara's renown as a poet and loyal son of the South was such that, at a number of stops on the journey through Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, local tributes were paid to the late soldier-poet. On September 15, 1874 a crowd estimated crowd at several thousand braved threatening weather to witness an elaborate procession and ceremony honoring O'Hara and two other veterans of the Mexican War. His grave, near that of Daniel Boone in the Frankfort Cemetery, was marked with a simple military stone, later replaced. Today, the site is adorned with two slabs of Italian marble, erected by the Kentucky Historical Society in 1913. The horizontal one features a crossed sword and sheath within what appears to be a crown of bay leaf. On the vertical one, there is a scroll topped with a leaf of fern and a quill pen. The scroll contains sixteen lines from "The Bivouac of the Dead." He had written his own epitaph—and that of countless others as well.

> The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
> The soldier's last tattoo;
> No more on life's parade shall meet
> That brave and fallen few.
> On Fame's eternal camping-ground
> Their silent tents are spread,
> And Glory guards with solemn round
> The bivouac of the dead.
>
> Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead!
> Dear as the blood ye gave,
> No impious footstep here shall tread
> The herbage of your grave;
> Nor shall your glory be forgot
> While Fame her record keeps,
> Or Honor points the hallowed spot
> Where Valor proudly sleeps.

On the back side of the marble slab, a harp is carved in bas-relief with one broken string, a traditional symbol for the Irish poet-singer, now silent. ●

Thomas C. Ware is a professor of English, specializing in Irish and Victorian literature, at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He has published numerous articles and reviews and is the co-author of *Theodore O'Hara: Poet-Soldier of the Old South* (University of Tennessee Press, 1998).

The Kentucky Book Fair, which celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2006, has proved the skeptics wrong and changed the perception of Kentucky as a bad book market.

Going for 50

As the 25th anniversary of the Kentucky Book Fair approached, *Kentucky Humanities* discussed the history and future of what is now a beloved institution with three Book Fair stalwarts:

- **Carl West**, editor of the *State Journal* and president of the Kentucky Book Fair, Inc.
- **Connie Crowe**, manager of the Kentucky Book Fair
- **Lynda Sherrard**, chair of the 25th anniversary committee

West: I had put on a book fair at the National Press Club in Washington for several years prior to coming back to Kentucky. My experience with book fairs was all good and positive, so I began to organize one here. I didn't think of it in terms of the need. I thought of it in terms of it being a good civic project for a newspaper to be involved in. I had no idea how it would go—none of us did. There were a few who had experiences with book fairs who thought it would not go… because of Kentucky's reputation for having a low ranking in literacy, a low ranking in high school graduates, a low ranking in the number of students attending college, and a low ranking among publishers as being a book buying state. That was their concern—that the people of Kentucky don't read books and therefore they don't buy them. But it turned out to be the opposite. It turned out all the fears and concerns were unfounded.

The Kentucky Book Fair in its original location—the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives.

Planning began in 1981, and the first Book Fair took place in 1982.

West: I think we had forty authors and we sold $10,000 worth of books. We just tried to get as many authors as we could, authors of current books, and from there we didn't know where it was going to go. We didn't know if we'd sell a single book.

He estimates attendance at the first fair at 1,000. It was held in the then-new Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA) building. Its current home is the Frankfort Convention Center. The Fair is a nonprofit corporation, run by a 15-member board of directors. Part-time manager Connie Crowe is the only paid staffer. The Fair's pri-

Birthday Bash

Lynda Sherrard, chair of the Book Fair's 25th Anniversary Committee, says this year will be like previous years, but more so. "We just decided that what we're doing is the best thing we do, so we're trying to turn it into a little bit of a party. We're going to drop down the big video screen and show slides and program covers and people who've been here over the years and crowd shots—how authors have changed in physical appearance. We are going to do some blowups of the programs and have them sitting around the floor so that people will have an idea of the time that's passed. We're going to do some things that are fun, but we really just want them to come and have the same good old time they've always had."

One special feature of the 25th Kentucky Book Fair will be an appearance by actress Patricia Neal. A Kentuckian and Academy Award winner, Neal will sign her biography, *Patricia Neal: An Unquiet Life*, which was written by Stephen Michael Shearer. Neal will also be the main attraction that evening at a reception and screening of *Hud* at Frankfort's Grand Theatre.

The 25th Kentucky Book Fair
Saturday, November 11, 2006
9 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
Frankfort Convention Center

mary partners now are the State Journal, *KDLA, the University Press of Kentucky, and Joseph-Beth Booksellers. It costs about $20,000 a year to present the Book Fair.*

Crowe: We make a very small profit. We make less than $20,000 from the event each year. Our attendance is a little bit over 3,000. Sales last year exceeded $160,000. We have been hovering in that area for about the last three years.

West: We're always trying to increase attendance with promotions, we're trying to get bus tours. Everything we do, in addition to having the authors, we look at getting more people in—seminars, luncheons, speaking engagements, breakfasts, entertainment on Saturday night after the Book Fair. It's all geared to increasing attendance.

For most of those who come, talking with authors is the main attraction.

West: The interchange between the authors and the reading public—I think that really is the key. The bigger the author, the more celebrity, the better the draw. But still it's that reader wants to meet that author.

Sherrard: It works the other way too. A lot of the authors enjoy talking with their readers. They enjoy telling how they put the plot together, whatever it is.

West: If you just come in and see these patrons talking with these authors—sure, they can buy the book at a discount, but to get that conversation in is what they really want. And of course if you're an author, you've labored in obscurity, alone for a long time putting something together and you are most eager to talk about it. At least that's the case we've found with most authors. They really want to talk about something that they've been cooped up maybe years writing. Someone comes in, picks it up, starts asking questions—it's like turning a faucet on.

The Book Fair's goals are to celebrate the book, bring authors and readers together, and raise money for literary causes—mainly public and school libraries in need.

Crowe: That's where 98 percent of the grants go. To date we've awarded over $250,000 in public school and public library grants. We're in the process this year of looking at our grants and what we're going to be able to do, but we haven't really announced that application process yet. Depending on our proceeds from year to year, individual grants usually vary from $500 to $1000.

In the universe of book fairs, the Kentucky Book Fair has achieved a certain eminence.

West: We've said for years it's one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the nation, and it is—its kind being strictly for authors. We've sort of gotten away from that for the last few years because we have symposiums and luncheons. For a long time that's all we did, was authors. We didn't do these other sideshows. Still, I think, for the number of authors we have and for the amount of money we take in in eight hours, we may be the largest of its kind in the nation. Certainly we're in the top five.

Crowe: We have a minimum of 150 authors, and sometimes it ranges on up close to 170 or 175, 180 one year. It's kind of like fishing. You dip your pole in the water and see what comes back. So any day the numbers can fluctuate. It's kind of like riding a roller coaster between now and November 11 for me. We look at between four and five hundred titles each year. I get daily requests. It's put us on the map as far as being a reading public. You can call New York publishing houses now and they actually do take you seriously and not think that we're barefoot and pregnant in Kentucky and not a reading public.

West: I think it's met its goals. If someone were to say to me, "You've not met your goals," I don't know what their

Organizers say the chance to interact with authors is the Book Fair's main attraction. Here Bobbie Ann Mason autographs her novel **Feather Crowns.**

argument would be. We do hold a one-day celebration that honors authors and what they've written. We do put authors on a one-on-one with their readers, and we certainly raise money [for grants]. Putting the state on the literary map is an achievement. We've had celebrity after celebrity in here, from Rosalynn Carter to Mickey Mantle to Erma Bombeck, but year after year our bestselling item has been the Kentucky authors—the Tom Clarks, David Dicks, Wendell Berries, James Archambeaults. We get at least 100 Kentucky authors every year. I'm going to leave out Marcia Jones, George Ella Lyon, Bobbie Ann Mason—those are the people who year in and year out make the Kentucky Book Fair.

Crowe: It's meat and potatoes. It's the Kentucky authors that cumulatively have a larger effect on us. Local sales, Kentucky sales. You will have standout star authors. You will have some that you thought were going to be standout star authors that were not.

They think Lexington children's books author Marcia Jones has probably sold more books than anyone else in the Fair's history, and that the late historian Thomas Clark is the dollar-volume leader. Local history is the overall best seller. The Fair has earned a reputation for being most hospitable to its authors, although a few don't seem exactly grateful.

West: We've had authors who have been difficult to the extent that we have an award for one of them—the most-obnoxious author award we give every year. We've had some who've been amusing. We had one very prominent author who brought a woman with him who was not his wife. Everyone was curious about that. He pawned her off as his fiancée, which nobody believed, but there she was sitting behind him. The one who was the most amusing to all of us was Andy Rooney. He behaved in a most obnoxious manner, but we couldn't figure out whether he was just being Andy or he was really obnoxious. We've had authors who were really discourteous to the volunteers to the point where they were almost asked to leave the Book Fair. But these have been so, so far in the minority. Most of the authors are just so genuinely happy to have a chance to sell their books.

Book Fair founder and president Carl West (right) with Thomas D. Clark. West says the late historian laureate was the Fair's bestselling author and most ardent supporter.

When it comes to the future, the Book Fair is aiming high.

West: Fifty years! We would like to see more sideshows like symposiums and breakfasts and luncheons, and more space. Not necessarily more authors, but more space for the authors we have. And I think we all want to see this continue because it's been good for everyone. It's been good for the publishers—they've made money. The authors who've sold their books have made money. The reading public has gotten their pleasure out of it, and what money we've made has gone to buy a quarter of a million dollars' worth of books and who knows what that's going to do in the long run. And that's why I got into it in the first place. I couldn't find any negatives to a book fair. There are none that I know of, unless it's that we're all tired at the end of the day when the thing's over.

Sherrard: I think the public would be very disappointed if anything ever happened to it. I know of one woman here in Frankfort—she brags that she's been to every Book Fair, even though she has to count that she was in her mother's womb the first year. People truly look forward to it and I think would be crushed if it ever fell by the wayside. ●

**In a warm room
on a snowy night,
Uncle Jones works his magic.**

The Light in the Distant Room

In the cool fall, red and gold, when the walnuts were dropping to roll in the pale grass, when they hit with a thump against the smokehouse roof, he was there in the blue light. He wanted to know, and he was willing to strive to learn it all. Why should he not think of wisdom? He felt like the wind. Red leaves flying from the trees. A solitary bird was speaking. To himself he said, I can be just like the wind.

He thought of Mary. He thought of Mack. Then he could not think. "Uncle Jones, where are you? Are you down near the arbor with a lattice and a sharp saw? Not there. Where?"

Joey thought for a moment—a lion—and gracefully searched with his eyes for Uncle Jones. Out in the pasture near the white sycamore he saw his silver, long legged mare running the curve, her mane flashing high in the breeze. Joey ran too—kicking and jumping. They sailed on by: charmed particles—one this way, one that—the race begun and won in a breath.

Near the greenhouse, where the light fluttered in the glass, by the steaming flowers he found Uncle Jones. He was repairing the door with a plank of yellow wood. He sat on the stone walk by his leather grip sack. The old tools shone in the sun like silver. With a plane he was shaving the edge of the board to make it true. With an ease of concentration he pushed the plane, and the yellow shaving curled out like a ringlet of sun blonde hair.

Like Mary's golden curls, Joey thought. For her, I'll get one.

"How old are you getting to be?" Uncle Jones asked, with that light he could bring to his eyes.

Joey thought, He always asks that, every few days at least. "Nine, seven, eleven to come, the next one better than the last of 'em," he said. That's what he always says to me, he thought, but he must be a hundred.

"You right about that," Uncle Jones said. He took the pipe from his mouth and tapped it on the stone walk. "The next one should always be better than the last one. You know why?"

"No," Joey said, surprised at the new twist. "Why?"

"Cause that's the one you got."

When Uncle Jones eats a ripe paw paw from our tall tree in the lavender garden, he says that too, Joey thought. Lavender was the garden's name, with silver fruit branches and wild red roses, often all rain and sunlight.

Uncle Jones's mustache was curved and gray. His skin was black. He was tall and slender. He wore high boots, a dark flannel shirt and a vest. His old hat had a broad brim darkened from wear. There was a hole in the point of the crown. Joey thought, I won't ever say, "Uncle Jones, there's a hole in your hat." "You're right about that, Joey," he would say if I did.

At sunset that same day the snow began to float down, a storm of white narcissus. It was a strange sky, for the sun was making colors in the west and for a moment all the flakes were wild red roses. Joey was waiting for one to fall in his hand when Mack slipped under the fence. Mack lived on the farm down the road at the horseshoe curve.

"The bull chased me," Mack said. "But I got away. I hit him with a clod right between the eyes." Mack spit over one shoulder and hiked his pants up with both hands. He walked up to Joey and looked him straight in the eye. "Let's do something."

"The snow is red," Joey said.

"Snow's white," Mack said. "Got any gum?"

"Nope," Joey said. "Let's go find Uncle Jones." Joey still held out his hand, and it was wet from the red snow flakes that were falling.

"I'd rather go start the tractor," Mack said.

"We promised we wouldn't."

"I don't care," Mack said.

"Besides it's boring. I'd rather do something different," Joey said.

"We could back it up."

"We've done it," Joey said. "Maybe Uncle Jones will tell us a story."

"He's boring," Mack said.

She ducked under the low limb of the golden rain tree by the garden gate. A branch hooked her soft, white cap, and her blonde curls cascaded to the shoulders of her coat. She stood there surprised, as slender and graceful as the limb which lifted her cap. And the snowflakes, falling large and white again, began melting in her hair. Mary! Joey took an extra breath and with bright eyes sank his hands into his pockets. Mack took off running.

At Mary's side Mack told her, Joey said we should go start the tractor, and Joey said he would go in the house and get some cookies and bring them down, and Joey said we should run on fast before his mother came out and not to wait for him.

When Mary ran away with Mack, tears tried to flow in Joey's eyes, and in his pockets he clenched his fists. Why didn't she wait for me? He brushed his eye with the edge of his hand and tried to look into the falling snow for comfort. But the flakes appeared small and sharp and seemed no longer beautiful.

The trees had lost their edges in the sheets of nightfall. Through the damp window Joey watched the two of them, Mary and Mack, fade and come again, coming along the gravel walk. Shadows fell across the cold. They came making footprints. She wasn't holding his hand. Mack was talking. He kicked the snow as he talked, probably telling her lies about the bull, Joey thought.

"Hi, Joey," Mary said. At the kitchen door—the bright lights. He wished he were damp and cool like her.

"Where have you been?" Joey's mother smiled.

"Riding the pony," Mack said.

"Next time go with them and help them, Joey. Take off your coats and have dinner with us if you like."

"Thank you, Mrs. Williams," Mary said. She jiggled her arms out of the sleeves of her coat.

"What are you having?" Mack asked.

"I'll call your parents, and I'll take you home when I take Uncle Jones home," Joey's mother said. At the big stove she lifted the lid of a rich, steaming soup.

Down the long hall, over Mary's shoulder, Joey saw the glow of red fire. Mary looked at Joey with the edges of her eyes. Mack pulled at her arm.

"Race you down the hall," Mack said. He pushed her ahead and she ran, and he passed her, and Mary laughed near the marble statue of the gentle woman with the blue urn, and she felt the warmth of the statue's elegant smile and the freshness of the stone dress when she brushed on by with her hand.

Mack and Mary skidded on an ancient rug from Asia. And there by the fire was Uncle Jones. They had forgotten about him. Mack's eyes widened. Uncle Jones made him nervous. He didn't know why. So he sauntered up to the fire and turned his back to it for a moment as if that warmth was what he had come for all along. Mary said, "Hi, Uncle Jones."

"Race you. Let's go," Mack said to Mary.

Uncle Jones sat with his long legs crossed. His hands were resting, and the light from the fire shone softly over him. His old felt hat rested on the floor beside him. His eyes widened when Mack twirled on one foot in discontent.

"How do you do, Mary," Uncle Jones said gently. "Have you all been out in the snow?"

"Yes, sir, we have."

"Race you. Let's go," Mack said. He swung Mary by the arm.

"Wait," Mary said without looking at Mack. She pulled her arm away with a quick turn of her shoulder, her open hand cutting downward, a deadly move from a darker place. Again she softened. Her eyes remained on Uncle Jones. Uncle Jones had the look of a Captain resting from the sea. He leaned back. He began to sharpern a small knife, slowly against a stone. Mary's long curls were red with the fire. "Would you tell us a story, Uncle Jones?" she asked.

"Joey?" she called. She turned to search for him, but when she met his eyes in the doorway, she looked down.

Joey looked down, too. He wondered if Uncle Jones could see him; the room seemed so full of people. Did Uncle Jones know that he had almost cried? No, he couldn't know. "I'd like a story too, Uncle Jones," he said.

Uncle Jones's mustache was curved and gray. His skin was black. He was tall and slender. He wore high boots, a dark flannel shirt and a vest. His old hat had a broad brim darkened from wear. There was a hole in the point of the crown.

Uncle Jones smiled at them with that light in his eye. He put away the knife. Mary sat down on the rug, and Joey sat down, not too close. Quickly Mack was on the rug between them, but then, with a flourish of his arms, he jumped up again.

"I want to hear a story from a book, not another made up one," Mack said. "I know where a book is."

"You don't know any books here," Joey said.

"Yes I do. I saw it. It has an Indian on the front." Mack ran down the hall, and they could hear his feet on the long, wooden stairway.

Joey looked out of the corner of his eye at Mary. Uncle Jones, who had been about to speak, saw Joey's look and quietly began to busy himself with the poker and the hot coals of the fire.

"Why didn't you come down to the barn?" Mary asked in a soft voice that

she was sure Uncle Jones was too busy to hear.

"I don't know," Joey said.

"Mack said it was because you were afraid to drive the tractor, and because you didn't like me."

"I've driven the tractor before," Joey said. But then he felt tears might come if he tried to say more. So he just turned warm in his chest and blended with her curls.

"Mack is going to buy me a milkshake tomorrow after school," Mary said.

"I never said I didn't like you," Joey said. But it was too late. He was almost sure she didn't hear him, because at that moment Mack burst in with the book, dropped it in Uncle Jones's lap, and sat between them.

Uncle Jones crossed his long legs and sat a little straighter in the firelight. He held the book as he might have held a piece of wood that he was eyeing for its beauty and its use, or as he might have held a precious stone. He touched the cover with his finger tips and brushed them across it, exploring the surface for smoothness. He held it up for the children to see the front of it.

On the cover was a painting of a magnificent man, an Indian. Across his back was a dark green bow and a quiver of yellow arrows. His skin was as red as the blazing fire. His expression held great determination and strength. The eyes painted there were kind. Behind him spread a scene of waters and woodlands; a sunrise was blazing. Bright feathers hung from his hair. He was as beautiful and wild as nature herself. The fire of the children's eyes shown upon it. Joey took an extra breath. Mack tucked his legs under himself. Mary spoke softly: "Who is that?"

Uncle Jones hesitated, and they looked anew. Then Uncle Jones studied the Indian as if what was painted was real. He put his finger on a word and pronounced the syllables slowly, "Te...cum...seh," he said. Mack bit his lip, now a little embarrassed at what he had done, but puzzled too that Uncle Jones had read the word. His mother had told him one time that the old man who worked for Joey's parents wasn't as smart as Joey said he was, that obviously he wasn't Joey's uncle, and the old feller couldn't even read. But Mack had never been sure about the old man. Could he read Indian?

Joey's mother looked into the fire lit room from the high, white doorway. She smiled. "Dinner soon," she said. "Don't go away." Her face, her form held the youth of one who cares, and in her movement was grace, and her soft dress was flowing, red. She had auburn hair, soft hair like Mary. One hand drifted easy to brush her cheek.

"Uncle Jones is going to read us a story," Joey said.

"Oh," his Mother said. "He knows all the good stories." She knew Uncle Jones couldn't read. She stepped over near him. "What story is this, let me see." She took the book and smiled. "Yes, this is my book, I've read it so many times. It's my favorite, it really is. My grandmother gave it to me. You didn't know her. She was strong and happy. Since I know this book so well, why don't I read for us something from it."

"Please do," said Mary. And the fire seemed to glow more brightly.

Near Uncle Jones, Joey's mother stood tall on the wide stones of the hearth. She read the title: "A Tribute to Tecumseh."

Uncle Jones reads Indian, thought Mack.

And they stared at Joey's mother, so striking in the firelight, so at ease in the firelight, and mysterious like Uncle Jones—beautiful, like the princess in a story, and truthful like the queen. Joey glanced at Mary and was held within her burning curls. Uncle Jones leaned back, easy, alert, interested in what he might hear.

The woman's voice came softly, strong and true, like the storytellers of old. Her eyes, clear and sure, told the children that this story was her own, that what it was—its depth—she was.

Her red dress lay like water against her skin. She read, "Tecumseh was a strong man, clear of eye, born under a special star, when a meteor sailed across the heavens. As a youth he learned to ride and speak and play games, and he listened to the wisdom of his elders with an eye that was creative and humane."

"What's a creative eye?" Mack broke in. "How could he hear with his eye?"

"That means that he listened very carefully, that he saw deeply into what he was told," Joey's mother said. "Creative means that he could make something out of what he learned that was true and helpful within himself and for the life around him."

"Oh," Mack said.

"Tecumseh not only learned the ways of his own tribe, but he learned the ways of all the tribes. He visited them; he listened; he asked questions. He not only learned the crafts and the ways of nature, but he spent time with the medicine men and the holy men to learn what was known by them. He fasted and spent time alone."

"What's fasting?" Mack asked.

"Not eating," said Mary.

"Why?" asked Mack.

"To clear his mind, wouldn't you think?" Joey's mother said.

"Tecumseh became a natural leader," she read. "Natural because he had energy to spare, and because something began to develop deep within him that gave him understanding and the force to express it, even when it went against the traditions of the tribe. It was the Indians' custom and habit, as long as any of them could remember, to torture their enemies when they captured them. After a fierce battle, when Tecumseh was only twenty, he stood between his tribes-

They came making footprints. She wasn't holding his hand. Mack was talking. He kicked the snow as he talked, probably telling her lies about the bull, Joey thought.

men and a captured enemy and eloquently spoke against the practice of torture. He called his fellows cowards to torment a helpless man. From that day the custom of torture was abandoned by his tribe."

"What did they do?" Mack asked.

"They put ants on them," Joey said. "I saw it in a movie."

Mary put her hand over her eyes and made a face.

"I saw on TV where they were torturing people somewhere else, the other day, in some country," Mack said. "How come?"

The logs fell; bright sparks, orange and red, rained upward.

Uncle Jones watched the faces of the children, but they thought he only watched the burning logs. Joey's mother remained standing in the firelight. Any true man alone and capable of love would have loved her, for her, for what she was. Any child would have looked, and in that presence found comfort. In an older time it would have been understood that she too had listened to the stories of the wise. Riveted to their place at her feet, the children waited.

She read, "Tecumseh saw as a hope for his people that they not forget the lore of the woods, and that they keep their relationship with nature, a relationship which was at the very heart of truth and the spirit and force of the universe—as a lifestyle and as the inward state of their being."

"I don't get that," Mack said.

"I do, sort of," said Mary.

"Yeah, sort of," Joey said.

"It's to know what is at the heart of things," Joey's mother said. "To find the truth of life, no matter in what time you live. In the heart, what was true for Tecumseh is true for us. What do you think, Uncle Jones?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's exactly right." His voice was low and clear, and his answer told the children, "Uncle Jones, he's like her!" They felt the sameness between this old man and young woman, as if the two of them were parallel movements of light—just that. Uncle Jones said no more. He knew the alchemy of her being. She read on.

"Tecumseh, when he became a powerful leader, spoke often to his people with great eloquence. And if they were not always strong enough to follow his wisdom, nor clear enough to see its truth, still they loved him. And they did what they could. He warned them against alcohol and the weed that weakens. He spoke of ways to bring clarity to their vision."

Mack lifted up on his knees. "What is the weed that weakens?"

"It was a drug they took," Joey's mother said.

Then Uncle Jones studied the Indian as if what was painted was real. He put his finger on a word and pronounced the syllables slowly, "Te...cum...seh," he said.

"They had drugs way back then?" Joey asked.

"Even then," she said.

"Gosh," Mary said. "That's strange. Why would they want them way back then?"

"They say he was a prophet," Joey's mother said, "that not only did he bring messages of truth to his people, but that he foresaw events before they happened. He predicted an earthquake that was so great the rivers and streams ran backward, and he told of the time when a meteor of great brilliance would flash across the sky. Tecumseh said, 'Would that the red people could be as great as the conceptions of my mind when I think of the Great Spirit who rules over all.'"

Joey's mother slowly closed the book. She waited to see if Uncle Jones would like to speak. The children were silent. Uncle Jones had only one eye on the fire. There was a hush over the room, a hush as deep and as truly beautiful as in any forest or lodge or painted tent of long ago—at night when there was firelight—entwined among the dreams of those gathered to tell stories of the rain, or of the ruins, or of the waves that carried them on.

"I'll get dinner," Joey's mother said. Her voice was soft. "Tell them about Tecumseh, Uncle Jones." She lifted her head and seemed to breathe the firelight. She then turned and like the shadow of a gazelle was gone from the room.

Joey felt his eyes want to fill with tears because of everything: his mother, the fire, the Indian, the old hat by the chair—Mary's curls; he breathed her. He looked down at her hands, and he could not think. But finally the firelight on her hands made him remember by the green tree the red snow when it fell. Mack had his arms around his knees and was staring upward to the ceiling.

Uncle Jones let them be for a few moments, and then he leaned forward as if to tell a secret, a secret that could not be forgotten. It was almost as if they could see Tecumseh's quiver of yellow arrows and the wood of his long, green bow.

"You know, children, if old Tecumseh were here now, right here with us, he'd be a good friend of mine."

"You know about Tecumseh, Uncle Jones?" Mary asked.

"Of course I do. More than you know, child. Why, I know people right now, on this earth, that follow in his footsteps."

"Who is that?" Mack asked.

"Why, you were just looking at her. The very woman who was reading to us from that book."

Mack looked toward the kitchen light where she had disappeared. His eyes kept searching there.

"My mom?" Joey was incredulous. "You mean my mom?"

"That's who for sure," said Uncle Jones in a tender voice to impart that great truth. "And there are others, too. And it could be that the three of you will grow up in that same mold, and you will be brave and the world will be happier because of you. But you have to work at it some."

And the firelight shown on the wonder in the faces of three young warriors,

"How old am I?" Uncle Jones asked.
"Maybe a hundred."
"Almost a hundred. I've been around a long time, and I know the type. And you're just it."

faces transformed, clear, finer than before, intent.

"I would like to be like Tecumseh," Joey said.

"I will be a lady Tecumseh," Mary said. "I will grow up beautiful like your mom, Joey, and I will learn all about everything."

Mack pulled his knees closer into his chest and tried to make himself small. He didn't want to be seen. He looked at the logs by the fire to try to quiet his heart from beating so fast. And he struggled to keep the tears from his eyes.

Uncle Jones waited, but he didn't wait too long. "How about you, Mack?"

Mack's voice came out very faint. "I don't think I could," Mack said. He looked down at the floor, his long brown lashes rising and falling over his eyes.

"Could Joey?" Uncle Jones asked softly.

"Yeah, Joey could," Mack said. He didn't raise his eyes.

"Could Mary?"

"Yeah, she could."

"You could," Uncle Jones said.

"I could?" Mack said in a voice filled with hope. He lifted his eyes. "Do you really think so?"

"I know so," Uncle Jones said.

Brightness returned to Mack's face, but tears welled up in his eyes. He crossed his legs under him. "How do you know?"

"How old am I?" Uncle Jones asked.

"Maybe a hundred."

"Almost a hundred. I've been around a long time, and I know the type. And you're just it. Why, I imagine you could be just like Tecumseh and help the world coming and going."

"Sure you could," Joey said.

"Uncle Jones knows," Mary said.

Mack smiled an inward smile; his eyes slowly closed. His expression was generous, calm, final in that time. As surely as they had closed, his eyes snapped open. He rocked forward and backward, bursting to find something to do with his hands.

"I smell cooking," Uncle Jones said. He lightly slapped his knees with his hands and then lifted his broad hat from the hearth.

All three children bounded to their feet, but hesitated...uncertain, tentative, as if they had awakened from another world into an unfamiliar room. Joey felt the yellow shaving in his pocket as a vision, as Mary's golden curls. She lifted her eyes, but only as shining windows inward; she noticed nothing. Mack stared into the fire for a long moment as if stunned by the light then turned slowly to Mary and whispered, "I think Joey likes you." For another long moment Mack seemed struck by his thoughts; he then bolted to the doorway, leaving Joey and Mary behind, and he knew, together.

"Race you," Mack said. And down the long hall toward Joey's mother he ran, thoughtless of who might follow, on his own journey, alone, toward the light in the distant room. ●

John Hay's stories have been widely published, including one in *The Kentucky Anthology: Two Hundred Years of Writing in the Bluegrass State*. A graduate of the University of the South, Hollins University, and the University of Louisville, he has held various jobs in law, film, and farming. He is working on a documentary about Scotland Farm, his family's farm in Frankfort. "The Light in the Distant Room" first appeared in the 2006 edition of *Open 24 Hours*, published by the Brescia Writers Group.

Wanted: Your Opinion

We're thinking about making some changes to *Kentucky Humanities* magazine, but before we do anything, we want to know what you think.

In the next few weeks, subscribers will receive a survey form. It's easy and quick and includes a postage-paid return envelope.

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A Change of Pace

The stories Bob Rennick collects aren't always about place names. Here's one of his favorite eastern Kentucky tales.

My friend George knows everyone. That's what he says. "You mean everyone?" I asked him. "Everyone," he said, "everyone in the whole world." "Oh, I can't believe that." "It's true," he said, "everyone in the whole world, and, what's more, everyone in the whole world knows me too." "Oh, come on", I said. "Would you like to bet on that?" "Sure," I said, "That'd be the easiest bet I've ever won." "You busy the rest of the day?" he asked me. I said no. He said, "Come on down to the Court House with me. I want to show you something."

So we went to the Court House downtown, to the office of our County Judge. "You busy?" George asked as he stood in front of the Judge's open door. "I'm never too busy to see you, George. Come on in and we'll chat awhile."

"So, you and the judge know each other, big deal," I said, "everyone in the county knows our judge. Who else do you know?" He asked if I were busy tomorrow and I said no. He said "Let's drive down to Frankfort, our state capital, I want to show you something."

So the next morning, bright and early, we got in his car and drove down to Frankfort, and dropped in to see the governor. "Howdy, Governor," said George, "Whatcha up to these days?" "Well, howdy yourself, George," said the governor, "You're looking real good. Know any good stories to share?" And we spent the rest of the day swapping good stories.

"Hmmm," I said to myself, beginning to feel that maybe I'd misjudged old George. "You doing anything tomorrow?" he asked me that night at the Holiday Inn. "No," I said. "Well, let's hop a plane and fly to Washington, I want to show you something." So, early the next morning, we took the first scheduled plane to Dulles where we chatted up a storm with the stewardesses who all just happened to have dated George in the recent past. We even visited with the pilot in his cabin while we were waiting for takeoff instructions from the control tower. I never knew that George had taken flying lessons years ago and earned a commercial pilot's license and flew combat missions in all our recent wars and had earned a Distinguished Flying Cross with three oakleaf clusters.

When we got to Washington we took a taxi to our Congressman's office. We told the secretary in the front office that we'd come to visit Hal Rogers. "Oh, my, George," said the secretary, "Mr. Rogers has been waiting for you. Go right on in." So we went in and Mr. Rogers said, "George, I sure am delighted to see you again. How have you been? It's sure been a long time. Do you remember when we…" After a three-hour conversation the Congressman took us for lunch at the National Press Club where all the Washington reporters lined up to greet George. "Got any news tips for us, George?" they asked. And he spent the next six and a half hours telling each of the 237 reporters, by name, some of the hottest scoops they'd ever heard.

We then took a taxi to the White House. And all the president's secretaries, aides, cabinet officers, special reps, and Secret Service men lined up to greet old George. And George greeted them all too, by name, each one of them. And the president instructed his appointments secretary to reschedule everything he had for that day so he could visit with George. And they discussed old times and how they used to double date back in college and how George helped him to get into 1aw school and got him has Rhodes Scholarship, and everything.

After an evening dancing cheek to cheek with the wives of every ambassador at Kissinger's annual big bash, we retired to the Presidential Suite at the Willard, you know the one that's reserved for visiting dignitaries, like George. Before we turned in that night he asked if I was doing anything the next day. And I said no. And he said "Let's go to New York. I want to show you something."

So the next day we flew to New York City and lunched with the U.N. Secretary-General who just happened to have been an old fishing buddy of George's on the many visits he made to that great man's country.

That night, before we turned in, he asked if I were doing anything for the rest of the week. And I said no. He said, "Let's fly to Europe, I want to show you something." The next day we were in Rome to see the Vatican. There were so many people in the Square, over three million of them, that George was invited to stand on the balcony with the Pope as he greeted the crowd. There was no room for me up there but I don't mind crowds. I was standing in the midst of them when one visitor came up to me and said "I hate to disturb you, sir, but I was wondering if you could tell me who is that man up there on the balcony, standing next to George."

Well, howdy yourself, George," said the governor, "You're looking real good. Know any good stories to share?"

Somehow, I didn't mind losing that bet. ●

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