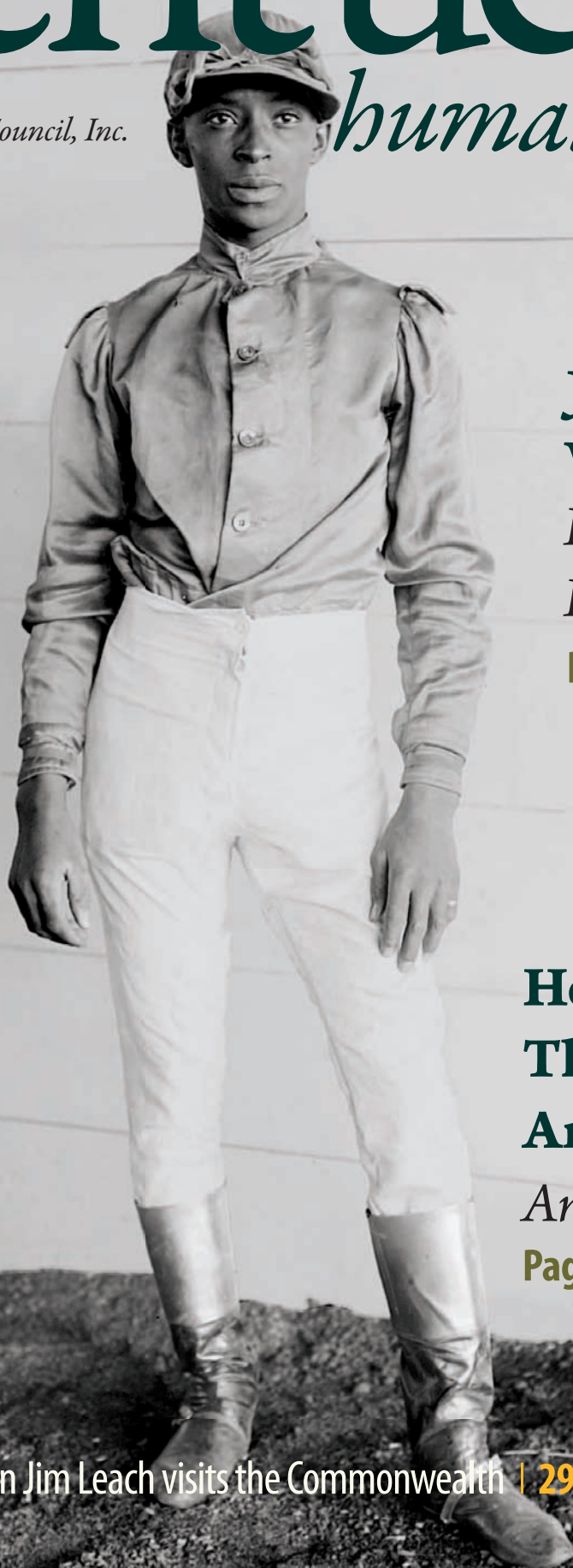


Kentucky

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**Jimmy
Winkfield**
*Raised in the
Hamlets*

Page 14

**Man and
Plants**

*Beneficial
Relationship*

Page 11

**Henry Clay:
The Essential
American**

An Excerpt

Page 21

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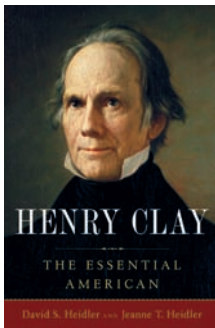
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14

Raised in the Hamlets

How Kentucky became the center of horse racing and breeding in the United States.



21

Henry Clay: The Essential American

By David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler

29

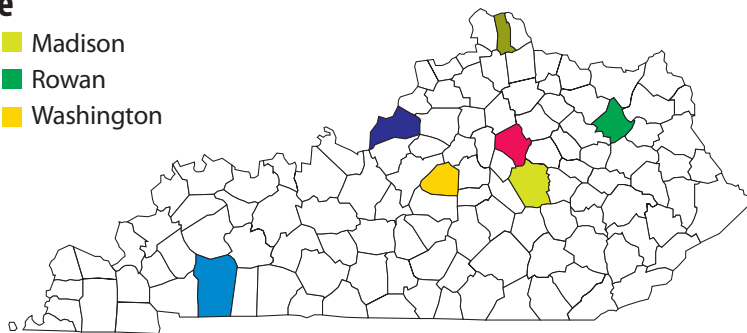
Words Do Matter

NEH Chairman Jim Leach visits Kentucky.



In this issue

- Christian
- Fayette
- Jefferson
- Madison
- Rowan
- Washington
- Kenton



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On the cover: Kentucky native Jimmy Winkfield, Keeneland Library, Cook Collection.

Celebrating the Season

There were moments it seemed as if the long, dark days of winter would never end. But as always, Kentucky has rewarded us for our patience with the enchanting sights and sounds of spring in the Bluegrass — birds chirping as the sun rises, blooming dogwood trees lining the streets, the call to the post, and families gathered for long afternoons on the porch.

As a celebration of spring, Dr. Thomas Barnes looks at the relationship between people and plants, revealing several myths and legends that have been passed down for generations. An award-winning author and photographer, you can find his article, as well as several exquisite photos, beginning on page 11.

In addition to the beautiful foliage of spring, Kentuckians are reminded about the change in season with the opening day at Keeneland Race Course followed by the 137th running of the Kentucky Derby. Maryjean Wall gives us the background of how Kentucky became the “Horse Capital of the World” through the stories of famed jockey Jimmy Winkfield and Man o’ War’s loquacious groom Will Harbut, who were residents of Kentucky’s free towns. Her article begins on page 14.

We are privileged to share with you an excerpt from the recently released book, *Henry Clay: The Essential American*. Authors David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler tell the story of Clay from his beginning as a young farm boy in Virginia to becoming the consummate politician, earning recognition as the “Great Compromiser.” At the time of his death, Henry Clay was admired not only by Kentuckians, but by citizens across America. Clay’s devotion to his state and his country is masterfully captured in this biography, one of the best I’ve read.

Because so many of our readers could not be present on April 7th for NEH Chairman Jim Leach’s Kentucky stop on his national civility tour, we’ve held the press on this edition to share it with you. The Chairman gave his “Words Do Matter” lecture to a crowd at Fasig-Tipton Sales Pavilion in Lexington. Read his words and one Kentuckian’s response beginning on page 29.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Kentucky Humanities* and the stories we’ll tell on the following pages. We want to hear your Kentucky stories as well. If you have a story to share, please contact our editor, Marianne Stoess, Marianne.stoess@uky.edu.



Virginia G. Carter
Executive Director
Kentucky Humanities Council

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Virginia G. Carter".



Henry Clay

Margaret Garner



Johnny Green



Justice Harlan



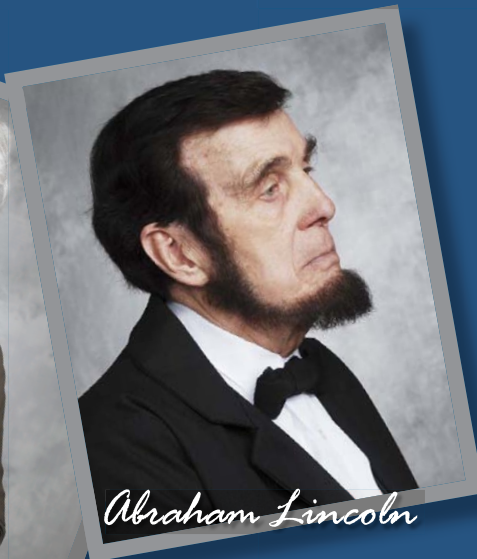
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Emilie Todd Helm



Billy Herndon



Abraham Lincoln

AND *six new additions* coming in August!



Dinnie Thompson



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Three new members join the Kentucky Humanities Council Board of Directors

David V. Hawpe, Minh Nguyen, and John Michael Seelig were elected to the Kentucky Humanities Council board of directors at the November, 2010 Board Meeting. The new directors 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, Hawpe, Nguyen, and Seelig 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.



David V. Hawpe

Hawpe has served in many positions during his forty-year career in the newspaper industry, including: reporter, copy editor, assistant state editor, city editor of *The Louisville Times*, and managing editor, editorial director and editor of the *Courier-Journal*. During his leadership the *Courier-Journal* won four Pulitzer Prizes.

Hawpe has also taught college courses, including an Appalachian studies course at Harvard University, journalism at the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky, and media ethics at Spalding University. His industry-wide work in journalism was devoted to fostering diversity in the media.

In 1994, he was named to the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame and the UK Hall of Distinguished Alumni. In 2009, Hawpe was awarded the James Madison Award for Service to the First Amendment from the Scripps Howard First Amendment Center and received the Distinguished Service Award by the Associated Press Managing Editors. In 2010 Hawpe was appointed to the Morehead State University Board of Regents by Governor Steve Beshear. He is a past president of the Kentucky Press Association and a founding member of the board of visitors for the journalism school at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.



Minh Nguyen

Dr. Nguyen is an associate professor of philosophy and Honors Program faculty member at Eastern Kentucky University. A native of Vietnam, he came to the United States in 1984 and became a U.S. citizen in 1989. Dr. Nguyen attended Columbia University in New York, where he earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics, a master's degree in philosophy, as well as a Ph.D. in philosophy.

He began his teaching career as a part-time lecturer in philosophy at Columbia University in 1993. He went on to serve as a visiting instructor of philosophy at Georgia State University and a visiting assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Louisville. In 2003, Dr. Nguyen began teaching at Eastern Kentucky University.

The founding editor of the *Chautauqua Journal*, he currently serves as the Chautauqua Lecture Coordinator at Eastern. Now in its eleventh year, the ECU Chautauqua Lecture Series seeks to refresh the mind, renew intellectual curiosity, encourage individual expression, and promote civil discourse. Under Dr. Nguyen's direction, an impressive lineup of speakers and performers is scheduled this year.

Seelig has extensive experience in higher education, having published more than fifty papers in scholarly journals and presented several works at professional conferences. Seelig was the recipient of a Fulbright Senior Scholar Program Grant in 1990. He also served as a Fellow for the American Council on Education, where he completed an internship at the University System of Maryland.

Seelig began his career at Morehead State University in 1983. While at Morehead, he served in a wide range of positions including: dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, executive director and chief development officer, general counsel, executive assistant to the president, affirmative action officer, and tenured professor of social work. He also spent seven years serving as the dean of the Caudill College of Humanities. Prior to his retirement in 2010, Seelig served as the associate vice president of academic affairs, university outreach, at Morehead and as interim vice president of academic affairs at the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Seelig attended Ohio State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in biology, a master's degree in public administration and a master's degree in social work. He also holds a law degree from Capital University. Mike Seelig was selected as a Fulbright Scholar to Ethiopia and as an American Council on Education Fellow assigned to the University System of Maryland.



John Michael Seelig



Kentucky Chautauqua®

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Six new dramas added to Kentucky Chautauqua

Six new Kentucky Chautauqua dramas will join the cast in August:

Rev. Newton Bush

Rev. Newton Bush was in the Company "E" 5th United States Colored Cavalry mustered in at Camp Nelson, was wounded at Simpsonville, and worked to try to get a pension on behalf of a widow of a fallen soldier from the Simpsonville Massacre. Rev. Bush is portrayed by Robert Bell, a veteran re-enactor and member of the Kentucky Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission.

John G. Fee

John G. Fee, abolitionist and founder of Berea College, gave up his comfortable life and his property to pursue the cause of abolition, dedicating himself to providing the education he believed was equally important to true emancipation. He is portrayed by Obadiah Ewing-Roush, an MFA student in theatre at the University of Louisville.

Private William Greathouse

On August 24, 1813, at approximately nineteen years of age, William Greathouse answered Governor Shelby's call for militia men to run the British out of Upper Canada. Coming from Bardstown, Greathouse served under Captain Martin H. Wickliffe of Nelson County in Colonel Henry Renick's 5th Regiment. Greathouse's account follows his adventures on this rapidly executed campaign into Canada. The victory at the Thames broke England's power in the Old Northwest and proved to their Native American allies that the British could no longer be relied upon for protection or maintenance. Private Greathouse is portrayed by Harry Smith, who is 15.

Harland Sanders — "Colonel Sanders"

This story is more than that of Kentucky Fried Chicken: It includes lessons learned in the future chicken king's life as well as insights into Sanders, the man. He will be portrayed by Henry Dowell, who currently portrays Dr. Ephraim McDowell for Kentucky Chautauqua.

Mary Settles

Mary Settles, the last survivor of the Pleasant Hill Shakers, was left at the village with her children when her husband learned that she would be of no use in producing the large family he needed to farm in Missouri. Mary Settles saw the Civil War from the point of view

Thank you Congressman Ben Chandler

The Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc. is grateful to Kentucky Congressman Ben Chandler for his continuous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the state humanities councils. Throughout his tenure, Chandler has been a staunch supporter of the humanities and the arts in Kentucky. Congressman Chandler dropped by the Kentucky Humanities Council to answer questions about the future funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Congressman Ben Chandler stopped by the Kentucky Humanities Council office in February and was greeted by Kentucky Chautauqua's George McGee as Henry Clay.

of the Shakers, her adopted extended family. Settles is portrayed by Janet Scott, who coaches opera students in theatre at UK and is an experienced actress with a career in New York.

Governor Isaac Shelby

Governor Isaac Shelby, best known as Kentucky's first governor, was also Kentucky's fifth governor at a time when war with Great Britain was imminent. He dedicated most of his second gubernatorial term to the War of 1812, raising 3,500 Kentucky troops, more than double the number requested. He will be portrayed by Mel Hankla, who currently portrays George Rogers Clark and Simon Kenton.

Yes, they too were Kentuckians

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

Jefferson Davis

1808-1889

By James C. Claypool

A rallying cry among Union soldiers during the Civil War proclaimed, “We will hang Jeff Davis from a sour apple tree.” Given their horrendous casualties and sufferings on the battlefield, such bitterness toward the leader of the Confederate government by Union soldiers is understandable. Yet, ironically, Jefferson Davis, the object of such intense hatred, had once been one of America’s most famous military heroes as well as one of the nation’s foremost statesmen.

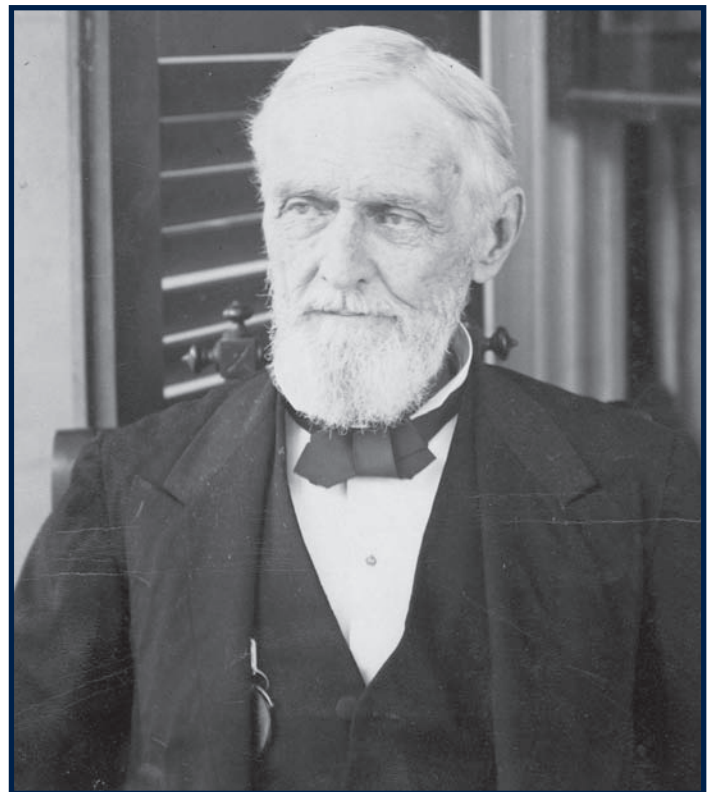
Jefferson Finnis Davis was born in 1808 on a farm in rural western Kentucky. His father, Samuel Davis, named the family’s tenth and last child Jefferson for the contemporary president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, whom Samuel greatly admired. Men in the Davis family, including Samuel Davis, had traditionally served their nation as army officers, some in the Revolutionary War and others in the War of 1812. By 1812, Samuel had relocated his family to Wilkinson County, Mississippi, where their precocious five-year-old son, Jefferson, attended a log cabin school. After two years, Samuel Davis was dissatisfied with his son’s rudimentary education and sent him to study at a school run by Catholic priests in Washington, Kentucky, even though Jefferson was at the time the only Protestant enrolled.

Davis stayed two years in Kentucky, returned home and studied at a prep school in Mississippi. In 1821, at age thirteen, he was judged ready for higher education and entered Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. He spent three years at Transylvania, where he was a popular student, often gaining acclaim both for his singing and speaking abilities. Davis’s father, whose success as a Mississippi planter had placed him in contact with influential state and national politicians, used these political connections to secure his son an appointment in 1824 to West Point. Thus, in keeping with the tradition of males from his family serving as officers in the army, Jefferson Davis reluctantly left Transylvania, not having completed his senior year, and entered the military academy.

Davis, who ranked in the lower half of his class at West Point both academically and for discipline marks, was commissioned a second lieutenant upon his graduation in June 1829 and assigned to an infantry regiment in Wisconsin. His life in the army took its most interesting turn in 1832 when, while he was serving as an

aide to another Kentuckian, future U.S. president Colonel Zachary Taylor, Davis met and fell in love with Taylor’s daughter, Sarah Knox Taylor. Since Taylor did not approve of the match, Davis resigned his commission, and on June 17, 1835, he and Sarah were married.

Tragedy soon struck the newlyweds. While they were visiting Davis’ older sister at her plantation deep in the marshlands of Louisiana, both Sarah and Jefferson contracted malaria. Sarah died on September 15, 1835, just three months after the wedding, and in 1836 after his own difficult recovery, Jefferson Davis, inconsolable over the loss of his wife, moved to a plantation in Mississippi owned by his brother Joseph. Jefferson Davis spent the next eight years as a recluse, reading history, studying government and politics and



Jefferson Davis was born on a farm in rural western Kentucky in 1808. He was the tenth and final child of Samuel Davis, and was named after U.S. President Thomas Jefferson.

Photo courtesy of The Library of Congress

engaging in private conversations about politics with his brother at the plantation in Mississippi.

In 1843, Jefferson Davis, by now somewhat healed and acting on his interest in politics, ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat but lost to his Whig opponent. A year later, Davis ran again and was elected to serve in Mississippi's At-Large District as a member of the House of Representatives. He entered the House on March 4, 1845, and in December married Varina Howell, the seventeen-year-old granddaughter of the late and greatly admired eight-term governor of New Jersey, Richard Howell.

In June 1846, just one month after fighting had begun between the United States and Mexico in the Mexican-American War, Davis resigned his House seat, returned home and raised a volunteer regiment, which he commanded as the regimental colonel. He insisted that his troops were to be armed with the new Whitney percussion rifles; because this was the first regiment to use them, the troops he commanded became known as the "Mississippi Rifles."

In a rather strange twist, Colonel Davis and his regiment were placed under the command of Davis' former father-in-law, Zachary Taylor, now a general. Any tensions that may have existed between Davis and Taylor were quickly set aside once the fighting began. In September 1846, the Mississippi Rifles participated in the siege of Monterrey, Mexico, where they used their new percussion rifles with particular effect against the enemy's infantry. Davis was seen on his horse commanding throughout the battle, urging his troops onward.

In February 1847, at the Battle of Buena Vista Ranch, Davis also played a major role in the American victory. Wounded in the foot early in the battle, with blood filling his boot, Davis stayed mounted in command until his regiment helped carry the day, after which he fainted and was carried to safety. It was later said that Davis had played a command role at

the Battle of Buena Vista second only to the one played by Zachary Taylor, the battle's commanding general. This point was confirmed when Taylor visited Davis' bedside later to recognize his bravery and initiative at Buena Vista and reportedly exclaimed to his former son-in-law, "My daughter, sir, was a better judge of men than I was!"

A national war hero, Davis returned to Mississippi and was appointed in December 1847 by the state's governor to fill a U.S. Senate seat left vacant by a death; he was elected to serve the rest



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Jefferson Davis died in New Orleans on December 6, 1889 at the age of eighty-one. His body was taken from New Orleans to Richmond, Virginia, for burial. His funeral is said to have been one of the largest ever seen in the South.

Photo courtesy of The Library of Congress

of the term in January 1848. Jefferson Davis chaired the Senate Committee on Military Affairs from 1849 until 1851, after which he resigned his Senate seat to run for governor of Mississippi, a race he lost by only 999 votes. Out of office but still politically involved, Davis campaigned in several southern states on behalf of Franklin Pierce, the Democratic candidate for president in 1852. After his election, President Pierce made Davis the secretary of war. Davis' most important work in this post involved a report he submitted to Congress detailing various routes for the proposed Transcontinental Railroad.

Davis resigned his cabinet post to run for the Senate in Mississippi after the Democrats selected James Buchanan, rather than Pierce, as their presidential candidate in 1856. Davis won the election and re-entered the Senate on March 4, 1857. The next four years of Jefferson Davis' life would be history-making as first he struggled to preserve the Union and then headed the government that opposed it. During the first year of his term in the Senate, Davis was quite sick, suffering from an illness that nearly cost him his left eye. On July 4, 1858, Jefferson Davis, one of the nation's most influential Southern senators, while on a sail boat in waters just outside of Boston, delivered a powerful anti-secessionist speech that captured headlines nationally. Three months later, in another speech at Boston, he eloquently reiterated his position by urging all parties

concerned to join together to help preserve the Union.

Davis, like his southern colleagues in Congress, believed that states had the right to secede from the Union, but he believed doing so would be both a serious mistake and a national tragedy. Lincoln's election as president in November 1860 placed the nation at the brink of war. Davis was now conflicted by the realities of Lincoln's election and his understanding of what results might lay ahead. As secretary of war under Pierce, Davis had become convinced that the Southern states did not have the military and naval resources to defend themselves. But war was looming imminent in the spring of 1861 and Jefferson Davis was once again to become a reluctant victim of his Southern heritage.

South Carolina's departure from the Union in December 1860 set the stage for ten other Southern states, including Davis' home state of Mississippi, to secede. Davis' last speech before his departure from the Senate was a summation of a life now entangled by forces seemingly beyond any one individual's control. As he rose to bid his farewell, Davis delivered what was perhaps his finest speech. They were words from the heart, a speech that spoke of his love for his country, of his military service and of the personal sadness he felt because of the Union's fragmenting. When he concluded, there were many wet eyes on the Senate floor as well as audible weeping in the galleries. Even the Senate's grim-faced Republicans seemed to understand that this was a man who loved his nation more than they had ever suspected.

Davis' four years as president of the Confederacy (1861-65) were controversial. Perhaps he would have been better posted as a general in command of an army. Who can say? His supporters in the South revered him as a tragic statesman swept away by forces beyond his control. His detractors, both in the North and the South, slandered and maligned him as being weak and ineffective. He survived the war, was captured, charged with treason, imprisoned for two years and then was set free in 1869. In his later years, Davis traveled abroad extensively and in 1881 completed a two-volume book entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*.

In October 1889, Davis' *Short History of the Confederate States of America* was released. Both of his books remain standard source materials concerning the history of the American Civil War. He died in New Orleans on December 6, 1889, of unknown causes, at age eighty-one. His body was taken from New Orleans for burial in Richmond, Virginia, by continuous day and night cortège, producing a funeral said to have been one of the largest ever seen in the South. The South is dotted with memorials to Jefferson Davis, but perhaps the most impressive stands near Davis's birthplace just outside of Fairview, Kentucky, a two-hundred-foot obelisk paid for entirely by private donors.

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 Speakers Bureau.

Beneficial Relationship

Humans and plants have a history spanning centuries

By Thomas G. Barnes

Humans and plants have a long and interesting relationship. Plants have been used, abused, and manipulated by humans for centuries and recorded in posterity from the ancient Greeks like Theophrastus (370- 275 B.C.E.) to the modern day.

But plants have also benefited from our hand in that we have studied and discovered ways to alter plants so they may be used in food and medicine. One only need to look to the apple, which originates from Central Asia in southern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Today the number of apple varieties we've bred exceeds seventy-five hundred.

Much of the plant business relates to science and nature, but how does the relationship between humans and plants apply to the arts and humanities?

Plants inspired many famous works of art including pieces by renowned artist Georgia O'Keeffe. Similarly, writers and

poets often used the dynamic between plants and humans in their work. In his poem "Hamatreya," Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "The earth laughs in flowers." And author Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "The Amen of nature is always a flower." Plants also have contributed to the arts and humanities throughout history through the use of herbal remedies and the development of common myths and legends surrounding plants.

Looking again at the apple, one of the most beloved American legends is the story of Johnny Appleseed, who wandered west through the frontier bringing tasty apples to the next village. While it is true that John Chapman *did* plant apple trees and that he had a clever business plan for doing so, his intention was not to generate the wonderful tasty apples we have today; rather, his plan was to use the apples for making hard cider or applejack, the alcoholic drinks of choice on the frontier.

These are some interesting myths and legends about plants.



One of my favorite stories about the naming of a plant is our native passionflower, *Passiflora incarnata*. This is a large, showy perennial vine with highly fragrant flowers and an edible pod. It is the sole larval host plant for several fritillary butterfly species. The legend of how the plant was named goes back to the Jesuit priests bringing Christianity to the Native Americans. The priests observed the natives eating the fruit, which they believed cured insomnia and relieved stress.

This observation resulted in the Jesuits believing that the natives were “hungry” for Christianity because they called the flower “flos passionis” or “flor de las cinco llagas” which is interpreted to be the flower of the five wounds. The Jesuits believed this was the flower that grew at the cross when Christ was crucified as told in a vision by St. Francis of Assisi. The Jesuits based the reason for the name on the structure of the flower where five petals and five sepals represented the ten Apostles (Peter was omitted because he denied Jesus and Judas was left out for his betrayal of Jesus.) The fringed crown represented the crown of thorns worn by Jesus, the five stamens represented the five wounds, the ovary represented the hammer and the three styles represented the nails. Hence we get the name today, passionflower.

One of the more entertaining myths or legends about plants is the story of the Indian Paintbrush. Only one species of this flower exists in Kentucky, *Castilleja coccinea*, and it is listed by the state as endangered. There are more than two hundred species of this flower, which mostly occur in western North America. One species is the state flower of Wyoming. In Kentucky, our species is a hemiparasite on little bluestem grass and grows in limestone glades. The genus is named in honor of the Spanish botanist Domingo Castillejo. The legend of the Indian Paintbrush, which has been retold by Tomie DePaloma, describes how a young Native American called Little Gopher was not strong and virile like many of the other boys in the tribe. He was not destined to become a warrior. The wise Shaman recognized that Little Gopher had a unique talent and told him he would not be remembered as a great warrior but that he would be remembered for something special, his artistic talents. So

Little Gopher headed up the hill one evening to think about becoming a man and how he could put his special talents to use. He went home and made some brushes and paint and began to paint the colors of the evening sky. He produced beautiful paintings but he was disappointed because none of his art came close to capturing the magnificence of the sunset. One night Little Gopher had a dream at the place where he watched the sunsets, and when he woke the following morning he discovered brushes of every color in the evening sunset. Little Gopher began





*clematis
crispa*



*painted
trillium*

to paint and continued painting until he succeeded in creating a masterpiece. When he went down the hill to show his painting to the tribe, all the brushes he had used to create his masterpiece had taken root, covering the hills with the flowers of the evening sunset!

In the not too distant past, humans collected wildflowers for their medicinal properties. The “old timers” used to know all the various plants in the woods that could be eaten or used for medicine, and they passed this information on to future generations via oral traditions. Much of that knowledge is now being lost, as people do not go outdoors or collect plants today like our forefathers did. However, plants are important both for modern medicine and herbal or alternative medicine. Today more than forty percent of our modern pharmaceuticals are plant-derived in origin.

Herbalists continue to use plants — one of the most commonly used plants is ginseng. Ginseng has been used by herbalists for more than two thousand years and it’s still widely used today to treat a variety of ailments including: improving mental alertness, coronary heart disease, fatigue, chronic pulmonary disease, immune system enhancements, menopause, dementia, and a whole host of other health related issues. Because ginseng is used for so many treatments of such various natures, scientists began studying the effects of ginseng and its interaction with other drugs. Ginseng interacts with more than one hundred pharmaceutical drugs and can negatively affect the activity of blood thinning drugs, diabetes medications, the way the liver metabolizes drugs, and other potentially dangerous interactions like erectile dysfunction drugs. Because ginseng can interact with almost half the known modern pharmaceutical medicines available today, it is always wise to consult with a physician before taking it or any other herbal remedy.

Unfortunately, wildflowers are at risk from a variety of causes ranging from global climate change to habitat loss to collecting for the garden. Perhaps as we gain a little insight into the relationship between plants and humans, we can learn to love and protect our remaining wildflower resources.

About the Author

Dr. Barnes is the Kentucky state Extension Wildlife Specialist and a full professor in the Department of Forestry at the University of Kentucky. He holds his doctorate in wildlife and fisheries sciences from Texas A&M University, a master of science in wildlife and fisheries science from South Dakota State University, and a bachelor of arts from Huron College in South Dakota. Dr. Barnes has been a part of the Department of Forestry faculty at UK for twenty years and is an internationally published, award-winning author and photographer. During this tenure he has published more than thirty-five research papers, forty-eight extension publications and more than sixty regional and national magazine articles.

Dr. Barnes is the author and photographer of *Kentucky’s Last Great Places*. Other notable books written and photographed include the popular *Gardening For The Birds, Wildflowers and Ferns of Kentucky*, and *Rare Wildflowers of Kentucky*. Dr. Barnes’ most recent book, *Finding and Photographing Kentucky Wildflowers*, is due out this spring. He is a commissioned Kentucky Colonel and is a member of the Leadership Kentucky Class of 2000.



gentian

Raised in the Hamlets

Residents of the free towns helped make Kentucky the center of horse racing and breeding in the United States

Image courtesy of Keeneland Library, Cook Collection

Jimmy Winkfield



By Maryjean Wall

Jimmy Winkfield, living like a baron at his palatial home near Paris, France, would have dazzled the folk he left behind in Chilesburg, east of Lexington at the heart of Bluegrass horse country. The dapper bon vivant of continental manners who had acquired fluency in Russian and French had befriended the Czar's court, saved some two hundred and fifty Thoroughbreds from certain slaughter at the hands of Bolsheviks, and wound up in France, an esteemed horseman among the Paris sporting set. At the French race tracks, people adoringly called Winkfield "Le Blackman" in an obvious reference to his race.¹

Kentuckians knew nothing at the time of Winkfield's adventurous life. But this Kentuckian never forgot where he came from. On the run from Bolsheviks in 1919, fleeing with others for their lives on the horses they rescued and rode through the southwestern Ukraine, across Moldavia, Romania, and into Poland, Winkfield recalled exclaiming something like, "This ain't no longer a fit place for a small colored man from Chilesburg, Kentucky, to be."²

¹ Two excellent autobiographies about Jimmy Winkfield are Joe Drape, *Black Maestro: The Epic Life of an American Legend* (New York: William Morrow, 2006) and Edward Hotaling, *Wink: the incredible life and epic journey of Jimmy Winkfield* (Camden, Me.: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

² Roy Terrell, "Around the World in 80 Years," *Sports Illustrated*, May 8, 1961.



Woodburn Farm

Photo courtesy of Maryjean Wall

Chilesburg, Jonestown, Bracktown, Maddoxtown, among some twenty-nine rural African American communities throughout Central Kentucky were home to numerous persons who worked on horse, hemp, or tobacco farms either as laborers in the barns or as domestics within the great houses. Locals variously called these settlements “hamlets” or “free towns.” The settlements were of great importance to the horse farm community as well as to the region’s tobacco farming and before that, hemp farming.

Winkfield, of Chilesburg, and Will Harbut of Maddoxtown were the two best-known residents of these hamlets, for they received international renown. Isaac Murphy, the best known among black horsemen and three-time Kentucky Derby winner, did not come from a rural hamlet. He was raised in the city of Lexington. Winkfield won the Kentucky Derby twice as a jockey (he was the last African American jockey to have won the race, in 1902). This occurred prior to his leaving the United States for an eventful career in Russia, Poland, and France. Harbut, Man o’ War’s groom at Faraway Stud in Lexington, received a great amount of attention in his storied role as the horse’s loquacious and memorable caretaker. Both men stood out for their achievements among residents of the free towns. Yet they were only two among legions of African American horsemen who, born and raised in the hamlets, helped secure Bluegrass Kentucky’s position as the center of racing and breeding in the United States.³

Hamlets were so integral to the economic development of Central Kentucky that two scholars have questioned whether the iconic, manicured landscape of Bluegrass horse country would appear as it does today had not the free towns drawn residents to work on the farms following the Civil War. Horse country’s unique landscape bespeaks big money on a global scale, and the residents of the hamlets greatly assisted the region in attaining its claim as Horse Capital of the World. As Peter C. Smith and Karl B. Raitz have written, synergistic social and economic relationships developed between the rural African Americans and the white farm owners.⁴

Agricultural losses from the war “were incalculable,” wrote Smith and Raitz. Armies from both North and South as well as guerrillas and even common criminals had ruined crops and stole livestock. Losses to the Thoroughbred and Standardbred breeds were huge, with raiders having run off with valuable horses. Robert Aitcheson Alexander’s Woodburn Farm, the largest and most successful breeding operation in Central Kentucky, withstood two raids on its horses before Alexander, in despair, shipped some three hundred trotters and Thoroughbreds north to Illinois in 1865. As Smith and Raitz noted, “Prewar production capacity was only slowly reestablished.” The problem in getting the breeding business and the farming of hemp and tobacco up and running again stood not only in acquiring new breeding stock or materials but in finding labor to work the farms.⁵

³ For more on Isaac Murphy see, Maryjean Wall, “Kentucky’s Isaac Murphy, a Legacy Interrupted,” *Master’s Thesis, University of Kentucky*, 2003.

⁴ Peter C. Smith and Karl B. Raitz, “Negro Hamlets and Agricultural Estates in Kentucky’s Inner Bluegrass,” *Geographical Review*, Vol. 64: 2 (April 1974), 217-234.

⁵ On the raids at Woodburn Farm, see Maryjean Wall, *How Kentucky Became Southern: a tale of Outlaws, Horse Thieves, Gamblers, and Breeders* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010).

For years following the war, landowners faced a labor crisis as former slaves abandoned rural regions and fled to nearby towns or cities. In a brilliant stroke that proved advantageous to both sides, landowners managed to lure labor back to the farms by giving away or selling cheap tracts of land at the rear of their farms. An agency called The Intelligence Office, created in Fayette County, attempted to restore good feelings between the races and to connect job-seeking freedmen with white farm owners and other employers. At a meeting in 1869, a group of African Americans expressed willingness to enter into working arrangements with white employers. With this, free towns began cropping up throughout Central Kentucky.⁶

Settlements grew into hamlets, with populations of perhaps fifty persons. A few of the free towns built their own churches, schools, and general stores. The economic divide between farm owners and workers meant that free towns presented a visual image quite the opposite of the main portions of the manicured horse farms. Winkfield's daughter, Liliane Casey, recalled the typical dwelling at Chilesburg as "more like a shack... a wooden house with no

running water, no facilities, and a water pump situated outdoors." Nonetheless the economic dependency between farm owner and hamlet residents, and vice versa, remained strong. The farm owners provided work and income for the hamlet residents. As for the farm owners, Smith and Raitz wrote that "...it can be conjectured that if the hamlets had not been created in the decades immediately following the Civil War, many of the large estates would have failed for want of reliable labor and the present Bluegrass might have been quite different today, both socially and agriculturally."⁷

A small number of free towns actually predated those founded specifically after the war to ease the rural labor shortage. Four of the hamlets — Coletown, Fort Spring, Little Georgetown, and Firmantown — arose after slaves had been manumitted upon the death of their owners and according to terms of the owners' wills were granted small portions of the estate property. Local folklore holds that Calumet Farm's crackerjack race horse of 1947, Coaltown, received his name in recognition of Coletown, albeit in a slight misspelling.⁸

⁶ Peter Craig Smith, "Negro Hamlets and Gentlemen Farms: a Dichotomous Rural Settlement Pattern in Kentucky's Bluegrass Region," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1972, 38. The postbellum labor situation also receives attention in Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky, Vol. 1: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Frankfort: The Kentucky Historical Society, 1992).

⁷ Smith & Raitz, 226; Liliane Casey interview with Maryjean Wall, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001.

⁸ Smith and Raitz, 227.

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For the most part, African American hamlets evolved during the decade following the war. For example, Cadentown began in 1867, after an Irishman named Owen Caden purchased some forty-three acres at the intersection of Todd's and Liberty Roads east of Lexington. He began selling tracts of this land to African Americans in 1869 and continued to do so for the next ten years. Some fifteen families purchased land at what became known as Cadentown. The majority of purchases were from one to two acres.⁹

Bracktown developed after a former slave, Frederick Braxton, purchased twenty-one acres as four separate tracts northwest of Lexington, near Leestown Road. Braxton, a blacksmith, was also a clergyman who succeeded London Ferrill as minister of First African Baptist Church in Lexington, prior to the Civil War. The church split and Rev. Braxton led the Independent Baptist Church, renamed Main Street Baptist. He also led First Baptist Bracktown, then a branch of Main Street Baptist. Braxton acquired his land northwest of Lexington between 1867 and 1869 and oversaw the initial development of a settlement until his death in 1886. When Col. E. R. Bradley purchased his Idle Hour Farm nearby on Old Frankfort Pike early in the twentieth century, Bracktown served as a source of labor for Idle Hour

Farm, home of four Kentucky Derby winners: Behave Yourself, Bubbling Over, Burgoon King, and Brokers Tip.¹⁰

Maddoxtown began after Margaret Hollum, an African American, purchased a piece of land in 1871 from a land speculator named Samuel Maddox. She paid \$175 for two acres along Huffman Mill Pike, north of Lexington. By 1877, seven families took up residence in the growing community. Numerous others came later.

As free towns began evolving throughout Central Kentucky, their presence suggested that rural housing and work patterns would differ significantly for African Americans in the central section of this border state from those in the deeper South and even in the western portion of the Commonwealth. Central Kentucky's rural blacks would not take up sharecropping and operate under the crop-lien system to the extent that southern freedmen became enmeshed in this economic form of neo-slavery. The share-cropping and farm tenancy systems of the Deep South — the South of cotton, rice, and sugar plantations — held blacks in isolation from one another, thus challenging any sense of close community. In contrast, rural African Americans in Central Kentucky had the opportunity to own their own land and live closely connected to one another, physically and socially, in tightly knit communities.¹¹

⁹ Celine Finney, "A Place to Call their Own: the Cultural and Historic Landscape of Cadentown, Kentucky," Master's Project Proposal, University of Kentucky Center for Historic Architecture and Preservation, 2003, 11.

¹⁰ Robyn Bauw, Rachele Green, Amy Hill, Jessica Palmer, Glen Payne, "Cultural Resource Survey of Bracktown, Fayette County, Kentucky," unpublished report, University of Kentucky Center for Historic Architecture and Preservation, 2004; Darbydan.com.

¹¹ Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture 1865-1980* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 27, discusses the widespread poverty and landlessness inherent to the southern sharecropping system. See also Pete Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures since 1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985). Jack Temple Kirby also wrote about these conditions in *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

Man o' War and Will Harbut



Image courtesy of University of Kentucky Archives

Development of the hamlets also changed the appearances of the park-like estates iconic to horse country. The antebellum Bluegrass estate typically saw the slave cabins clustered at the rear of the owner's mansion. With the rise of hamlets following the Civil War, housing for African Americans moved to the rear of these farms, generally out of sight of the main road and certainly out of sight of the main residence. Residents of the free towns grew their own vegetable gardens and might keep a cow or horse or a few hogs. This postwar change in housing patterns left the mansion of the landowner standing alone at the front of the estate.¹²

The clustering of blacks in free towns to the rear of these estates led Kentuckians of later generations to believe that the hamlets represented rural segregation along narrow country roads. This assumption was incorrect. Some of the hamlets included a few white residents. The primary purpose for the hamlets remained one of supplying surrounding farms with labor. While the men worked in the barns and farm fields, the women of the free towns found employment outside the home which one Maddoxtown resident, Martha Rankin, called working "out." She found work keeping house for Susan Fisher, at one time the owner of Dixiana Farm. Rankin recalled how someone from the Fisher estate would arrive at her house in nearby Maddoxtown every morning around 9 a.m. in an automobile to take her to the farm. She worked until approximately 5:30 p.m. "every day except Sunday."¹³

The notion of blacks "segregated" to these rural enclaves no doubt grew greater from the early 1920s onwards when some fifty thousand persons travelled the Huffman Mill Pike in Lexington to view the great horse, Man o' War. Maddoxtown lay across the pike from Faraway Farm where Man o' War lived until his death in 1947. Visitors passing by the hamlet would have formed impressions of black life in Kentucky within a context of a culture bounded by segregation laws.

They might or might not have realized that Man o' War's groom, Harbut, resided in Maddoxtown within a short walk of Faraway Farm and the barn housing the famous horse. Harbut would not have talked about where he lived and probably no one would have inquired. In the spellbinding presence of Man o' War all talk centered on the horse. Harbut developed a spiel about Man o' War that he delivered with a flair that no visitor forgot.

"This is Man o' War," Harbut would commence his talk. He would work his way up to showing the handsome red Thoroughbred only after presenting the other stallions in the barn. Harbut would chasten the fidgety Man o' War. "Stand still, Red," he would say. "No, M'am, I'm sorry, but I can't give you no hairs out of his tail." Then the spiel began: "He was foaled right over there at Major Belmont's farm and Mr. Riddle bought him for five thousand dollars. A few years ago a man offered Mr. Riddle a million dollars for him and Mr. Riddle said 'No.' He said any man could have a million dollars, but only one man could have Man o' War."¹⁴

Harbut would wind up a lengthy recitation of Man o' War's legendary racing career with a summation that became famous: "He is the mostest horse!" People came to hear Harbut as much as to see Man o' War. The British ambassador was among many famous persons who visited Man o' War and witnessed Harbut's presentation. The ambassador reportedly remarked, "It was worth coming halfway around the world to hear that."¹⁵

¹² Smith and Raitz, 224, 227.

¹³ Martha Rankin interview with Maryjean Wall, Lexington, 2005.

¹⁴ Page Cooper and Roger L. Treat, *Man o' War* (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1959), 138-139. Conversation is altered from the vernacular used in the book. See also Joe H. Palmer, *This Was Racing*, ed. Red Smith (Lexington: Henry Clay Press, 1973), 80.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

And what of Jimmy Winkfield, who was building his reputation in Europe while Harbut built his in company with Man o' War?

Americans began to learn about Winkfield's continental life only in the 1960s, when he returned to the United States, and received an invitation to attend the annual Derby-week dinner of the National Turf Writers' Association as a guest. The dinner was held at the Brown Hotel in Louisville, where Winkfield was confronted with an obstruction he had not experienced in Russia or in Europe. For it was at the front entrance of the Brown Hotel that a doorman denied Winkfield entrance, saying the hotel was for whites only. Winkfield tried to explain that he had been invited to a dinner; he asked the doorman to send word to the turf writer who had invited him, and the turf writer successfully intervened. However the evening was not the success it might have been. Like Winkfield's frightening ride across the Ukraine when escaping the Bolsheviks, the Brown Hotel's front door during racially segregated years was "no place for a colored man from Chilesburg to be."¹⁶

Winkfield was not unaccustomed to racial prejudice in the United States. After winning the Kentucky Derby twice, in 1901 on His Eminence and in 1902 on Alan-a-Dale, Winkfield had departed the

United States to ride races in Russia. He left partly as a result of a brash mistake he made, choosing to ride one white owner's horse despite previously contracting to ride another white owner's horse. This left him blacklisted, without sufficient mounts to achieve the financial success he had previously enjoyed.¹⁷

Winkfield's decision to leave for Europe also appeared to have been based on racial prejudice. The race tracks, like the larger American culture, were undergoing a racial purge following the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1896 which legalized segregation. Racial resentment stood at an all-time high in the United States, with lynching of blacks at the highest numbers. An unfounded paranoia ran rampant through the American psyche: a fear of black males raping white women.¹⁸

Until this time black jockeys and black trainers had occupied positions of high visibility at the head of the sport of horse racing. But the societal changes saw black horsemen pushed literally to the back of the bus: black jockeys virtually disappeared from the sport. Thoroughbred racing did not want its female patrons cheering for horses ridden by black jockeys, when segregated society preyed on fears of black men raping white women. Winkfield's daughter,

¹⁶ *Hotaling*, 290-291.

¹⁷ *Drape*, 111.

¹⁸ *On the paranoid fear of the rape of white women by blacks*, see Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: black/white relations in the American South since emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).



Photo courtesy of the Kentucky Historical Society

Liliane Casey of Cincinnati, said her father said he had received threats before leaving the United States.¹⁹

After riding successfully in Europe, Winkfield moved on to Russia. Here he achieved such success that he circulated among the court of the Czar Nicholas II. Winkfield was said to dine on caviar for breakfast and earn some \$100,000 yearly in riding fees: quite a sum for the early 1900s. As well, this represented quite a sum for the young man formerly from the hamlet of Chilesburg, Kentucky. However, as a newly minted member of the upper class, Winkfield was forced to flee during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Some among this elite class sought a haven in Odessa, along the shores of the Black Sea, where horse racing temporarily continued. But not for long.

When the revolutionaries descended south to Odessa, the horsemen fled for their lives — again. Years later Winkfield told a writer for *Sports Illustrated* how these horsemen took 260 valuable thoroughbreds with them while fleeing through the southwestern Ukraine, through Moldavia, into Romania, and on to Poland, to Warsaw. Miraculously, all but eight of the horses survived. Soon the horses and horsemen were back at work, racing in Warsaw, Winkfield among them. Eventually he moved to France where, as in Russia, he learned the language, revived his success and, when he became too old to ride races, turned to training Thoroughbreds for a new career. He married the daughter of a baron. He built his own

multi-story chateau which he staffed with servants. Horse stables lined the property and from those stables Winkfield conducted a highly successful racing operation.

Winkfield's continental success in Russia and later in France paralleled in some ways the personal achievement that Will Harbut attained as Man o' War's famous caretaker and storyteller. The life stories of both demonstrate the role that the free towns of Central Kentucky played in building the Bluegrass horse industry. Without the labor force and the occasional star of the horse world that these hamlets produced, Kentucky horse country arguably might never have resurrected itself after the Civil War to become the global industry that it is today.

About the Author

Maryjean Wall, Ph.D., is a graduate of the University of Kentucky and author of *How Kentucky Became Southern: a Tale of Outlaws, Horse Thieves, Gamblers, and Breeders* (University of Kentucky Press, 2010). A member of the Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame, she is a three-time winner of the Eclipse Award, the highest honor in Thoroughbred racing, and a three-time winner of the Hervey Award, the highest honor in Standardbred racing. She retired in 2008 from her longtime position as horse racing writer for the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and now teaches American history to college students.

¹⁹ Casey interview.

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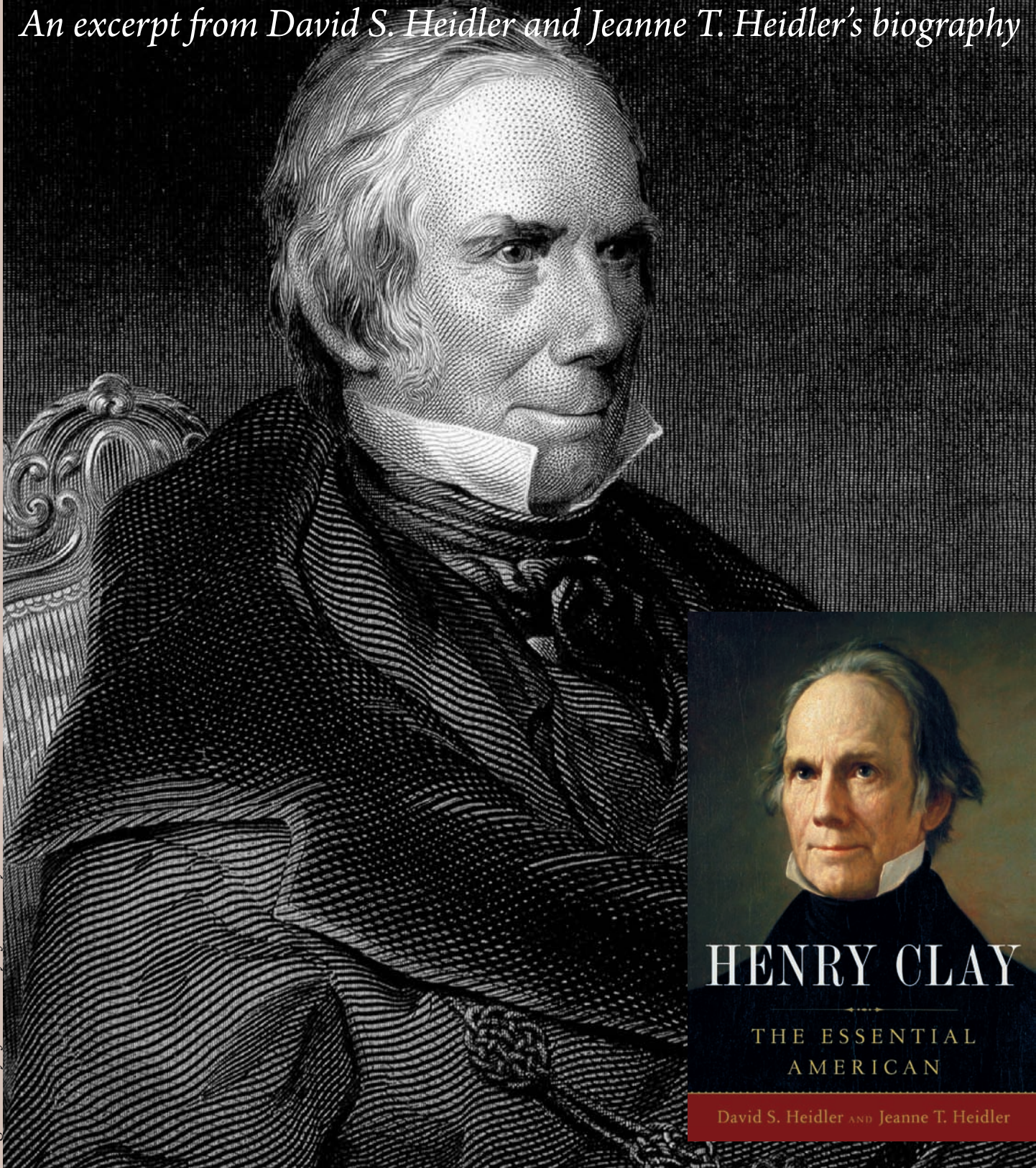


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Prologue

Before the clocks struck noon, Washington's church bells began to toll, a signal to the capital that it was over. The telegraph sent the news across the country, and bells began to ring in cities and towns from the Atlantic coast to the deep interior. One of those first telegrams was sent to Lexington, Kentucky: "My father is no more. He has passed without pain into eternity." Soon that message was speeding to the house nearby called Ashland where an old woman at last had the hard news she had been expecting for months. Her husband of more than fifty years was dead. Lucretia Clay was a widow. The bells in Lexington were already ringing.

Henry Clay was dead. Shop owners across the country paused to stare briefly into the distance before pulling shades and locking doors. Men reflexively pulled watches from their vest pockets and noted the time. The immediacy of the news was sobering. Clay had died at seventeen minutes after eleven that very morning of June 29, 1852. Only a few years before reports of his death would have seeped out of Washington only as fast as the post office and knowledgeable travelers could carry them. People on rivers would have heard about it first, possibly in days, but days would have stretched into weeks before most people learned that the greatest political figure in the nation was dead. Time would have cushioned the blow, weakening its power until it became a piece of history, something that had happened a long way off, a long time ago.

The telegraph made the news of Clay's death instant and therefore indelible. Only hours passed before cities from Maine to Missouri began draping themselves in crepe and men from Savannah to Saint Louis began pulling on black armbands. Washington, already slowed by summer's heat, came to a halt. President Millard Fillmore shut down the government, and Congress immediately adjourned. Members scattered to boarding houses, hotels, and taverns, some to draft eulogies they would deliver the next day in the legislative chambers that Henry Clay had deftly managed for almost a half century. Even after sunset, the bells continued to ring. Cannon at the Navy Yard were firing.

On June 30, the House of Representatives and the Senate heard recollections of Henry Clay. His passing was not unexpected—he

had lain ill in his rooms at the National Hotel for months, and his visitors had been on what amounted to a death watch for weeks—but the expectation did not make its actual occurrence any less piercing. The sense that Clay's death was ending a momentous chapter in the country's history was also sobering. A little more than two years before, Clay's celebrated contemporary John C. Calhoun had died, and another, Daniel Webster, was gradually succumbing to maladies that were soon to carry him off as well. These three had become the fabled Great Triumvirate of American government. More than mere symbols of the Republic, they became personifications of it. The South Carolinian Calhoun was the South with its growing frustrations and emerging belligerency over the slavery issue. New England's Webster had become the conflicting ambiguities of the North with its moral repugnance over slavery and its allegiance to a country constitutionally bound to slavery's preservation. And the Kentuckian Clay was that national ambiguity defined. He was a westerner from the South. Yet he was not southern because he deplored slavery. His owning slaves, however, meant that he was not northern. When an admirer said that "you find nothing that is not essentially AMERICAN in his life" it was meant as a compliment in a divisively sectional time, but in retrospect it was also a warning to the country. Like Henry Clay, it could not long continue to own slaves while denouncing slavery.

When Congress met on June 30, however, it was more in the mood to celebrate Clay's life than find portents in his death. Some members quoted poetry; some of it was good. Several remarked on his humble birth and his admirable efforts to rise above it, a theme that had already become an American political staple by the mid-nineteenth century, an obligatory credential for establishing one's relationship with "the people." And though in some cases, such as Clay's, it was an exaggeration for election campaigns, he had indeed risen, and no less spectacularly because he started from relative comfort rather than poverty. His success resulted from ceaseless labor and fastidious attention to detail. Kentuckian Joseph Underwood reminded the Senate that Clay had been neat in everything from his handkerchiefs to his handwriting. Underwood was not just talking about wardrobes and penmanship.

All realized, some grudgingly, that Clay had become a great

The telegraph made the news of Clay's death instant and therefore indelible. Only hours passed before cities from Maine to Missouri began draping themselves in crepe and men from Savannah to Saint Louis began pulling on black armbands. Washington, already slowed by summer's heat, came to a halt. President Millard Fillmore shut down the government, and Congress immediately adjourned.

statesman. They also had to admit, again some grudgingly, that he had been usually a jovial adversary with his opponents and always an endearing companion to his friends. New York Whig William Seward, destined to become Abraham Lincoln's secretary of state, did not particularly like or admire Clay, but he nevertheless dubbed him "the Prince of the Senate" and recalled that his "conversation, his gesture, his very look, was persuasive, seductive, irresistible." A House Democrat paid tribute to the peerless orator for "the silvery tones of his bewitching voice" and a Kentucky Whig said "he reminded us of those days when there were giants in the land," concluding with Shakespeare's Antony describing Caesar to "say to all the world, This was a man!"

The reference to Caesar was ironic. The closest thing to an American Caesar in Clay's time had been his most implacable foe, Andrew Jackson. "For near a quarter of a century," Virginia's Charles Faulkner observed, "this great Republic has been convulsed to its centre by the great divisions which have sprung from their respective opinions, policy, and personal destinies." But that didn't say the half of it actually. Andrew Jackson's shadow had been over Clay's political life for more than a quarter century in some way or other, starting with Clay's criticism of Jackson's foray into Florida in 1818, their rivalry in the 1824 presidential contest, and clashes during Jackson's presidency that included the titanic struggle over the national bank, a political brawl so devastating that it was called a war. Clay had lost that war. In fact, he had lost almost every time he challenged Andrew Jackson, and worse, he was defined for many Americans by the accusation Jackson and his friends leveled at Clay in 1825. He had, they said, entered into a "corrupt bargain" with John Quincy Adams to give Adams the presidency in exchange for Clay's appointment as secretary of state, a presumed springboard to the presidency. This example of what Americans now call the politics of personal destruction was called by Clay's generation simple candor by his foes, base slander by his friends. The argument over who was right would outlive both Jackson, who died in 1845, and Clay, but as his colleagues took the measure of his life on that hot June day, the question momentarily became irrelevant. When John Breckinridge, a young Democrat from Clay's Kentucky, proclaimed that Clay had been "in the public service for fifty years, and never attempted to deceive his countrymen," it was a slightly oblique jab at Jackson and the charge he had perpetuated. Walker Brooke reminded the Senate and James Brooks the House of Clay's famous response when advised to modify his principles for political advantage: "Sir, I had rather be right than be President." Clay's repeated failures as a presidential aspirant is evidence that he apparently meant it.

Yet Clay's principles had never made him inflexible or doctrinaire, an ineffective posture for a party leader. Twenty years earlier, he had shaped the faction opposed to Andrew Jackson into a political party. Its members became known as Whigs because just as the Whigs of England had objected to the unchecked power of the throne, they resisted "King Andrew's" excessive assumption of authority. Abraham Venable noted that Clay was a highly successful party

leader, his "plastic touch" almost always shaping Whig plans and purposes. Another praised his ability to "relax the rigor of his policy" if it endangered the government and the nation. Those traits had earned his reputation as a political peacemaker. He was the "Great Compromiser" and the "Great Pacificator," labels applied as tributes to a man who had always pursued political goals within the limits of the possible. Congress had the evidence for that in the most recent clash over slavery that had almost destroyed the Union. Clay, gravely ill and fading daily, had helped to save the country from that crisis in his last public act. These men now contemplating his death were ready to see that gesture as one of singular selflessness, a labor that had hastened a frail, old man's demise, making him a martyr to the cause of Union, "a holy sacrifice to his beloved country."

We know now what they could not imagine. Clay's sacrifice was ultimately in vain, and the ungainly compromise he had helped cobble together was already unraveling as he died. The country had no more compromises in it, and only nine years later the Union that Clay knew and loved would disappear. The congressional eulogies on June 30 contained subtle hints of the divisions that would finally split that Union and turn its political arguments into a civil war. Of the thirteen eulogies in the House of Representatives, all but three were delivered by Whigs, and they were mostly from the East. Not a single New Englander rose to praise Henry Clay, and aside from two representatives from Kentucky, only congressmen from Tennessee and Indiana, both Whigs, spoke for the West. No representative from the Deep South spoke for Clay. The only southerners who did so were from Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland. Many in the House apparently followed the rule that when unable to say anything good, to say nothing at all.

The time was fast coming—perhaps it had already arrived—when even a Great Pacificator could not soothe such troubled political waters. One Democrat even tinged his remarks with mild spite. Virginia senator Robert M. T. Hunter was still smarting from the bruising fight over the Compromise of 1850 and could not keep himself from reciting a series of backhanded compliments that damned with faint praise: Clay was not well educated but had managed to achieve success anyway; clearly past his prime, he had soldiered on; never bright or prescient, he at least had never exaggerated matters for political effect. Hunter closed by inviting the Senate to gaze upon the ghost of the Democrat Calhoun, the man Hunter clearly regarded as a genuine intellect and great statesman. Some muttered about Clay's popularity in death spanning the political breach and took small comfort in the reality that it was bad form to speak ill of the dead. Four days after the congressional eulogies, Democratic newspaper editor Frances Preston Blair privately grouched that Democrats had made the best speeches but had apparently forgotten that Clay was a Whig.

Nobody could forget, however, that Clay was a friendly, persistently cheerful man whose mark on the country was as indelible as his influence on its politics was profound. "The good and great can never die," said Walker Brooke, and Maryland's

He began by noting how different people would remember different Henry Clays. There was the Clay of youth and ambition, the Clay of great accomplishment and renown, the Clay of the sickroom, feeble but cheerful, and the Clay who rose to defend the beleaguered Union. But there was also the Henry Clay who had embodied all that was great and good about America.

Richard J. Bowie observed that Clay’s “name is a household word, his thoughts are familiar sentences.” But Alabama senator Jeremiah Clemens, who happened to be a Democrat, spoke the simplest and most poignant sentiment because it was the most personal. He disagreed with Henry Clay about almost everything, but that was of no relevance now. “To me,” Clemens said simply, “he was something more than kind.”



The next morning Clay came to the Capitol for the last time. Overnight Washington had dressed its buildings in black. As dignitaries spent the morning gathering at the National Hotel, the church bells resumed their tolling, and the cannon at the Navy Yard began firing as they had the previous night, one report every sixty seconds, hence their label as minute guns. All flags were at half-staff. It was 11:00 a.m., and the day was steaming hot, making black attire even more oppressive.

It took an hour to organize everyone, but at noon the procession finally moved out for the Capitol, only a few blocks east. It headed up Pennsylvania Avenue behind two military companies and a regimental band setting a slow pace with dirges and muffled drums. The Senate Committee on Arrangements, wearing white scarves, and the Senate pall-bearers with black scarves, led the funeral car, an elaborate creation covered in black cloth, its corners decorated by gilded torches wrapped in crepe, silver stars fastened to its sides, and a canopy of intertwined black and white silk arching over the coffin. Six white horses, each attended by a groom dressed in white, pulled the car up the avenue. A silent multitude lined the route. The slow pace took the procession almost an hour to cover the short distance to the Capitol’s portico that opened to the Rotunda.

President Fillmore, cabinet officers, and the diplomatic corps entered the Senate Chamber at 12:20 p.m., and shortly afterward they were followed by the congressional chaplains, the pallbearers and the casket, Clay’s son Thomas, friends, Senators, Representatives, Supreme Court justices, judges, senior military officers, mayors from Washington and other major cities, civic groups, and militiamen. The absolute silence of such a large gathering, especially among the citizens packing the gallery above, was eerie. As the casket was brought in, the imposing figure of Senate chaplain Charles M. Butler, clad in high canonical robes, stepped forward and broke the hush: “I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord.”

The coffin was placed in the center of the chamber. The coffin was a distracting novelty, made of metal and shaped to resemble the human form and with weighty silver mountings and handles. A large, thick silver plate bore the inscription HENRY CLAY, and another just above it could be removed to reveal the corpse’s face under a glass pane, a practice to make sure that the encased body really was lifeless and avoid the nineteenth century’s greatest nightmare, being buried alive. The president, vice president, and Speaker of the House sat nearest the coffin at the center. Senators, diplomats, family, and friends formed a semi-circle just beyond. Congressmen and visiting dignitaries filled the outermost circles.

The Reverend Dr. Butler was Clay’s friend. He performed the service as much from affection for the deceased as from his official duty as the Senate’s chaplain. He began by noting how different people would remember different Henry Clays. There was the Clay of youth and ambition, the Clay of great accomplishment and renown, the Clay of the sickroom, feeble but cheerful, and the Clay who rose to defend the beleaguered Union. But there was also the Henry Clay who had embodied all that was great and good about America. Butler invoked Jeremiah, chapter 48, verse 17, to describe this universal recollection of Henry Clay as “the strong staff” adorned with “the beautiful rod” of patriotism. He spoke of a nation in mourning, its cities silent but for peeling bells, an entire country swathed in crepe, its commerce stilled and its citizens reflecting on the sobering loss and the finality of burying Henry Clay. “Burying HENRY CLAY!” Butler roared. “Bury the records of your country’s history—bury the hearts of living millions—bury the mountains, the rivers, the lakes, and the spreading lands from sea to sea, with which his name is inseparably associated, and even then you would not bury HENRY CLAY—for he lives in other lands, and speaks in other tongues, and to other times than ours.”

As Butler spoke, Frances Preston Blair in the gallery scanned the assembly. His eyes found Daniel Webster among the cabinet, the last of the Great Triumvirate, now in his final days serving as Millard Fillmore’s secretary of state. Blair saw in Webster’s face haunting, inconsolable sadness. Daniel Webster himself had less than four months to live.

The service ended. Attendants quietly removed the silver plate covering Clay’s face. President Fillmore paused only briefly to look on Clay for the last time. Tuberculosis had made him more skeleton than man and had drained the vitality out of his expressive face, but visitors in his last days still saw something of the old spark, even at

the very end. Now that was gone too, and what remained was only an effigy. Those who knew him well did not linger now to gaze upon it. At first, the plate was removed at stops on the lengthy journey home whenever Clay lay in state for public viewing, but the practice was discontinued. The remains had not been embalmed, and it was summer. In any case, those who knew him preferred to have their memories unimpaired. When he arrived in Lexington, his family would keep the plate in place.

The coffin was soon moved to the Rotunda and set atop a bier. Despite its enormous size, the Rotunda was quickly crammed full with a confused, shoving crowd. Outside the throng overflowed the portico and public grounds. Grief, curiosity, and the limited time almost turned the scene into mayhem as the jostling and rising murmur of the mob alarmed the U.S. marshal and his deputies. The confusion was understandable. Henry Clay was the first American to lie in state at the Capitol. No other official of the government, not even a president, had ever been accorded that honor. The procedures for managing the resulting crowd did not exist, and the marshal and his assistants took a while to restore order and establish the proper decorum. Afterward, though, everyone behaved, forming an orderly file that entered the Rotunda and parted into two queues on each side of the funeral bier, never pausing, steadily passing to catch only a glimpse of the shadowed face in the odd coffin. Americans would not do this again for thirteen years. Then it would be for Abraham Lincoln.



At 3:30 that afternoon it was time for Clay to start home. The committee of arrangements, the honorary pallbearers, led by four military companies and followed by a large crowd, accompanied the casket to the railroad station where a locomotive was standing by. At the station thousands of men and women stood silently as the coffin was placed in a special car. The entire train was trimmed in crepe. The six Senators selected to take Clay home prepared to board, a strange bunch split evenly between Whigs and Democrats. They included the venerable Lewis Cass, at seventy the eldest, and Tennessee's James C. Jones, a youngster at forty-three. Sam Houston, the flamboyant Tennessee transplant to Texas, confidante of Andrew Jackson, was part of the group, as was New Jersey's Robert F. Stockton, whose grandfather had signed the Declaration of Independence. The train's whistle wheezed to a full roar, and its wheels began their slow turns, easing out of Washington, D.C., like a black snake, bound first for Baltimore.

It was a mark of Clay's importance that this last journey home began by heading away from it. The family agreed to allow the body to travel a much extended, roundabout route from Washington to Lexington, though Clay's son, Thomas, dreaded the prospect of it all. "Oh! how sickening is the splendid pageantry I have to go through from this to Lexington," Thomas wrote to his wife. In addition, the funeral procession was unprecedented. The funeral party would cover more than a thousand miles by trains and steamboats, first

to Baltimore and Wilmington and Philadelphia and then swinging north to New Jersey and New York, arcing over to Buffalo before heading south through Ohio to Kentucky. The journey consumed nine days—a direct passage could have taken Clay home in a fraction of that time—and attracted huge crowds in large cities and drew out the entire populations of towns. Aside from the journey's obvious symbolism, it held subtle significance too. When Clay first traveled from Lexington to Washington, the trip took weeks of hard trekking on horseback and rickety stagecoaches. That was in 1806 when Thomas Jefferson was president. The enormous continental heartland called Louisiana had only just been added to a country that was still mainly a wilderness crossed by trails, many only paths hemmed by trees and undergrowth. When Clay headed home four and a half decades later, he passed through a land unrecognizably altered and marked by unparalleled expansion and improvement. Americans had turned trails into roads, some paved with wooden planks or broken stones to make them passable in all weathers, allowing coaches to cover twenty, sometimes thirty miles a day. Travelers who decades before had slept under stars now could stay in moderately comfortable lodgings.

Americans now call such wonders "infrastructure," but Clay's generation called them internal improvements. He had been their constant champion through both private initiative and public subsidies. Internal improvements, he preached, could speed American commerce, bolster American security, refine life on rough farmsteads, transform remote villages into thriving townships. With such encouragement, engineers had scoured harbors and dredged rivers. Where there were no rivers, they dug them in the form of canals that could float keelboats heavy with freight and people into the interior. Along the way, steam revolutionized water traffic to allow packets to strain against American rivers and moor in spacious harbors, courtesy of the Army Corps of Engineers. Steam radically changed ground travel as well. When Clay first came to Washington, he would have heard only the wind in the trees, birdsongs, the rush of untamed waters. On his last journey home in 1852, the pounding cylinders of his locomotive joined a chorus of machined progress that had become an American expectation, a march that rarely paused for anything. It paused only briefly for Clay's passing. Americans felt in their bones the certainty of inevitable material improvement as they saw the future dance to the music of roaring steam whistles atop grand riverboats and heard the pinging of spikes driven for new iron rails and more locomotives. That summer evening in 1852, one of those locomotives pulled Henry Clay into the American twilight, a full moon waxing.



The train arrived at Baltimore's outer depot on Poppleton and Pratt streets at 6:00 p.m. Attendants placed the coffin on an ornate hearse that slowly made its way up Pratt Street

between a vast crowd toward the towering domed rotunda of the Exchange, a building owned by a joint stock company of Baltimore merchants. There the coffin was placed on a large, draped catafalque. Its faceplate was removed, and the men of the local militia, in this case the Independent Greys, managed the slow moving lines that passed in tribute well into the night.

At 10:15 the next morning, a large procession escorted the coffin to the Philadelphia Depot. By 11:00 the train was on its way to Wilmington where it stopped before proceeding at 7:00 p.m. to Philadelphia. A large crowd was gathered at that city's Baltimore Depot when the train arrived at 9:00, and a torchlight procession conveyed the remains to Independence Hall. That night into the next morning, Philadelphians filed passed the funeral bier, military guards at its corners. No one seemed to have noticed the coincidence of the date, especially the year. Clay came to this room exactly 76 years, almost to the day, after the Declaration of Independence had been signed there in the year 1776.

On Saturday, July 3, the body was escorted to Kensington and placed on the steamboat Trenton bound for New York City. New York closed down and turned out on Broadway to see the makeshift parade that bore Clay to City Hall. He lay in state there for the rest of the day and all of the next, July 4, a Sunday.

Despite a veneer of organization, almost everything about this funeral journey was impromptu and planned on the fly. It was a testament to the resourcefulness of the Senators accompanying the remains. In New York City, for example, there was no set time for departure, and the city planned to have Clay lie in state "until the Congressional delegation determine to proceed onward." After the Fourth and tens of thousands of New Yorkers had paid their respects, the congressional delegation decided it was time to move on. Another grand procession conveyed the remains and the funeral delegation to the Santa Claus, a Troy passenger steamer, which promptly headed up the Hudson River to Albany. The Santa Claus made only a few brief stops, but all the towns along the way paid respects anyway. As the steamer neared Poughkeepsie at 5:00 p.m., it slowed to allow citizens in small boats to hand up flowers for the coffin. Albany was alerted and ready for their arrival. By the time the Santa Claus docked, a general din of steamboat whistles, church bells, and firing guns had broken out. Preparing to disembark, the funeral party was startled to see the gigantic crowd that stretched into the dark distance of Albany's streets. After all, it was 11:00 p.m.

At 8:30 the next morning, the body and its growing entourage were escorted to the Erie Railroad Station where another special funeral train began a slow journey to Buffalo, briefly pausing for large crowds at towns along the way. Like Albany, Buffalo remained up for the train despite its late arrival, greeting it with a torchlight procession that conveyed the coffin to the Buckeye State, an enormous steamboat of the first class, almost 300 feet long and boasting powerful engines that made her one of the

fastest of the Great Lakes packets. She was soon under way, lighted from bow to stern, heading down the Erie shore toward Cleveland.



Some five hundred miles to the west, as the Buckeye State sped toward Cleveland, citizens and officials in Springfield, Illinois, were doing what countless towns across America were doing—gathering to mourn the death of Henry Clay. In Springfield, plans for such ceremonies had been made the evening of Clay's death at a public meeting presided over by the young lawyer Abraham Lincoln. The next day a special committee set the following Tuesday as the day for the commemoration and the Illinois statehouse as the place. Stephen T. Logan, Lincoln's former law partner and a leader in Illinois politics, was to deliver the eulogy. Before July 6, however, Lincoln was tapped to take Logan's place. It has never been clear why this was done, but Lincoln must have been ambivalent about it. He was tired, having just returned from a long trip riding the Illinois judicial circuit, and he was busy preparing a defense of a Mexican War veteran, an amputee, who stood accused of stealing from the U.S. mails. It was also extremely short notice, and Lincoln's previous experience at writing a eulogy—he had delivered one when President Zachary Taylor died two years earlier—had been frustrating.

He was likely troubled by the task for other reasons as well, for he admired Clay more than he did any other man on the American political scene, the man he later described as "my beau ideal of a statesman." He had never met Clay, but he had devoured his speeches and had even heard him speak on one memorable occasion at Lexington in 1847. Lincoln had been visiting his in-laws, the important Robert Todd family, who knew Clay quite well. Clay was a frequent dinner guest in the Todd home, and Lincoln's wife Mary as a girl had once taken her new pony to Ashland to show it off to Clay.

Tackling his important and unexpected task, Lincoln hurriedly consulted Clay's own writings and published speeches for inspiration, even searching for a model eulogy to imitate, but he could find nothing helpful. When the observances opened on July 6 at the Springfield Episcopal Church before moving to the hall of the state House of Representatives for his speech, Lincoln felt ill-prepared and showed it. He spoke for just under an hour and was as disappointed as his listeners with a lackluster, pedestrian effort. He was especially frustrated because Clay meant so much to him, and Lincoln obviously meant it when he noted how Clay's failed quests for the presidency had not diminished him in the slightest, how those who had won the office "all rose after, and set long before him." Most of all, though, Lincoln strained to describe Clay as a champion not only of the Union but of human freedom, from his support for Latin American and Greek independence to his advocacy of gradual emancipation of American slaves and their colonization in Africa. Lincoln found both courses wise and sensible. He did not say so

The regular beat of the bell having stopped, the silence was unsettling as the steamer glided closer. Gradually the passengers could see that the figures were not ghosts but girls. There were thirty-one of them, each to represent a state of the Union, and all but one dressed in white. The one in black was Kentucky.

on July 6, 1852, but he was convinced, like Clay, that only gradual emancipation would end slavery without destroying the Union, and only colonization would remove freed slaves from the enduring bigotry of white Americans.

Although Lincoln's speech was strangely disappointing and its effect unmemorable, there was a seed of great meaning and portent in it. Haste and the emotion of the moment seemed to have overwhelmed his talent for soaring rhetoric, his flair for muscular prose, a talent that appeared in some of Clay's best speeches, a gift that had helped make Clay Lincoln's political idol. That July day in the Springfield statehouse the task proved too much for Lincoln, and he confessed as much about understanding Henry Clay's appeal: "The spell—the long-enduring spell—with which the souls of men were bound to him, is a miracle," he said. He then asked, "Who can compass it?"

Lincoln was asking how such a miracle could be understood, and that day he clearly did not know the answer. But the echo of Clay's words would sound in Lincoln's mind through the years and eventually find voice in Lincoln's own way, when it really mattered. Lincoln would in the end manage to compass the miracle that puzzled him that day. It would be later, when it really mattered.



The Buckeye State reached Cleveland where a train waited to transport the funeral party south, at last heading toward Clay's home, passing through Columbus and arriving at Cincinnati at 11:00 a.m. on July 8. The large gathering at the station there included citizens, military companies, local lodges of Masons and Oddfellows, and firemen. Immediately a long procession formed to convey the body and its growing number of companions to the wharves on the Ohio. It took two hours to reach the river and the steamer that would take Clay to Louisville. The boat by special charter had delayed its scheduled departure an hour.

The earliest French explorers called the Ohio "the beautiful river," and most travelers ever since agreed. The waters were clear and almost always smooth, resembling polished glass except when southerly breezes rippled them for a few hours, usually at midday. Before there were steamboats, those winds had allowed travelers to make sail and beat upriver against the current. At night, the river caught starlight like a mirror and reflected the rising moon in a long shaft that chased the hulls of watercraft and mesmerized their occupants. Clay had traveled the Ohio

many times. This last trip would carry him on it for the rest of Thursday into dawn on Friday. Along the way, emerging national greatness was evident in bustling towns that had sprung up on the river's banks and trim farms cultivating its fertile valley. They were lively places usually, but that Thursday they were subdued as the steamboat passed, steadily ringing its bell to signal its approach. Occasionally church bells and cannon answered from communities wrapped in black.

The steamer was the Ben Franklin, a U.S. mailboat that regularly made the Louisville run. Two years earlier, Ralph Waldo Emerson had taken the Ben Franklin out of Cincinnati on the way to visit Mammoth Cave, and, indeed, the trip was often festive with tourists bound for excursions. But on this run all was quiet except for the ringing bell, the thrashing waters under the boat's paddlewheels, the reciprocating pistons of its engine sending a rhythmic thrum through its decks and cabins. The Senate delegation and others who had started this journey eight days earlier must have been exhausted, and everyone was certainly crowded and uncomfortable as the entourage had grown, increased along the way by delegations joining the trip to Lexington.

Yet the Ben Franklin was only a few hours under way when something remarkable happened. The ringing bell suddenly stopped, and curious passengers crowded to the boat's starboard rail. Indiana was off to the right, and just ahead on a community wharf there stood more than two dozen ghosts, white shadows in the lowering sun. The regular beat of the bell having stopped, the silence was unsettling as the steamer glided closer. Gradually the passengers could see that the figures were not ghosts but girls. There were thirty-one of them, each to represent a state of the Union, and all but one dressed in white. The one in black was Kentucky. Behind them, off the wharf, the population of their town was gathered and hushed.

No one said a word, and the Ben Franklin continued downriver. Its bell began ringing steadily again, and the passengers moved away from the rail. The crew, familiar with the towns along the route, could have told them the name of the place with the girls. It was Rising Sun, Indiana.



The Ben Franklin completed the 133-mile run to Louisville at six on Friday morning. Four hours later the funeral party departed on a train that stopped at Frankfort and finally at dusk

arrived in Clay's hometown of Lexington. A large crowd carrying torches silently escorted the coffin through the black cloaked town. Lexington's population was about 9,000 ordinarily, but in the first week of that July it became the most populous place in the state. It was impossible to make an accurate count, but at least 30,000—and some say as many as 100,000—were gathered to pay respects to Clay.

A procession conducted the coffin to the Ashland estate where it arrived at 8:00 that evening and was placed in the large dining room. The Senate committee along with the family filled the house. Clay's son Thomas had made the grueling journey with his father's remains, and he was now joined by his brothers James and John and his mother Lucretia. She was seventy-one and feeble, an intensely private woman who publicly had never shown much emotion nor displayed much affection, masking what her family and friends knew to be a turbulent and loving heart. The years had made her resemble a frail bird, her eyes hard like diamonds. She had many devoted friends in Lexington, but now she had lost her best one, the only person in the world who had ever thoroughly understood her. She, the boys, and their families stood next to the coffin that night. Just five years, Lucretia had been sitting down to dinner with her family in this same room when she had received devastating news about one of her sons. Now, surrounded by fine china and crystal glittering in the candlelight, she gazed at her husband's coffin. The family did not remove the face plate, but they did not need to. Clay was not really in that metal container, but he was there in that room. And for the rest of the night so was Lucretia.

The Clay Guard that had come down from Cincinnati stood vigil through that night as thousands continued to stream into Lexington for the funeral the next day, Saturday, July 10. At 10:00 a.m. the Reverend Edward F. Berkeley, rector of Clay's church in Lexington and the man who had baptized him only five years earlier, read a sermon and eulogy in a small outdoor service at Ashland. The coffin was then taken to Lexington in a grandly designed car drawn by eight horses, each as white as snow and wearing silver fringed crepe. Lucretia watched the procession leave in the rising heat of the July morning before going back in the house and closing the door. She did not feel well, she had said simply. She would not go to the cemetery.

In Lexington a spectacular pageant grew to immense proportions, the procession extending farther and farther as muffled drums beat the cadence toward the Lexington Cemetery. The now familiar sounds of bells and cannon echoed out from the city across the countryside. Lucretia would have heard them.

The crowd overflowed the cemetery's grounds, many out of earshot of Berkeley's reading of the Episcopal service and unable to see the ritual by the local Masons. During the ceremony, they placed on his coffin a Masonic apron, a gift to Clay from the Marquis de Lafayette, removing it just before the coffin was placed in its vault.

And so it ended, nine days and more than a thousand miles from where it had begun with the death of Clay and the beginning of his extraordinary journey home. The man who the New York Times had judged as "too great to be president" had been given a farewell to make a monarch envious. The London Times spoke of Clay's "antique greatness," and that Clay's death deprived many Americans of something noble and fine, something connected to the beginning of the country, spanning from the Revolution through the tumult and strain of first creating and then building an American dream.

Henry Clay's part in that adventure had been always central and often crucial. But there was more to it than that. Lincoln had described the enduring affection for Clay as something resembling a miracle, as mysterious as it was tangible. Lincoln and many of his fellow Americans could not fully grasp it, as he said, but they certainly felt it, and Lincoln would draw on it to help him save the country, when the time came. Some of those girls in Rising Sun would later send off fathers, husbands, and sweethearts to fight and die for their country, and for the same reason that they had wrapped themselves in peculiar clothes and waited on a hot wharf that July afternoon for a steamboat.

In 1852 all of the country mourned Clay's passing, marking a rare instance of agreement among people who had gotten into the habit of disagreeing about almost everything. He was a titanic symbol of Union to the very end, promoting compromise to prevent his country's demise and the slaughter he was certain would follow. He saved his country until its muscle and sinews could weather a terrible civil war, until "fair seed time" and his example could produce a man like Lincoln, who when Clay died was yet straining to understand what it all meant, to understand the miracle that stemmed from Clay's life, a life that had begun seven and a half decades earlier amid Virginia's swampy rills. Clay's life began in the midst of a war that was, like Lincoln's would be, for national survival.

Losing him was a uniquely personal event for the nation because his life had been the mirror of his country and its aspirations. In that, it was an extraordinary life. "I will forgive your weakness," wrote a student at Yale, who could have been speaking for the entire country, "if you bow your head and weep for the departure of his noble spirit."

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Words Do Matter

A Conversation with the Chairman



Photo by Paul Atkinson

Jim Leach, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, made a stop in Lexington, Kentucky, on April 7th as a part of his fifty-state civility tour. The tour focuses on how America's democracy must be based in conversation that is civil and respectful of views that may contradict, and highlights how the humanities — philosophy, literature and languages, history, and anthropology, for example — can help us examine and understand opposing perspectives and express differing viewpoints reasonably.

Prior to his "Words Do Matter" lecture presented by the Kentucky Humanities Council, Leach visited the University of Kentucky campus to meet with students of the Gaines Center for the Humanities. He also attended a discussion with student representatives from Tates Creek High School's International Baccalaureate program, an eighth grade social studies class from Christ the King School, University of Kentucky freshmen, UK faculty, and civic leaders as a part of the Citizen Kentucky forum on civic education.

We are pleased to share the Chairman's words from his civility tour with you on the following pages.

Few subjects may seem duller than concern for public manners. But in the context of American history, where change was wrought in the crucible of debate about the nature as well as the rights of man, little is more important for the world's leading democracy than recommitting to an ethos of thoughtfulness in the public square.

The concept of civility implies politeness, but civil discourse is about more than good etiquette. At its core, civility requires respectful engagement: a willingness to consider other views and place them in the context of history, philosophy, and life experiences.

Comments several months back on the House floor involving advocates on both sides of the health-care debate have gathered much attention, but vastly more rancorous, socially divisive assertions are being made across the land.

In recent weeks a Congressman who was one of our most distinguished civil rights leaders has been spat upon; a senior member of Congress has been subjected to homophobic remarks; and with increasing frequency public officials are being labeled “fascist” or “communist,” sometimes at the same time. More bizarrely, hints of history-blind radicalism — notions of “secession” and “nullification” are creeping into the public dialogue.

One might ask what problem is there with a bit of hyperbole. To paraphrase Marshall McLuhan's observation about the media, the logic is the message.

Certain frameworks of thought define rival ideas. Other frameworks describe enemies.

If 400,000 American soldiers sacrificed their lives to defeat fascism, if tens of thousands more gave their lives to hold communism at bay, and if we fought a civil war to preserve the union, isn't it a citizen's obligation to apply perspective to incendiary words that once summoned citizens to war? There is, after all, a difference between supporting a particular spending or health-care view and asserting that someone who prefers another approach or is a member of a different political party is an advocate of an “ism” of hate that encompasses gulags and concentration camps.

Citizenship is hard. It takes a commitment to listen, watch, read, and think in ways that allow the imagination to put one person in the shoes of another.

Words matter. They reflect emotion as well as meaning. They clarify — or cloud — thought and energize action, sometimes bringing out the better angels of our nature, sometimes baser instincts.

Stirring anger and playing on the irrational fears of citizens can inflame hate and sometimes impel violence.

Conversely, healing language such as Lincoln's plea in his Second Inaugural address for “malice toward none and charity for all” and President Obama's call in Cairo for greater understanding between the world's great religions can uplift and help bring society and the world closer together.

The challenge for citizens is to determine whether to identify with those seeking unity in diversity, or those who press debilitating cultural wars and extreme ideological agendas.

But civility is more than about governance. At issue is whether we perceive ourselves as belonging to a single American community with all its variety, and whether we look at people in other neighborhoods and other parts of the world as members of families seeking security and opportunity for their kin just as we do.

Whatever our backgrounds, in politics as in family, vigilance must be maintained to insure that everyone understands each other. Vigorous advocacy should never be considered a thing to avoid. Argumentation is a social good. Indeed, it is a prerequisite to blocking tyranny and avoiding dogmatism. Rather than policing language, the goal should be to uplift the tenor and tone of debate and infuse it with historical and philosophical perspective.

The poet Walt Whitman once described America as an “athletic democracy.” What he meant was that nineteenth century politics was rugged, with spirited debates about immigration, taxes, and slavery. Things could also get violent. A vice president, Aaron Burr, killed our greatest Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, in a duel triggered by Hamilton's claim that Burr was a “despicable” character.

So, uncivil acts, in this case legal in the state in which the duel occurred, are nothing new. What is new in our social discourse are transformative changes in communications technology, debilitating changes in American politics, and the gravity of issues facing mankind.

During his visit to Kentucky, Jim Leach, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, spent the morning in conversation with students from the University of Kentucky's Gaines Center for the Humanities.

Photo by Virginia G. Carter



In teaching at Princeton and Harvard upon leaving Congress, I developed for lecture purposes a large number of what I termed two minute courses in governance. Let me cite several that point to some of the causes of American angst and division.

Political Science 101: The country over the past generation has been approximately one-third Democratic, one-third Republican, and one-third independent. Basic math tells us that one-half of one-third is one-sixth, so 16⅔ percent of the voters nominally control candidate selection in a typical election. But only one in four voters (often a fraction of this figure) participates in primaries where candidates are chosen. Thus, it is ¼th x ¼th, only ¼th of the electorate that determines who the candidates of the principal parties will be. This four percent is socially quite conservative on the Republican side and actively liberal on the Democratic. Consequently, legislative bodies intended to represent a vast cross-section of the American public come principally to reflect its philosophical edges.

Political Science 102: In primaries for president, Republican candidates lean to the right, where the vote is, and then, if nominated, scoot to the center in the general election; Democrats do the same, but begin from the left. When it comes to Congress, however, the scoot to the center is seldom evident. Approximately 380 House seats are gerrymandered to be “safe” for one of the parties. About half of these safe seats are held by Republicans and half by Democrats. With few exceptions, safe-

seat members must lean to the philosophical edges to prevail in primaries. Once nominated, there is no incentive for politicians to move to the center, either as candidates or legislators, when their only serious electoral challenge is likely to come from within their party’s uncompromising base. Polarization is the inevitable result.

Psychology 101: An increasing number of issues in Congress are being projected as questions of morality rather than judgment. Advocates of one perspective assume that those with a different view are championing immorality. On the left, the problem is frequently evidenced by those who assume that increasing social spending for almost any compassionate cause is the only moral choice; on the right, by those who assume that the moral values of one or another group should be written into law to bind society as a whole.

Psychology 102: There is something about the human condition that wants to be allowed to make governing decisions at socially cohesive levels where citizens may have impact. Much is written today about globalism, but this century is also about “localism.” To adapt to a fast-changing world, one must understand both of these phenomena — the fact, as Tip O’Neill repeatedly noted, that all politics is local and a corollary that all local decisions are affected by international events. The angst of our times is correlated to the concerns of peoples everywhere that their livelihoods are increasingly buffeted by forces outside the control of family and community.



Secretary of State Elaine Walker joined NEH Chairman Jim Leach as he attended events on the University of Kentucky campus and the lecture at Fasig-Tipton.

Photo by Paul Atkinson

Sports 101: A mid-twentieth-century sports journalist, Grantland Rice, famously observed that winning and losing are less important than how the game is played. Likewise in politics. The temper and integrity of the political dialogue are more important for the cohesiveness of society than the outcome of any election. In politics there are few rules and no referees. The public must be on guard and prepared to throw flags when politicians overstep the bounds of fairness and decency. As athletes compete to win, they learn to respect their opponents. Is it asking too much for candidates and their supporters to do the same?

Literature 101: In a set of four books published half a century ago called the Alexandria Quartet, the British author Lawrence Durrell describes urban life in Alexandria, the ancient Egyptian city on the Mediterranean, between the First and Second World Wars. In the first book, Durrell spins a story from the perspective of one individual. In each subsequent book, he describes the same events from

the perspective of others. While the surrounding events are the same, the stories are profoundly different, informed by each narrator's life and circumstances. The moral is that to get a sense of reality it is illuminating to see things from more than one set of eyes. This observation can apply to interactions in a court room or town hall or on the international stage. What America does may seem reasonable from our perspective but look very different to a European, African, Middle Easterner, or Asian.

Physics 101: Sir Isaac Newton set forth three laws of motion, the third of which affirmed that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction; in short-hand, action equals reaction. Social chemistry can be quite different. In the kindergarten of life, reaction can be greater than action. If, for instance, one were to malign a rival calling him for instance a "bum" or "crazy" or worse, or describe the country in which a person lives as "evil" or "backward," the reaction might produce effects far greater than the precipitating words envisioned or intended.



Students at the University of Kentucky hosted a Citizen Kentucky forum on civic education followed by a discussion with Chairman Leach.

Humanities 101: In the most profound political observation of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein suggested that splitting the atom had changed everything except our way of thinking. Human nature may be one of the few constants in history, but 9/11 has taught that thinking must change not simply because of the destructive power of the big bomb, but because of the implosive nature of small acts. Violence and social division are rooted in hate. Since such thought begins in the hearts and minds of individuals, it is in each of our hearts and minds that hate must be checked and our way of thinking changed.

Humanities 102: In Western civilization's most prophetic poem, "The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats suggests that "the centre cannot hold" when "the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." Citizens of all philosophical persuasions are displaying increased disrespect for their fellow citizens and thus for modern-day democratic governance. Much of the problem may flow from the fast-changing nature of our society, but part of the blame falls at the feet of politicians and their supporters who use inflammatory rhetoric to divide the country. Candidates may prevail in elections by tearing down rather than uplifting, but if elected, they cannot then unite an angered citizenry. Negativity dispirits the soul of society just as it raises the temperature level of legislatures.

I have often assumed that in America process is our most important product, and that our Constitutional processes have propelled our history toward greater justice for all.

But we still have systemic weaknesses, particularly relating to the confounding dimension of money in politics, a problem that has just been further complicated by the recent Supreme Court ruling in the Citizens United case in which the court has approved direct corporate giving for and against candidates.

It is no accident that just as the gap between rich and poor is widening in America, so is the political gap between powerful elites and common citizens.

Politeness may be an aspect of civil discourse but civility and polite words are not synonymous. Moneyed speech that carries strings may be the most uncivil speech of all. It eviscerates reasonableness in public dialogue and distorts the capacity of citizens and policy makers to weigh competing views in balanced ways.

Many good people enter politics only to find that the system causes the low road to become the one most traveled. Politicians routinely develop conflicts that do not technically rise to a legal standard of corruption because legislated law and now judicial fiat have weakened that standard.

Speech is thus at issue from two perspectives. At one end, uncivil speech must be protected by the Court but filtered by the public and, at the other, corporate "speech" must not be allowed to stifle the voices of the people.

Just as civilization requires civility, democracy demands equality.

OP-ED

Introducing America to the “Middle”

By Linda Raymond

This is an announcement (sort of): I’m running for office. For the U.S. Senate, probably. Or the House of Representatives. Maybe the White House.

It doesn’t matter because whatever I run for, I’ll win. I’m starting a new party called “Middle.” Our entire platform will fit on our bumper stickers. “Listen,” they’ll say. Two statesmen, a comedian, and several historians have convinced me that this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it — although they may not have been aware that they were encouraging my nascent plan.

Middle grew out of a conviction that many people — of all parties and political persuasions — are tired of electing candidates who promise to “fight for us” because those public officials usually keep their promise. They fight. That’s not what we want. We need public servants who will listen. We need statesmen who will sit down with other elected officials, including those who disagree with them, and find common ground where they can build a government that serves the public interest. You don’t find common ground by shouting. You have to listen. Thus, Middle’s bumper sticker. (Naturally you’ll put it in the middle of your bumper.)



It’s hard to say exactly when all the swirling discussion about a lack of civility in our national debate settled into the idea for the Middle Party. Perhaps former U.S. Representative Ron Mazzoli, a Louisville Democrat, prompted it with a talk on civility in government. Or maybe Comedian Jon Stewart’s Washington rally got me thinking. Certainly, the plan came together in my head after a lecture former U.S. Congressman Jim Leach, an Iowa Republican, gave in Lexington for the Kentucky Humanities Council.

Comedian Jon Stewart of “The Daily Show” clearly sensed some sort of public longing for Middle when he and satirist Stephen Colbert announced their Rally to Restore Sanity And/Or Fear — also known as the March for the Middle. By some estimates more than a quarter of a million people traveled from all over the country to Washington’s Mall for the event to make a statement about middleness. I watched on television and bought a t-shirt from the official website. My shirt says “I’m with stupid” — only “stupid” has been crossed out and replaced by “reasonable.” I wear my shirt to the gym to pump iron. The people who read newspapers and argue politics while they work out on the elliptical trainers always notice my shirt and comment. Something about reasonable clearly strikes a chord with them.

Former U.S. Rep. Ron Mazzoli understands something about the middle, too. For twenty-four years he served Kentucky’s Third Congressional District, earning a reputation as a smart, reasonable man who could work with the opposition to get things done. (For example, Mazzoli, a Democrat, and Republican Sen. Alan Simpson actually got an immigration reform bill passed in the 1980s. As best I can tell, they did it without shouting.) This winter, Mazzoli gave a thoughtful talk at Louisville’s Highland Presbyterian Church on why Congress has such a hard time being civil these days. He had several explanations, but the one that stuck with me is that members of Congress don’t see each other socially any more. Because they go back to their districts for the weekends, they

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only live in Washington three or four days a week. That doesn't leave time for homesick Congressfolk to lift a brew together and establish common ground on why Washington's weather is crummy and the Washington sports teams don't win. If they agreed on the weather, they'd at least know at whom they were yelling on the floor of the House.

Mazzoli's insight got my attention because we've been there before as a nation; this isn't the first time members of Congress refused to listen to each other. Remarkably, there wasn't a lot of listening in the early days of our republic when Congress was still figuring out how to make Democracy work. When language failed, fists, canes, and even hot fire tongs served as communication tools. "Men fought and murdered each other

over ideologies," said historian Catherine Allgor. When they weren't fighting in Congress, they didn't talk at all. The political opponents lived apart and didn't party, violating Allgor's secret for successful political discourse: "For politics to happen, you need the social sphere."

Enter Dolley Madison, married to a president so small and shy opponents referred to him as a sardine. Known and admired for her charisma and cleavage, Dolley Madison invited Congressmen and their wives to the new White House. Then she enticed rivals across the room to talk to each other, says Allgor, who has written a book on the woman she calls the first First Lady.

We don't know what was said at Madison's soirees, but what our leaders say when they talk does matter, says former U.S. Rep. Jim Leach. Leach, who served Iowa in Congress for thirty years, is combating political dysfunction with a speech, "Words Do Matter," and a fifty-state "civility tour." Now chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Leach had given his speech in forty-four states when he stopped in Lexington in April to talk about the importance of words. For example, when politicians define an issue — balancing the budget, say — as a "moral" issue, it creates a problem right away: Anyone who disagrees on a moral issue is automatically immoral. Who wants to listen to someone who just called him immoral? No one.

Leach's speech provoked me to propose the Middle Party. Here's what I'd like to say to voters at this summer's political speaking at Fancy Farm: Talk to the candidates you like. Tell them you want them to listen. Tell them you've got an alternative candidate (me) if they won't listen. If a candidate promises to listen to the opposition, that's who gets your vote.

When candidates who listen win, I'll win. And, you'll win, too.



Baling Wire

By Georgia Green Stamper

I think baling wire is obsolete now — replaced by something newer, maybe cheaper, and that’s a shame. Because the baling wire that held the bales of hay together back when I was a kid was versatile and efficient, enduring and strong. My grandfather, and later my dad, held our place together with baling wire.

MIT engineers weren’t required to take “Baling Wire 101: Foundation of the Infrastructure” but it wouldn’t have been a bad idea. This omnipresent, skinny, little wire could be used to fix just about anything, big or small, that needed fixing. On our farm, it pieced together all sorts of machinery, held gates shut, and occasionally even girdled a bale of hay as it was intended to do. My dad claimed to know a fellow who used baling wire instead of nails to build a barn, but I’m pretty sure he made that up.

It is true, though, that the uses for baling wire were limited only by imagination. I fully expect to run across a book in some used bookstore titled, *1001 Ways to Use Baling Wire*. One year, when a brown blight hit most of the Owen County cedar trees, the greenest looking tree we could find was also the most crooked. My dad saved Christmas by attaching baling wire to the top of our pitiful, spineless tree. Like a circus high wire, the baling wire stretched thin and taut from the base of our perennial Christmas star to a small nail on the wall near the ceiling. Thanks to the ubiquitous wire, we never had a holiday tree that stood more proudly upright in our living room.

Another holiday, baling wire shaped a homemade wreath for our front door. The wire could also be used as a stick to roast hot dogs over an open fire, or twisted into a homemade cradle to lift all kinds of things. It could fish objects out of cracks, pull a small wagon, and be shaped into a loop whenever a loop was called for. My folks admired versatility such as this, and over time “handy as baling wire” became a high compliment used to describe both objects and people.

It’s difficult to say, though, whether they used this wire so much because it was adaptable, or whether they used it simply because they had it. It used to be a half-day’s work to drive into town and back home again to our southern Owen County farm. The trip twisted along steep and narrow roads, unpaved for more than half the route. The bad roads, combined with a lack of ready cash, encouraged a frugality of both time and money that became a test of character. My grandfather had learned to make do with what he had on hand, and he expected others to do the same.

Whenever I’m tempted now to rush out to an open-all-night superstore for some small item needed at the odd hour, I feel my grandfather’s disapproving eyes on me. “Is this a necessary trip, Georgia?” he seems to whisper through the years. “Don’t you have any baling wire that will do?”

But to our way of thinking the best attribute of baling wire was its staying power. It might rust, but it didn’t disappear. My grandfather and my dad were impressed with such endurance. To be fair, they had not yet grappled with plastics that survive longer than dinosaur bones. And if they had run across the word landfill they sure wouldn’t have connected it with trash.

In fact, trash wasn’t something they had much experience with. Occasionally, a little was burned in a barnyard bonfire, but most of our leftovers were re-cycled in a multiplicity of ways for useful purpose in our daily lives. Boxes were hoarded, glass containers re-used, pieces of string wrapped into an ever expanding ball. No, trash was a word they more often associated with loose morals, with people who didn’t hold up to the rigorous demands of life. They admired both people and things that stuck around for the long haul.

I have no idea if baling wire such as I remember was commonplace in other areas of the country. Maybe it was unique to Kentucky. Maybe, like the bones of our horses, baling wire absorbed strength from the limestone in our bluegrass soil. It could be broken, of course, if it were twisted long enough, tortured by wire cutters, or pounded for a long time with a hammer. Over the passage of many years, it might wear out. It could become brittle, then, and break into pieces from the erosion of weather. But overall, baling wire was as strong as the Kentucky farmers who worked with it.

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 work has been published in the literary anthologies *New Growth*, *Tobacco*, *Daughters of the Land*, *Motif I & II*, and *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*. She writes a bi-weekly column, “Georgia: On My Mind,” for *The Owenton News-Herald*. She is 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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