

# Kentucky

\$5

Spring 2014

Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc.

*humanities*



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# Kentucky

Spring 2014

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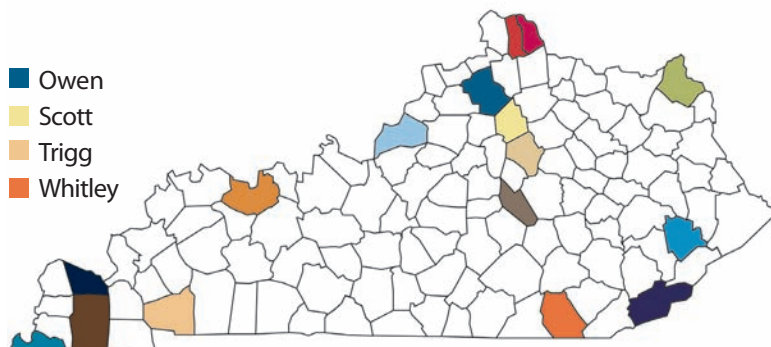
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# Spring in the Commonwealth

After a long, brutal winter, we have finally turned the page to spring, the time when Kentucky shines its brightest. Spring brings some of Kentucky's greatest passions to the forefront. From horse racing to basketball to community festivals throughout the Commonwealth, we get the chance to experience some of the best Kentucky has to offer.

A sure sign of spring in the Bluegrass is the Kentucky High School Athletic Association Boy's Sweet Sixteen at Rupp Arena. Marianne Walker shares the journey of the Cuba Cubs and their trip to the state tournament, then held at the University of Kentucky's basketball palace Memorial Coliseum, in her new book *The Graves County Boys*. You can read about the small-town team that took the state tournament by storm on page 17.

Springtime also marks the beginning of hundreds of annual festivals throughout the state. Festivals dedicated to everything from fried chicken to apples to bluegrass music are the pride and tradition of Kentucky communities. For more than 40 years, Morgan County has hosted the Sorghum Festival. Although it is not as commonly used today with sugar and other sweeteners widely available and inexpensive, Marshall Myers gives a glimpse of how Kentucky pioneers used sorghum as a sweetener in place of sugar, and how sorghum could play a part in the future production of biofuel.

One of the most commonly asked questions I get in my work as the executive director of the Kentucky Humanities Council is, "what are the humanities?" A new, hopefully recurring, column in the magazine by Murray State professor Dr. James Duane Bolin examines the often asked question of what are the humanities and why they are so important. You can find his column, *In Search of the Humanities*, on page 8.

Lastly, Frederick Smock shares with us an appreciation of Kentucky author James Still. Still lived at the Hindman Settlement School in Knott County, where he spent time writing and working as a librarian for nearly seven decades. He lived in a cabin on Wolfpen Creek, making the name Wolfpen a landmark in literary circles. Still incorporated his experiences in Knott County and the area dialect for his novels, poems, and stories.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of *Kentucky Humanities* and the stories we tell. We want to hear your Kentucky stories as well. If you have a story to share, please contact our magazine editor, Marianne Stoess, [Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu](mailto:Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu).



**Ben Chandler**

*Executive Director*

*Kentucky Humanities Council*

*Ben Chandler*

# Yes, they too were Kentuckians

*A look at some well-known, and not-so-well-known, people in Kentucky history*

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## Henry Stanbery

By James C. Claypool

1803-1881 • Fort Thomas, Kentucky

**H**enry Stanbery, who resided for many years in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, was thrust upon the stage of history by a bizarre set of circumstances. Stanbery was an experienced lawyer with impressive credentials when President Andrew Johnson appointed him attorney general of the United States in 1866. Stanbery had earlier been made the first attorney general of Ohio in 1846 and participated in the drafting of Ohio's constitution in 1851. After serving as Ohio's attorney general, Stanbery moved to Cincinnati, where, in 1853, he returned to the private practice of law. One year later, he moved across the Ohio River to the nearby District of the Highlands in Kentucky. In 1866, Stanbery drafted the paperwork of incorporation to convert that district into the city of Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

Initially a Whig, Stanbery switched to the Republican Party when his former party was dismantled during the 1850s. After the Civil War, he was drawn into the political conflicts and controversies surrounding Andrew Johnson's presidency. Johnson, a southern Democrat who supported the moderate policies of healing and reconstruction that had been advocated by the assassinated president, Abraham Lincoln, clashed throughout his term in office (1865-1869) with the Radical Republicans in the Senate who were determined to punish the South. When Johnson's first attorney general, James Speed, resigned in 1866 because he could no longer support Johnson's policies, Henry Stanbery was thrown into the political fires as Speed's replacement.

President Johnson had first taken note of Stanbery's abilities in 1866 while Stanbery represented the federal government in its successful defense against allowing military courts to preempt civil courts and to suspend a citizen's right of habeas corpus. Although nominated by Johnson in 1866 for the Supreme Court, Stanbery was left hanging on this matter when the Senate refused to act on his nomination. Instead, fearing that a Johnson court nominee would support the president's moderate reconstruction policies, the Senate voted to reduce the number of justices from ten to seven, thereby depriving Johnson of the ability to appoint new justices during his presidency.

Nonetheless, Stanbery and Johnson soon became a powerful alliance consistently thwarting attempts by Senate Radical Republicans to introduce new stringent policies toward the South. When Johnson was impeached by the Senate in 1868, Stanbery resigned his office and readied himself to defend the president. Despite the fact that Stanbery was 63 years old and quite ill throughout the impeachment proceedings, he mounted a brilliant defense, much of which had to be delivered to the Senate in writing. Stanbery was even too sick to attend and witness the high drama of Johnson's acquittal in the Senate chambers by a single vote.

Afterward, when Johnson tried to reappoint Stanbery as attorney general, the Radical Republicans in the Senate, smarting from their loss, blocked the reappointment. After having helped preserve Johnson's presidency, Stanbery remained in Washington for the next few years, often arguing on strict constitutional grounds cases that challenged the government's criminal prosecution of the Ku Klux Klan. In the mid-1870s, Stanbery returned to his home in Fort Thomas, where he briefly served as president of the Cincinnati Bar Association. Afterward, he devoted his time to managing his substantial property holdings in Fort Thomas and writing about political and legal subjects. Henry Stanbery died in New York in June 1881.

In a sense, Stanbery's role in fashioning the successful defense of Andrew Johnson's presidency remains only a sidebar to the higher drama that saw that presidency so narrowly preserved. In their recounts, historians most often have focused on the deciding vote cast by an ailing senator from Kansas to sustain the president. But as popular radio commentator Paul Harvey might have concluded, it is only after one understands the role played by Henry Stanbery in these events that one can actually understand and appreciate the rest of the story.

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Adapted from James C. Claypool's book, *Our Fellow Kentuckians: Rascals, Heroes and Just Plain Uncommon Folk*, and the subject of a talk offered by Claypool through the Kentucky Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau.



## Three new members elected to Kentucky Humanities Council Board



**James Duane Bolin**

James Duane Bolin, Judith L. Rhoads, and Matisa Wilbon were elected to the Kentucky Humanities Council board of directors at the December, 2013 Board Meeting. They will each serve a three-year term, with a second three-year term optional. As members of the twenty-three-person volunteer board of directors, Bolin, Rhoads, and Wilbon will help set council policies, award project grants to community organizations, and participate in fund-raising to help the Council meet the growing demand for its programs.

Dr. Bolin is a professor of history at Murray State University, where he teaches courses in American history, Kentucky history, and sports history. Bolin has published two books as well as numerous articles and book reviews. He was awarded Murray State's College of Humanities and Fine Arts Excellence Award for Creative Scholarly Activity as well as Murray's Distinguished Researcher Award, the highest award given by the university for research and writing.

Bolin is a graduate of Belmont University with bachelor's degrees in history and secondary education. He went on to complete a master's in history as well as a doctorate in history from the University of Kentucky.



**Judith L. Rhoads**

Judith L. Rhoads has more than thirty years of administrative and faculty leadership in higher education in the Community College System of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System as well as seventeen years of full-time teaching experience. For over thirty years, Dr. Rhoads has served the community through organizations and business initiatives. Since July 1, 1998, Dr. Rhoads has served as president of Madisonville Community College. She oversaw the transition of Madisonville Community College from the University of Kentucky Community College System to the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

Dr. Rhoads earned a bachelor of science degree in home economics from Murray State University, a master's degree in counseling/psychology from Austin Peay State University, and an Ed.D. in human resource development from Vanderbilt University.



**Matisa Wilbon**

Matisa Wilbon is an assistant professor of sociology at Bellarmine University teaching both introductory level courses as well as upper level courses centered on her research interests: crime and the media, juvenile delinquency, and structural inequality. Dr. Wilbon is also an active researcher and authors supplements to sociology text books. She has published in the areas of neighborhoods and delinquent and risky behavior and has written numerous technical reports related to drug and alcohol prevention.

A Kentucky native, Dr. Wilbon is also the director of Bellarmine's Brown Scholars Leadership Program. The program's mission is to nurture and cultivate leadership, civic engagement and communication skills of young men and women, developing talent that will enrich the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Dr. Wilbon earned a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology/sociology from Centre College and master's and doctorate degrees in sociology from Ohio State University.

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Are you a friend of the Kentucky Humanities Council? Your generous gifts support *Kentucky Humanities* magazine. Please use the envelope stapled in this issue or visit [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org) to make a donation today. We hope you will join us in *Telling Kentucky's Story*.





## ***PRIME TIME Family Reading Time® coming to Kentucky Libraries***

The Kentucky Humanities Council will bring Prime Time Family Reading Time to twenty-one Kentucky libraries this year.

Prime Time Family Reading Time helps families bond around the act of reading and discussing books. The books introduced to children ages 6 to 10 and their parents explore timeless issues of humanity — fairness, greed, courage, coping, and determination — while helping them understand the dynamics of making life choices. The program is free and includes meals, transportation, and educational childcare for younger siblings.

For additional details and registration information please contact the library in your area or visit [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org).

## ***2014 Prime Time Family Reading Time Sites***

**Allen County Public Library**  
January 23 - February 27  
106 West Public Square, Scottsville

**Pulaski County Public Library**  
January 24 - February 28  
304 South Main Street, Somerset

**Logan County Public Library**  
February 10 - March 17  
201 West 6th Street, Russellville

**McCreary County Public Library**  
March 6 - April 10  
PO Box 8, Whitley City

**Madison County Public Library**  
Berea Branch  
March 10 - April 14  
319 Chestnut Street, Berea

**East 7th Street Center**  
March 11 - April 22  
240 East 7th Street, Lexington

**Taylor County Public Library**  
March 13 - April 17  
1316 East Broadway, Campbellsville

**Goodnight Memorial Public Library**  
April 8 - May 13  
203 South Main Street, Franklin

**Powell County Public Library**  
April 15 - May 20  
725 Breckenridge Street, Stanton

**Breathitt County Public Library**  
May 1 - June 5  
1024 College Avenue, Jackson

**Nelson County Public Library**  
June 9 - July 14  
201 Cathedral Manor, Bardstown

**Louisville Free Public Library**  
Newburg Branch  
July 7 - August 11  
4800 Exeter Avenue, Louisville

**Fleming Neon Public Library**  
August 11 - September 22  
1008 Main Street, Neon

**Corbin Public Library**  
August 18 - September 22  
215 Roy Kidd Avenue, Corbin

**Livingston County Public Library**  
September 1 - October 6  
321 Court Street, Smithland

**Pike County Public Library**  
Lee Street Branch  
September 8 - October 13  
PO Box 1197, Pikeville

**Boone County Public Library**  
Scheben Branch  
October 1 - November 5  
8899 US Highway 42, Union

**Nelson County Public Library**  
Bloomfield Branch  
October 1 - November 5  
34 Arnold Lane, Bloomfield

**Louisville Free Public Library**  
Shawnee Branch  
October 5 - November 17  
3912 West Broadway, Louisville

**Grant County Public Library**  
October 27 - December 1  
201 Barnes Road, Williamstown

**Louisville Free Public Library**  
Western Branch  
November 10 - December 15  
604 South 10th Street, Louisville

# In Search of the Humanities

## A Connecting Link

By James Duane Bolin

**W**hat after all are the humanities? At a recent PRIME TIME Family Reading Time® training session sponsored by the Kentucky Humanities Council at Cumberland Falls State Park's Dupont Lodge, Kentucky Humanities Council executive director Ben Chandler suggested that the humanities, those branches of learning — literature, art, music, culture, history — that make us most human, lead us in Kentucky to a heightened sense of citizenship. Why do I spend my days immersed in the humanities, teaching history to students? Does it all really matter in the end? Is it important for us to make connections with the past?

The writer John Egerton grew up in Trigg County in western Kentucky, but he chose a married couple from the other end of the state as the subjects for his book, *Generations: An American Family*. Egerton's book made a huge impression on me when I first read it more than thirty years ago in 1983.

Whenever I open my old paperback edition, loose leaves fall from the book's spine and rusting paperclips marking key passages have marred the dog-eared pages. Still, I return to the book again and again, quoting memorized passages to my students semester after semester. In 2003, the University Press of Kentucky brought out a new twentieth anniversary edition. My students felt so sorry for me that they gave me a hardback first edition they found either online or in a used bookshop. Now I can read *Generations* from the dust-jacketed hardback or the fresh paperback edition instead of my old tattered inked-up copy.

The central premise of the book helps me understand more about what I do for a living, and why I do it. Egerton wanted to write the story of a typical American family, but he also wanted to use that family's experience to "encompass the broader history of the American experience." He chose to center his story on Burnam and Addie Ledford from Harlan County in eastern Kentucky and then Garrard County in central Kentucky. The author talked with the two — Burnam in his early 100s and Addie in her late 90s — in scores of interviews.

After the book was published, Burnam died at 106 and Addie at 102. In one of Egerton's conversations with the old man, Burnam uttered a remarkable statement. I want to quote it to you, and I want you to let the significance of his statement sink in. Burnam said, "I went to see my great-grandmother on Cranks Creek in Harlan County in 1881, when I was five years old." And then he said simply, "She was born in 1791, when George Washington was president."

Think of it! Burnam Ledford had talked with someone who had witnessed every generation of American history since George Washington! Neither I nor anyone reading these alphabet letters can ever do what Burnam Ledford did. Those days are over, now buried only in an individual's memory or our nation's collective past.

Still, Egerton knew, and we all know — don't we? — even if we hesitate to admit it, that the past if used wisely, can help us in the present. The author said it this way in *Generations*: "There remains a remnant of elderly Americans who have seen and heard every generation of citizens in the history of this nation. They are the last connecting link between our ancestors



and ourselves. When their time is gone,” and that time is now surely gone, “there will be none who remember the nineteenth century.”

King Alexander, Murray State University’s former president and now the chancellor at Louisiana State University, told of meeting Margaret Thatcher during his graduate work at Oxford. The prime minister asked Dr. Alexander’s friend what she was reading — or studying — at Oxford. When the friend answered, “I’m reading history.” Ms. Thatcher responded, “Oh, what a luxury.”

But studying history is not a luxury. It is instead a necessity. Don’t you think there is a need to “keep the link intact between our ancestors and ourselves,” in order to know from where we’ve come and in order to know ourselves? Reading and thinking about our history — the history of our families, our state, our nation, and our world — allows us to do what Burnam Ledford did face to face with his great-grandmother. We are keeping the link intact between our ancestors and ourselves.

Last summer, the University of Kentucky Libraries honored John Egerton with the Medallion Award, its highest honor, for his lifetime of work. Egerton has written not only *Generations: An American Family* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), but also *Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, in History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights*

*Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), along with other books about the South.

Dr. Terry Birdwhistell, UK’s dean of libraries, awarded Egerton with the medallion, and then Egerton gave an impassioned keynote address about the humanities and books and libraries and what it means to be an educated citizen. He did not limit his remarks to the South, even though he became an expert on that American region. Instead, Egerton discussed the significance of Gutenberg’s invention in 1450 and how the printing press freed up monks to make wine and cheese instead of copying books; wine and cheese, which ironically have become staples, he joked, at many an author’s book signing. “There is no explaining,” he once said about his beloved South, “how the best writers would come from the region that has the most illiterates.”

And so it came as a great shock to me to learn of Egerton’s death of a heart attack in November, 2013. The humanities lost a great advocate and friend. Literature lost a great writer. But we have his works such as *Generations* to remind us how important it is “to keep the link intact between our ancestors and ourselves.”

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James Duane Bolin teaches in the Department of History at Murray State University and serves on the Kentucky Humanities Council’s Board of Directors.



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# James Still, Born in a Cotton Patch, He Said He Was

## An Appreciation

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*For a country boy, James Still sure was a dapper dresser. His tastes ran to cream-colored linen suits, and crisp white shirts, and a wide-brimmed Panama hat; in his later years, he accessorized his ensemble with a polished wood walking-stick. Though never married, he enjoyed the companionship of intelligent and elegantly dressed women. So, if he was a man of paradoxes, he seemed to wear them comfortably, fashionably well....*

By Frederick Smock

## I

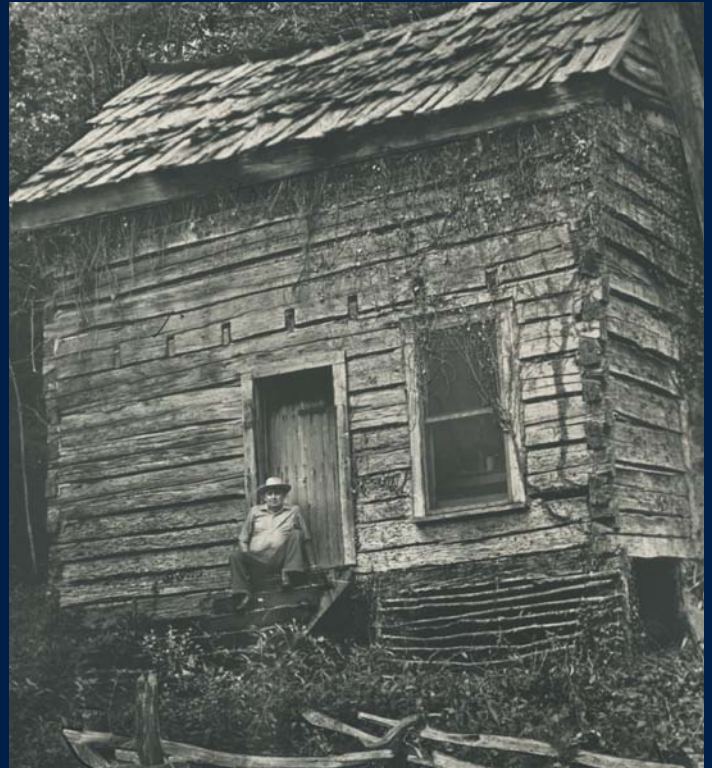
James Still claimed to have been born in a cotton patch. One of his earliest memories as a child growing up in Chambers County, Alabama, he said, was picking cotton, and packing the cotton bolls into a sack that his mother had sewn especially for him. (His ancestors had fought in the American Revolution, and wilderness land was allotted to them as a reward.) It was also there, in the fields of the Double Branch Farm, that the young James learned a little something about the art of storytelling.

“One day, when I was hoeing cotton, my sister Inez began to tell a story from the next row — a true story, I thought,” he wrote, in an essay called “A Man Singing to Himself.” His sister’s story continued “for hours, as our hoes chopped and pushed and rang against stones.” Then, he realized, what she was saying was all a fabrication. “My horizon,” he said, “expanded into the imaginary.” What he had learned was that he could make up his own tales, and so he did.

He soon began to collect stories — his own and others’ — anywhere he could. Eventually, he went to study at Vanderbilt University with John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and the other Fugitive poets, then he took a library degree at the University of Illinois. His itinerant days ended when he was offered the job of librarian at the Hindman Settlement School, at the forks of Troublesome Creek, in Knott County, Kentucky. He found a log cabin nearby in which to live, where he settled in to try his hand at writing, in the hours after work. This particular cabin, on Wolfpen Creek, had once belonged to the dulcimer-maker Jethro Amburgey, and it retained some fine music — “One night,” Still recalled, “a dulcimer hanging from a nail began to play, however faintly, but a struck match revealed a granddaddy spider walking the strings.”

James Still would live there, in Jethro Amburgey’s old cabin, for almost seven decades, which was time enough to put down some pretty deep roots. And that name — Wolfpen — would become a literary landmark near and far. For it was there, on the “backside of Nowhere,” betwixt mountain and creek, that James Still wrote the stories, poems, novels and the children’s books that have won him generations of readers, and that have distinguished him as one of our finest and truest native speakers.

Still’s novel *River of Earth* is one of two generally acknowledged masterpieces of Depression-era America, the other being John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. In the 1930s, Still began placing his poems in all the best magazines — *Poetry*, *Sewanee Review*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and others, as well as some of the more expected places, perhaps, like *The Appalachian Review* and *Appalachian Heritage*. His literary reputation spread far beyond the mountains that he had come to call home. A fan letter sent to him by the poet May Swenson praised his work, saying, “Poets today try too hard to outdo each other — they strain. Your poems are very satisfying for being simply natural.” Like his contemporaries Carl Sandburg, and Robert Frost, Still wrote in the American vernacular — plain speech — that was intelligent and ennobled and also, or thereby,



**James Still had a cabin on Wolfpen Branch, in Knott County. He often would visit the log house in good weather. He didn’t like the term “cabin,” so always referred to it as a log house.**

**Photo courtesy of Hindman Settlement School**

of the earth. T.S. Eliot noted that literature takes its life from common speech; Frost observed that literature amplifies and elaborates plain talk.

The naturalness of James Still’s poems also derives, at least in part, simply from his having listened to stories for so long. He had an attentive ear for anyone who had a story to tell, and he was also a voracious reader. “I suppose I’ve read an average of three hours a day for more than half a century,” he said. His reading was both deep and wide — the Himalayas, the South Pacific, the American Civil War, World War I, Mayan civilization, and the complete works of many a favored author. “Curiosity is like an itch than needs scratching,” he said. He traveled widely, too, having spent fourteen winters exploring the outposts of Central America and his interests in Mayan culture.

The storytelling impulse does animate, or initiate, so much of his poetry. Even his short poems are often built around a narrative. His poem “Banjo Bill Brewer” is a good example, beginning —

*Singing he goes, wrapped in a garment of ballads,  
And his songs are his own, and his banjo shaped  
By his own skilled hands. This is his own true love  
He grieves, these his winding lonesome valleys  
Blowing with perished leaves and winds that starve  
In the chestnut oaks, and these the deaths he dies.  
His voice is a whispering water, the speech of a dove.*



**James Still served as the librarian of the Hindman Settlement School for six years. His duties included delivering books on foot to one-room schools.**

**Photo courtesy of Hindman Settlement School**

He told the stories of his own adopted place, Wolfpen Creek —

*How it was in that place, how light hung in a bright pool  
Or air like water, in an eddy of cloud and sky,  
I will long remember. I will long recall  
The maples blossoming wings, the oaks proud with rule,  
The spiders deep in silk, the squirrels fat on mast,  
The fields and draws and coves where quail and peewees call.  
Earth loved more than any earth, stand firm, hold fast;  
Trees burdened with leaf and bird, root deep, grow tall.*  
(“Wolfpen Creek”)

And, he told the stories of Hindman, Kentucky, the small town in eastern Kentucky on Troublesome Creek, where he had landed a job —

*These people here were born for mot led hills,  
The narrow trails, the creekbed roads  
Quilting dark ridges and pennyroyal valleys.  
Where Troublesome gathers forked waters  
Into one strong body they have come down  
To push the hills away, to shape sawn timbers  
Into homeseats, to heap firm stones into chimneys,  
And rear their young before splendid fires . . .*

(“Troublesome Creek”)

He was a keen observer of this home-place that he had chosen, in its physical dimensions, and, through them, of its metaphysical dimensions.

## II

When James Still died, in 2001, at the ripe old age of 95, many of us were surprised. Yes, we knew that he was old. Quite old. However, the vitality of his work had seemed to suggest that his stories and poems would just go on and on. Cresting his nineties, when some folks won’t buy green bananas, he was ordering journals and magazines in five-year bunches. (I happen to know; he subscribed to my literary journal, *The American Voice*, for the entirety of its fifteen-year run, and not so very long before his death, I received in the mail his renewal for yet another five years.) Maybe we were surprised at his death because of the nature of his poems and persona. He was too contrary to die! He was too stubborn to be rooted out of his mountains! The last poem in his signature collection, *The Wolfpen Poems*, begins in this way:

*I shall not leave these prisoning hills  
Though they topple their barren heads to level earth  
And the forests slide uprooted out of the sky. . . .*

(“Heritage”)

Or, this one, “A Year’s End,” an equally defiant poem, which I was fortunate enough to publish in my journal —

*Now is the world metal,  
The sky leaden day to day,  
Earth iron and iron-resounding;  
Where the heel strikes it  
                    echoes firmigid air,  
Far and afar, and farther still.*

*I must blow upon this living  
                    spark  
At the dying of the year,  
Spare it firm death, firm  
                    outer dark.*



Still earned degrees from Lincoln Memorial University, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Illinois.

Photo courtesy of Hindman Settlement School

Some people — artists especially — manage to cultivate for themselves a seeming indestructibility, or inevitability, through some combinational power of imagination, simple longevity, and force of will. Certainly James Still did. He created a legend for himself, as perhaps all the great writers do.

In an introduction to *The Wolfpen Poems*, the western Kentucky poet Jim Wayne Miller wrote, “James Still’s achievement as literary artist largely rests on the success with which he blends sophisticated and self-conscious storytelling with a folk mode found in the oral traditions of southern Appalachia.” So, the studious country boy grew up to bridge the gap between the folk tradition and the intellectual tradition. He was the backwoods sage. He was the smart hillbilly. The philosopher and the folklorist are met in such poems as “The Broken Ibis,” which reads, in its entirety —

*If the legs of the bird be broken,  
The arrow-legged ibis earth-pent  
And on wearying wings having spent  
Her final flight, sinking at last  
To the dark lake, to death bespoken,*

*How may I who am seeker and rover  
Design from wisdom of eagle and dove  
A philosophy wherein the lover  
Must slay his love?*

Reviewing *The Wolfpen Poems* for the *Los Angeles Times*, James Dickey wrote, “*The Wolfpen Poems* seem to me to establish James Still as the truest and most remarkable poet that the mountain culture has produced. The poems are quiet, imaginative, and sincere, and the poet’s terrible grief over the loss of a way of life registers with double effect because of the modesty of statement. Through everything, Still writes that there is a continual sense of both custom and uniqueness, of tradition and at the same time the strangeness of the tradition, of work and wonder, of the everyday things one does in order to survive, taking place in a kind of timelessness, a world of sacramental objects.” Still’s poems are in a way elegaic, yes, but they do not simply mourn the passing of a way of life; they also speak to the resilient nature of the men and women who are born to the earth, who live by the earth, and who die in communion with the earth. For one example, this poem about the people who lived near his Alabama birthplace, “On Double Creek,” which reads in its entirety —

*I was born on Double Creek, on a forty-acre hill.  
North was the Buckalew Ridge, south at our land’s end,  
The county poor farm with hungry fields  
And furrows as crooked as an adder’s track.*

*Across the creek I saw the paupers plowing.  
I can remember their plodding in the furrows,  
Their palsied hands, the worn flesh of their faces,  
And their odd shapelessness, and their tired cries.  
I can remember the dark swift martins in their eyes.*

In this nine-line poem, we get eight lines of poverty and pain, and then one line, the last line, the most important line — of spirit, of pluck, of grace. The poem swoops up, at the final moment, into something resembling hope; that last line, however mysterious, seems also somehow redemptive.<sup>1</sup>

James Still belonged to a Southern literary renaissance: a generation of upland Southern writers that included Thomas Wolfe, and Kentuckians Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, Robert Penn Warren, Harriette Simpson Arnow, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and Jesse Stuart, Madison Cawein, Logan English, Elizabeth Hardwick.... As Jim Wayne Miller observed, “Kentucky is a writerly state.” My own introduction to Appalachian literature came in the person of the novelist Jesse Stuart. He would travel down to Louisville once in a while, from his home in Greenup, Kentucky, in the northeast tip of the state, to sign copies of his books at the old Stewart’s

<sup>1</sup>Thinking of the financial struggles of family farmers, I am reminded of a joke that Wendell Berry tells about a farmer who wins the lottery — his neighbor asks, “What are you going to do with all that money?” And the farmer says, “Well, I guess I’ll just keep on farming till it’s gone.”

department store, at 4th and Walnut streets, which was just a short trolley-car ride from our house farther up Broadway. My mother took me each time to buy his new book, to get his autograph, and to shake his big meaty hand. (Some years later, my Georgetown College professor Woodridge Spears would be revealed to me as a childhood friend of Jesse Stuart, and a character in many of those stories that I had read as a boy.) Eventually, reading wider, I found my way to Caroline Gordon's stories, and Robert Penn Warren's poems, and James Still's novels *River of Earth* and *The Run for the Elbertas*, and then his poems — all of them part of the Kentucky renaissance that continues today, in the work of Wendell Berry, Bobbie Ann Mason, James Baker Hall, and Chris Offutt, among so many others.

James Still's first book of poems, *Hounds on the Mountain*, was published in 1937. His novel *River of Earth* was published in 1940. He also wrote a poem called "River of Earth." Like his novel, this poem's first source was Biblical — Psalm 114, which reads:

*When Israel came out of Egypt,  
the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,  
Judah became God's sanctuary,  
Israel his dominion.  
The sea looked and fled,  
the Jordan turned back;  
the mountains skipped like rams,  
the hills like lambs.  
Why was it, O sea, that you fled,  
O Jordan, that you turned back,  
you mountains, that you skipped like rams,  
you hills, like lambs?  
Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,  
at the presence of the God of Jacob,  
who turned the rock into a pool,  
the hard rock into springs of water.*

In his poem by the name of "River of Earth," a young man of the country stands mute before "the shattered thrust / Of hills," the mountains looking like waves of earth and rock, and he is unable to find the words to say what is told here, in the "convolutions of earth, by time, by winds." He stands mute before the age-old work of weather and water and ancient upheavals on the landscape. He is maybe thinking about his own plowings and plantings and buildings, these relatively "minute shapings of man" —

*He can but stand  
A stranger on familiar slopes and drink the restless air,  
Knowing that beneath his feet, beneath his probing eyes  
A river of earth flows down the strident centuries.  
Hills are but waves cast up to fall again, to rise  
Still further down the years.*

In Still's view, humankind's place in the world — our carbon footprint, if you will — is, appropriately, necessarily, a small one, both vertically, in our duration on its surface, and horizontally, in our ecological influence on the globe. (I wonder how James Still would respond to the increasingly alarming news about global warming.) He writes, at the end of his poem "River of Earth," these lines: "Men are held here / Within a mighty tide swept onward toward a final sea." To live in the mountains is to never see the sun without lifting up one's eyes — as if in the attitude of prayer?

The preacher, Brother Sims Mobberly, in Still's novel *River of Earth*, says this in one of his sermons:

*I was borned in a ridge-pocket.... I never  
seed the sun-ball withouten heisting my  
chin. My eyes were sot upon the hills from  
the beginning. Till I come on the Word in  
this good Book, I used to think a mountain  
was the standingest object in the sight o'  
God. These hills are jest dirt waves, washing  
through eternity. My brethren, they hain't a  
valley so low but what hit'll sink to the low  
ground o' sorrow. Oh, my children, where  
are we going on this mighty river of earth,  
a-borning, begetting, and a-dying — the  
living and the dead riding the waters?*

The land is indeed always shifting under our feet, by way of natural phenomena — earthquakes, landslides, sink-holes — and by way of supernatural phenomena. The Biblical parallels are not lost on us. We recall the topsy-turvy world-view of Christ's teachings in the Beatitudes and elsewhere: the meek shall inherit the earth; the last shall be first; the lion shall lie down with the lamb....

In his poem "I Was Born Humble," Still wrote —

*I was born humble. At the foot of the mountains  
My face was set upon the immensity of the earth  
And stone; and upon oaks full-bodied and old.  
There is so much writ upon the parchment of leaves,  
So much of beauty blown upon the winds,  
I can but fold my hands and sink my knees  
In the leaf-pages.*

It would seem that the natural world — that is, paradise — knows so much, and humankind is privy to so little of this ancient wisdom. "My heart grieves," his poem concludes. "Beneath the wealth of wisdom perished with the leaves." It is as though, with the turning of the seasons, so much knowledge gets scattered to the four winds. Perhaps this is why James Still and many other Kentucky poets live and work so close to the land. To listen, to learn, to not lose the knowledge that is held there. I believe that even my colleagues in the biology



Still had his first poem published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* in 1935.

Photo courtesy of Hindman Settlement School

department might agree with me, that with each autumn season, a good deal of wisdom falls from the trees and is lost.

### III

“Sometimes children come up and ask me, ‘How do you write a poem?’” James Still said, in an interview with Noah Adams on NPR. “I finally decided on an answer. Eleanor Clark, who is Mrs. Robert Penn Warren, told me once what to do if I were attacked by an octopus. ‘You know, you’re all wrapped up in the arms, the thing to do — the only thing you can do — is to reach in its mouth and get a handful of something and turn it wrong-side out. Now, that’s what you do with a subject. You turn it wrong-side out.’” Here is an unusual aesthetic! Mindful of that comment, I wonder if Still’s poem “Death of a Fox” might have come from the wrong-side out. As he described it to Noah Adams, later in that same interview, Still said he was driving home late one night, and “there was fog on the ground and I was coming along and all of a sudden a fox flared up in my headlights and I ran over it and killed it. And that bothered me, and the next day I started to write a letter, but instead I wrote this verse, and this is how it came out” —

*Last night I ran a fox over.  
A sudden brilliant flash of gold,  
A setting sun of gilded fur  
Appeared in my car’s beam,  
And then the fatal thump.*

*I asked the fox to forgive me.  
He spat as he died.  
I asked God to forgive me.  
I don’t believe He will.  
Is there no pardon anywhere?*

The poem begins with a death; it began as a letter; and yet, he turned it such that, out of that experience came a verse seeking redemption, where there is no redemption to be had. This poem feels to me rather like reaching into the mouth of the octopus, grabbing a handful of something and turning it wrong-side out. Or, right-side out.

I still cannot read this poem of Still’s without thinking about a friend of mine at the seminary, some years ago. Seems he had a mouse in his apartment. He set out a shoebox with lettuce and whatever other foods he thought a mouse might like. Eventually,

he caught it, then carried the box to his car, and drove out deep into the country. He found a meadow, stopped the car, opened his door, and let the mouse go. As he was pulling away, he felt a small *thump* under his tire — and he wept all the way home.

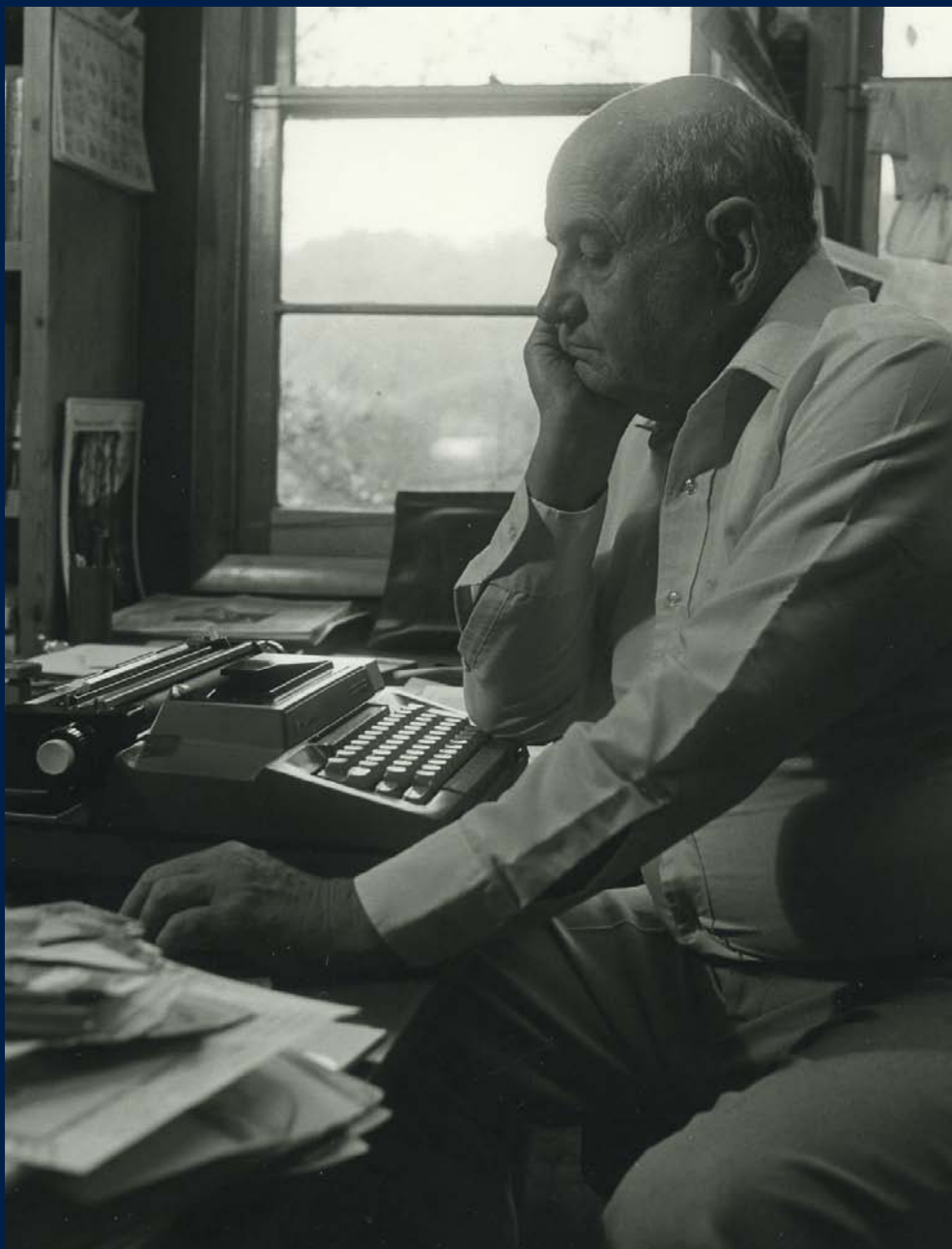
Doorways along Wolfpen Creek are painted blue, to ward off bad luck and witches. It is an old superstition of the Germans who settled that region. James Still's cabin door was painted blue, too. My guess is, that no matter how deeply imbued you are with the western Judeo-Christian tradition, you don't live seventy years in the country without picking up a few of the local superstitions.

A poet of nature resists being corralled by the rational mind. Perhaps this is true of all poets. In his *Book of Questions*, Pablo Neruda asked questions that have no answers. Perhaps this is what the best poets do — is to ask unanswerable questions. Neruda asked such questions as, “Why don't they train helicopters / to suck honey from the sunlight?” and “Why doesn't the gymnasium / feel sorry for girls?” James Still frequently asked such questions. His poem “When the Dulcimers are Gone” begins —

*When the dulcimers are mingled  
with the dust  
Of flowering chestnut, and their  
lean fretted necks  
Are slain maple stalks, their  
strings dull threads of rust,  
Where shall the mellow voice be  
heard upon the hills,  
Upon what pennyroyal meadow,  
beside what rills?*

Perhaps the most lovely and mystical questions that he asks can be found in his poem “Horseback in the Rain,” the first stanza of which reads —

*With rain in the face  
And leathern thongs moist  
In the hands, where halt  
The mud-scat'ered journey  
For the crust, the salt  
Of bread upon the tongue?*



**James Still lived on the Hindman Settlement School campus in a home called Oak Ledge, because of its location on a ridge above the school. Oak Ledge was built by Lucy Furman, another writer who lived in Hindman, beginning in 1907.**

**Photo courtesy of Hindman Settlement School**

And he concludes the poem as he perhaps concluded his life — “Ride the storm with no ending / On a road unraviving.”

### **About the Author**

Frederick Smock is an associate professor of English at Bellarmine University. His new books of poems is *The Bounteous World* (Broadstone Books). His most recent book of prose is *Pax Intransigentibus: A Meditation on the Poetry of Thomas Merton*.



# THE GRAVES COUNTY BOYS

## A TALE OF KENTUCKY BASKETBALL, PERSEVERANCE, AND THE UNLIKELY CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE CUBA CUBS

*By Marianne Walker*

**A**fter I had several magazine articles published, a friend asked me to write about her husband who had been a star basketball player in high school and in college. Ignoring my reply, “I don’t do sports,” she went on to say how he, Howie Crittenden, had won many awards but was proudest of the state championship he and his teammates, the Cuba Cubs, from Cuba, Kentucky, won in 1952. She insisted that I would find something to write about after I talked with him. I doubted it. After the first interview, I doubted it even more.

Much later on, they invited my husband and me to meet Howie’s childhood friend and co-star on the team, Charles Floyd, known as “Doodle.” Before, during, and after dinner, the men enjoyed talking about games, coaches, and players. Their basketball lingo and few attempts to explain such terms as one-three-one zone defense and five-man-weave were as confusing to me then as genome sequencing is now.

Toward the end of that evening, they looked at the old scrapbook that had belonged to Howie’s mother. It contained a few of his

school photos, some Kodak snapshots of him as a teenager, and a number of faded, fragile newspaper articles from the 1940s and ’50s. As the men studied the scrapbook, they talked quietly about their childhoods in Pilot Oak and Cuba. For the first time that evening, my attention was focused on their conversation. As we prepared to leave, I asked them if they would tell me more about their lives before they met Coach Jack Story in 1947. Surprised but obliging, they offered to give us a tour of these places in Graves County and a fine catfish supper in Mayfield, the county seat. We accepted. From then on, this true story about the lives of five Cuba Cubs, their coach Jack Story, their families, friends, and neighbors gradually unfolded. It is a story worth remembering.

Born in 1933, Howie and Doodle were sons of sharecroppers who could not make ends meet no matter how hard they worked. Both were born in Pilot Oak and attended school there until they entered the 8th grade at the Cuba School, eight miles away. Neither of these places was ever a town. They were tiny farming communities with a few, plain, framed houses, a store,



*Former University of Kentucky basketball coach Joe B. Hall, author Marianne Walker, and Jim Lankster.*

*Photo courtesy of Marianne Walker*

a school, a blacksmith, a church or two, and lots of outdoors. No stoplights, sidewalks, mayor, sheriff, drive-in, or even paved roads until the mid-1940s. Farmers raised wheat and corn, but their cash crop was “dark-fired” tobacco. They plowed with mules. Behind nearly every house would be a vegetable garden, a few chickens, maybe a cow or pig or two, a shed, a wagon, a mule, and also a well, and a privy. Plumbing and electricity were not available until the early 1950s in some areas in Graves County, such as where Doodle and Howie lived.

Like many people in rural areas across the United States, those in Graves County during the first half of the twentieth century lived simple lives. Hardship and poverty were a way of life for them. They grew what they ate and made, for the most part, what they needed. Their motto was “Make it do or do without!” After finishing their chores, children were free to roam, fish, swim, hunt, snack on blackberries, or whatever fruit and nuts they found. “No Trespassing” signs did not exist. The folks in Pilot Oak and Cuba kept a sharp eye out for each other’s children and had the right to discipline any miscreant. They swapped work, called everyone by his or her first name, and knew that a handshake was a contract. No one ever locked his door.

Driving into Little Cubie, as it was called then, you would have a sense of a very pleasant place—one that was steadfast and secure, where life was slow, where nobody ever got in a hurry. As one of the older residents explained, nobody had anywhere to go. The people lived simple, self-sufficient lives. The rest of the world could have fallen away, and they would have survived. “They were as independent as a hawg on ice,” exclaimed one local historian.

In 1948, Howie and Doodle entered the 8th grade in the Cuba school, which housed both elementary and secondary classes. The school was poorly funded. It had no special programs or equipment for the playground or the classroom. Its only sports gear was for basketball, called the poor boys’ game because it required so little equipment. The cafeteria was primitive by our standards, yet it provided every child (whether or not he could pay) with hot, nourishing lunches prepared by farmers’ wives using food raised in their area.

Although its total enrollment varied according to the seasons when farmers needed their children to help them work, the high school sometimes had as many as a hundred students. Some girls quit school by the 9th grade to get married. Some boys, if they were not college bound, would drop out of school early too. If they played on the basketball team, they were most likely to graduate. The school’s gym was too small for a regulation size basketball court. As the Cubs’ games became more and more popular, spectators packed the bleachers while others stood thickly crowded around the court, making it seem even smaller. Basketball was their main form of live entertainment, and it united the school and the community in a manner that nothing else did. Cuba wholeheartedly and consistently supported its faculty, coach, and the basketball team (whether the team was successful or not).

In the 8th grade, Howie and Doodle met those who would become their teammates and life-long friends: Joe Buddy Warren, Raymon McClure, Jimmie Webb, Ted Bradley, and Jimmy Jones (who was older and in a grade above them). However, the single most important person they met was their 30-year-old principal and coach Jack Story, who had a passion for basketball and a deep yearning to coach a team to win a state championship.

After recognizing their natural athletic abilities, Jack Story formed those six 8th graders into a team and convinced them that by the time they were seniors in 1952, they could win the state championship—one of the greatest honors in the world he exclaimed. But, he stressed to them that they could win only if they started right then preparing themselves to win. Infected with their coach’s spirit and dream, the boys dedicated themselves to basketball.

I was impressed by the methods Coach Story used to motivate youngsters to set goals and to work hard to achieve them. During that disgraceful period of segregation of which he wanted no part, he showed them a film of the Harlem Globetrotters and urged them to imitate those agile black men as best as they could. And imitate they did. No matter where they played games, the crowds’ applause and cheers thrilled them every time they went into their Trotters’ routine in warm-up sessions.

After I learned about Jack Story and the origins of the famous team he created, I was hooked on writing about them.

On my many subsequent trips to Graves County, I learned the history of Cuba and its region—the Jackson Purchase. I began to understand the importance that geography has on forming the character of its people. I talked to the individual players many times, and more than once with all of the others involved with the team. Mary Lee Story, the coach's widow, who became a dear friend, was a most valuable source of information, as were other older inhabitants of Cuba. Although it was not easy getting any of these people to talk to me at the start, and even disappointing at times, I could not give the project up.

After many, many hours of listening, taking notes, straining my eyes reading old newspapers, I began to see a way that I could write about basketball, but it would be the kind of book that I would like to read. Just as one would piece a quilt from many scraps of different materials, I pieced together these oral histories about some people who at a special time and place shared a dream and the joy of making it a reality.

The fact that I did not know much about basketball when I began this project turned out to be an advantage to me as a writer. For it enabled me to see the Cubs' story from a different perspective. To those who wonder if I were intimidated or handicapped by not knowing anything about basketball, the answer is no. After all, I had the championship players, some of whom were then coaches, ready and willing to explain the subject at any and all times. The basketball part was the easiest of all to write. Since learning about how the sport is played, I enjoy watching games now.

After readers began comparing my book *The Graves County Boys* favorably to *Hoosiers*, I watched the movie for the first time and loved it. Later, I learned from reading Jeff Merron's "HOOSIERS in Reel Life," on ESPN's website, that this classic, stirring story is loosely based on the success of the real Milan, Indiana, basketball team in 1954. I found the movie to be similar in some ways to the 1952 experience of the Cuba Cubs. In both cases, rural underdogs with exceptional coaches win state championships against all odds after losing in the championship final the previous year.

Yet, there is a world of difference between *Hoosiers* and *The Graves County Boys*. *Hoosiers* is a screenplay and mostly fiction. Screenwriter Angelo Pizzo explained he had to fictionalized some of the events and major characters "because their real lives were not dramatic enough" for a Hollywood movie. In *Hoosiers*, the star on the Hickory team is Jimmy Chitwood, who is unlike the real-life star of the Milan team Bobby Plump. In a *Saturday Evening Post* interview in 1987, Plump said, "The final 18 seconds was the only thing factual in the movie about the Milan-Central game. From the time the ball was in bounds after the final time-out, the movie was accurate."

In contrast, *The Graves County Boys* is a nonfiction book. It is a true account of the lives of real people and of how a basketball game once brought joyful pride to its entire community. It is more than our own Kentucky story, it is America's story too. And, it needed no embellishment!



*The Cuba School housed grades 1-12, which was not uncommon at the time.*

*Photo courtesy of Donald Poyner*

Adolph Rupp and his University of Kentucky Wildcats dominated the national basketball scene in the 1940s and early 1950s. The same year, 1951, the Cubs went to the state tournament for the first time, the Wildcats won their third national championship in four years. In 1950, Kentucky built a basketball shrine—Memorial Coliseum, the largest and finest arena in the South at that time, with the capacity to seat 12,500.

Playing in Memorial Coliseum was a dream come true for every player in the 1951 and the 1952 state tournaments, but the Cubs had come further than any other team in more ways than one, making the journey from the most remote western corner of the state and from a school unimaginably poor by any standard today.

Since their small schools have been swallowed up by larger ones, little rural communities like Cuba, if they exist at all, have lost their sense of identity and purpose. They are as fragmented as cities. It is not likely that the Cuba Cubs' story will ever be repeated, for it is about a place and a time and a way of life that has gone with wind. And that magical kind of euphoria that the Cubs created—that euphoria that did not vanish quickly after the tournaments, as sports' highs do today—has also disappeared from the American scene.

The Graves County boys proved that no matter how poor or disadvantaged we may be, we in America can overcome the limited stations of our birth and impoverished conditions of our environment. We can achieve success. Cuba Cubs' story is the American dream.

*Information about Hoosiers and quotations are from Jeff Merron, "HOOSIERS in Reel Life" ESPN PAGE 2 (esp.go.com/page2/).*

# An excerpt from *The Graves County Boys* Chapter 2 — The Little Crossroads Team

**W**ith their diligent daily practice and with the guidance of their coach, the Cubs—by the time they were juniors—had quite a wonderful reputation in western Kentucky and west Tennessee. Known as the Cuba Cubs from little Cuba, Kentucky, they were a popular and respected team, well grounded in the fundamentals. They played uniquely, with a flair that resembled the Harlem Globetrotters, and everywhere they played, the gyms were packed with spectators. As juniors, they had already earned their right to compete in the state tournament to be held in Memorial Coliseum in Lexington, Kentucky, in mid-March 1951.

Two days before the coach and the team left for Lexington in 1951 to compete in the state tournament, Jack Story had a telephone interview with Edd Kellow, sportswriter for the *Paducah Sun-Democrat*. He talked about his team's successful record for the season (33-2), noting that in thirty-five ball games, the Cubs had hit an amazing 45 percent of their



*Jack and Mary Lee Story met at Fairbanks School in Graves County. He was a teacher and she was a student. They were married on June 14, 1936, in Paris, Tennessee.*

*Photos courtesy of Barbara Story Crowell*



*The Cuba Cubs won the 1952 Kentucky state high school championship played in Memorial Coliseum.*

*Photo courtesy of Donald Poyner*

shots from the field and 68 percent from the free-throw line. He added that he and the boys planned to keep that pace up in Lexington. Then he stammered, “You can’t believe it—you won’t believe it—this place has gone state tournament crazy. And I want you to see for yourself. I believe that everyone from Cuba is going to Lexington. And from the number of requests for tickets, I’m not sure that all Graves and Fulton counties aren’t going to be there with us.”

The old school buses were in no shape to make the long trip, so everyone who had a car or truck offered to take someone who had no ride. Getting ready for the trip was a joyful communal effort. By 4:00 that blustery, cold, dark Wednesday morning of March 14, 1951, all of Graves County was awake and hurrying about. In Mayfield, Pilot Oak, and Cuba, trucks and cars were already parked outside of the stores where people were to meet to share rides. Cuba supporters from all the little neighboring places, including Lynnville, Water Valley, Sedalia, Dukedom, and Fulton, gathered at their stores and schools to form their own caravans and car pools.

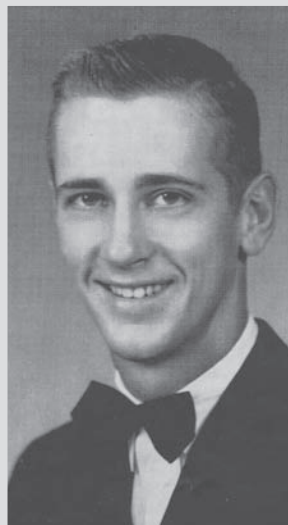
In other parts of western Kentucky similar car pools were organized. It was a merry pilgrimage starting out early that morning. At one point, the heavy traffic on Highway 31W headed east made it look as if all of western Kentucky were being evacuated.

Graves County alone accounted for forty automobiles making up the long motorcade to Lexington. The story the newspapers put out was that everybody in Cuba went to the state tournament except Harry McClain. He stayed home because he had agreed to milk everybody's cows and to do so had rigged up a mechanical milking device on his pickup truck. Harry did stay to look after things for others, but he was not the only person who remained. Aside from those too old or ill to go were Doodle's, Howie's, and Jimmie Webb's parents. They had not attended any of their sons' games, even the ones played in Cuba. Perhaps it was not just their lack of interest this time, but also their lack of money to travel that kept them at home.

Jack Story never placed any value on cheerleaders, as important as they were to the school and to the team. To him, those girls were a nuisance, a major distraction for the players. He never even assigned a faculty advisor to them, so they managed their own little organization. He made no arrangements for them to go to the tournament, so they rode with their families or friends and made their own hotel reservations. Yet he had to approve all their routines. Just before the trip to Lexington, he had condemned their latest cheer when he found them practicing this little hip-grinding, handwaving strutting dance while they chanted: *Roosters chew tobacco. Hens dip snuff. Come on Cuba, strut your stuff! Strut! Strut! Strut! Come on, Cuba, strut your stuff!*

Those in Graves County who did not own a radio frantically tried to buy one once they learned that Cuba had won the regional tournament by beating the formidable Paducah Tilghman 61-46. In fact, all the stores in Mayfield and in Fulton sold out of radios in a flash once the word was out that Coach Story was taking his team to the state tournament.

The day the tournament began, it was not business as usual in the county. The few people in Pilot Oak who had not gone to Lexington went to Fred Wagoner's store to listen to the games on the radio there. In Cuba, they went to Carl Rhodes's store. In these small communities, where people generally had no way to distinguish themselves as excellent in any area, the success of "their" boys brought distinction to them. They were hopeful, happy, and proud of Coach Story and his team.



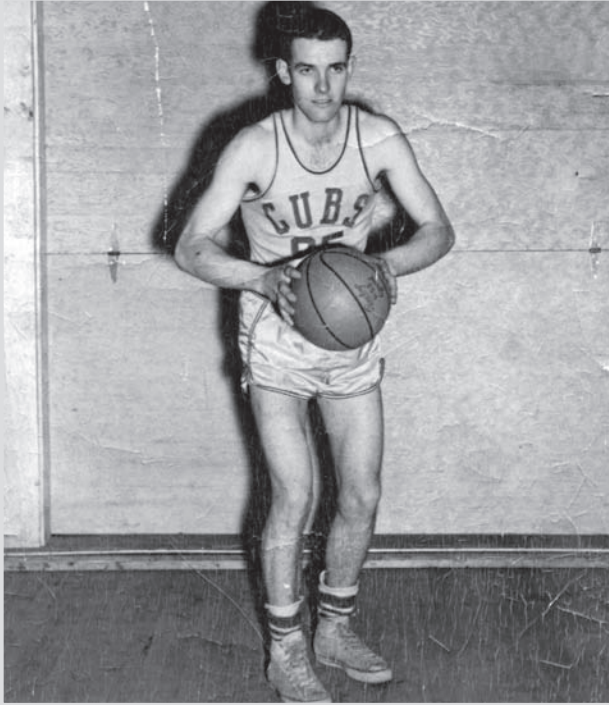
*Howard "Howie" Crittenden (left) was quiet, polite, and intense. He was a good student and was named Mr. Cuba High. Raymon McClure (right) was known as a hard worker and very mature for his age. He didn't begin attending the Cuba school until he was in the 7th grade. McClure married before he graduated from high school.*

*Photos courtesy of Howard Crittenden and Donald Poyner*



*Cuba cheerleaders (left to right): Barbara Harper, Helen Crittenden, Shirley Wiggins, Julia Harris, and Jackie Edwards.*

*Photo courtesy of Cuba School Yearbook*



*Jimmie Webb was a starter and terrific scorer for the Cubs. Like many, he was thrilled for the opportunity to play in Memorial Coliseum.*

*Photo courtesy of Donald Poyner*

Over the three days before the Cubs' departure, fans in Cuba and Pilot Oak held celebrations of all kinds—luncheons, pep rallies, informal get-togethers, and a banquet the night before their departure. Nearly every person in the area had contributed to the Cubs' effort in some way, so each individual felt as if he or she had a stake in the Cubs' success. The farmers had scraped together enough money to buy the boys new warm-up suits, socks, and underwear. Aught McClain, father of one of the Cubs' classmates and a barber, gave free haircuts to Coach Story and to each of the Cubs. Mary Lee Story, Coach Story's wife, bought the players new satiny gold and green uniforms and shoes with earnings she had saved from the concession and supply stand she ran at the school. Some men who had jobs in Mayfield collected enough money to buy basketballs, which Coach Story painted green and gold—the school colors.

The owners of the four men's clothing stores in Mayfield gave the coach and each player a complete suit of clothes, including two white shirts, ties, socks, dress shoes, topcoats, and more underwear. Other merchants collected money to pay for the team's travel expenses, hotel rooms, and meals. They even gave each boy a crisp new \$20 bill, an extravagant amount of spending money. Everything the community could do had been done for them, and now the rest was up to the Cubs and the coach.

The drive to Lexington was about 280 miles and took the better part of a day. They traveled on two-lane roads winding through one small town after another. The highway speed limit was fifty or fifty-five miles an hour, and having to stop in every town and hamlet for stoplights,

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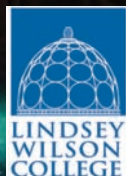
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stop signs, intersections, and railroad crossings made the ride even slower.

Some of the team's starters—Howie Crittenden, Charles “Doodle” Floyd, Joe Buddy Warren, Raymon McClure, and Jimmie Webb or Jimmy Jones—rode with Coach Story and his wife. On previous trips they had crowded into Coach's secondhand Plymouth, but this time they all rode in his spacious new Kaiser. He was so happy to be taking his team to the state tournament that he splurged on a new automobile, without saying anything to his wife beforehand. The morning after winning the regional tournament, he drove to Paducah, a city about twenty-four miles from Mayfield, where he lived, and paid over \$3,000 plus the trade-in value of his Plymouth for this beautiful Kaiser. Jack Story felt proud and confident driving his new four-door, two-toned, grass green sedan with its golden-tan interior—colors that matched the Cuba School colors.

Nearly all cars then were built big, but this Kaiser was really big. Unlike the Plymouth, it had ample room for three adults to sit in the front and four in the back, comfortably. The manufacturers had completely redesigned the Kaiser that year, making it less boxy, giving it more glass, more head- and legroom. It was advertised as “the new Anatomic Design, made to fit the human anatomy.” In addition to its color, that selling pitch may have been the very thing that attracted Jack Story to this car. At six feet three and 260 or more pounds, he needed a large car to drive himself, his wife, and five slender but long-legged basketball players around the state.

This car was classy looking, too. Its huge windshield header sloped down on each side and had a V in the middle, giving it the seagull wing appearance that became Kaiser's trademark. With its shiny K-and-buffalo badge and a dartlike mascot sitting in the center of the hood, this automobile was the grandest thing that Coach Story and the Cubs had ever seen on the highway, and riding in it made them feel like world-class winners.

They arrived in Lexington early afternoon that cold, crisp day. Coach Story parked near the front of Memorial Coliseum. Before getting out of his car, he and the others sat silently, staring out the window at the new building for a minute or so.

Just one year earlier, the large arena had been added to the campus of the University of Kentucky as a memorial to Kentuckians who had died in the two world wars. With its capacity to seat 12,500, it was said to be the largest arena in the South. That next day, for the first time, it was to be the site of the Kentucky Boys' Sweet Sixteen High School Basketball Tournament.

Breaking the silence, Mary Lee, seated next to Coach Story, spoke first: “Well, why are we sitting here? Let's all go look inside.”

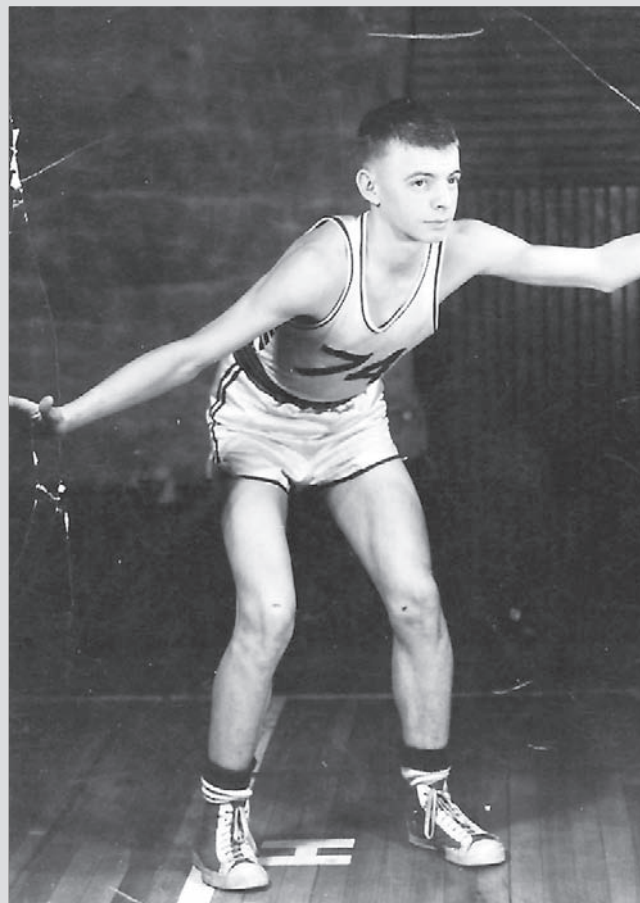


*Charles “Doodle” Floyd was friendly, good natured, spontaneous, and fun. Everyone who knew Doodle loved him.*

*Photo courtesy of Charles Floyd*

The wide doors of the Kaiser popped open and five teenage boys, the coach, and his wife climbed out. While the boys ran ahead to the entrance of the Coliseum, Jack and Mary Lee stood waiting on the sidewalk for the other cars with players and team managers to arrive. Dressed in his good-luck brown suit, the same color Coach Adolph Rupp always wore to games, and a brown felt hat cocked to one side of his head, Jack Story leaned back, stretching slightly, pressing his hands into his lower back as if to ease an old pain. He smiled as he watched his starters entering the building that they had dreamed of seeing.

Inside the Coliseum, the boys stood in awe, struck by the wonder of newness and the stillness that pervades a battlefield before a battle. Staring at the ceiling, Jimmie Webb whispered, “This is



*Raymon McClure was known as a hard worker and very mature for his age. He didn't begin attending the Cuba school until he was in the 7th grade. McClure married before he graduated from high school.*

*Photo courtesy of Donald Poyner*

the first place I've ever been in where I couldn't throw the ball and hit the ceiling." The others turned to look at him and then looked up silently.

Accustomed to playing on creaky wooden gym floors in rural schools, Howie knelt down and ran his hand over the smooth hardwood, saying, "This looks and feels just like polished glass!" Pointing his finger up and down at the floor, Joe Buddy merrily exclaimed, "Yeah! And just think. We are going to play on this floor. This is the floor the Kentucky Wildcats play on! And they already have won two NAAs. And I bet they win it again this year. Holy cow! I can't believe we're here!"

They laughed. This was the first time they had been so far out in the world, and they had mixed feelings of fear, wonder, and excitement. This was the place and the moment they had been dreaming about and working toward since they were in the eighth grade, and here they were as juniors—a year earlier than planned.

Their trip that day was long in more than one way. They had ridden from their tiny rural community of Cuba, Kentucky, to

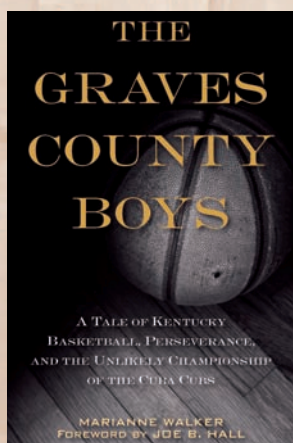
Lexington, the second largest city in the Commonwealth and the home of the winningest college basketball team in the nation—the University of Kentucky Wildcats—and the winningest coach—Adolph Rupp.

After their brief stop at the Coliseum, Coach Story drove the boys to the Phoenix Hotel where they and their supporters were staying. On their way, they listened to a sports broadcaster on the car radio talk about the teams playing in the tournament the next day. As he described them as the unknowns, the little crossroads team, they tensed up, listening to him say such things as "We don't know what to expect from the Cuba Cubs from way down yonder in Graves County. That's in the Jackson Purchase region and is about as far west as you can go and still be in Kentucky. They are the mysterious underdogs in this tourney. Their whole school has only about a hundred students." Although some of the other smaller schools in western Kentucky were known throughout the state, he said Cuba was not one of them. He named the familiar larger high schools—Paducah Tilghman and Owensboro Senior High—saying how well respected they were.

He listed the achievements of Covington Holmes, winner of the Ninth Region, whom the Cubs would face that next evening. He pointed out that the Holmes team, from a large high school in Covington, a city directly across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, was one of the tallest aggregations in the state and one of the most powerful teams, one not easily defeated. Doodle winced when he heard him add, "The tallest player on Cuba's team is six feet four, so rebounding might be a problem for them."

Thus, the first thing the Cubs heard upon arriving in Lexington was this broadcaster's view that they were not expected to survive their first battle in the tournament. The boys sighed. The coach turned off the radio.

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## *About the Author*

A native of Monroe, Louisiana, Marianne Walker is the author of numerous articles and three books: *Margaret Mitchell & John Marsh: The Love Story Behind Gone With the Wind* (a dual biography); *When Cuba Conquered Kentucky*; and *The Graves County Boys*. A retired professor of English and philosophy, she and her husband live in Henderson, Kentucky.





# The Search for Something Sweet

## *Sorghum Molasses in Kentucky*

By Dr. Marshall Myers

**W**hile scientists insist it's an acquired taste, we all seem to have a "sweet tooth," a hankering for something sweet.

Most desserts are sweet, be they pies, cakes, or cookies, and most of us like that lingering sweetness on our tongues after a hearty meal. That desire for the saccharine has been around for a very long time.

Even on the Kentucky frontier.

But what if granulated sugar, so common today, was not that easy to get or was way too expensive to buy in the necessary portions?

Finding a source for sweetening presented the early pioneers with a problem.

The most obvious source was honey. Honey, a sweet syrup collected by special types of bees, was an adequate substitute for granulated sugar, rarely available to pioneers nestled in cabins far from any source or manufacturer of the product.

But honey was hard to find. Bees were common insects, yet not so common that honey was readily available to all who wanted it.

The hive, too, was often high in a tree providing natural

protection from other animals that had a taste for it, like bears who feasted on honeycombs and the syrup whenever they could, often well before man could find it.

When traveling west, new Kentuckians often took along a few barrels of molasses, the boiled-down syrup which was the product of juice of sugar cane, grown mostly and most effectively in warmer climates like the Caribbean and the southern coastal areas. But molasses, often made into rum for more profit and easier transport, was then relatively expensive for subsistence farmers barely surviving on what they could grow to support their families and with little cash or other trading goods to purchase large quantities of molasses.

Molasses was good, but often not readily available. And, of course, it soon ran out.

Honey not handy, molasses costly and uncommon, the sugar beet not even an option yet, the early Kentuckians, if they wanted sweeteners, needed another source. But improvising was in the nature of the earliest Kentuckians, making their own gunpowder from cave dust, and rendering their own salt from the many salt licks, for instance.



Once they have been through the sorghum mill, the sweet sorghum stalks are discarded.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Marshall Myers

## Sweet Sorghum Becomes Popular as a Sugar Substitute

What they used instead had really been around for hundreds of years; in fact, *The Courier-Journal* recently reported that an earlier version of the plant was found in ancient Egypt, about 6,400 years ago. But, significantly, a modern version, called sweet sorghum, a corn-like plant, flourished in the often poorer Kentucky soil, and it didn't require extensive acreage to make enough of the sweet syrup derived from it.

While there are at least two other varieties of the plant used as a rich cattle feed and another a non-edible variety, sweet sorghum, produced a rich source for sweetening in the early days of the Commonwealth and throughout much of the mountainous South and lower Midwest.

According to the journal *Economic Botany*, the plant from Africa was quite popular, with 6,749,123 gallons extracted from the juice of the sweet sorghum plant in 1860 alone, jumping to 16,050,089 gallons over the next ten years.

Even in 1970, 6,000,000 gallons were produced, with half of it from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. But the sorghum produced is hardly as necessary now as it was when sugar was so expensive and hard to find as it was in pioneer Kentucky.

## The Sorghum Molasses Making Process

While the making of the syrup seemed simple enough, it really required workers who were knowledgeable, careful, and patient, with attention to detail paramount, for the whole process could easily be disastrous if care and cunning weren't observed, even if it all seemed simple as the dull repetition of the sorghum mill ceaselessly circled the same ground time after time.

One of the most famous descriptions of a sorghum mill at work appears in *Flags in the Dust*, by the Nobel Prize-winning Southern novelist, William Faulkner:

*The mule would be plodding in a monotonous circle, its feet rustling in the dried cane pith, drawing the long wooden beam which turned the mill into which one of the patriarch's (land owner's) grandson fed the cane.*

*Round and round the mule went, setting its narrow, deer-like feet delicately down in the hissing cane — pith, its neck bobbing limber as a section of rubber hose in the collar, with its flanks and flopping, life-less ears, and its half-closed eyes drowsing venomously behind pale lids, apparently asleep with the monotony of its own motion.*

And in those early days, before power-take-offs on a tractor, the mill, powered by a mule following a monotonous circular pattern that Faulkner described, squeezed a greenish-colored juice from the tall, sweet sorghum plant, sending it via a trough into a temporary storage vat, earlier usually a barrel for filtering, but later directly into a large rectangular pan with a series of baffles, elevated so that the heavier syrup gradually made its way to the lowest part. This box-like boiler was heated underneath usually by a wood fire. The juice moved through various elevated compartments, representing the variety of stages of evaporation, until the ten gallons of raw syrup reduced to one gallon of the brownish-colored sorghum molasses.

In the process of evaporation, as the juice moved from one compartment to another, skimmers, dippers, and rakes were used to insure the integrity of the syrup by skimming off the foam on top that was filled with impurities, moving the thickening syrup downward toward the end where it was put in jars or buckets. *The Murray Ledger and Times* writer, Barry William Drew, describes the skimmers as resembling "small shovels with long handles.

The bottoms of the skimmers are full of holes to allow the juice to pass through while the foam is caught and thrown away, usually in a designated place near the vat itself.”

Cooking sorghum at just the right temperature, but yet not boiling it, often for several hours, continuously carefully skimming off the impurities, while watching the green juice gradually turn to the dark brown color of rendered sorghum was more of an art than just a step-by-step procedure, an art that required both broad experience and love and respect for the process itself.

Not just anybody could make good sorghum, the sweetener that pioneer families living on self-sufficient farms depended upon.

The early pioneers made use of what was left of the tall sweet sorghum plants after all the juices had been extracted by the sorghum mill itself. Large piles of used stalks provided necessary fodder for cattle and horses, the tall green plant and tassels whose large, woody stalks



*The mule following its circular path around the sorghum mill at the Morgan County Sorghum Festival.*

*Photo courtesy of Dr. Marshall Myers*

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*This is the pan that Danny Townsend uses to cook sorghum molasses. He uses a wood burning fire to heat the pan.*

*Photo courtesy of Dr. Marshall Myers*

were quite delicate eating for four-footed animals. And the seeds were quite popular as chicken feed, while other seeds, if the plants were particularly hardy, were saved for next year's planting.

### **Sorghum Molasses "Stir-Offs"**

Since, many times, each family in a community used the same sorghum mill owned by one individual in the region, sorghum making was often an occasion for community gatherings, called "stir offs."

Will Turner described these events for *The Harrodsburg Herald*: "Used to, when I was growing up, they'd have these 'stir offs' and people would get buckets and take molasses home." The sorghum maker told the reporter that "the fun started early and lasted all day. Mixed in with the sweet scent of molasses boiling was the roasting pig and the beans cooking over an open fire." Batch after batch of molasses flowed out of the pan, often sampled by the children until twilight forced the end of the day's events. Slowly the people took their buckets of sorghum home, the children, with outstretched tongues, still licking long wooden spoons sweet from the sorghum lingering there.

In the days before refrigerators or even iceboxes, a real problem on the frontier was preserving or storing food. To counteract that, early settlers buried cabbage, dug root cellars to store potatoes, often

wrapped fruits like apples to preserve them, to name just a few methods.

From their German neighbors, they quickly learned how to convert cabbage into large vats of sauerkraut from which they could draw meal after meal.

But they couldn't preserve what they couldn't make, and they couldn't make granulated sugar.

So when it came to sweetening, sugar was a rare commodity indeed. So valuable was it that special cabinets were built for the little they could procure, with locks, to store coffee and sugar, so those less appreciative of their values would not thoughtlessly raid the bin. Granulated sugar and coffee were truly rare.

Like many aspects of their lives, early pioneers had to improvise. In other words, they had to come up with a sugar substitute, since sugar was either inaccessible or too expensive.

In most ways, sorghum molasses was, surprisingly, more than an adequate substitute, for it too could be stored for long periods of time.

### **Foods Made with Sorghum Molasses**

According to the National Sweet Sorghum Producers and Processors Association publication, for cooking purposes, one-third more sorghum was used over what the recipe calls for in sugar.

And the early settlers used sorghum as a sweetener in a variety of ways. The same sorghum association has resurrected older recipes, improvised some newer ones, and published a couple of cookbooks filled with recipes to show how versatile sorghum is, noting that sorghum was used as the "principal sweetener" for these pioneers for "making confections, flavoring meats," and for other desserts, including "pies, breads, puddings and countless cakes and cookies." These people knew that "sorghum blends with almost every kind of food, enhancing both taste and texture in very subtle ways," giving the dessert its unique taste.

### **The Nutritional Value of Sorghum Molasses**

While the early settlers didn't realize it, sorghum also offers many health benefits. According to the Federal Recommended Dietary Allowances, Revised 1995, the tasty syrup provides significant amounts of certain elements elementary to good nutrition. For example, sorghum is high in minerals like iron, phosphorus, zinc, and particularly potassium (a vital aid

to allowing the body to function harmoniously), as well as riboflavin, all packaged in surprisingly few calories. The pioneers were not as health conscious as we, but sorghum provided a goodly amount of some very essential elements.

While sorghum in its various varieties is used today as a nutritious food for cattle, usually then called milo, it generally grows on the Great Plains. But the kind of sorghum that is used for making molasses is grown in a defined area, generally in locations that reflect the region where sorghum molasses was, in the, past such an important crop.

For instance, Morris J. Bitzer, Grain Crops Extension Specialist for the University of Kentucky says that although “some sweet sorghum syrup has at one time or another been produced in every one of the contiguous 48 states, ... sweet sorghum is grown extensively for syrup production in the southeastern states. Kentucky is one of eight states in the Southeast and Midwest producing about 90 percent of the total U.S. output. So the states that produce the most sorghum molasses then and now are those in the mountainous south — states like Kentucky, Tennessee, western North and South Carolinas, Georgia, and parts of hilly Alabama, where sorghum was originally grown. Parts of the Midwest like Indiana also plant sweet sorghum, reflecting the normal patterns of migration in the early nineteenth century.

Today, sorghum molasses has acquired a cultural identity, since granulated sugar is much easier to find and not as expensive. People rarely cook with sorghum except for an occasional batch of molasses cookies, but instead eat their sorghum molasses in a particular way, the manner their grandparents ate it. Writing for *Focus* magazine, David Griffin recalls fondly how his forefather ate sorghum molasses:

*I can see him now as he prepared his favorite biscuit topping. He always began with a small saucer and fresh butter to start his formulation. Into the saucer he placed a large of hunk of butter; then he covered it with molasses. He proceeded by taking his fork and mixing the two ingredients until they were thoroughly blended into a yellow jelly-like consistency. This concoction was then carefully layered on top of a hot biscuit and devoured by my grandfather. I am certain it was his morning treat.*



*A rectangular pan is used to cook the sorghum molasses. A small shovel-like device is used to skim the impurities off the top.*

*Photo courtesy of Dr. Marshall Myers*

## **The Future of Sweet Sorghum Looks Bright**

Despite the nostalgia, the future of sorghum is much brighter than most think. Several counties in Kentucky still celebrate old-time sorghum festivals. But with each generation’s passing, the art of making sorghum molasses fades farther back in a culture’s memory, in spite of those who stubbornly strive to keep the art alive; sweet sorghum, the plant, has undergone great scrutiny by a new generation, not interested in making molasses but in making biofuel. In that particular area, the world looks to more ways to create renewable energy from sources cheaper and more environmentally friendly than non-renewable fossil fuels like oil and natural gas.

Sweet sorghum fits in this niche rather nicely. For instance, *Agriculture Business Week* reports that “sweet sorghum costs \$1.74 to produce a gallon of ethanol, compared with \$2.19 for sugar cane, and \$2.12 for corn.” In addition, “ethanol produced from sweet sorghum is carbon neutral. The carbon dioxide fixed during the growing cycle offsets the carbon dioxide produced during crop production, processing, and ethanol utilization.”

Since sweet sorghum has already proven that it can grow on poorer soil, the state’s larger producers of sweet sorghum like Danny Townsend of Jeffersonville, Kentucky, have a head start in the production of sweet sorghum to make ethanol.



Western Kentucky University Public Radio reports that Kentucky has a biofuel company near Mount Sterling whose president has addressed Kentucky’s General Assembly to let lawmakers know the potential of the crop and to endorse it as a source of biofuel. That operation has already turned 2,000 acres of sweet sorghum into a million gallons of ethanol. The company also maintains that “it is not hard to produce ethanol from sorghum.”

So those simple patches of sweet sorghum that the pioneers grew to produce a viable sugar substitute, if turned into ethanol production on a large scale, may give new meaning to just how “sweet” sorghum really is.

### About the Author

Retired in 2012, Dr. Marshall Myers was coordinator of composition and full professor at Eastern Kentucky University in the Department of English. He has published more than 250 articles, scholarly pieces, poems, and short stories. Dr. Myers has authored two books on the Civil War in Kentucky, published in 2011: *Great Civil War Stories of Kentucky* and *Neither Blue Nor Gray*. His new book, *Only in Old Kentucky: Historic True Tales of Cultural Ingenuity*, continues the theme of early Kentuckians “making do” in their circumstances. In 2010, Dr. Myers was appointed to the Kentucky Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission by Governor Beshear. Raised in rural Meade County, near Battletown, Dr. Myers received a B.A. in English from Kentucky Wesleyan College, a M.A. in English from Eastern Kentucky University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Louisville.



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# Grass Chiggers and Blackberries

By Georgia Green Stamper

I used to think that grass chiggers stalked everyone's childhood, but to my amazement, I've run into people from other parts of the country who don't know about them. By rights, the chigger should be our official state insect — if we must have one. After all, the epicenter of the parasite's international breeding grounds lies in Kentucky, possibly on our Owen County farm. But no, Kentucky bestows that dubious honor to the viceroy butterfly, an elegant bug, I admit, but why should personality and good looks determine every election?

The chigger does keep good company, though. The blackberry, its best friend, is Kentucky's official fruit — which is the exception that breaks the rule. Classy breeding and a moneyed background don't always win out in these contests. The blackberry is a weed with thorns, effortlessly fertile when married to our limestone soil. Since Ernie and I have now given up even the pretense of farming, its unruly brambles are running wild on our place.

I got to thinking about this relationship between larvae and fruit this week when I had a passing notion to pluck some organic, mine-but-for-the-getting blackberries on our farm. In July, the fleshy berries come of age in Owen County. They outgrow their adolescent blushing and mature into Rubenesque black beauties. Like the Sirens who lured sailors into shipwreck with songs of desire, the succulent berries seduce the greedy and the innocent alike to wade into the briar patch.

Then I remembered. The summer I was four Mother and I went on a serious blackberry expedition on the overgrown hillside beyond the far pond. Miz Zell True, one of my favorite grown-ups, joined us. She told good stories and made everything fun, so I was excited about our adventure.

Miz Zell told me how we would sprinkle the berries like sunshine on cereal in the morning, and splash milk and sugar over them for an afternoon treat and invite the Gingerbread Man to join us. She told me about the sugary cobbler Mother would make for our supper, and describe how we'd preserve jars of thick jam to spread on hot biscuits to remind us of the taste of summer when winter came.

In their defense, the women dressed me appropriately for berry picking in long pants and sleeves. Maybe I got hot and pulled the protective clothing up or down or off. I do recall that I took along my doll, a boy named Johnny, and kept dropping him in the grass that grows undisturbed beneath the berry briers.

By the end of the day, I'd lost Johnny for good, to everyone's dismay. But I brought home hundreds, maybe even a thousand, chigger bites. Mother couldn't put the head of a straight pin between the itching red welts that stretched from my scalp to the innards of my toes.

For those who haven't been terrorized by the parasitic red bug, I guess I should explain how they operate. They're somewhat more complex

than I realized when I was a kid. The University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture website has this to say:

*Chiggers overwinter as adults in the soil, becoming active in the spring. Eggs are laid on the soil. After hatching, the larvae crawl about until they locate and attach to a suitable host. The larvae do NOT burrow into the skin, but inject a salivary fluid which produces a hardened, raised area around them. Body fluids from the host are withdrawn through a feeding tube. Larvae feed for about 4 days and then drop off and molt to nonparasitic nymphs and adults. Chiggers feed on a variety of wild and domestic animals, as well as humans.*

I would add that chigger larvae thrive in the vegetation that grows unmown beneath the prickly blackberry canes. And when given the chance, they prefer to feed on humans, especially the tender skin in one's most private places. As a fair skinned four year old, however, I was delectable from end to end.

We'd never heard of anti-itching medicines like Benadryl. I don't think we even had calamine lotion. But we did have coal oil, my grandfather's cure for everything. I'm not sure what that is since the phrase has vanished from the lexicon, but I think it's kerosene. Whatever it is, it was Gran's elixir, and he proceeded to fill a galvanized washtub with coal oil and cold water.

I was too miserable to resist when he dunked me under. In my memory, the itching did subside some then, but the burning began. I was in agony for days until my welts broke open, oozed, and eventually scabbed over. The rest of my childhood was not chigger-bite-free, of course, but the larvae never again got a chance to mutilate my body because — being no fool — I avoided the blackberry patch, its primary lair, like the plague.

And so I decided not to go blackberry picking at the farm last week. Instead, I purchased some fine berries — on sale, too — at the supermarket. They probably emigrated from Ecuador while local blackberries go begging, but there is a limit to how politically correct I can stand to be.

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## About the Author

Georgia Green Stamper is a seventh generation Kentuckian. A graduate of Transylvania University, Stamper is a former high school English and theater teacher and speech team coach. Her published works include *Butter in the Morning* and *You Can Go Anywhere*. She also writes a bi-weekly column, "Georgia: On My Mind," for *The Owenton News-Herald*. She has been a regular commentator for NPR member station WUKY affiliated with the University of Kentucky and a popular member of the Kentucky Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau.



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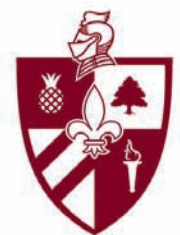
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## Acceptance, unabridged

Bellarmine University embraces students from all backgrounds. Our smaller class sizes allow professors to give personal attention needed for academic success. While the tight-knit student body, over eighty student organizations and location in the heart of Louisville's Highlands provide a traditional college experience. **Bellarmine University, education unabridged.**

Bellarmine University admits qualified students of any age, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, color, religion, and national or ethnic origin.



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[bellarmine.edu](http://bellarmine.edu)