

Storm sewer education through art

Second of a two-part series

By Beth Connors-Manke

Editor's note: In part one of this article, Beth introduced Blake Eames and Claudia Michler, the artists behind Made You Look!, an arts-based environmental activism project. Eames and Michler painted storm sewer drains around downtown, neighborhoods near UK, and the near north side. Made You Look! won an EcoART grant from the city to help with the storm sewer public education campaign.

After my last official interview with Eames and Michler—I saw and talked to them many times after that as they knelt over drains, brushes in hand—I had mixed feelings about the storm sewer project. I loved the art, of course, no question, but the problems that had led to the need for the art and for sewer education weighed on me. As much as I may appreciate the art, the environmental degradation that it signaled was serious and dangerous.

Our conversations had suggested there were at least two aspects to the project: the first, the joy in the art; the second, the decline in the city's infrastructure and an ignorance about water pollution.

Second, the Bad, or A Walk Down a Flooded Memory Lane

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began examining Lexington's sewer systems in 2003. Tasked with making sure municipalities complied with the Clean Water Act of 1972, the EPA found what the city had already known: the antiquated and overwhelmed sewer system was an environmental and health hazard. In certain parts of the city, heavy rains brought nightmares for residents and public works: sewage would back up into basements and overflow into the stormwater system. Storms also brought raw sewage flowing out of pump stations and manholes. The net

result was that untreated sewage from sanitary sewers (the ones that take waste from your house) ended up in our waterways.

"The storm that's brewing under our feet," as Eames and Michler called it in their proposal, was a convergence of issues related to funding and development. If you read back through the more than 100 *Herald-Leader* articles since 2006 on the problem, you find an intriguing story, but one with no single protagonist and no clear villain. Things just fell apart—literally—which is what happens to a city when there's

streams, rivers and bays by upgrading sewage treatment systems that might once have been state-of-the-art but had become grossly inadequate. The federal government would pay for the biggest part of this massive infrastructure rehab. The feds backed out on their end of the bargain when the Reagan administration insisted on deleting the funding provisions in 1987. And an unfunded mandate was born."

"Lexington now finds itself on the receiving end of that unfunded mandate," the editorial continued. "For those who don't know, an unfunded

Politically, the situation came to a head in November 2006 when the EPA sued the city for violations of the Clean Water Act related to an ineffective storm sewer system. However, two months earlier the problem unfolded as a human drama when Lauren Brooke Fannin and Lindsey Marie Harp drown. The two young women were swept away in floodwaters near the intersection of Nicholasville Road and Alumni Drive during the torrential and historic September 23, 2006 rainstorm. The two left their taxicab when a police officer turned it back because of high water. Believing they could make it on foot, the women waded into the water.

While the women's deaths weren't a direct result of the storm sewer problems—UK holds that it has met drainage requirements since 1993—the tragedy did, for a time, become a clarion call for change in Lexington's approach to water and development. A little over a week after the drownings, a *Herald-Leader* editorial lamented the deaths of Fannin and Harp, along with all the other damage done by the "out-of-control water" that came with the September 23 storm.

"If we had needed another sign that this is not the moment to expand our city," the editorial argued, "that should have been it...this is the moment to take a break from suburban development, get our house in order and figure out what we want to be."

Remember what Eames and Michler said about why people were responding so often and so strongly to the color in their storm drain art?

Eames: "I think that everything is getting so grey and so concrete. And it's us doing it—even if we're not physically doing it, it's our need that is creating all this concrete and asphalt."

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BRIAN CONNORS-MANKE

Artist Claudia Michler at 3rd and Elm.

little funding for large-scale infrastructure repair and less than vigilant urban planning. I started reading the *Herald-Leader* articles dating from 2006 because I knew the EPA's hammer came down on the city that year.

One June 2006 editorial sketched the EPA-related financial bind created in the Republican 1980s.

"The Clean Water Act of 1972 struck a great environmental bargain between federal and local governments. Municipalities would help clean up

mandate is a requirement imposed by one government on another with no money to pay for it."

It also didn't help that the city had no dedicated revenue stream for the sewer systems such that it could substantially tackle the problem. Add to that the fact that, until the recent crisis forced by the EPA, the city's administrative structure kept maintenance of the sanitary sewer and storm sewer separate, even though the two types of sewers sometimes intertwine.

Council candidates on low-income Lex

NoC News

The Community Action Council, God's Pantry, and the Urban League of Lexington-Fayette County have sponsored two forums to help citizens, especially northsiders, learn about Urban County Council candidates.

District 1 forum

The September 30 candidate forum brought residents out to Douglass Park on a balmy and breezy night. District 1 hopefuls Marty Clifford and Chris Ford addressed a modest but interested audience. Candidates answered questions from moderator Beverly Henderson and audience members.

The first question asked each candidate which specific issue he would like to be known for as a councilmember. Clifford affirmed his commitment to being a "full-time" councilmember, allowing him to represent the First District's needs in the many meetings held by Council. Ford began his answer with affordable housing, also stressing economic empowerment and the relocation of Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) to Eastern State Hospital, located near West Fourth Street and Newtown Pike.

These issues—housing, poverty as it relates to education and job skills

training, and the First District's voice on Council—were the themes of the night.

Audience members asked pointed questions about the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF). An issue that has been under debate for several years and is strongly supported by several community groups, the AHTF would contract with non-profit organizations, for-profit entities, and local government to build and maintain affordable housing. "Affordable housing" is defined as housing that requires families and individuals to pay no more than 30 percent of their income for housing.

One resident, who had just received his property tax bill, complained about the potential for another tax (the proposed method for establishing the fund) when he is already financially strapped. Both candidates sympathized with the questioner, but emphasized that for the average household the cost would be relatively small. Clifford and Ford agreed that the result, more decent and safe housing for Lexington residents, would benefit all.

Another questioner pushed the candidates to clearly articulate their support for funding the AHTF. This audience member asked the candidates if they would commit to making sure

that every dollar that goes to PDR (the purchase of development rights for farm land around Lexington) is matched by funds going to housing in the inner city.

Clifford had admitted earlier that he was not very familiar with the work that has been done on the AHTF so far, but that he would support it because it was a "make sense deal." He suggested that funding for the AHTF might be gathered more incrementally than has been previously proposed.

Ford, a member of the original AHTF commission and currently the president and CEO of Reach, an affordable housing organization, detailed the AHTF model for the audience. He strongly and clearly promised to push the AHTF while on Council.

Earlier in the conversation, Clifford, who has spent most of his career in real estate finance and specializes in low-income housing, had pointed out another housing issue on the horizon for District 1: the gentrification that may come with the BCTC move to Eastern State Hospital. To guard against that, Clifford said an effort should be made to help residents near Eastern State buy their houses now, before real estate prices go up with BCTC's arrival.

Candidates addressed poverty in District 1 by stressing the need for

accessible and affordable education and job skills training. Ford cited the need for a program similar to the now-defunct Mayor's Training Center which provided job skills training. Clifford suggested models like one from San Jose in which community college education is free because of private investment.

The most evident difference between the candidates that night was their positions on dealing with government's perpetual "lack of funds." Ford argued that his experience in government and grant writing would help him find money for vital projects. He pledged to go Frankfort, or even Washington D.C., for funds if necessary. Clifford's approach, which he said is based on his past grassroots successes on the north side, relies on citizen volunteers to get projects done, creating stronger community in the process.

At-large forum

Nearly a week later at the downtown public library, the six at-large city council candidates also convened for a public forum moderated by Nancy Jo Kemper. Attended by nearly fifteen residents, it also focused on issues important to low-income residents of

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OCTOBER 13, 2010

The Neighborhood

Where have all the bike racks gone?

Out on the streets, that’s where we’ll meet

By Captain Comannokers
NoC Transportation Czar

For full effect, the title of this installment should be sung to the Kinks’s “Where Have All the Good Times Gone.” It should also be noted that the official subtitle—*Out on the streets, that’s where we’ll meet*—is the opening lyric to Ratt’s “Round and Round” and should be sung each time you begin reading this column.

Now, some information that you may actually find helpful: BADASS (*Bicycle Accommodations Downtown for All Serious Syclist*) had its initial meeting a few weeks ago to discuss the lack of bike parking available in the Limestone Corridor and downtown in general. Thanks to Hap Houlihan for sharing the minutes of the meeting with me.

The hoop-style “hitching post” racks, while not particularly popular or efficient, were certainly better than nothing. Now, areas that had hitches before the first phase of the Limestone Corridor project have nothing – sidewalks returned, traffic is flowing once again, but bike racks are missing.

Cyclists either have to go far afield to find a rack or be creative (or maybe illegal) in hitching their bikes. Riders with U-locks have the toughest time since their locks are made for attaching to a rack as opposed to, say, a tree trunk.

Limestone merchants have been told that bike racks, as well as new waste receptacles, etc., are classified under a later phase of the Limestone Corridor project. LFUCG’s Kenzie Gleason noted that bids for the racks had yet to be issued as of late September, and no reliable timelines for completion have been announced.

One goal of BADASS is to determine how much of the resources needed for adequate bike parking downtown and on the Limestone Corridor can be provided by committed citizens instead of waiting for change at the “speed of government.”

BADASS noted that the recent

redistribution of racks on UK’s campus was largely due to volunteer effort to collect the data, suggesting that volunteers may be key in mapping demand for downtown bike parking.

I’ll keep you posted, letting you know how and when you can assist in this effort.

Some questions and comments have filtered in via the noclexington.com discussion board. Loyal reader Lauren had several, and below I discuss a few with the assistance of Officer Howard Florence and UK’s Sustainability Coordinator Shane Tedder.



“I will admit I need to be better about using hand signals. I don’t always like to give up dual-hand control on my handlebars when turning in order to signal.”

First, I will say that cyclists need to use the proper hand signals – that is currently a big issue around these parts. Yes, I am completely annoyed when vehicles DON’T USE THEIR DAMN TURN SIGNALS...EVER, but cyclists have no room to bitch unless they are also using hand signals (my best guess would be less than 10 percent of riders use hand signals).

“Even if it’s only for a brief moment, it’s important to signal your intention,” Officer Florence said. “Sometimes I have to hold my

arm out for a second—then grab the handle bar—then signal again. You’re not required to do so if it could cause you to crash, and you don’t have to constantly keep your arm extended throughout your maneuver—just long enough to give cars a chance to understand your intent. I would suggest practicing in an empty parking lot at different speeds to build on bike handling skills and gain confidence.”

Excellent advice—just as you learn to drive a car through driver’s ed, you may need to touch up some bike skills to effectively and confidently become an

active participant in traffic. Practicing in a safe environment may seem embarrassing or silly, but at least you won’t have to learn how to parallel park again.

“When I get into the left turning lane at Euclid/Rose and I am the only ‘vehicle’ in the lane, I don’t weigh enough to get the light to change. So I can either wait till a car comes up behind me, turn illegally against the red, or jump off my bike and pretend I’m a pedestrian and walk through the cross walks.”

“Depending on the intersection, I like to pull up past the stop bar when safe to allow a vehicle behind me to trip the sensor. Sometimes I have to motion for them to pull closer because they’re giving me so much space,” Officer Florence recommended. “If you’re in a left lane with its own signal and no traffic is behind you, you may need to cross the street in the through lane and then start traveling with the cross traffic in the direction you wanted to go.”

“The law says that you can proceed if the signal malfunctions. A police

officer or the court may feel that just because it doesn’t work for a bicycle, doesn’t mean it’s malfunctioning. If you proceed through a red light, the burden is on you to justify why you did it,” Officer Florence said.

I call this using “safe sense.” If you are in a situation like this and can determine that you SHOULD have the arrow but don’t, and can make a left onto Rose without endangering yourself or ANYONE else (driver, pedestrian, squirrel)—then proceed. There are situations when I have determined that it would not be in my best interest to flirt with an 18-wheeler or seven lanes of anxious and antsy drivers—and so I walked my bike through a crosswalk, or took other precautions.

I base predicaments like these on a case-by-case scenario, and my greatest concern is safety for myself and all others involved. (I fully realize that the court may not have my supreme sense of justice—but maybe they can eventually appoint me Bike Infractions Judge or something along those lines).

“There is no easy way to legally get to Patterson Office Tower. I’ve been riding up the hill from Rose on Patterson Drive, but that turns into a one-way street going the wrong way. Thoughts?”

“The bike lane that begins in front of Fine Arts is intended for cyclists heading uphill against the flow of traffic,” said Tedder. “Students traveling by bike in the opposite direction (downhill) should use the same travel lane as the vehicles. To sign this, we are considering ‘sharrows’ in the shared eastbound lane (downhill) and a classic directional bike lane marking in the westbound lane (uphill). The markings are proposed at this point and we don’t have a concrete timetable for implementing.” So, rest easy Lauren—you are legally riding to work (unless you are carrying a concealed weapon or perpetrating some other offense that I don’t know about).

Thanks, Lauren, hope that answers some of your questions. I know there are plenty more inquires of all kinds out there, so join in the conversation at noclexington.com or email ShareTheRoadLex@gmail.com. This is your Captain speaking—over and out.

Report from Appalachia Rising

By Joan Braune

On the weekend of September 25-7, I joined over two thousand people in Washington, DC for Appalachia Rising, a conference and march against mountaintop removal mining. The march paused in front the Environmental Protection Agency and PNC Bank, which helps to finance mountaintop removal, before concluding in front of the White House, where around one hundred activists were arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience.

Appalachia Rising will likely prove to be a historically significant event, as this is the first time that a broad coalition of organizations, mostly based in Appalachia, came together to organize a large nationwide march against mountaintop removal.

Mountaintop removal has had devastating consequences for the region, including poisoned drinking water (which frequently comes out of the faucet black, red, or green) and deadly avalanches, flooding, and mudslides. It also puts miners out of work, since mountaintop removal requires only a third of the number of miners required for underground mining. Coalfield residents feel earthquake-like blasts while the mountains are being exploded and endure loud electronic

beeping at night. Dust from the blasts can coat houses and roads, sometimes rendering the painted lines on the highway invisible, endangering drivers.

Appalachia Rising was a blue-collar and grassroots event, with most of

bearded hippies with facial piercings, chanting “old standbys” like “We Shall Overcome.”

What that reporter did not realize, or did not acknowledge, is that many of the beards, red bandanas, bluegrass



The Appalachia Rising march begins.

the organizers and participants hailing from coal mining regions. In an article that offended a number of the protesters, the Associated Press smirked that the march was a “festive” gathering of

music, overalls, and the “ho down”-style dancing of protesters awaiting arrest were not counter-cultural fashion statements but everyday expressions of Appalachian culture. I probably

learned more about the history and culture of Kentucky in the three days I spent at Appalachia Rising than in the past four years of living here.

Many participants in Appalachia Rising joined the movement against mountaintop removal at great personal risk. As speaker Lorelei Scarbro stated, “You literally put your life on the line any time you stand up against coal in coal country.” Larry Gibson, founder of Keepers of the Mountains and a hero in the anti-mountaintop removal movement, spoke of shots fired at his home and the killings of his pet dogs.

On the bus back to Kentucky, I interviewed Rick Handshoe, a member of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and a good example of the intimidation faced by Appalachians who resist the coal companies. Handshoe, a soft-spoken man in his fifties who lives in eastern Kentucky, has become a noted whistleblower, seeking the aid of the EPA in his fight against the coal companies and corrupt Kentucky bureaucrats in league with big coal.

He explains that he joined the fight against mountaintop removal for his children, who suffered sore throats and respiratory problems for years due to exposure to methane gas produced by mountaintop removal mining.

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Crazy Mary’s Whiskey Run

By Andy Johnson

The buzz of nearly 60 motor scooters broke the clear, crisp fall morning air of October 2 as riders lined up in front of Vespa Lexington on 198 Moore Drive to stake their place in history: Lexington’s first scooter rally. Riders came from as far away as Dayton, Cincinnati, and Louisville and rode everything from 50cc Vespas to 500cc Suzuki Burgmans, capable of cruising at more than 100 mph.

The inaugural rally, hosted by Lexington’s Circle 4 Scooter Club, was titled Crazy Mary’s Whiskey Run in honor of two Kentucky icons: Mary Todd Lincoln and bourbon.

Crazy Mary was a lighthearted play on the popular (if erroneous) historical belief that Lexington native Mary Todd Lincoln went insane after the assassination of her husband, Abraham Lincoln. Although scholars have largely debunked the myth, the title Crazy Mary was intended to reflect the general cheekiness of most scooter rallies. The Whiskey Run portion hinted at our main stop along the ride: Buffalo Trace distillery.

The rally began the evening of Friday, October 1 with registration at Vespa Lexington, one of the rally sponsors. (Other sponsors included The Morris Book Shop and national scooter-oriented businesses Corazzo and Scooterworks). A group then rode downtown to enjoy the free festivities in place for the World Equestrian Games.

Saturday held the main event: a ride through portions of Central Kentucky. After a continental breakfast in the chilly morning at Vespa

Lexington, we left Lexington for the winding backroads of Central Kentucky. After brief stops in Millville and Nonesuch, we pulled into Buffalo Trace by early afternoon for lunch and a tour of the distillery. After the tour, we cruised to Frankfort and paused for

as the rains rolled in. There we feasted on barbecue, beans, and coleslaw (with vegan options) and sampled homebrewed beer crafted by one of the riders.

The rain prevented us from holding most of the games we’d planned,



MICHAEL WRIGHT

Bikers descend upon the capital.

a group photo in front of the Capitol Building.

We then meandered our way back to Lexington through miles of autumn-touched trees, curious horses, waving people, and increasingly strong winds, finally winding through the grounds of Keeneland.

We ended the ride as planned at Oleika Shrine Temple on Southland Drive, but had to move our party back to the protection of Vespa Lexington

though an intrepid few braved the downpour for a slow race, in which riders win by going as slowly as possible without putting their feet down. (It’s more difficult than it sounds.)

The rally even drew a scooter celebrity: Angie “Bonegirl” Buettner from Cincinnati. Bonegirl’s fame comes from her amazing devotion to riding. She began riding in 2006 and, never having ridden a scooter or motorcycle before, the Vespa

celebrity admits she was “scared to death.” She began riding everywhere, though, and in 39 months put over 40,000 miles on her pink Buddy 125, a feat that inspired Genuine Scooter Company (maker of the Buddy) to name her Buddy of the Year and to reward her with a new scooter. Bonegirl has now ridden over 50,000 miles, many of them in charity events, at rallies, and over the roadways of the U.S. She has even completed, more than a dozen times, the infamous Tail of the Dragon, a notoriously twisting road on the North Carolina/Tennessee border that has claimed the bikes and/or lives of many skilled riders.

Like most dedicated scooterists, Bonegirl has noticed profound changes to her life thanks to riding. “I see things I would have never seen in my car,” she says, “planes overhead, the gorgeous colors of leaves as they fall on me from the trees, the size and shapes of clouds. I smell things I didn’t notice in my car: the wood of a backyard campfire, newly fallen raindrops on the asphalt, restaurants frying bacon on my early commute to work. My experience now as a rider allows me the opportunity to take advantage of the gifts of life off the beaten path.”

If you would like to explore life off the beaten path with other riders, or if you have questions about riding scooters, look for the Circle 4 Scooter Club on Facebook, or contact Vespa Lexington (www.vespal Lexington.com). The Circle 4 is open to anyone who rides scooters of any size, make, or model, vintage or modern. Motorcycles are welcome, too.

Rising (cont.)

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Handshoe now spends nearly all of his time fighting mountaintop removal. “This is not what I planned to do when I retired. We have had to become self-trained hydrologists, engineers, and lawyers just to survive.” He has faced threats of violence and imprisonment and even a recent threat that his retirement benefits will be cut off by the state.

Coal companies sponsor massive propaganda campaigns to persuade Appalachians that their livelihoods depend upon coal and that “outsiders” who protest the industry are just “tree-huggers” who do not care about the people. The Appalachia Rising event sought to counteract those myths.

While many participants spoke of their deep love or spiritual reverence for the mountains, the primary focus was upon the struggles of the Appalachian people. Indicative of this focus were a conference session aptly titled, “Environmentalists vs. Labor: A False Dichotomy,” and t-shirts reading, “What we do to the land, we do to the people.” While Appalachia’s long, bitter struggle against economic and political control by the coal industry is far from over, Appalachia Rising is a sign of hope and the beginning of a national movement against mountaintop removal.

Article reprinted from Waging Nonviolence (<http://wagingnonviolence.org>).

Addendum: the dance of the protesters awaiting arrest was a nod to traditional Appalachian dance, which I have since learned would be more properly termed “square dancing” than “ho down.” Red bandannas are a long-time symbol of resistance, dating back to the 1921 strike and massacre of miners at Blair Mountain in West Virginia. (Historic Blair Mountain is itself currently undergoing mountaintop removal.) To learn more about the richness of Appalachian culture and help oppose stereotypes of Appalachians, check out the work of Appalshop: <http://appalshop.org>. I went to Appalachia Rising on a bus with Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, www.kfkc.org, a group also worth checking out that is doing great work to fight mountaintop removal.

Storm sewers (cont.)

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Michler: “The automobile, actually.” People love the color, the artists suggest, because we’ve paved over such much natural beauty.

The aging and gnarled sewer system is a problem, but so is increased development that covers more soil. It seems, though, that we can’t exactly blame Hamburg for the problems around downtown. An October 2006 *Herald-Leader* article absolves that ever-expanding pavement kingdom:

“Many cities are built on rivers, and water flows toward downtown and the river. Lexington sits on a slight dome, so water flows away from downtown and into creeks that eventually find the Kentucky River.”

“While more roofs and pavement can increase runoff,” the article continues, “more development in Hamburg, for example, would not affect flooding in downtown neighborhoods. That’s because the two areas are in different watersheds, which in this case are called sewersheds. Rain that falls in Hamburg flows north, into North Elkhorn Creek. Rain that falls in Chevy Chase flows west, into Town Branch.”

It seems that at the heart of the problem is citizens’ collective lack of understanding of our own landscape. We may tout our rolling hills, protect area farms with the Purchase of Development Rights Program (PDR), sell ourselves as the horse capital, but on a basic level we just don’t get how our land works. We’ve covered it up,



BRIAN CONNORS-MANKE

Made You Look artists working on the Pac Man-themed drain at Park and High across from Woodland Park.

and now we need the Made You Look! art to remind us that yes, we need clean watersheds, and yes, we need beauty and color around us.

We’re paying for that ignorance. The city is dishing out hundreds of millions for the repair of the sewer systems, and property owners are now responsible for their contributions to the problem. Single-family homes have a set storm sewer fee, and other properties are assessed based on square footage of impervious surface (such as pavement and roofs).

But let’s not think we excuse ourselves by the new fees. What’s the point of paying the fee if we charge ahead, still polluting our creeks with the pet waste, oil, trash, grease, and

lawn chemicals that wash into storm sewers? Those sewers along the curb—where we let our grass clippings and litter pile up—those are the sewers that go directly to the nearest body of water.

Lexington feels pretty strongly about who should own the water around here; shouldn’t we also care deeply about central Kentucky’s watersheds, especially since we can secure their quality without any complicated utility takeover?

Let’s not enjoy Eames and Michler’s painted drains while forgetting their purpose isn’t solely as public art. Made You Look! may be a more homegrown public art than Horse Mania (which is a branding campaign more anything else), but there is more to the project than the art. Unlike Horse Mania, the painted storm drains tell us something real and true about our home: we’re polluting it.

Learn more about stormwater pollution and how to avoid it at LFUCG’s www.livegreenlexington.com. Find out which watershed you live in (there are nine in Fayette County—I promise you live in one of them, and more than likely it’s one of the polluted ones). We’re also sorry that we neglected to tell you in our last issue that you can keep up with Made You Look! on Facebook. Search for “Made You Look.”



Seedleaf

Planting gardens
Growing Gardeners

For education and volunteer opportunities, visit
www.seedleaf.org

Music you need to hear: 10/16 - 10/23

We check their myspace pages so you don't have to

Saturday, October 16
Karma Theory w/ Katie Kerkhover
Buster's, 9 P.M. \$5. 18+

There's an age at which one can no longer muster the idealism and earnestness of youth, but only observe it with a wry smile and nostalgia for a simpler time, a time when the lyrics you sing so passionately in the car change in character, from hopeful to disappointed, and so we begin taking antidepressants and complaining about the neighbors.

When you go see Karma Theory and Katie Kerkhover, then, you will experience one of two effects, depending on how far your wheel of life has turned:

If ye be yet a youngster, you will leave Buster's hoarse, sweaty, and utterly exhilarated, for the performance you have witnessed speaks to your very core, and you could not help but writhe about, in thrall to the rough guitars and high harmonies and pounding rhythms and ardent looks on the bass guitarist's face. (Or stand there and sort of quiver, depending on your religious denomination and present relationship with it).

Or, if thine teeth have grown long,

you will stand off a bit, tap your foot, and watch the writhing and quivering, realizing that you could join them still if you'd only get over yourself, silly. But you don't, because nostalgia is something to be taken out and then put away, and that you're no longer 20, though you were really happy when the cashier at the Thornton's near your work carded you for cigarettes the other day. —*Buck Edwards*

Sunday, October 17
AutoVaughan w/ Will Hoge
Cosmic Charlie's, 7 P.M. 21+

In certain circles, the word "pop" as applied to modern music has acquired a stigma. The smart music fan blames soap stars Rick Springfield and Jack Wagner for this, and rightly so, but he/she should remember that the Beatles were pop. Simon and Garfunkel was pop. The Stone Roses were pop. Huey Lewis and the News were pop.

None of those bands sound much like AutoVaughan, but they played very, very good pop. What do AutoVaughan sound like, then? They sound like the lovechild of Stephen Malkmus and Gwyneth Paltrow, having already



AutoVaughan flies into Cosmic Charlie's.

borne the fruit of Chris Martin and thus a carrier of that gene. Got it? And don't you say a bad word about Huey Lewis, punk. —*BE*

Friday, October 22
Eric Wilkinson book release w/ The Dialectics
Al's Bar, 9 P.M.

Throughout the 1990s I was a regular consumer of hip-hop. This was the golden age, of course, of Dre and Snoop, and Nas and Jay, and Pac and Biggie. I really dug the emphasis groups such as A Tribe Called Quest, The Roots, and Guru placed on musicality, but as the millenium turned, those sorts of sounds fell out of the

mainstream, and it got more and more difficult to locate them amid the wash of club anthems that dominated the radio.

But here's one now: Lexington's Dialectics know that there's still a place for smart lyrics and a DJ who knows his way around a crate. Later, the band's poet/rapper/impresario Eric Wilkinson will read selections from his latest book, "Black Through a Distortion Pedal." Yes, yes y'all. —*Keith Halladay*

Saturday, October 23
Kati Penn & Newtown w/ Maggie Lander
Natasha's, 8 P.M. \$8.

I love bluegrass, and there's a lot of good groups in the region, a fact for which we should be ever thankful. But great bluegrass bands are still rare, the sort of bands who put every note in *just* the right place, who hit harmonies so fine you think you might swoon, and who make the old stuff sound brand new and the new stuff sound like you've known it for years. Such is Kati Penn and Newtown. Maggie Lander's gorgeous fiddle kicks it off. —*KH*

Swedes rock L'ville, metalhead reports

By Christopher L. Williams

There is one man in the Bluegrass who deserves a salute. Not for any heroics or out-of-the-ordinary commitment to civic duty, but because he has figured a way to lure some of the finest heavy metal acts in existence to our humble commonwealth. No longer are we considered fly-over country for bands that might only have made tour stops in the US, if they came to the US at all, in the largest of markets: Chicago, New York, LA, and maybe a few others in between. Louisville is now a bona fide destination for heavy metal acts big and small.

One such band, Katatonia, was a band that I was sure I'd have to travel to some dingy bar in Stockholm if I ever wanted to see them perform live. Their roots are firmly planted in doom metal, a mostly dead sub-genre chiefly popular in the early to mid-nineties, but they've evolved into what can only be described as melancholy European prog metal: a mix of heavily distorted guitars, crunchy riffs, odd times and clean vocals (no screaming) with spare,

play for us here in the Bluegrass state, yet here they were, direct from Finland and Israel respectively. Swallow the Sun came armed with sludgy guitars and Gollum-like vocals, while Orphaned Land provided a good representation of what a metal-themed bar mitzvah might sound like. They started off the night playing two relatively short sets to a small, yet highly energetic and appreciative crowd. It isn't every day that metalheads in the Bluegrass can watch live European metal, and we sure do dig it when it comes around.

But despite their Herculean efforts on a stage dwarfed by a medium-sized kitchen, neither of the openers were what the crowd came for. We wanted Katatonia.

Their set, which started promptly at 10 P.M. comprised predominantly tracks from their Katatonia's two most recent albums, *The Great Cold Distance* (2006) and *Night is the New Day* (2009), representing the fullness of their transition from very heavy doom metal to more groove-oriented prog-metal, though there were sprinkled in a handful of tracks from the band's earlier,



Niklas Sandin and Jonas Renkse of Swedish metal group Katatonia.

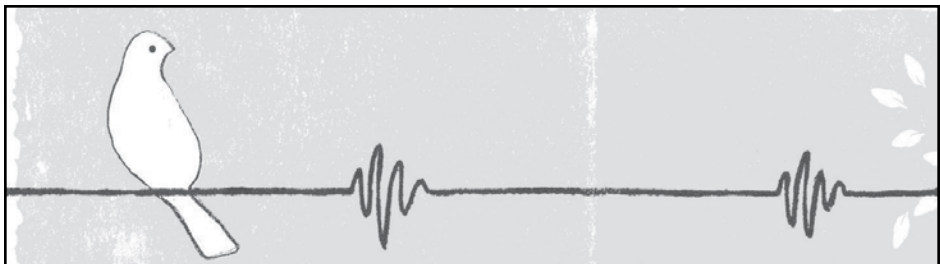
innovative drum rhythms. They're highly accomplished, having recorded nearly 10 albums since 1993, and rather than appearing in some well trodden metal bar in northern Europe, they're in Uncle Pleasant's, a hole-in-the-wall bar on the south side of Louisville, in front 250 or so people, heads banging and horns flying.

With Katatonia were two even more obscure metal bands, Swallow the Sun and Orphaned Land, which, in my estimation, were even less likely to

death-metal period.

The 90-minute set was epic. Their sound—ferocious and heavy, yet often crisp and airy—brought a smile to my face and led to more than a couple of sore neck muscles. Good times.

Which brings me full-circle to the beginning. Mr Harper, to you I salute, for a job well done in bringing largely unnoticed acts to us, saving us the cost of a very expensive plane ticket or, at the very least, a very long drive. You do us a great service! \m/



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Inaugural LexFest a clear success

By Keith Halladay

On the crystalline morning of Saturday, October 9, I attended the first annual Lexfest, held at HomeGrown HideAways, a delightful patch of farmland and forest located in a holler about eight miles east of Berea. The festival was the brainchild of Jon Imeson, also (and perhaps better) known to Lexingtonians as DJ Selektro and a familiar face to local club-goers.

Now, eight miles east of Berea is a good ways away from Lexington, but when I met him at the festival grounds a little after noon, shortly before the music was to begin, I decided against asking him why he'd chosen such a geographically imprecise name for his first foray out of the DJ booth and into festival promotion; I figured he had enough on his plate already.

Instead, Imeson showed me to the music stage—not large, but atmospheric, and well equipped with quality equipment and sound guys who knew how to use it. Beyond the stage lay three open fields for parking and camping, and in the middle a concession stand with pulled-pork sandwiches and veggie soup.

Throw in the unseasonably warm and sunny weather, and Lexfest 2010 was shaping up to be the perfect festival on the perfect day. Except then the first band, Lipstick Pistol, played most of its set in front of an audience of exactly three: Imeson, the sound guy, and a goat name of Dottie.

I know this for a fact because I'm in the first band. We've played, like most acts working the bar scene, in near-empty rooms before, but the goat was new. And while the sound guy and Jon had to be there, Dottie stayed, voluntarily, the whole time.

"Man, that is one cool-ass goat," our guitarist, Bruce, whispered to me as we packed our gear after the set. So cool, in fact that the goat stayed for every band's set, and was joined as the afternoon progressed by a slow-but-steady stream of humans, and by early evening more than 100 of them dotted the grounds, with plenty more to follow. Every festival promoter's worst nightmare was thus averted. Not bad for a first try.

But was it a "success?" Imeson: "[Lexfest 2010] was me sacrificing everything I had just so this event could happen. When it did finally happen, it was quite a relief. And enough people showed up to make it somewhat break even. So I'm completely satisfied for my first throwing of a festival."

So will there be a Lexfest 2011, and will this year's strong lineup of musicians be still improved? "Yes," says Imeson. "Next year, as far as lineup goes, I want more variety and more time, most likely a two-day festival. I want to feature more genres, such as jazz and bluegrass. I want to have more vendors both food and art, with a focus on local businesses and artists. And I still want to have a complete local lineup for the event."

So more jazz and bluegrass, though the full lineup, headlined by master DJ Milyoo, was already pretty diverse (and too long to list here; surf to www.lex-fest.com to check it out). But here's hoping Imeson doesn't change the venue: despite the distance from Lexington and the need for a bit more signage on the approach roads, HomeGrown HideAways, an ecological and sustainable development workshop facility when not hosting festivals, is an idyllic spot for Lexfest.

And keep the goat, too. That was a cool-ass goat.

Film & Media

Jon Landau at the Kentucky Film Lab

Questions from midwest filmmakers; answers from Hollywood

By Mary Ashley Burton

The Kentucky Film Lab (KFL), now in its seventh year, has become a reliable resource for networking, workshops and face-to-face interactions with names whose fame go far beyond the borders of Kentucky.

The KFL's 2010 Fall Studio, held on October 2nd at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, did not disappoint on any of these fronts. The main attraction at the event was the chance to meet Jon Landau, the producer of (among other films) *Titanic* and *Avatar*.

Attendees had two opportunities to hear from the surprisingly accessible Landau: one in a Question and Answer session in the afternoon and another in the evening during his IdeaFestival presentation. Attendees at both events seemed to have two main interests: What Is It Like To Be You? and How Can I Make It?

What *is* it like to be Jon Landau? He answered that he looks at every movie as a new business. He is responsible for taking James Cameron's broad, innovative ideas and making them happen. He takes credit for sowing seeds for ideas that Cameron later is convinced he conceived on his own, and raising questions and offering opinions that ultimately improve the film. He claims that he landed in producing because he wasn't good in any other department and that he really is a jack-of-all-trades (master of none) working with each department to ensure that they stay happy, motivated, and productive. Ultimately, he assured the attendees that the greatest fulfillment of his job is watching the audience be entertained by his films.

How can I make it, Mr. Landau?

While it certainly was fascinating to get a glimpse into the life of one of the most successful producers in Hollywood, the frequent peppering of How Can I Make It? questions revealed an inquietude amongst Landau's KFL audience. Many local writers and filmmakers struggle to see beyond the

enormous gulf that exists between them and Hollywood.

Landau was quick to voice his support of local filmmakers. Technology has become sufficiently accessible such that filmmaking now is open to more people than ever before (an accomplishment he says they welcome in Hollywood) and that the internet provides a greater opportunity for exposure than has ever existed (he assures us that the next Spielberg will be found online).

Yet these answers somehow seemed unsatisfying. Attendees continued to ask, "How do you become a producer?", "How do I get my script on your desk?", and "How can I get my movie made?" There was a hint of frustration to the questions, and Landau was unable to provide a completely reassuring answer. To get into his position, he noted, one must: start at the bottom, be at the right place at the right time, and get to know the right people. To get your script out there you must: be sure to have a theme that goes beyond your script's genre, remember that less is more, pay close attention to the last ten pages, write compelling characters, and look to literary agencies and screenwriting festivals for exposure. To get your movie made you must: ask your friends and family for cash and get to work. But whatever you do—make sure your first project is not mediocre.

Them and Us in the Age of Piracy

The gap between "them" and "us" was made even more apparent when Landau expounded upon his vision of what awaits the moviegoer of the future. For all of his advice on character and theme, it was obvious that most of what preoccupies Hollywood in the Age of Piracy is creating an experience for which people are willing to pay. The technological innovations of *Avatar* are only the beginning as we look forward to "4D" movies where the seats move to replicate the action on screen. Soon, Landau hopes, people will enjoy their 3D movies using their



COURTESY ARTHUR ROUSE

Landau enlightens viewers at the Kentucky Film League.

own personal set of designer 3D glasses. These glasses will come complete with USB ports, allowing the user to take their 3D content anywhere. Of course, in Landau's vision of the future, even designer 3D glasses will be abandoned once we have the technology to make every surface (from televisions to computer monitors!) 3D to the naked eye.

It's clear that Landau doesn't see partnering with manufacturers of designer sunglasses as selling out. Indeed, he seemed enthusiastic about the possibilities corporate partnerships provide. Even though *Avatar* was granted a PG-13 rating, which prohibited them from showing the trailer during certain times of the day, Landau lauded Mattel and McDonald's for their toy and Happy Meal partnerships and, most importantly, for their ability to promote the movie to the under-13 crowd. When asked whether marketing a movie to an age below the established rating was moral, Landau replied that he couldn't be the moral compass for anyone else. In this case, McDonald's deemed *Avatar* as acceptable viewing for consumers of its Happy Meals. Thus, Landau supposed that McDonald's had served as his own

moral compass. His sincerity elicited laughs from the audience that he didn't seem to expect.

For local filmmakers struggling to believe that seeing their dream project on a big screen is even possible, multi-billion-dollar budgets, film-themed Happy Meals, and 4D viewing experiences are worlds away.

Still, the opportunity allowed filmmakers to let themselves dream far beyond their current limitations. Toward the end of the Question and Answer session, Landau reached into a ratty, ordinary-looking backpack with one hand and casually pulled out his brilliantly gleaming Best Picture Oscar for *Titanic*. Everyone gasped. Some started to tear up. It was hard to focus on anything else in the room, including Landau himself. As soon as the session ended, a crowd immediately formed around the Oscar. Each participant sought their own moment to experience what it was like to hold Hollywood's most coveted prize. For just an instant, the participants could feel the truth of Landau's parting words to the IdeaFestival: dreams without courage are just delusions and failure is not something to be feared, but challenged.

Review: *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up*

By Michael Dean Benton

In the opening scenes of Debra Chasnoff's 2009 documentary *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up*, young males are filmed discussing clothing in a retail store and debating the appropriate hardness of their appearance. This pose brought to mind Jackson Katz's 1999 documentary *Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity* which depicted our cultural entertainments as increasingly focused on a hard, impervious, aggressive sense of masculinity. Sadly, this disciplining of proper masculinity through the threat of aggressive violence is still endemic in the twenty-first Century.

I was recently reminded of the dangers facing anyone who dares to step outside the bounds of rigid gender roles in certain situations. Last year, one of my students was hospitalized after being brutally beaten while walking home at night, his assailants shouting the word faggot as they kicked the student repeatedly in the head. His perceived violation was the wearing of a pink shirt and sporting long hair with different colors.

The pressures of gender roles is even more evident in the body image pressures faced by young females in a 24/7 mediatized world. They are constantly bombarded with unrealistic, airbrushed images of hyper-sexualized femininity. The message seems to be that no matter what you desire to achieve in this world, if you do not dress and act in a certain way, you are not a proper female.

Straightlaced also explores how ideas of gender limit young people's professional and creative options. Young women discuss being discouraged from pursuing traditionally masculine professions like construction work or contact sports, while young men discuss the fear and anxiety evoked when they want to participate in yoga, dance or theater.

Most importantly, this film deals with the lives of questioning, intelligent, and courageous young people - of many different sexualities and gender identities—who are working to change these rigid gender roles and designations. The film inspires with its depiction of open, honest individuals addressing these difficult questions.

The film includes the story of the tragic suicide of Fayette County student Josh Shipman, and the Dunbar Memorial Garden spearheaded by Hannah Landers and Jesse Higginbotham to honor their creative friend. Hannah mentions how whole classes of students laughed at the death of Josh, and her confusion concerning their cruelty toward him simply because he was different.

This is a wonderful exploration of the possibilities being imagined by young people today, and a challenge to the hate and prejudice toward people who are perceived as not conforming to these strict gender and sexual roles. This is all related by the voices of the actual youths dealing with these issues and, owing to this, the film is a powerful vehicle for exploring these issues and challenging restrictive gender roles.



COURTESY GROUNDSPARK FILMS

Debra Chasnoff, Academy Award winner and director of *Straightlaced*.

This Saturday, October 16, PFLAG Lexington will be screening *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up* at the Unitarian Universalist Church on 564 Clays Mills Rd. in Lexington, KY.

PFLAG is dedicated to respecting, embracing, supporting and advocating for diversity in our culture,

including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. They offer a place for dialogue and support for individuals and families dealing with their own struggles and those of an adverse society. For more info about PFLAG Lexington events, organizing and fundraising contact them at info@pflaglex.org

WEG at pedestrian speed

Eating out on the Legacy Trail

Editor’s Note: The paper bired Northrupp to do a serious story on WEG, for which NoC lent him its home during the Games. Mayer came back from his New Mexico vacation to a thoroughly destroyed backyard, starving dogs and this manuscript, part of which is serialized below. We can make no claims about any of the actions relayed below by Center, except for those verifiable through other sources. We would not run this at all, except for the late date at which this was made known to us, and the writer’s insistence that Mayer signed a contract giving him “full access,” which he takes as full access to this paper. We offer this piece by Rupp only as a poor example of realist fiction, historical short story writing or local color regionalist writing.

By Northrupp Center

We were somewhere on the Legacy Trail, near the edge of the Horse Park, when the mushrooms began to take hold. I remember saying something like, “Gortimer, I think we should get off the path for a moment.”

For some time I had been peering intently at the dry fall skies, watching micro-currents of wind crash into each other, a series of chaotic pixelated energy vectors plotted on a moving 4-D grid, which had been guiding me along for the past 100 yards.

“Good idea,” he replied. “I see you’ve read the signs.”

Past Gortimer, my eyes left the sky long enough to mark them, two simple affairs, offering friendly advice for the bike and pedestrian hordes the city hopes to one day attract here. *For continuous participation....Don’t forget hydration.*

I took out my moleskin and scratched a gross approximation. A week earlier, I agreed to cover the World Equestrian Games—the Olympics of Equestrian sports, it had been widely reported—for *North of Center*. Equestrian sports, for any non-sports fans, are the third largest in France, falling just behind soccer and tennis. The French go absolutely berserk over

And with such great promise comes the responsibility. From the beginning, the papers provided the narrative. The world’s eye, not to mention its people, would soon be upon Lexington. Putting aside, momentarily, the issues of homelessness and massive government giveaways to dying industries, the paper spent a lot time pondering the question: could the mid-market city with big-time aspirations actually pull it off and arrive...somewhere, or would its small-thinking, small-city citizens fuck things up again for the rest of us?

It was an intriguing story line for a sports journalist.

A perfect brand storm

Rise up unite, come to the fight
for the duped and working poor
—Wes Houp

I had been amassing a sizable file of newspaper clippings on the WEG since 2007 while in town for other matters, when I heard a tip on them from a bartender at the Pub. Over draughts of Guinness, he explained to me that every hotel in the area was already booked clear through to Cincinnati. Even better, horse people who passed through the mall-side authentic Irish pub where he worked had been telling him of the outrageous prices that European horse people were willing to pay.

It made sense in 2007, when it seemed everyone was cashing in. After sitting much of the past two decades out of the large-scale speculative capital bubble, Lexington had hit, it seemed, the supply/demand jackpot. It was a perfect match. The city would come off as urban global cool (three brand identities currently in great demand), one with a distinct sporting identity to complement its basketball crazy... *and* it could make shit loads of money scraping shekels off the jackals dumb enough to fall for it all and participate in the whole thing.

flight west, I also had to apply five coats of a natural, though still highly toxic, Waterlox finish over the entire downstairs of the house.

I had spent the ensuing eight afternoons preparing and rubbing tung oil into the *NoC* floorboards. The work left me woozy and it effectively denied me access to the house for the day while things dried. I spent my days outside, watering and feeding the dogs, collecting wood from the alleyways for evening fires in the backyard and taking good advantage of the city’s WEGer induced downtown open container laws.

By the last Wednesday night of WEG, I began to panic. *I had no story. Nothing was really happening.* I hadn’t watched a single event. In all my research, I hadn’t counted on caring

Time for a Pumpkin Ale, a smoke, some lunch.”

I patted my black leather satchel, a dollar pickup at a forgotten garage sale some ten years earlier. It was, admittedly, too small for the task at hand, but I didn’t know what to expect on our trip. The Games were corporate all the way. Alltech, a local bio-technology corporation dabbling in alcohol production, and its founder Pearse Lyons had put up over \$32 million in sponsorship and other financial help to sponsor and run the Games. Booths to sell wares at the 16 day event were going for upwards of \$15,000. Cost for a grounds pass, to just enter and see the free shit, cost \$25 alone. There would be blood to pay, I thought, as everyone extracts their ounce of flesh. *I’ll be lucky if I don’t get patted down, ball*



so little for the sport; I couldn’t bring myself to watch a thing.

About this time, dues ex machina, Gortimer reminded me of our planned WEG outing. We would enter the Kentucky Horse Park by way of the newly opened Legacy Trail, and we would consume as much of our bountiful fall Kentucky harvest—and others’ harvests, too—as humanly possible on the hike to the WEGer horse-feast. If the horse-people were gathering in pastoral Fayette County, we felt the pedestrian culture should be represented as well.

On consumption road

The Europeans, especially, want Americana.

—Wayne Musick, owner of the Boot Store in Lexington, KY

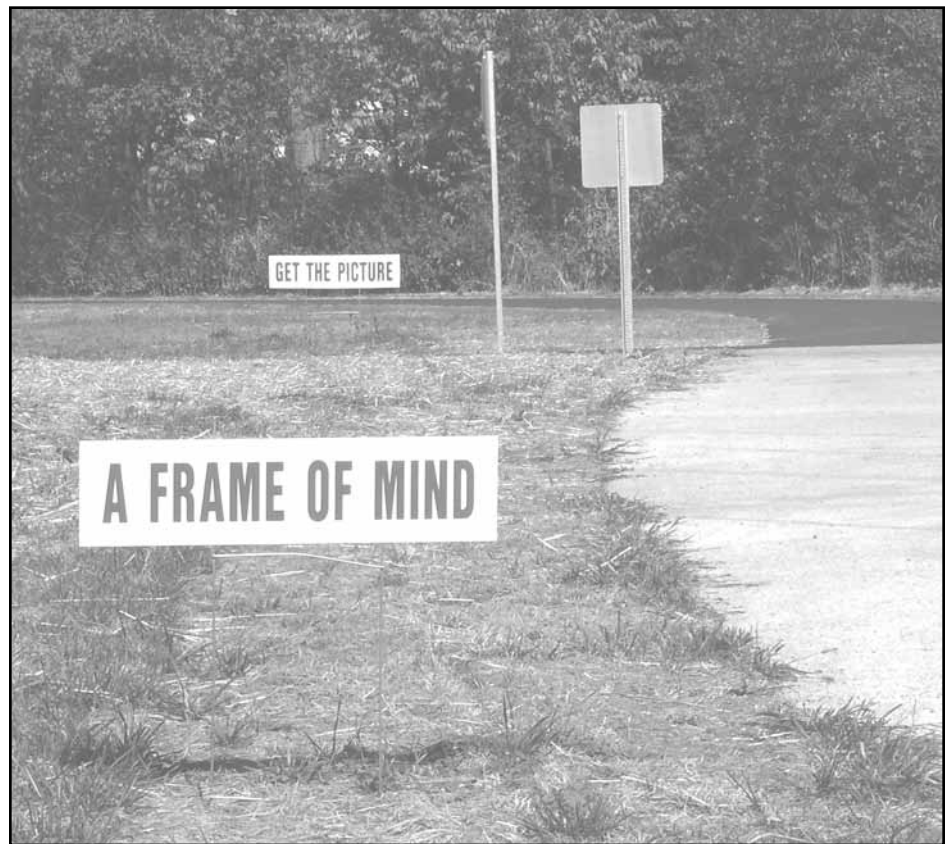
After a morning walk to Third Street for the day’s paper and to Sunrise for some comestibles, it was back home for a quick pre-game sampling of two local harvests, The Diesel and a local variant named Chad’s Peak, and a meet-up with Gortimer. He had arranged a pedicab to drop us off at the Lexmark parking lot, where we picked up the newly finished Legacy Trail, a paved path that connected the north side YMCA to the Kentucky Horse Park, about 9 miles away. After crossing New Circle, we descended into the backside of a small residential neighborhood, their backyard private fences no match for the path’s superior altitude. It was here we got out the first batch of mushrooms, a real local first product grown by a Boyle County DIYer, and spread them over some bars of hot chile chocolate.

“Feed the mind, feed the body,” Gortimer uttered before downing his late-morning snack.

The trail soon opened onto Citation across from UK’s Coldstream business campus. I paused to pen the first of the trail’s many road-signs into the moleskin. *If everything comes your way...You are in the wrong place.*

“Northrupp...don’t forget hydration...off the trail. *Quit fucking writing in that thing.* Come back to me, man.”

I snapped to attention immediately, pivoted left beyond the For continuous participation sign, tucked the moleskin back into my pocket, and went tromping towards a small dirt road that would eventually lead up a rise into an already harvested corn field. “Right-O, G-Man.



Messages on the Legacy Trail.

the events, which run from endurance riding, what one insider has described as “80 Kentucky Derbies at one-third the speed” packed into a single race spanning the entire day over inaccessible private property, to dressage and driving and vaulting.

Lexington’s landing of the Games, the first in America during WEG’s storied 20 year run spanning five other cities in Europe, was cause for celebration. In the sports year 2010, local media were reporting, this would be the second biggest sporting event to occur anywhere in North America. Forget a weekend, any weekend, of home-football games in the states of Alabama, Texas or Florida. Disregard the sporting event known as March Madness. Fuck the Super Bowl. In 2010, smart money says that the second biggest will be WEG. In Lexington.

swiped even. No need to bring anything nice.

“Your muttering to yourself, Northrupp. Nobody here cares about ball swipes. You’ve been paranoid all day, man, since this morning when you thought the secret police were tracking us in the alleyway. As if the police care about a fucking horse writer for a nothing paper. It’s just us up here...relax and take a look at the view.”

Gortimer had a point. The view was exquisite, vintage Fayette County countryside. Below us, our middle landscape, the Legacy Trail rolled its way north over a rise and out of the picture, presumably on its way to the Horse Park; in the background across the trail below the edge tract of Coldstream, even nw with our elevated vantage point, still vacant and awaiting tenants, grass running up a hill and disappearing into the sky and its wind vectors. The lack of development on Coldstream made the place seem queerly nineteenth century, removed from the city yet less than two miles from two separate interstates.

I grabbed my bag, which was bursting with a sampling of the region’s harvest. In it I carried six bagels and an uncut French bread from Sunrise, a couple of containers filled with capicola and provolone cheese mini-sandwiches, a salt and pepper shaker, an eye dropper half-filled with olive oil, an assortment of mushrooms, three bags stuffed with assorted teas, newly harvested green genovese basil and the last of last year’s dried salvia/wild dagga herb mix, and a sugar baby watermelon.

I was relieved for us to begin consuming our way into all the weight. The goodies were heavy, and they had been competing for space with other sundry necessities: the day’s *Herald-Leader*, a couple old copies of *NoC* in case I needed to procure credentials, six Belle’s Pumpkin Ales, a flask of Svedka and \$75, divided up into three bills.

Gortimer and I commenced to gorging on everything we could consume and to making plans for our final valiant push to the Horse Park.

This story may be serialized in future issues. Northrupp Center holds the Hunter S. Thompson/Charles Kuralt endowed chair of journalism at the Open University of Rio de Janeiro (OURdJ). He splits his time between there and Lexington, KY.

Opinion

Why nonviolent civil disobedience
On getting arrested at Appalachia Rising

By Betsy Taylor

My arrest in front of the White House on September 27, during “Appalachia Rising,” was an odd mix of fear, discomfort and joy. Of course, It is the joy that is important to remember and cultivate – the great and simple happiness found in non-violent witness for clean water, good jobs, vibrant communities, beautiful mountains and ancient biodiversity in Appalachia.

But it was the physical fear that surprised me – the searing as plastic handcuffs dug into my skin, the panic with my arms pinioned painfully behind me, the unexpected claustrophobia as they strapped us into the paddy wagon with walls and air frighteningly close.

And as a law-abiding 62 year old academic, I had wrestled for weeks with social fears. Would this undercut my scholarly credibility? Would ‘having a “record” cost me professional rewards? What would Aunt Alice think?

But the joy came from acting together with so many ordinary citizens fighting for land and community. Odd how joy can arise within so much tragedy. If you just read the signs that people were carrying, the Appalachia Rising March was a vast elegy, a long winding chant for what has been killed by Mountaintop Removal (MTR).

Many marchers carried little white crosses with hand written, magic markings. “Metallic Taste of Water.” “7.5% of forests cut down.” “Homes destroyed.” “Impoverished region,” “Toxic Waters,” “Mudslides and floods,” “Suffering miners,” “Dying miners,” “Endangered species,” “Corporate greed,” and so on, by the hundreds. Many marchers carried cardboard tombstones, each with the name of a specific mountain or creek that MTR has destroyed: Mann Knob, Elk Mountain, Shawnee Mountain, Pine Mountain, Buck Lick, Flat Top Ridge, Big Ugly, Sandy Ridge, and on and on, as the thousands of people passed by.

Tragedy is always specific. It is *this* person, *this* place, *this* homeplace, this way of life, *this* holler that is gone and irreplaceable.

But, the joy, it was there. How can that be? The first AP reports by Frederic J. Frommer spoke correctly of a “festive air,” but he lacked the imagination or the experience to know he should ask to find out what was behind this. Frommer instead reached for hackneyed media frames. It must be hippies or youth counter-culture, if there are creative political art, music, passionate speeches, laughter and playful, joyous movements.

When he heard the drums, why did he think hippies, rather than (as there were) representatives from south-

poisons people for \$profit\$,” “Stop killing the kids,” “Coal CEOs kill,” and, the topper, “Communities Destroyed by MTR – Ashford, Berry Branch, Twenty Mile, Peters Creek, Sharples, Yolyn, Farley’s Branch, Red House, Seng Creek, Dorothy, Pine Creek Mud, Crazy Hollow, Dehue, Blair, Paxville, Blue Penant, Mar Fork, Buffalo Creek, Lindytown, Pardee, Linden”.

For me, the joy was to be in public, feeling liberated to speak the truth. I cannot speak for others, but it felt electric, despite rain and foot-weariness. It was liberating to voice and hear the intensity of fears and grief about our collective energy future and past.

I have worked as a scholar for three decades in coal mining regions and

severe hardships if they speak for economic transition and diversification.

This puts one into surreal situations where one must speak in code. Behind closed doors, one hears local politicians say things like “we all know coal is not our future” while crafting strongly pro-coal personas in public. Political power also reaches deep into academe and other public institutions. I have nurtured the habit to think before public stands—weighing whether the danger of attacks from coal interests outweigh possible public good. Academics can suffer penalties within our public universities by going against the institutional dominance of industry, so there are invisible and undiscussed codes of speech in many settings.

However, when I heard that many among the long time grassroots leaders in the Appalachian Alliance were considering civil disobedience, I felt a visceral shift in me—as if an ethical decision had been made in a part of my soul beyond my conscious professional habits. I fought this. But, all along I knew that I simply would not be able to walk away if people like Teri Blanton, Bev May and Mickey McCoy were willing to put their personal reputations and bodies on the line—while justice organizations like Kentuckians for the Commonwealth provided backup.

Country singer Guy Clark has a great song, “Some days you write the song, some days the song writes you”. September 27 was the day when the great joyous drama of thousands of people speaking the truth to power swept through me and re-wrote my life—catching up to and passing sorrow and tragedy to make something beautiful and wildly creative.

Our collective utopian story is simple: clean water, stable employment, renewable energy, toxin-free health, political liberty beyond corporate control, ecological stewardship, neighborliness, global solidarity with those most threatened by climate change.



Waiting to be arrested.

west Native American tribes affected by coal mining? As Joan Braune says, it must be class bias which frames out the signs and markers of specific and diverse working class histories. But, still, how can you write an entire article that focuses on marchers’ concerns about the non-human environment but says nothing about the humans affected—when they are carrying signs that say things like “Blankenship

often have to muzzle myself publicly about impacts on workers and local communities. For fifteen years, I have been involved in participatory action research, supporting community-based development projects where local people set the agenda, while professionals lend their skills. The coal industry dominates because it is politically powerful (although it can offer fewer and fewer jobs), so local people often face

Coffee Party in Louisville

By Joy Arnold

The last weekend in September saw the birth of the Coffee Party when Annabel Park got up off her couch and ranted on her Facebook page about the growing popularity of the Tea Party movement. Park immigrated with her parents from South Korea as a young girl, grew up in Houston and now works in film. She and her partner, Eric Byler, recently produced the film *9500 Liberty*, which documents the immigration issue as it has played out in Manassas, Virginia. The film is currently being shown on several MTV outlets.

Park’s Facebook rant reached an audience increasingly frustrated with the incivility and obstructionism in political discourse, and with the media assertion that the Tea Party represents America. Inspired, Park to organize, via social media outlets like YouTube, a group to counter the Tea Party’s populist mobilization.

Word spread and on March 13, Coffee Party Day, people gathered around the country for coffee parties. Six months later, September 24-26, some 300 people from forty states, Japan and Switzerland gathered in Louisville to extend their conversations and determine what this Coffee Party thing is. Here’s what we came up with.

With the desire to “wage civility,” members and participants take this pledge: “As a member or supporter of the Coffee Party, I pledge to conduct myself in a way that is civil, honest, and respectful toward people with whom I disagree. I value people from different cultures, I value people with different ideas, and I value and cherish the democratic process.”

Participants asked, “Are we just going to talk, or is our conversation going to lead to action?” That resulted in this statement of purpose:

“The Coffee Party Movement gives voice to Americans who want to see cooperation in government. We recognize that the federal government is not the enemy of the people, but the expression of our collective will, and that we must participate in the democratic process in order to address the challenges that we face as Americans. As voters and grassroots volunteers, we will support leaders who work toward positive solutions, and hold accountable those who obstruct them.”

Many participants in Louisville struggled with the need to move from a political party mindset. It took acknowledging that the election of a candidate does not by itself provide hoped for change; that Democracy requires as much, if not more, effort *between* elections as it does during election cycles; that the messy work of Democracy takes time and hard work.

Mostly,the Coffee Party aims to overcome the practice of political parties working en masse to stifle discussion by not talking with each other from a position of respect.

One of the tools the Coffee Party uses to help facilitate dialogue is “The Coffee Sphere,” found on the lower left of the Coffee Party home page. The “Sphere” is an inventory of 57 questions, responses to which are weighted 1-9 and recorded in a sphere with technology that permits various demographic groups or individuals to be over laid for comparison.

The aim of the Coffee Sphere is to show groups where different individuals and groups agree and disagree. It

provides, that is, common bases for conversation. Thus far, these thousands of reflections generated through this instrument show remarkable agreement among different demographic groups, exposing unrecognized common ground.

In Louisville, a common thread running throughout most convention sessions was the need for election reform, providing for public funding and a constitutional amendment negating the Supreme Court decision in Citizens United by eliminating the concepts of corporations as people and money as speech. Imbibers of both sources of caffeine—tea or coffee—agree overwhelmingly on this proposal.

A mock constitutional convention was facilitated by Lawrence Lessig, Professor of Law at Harvard University. Consensus was reached on numerous proposals (details available at www.coffeepartyusa.com), but throughout the convention ran the issue of whether a real constitutional convention is the route to take to obtain publicly funded elections, deny corporations personhood and money the freedom of speech. It was generally agreed that at least the threat of a convention might pressure Congress to act, as they did when the agreement of only one more state was needed to have brought on a convention to write the Seventeenth Amendment, making the Senate an elected rather than an appointed body.

Parks believes that dialogue can happen across the country among citizens who are ready to engage around critical issues if they use three steps: create a public space for open, civil dialogue; use collective deliberation, considering facts and values to arrive

at a decision; work toward implementing the decision.

The goal is to reclaim our democracy and it can start at the most local level—neighborhood associations, Sunday school classes, city councils—and it does not require elected leaders to start it.

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

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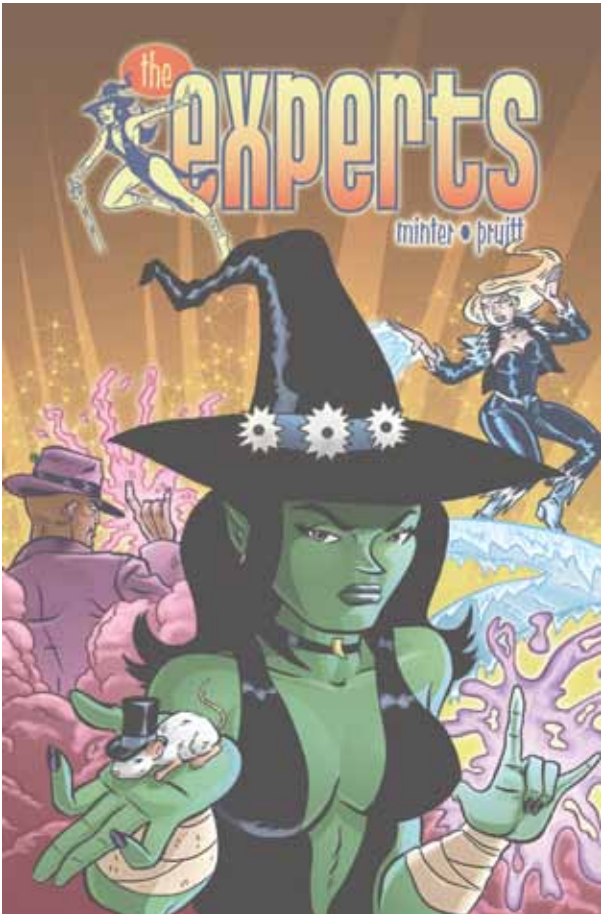
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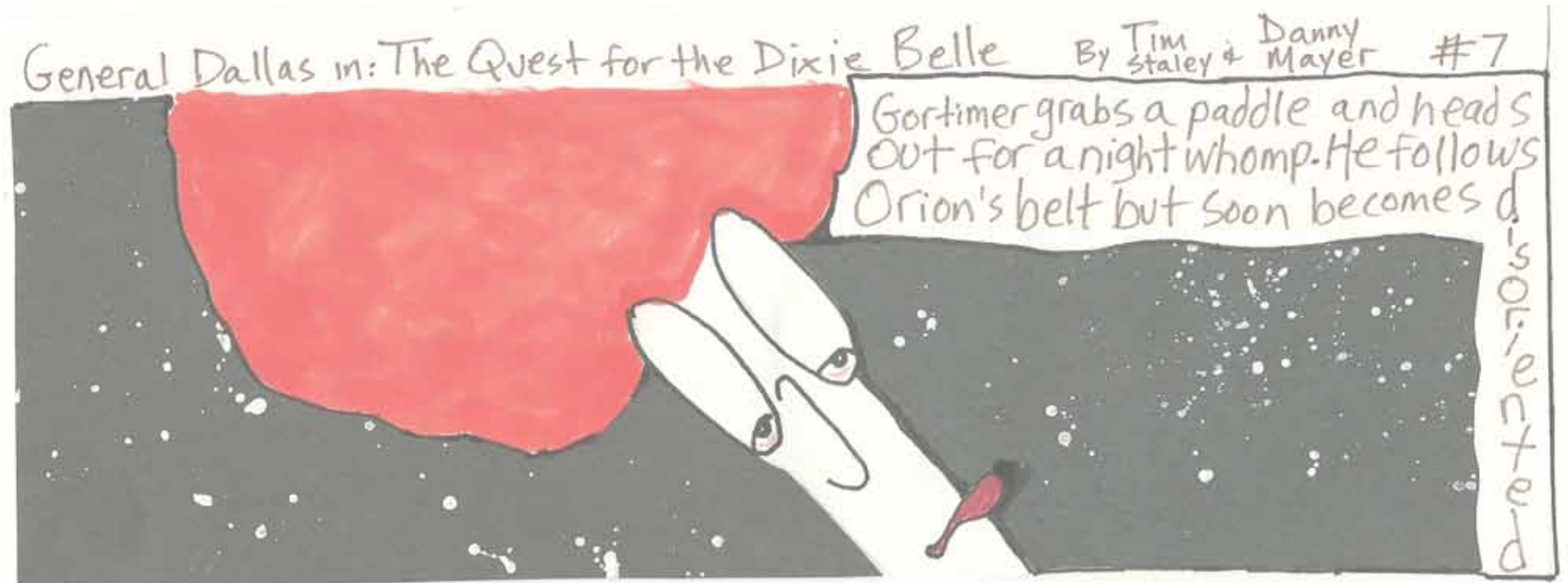
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Council candidates (cont.)

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Fayette County. After an introductory statement, the candidates fielded questions focusing generally on affordable housing, utility rate increases, and generating revenue to better fund community engagement with Lexington's underclass.

When asked, "How can city government get the community to engage with the city's low-income residents?" candidates offered a variety of specific and broad-based ideas. George Brown began by noting how little knowledge southside Lexingtonians have of northside poverty. "Main Street [is the] Mason Dixon Line of Lexington," Brown observed. For Brown, educating the city about the faces of poverty throughout the city is an important first step.

Kathy Plomin, who has spent the last decade as president of United Way Bluegrass, cited the need for greater partnerships with social service agencies like the United Way. In particular, she noted her role in the creation of 211, a call line for community resources geared toward the city's poor and working-poor residents. Such private initiatives, she claimed, could be partnered to more efficiently provide the city with better information regarding what needs Lexington's low-income communities have—and where in the city such needs arise.

Linda Gorton, who along with Chuck Ellinger already sits on the city council, drew on her professional and civic interests in nursing by proposing a health tax to give the health department a regular funding stream for low-income residents. She also called for a renewed focus on providing services for Lexington's aging population.

Gorton also hit on a theme picked up by several candidates: the need for more education as a path to economic security. In noting that no "simple answer" would

solve Lexington's poverty, Steve Kay described a need to bolster K-12 education. Kay cited the recently built William Wells Brown facility as a model for integrating school and community resources into one neighborhood-focused center.

Brown, who also noted the need for better education as a way to combat systemic poverty, focused instead on preparing economically poor students for university life (and finding ways to better grant them access to college), particularly in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Gorton stressed a different sort of educational training, focused less on university training and more on the development of job training programs that do not require university degrees. For Gorton, the key word is "skills" production rather than educational degree production.

As with the District 1 candidate forum, the question of the city's affordable housing trust fund (AHTF) came up, though it played a significantly smaller role in the at-large debate. Every single candidate supported the need for a trust fund, though few candidates categorically supported it.

Chuck Ellinger, who sits on the city's affordable housing task force, supports the idea of affordable housing, but claimed at the forum that now was not the right time to raise the fees needed to fund it. (Ellinger also claimed that the city has balked at funding the \$24,500 affordable housing impact study, needed as a baseline for moving forward with more specific needs and funding assessments.)

Gorton mirrored Ellinger in noting that the "climate is not good for new taxes." She stated a general desire to find money in the budget and to sit down with the development community (which has underbuilt affordable housing) in order to try to partner with them. Kay provided the most specific support, though it was mild. He claimed

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support for "some form of funding" for AHTF, though he noted he was "not prepared to say exactly where it needs to come from."

The question of funding initiatives for low-income citizens bubbled to the surface at several points during the forum, such that "funding" often supplied the boundary-points for discussion. The catch word used by several candidates was "increasing the pie," generating more tax revenue for the city to fund initiatives geared toward helping its citizens. Ellinger observed that 70 percent of the city's operating funds are earmarked for specific city staff; 10 percent goes to servicing city debt. This only leaves 20 percent to disburse in the form of city projects and initiatives, he claimed.

On the question of increasing the pie, the candidates suggested different ideas. Ellinger stressed his pledge to provide "basic services" like police and fire departments and to fiscal conservatism. Brown suggested education in the STEM fields as a way to grow the economy and the tax roles. Plomin focused on attracting more grants and corporate partnerships.

Steve Kay and Don Pratt offered more specific ways to generate and disburse money during a time of shrinking tax bases. Kay first noted that providing services to Lexington citizens is a matter of priorities: "Where there's a will, there's money," Kay claimed. And then he supplied a vision for how he sees the city engaging citizen needs.

Pointing to the Lexington Farmer's Market and the development of the London Ferrell Garden as models, Kay claimed that "government's role is to provide seed money, guidance, support" to energize people's desires and needs, a sort of small-scale, bottom-up, public-private partnership.

For Pratt, whose candidacy is more geared toward changing the culture and financing of city government, part of the problem lies with how the pie is broken up. Mayoral races, and city council races, Pratt contends, have become too expensive, with Lexington mayoral candidates now spending over \$1 million and his fellow council candidates running tabs over \$20,000. Candidates are pre-determined to accede to big business interests that tend to fund such candidacies, and it's the citizen who loses out in terms of city priorities. Pratt is calling for true publicly funded races that, he argues, would increase citizen participation at all income levels.

Pratt's plan to grow the city's economic pie includes two planks: he proposes to save money in the budget by appointing a publicly elected auditor to ensure Lexington's tax dollars are being spent ethically and transparently; he also hopes to lay the groundwork for generating money (growing the pie) by re-starting hemp production (and taxing it) and building a medical marijuana hub in the city (and taxing it).

Election day is Tuesday, Nov. 2.