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The Angelou hoax The educational-municipal complex

By Danny Mayer

Editor's Note: This should be the first in a three-part look at Town/Gown economic relationships

"[H]ow people react when something is publicly staring them in the face is one thing. How they react in the much more common situation where the gloom of obscurity hides the unpleasant facts is another."

—*Lexington Herald-Leader*, "Cut-and-paste lessons," March 15, 2011

Angelou Economics is one of a relatively new breed of business, urban economic development consultants, that has arisen over the past 20 years. Mostly, such groups adhere to a set of assumptions most popularly espoused by the academic Richard Florida. Florida's general thesis holds that creativity drives growth. Because of this, Florida concludes, city survival depends upon attracting the somewhat limited global class of creative people who make cities grow—real selective consumers who, alas, apparently circulate the world looking diligently for cool places in which to live and/or visit.

Unfortunately, the creative class is not well defined. Doctors and

engineers are always creative class. Always. Academics are normally creative, though Florida's hazy on the creative distinctions between the adjunct teacher living below the poverty line, the graduate TA also teaching below the poverty line and the tenured literature professor doing research from some remote location.

On campus janitorial staff, while geographically close to creativity, are not creative class. Neither are waiters, unless they have a college degree in the fine arts or humanities, or are in fine dining. Artists are desirable, but the scale is hazy. It's not clear whether, say, working 30 hours at McDonald's and sketching things at home on spare computer paper a couple days a week constitutes being an artist in the economically uplifting sense of the word that Florida intends. Techies, you probably already know, are fucking off the charts creative.

As cities have become enamored with Florida's theories on capturing this brand of peeps, urban economic development consultants have sprouted up in a number of guises. Their main mission: develop successful strategies for attracting and retaining the mythic "creative class." Smaller homegrown varieties of this business

include Eric Patrick Marr's *Lexonomics* and Sylvia Lovely's *New Cities Institute*; larger names include recently certified "Innovation Coach" Peter Kageyama of Creative Cities Productions, who visited Lexington last year.

Angelou Economics, the Austin, Texas firm paid \$150,000 by the city and city business leaders to produce an economic development study of Lexington, was by most accounts well-respected in the consultancy field, claiming over fifteen years experience. Angelou's niche is economic development via technology, a supreme creative class endeavor. The company claims to make "communities more competitive" by creating "economic development strategies for communities that want to expand their high-tech base, through the recruitment of businesses and the creation of new companies."

In March, ProgressLex contributor Ben Self reported that Angelou's final draft of its Lexington study, which was to be submitted a week later to Commerce Lexington and Mayor Jim Gray, was a half ass job. Much of the report was simply cut and pasted from a variety of other studies Angelou had done for other cities. "Some are so horrible," Self observed, that the company had "forgot to delete the spaces before the text when they replaced the previous city's name with "Bluegrass region" for our report."

Self and the rest of ProgressLex notified public officials (Jim Gray), mobilized the public into action, and even provided a forum for Angelou to respond—all in all an exemplary and inspiring model of committed citizen journalism. Ultimately, Angelou agreed

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Life by rheotaxis A river rat retrospective

By Wesley Houp

rheotaxis: the tendency of certain living things to move in response to the mechanical stimulus of a current of water.

"In *terra incognita*, if the opportunity presents itself at all, the only way to go is by river—always assuming, of course, that you and the river happen to have the same general route in mind and that the river doesn't object violently to having passengers. At the same time, there is a certain comfort in knowing where the thing ends and where it begins."

—John Madson, from *Up on the River*

"Life never grew stale or weary for him. To watch the river and talk about the river and recall old scenes and old stories about the river and snap up every line of news about the river and tell again his days and ways of love for the river—it was enough. Men wear out first in their spirits. No riverman's spirit flagged so long as he could remember the river."

—Charles Edward Russell, from *A-Rafting on the Mississippi*

current, disguised against rope-swinging day-trippers and stoic, bank-hushed fisher-boys as an insignificant detail of the larger set—creek cobble and riprap scoured black and tumbled smooth. From intermittent headwater streams to alluvial river mouths, I associate the life in and of the current with all that is good and all that is essential in the life gently but seriously fashioned for me by gentle and serious people.

In every place I've lived as an adult, from Pennsylvania to Tennessee, mapping out and connecting to watersheds has been not only a constant, sometimes obsessive, undertaking but an outright existential necessity. We all need water to survive, but some of us need it in more ways than one and seek it out wherever and whenever possible.

I'm not talking about recreational pleasure or sport although I'm not necessarily opposed to those activities, but a fascination more akin to the elemental "draw" Harland Hubbard notes in the opening lines of *Shantyboat*: "A river tugs at whatever is within reach, trying to set it afloat and carry it downstream... The river extends this power of drawing all things with it even to the imagination of those who

ROCK in preseason Pleasantly stimulates new beat writer

By G. Jordan Johnson

Editor's Note: With the retirement of ROCK beat writer Troy Lyle, G. Jordan Johnson has assumed the role. We're still looking for people to cover disc golf bike polo, and any other sport you can convince us needs covering. No prior knowledge of the sport is necessary—just a willingness to learn, cover and write about it. Photographers needed, too.

My only experience with flat track roller derby prior to last Sunday was six years ago when I still had access to a cable television and a weekly show, the name of which I have forgotten, covered team bouts on the air. In the time since, I had not crossed paths with the rough but glamorous sport until getting a recent *North of Center* assignment.

The Rollergirls of Central Kentucky (ROCK) were closing in on their season opener, scheduled for Saturday, April 23 at the Lexington Convention Center. The paper needed the coverage. I wanted the work. I could not protest.

Through reaching out to ROCK's own Rainbow Smite, I found myself invited to watch a Sunday training and scrimmage session. The excitement was pleasantly stimulating. I was anxious to begin my tutoring in derby lingo and the Rollergirls greeted my green nature openly.

At practice, twenty plus of Kentucky's finest materialized, donning their skates and gear. Rainbow gave me the standard tour and introduced me to a number of team members. Still recovering from an injury she sustained last season, bench coach Meracle Whip was the first to give me a quick earful of what to expect. The enthusiasm was more than apparent and an obvious fervor emanated from each girl, displaying the unrelenting desire to skate.

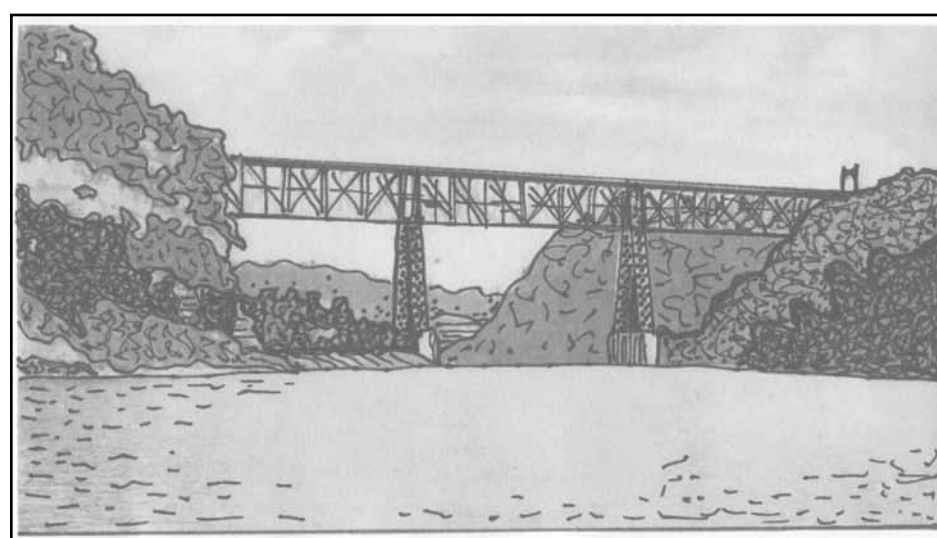
Practice commenced with Meracle gliding to the center of the track and calling aloud for stretching and warm up to begin. Along with team captain Ruby Ragdoll, Rainbow led the exercises from the front of a fluid line. All three called out instructions and went through a range of different warm up exercises and motions. Team Coach James Whitley sputtered and shuffled about the room, in an obvious sprint to fasten last minute loose ends. His fists clutched scoring sheets for the impending scrimmage, white shirts versus black.

For fifteen minutes I watched as the team circled in unison and continued what had clearly become a choreographed routine, judging by the fluid nature of their movements, until Meracle called for a break prior to beginning the scrimmage.

My excitement grew. The track had repopulated with Rollergirls, the whole now separated into halves and redefined with white and black shirts. A few moments of frenzy passed before Coach Whitley passed out the Jammer pants and the scrimmage began, leaving me fumbling to balance a notebook in one hand, a camera in the other, and a pen clutched in my teeth. I began documenting my first courses in flat track derby. Taking notes became redundant when it occurred to me that the only way to capture derby is to experience it. I tritely flicked my pen in nervous circles, idling it as if to jot something relevant but only to remain fixated on the intensity brooding in the track.

"WHITE JAMMER!" echoed, testifying to the excitement between competing teammates, detested by "SIT ON HER!" The commotion was too much for a pen and nearly too much for my ailing camera. I gave way to my eyes, relying on memory to

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High Bridge. Drawing by Laura Zabilka.

As the son of two aquatic biologists, I spent a goodly portion of my childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood doubled-over in benthological awe, wading through riffles and pools with a kick-net or seine, eager to pick through the contents of each haul as if I were skimming off the top of some vast and foreign treasury answers to life's perplexing questions that elude the hoi polloi, hung just beneath the

live on its banks. Who can long watch the ceaseless lapsing of a river's current without conceiving a desire to set himself adrift, and, like the driftwood which glides past, float with the stream clear to the final ocean?"

I'm talking about a real ontological need to experience—to feel—the water, its undercurrents and biota, be

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The world is your playground

Get out, and take your kid

By Jessie Cottle

Summer is quickly approaching, and it is time to quit telling my child to calm down and color, and time to get him outside to run. With a plethora of options for outside play and activities in and around Lexington, we are on the hunt for the place that suits us best. Recently, we took a trip out to Jacobson Park (along with at least half the city it seemed) for a bit of a frolic on the huge playground.

We arrived with the intent of enjoying the first beautiful day in several weeks, and after about an hour of intense playground frolicking, I basked in the realization of a most enjoyable outcome. Not only was my son exhausted and ready for bed an entire half hour earlier that night, but his appetite had doubled.

I was also excited to discover my son's newfound courage when it came to heights and his command of the layout of the playground (never leaving my sight of course). Within that wooden fence, he was the master of his own destiny, and there was no stopping him. The park had stimulated his

creativity and his energy.

Needless to say, I was quite satisfied that night; not only had my boy had a great time, but my purse was not worse for the wear.

Physical activity is the single easiest and cheapest way to improve your child's mood. The American Heart Association suggests promoting physical activity, and have conducted numerous studies which show that increased physical activity helps control weight, reduce blood pressure, raise HDL "good" cholesterol, reduce diabetes and some kinds of cancer, and my personal favorite, improves psychological well-being, which includes gaining more self-confidence and building higher self-esteem.

Setting a play date, frequenting a park with children of a similar age or playing with them yourself (childlike doofs similar to myself excel at this) for a little play time gives children more incentive to run. While I am a hearty supporter of sending children to the backyard to entertain themselves in an unobstructed environment, one should never underestimate the benefits of one on one interaction

with others. Have you ever tried to play cops and robbers by yourself? Playgrounds are a great outlet for the need to interact. They are place where you can pretend and exert energy at the same time. Even I felt better after playing "see if mom can squeeze under that beam to get up to the top."

The world is your playground

That being said, I also think that physical activity doesn't just involve playgrounds.

When you take a child outside, their first instinct is to run; so take them with you, everywhere. Go downtown; park a few blocks away, and take your children to the Farmers Market or Thursday Night Live. Walk around the fountains in front of the Courthouse. In the walk from the car to your destination, you are giving your child quality time with you and giving them a new perspective and view of a place you have seen and been to before.

If you have children that aren't so great about sticking with you, take them for a walk at the arboretum. Those tree stumps and logs can be a surprisingly great time and, as it happens, located far away from a street or

road. There are several walking and shared trails throughout Lexington that do not allow motorized vehicles, giving way for you and the young ones to enjoy a leisurely stroll without as much fear. You can find a complete list of parks, playgrounds, and trails at lexingtonky.gov, under the Parks and Recreations link on the bottom right corner of the home page. They list all trails managed by the City, as well as a description of the suggested uses for each. No matter where you prefer to walk, and no matter where you would like your destination (or lack thereof) it's the process they will remember.

I don't remember the last band that I saw at Thursday Night Live, and I'm pretty sure that I never saw a single thing that came down the street during the Saint Patrick's Day Parade we attended a few weeks ago; however, I remember exactly the route we walked to get to the old courthouse, and the crowd we had to trudge through to get to the hot dog stand for a milkshake. We weren't just there for the event. Being together and bonding on that beautiful day *was* the event. So go out, play hard, and take your kids with you.

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100 Community Values

Sollee partners with Latitude for Merch that Matters

By Niah Soult

"100 Community Values", a creative collaboration between the Latitude Artist Community and one of Lexington's finest musicians, Ben Sollee, is one of the more refreshing demonstrations I've witnessed of Visual Art functioning as a Walking, Talking, Living thing. Designed to promote the importance of community inclusiveness and more socially conscious practices, the project has resulted in 100 painted canvas bags reflecting 100 different values. The bags will be sold in place of generic concert memorabilia while on tour with Ben Sollee.

Though I say "end-result," it is truly only the beginning of a larger campaign Sollee calls, "Merch That Matters," one that he hopes will help shape new attitudes and behavior amongst those seen toting the painted value bags around. Sollee also hopes the merch will inspire other musicians to become more concerned with the message they broadcast beyond their lyrics.

As most professional musicians will tell you, merchandise is a vast resource for generating revenue for touring and recording expenses. It's also good for advertising fan support and broadening audience demographics.

For Sollee, merchandise was also viewed as an opportunity to amplify his upcoming album, *Inclusions*, while showcasing the artistic capacity of a community. The locally made artwork, it's hoped, will inspire others in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

Thus, "Merch That Matters." Who better to help give life form to this idea, Sollee thought, than Latitude Artist Community, an organization aimed at providing inclusive and creative experiences with people relegated to having a "disability."

100 Community Values aimed to recruit Lexington Artists to partner up with those at Latitude, mobilize

and serve as a powerful language from one community to the next while on tour. As an outgrowth of that project, "Merch That Matters" now serves as a new vehicle for Sollee's own contribution towards social change.

In addition to inspiring other artists to incorporate "Merch That Matters"-type sales into their tour-gear, but that it will also elevate levels of awareness and more inclusive social

practices amongst audience members.

"100 Community Values is a powerful link, connecting real people from one community to another, and the effect is immeasurable," says Sollee. "[W]e plan to include a variety of artists from the towns we visit on tour."

My story: Fireworks at Latitude

Back in February while fetching my fix for a Dirty Chai Latte at Third

Street Coffee (home to many Latitude Art exhibits), I noticed an open invitation that described the project and reached out to local artists. As one who finds the creative exchange more than fulfilling, I eagerly contacted Bruce Burris and Crystal Bader, co-founders of Latitude, who invited me over to participate.

Having only discovered my own advocacy for community about 6 years ago when I relocated to the corner of N. Limestone and York, I've been inspired by other artists who have not just actualized the power of artistic expression as a language but who also are compelled to utilize the creative process as a form of community engagement. Artists and community activists like Burris and Bader share my motivation.

For those of you who have never visited Latitude, its 167 Saunier Street entrance is very unassuming, aside from the black and white horses painted next to it on a garage door. The energy emitted upon walking in is best described as a secret hideaway discovered for the first time in childhood. On the day of my visit, a workshop led by Lonnie Holley, an internationally exhibited artist, was scheduled that was organized by Institute 193 founder Phillip Jones. Sollee was also in attendance.

The community that Burris and Bader have created is extremely open and all-inclusive. Colorful and radiating with creativity, my excitement was hard to contain as I watched, demonstrated, learned, painted, talked, joked, and shared the creative process with my partner at Latitude.

We received "Fireworks," one of the designated themed bags Burris drew blindly from a pile of incompletes. It was a perfect depiction of the explosive and transformative experience lighting me up from the inside out. It was also



"Fireworks" canvas bag.

NIAH SOULT

continued on the next page

Hoax (cont.)

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with Self's initial demand to return the city's \$75,000 investment. The company also agreed to significantly revise the document before turning in a final draft. The demands were met, no doubt, in part because of the pressure Mayor Gray applied to Angelou, and in part because of the pressure the likes of ProgressLex, *Barefoot and Progressive*, the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, *Business Lexington* and other media outlets kept upon the consultancy group and the mayor to do what was right. It was a wonderful thing to experience and participate in.

Cementing progressive narratives

Tracking the response to the Angelou report as things have unfolded over the past month has been quite interesting.

Angelou is, at best, a progressive cautionary tale, and at worse, a pretty damning indictment of many assumptions progressives hold dear here in Lexington. Angelou came well-recommended, with creative hub Austin, Texas, hometown bonafides to prove it. It claimed expert knowledge in high tech industry recruitment, a subject that creative class journalist proponents like Tom Eblen regularly pleaded with city leaders to develop. A year earlier in April, Lexington became "Tech-stington" for the city's officially declared technology month.

That same month, Lexington even hosted the Creative Cities Summit, complete with feature speaker Richard Florida and main under-card performer Peter Kageyama. The message was pretty clear: keep the bluegrass beautiful, develop downtown and give it the amenities to attract good people. Support bourbon, horses, UK and artists, fuck the Webbs, and find you

a billionaire to invest in your city's underclass. Technologically speaking, I recall several participants describe the stage's tech-on-steroids feel as overwhelming and fascist.

ProgressLex promoted the hell out of it, as did the *Herald-Leader*, led by Tom Eblen, and *Business Lexington*. It was twittered to death, and blogged, too. I'm pretty sure Lee Todd was there. So was Newberry, much of the city council, etc. You get the point.

In the context of a concerted cry by city leaders for the city to gosh-darn it finally get a good downtown so "we" don't lose out to "them," Angelou coming in the cross-hairs of city leaders was like dropping a *Hustler* or *Playgirl* in the lap of a thirteen year-old boy. It didn't take much, I'm sure, for the city to spew forth a \$75,000 payload. Frankly, I expected more.

While this may explain why the progressive blogosphere came down so hard on Angelou, it also explains how progressive leaders and followers subsequently critiqued Angelou's report. Most public responses critiqued the content while embracing the message. Right message, but wrong, poor or unethical implementation or packaging. As I heard a democratic operative describe an unsuccessful Republican bill, "It did not convey the appearance of..."

In what is widely regarded as the best analysis of the Angelou report, blogger Rob Morris wrote: "The recommendations that Angelou makes aren't bad. They recommend creating a better support network for entrepreneurs. They recommend setting up a minority business accelerator. They recommend setting up a comprehensive marketing plan for Lexington to help recruit new businesses. The trouble with Angelou's report...is that 'Lexington' is missing. Much of what makes Lexington special

and unique—our history, our geography, and our culture—is largely absent from the Angelou strategy."

Within the framework he sets up—content but not message—Rob's analysis is spot on. The Angelou plan imagines a dream Lexington that has little relation to the city most of us inhabit. Blatant plagiarism, even in defense of OK recommendations, plays to progressives about as well as their doppelgangers, the Tea Party, take to Jesus-bashing. We Lexington yuppies don't like to be reminded that despite pretensions we are in fact small-town rubes in some greater global con game.

Message-wise, though, all folks, most of whom self-identify as progressive, seem to agree with Rob. The Angelou content was generally fine: boiler-plate regurgitations of creative ideas about technology clusters and capitalizing on local assets. No mention by Tom Eblen, in his "this is our consultancy CenterPointe moment," that his articles have been juicing the city market for creative consultancy work, from his Creative Cities reporting on through to his Pittsburgh dispatches and WEG brand-identity coverage.

No media outlet covering the saga has yet to look into how Angelou got hired as a way to see if any city assumptions created the conditions for getting hoodwinked. Nobody's asked whether a consultant "specializing in the site selection needs of the technology industry and the communities seeking to recruit them" is good economic policy. I've seen no media or council work comparing, say, the city's investment and outcomes in Creative Cities to its similar investment in Angelou—both, after all, do grow from the same philosophical and practical mulch.

Florida does Lex again: the return of the Angelou hoax

Here's why this is important. In the absence of that discussion about message—whether the city needs to invest in an economic strategy concerned with positioning itself as a net attractor of techno-creatives and their needed communities—Angelou went ahead and did what companies of that sort do best. It re-wrote the work, changed allegiances from Commerce Lexington to Jim Gray, and stayed on message while changing its content.

The more specific revised report has made a unique turn. The business featured most in the new Angelou report is the University of Kentucky, technically not a business at all. Its revised "Top 12 priorities," on page 9 the report's first offering specific details, makes specific recommendations for extending city relationships with UK—its first and fourth listed. (The minority business accelerator fell from its featured position in the draft to point eight.)

Strategy 1.1 in the revised report reads, "Build upon the success of UK's Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship to become a nationally recognized hub of entrepreneurship training." Strategy 2.1 reads, "Brand UK's Coldstream campus to

specific research and development activities occurring at the campus."

Curiously, the revised report's interest in UK seems to deeply mirror the interests of its new overlord. By coincidence, Jim Gray has recently taken up the town/gown relationship with UK in a number of places, mostly with the public or tacit support of his progressive followers. On the pretext of doing what it takes to sustain a growing downtown renaissance, Gray's limited the conditions for a recent study on Rupp Arena to a renovation for an arts/entertainment district or a rebuild of the entire arena.

Also echoing the revised Angelou document, Gray has worked to sell Coldstream as "leverage" for city-wide economic development. This has been fortuitous, as in the most recent special session of Kentucky Congress, Democratic senator Damon Thayer passed a bill—one of only two passed in the session—that created a special exception for university research parks and military bases to be considered for TIF funds. The bill was explicitly written for Coldstream, which means even more city and university money should soon pour into the Legacy Trail area along Newtown Pike.

What do these new connections between the city and university mean for us? Is the inevitable message conveyed in creative class manifestos, a pop-social theory emanating from academia that's been taken up here in Lexington by two abashedly pro-business leaders, one that is truly in the collective good?

In its editorial coverage of the unacceptable earlier Angelou report, the *Lexington Herald-Leader* took the draft-writers to task for repeating common sense ideas already widely noted by locally produced city planning documents. By way of example, the *Leader* wrote, "'Then there's this: 'Fully leverage regional higher education institutions.' Is there any economic development scenario in which we wouldn't want to leverage our higher education institutions?'"

The Angelou revision recently turned into Jim Gray addresses the *Leader* questions of content: more Coldstream, more downtown Ruppish area development, more use of UK's Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship. Same message, more specific content.

Despite its laudable critique over the funding of the UK Wildcat Coal Lodge, the *Herald-Leader* can't even imagine an economic development scenario where leveraging educational assets would not be desired. The result of this lack of imagination? By default, all the town/gown projects imagined by Angelou and (supported thus far by Gray) are presumed, by default, to be worthy uses of public city funds.

The revised report seems to enable a whole lot of people to do a whole lot of things—UK, its basketball donors, the city, private developers, etc. In the case of Angelou Economics, we should ask, whose hoax is whose? Me...I've got my suspicions.

To be continued.

Announcements

The Bazaar opens on Bryan Avenue

Drop on by the Bazaar, 720 Bryan Avenue, to browse stalls of jewelry, journals, photographs, soap, and other items handcrafted right here in Kentucky.

Sixty percent of revenue earned goes directly to the artist and the remaining forty percent helps the LRM in its mission to assist the poor and homeless in Lexington.

Elizabeth Warren speaks on debt at UK

Nationally renowned scholar Elizabeth Warren will deliver the University of Kentucky's annual

business-themed Chellgren Lecture on April 18.

The free lecture, titled "Debt, Credit and the Middle Class," will be held at 7 P.M. in Memorial Hall and is open to the public

Saving power of nonviolence at Lexington Theological Seminary

On Tuesday, April 26, from 7:00-9:00 P.M., Terrence Rynne will explore the life of Jesus and teachings of Gandhi as a way to put nonviolent action at the center of Christian salvation. The talk will take place at the Lexington Theological Seminary fellowship hall, located on 631 South Limestone Street.

1100 Sparks Road

Dave



Perry Jordan, the former owner of the chair, lived in this house at least since 1966, when Dave, the man who sat for the photograph, lived across the street as a child. Perry was an auto body specialist by trade and had hobbies that included old-fashioned photography (which is where the large fresco in the picture most likely came from), phonograph repair, and being a church ladies' man (according to Dave, "He loved, loved, loved his women and they loved him too"). Perry left his home on Sparks when his children moved him to the Wilmore Veterans Care nursing home after he turned 97.

Image and text by Kurt Gobde and Kremena Todorova, Discarded project.

Sollee (cont.)

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a good description of the Latitude community itself, which mixes all ages, ethnicities, genders, and "abilities."

My partner and I adapted some of the techniques taught by Holly earlier that morning, allowing us to create two pieces of artwork at the same time! The end result was a night sky lit up with bursts of color atop a silhouetted crowd of people, their arms stretching into the air. In the top right corner of the bag is the word "Boom," which is probably my favorite element, for it reminds me of the best imitated sound-effect of a firework I've ever heard.

I suspect, Merch That Matters will quickly become a sideshow traveling

alongside the concert experience. I'm proud to be a resident of Lexington, where we are fortunate enough to have passionate artistic activists who are redefining what it means to live in a commonwealth, a group of people linked by something they all have in common: music, art, and matters of the heart.

The Ben Sollee tour kicks off May 4 and 5 at the Lyric Theatre, where Merch That Matters will be introduced and 100 Community Values painted canvas bags will be available for purchase, benefiting a local charity. Look for Sollee's new record Inclusions to be released May 10. For more info contact Bruce Burris at (859) 806-0195.

APRIL 13, 2011

Music

Live music to support a cause to: April 16 - 23

Saturday, April 16

Variety Show to benefit Reading Camp *Buster's*; 899 Manchester. 8 P.M.

I'll tell you the artist roster in a sec, but first, let's talk about literacy. Not high-talkin' fancy-pants 50¢-word-usin' literacy, but the basic ability to read and write at an age-appropriate level. Here in Kentucky about 12 percent of the adult population can't comprehend basic prose, which is, well, poor. I mean, Alabama's worse, but is that the benchmark we really wanna use? No.

The way you fix this problem in the long term is by making sure kids get the reading help they need, and since neither parents nor the schools have demonstrated they can always do the job, you have to look for extra help. That's where Reading Camp comes in; basically, if you've got a 2nd-, 3rd- or 4th-grader who's falling behind in language skills, Reading Camp will take the kid off your hands for a week, free of charge, and do some intensive remedial reading instruction for the duration.

It's an Episcopal church program, but at the moment the Anglicans have too many problems of their own to bother trying to convert anyone, so the worst that will happen is that your child will come back from camp with a slight Oxbridge accent and a taste for fresh scones, in addition to knowing how to read at least a little bit better than before.

Now, the roster: Fifth on the Floor, Barry Mando Project, Holler Poets, Josh Branham...and like a half-dozen more musicians and dancers that I'm not gonna list because it shouldn't matter who's playing, damn it, because you're going there to support the cause, which is making sure Kentucky's kids learn to read properly, and your ten bucks (\$12 day-of) helps keep Reading Camp free. So you're going, yes? Learn more at readingcamprocks.org.



Kelsey Skaggs.

Wax Fang *with* Onward Pilgrim and The Bad Reeds *Cosmic Charlie's*; 388 Woodland. 9 P.M.

Some of you hate reading and would prefer we all existed in some sort of hazy pre-Enlightenment state of ignorance, and others of you just like to be contrary for contrary's sake. I can respect the latter, at least, and so I offer for your consideration Wax Fang, who sound a bit like PiL-era John Lydon fronting early Rush: specifically, you get the off-center melodic sensibility of the first combined with the power and virtuosity of the second. It has to be that way because we don't look to John Lydon for virtuosity, ya know?

The cause here is to support local-ish music, which ought to be enough for you, since you hate reading so much.

Monday, April 18

Kelsey Skaggs *Natasha's*; 112 Esplanade. 9 P.M.

The music is that Nashville + alt country + quirky singer/songwriter

stuff that's real easy to like, but what's fascinating about Kelsey Skaggs is the remarkable personal story and socio-religious manifesto that appears on the "About" page on her web site. After you get past the facebooky stuff, like the love of hiking and Family Guy and sushi, there's this:

"Life was easy and good growing up, as I faced the challenges normal 6 and 7 year olds face of best friends, picking favorite colors and dandelions. But that all changed when I was put in situations that I shouldn't have been and I became a victim of a broken world...Once I started to grasp what had happened, I started understanding the things I would need the Lord to help me conquer."

But there's hope:

"My experience was just a small speck of what happens on a daily basis, to women all over the globe. I was wrecked for these women that go through this every day, all day, and I felt an overwhelming need to fight the growing demand for the innocence of children everywhere. I had started getting involved in music during my crucial years of rehabilitation, and it proved to be a source of tranquility and rebuilding; it also became a pedestal that gave me a voice."

Now, normally I make fun of band bios and that sort of thing (see this week's letters, for example), but I ain't making fun of this. In fact, not only do I recommend you go see the show and buy the record, but you ought to be doing everything you can to help stop child abuse wherever and whenever you can. Don't say to yourself, "oh, that's none of my business." You know damn well it's everybody's business. Kelsey works with an organization called Love146, but there are plenty of others, and there's plenty to do in your own neighborhood. In our neck of the woods there's the Children's Advocacy Center of the Bluegrass, at kykids.org, and look for Kelsey's cause at love146.org.

Record Store Day at CD Central

By Buck Edwards

Music lovers of a certain age get misty-eyed when the subject of record stores comes up in conversation. Now, you readers under 30 will probably roll your eyes at this, but you have very little to contribute to society anyway, so feel free to tune out as usual. To the rest of you: remember that feeling of walking into a really great record store with some cash in your pocket and a vague idea that somewhere in the racks of discs, those caverns of cassettes,

CD box set, and thus wasn't special or scarce anymore, but for a while I was a musical king among my peers. I'd even bought extra copies to sell to my friends, at a hefty markup.

Now everything's available for download, and both the big chains (remember the awe you felt just *hearing* about the NYC Tower Records?) and the mom 'n' pop stores have closed up shop just about everywhere they once operated, but a few stores are hanging on, and a number of them, including our own CD Central, are participat-



those vistas of vinyl—somewhere there was a record that would prove to be the best music you ever bought.

My record-store Valhalla was the Peaches in Greensboro, NC. The store was about 45 minutes from where I grew up, so I didn't get to go very often, but when I did...glorious. It was huge. It had, seemingly, everything. New releases. Old stand-bys. Special orders. Imports. Rarities. I remember, in high school, tracking down Led Zeppelin's "Hey Hey What Can I Do" on 45, the B-side of "Immigrant Song." Later the cut was included on the first

ing in the 2011 Record Store Day, on April 16.

What's so great about Record Store Day? Try limited-edition vinyl from Warner Brothers; I just about shat myself when I saw the five-album Flaming Lips collection on 120-gram stock. Try special releases of all sorts of stuff: live Floyd, rare New York Dolls, a single (!) from Opeth...this is what it used to be like, man! So close the iTunes app and go get your music the way God, by which I mean Buddy Holly, meant for you to get it: live and in person.

Review: J Marinelli's *Pre-emptive Skankery Sessions*

By Jackson Cofer

As I start this review I would first like to beg forgiveness. *NoC* editor Danny Mayer brought J Marinelli's latest vinyl release to my very doorstep in the depths of winter and though I have heavily rotated it for months now, I have selfishly kept this treasure trove my dirty little secret. Not dirty as in "guilty pleasure," but dirty as in "J Marinelli, you're a dirty, dirty boy." *Pre-emptive Skankery Sessions* sounds like, feels like and smells like real rock and roll. J's style seamlessly rolls elements of soul, punk and rock-a-billy into one cohesive sound that is uniquely his. Raw and original, this album is a sincere depiction of how gritty rock and roll can and (in my opinion) should be.

You can see the dust fly off the kick in "Weak Enough." You'll check the ridges in your record for little flecks of dirt on "The Ballad of Eddie Freedom." You'll even ask yourself, "Did I shower today?" as you groove to (it can't be helped) "Pop Bottle Pete and Beercan Bud." J's lyrical sentiments in "Last Year's Party" find me swaying in an empty room, drinking my last Modelo Especial, and matching my best yodel

against his. Not surprisingly, I always lose.

I have seen J perform here in Lexington at least 5 times, which isn't nearly enough as the man lives and works here in Lexington, and he jumps at almost every opportunity to perform. A transplant from West Virginia, J has been spreading his sound through touring and album releases for the past decade. One-man band performers from all over the country absolutely revere this man and when you meet him you get a genuine smile and a very real appreciation for his listeners.

Lexington has some really amazing local music. And since the first time I heard "Telephone Teeth" (not found on this album) on a youtube video years ago, J hasn't moved from my top 3. If you're into lo-fi, electric soul with break-beat swagger and the kind of nonchalance that is *earned* by years of playing all of your instruments at once, then not only do you owe it to yourself to see him perform live, but you should be supporting his music through the purchase of this incredible album. *Pre-emptive Skankery Sessions* may well have been the best new album to come out of Lexington in 2010.

Saturday, April 23

Big Maracas *Al's Bar*; 601 N. Limestone. 9 P.M.

Why mention Big Maracas here, again, when we've mentioned them many times before, when they've already gained renown in our fair community for playing some of the highest-energy shows around, when they've already demonstrated they time and again leave every member of their audience sweaty, exhilarated, and ready for activities in which their inhibitions would normally prevent them from engaging? Why? Because they're playing for a cause too, which is the liberation of your uptight ass.

The City
Live at Cheapside
April 22 & 23



Film & Media

APRIL 13, 2011

A chat with Bruce Dern Hollywood legend discusses acting, family, and Alex Trebek

By Jennifer Miller

When *Hitting the Cycle*'s principal photography in Lexington concluded last summer, filmmaker J. Richey Nash intended to shoot the final two scenes on a hospital soundstage in Los Angeles. Yet again, like the movie's anti-hero Jimmy "Rip" Ripley, Nash learned that there's no place like home: University of Kentucky HealthCare, which previously hosted two HTC overnight shoots in its hallways and lobbies, provided exceptional access to a transitioning patient area at UK Good Samaritan Hospital.

For this shoot, the West Coast representatives on Team HTC now included Hollywood royal Bruce Dern, playing James Ripley, Senior. While

set. The conversation was intended as a traditional Q and A, but, as you already may have figured out, Bruce Dern rarely follows conventional expectations. Below are some excerpts, in Dern's own words, from the pseudo-interview.

On Dern's upcoming film project with his daughter Laura and ex-wife Diane Ladd:

Laura and her mother have done seven films together. In three of them, they got nominated for Academy Awards. I've been nominated, but never in a movie with them. I've done a couple with Miss Diane, but I haven't done one with Laura, and we're getting ready to do that. The thing that's nice about the families here is that families support it; that's not always the case

to look forward. He can't look back, because in looking back you settle for what's been done. I'm always ready to look forward because I want to know what I'm doing next and how good I can be, and better than I was the last time.

Acting is real simple—it's hard to do, hard to learn, but my premise for acting is very simple, that is, having the ability to be publicly private. If you're willing to pull your heartstrings, open it up, and talk from yourself, one from the heart, if you will, you can make it, and be really big. It gives everybody alive a chance to be an actor or actress, because we all have a bank of memories, and thoughts, and feelings, and if we're willing to draw on our own things like that, we can make a difference. And if you can't, then you should be Alex Trebek and do game shows.

On his experiences with Team HTC:

From the minute I got off the plane, with the exception of the weather—but I'm from Chicago originally, so it's nothing new—I've been impressed, I've been happy, I've had fun...I enjoy Richey very much... He's a wonderful man. And the thing I like about that is, it's not just that he's well-bred. His folks get it, so he gets it. That's a key. [Assistant] Wendy [Guerrero] and I both work with a lot of people that don't get it. They don't understand that there's no "I" in the word team. Movies are the ultimate teamwork. You're only as good as your partner on the screen, off the screen. You're only as good as the people in your department that help you. There can't be any egos on the set, except the right kind of ego—dignity and so forth...

I think everybody on this crew—first of all, I didn't see one asshole. Except maybe myself. I didn't see any screw-ups. I didn't see anybody who wasn't ready to get ready to be prime-time in their department. The organization of it was fabulous. I think there's a lot of hope for this group of people. If I was a filmmaker and I wanted to come down here I'd keep this group together. I think anybody around Lexington, or in this part of Kentucky, ought to really study and look at the names of the people who were on this crew, and how it moved, 'cause it's a little army. All movies are. You become a family. The sad part about it is, when you get on a bigger and bigger level, you make a movie and then you never see those people again.

Crews are different, especially in independent film. If a company can keep that crew together, boy, you can do some stuff down the road, because everybody understands everybody else.

On turning a topical question about baseball into a meditation on family and filmmaking:

It's bred here. There's something about honoring tradition, and this movie had a little tradition to it without a lot of traditional people. And I like that, I admire that...Here, you had a guy that, because of his family ethic, turned a crew into a family. It's not easy to do. He's a monument to this movie, his energy, his strength, his endurance, all the things that made all this work.

Family tradition + untraditional family = Team HTC, and Bruce Dern fits in well.



Bruce Dern in a scene from *Hitting the Cycle*.

cinephiles can rattle off dozens of Dern's memorable performances—ranging from blue-blood Tom Buchanan opposite Robert Redford in *The Great Gatsby*, to his Oscar-nominated turn as a Vietnam Vet in Hal Ashby's *Coming Home*, to his recent portrayal of polygamous patriarch Frank Harlow on HBO's *Big Love*—twenty-somethings on the HTC set admired Dern even more for his real-life role as the father of acclaimed actress Laura Dern.

A family tradition on the silver screen veered far from Dern's own upbringing in a family distinguished in more conformist fields. His father was a corporate leader in Chicago, his paternal grandfather was the first non-Mormon Governor of Utah and a U.S. Secretary of War. Dern's maternal uncle won three Pulitzer prizes, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and served as the first Librarian of Congress. Dern's godparents: Adlai Stevenson (twice the Democratic nominee for President) and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Heady stuff.

Dern graduated from the Ivy League University of Pennsylvania after the New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois. The public school is famous as the backdrop for many John Hughes films in the 1980s, and the alma mater of an astonishing range of celebrities, including Rock Hudson, Ann-Margret, Ralph Bellamy, Charlton Heston, Hugh O'Brian, Liz Phair, Bobbi Brown, Donald Rumsfeld, and Ari and Rahm Emanuel.

Dern's disparate school experiences affected his perspective on societal assumptions, and helped shape his personal goals. As he explains, "I went to Choate [an elite boarding school in Connecticut] my first two years because my parents thought I hung out with the wrong kind of kids in grade school in Glencoe. They sent me to Choate to shape up and be with the right kind of boys. I got there, and I met 500 of the unhappiest kids I ever met in my life, who were in prep school since they were 5 years old. I didn't like that. And they knew how to cut a corner better than anybody that ever went to New Trier."

Dern shared with *North of Center* these thoughts and many others—the film production, family, acting, and politics—after finishing two days of work from a hospital bed on the HTC

in the movie business. When we got our stars on Hollywood Boulevard in November, we were the first family—mother, father, and child—to ever get separate stars on the Boulevard, and we're also the only family to have all three members nominated for multiple Academy Awards.

I'm sorry it's taken Laura and I this long, but we never found a piece of material. Now we have a magical piece of material called *Hart's Location*. It's a place where everybody alive has a chance to get to. Unfortunately, it's not on the map. When Laura said, "But, Dad, where is it? How do I get to it?" "You'll know when you're there." If you're lucky and you tell the truth to the people in your lives, and your family and all around you close what you really feel, honest feelings about everything, and everybody's up front about it, and nobody hides things, buries things, and refuses to talk about the tough issues. If you do all that the right way, then you have a chance to find *Hart's Location*.

[In *Hitting the Cycle*, the father and son] didn't get it. They got each other, but they didn't really get each other. It's a good metaphor. That's one of the wonderful things about the movie, is the metaphor.

On flying to Kentucky to play the estranged father of a struggling professional baseball player:

I liked the role, I liked the baseball metaphor for a story. I liked the story, and the fact that I made a running movie once called *On the Edge* with a similar kind of, you know, nobody does it on their own, nobody does it by themselves. And I like movies about guys that maybe don't quite get there. This is a movie about a guy who got there and couldn't stay there. And I've always thought that people who have great ability and they say, well, he got hurt, and he couldn't do this, and he couldn't do that, well, it's the sum total of who you are. You can have all the ability in the world, but if you're going to make the Hall of Fame you got to do it for a long time. And this had a semblance of that.

On his oft-repeated claim that "you're only as good as your next picture":

That's what an actor has to say. That's not the truth, but an actor's got



Hitting the Cycle co-stars Bruce Dern and J. Richey Nash.

Local film happenings

Bhutto Documentary at the Community Cinema Series

On Thursday, April 14, the Central Branch of the Lexington Public Library will host a screening of *Bhutto*, an hour-long documentary about the life and impact of Benazir Bhutto. The screening is part of KET's Community Cinema series and, like all films in the series, is free and open to the public. The screening starts at 6 P.M. and is likely to be followed by a discussion. Further information on the film can be found at www.ket.org/communitycinema.

Highbridge Film Festival

Make the short drive to Wilmore, KY to experience this year's Highbridge Film Festival on Saturday, April 16. The festival, which is hosted by Asbury College, will be held in the Hughes Auditorium at 7:30 P.M. The screening program will

consist of juried films and prizes will be awarded based on technical and narrative achievement. For more information, please visit www.asbury.edu/highbridge/festival.

The Good Foods Co-Op presents *Burning the Future: Coal in America*

Join the Board of the Good Foods Co-Op on Tuesday, April 26 for a film and discussion on a topic that hits particularly close to home. *Burning the Future: Coal in America* explores the conflict between the coal industry in West Virginia and the community that it affects. The screening starts at 6:30 P.M. at the Central Branch of the Lexington Public Library and will be followed by a discussion with representatives from the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, Cumberland's Mountaintop Removal Committee Chapter, and Kentucky Mountaintop Justice.



APRIL 13, 2011

Sports

River rats (cont.)

continued from page 1

part of its course, and live, if only fleetingly and as best a gravity-dumb biped can, by the alternating and life-altering charges of rheotaxis.

Folk memory

There's no two ways around it. The Kentucky River courses through the geography of first, second, third, and even fourth-hand memories that constitute my life. Had not my ancestors fallen on hard times, left East Tennessee in the 1850s for the big woods of Eastern Kentucky, logged the old growth timber in Breathitt and Clay Counties, and experienced first-hand the spring tides above the forks of the Kentucky, the splash-dammed tributaries, log-rafts, and the precarious, serpentine run to downstream sawmills, like the one that operated near present-day Lock 7, the magnetism of some other distant current might sing to me from my subconscious.

But as it were, lucky for me I'm certain, the Kentucky delivered my grizzled ancestors to High Bridge, a small but promising river and (after 1877) railroad town. This sleepy corner of central Kentucky, with its mammoth cantilevered bridge transecting the deep-set ribbon of life, remains for me, even still, home.

They had, no doubt, first encountered this part of the inner bluegrass in the years preceding the Civil War, and after serving in the Union Army through Perryville, Stones River, and Chickamauga, Edmund and Robert Houpp (father and son), my fourth and third great grandfathers respectively, shunned the rugged hills and hollows of Breathitt for the loamy and forgiving earth of southwest Jessamine.

Sweetheart of the sawmill

At that time, the lock and dams extended only as far as Tyrone, some thirty-five miles downstream from High Bridge, and the river level was low enough to allow the Beckham family of Oregon Bend, Mercer County, to drive their ox-drawn wagons up the bottom, through riffle and shallow pool much of the way, till they converged on High Bridge, too, eventually setting up residence in one of the only houses in the river-bottom and putting into place another part of my ancestral equation.

As family lore would have it, when Haggie Mae Beckham (my father's maternal grandmother) was a young lady, she gained some reputation among loggers and mill-workers for her ability to "fish out" runaway logs. The story involving Haggie Mae that my family knows best occurred sometime in the decade prior to WWI—the height of the timber boom and the era of mountain logmen and raftsmen on the Kentucky.

The legend has Haggie fishing out one fine length of white oak and bringing it to rest on the bank below her family's house, across from the mouth of the Dix, where the valley bends to the north and the emboldened Kentucky immediately passes beneath the shadow of High Bridge. In the night log bandits made off with Haggie's prize, most likely *dehorning* her crude mark, relegating her, as was most common in the era, to losersweepers status. The river gives on occasion but takes away as a general course of habit.

Discovering her log was missing, Haggie scoured the log-jammed banks the next morning in search of her stolen windfall. What the bandits hadn't considered was the extent to which this young female river-scruff had studied her prized length of white oak, and when she found the log unattended (and curiously nearby), she called on the help of some sawmill employees and managed to move the log upstream into the queue of logs waiting at the tramway, the giant wooden-framed, steam-powered conveyor belt that drew Eastern Kentucky's bounty up and out of the river bottom, some three hundred feet, to Hugh's sawmill atop the palisades in High Bridge.

Determined not to fall victim to bandits again, Haggie Mae guarded her log all the way to the base of the tramway, and when it was loaded, she jumped up, straddled the trunk, and rode the magnificent timber all the way to the top. Such antics were considered rare, not to mention foolish, among loggers, raftsmen, and sawmill workers alike, given the healthy respect these men held for heavy timber. Logs indiscriminately drowned men in the water and maimed them on the bank.

The sight of a girl riding a 16-foot white oak log up the narrow, steeply inclined tramway, careless of personal

injury, must've cut a deep and humbling impression on all those who witnessed the scene: stay away from that girl, boys. She's incredibly single-minded, purpose-driven, and more than likely insane. She delivered her log to the sawmill's blade, and, as the story goes, received 18 dollars for her prize, though I'm inclined to think the real figure was something less.

River, brush, and bottle fever

From the Beckham's house, it was just a short walk up the river-bottom to the large spring where the family drew their water. The path up the bottom was well worn, and where it met the stream below the spring, duck-boards provided a relatively clean crossing.

The image of Haggie Mae and her mother walking to the spring was preserved for posterity in the watercolors of Paul Sawyer, perhaps Kentucky's most renowned impressionist painter. The Beckhams, along with many other nearby residents, came to know Sawyer in the years between 1910 and 1913, when he moored his houseboat at High Bridge, lived a reclusive life, obsessively whetting his life-long appetite for the river, his bottle fever pulling him steadily toward oblivion, his brushes pulling him crosswise to immortality.

When he completed "Going to the Spring," he tried to sell it to Haggie's mother, but she "had no use for it" and offered to feed him dinner instead out of real frontier sympathy for scroungers. I'm sure he accepted, and I'm sure he was used to the cool market-reception the fruits of his artistic labor regularly received from locals, in whom tendrils of frontier asceticism still girdled all sense of aesthetics, leaving only the dulled *affect* of necessity. But, as his body of work demonstrates, he was undaunted. The number of reproduced river-related Sawyer prints exceeds eighty. It stands to reason he produced hundreds of sketches, studies, and paintings, many of which probably never made it out of the river-bottom.

Local legend has it that after Sawyer vacated his houseboat and headed north to the Catskills, local kids ransacked the place, tossing countless paintings over the gunnels in favor of more precious bounty—crusty paintknives, tobacco tins, a broken pocket watch, half a fifth of snake-oil whiskey, and the crown jewels, a little, rickety wood stove and enamelware kettle, prizes sure to impress even the dourest of hardscrabble mamas.

Grandpa was a "Winter" Shaker

By the first decade of the twentieth century, Robert Houpp had sired a small army of children, mostly boys. The oldest, George Wesley (my first namesake), was raised by the Shakers at nearby Pleasant Hill. The decade after the Civil War must have been a hard one because many families in the area sent their kids (particularly those who were old enough to handle a hoe or swing an ax) to be cared for by the Shakers.

Since the Shakers were the real losers in the war between North and South (having been all but bankrupted by the indefatigable appetites of two "invading" armies), they were more than happy to welcome young, impressionable youths into the fold. Even adults availed themselves of the Shaker's kindness and plenty, particularly in the winter months when sustenance was scarce. They were known in local parlance as "Winter Shakers" because as soon as the season turned and opportunity thawed, most abandoned their adoptive family, picking up life as they had left it the year before.

Always free to leave, the children were fed, clothed, and provided with shelter in exchange for the labor they contributed to the

community. For obvious reasons, the Shakers held high hopes that some of their young wards would eschew the hardscrabble life and moral malaise of the secular world and adopt the agrarian (and in dogmatic irony unsustainable) Shaker way for good. Let's call it a hedging of earthly bets doomed to come back snake-eyes.

George Wesley, like so many others, eventually found his way back down into the world of drunks, drifters and do-little river rats. He left the community, though, with a solid grasp of broom-craft and the art of cutting cedar shakes.

Boom and bust

While George Wesley went on to live as long and respectable a life as one could hope, his younger brother, Jackson, was not so lucky. At about the same time Haggie Mae was scouring the banks for unclaimed logs, and Paul Sawyer was setting the riverscape to canvas, Jackson Houpp, like so many other young men, was trying to cash in on the timber boom. He would travel up-river as far as Beattyville and the forks, buying up logs from wherever and whomever he could, assembling his own rafts to float back down to High Bridge.

The number of rafts and successful floats he made is uncertain (it surely wasn't very many), but we know each trip upstream and each attempt to assemble a profitable raft required significant expenditures of cash. A modest profit might be realized if everything went off without a hitch; one misstep, however, could sink your ass both literally and figuratively.

As usual, any economic boom simultaneously creates equal-opportunity piles of shit for the stepping, and as Jackson's luck would have it, he found the king shit-pile. Sometime around 1910, a particularly nasty gang of felon log bandits made off downstream with a newly assembled raft, leaving Jackson high and dry for weeks of labor and a wad of dough. Riding the floodwaters and with a day's lead, the bandits more than likely steered Jackson's raft on past High Bridge to the mills in Frankfort and vanished into "Crawfish Bottom," a seedier side of town, which, in the words of historian Thomas D. Clark, "clung to the famous river cliff like a half-drowned animal"—a place where men "could forget their trials and tribulations and give themselves over to at least one night of complete debauchery."

Ruined, Jackson returned home, checked in on his mother and father, and was last seen walking up the river-bottom past the bridge. They found him the next afternoon, hanging by a length of leather strap from a cross-member in the rickety little barn just up the bank from the Kentucky's swollen and muddy tide.

To be continued...

ROCK (cont.)

continued from page 1

recount the experience. An occasional penalty spoke for fairness and instructional shouts and shrieks blasted from the benches provided support. Aggressiveness was encouraged as the team competed but it's likely that the reminders were more of a convention than necessary. The waivers I had to sign prior to viewing were indicative enough of the coming aggression, but I welcomed it.

On the scrimmage carried, littered with moments of laughter and fun but characterized by effective teammate-to-teammate competition. The enthralling nature of seeing my first bout in person had left me without an idea of time. Before I was able to discern who had took the match, Coach Whitley called a score of 60-64, White winning. Two and a half hours had come and

went, leaving me gratified that I had taken the offer to stand in and view the action.

As the group shed their gear and packed their belongings, I made my commitments to return consistently and gave my thanks for their generosity. The experience left me exhilarated, satisfied, and already prepared for more. If you're interested in catching the action, too, R.O.C.K. will host their season opener at the Lexington Convention Center on April 23. Doors open at 6 P.M. and the bout begins at 7 P.M.

If you're interested in speaking with ROCK about volunteering, joining the team, or refereeing, email them at rockandrollergirls@gmail.com. Season passes are available now at www.rockandrollergirls.com or admission for home bouts is \$10. View the website for a full bout schedule and other information.

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Opinion

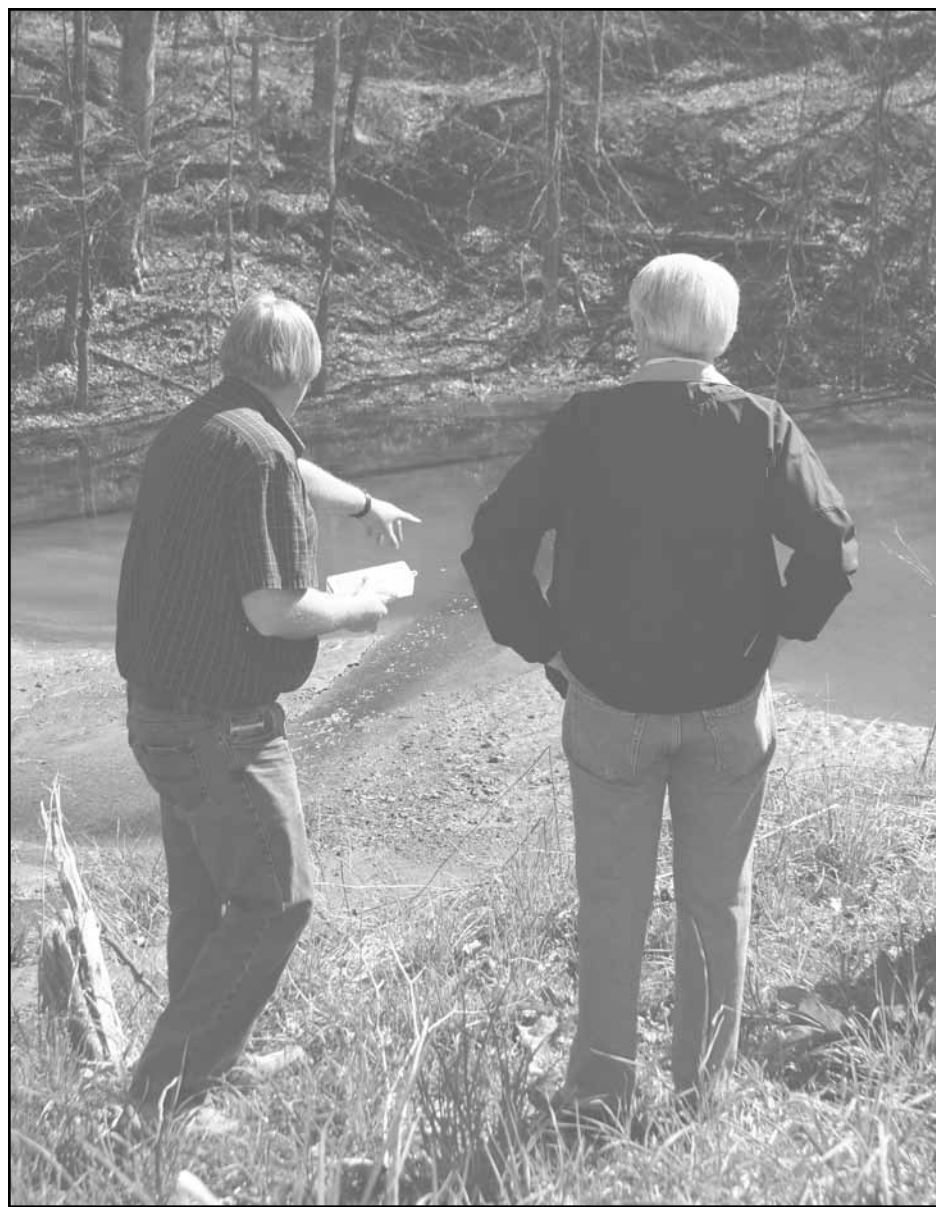
Rick's water

Last week, Rick Handshoe of Floyd County talked with Governor Steve Beshear about the acid mine drainage in the settlement pond above his home. Handshoe was one of the Appalachia Rising activists who occupied the governor's Frankfort offices over Valentine's Day weekend in an act of civil disobedience. As part of the conditions for leaving his office, the Appalachia Rising activists made Beshear promise to visit Eastern Kentucky in the spring and talk with people living around the region's coal mining sites.

Leading up to last week's trip to Eastern Kentucky, Beshear had openly embraced the power, influence and destruction of out-of-state coal companies plundering the region. Recently, the Kentucky governor had joined a lawsuit against EPA guidelines designed to protect our water from the poisons unearthed through the mining of coal. In January, Beshear increased his public attacks on the federal agency, braying to the entire state in a publicized address that the EPA should "get off our backs."

Thus far, Beshear seems to have been little moved by his trip east to view Handshoe's poisoned watershed. Nor does he seem to have been moved by the diverse collection of Lynch City Council members, public servants like himself, black and white, women and men, not to mention other citizens from the region, all of whom came to err their grievances with the state's most powerful public servant. Yet even as he faced the forgotten citizens of Lynch, the governor was careful to inflate the need for a fair, equal balance between the needs of out-of-state coal companies and in-state lands, resources and people.

"We want to enforce our rules and our laws that balance a need for



COURTESY KENTUCKIANS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

responsible mining," Beshear stated to the citizens of Lynch and other mountain communities, "and protecting our environment and protecting our water."

Interviewed by the *Herald-Leader*, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth member Doug Doerrfeld, who was present to hear Beshear's responses, noted that the governor failed to take a defined position on his vision for post-mining economic development for the

region, a surprising evasion for a sitting governor visiting a one-industry region like Eastern Kentucky. "I don't think he really gave clear answers," Doerrfeld told the paper.

Here in Lexington, this paper and the online news site *Barefoot and Progressive* have called attention to this city's enthusiastic and tacit support for the coal mining industry. This paper has called upon important area

leaders Lexington Mayor Jim Gray, UK President Lee Todd, and UK Basketball coach John Calipari to define their positions on coal extraction of the likes that has poisoned Handshoe's water. Thus far none have responded though all enjoy positions as leaders who engage their public, as people who are not afraid of tough decisions.

Politically and morally, Rick's cares should be, in part, our cares. We are Kentuckians together, and whether we like it or not, we share a common commonwealth covenant. By very nature of our geography, of our location *here*, his grievances are, contractually speaking, ours.

Here in Lexington and on towns along the state's great waterway, the Kentucky River, we ought to have an even more intimate reason to care about Rick Handshoe and his orange, tainted water. The same fouled water that leaches into back holler, politically under-represented Eastern Kentucky creeks also collects into larger tainted streams that funnel into the Kentucky River.

Less than 20 miles from where the last of these tainted Appalachian waterways, the Red River, enters the Kentucky, a pipe collects Kentucky River water to slake the many thirsts of the denizens of the city of Richmond. About 20 miles beyond that, not far from where Tate's Creek Road crosses the Kentucky at Valley View Ferry, a water station pumps Eastern Kentucky river-water into Lexington, Horse Capital of the World and our Kentucky home, little accumulating bits of Eastern Kentucky coal overburden bound for our own taps and leaching into our own bodies.

Let's make our leaders, here in Lexington as in Frankfort and Pikeville and Beattyville, care about Rick's water.

Letters to the editor

Calling entrepreneurs: better bike baskets

Every practical bicyclist needs folding rear baskets, and they're overpriced. So are the rear racks that hold the baskets and act as a fender. Google the baskets, and you'll see prices from \$15 to \$30—apiece! You need a pair. You need the rear rack, too, and those things also range up and down the double-digits.

A folding rear basket is 7 panels of stiff wire mesh. The dimensions are 2 gallon jugs or a 12-pack or a large paper grocery sack. How expensive can that be? For convenience, there's no match: drop stuff into the baskets, and go. Forget those plastic crates tied vertical behind the seat, or anything on the handlebars. That's awkward, and anything that's awkward in traffic is suicidal. If you buy the baskets, you'll use them all the time, and they'll pay back their ridiculous price very soon.

But if your bike is a tool—not a toy—and the price is too steep, you won't buy the baskets. Then it's a hassle to carry stuff home from the store, and you'll stop doing it. You'll drive or walk or do without. If more and more people are actually using bicycles, I suspect they also consider rear baskets, look again at the price and think "not now."

What needs doing is to show the manufacturers that there is enough demand to generate volume sales, if their product is attractively affordable. If there's any discernible trend at all, they can roll in the seige-guns of Mass Advertising. I don't know if you hawk bike baskets as cool or green or scientific or what, but the ad-men do. They can sell sugared paper as food, celebrities as gods and entertainment as journalism, so why not bike baskets as something—anything?

Bruce Williams
Lexington

Editor responds:

That sounds like a challenge for the Broke Spoke.

Music round-ups

Lady Gaga may be responsible for some things, but "turning a generation of little girls into streetwalkers" ("Live music to make you happy: 3/17-26") is not one of them.

I tend to shake my fist at those who lazily tag the most popular artist at the moment as the cause for all adolescent evils.

That being said, nice reviews.

Jackson
North Lexington

This comment is for whoever wrote the review for The Brothers Burn Mountain in North of Center (Buck Edwards, "Live music to make you happy: 3/17-26"). That last paragraph about The Brothers Burn Mountain is a bit derisive and cruel, and almost as poorly written (though in a different way) as that poorly written band bio that you so viciously criticize. Obviously neither Ryan nor Jesse Dermody wrote that bio. If you've ever listened to them in their interviews or spoken to them in person, which I have a couple of times, you'd realize they have a fluid, free-wheeling, unique and original way of saying things. So it makes you wonder who did write that bio, and why it's up on their website. Maybe it's beyond their control? For the time being?

I agree with you though that The Brothers Burn Mountain are damn good.



BRUCE WILLIAMS

Bike baskets.

Let me point out to you some of your own pretensions. What do you know about Wisconsin? For example, the snow season in southern Wisconsin lasts about five months these days, not eight months, and is getting shorter and shorter as the world heats up. And if you've ever kept up with The Brothers touring schedule, you'd realize how little time they actually spend in Wisconsin. They're constantly travelling across the entire Midwest and down south too, playing shows. And I've seen Fargo by The Coen Brothers that you've alluded to with your 'wood-chipper' quib, and I find it ridiculous that you'd even try to compare either of The Brothers (who are quite articulate and intelligent and warm-hearted) to that inarticulate, murderous thug from the forementioned film.

Amen.

Kathy

Buck Edwards responds:

Interesting criticisms. Let me address them point by point:

1. There are many things beyond our control, such as the price of tea in China, the size of our feet, and whether we develop acne as adolescents. Band bios, however, are eminently controllable.

2. I know nothing about Wisconsin. Why would anybody know anything about Wisconsin if they didn't actually live in Wisconsin?

3. Yeah, global warming's a bitch.

4. As far as I'm concerned, the Brothers have a wood chipper out back until it is positively demonstrated that they do not. That doesn't lessen the quality of their music.

5. Amen to you too.

Rest in peace, Dottie

I just discovered this article ("Inaugural LexFest a success," October 13, 2010) and appreciate the props to our farm, but I have sad news that [festival goat] Dottie is no longer with us. I won't go into the gory details, but she is greatly missed by all.

Jessa Turner



COURTESY JESSA TURNER

Dottie the goat.

North of Center is a periodical, a place, and a perspective. Read on to find out what that means.

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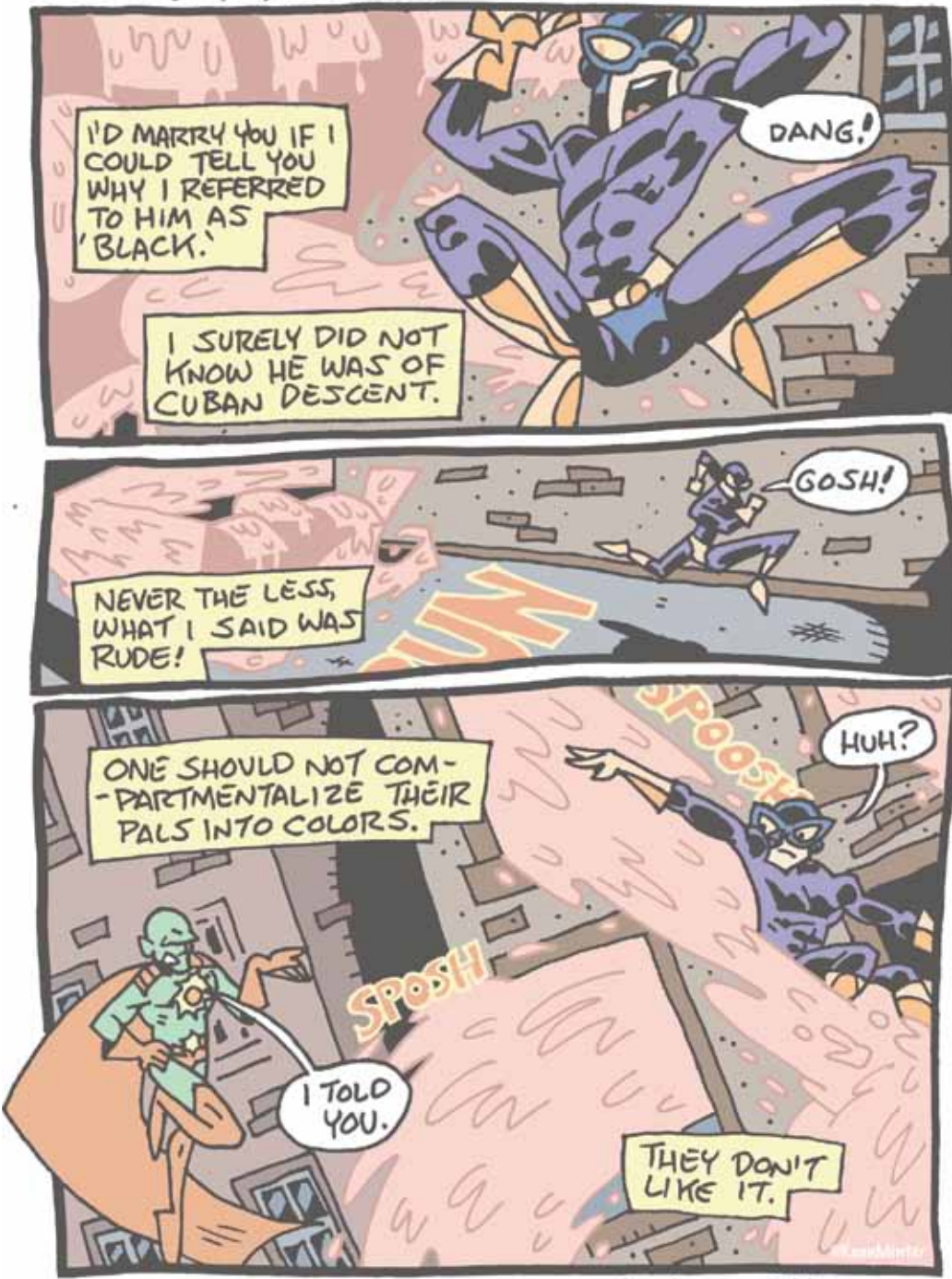
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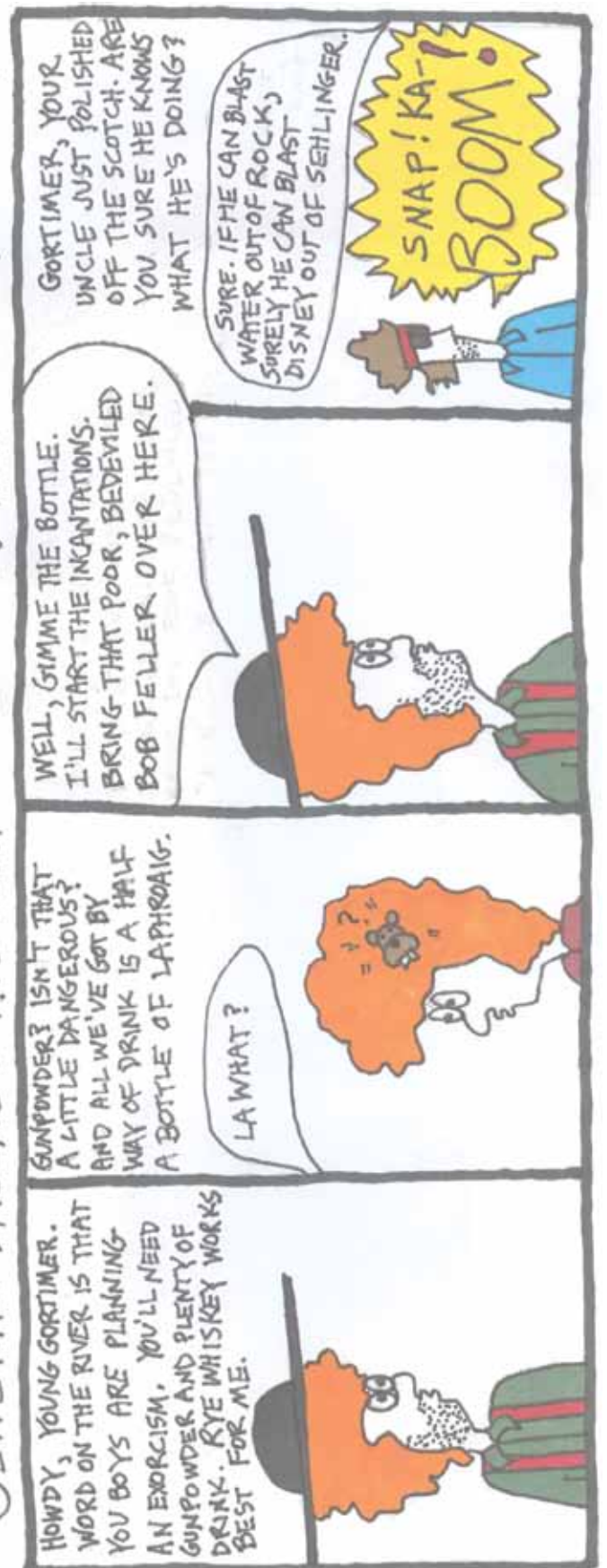
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Fierce Company by Kenn Minter



BY: WESTERN GENERAL DALLAS: HISTORY ENDURES, PART II



CROSSINGS | TRAVESÍAS



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