

## Adjuncts: invisible majority

By Christian L. Pyle

Recently I was walking through the Humanities Division office suite at Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) where I've worked as an adjunct English instructor for fourteen years, and I noticed a list of Humanities Division birthdays posted on a filing cabinet. My birthday wasn't on it. That's not just an oversight; the list also did not include over eighty other adjuncts in the division, some of whom have worked there longer than me. While this may seem a trivial slight, such subtle reminders that adjuncts are not really members of the departments they serve are regular signposts in the current academic workplace.

What the heck is an "adjunct," anyway? I get that question a lot from family and friends outside academia, and my standard response is that it's a fancy word for "temp." Whether in business or academia, temporary workers are intended to fill temporary needs: to staff short-term projects, to fill in for workers on leave, or to teach extra classes added to account for unexpectedly high enrollment. For the last

few decades, corporate America has been building workforces of temporary workers rather than hiring traditional employees. With temps, companies don't have to make long-term commitments, give raises or bonuses, or offer benefits like health care or 401Ks. Thus, temps stopped being "temporary" and became, instead, "disposable workers." Perhaps because governing boards of regents/trustees tend to be made up of successful businesspeople, colleges and universities soon followed suit. Today the majority of teachers at any given college tend to be adjuncts, not traditional professors. The practice of depending on disposable workers is sad enough in corporate America, but in non-profit institutions that claim to work for the betterment of their communities, it's obscene.

The alternate term for adjunct is "part-time instructor," which references another disturbing trend in today's workplaces, the abuse of part-time labor to evade laws that protect the rights of full-time employees. For example, the documentary *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* chronicles how Wal-Mart keeps its workers from

getting enough hours to be considered full-time. Again, the non-profit academic workplace followed the lead of for-profit America, hiring growing numbers of "part-time instructors" whose classloads are scrupulously kept just under the full-time line.

At BCTC, that line is drawn at five classes, the typical load for a full-time faculty member (although many teach fewer by obtaining a "course release" for doing another job at the school). For a while, I could get five or six classes at BCTC as a "temporary full-time instructor" or, ridiculously, a "part-time instructor with an overload." (The latter gig was paid less than the former even though the workload for the two was identical.) Recently, though, BCTC has more or less banned giving adjuncts more than four classes. This might be a well-intentioned attempt to lessen the exploitation of adjuncts, but I suspect it indicates a fear that letting adjuncts teach a "full-time" load would give them grounds to claim in court that they deserve full-time pay and benefits.

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## Appalachia keeps rising

By Joan Braune

Mountaintop removal has led to poisoned drinking water, deadly avalanches, and unemployment in Appalachian communities. The recurring blasts shake homes, destroy graveyards and other important sites, and irreparably flatten the beautiful mountains and forests, some of the oldest in the world. Residents of the region are often left feeling as though they are living in a war zone. In a constant drive for profit, coal companies treat coalfield residents as collateral damage, "externalities" that do not need to be taken into account.

Yet, as the destructive and dehumanizing practice of mountaintop removal continues, it has spawned a rising movement. Last September, two thousand people rallied in Washington, D.C. at an event titled "Appalachia Rising," and this spring, thousands rallied in Frankfort at the state capitol for "Kentucky Rising." This summer, a march on Blair Mountain (historic site of the bloodiest battle in U.S. labor history, and currently being mountaintop removal-mined) is being advertised with the slogan, "Appalachia is Rising."

The message of recent events is clear: long exploited, stereotyped, and marginalized, Appalachians are redoubling their long struggle for their rights and are rising up against mountaintop removal, working in solidarity with social justice and environmental groups to achieve their aims.

### UK Rising

An enthusiastic crowd of students and community activists gathered in an open area framed by a cluster of University of Kentucky dorms on Friday, April 8, to learn more about mountaintop removal and to share their stories about experiences with coal.

The event, titled "UK Rising," was sponsored by UK Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Music and a vegan potluck supper were followed by speakers on the issue. Even as it began to rain, people stayed for the speeches, keeping dry along a covered walkway.

Speakers at UK Rising included Appalshop intern Ada Smith, retired miner Stanley Sturgill, and UK Physics graduate student Martin Mudd.

Ada Smith grew up in Appalachia, left the region to attend college, and has returned to fight mountaintop removal. Deeply impassioned about the impact of mountaintop removal on her region, she pulled no punches, urging the audience to do their part to speak out against mountaintop removal and stressing that the lives of Appalachians are at stake. If you do nothing, she stated, "you are killing us." The event as a whole emphasized the responsibility of those who do not live in Appalachia to speak out against mountaintop removal, since those living in the region often cannot speak out without putting themselves and their families into danger.

The following speaker, Stanley Sturgill, spent 41 years as a coal miner and now has black lung

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## High Bridge: 100-year drift

### Life by rheotaxis, part 2

By Wesley Houp

George Wesley Houp II was born in 1897 in a nondescript but cozy shanty located just up Cedar Run, an unremarkable, spring fed stream that rises near the crossroads community of Burgin in Mercer county and falls precipitously, as do most streams in the palisades section of the Kentucky, emboldened by the clear waters of several more significant springs, to its mouth in the shadow and downstream eddy of High Bridge.

As a child, Wes (he would later add an extra "s" to his signature) had a front-row seat to what was, undoubt-

shrank the scope of the river valley, its giant iron girders and supports visually pulling the palisades closer together—an optical illusion of modern proportion. The new dwarfed the old and to a large extent bled all sense of wonderment from this 19th century engineering marvel. For years afterwards, residents and sightseers alike, including young Wes, sighed in disgust—a kind of nostalgic gag-reflex—on sight of its oafish form.

But rebuilding the bridge was only the first of several monumental changes the new century delivered. Of far greater consequence was the damming of the Dix River four miles up

opened and humming with some kind of confounded magnetism, rough yet refined. The ladies would pass, then suddenly wheel about as if fashioned from irresistible steel (surprising even themselves with their newfound carelessness), landing flushed and dizzy in his embrace. On more than one occasion, as the story goes, he bumped his face against the clinched fists of some slighted beau and slighted the tight jaw of more than one tender whelp himself. But ever-nimble on foot and wit, Wes never lost his cool...completely... never had to be carried off the deck or off the boat, always hit the gangplank upright and of his own accord.

Dancing on the *Falls City II* must have been the highlight to an otherwise humble, quiet life. Later on he married Maggie Savage, a potently dour woman from upriver in Estill County, who sported a bonnet and chewed tobacco for most of her 97 years. Whether or not the life they made together was satisfying to either of them can be left to conjecture. In 1953, after raising four children, Wes walked out of the cabin one morning, crossed the road, and wound down the path to "Whispering Springs," a familiar watering hole for local farmers. No one knows why, but he laced a dipper-draught of spring water with Paris green, drank it down, and was dead by nightfall.

### The Fur-Trade

Two years after Wes's death, his grandson, Ronald E. Houp, (or "Peanut" to all the old-timers from High Bridge), enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of seventeen. He was a well-mannered, even-keeled young man, mostly unenthused with human company and given to day-long meanderings across the rolling fields, deep woods, and lush gorges around High Bridge. He'd grown up working in his grandfather's tobacco patch, along side his older cousin, Thomas "Snake" Houp, whose daily complaint concerned Peanut's preoccupation with the details of tobacco patch

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COURTESY THE AUTHOR

Georgie Horton's Fish Camp across from Boreman's Bend, Kentucky River.

edly, the most monumental makeover in American railroad history: the widening of High Bridge from single to double-track. With minimal disruption to rail-traffic, the Southern Railroad Co. completed this herculean feat in 1909 (a year engraved and still visible on the southernmost pier). The old bridge remained intact and was slowly subsumed by a new exoskeleton.

For many railroad and engineering enthusiasts, the new structure represented a certain loss of grace and delicacy with which the old bridge spanned the chasm of the Kentucky. For all those familiar with the original structure, the new one effectively

from the confluence and construction of the area's first hydroelectric power plant completed in 1927.

When Wes was just still an infant, construction on Lock and Dam 7 commenced just downstream from High Bridge. By the time he was a young man, the community of High Bridge had become a primary tourist destination for rail and river travelers alike. On the weekends, steamboats would bring revelers up from distant, downstream cities such as Frankfort and Louisville (on the Ohio) for a few days of sightseeing and a few nights of dancing.

Wes gained a reputation as a dapper-dandy, a soft-shoe peddler, arms

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## In forthcoming issues



# The Neighborhood

## Summer camps for all ages

### Help defend the mountains by visiting them

By Dave Cooper

The Summer of 2011 will be a summer of action in the Appalachian Mountains.

#### Mountain Justice Summer Camp

Mountain Justice Summer camp will take place May 21-27 on top of beautiful Pine Mountain in eastern Kentucky. From the top of the mountain, you can see a mountaintop removal mine on Black Mountain and hear the blasts go off. The forests on top of the mountain are spectacular, and there are good hiking trails to the Mars Rocks, Tower Road, the Little Shepherd Trail, and the Pine Mountain Trail.

Featuring workshops, speakers, mountain music, a trip to see a mountaintop removal mine, bonfires, tent camping, good food, hiking at Bad Branch, sunsets and mountain views, the Mountain Justice Summer camp will be totally off the grid: Greenpeace will provide its massive “Rolling Sunlight” solar panel to light up our pavilion and provide power to the sound system for evening entertainment. We will even use solar showers and a composting toilet system.

Workshops will include community organizing, air and water monitoring, administrative and legal avenues to stop MTR, media work, direct action and civil resistance, alternative economies and sustainable livelihoods

Although many participants in the Mountain Justice camp are young people and college students, everyone is welcomed. Cost for the week-long Mountain Justice camp is very reasonable (less than \$100). To register, go to [www.mountainjustice.org](http://www.mountainjustice.org).

#### Heartwood Forest Council

The Mountain Justice camp will be immediately followed by the 21st annual Heartwood Forest Council, to be held at Camp Ahistadi in Damascus, Virginia over Memorial Day weekend May 27-30. Camp Ahistadi—Cherokee for “the very best of all”—is located in the Cherokee National Forest, near the Virginia-Tennessee border. Laurel Creek runs through the camp, along with several hiking trails. Nearby Damascus, Virginia, is a popular stop along the Appalachian Trail. America’s best rail-trail, the Virginia Creeper Trail, is just a few miles away, and Mt. Rogers, the highest point in Virginia, and Grayson Highlands are a short drive away.



COURTESY DAVE COOPER

Mountain Justice Summer Camp, 2009. Group 2.

The theme for this year’s Forest Council is “Energy!” and will focus on energy-based threats to our region’s forests and communities: mountaintop removal coal mining, industrial-scale biomass burning for electricity, and hydrofracking for natural gas.

Heartwood will also highlight the positive “energy” in the region that is working to move us away from these destructive sources of power and toward more sustainable lives and communities. The program will consist of 3 days of workshops, discussions, keynote speakers, and field trips – interspersed with ample social time, leisure, lively local music, dancing, and great food.

The Forest Council will be family friendly—kids of all ages are encouraged to attend. As always, this year’s Forest Council will feature great food, lovingly prepared by chefs Shane McElwee and Jessica Nalbone and their kitchen magicians, using the best possible fresh, local, and organic ingredients; live local music and dancing; plus a benefit auction; and the famous Heartwood Talent Show.

Personal connections made at the Heartwood Forest Council each year that are the heart of the Heartwood network. For more information and to register, see [www.heartwood.org/forest-council](http://www.heartwood.org/forest-council).

## \$5 Yoga

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## Experimental Kentucky

### LOT open on Third Street

By Paul Brown

On the 500 block of Third Street next to the Pak-n-save, gray and nondescript upon first glance, sits a building with no sign and a beige painted aluminum gate. Once a month or so, around eight, the building comes alive, and the crowd spills onto the sidewalk.

The Land of Tomorrow gallery sprung up on the north side of town in early 2009. According to their website, LOT aims to “facilitate the making and showing of experimental work in the fields of art, design, and music.” The idea for the space was conceived by Drura Parrish and Dima Strakovsky, who hoped to fill an unrepresented hole on the Lexington Art scene. They wanted to provide Lexington with space to go and see art that did not include water color flowers or tired, saggy nudes, but rather, a place to see new artists sailing on untested waters.

If you haven’t ventured inside these doors yet, you may be surprised by the expanses of its walls or the identities of its company. Many of the artists featured in the space are regional, coming from Kentucky, Lexington, even the neighborhood itself—the likes of Charlie Williams and Jacob Isenhour, among others. The gallery, which has two locations (the second in Louisville), wants to emphasize its locality and showcase Kentucky artists as both pertinent and progressive members of the art community at large.

In the next year, LOT will be adapting its business model to a residency style program, with emphasis on community education and development. Previously the gallery has functioned more traditionally by focusing mainly on exhibiting work. With the new plan, it hopes to establish more

connections with the community by having artists live and make work in them, while also serving as educators through workshops.

“Contemporary art and design are by definition and function international entities,” observes Dima Strakovsky, one of Land of Tomorrow’s founders. “However, their power centers are concentrated in major metropolitan areas (New York, London, LA, Berlin, Beijing...) We wanted to create an experiment, a situation where we could tap into what is going on on the international level and facilitate dialog with what is going on here locally. If the world is flat, we got to take advantage of it.”

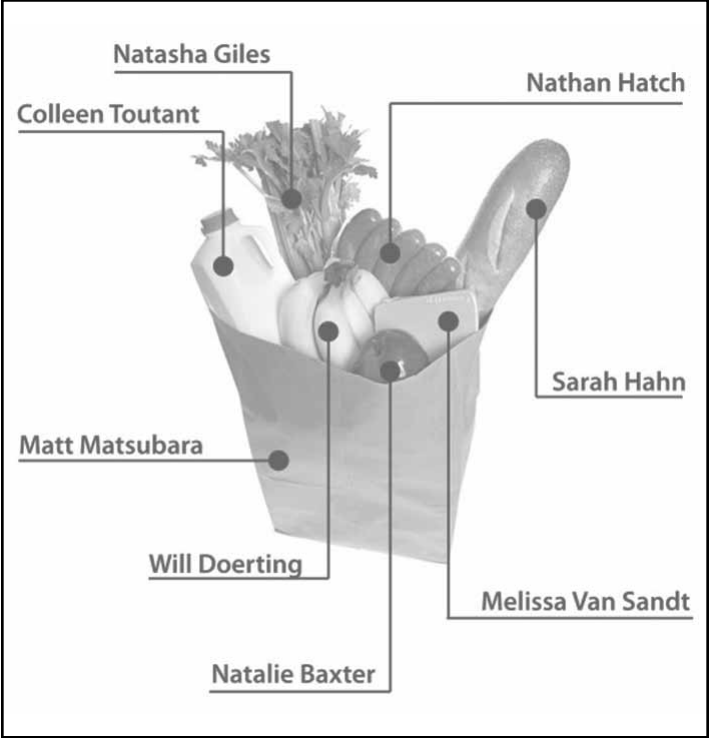
Strakovsky and the rest of the folks at LOT hope to establish Lexington, as well as Kentucky, as a place to be for experimental art and to facilitate the efforts of artists within these communities. With this in mind, the gallery plans to keep up communications with its residents after their stays, intending to help them sell and market themselves and their work. Thus perhaps the main goal of the gallery is to give artists the tools and knowledge to be successful in a place that has not been

traditionally too friendly to non-conventional artists.

Lots of things are happening at LOT, and they want their neighborhood to be a part of it. Come in and see the shows, be on the lookout for workshops, come to drink and dance and talk about art. LOT’s Lexington location, at 537 E. Third Street, has very recently established regular hours (Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 2-4 P.M.), but it still does meetings by appointment if you’d like.

Come on down and give them a look-see.

*LOT’s next showing will feature local artists Natalie Baxter, Will Doerting, Natasha Giles, Sarah Hahn, Nathan Hatch, Matt Matsubara, Colleen Toutant, and Melissa van Sandt. It opens on April 29 with a reception from 7:00 to 11:00. Drop on by.*



LOT’s daily nutritional artistic supplements.

## Appalachia (cont.)

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disease. A third generation coal miner, he said that his grandparents would have been appalled at mountaintop removal and its devastating impact on Appalachian culture.

In passing, Sturgill offered an analogy I found especially striking, comparing his opposition to the Afghanistan and Iraq wars with his opposition to mountaintop removal, and comparing his concern for the U.S. troops with his concern for coal miners. Although some claimed that those who opposed the wars did not “support the troops,” Sturgill knew young people in the military, and he opposed the wars precisely because he did not want them dying needlessly.

Similarly, contrary to the lie propagated by the coal companies that anti-mountaintop removal activists care only about the mountains and do not care about miners, Sturgill emphasized that it is logical to oppose mountaintop removal and to support miners. Since mountaintop removal has put many miners out of work and is wreaking havoc on Appalachian communities, opposition to mountaintop removal is the truly pro-miner position.

Discussing the meaning of “direct action,” graduate student Martin Mudd urged hope, concerted resistance, and respectful engagement with the opposition. Warning of the need to avoid despair, he pointed out that activists should be wary of becoming overly attached to the expectation of any particular outcome for their efforts. Continuing to struggle for justice, one must remain committed (and have some fun, too), even if the struggle is a long one.

Appalachia is rising, and it is in it for the long haul. These are exciting times to be on the front lines of the struggle for justice.

# Adjuncts (cont.)

*continued from page 1*

When I started teaching in 1990, I was paid just over \$2000 per class. Today, twenty-one years later, I still make just over \$2000 per class. In the early 1990s, I somehow managed to survive on two classes (and Tuna Helper). A lot of inflation and an economic collapse later, I need six classes a semester to get my ends even close to meeting, and the day when I’ll need seven is not far off. I’ve heard of adjuncts teaching as many as nine classes, spread out over several area colleges. The implications of this pattern for the physical and mental well-being of teachers as well as the attention given to any student or class seem obvious.

The good news: the house of cards colleges have constructed by hiring scores of adjuncts rather than full-time faculty will eventually collapse. When academia envied the for-profit sector’s exploitation of temp and part-time workers, it did not consider that those non-academic jobs don’t require graduate degrees. I made my decision to attend graduate school in the late 1980s. If there was writing on the wall back then, I didn’t see it yet, nor did the professors who offered me advice. We assumed that as the Baby Boomer profs retired, my generation of college teachers would take their slots as full-time, tenure-track professors. By the time I noticed the trends I’m describing in this essay, I already had an MA and was working on a PhD. But undergraduates today can have no illusions about what sort of jobs await them if they should seek a career teaching in college. Therefore, I look for colleges to eventually become more and more desperate to find qualified teachers, and I hope that offers of a living wage and benefits may follow.

The bad news: by the time the shortage comes, colleges may be relying almost entirely on robo-profs. Online classes can use cartridges of recorded lectures and automated exams in place of live instruction, and the grading of other work can be outsourced to Asia. But those disturbing trends are not the subject of this essay.

## Flashpoint: tenure at BCTC

My adjunct awakening came in late 2008 when the board of regents for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), the parent of BCTC, tried to remove the possibility of tenure for all new full-time faculty. My initial impulse as a college teacher was to support tenure even though I was not eligible for it. However, reading the arguments by full-time faculty members shook my sensibilities. The word “adjunct” appeared often to describe what full-time non-tenured faculty would be. We were described as “rootless,” despite the fact that many full-time faculty at BCTC came there from other places while many adjuncts are native to the area.

Furthermore, we were depicted as unreliable. One associate professor claimed, “Every academic coordinator has a story of the adjunct who bails out the day before the semester begins (or during the midterm).” While that may be true, I suspect there may be even more stories of adjuncts who’ve gone beyond their job descriptions in service to their departments: serving on committees, aiding with ongoing projects, and jumping in to take on those abandoned classes at the last minute. Prior to this, I had noticed that when there were full-time openings available, hiring committees in my area either hired someone who was new to BCTC or they chose someone who had only been an adjunct for a couple years (as opposed to a couple decades). The pro-tenure arguments also stressed that removing tenure would keep the college from “recruiting” new faculty. Recruitment would seem an easy matter as most departments had a large number of adjuncts serving them.

I could see that there was a stigma attached to being an adjunct that only became darker with time. I suspect that this bias may be a psychological

reaction to the inherent unfairness of the full-time/adjunct system. Full-time profs recognize this inequity and subconsciously resolve their internal conflict by believing that adjuncts are inherently inferior to full-time teachers.

## Academic caste systems

In today’s academic workplace, there is a caste system, and the two castes (permanent full-time teachers and adjunct teachers) live very different lives despite the fact that they may be teaching the same courses at the same school. At large universities, the caste system had a logic to it: tenure-track faculty had PhDs and were judged on the research they did rather than the classes they taught; adjunct faculty often had master’s degrees and focused entirely on teaching. Tenured profs taught upper-level and graduate courses; adjuncts taught freshman and sophomore classes. While that arrangement assumes that the “business” of the university is research, not teaching, it at least had a clear basis. At a community college, however, there’s little emphasis on research, and there are only two levels of classes. Although full-time faculty have a few added responsibilities, their primary job is essentially the same as that of adjuncts, but the two sets of teachers are treated very differently.

Just as there are two Americas, in the words of former senator John Edwards, there are two BCTCs. Consider this fact: the majority of instructors at BCTC are not members of the Faculty.

Really. The Faculty, as an organization that has a voice in the college’s policies and elects its representatives, includes only tenured or tenure-track professors. The majority of teachers at the college have no vote, no voice, no representation.

How much of a majority? In my division, for example, there are 30 full-time permanent faculty and 84 adjunct instructors. As the number of adjuncts increases much more rapidly than the number of full-time faculty, the ratio will eventually reach 3:1. How different are their lives? Full-timers get a living wage, adjuncts do not. Full-timers get a benefits package that includes health insurance, adjuncts do not. Full-timers are eligible for promotions and raises, adjuncts are not. Full-timers have a representative on the Board of Regents, adjuncts do not. Full-timers have offices and their own computers, adjuncts do not.

The lack of office space and access to resources for adjuncts raises another interesting issue. Not only are adjunct instructors treated as second-class citizens, their students are, too. Why don’t my students deserve to be able to meet with me between classes in a private office? They’re paying the same amount to take my section of a course as a full-time professor’s students are to take the same course. If BCTC is going to save cash by paying me starvation wages, why don’t my students get a discount? Even when I was a teaching assistant in graduate school, I had an office. Whenever a paper was due, I would hold extended office hours and allow students to sign up for appointment times to have private conferences about the papers they were writing. That’s not an option now.

Furthermore, part of my life as an adjunct is a constant quest for a quiet place to work on campus; many times I’ve ended up grading papers in my car as no other quiet space was available. When I enter grades on campus, I have to do it in a public space where anyone walking by could see my students’ grades, a potential violation of the students’ federally-protected right to have their grades remain private. Rather than having a special higher caste of teachers have offices to themselves 24/7, wouldn’t a more logical plan divide the number of teachers by the number of offices to arrive at the number of people who would share each office? BCTC is moving in two years to a brand-new campus. The

opportunity to design a workspace to meet the realities of 21st century higher education means that BCTC could guarantee that every teacher has an office. However, the plans that have been posted on the BCTC website offer only a classroom-sized space for adjuncts in one option. The other option has no adjunct space at all.

## Mission fulfillment?

How does it feel to be an adjunct? A dead-end job is bad enough, but a dead-end career is a real soul-killer. Adjuncts worked just as hard as full-timers to earn one college degree, then another, possibly a third. My résumé lists pages of awards, publications, conference presentations, and community service—all to earn a job which offers no possibility of a raise or a promotion, regardless of how many years I work at the college. I started at BCTC with a strong belief in my own ability to earn a full-time opportunity through hard work; despite my years of service, I have never even been offered an interview for a full-time job. The result for me has been a deepening depression. Luckily my wife has health insurance, so I’ve been able to receive treatment. The current advertising program for BCTC shows students moving from dead-end, low-paying jobs to better opportunities provided by education, yet the administration keeps

the majority of its teachers in dead-end, low-paying jobs.

When asked, college administrators toss their hands in the air and blame the times in which we live. Our leaders consistently refuse to lead on this issue. There is at least one example of a better system that they could imitate. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vancouver Community College (VCC) has found a way to improve the lives of its adjuncts. The per-class pay for adjuncts is based on what full-time profs make. After two years, adjuncts become “regular faculty,” with job security. Thus, they move out of the shadows and are recognized as a permanent part of the college.

It’s still a caste system, of course, and far from ideal, but the creation of a “middle caste” is more respectful than pretending that the adjuncts who teach at a college year after year are temps hired just for a semester. The VCC system was the product of collective bargaining by the faculty union. To receive better treatment in the USA, adjuncts must organize, and full-time faculty must become part of the solution. A step toward this end, I’ve started a page for KCTCS adjuncts and supporters on Facebook. Search for “Kentucky Community and Technical College Adjuncts” and “like” the page to join the discussion.

# Pedalpalooza at UK

By Corbin Little

Over the years, Lexington has become more and more bicycle friendly. Bicycling has grown exponentially due to its convenience for many living close to work or school and as daily exercise. To encourage this growth, on Friday, April 9, the University of Kentucky Student Sustainability Council (SSC) hosted Pedalpalooza, a free event that brought together Lexingtonians with varying bicycle interests to network and, more importantly, to have fun.

Russell Williamson, member of the SSC and organizer for the event, commented on the dynamics of the growing community and culture: “It seems there is always a disconnect. Young people love bicycles, but then there comes an age when you don’t want to ride one, have fun with one, or be on one. And I think it’s important to remember how much fun they can be, as well as a benefit to health and exercise. It grows community and grows culture through shared experiences.”

Pedalpalooza brought together bike lovers and organizations from throughout the city. Broke Spoke and Wildcat Wheels joined forces and resources to provide onsite bicycle tune-ups and repairs. Lexington Bike Polo set up their own courts, demonstrating the fine art of the game as well as inviting others

to play. Bike/Walk Lexington, Legacy Trail, LexRides, Bluegrass Cycling Club, and League of American Cyclists set up tables with information about their organizations and ways that others could become more involved. Local talent Funny Bones and Soul Funkin’ Dangerous supplied the musical entertainment for the event.

Becca Thill, who received a tune up while attending the event, said, “It’s awesome that so many different people and groups were able to come out today to support bicycles! I’m a fair weather biker so with summer coming up, this tune-up was well needed.” When asked how or if the event had changed her perception of bicycling, she responded, “Definitely, I never knew Lexington had such a diverse biking community. There are people here promoting more bike lanes, shops offering free bike education, and I never knew bike polo even existed before today.”

In case you missed it this year, don’t worry, Pedalpalooza will become an annual event. As indicated by Robert Kahne, the president of the SSC, “The fundamentals that were put together this year were really solid. We definitely learned a lot of lessons from the first Pedalpalooza that will make future ones a great success.”

So get on your bike and keep riding until Pedalpalooza comes around again.

# Announcements

## When workers run their own factories, banks and schools: A report on the Mondragan Coops

For the past 50 years, an organized network of over 120 factories and more than 100,000 workers has been growing in Spain’s Basque Country. It has allowed workers to develop their own bank, schools and research centers. Called the Mondragan Coops, they are unique in that they are owned and controlled by the workers themselves—one worker, one share, one vote. They are also unique in they obtain credit from their own worker-owned bank and skills from their own university. They are thriving and growing and have a lot to teach us on the possibilities of radical change in hard times.

Head on out to the downtown library at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, May 10 for a free talk on Mondragan and other worker-cooperatives by Carl Davidson, a national co-chair of the

Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, member of Steelworker Associates, and writer for Beaver County Blue. Davidson currently resides in Aliquippa, his hometown in Western, PA.

## Next PFLAG meeting Wednesday May 4

Drop on by Joespeh Beth’s on Wednesday, May 4 for the next meeting of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Meeting is from 6:30-8:30 in Jo-Beth’s Gallery. There will be a screening of “You should meet my,” a comedy about a conservative Southern mom who is horrified to discover her only son is gay. Determined that he won’t go through life alone, she sets out to find him the perfect husband.

On Saturday May 14 at Shilto Park Shelter #2, PFLAG will host a cookout from 11:30 A.M.-2:30 P.M. Bring your disc golf and bocce.



APRIL 27, 2011

Music

Live music for lucid dreaming: 4/16 - 5/11

Saturday, April 30

Meetwood Flac with C.O.P.S.  
*Al's Bar; 601 N. Limestone. 9 P.M.*

You ever have those nights where you wake up repeatedly because of your dreams? Not necessarily nightmares, but dreams so vivid, so involving, that they jolt you from sleep, leaving you alert but confused and trying hard to separate observed reality from the imaginary?

When you recall the Meetwood Flac show a few days afterward, you'll experience something like this half-sleeping, half-waking feeling. *Did they really play that song? Did they really sing those lyrics? Was I actually there? Is any this of this even real?* Yes, it was real. Or was it?

Noah Wotherspoon  
*The Crossroad; 286 Southland. 9 P.M.*

You're standing in a desert landscape, alone, by the side of a dusty highway. From a heat mirage out near the vanishing point emerges a convertible Cadillac, ink-black, roaring through the saguaro and mesquite, the Devil himself behind the wheel. And he stops, and you get in. The Devil smiles and drives east, the setting sun white-hot in the mirrors and momentarily blinding you. When the spots clear and you open your eyes, you're in Chicago, in a basement speakeasy, and the Devil is not to be found. Dazed and well into your cups, you stumble



Phonte and Nicolay of The Foreign Exchange.

the blues, in this case. But who told you this story? Why do we all know it so well? If our daily perception is isolated from the ken of others by time and geography, does that exclude the possibility that another perception, another experience, could be shared and known to all? If we replace the first-person singular with the plural... were not *we* in a desert, awaiting the Devil in his hellbound chariot? Were not *we* in that speakeasy? Were not *we* looking for our collective salvation on a steamy Mississippi flood plain?

We construct our own narratives and yet participate in the narratives we construct together. Such is the duality

trusted guide appears differently than what you had come to expect. Or maybe it's you who will have changed, as time passes and our lives wander: what I see of Julia Knight now may not be the same as what I will see in the next phase of my own travels, or what I will see in her when she turns 18. Impossible to predict, but the warrior is ready for all possibilities.

Thursday, May 5

Randy Tuesday with The Bleats  
*Al's Bar; 601 N. Limestone. 9 P.M.*

David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*: freaky, right? From the opening frame, noth-

Oh, surely the pleasures of the flesh are to be had in such a place, if that is your wont. But the warrior is not tempted; the warrior will not allow such damage to his wholeness. Buster's, then, is the site of a challenge: you may choose to try yourself there for but the price of a ticket, or, if you think yourself unworthy at present, you may wait until the next package tour.

Tuesday, May 10

The Foreign Exchange  
*Cosmic Charlie's; 388 Woodland. 8 P.M.*

It swings, but it doesn't swing. Oh yes, it swings. Producer Nicolay has reached the point in his development as a warrior that he can simultaneously exist in multiple musical planes. It is now well known that Nicolay and fellow-warrior Phonte formed The Foreign Exchange through the Internet (that force that links us all in ways both magnificent and unseemly), and released *Connected* to wide acclaim in 2004. Then, as now, the sound that emerged from the trans-Atlantic partnership was nothing like the hip hop to which we'd grown accustomed: while the great mass of disposable heroes became ever less musical, The Foreign Exchange sought to expand the genre's grasp by seamlessly integrating the careful lyricism and head-nodding beats of the Golden Age with far-reaching forays into contemporary electronic and ambient styles.



From whence the Devil comes.



Julia Knight, possibly.

out into a swampy pasture surrounded by stands of cypress and live oak, fall into the muck with a splat, and begin to plead, sobbing and frantic, for forgiveness of your sins.

Is *this* a dream, then? Or just a collection of images drawn from a long-told narrative—the narrative of

of existence. You will know this when you see guitarist Noah Wotherspoon at The Crossroad; sit, drink, eat, and say to yourself, *this is not Eric Clapton. This is not Howlin' Wolf. This is not Lonnie Johnson.* Then say, *yes it is.*

Tuesday, May 3

Julia Knight  
*Natasha's; 112 Esplanade. 8 P.M.*

"I can make you happy, make your dreams come true." So sings teenage Julia Knight. Miss Knight, therefore, is a shaman. Like a Sonoran nagual she has the power to shift your perception and lead you to a dream-realm well beyond your everyday experience. She is but 14 years old, chirpy and earnest behind her dreadnought Washburn, but appearances deceive, do they not?

The nagual is a shape-shifter, and may or may not choose to drop the mask when you encounter one in your journeys. So you should remain vigilant, lest the day come when your

ing is quite right. The familiar isn't anymore; characters behave exactly as you'd expect but nothing like they should; colors and sounds, all a shade too bright, a semi-tone sharp. Unreality posing as reality, or the other way around. Or just the sort of world we can choose to step into when we likewise step into, and command, our dreams.

Randy Tuesday plays the soundtrack to an unreleased sequel to *Blue Velvet*, a rollicking and anarchic film in comparison to its comparatively restrained predecessor, and available only by mail-order on grubby VHS bootlegs from a blind, parentless ten-year-old girl dwelling alone in southern Colorado. The Bleats play the music the blind girl listens to when she has company over.

Sunday, May 8

Hinder with Red, Kopek and Royal Bliss  
*Buster's; 899 Manchester. 9 P.M.*

The warrior has enemies: some are easily identified by their appearances, but as we have seen, many spirits are able to obscure their true selves, and the most malevolent among them seek to lead the unwary into a beastly place, a place where the music entices but soon grows tedious, a place promising artistic freedom but where corporate shackles lie in steely wait, a place where your *intent* is hindered.

Their shared warrior path has now delivered Phonte and Nicolay to Lexington, in support of their latest effort, *Authenticity*. As the title suggests, they have arrived at the point in their spiritual development that they have dispensed with the superficial, inauthentic trappings of Western culture and sought the real, the genuine, and the eternal. If you venture to but one hip hop show this year, let it be this one, and may the jaguar leave your dreams peaceful and fulfilling.

—Buck Edwards

# The City

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# Film & Media

## Happy’s era Kid TV and Lexington’s wonderfully dirty years

By Bill Widener

By the time I settled in Lexington, *Happy’s Hour*, the subject of the documentary *When Happy Met Froggie*, had already been cancelled. But I still have warm memories of the once-ubiquitous kind of kids’ show memorialized by the film. My guy was named, aptly enough, Mr. Bill. He was the host of *Mr. Bill’s Workshop*, broadcast from 7:30-9:00 AM Monday through Saturday on WLOS-13 Asheville, NC--the only channel my family could pick up out on the southernmost fringe of Corbin. Weatherman Bill Norwood would put on a rangerish get-up and teach easy crafts, read happy birthdays and get-wells to lucky kiddies, and show the usual mix of old comedy shorts and cartoons, the latter a grab bag of Bugs, Casper and Deputy Dawg alongside oddities like *Snowman in July*.

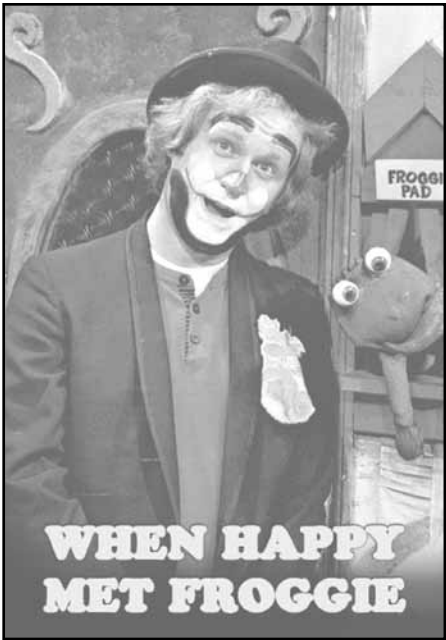
Though he started off with a Bozo (fellow weatherman Bob Caldwell), by the time I was watching in the mid-Sixties, Mr. Bill was solo. He had no retinue of continuing characters, no live audience of eager children in their Sunday best. Even so, I was a fan, watching as much as I could before being forced out the door to catch the school bus. Saturday was a special treat: a whole *Mr. Bill*, three hours of cartoons like *Super-President* and *Fantastic Four*, then *Shock Theater* with Norwood tricked out in Dracula duds as the host. Cartoons, more cartoons, and monster movies—the only way my mom could get me away from the television was to bring out the vacuum cleaner.

This wearing of many hats was typical of kids’ show hosts. As revealed by *When Happy Met Froggie*, Tim Eppenstein already had a job at WTVQ (then Channel 62) when his boss asked him to host the new afternoon children’s show. So did all the other members of the cast and crew. Five days a week, after starting their day with *Happy’s Hour*, they would go run the station for the rest of the night. That’s a hardworking bunch of people. Maybe that’s why they were such a hard-playing bunch.

### Lexington’s dirty decade

“It was the Seventies,” the interviewed would say by way of...explanation?

apology? when speaking of the party-hearty fun behind the scenes of *Happy’s Hour*. Hey, it was the Seventies, that lost decade when the “new freedoms” of the Sixties penetrated the straight world from the mailroom to the boardroom.



Lexington, in particular, was a party town back then. A college burg still reeling from the impact of urban renewal, poised to embark on the great suburbanization that would devour the surrounding countryside, Lexington was a scroungy little place. For instance, the august institution which premiered *When Happy Met Froggy* on April 6, the Kentucky Theatre, made its rent with biker and Godzilla movies while its little sister theater, then called “the Cinema,” ran XXX films with the “good parts” cut out to keep the law happy.

Lexington was wilder then, dirtier, but in many ways kinder, a wide-open place where a shy boho wannabe could end up sharing a joint with a professor, a seven-foot-tall drag queen, and the zonked-out heiress of a horse fortune. So of course an afternoon kids’ show full of impudent humor and improvised hijinx would garner an unintended audience of potheads and sauehounds. Of course the people involved with the show would party just as hard as that audience. Pitchers of beer with lunch before the show, some maryjane to get those creative juices flowing, followed on the weekends by “non-stop” parties complete

with wild wives dancing tits-out on the kitchen table...they don’t make television like that anymore.

Perhaps *Happy’s Hour* and others of its kind have such resonance because they were made on the cheap and on the fly by human beings with hearts and habits, not careerist droids gelded by corporate puritanism. While out on one of the many personal appearances Happy and Froggie made during the show’s run, Froggie #1, Mike Mellon, buzzed and wanting to impress a chick, gave her his Froggie puppet, the original, never seen again. Using their talent for improv, the boys just vamped for weeks until a new puppet was made. Nowadays, if he wasn’t canned on the spot, Mellon would be made to endure the unctuous grind of counseling. As the sun-glared sepia Seventies gave way to the rain-slick blue urbanity of the Eighties, the good times stopped rolling, brought to a halt by cocaine and Jesus. Everybody became a professional, even the heads and hounds, partying now a full-time gig, another kind of career.

Even if Happy and the gang had made it through the burn-out of making it up week after week, plus appearances, their days were numbered. As the Reaganites gutted the FCC rules regarding local and children’s programming, *Happy’s Hour* and other kids’ shows were supplanted by *GI Joe*, *Transformers*, and their ilk, glorified toy commercials doubling as agitprop for the bonehead manicheanism of the neo-cons.

Some kids’ show hosts tried to roll with the punches—there was a different Happy in another town who would do his thing between the *Thundercats* and *She-Ra*—but, for the most part, the kids’ show format that had existed from the beginning of television was finished. The mess and muzz of mere humanity, whether scratchy old prints of the Little Rascals or some moonlighting meteorologist with a silly suit and sillier jokes, just wasn’t good enough anymore. Besides, can you imagine getting kids today to sit still for a black & white short? They’d just badmouth the special effects in that week’s chapter of Flash Gordon, pop

another Ritalin, and go back to their video games.

When Happy Met Froggie is now available on dvd. To order, please visit [whenhappymetfroggie.com](http://whenhappymetfroggie.com). For more info about classic children’s programming, go to [captainerniesshowboat.com](http://captainerniesshowboat.com) which, unfortunately, doesn’t have Happy’s Hour listed in the “Kentucky” section.

## Local film happenings

### Casting Call!

Wanna be in pictures? Lexington filmmaker Justin Hannah is conducting casting for a short film entitled “Consignment.” The shoot calls for six actors (men and women) in their mid-20’s to late 30’s. Auditions will take place on Saturday, April 30 and filming will occur during weekends in May.

If you would like more information on the project, you can visit [www.manicbaby.com/consignment](http://www.manicbaby.com/consignment) for a synopsis and character breakdown. If you are interested in auditioning, please send an e-mail to [manic.baby@yahoo.com](mailto:manic.baby@yahoo.com) or call (859) 335-0831.

### Special Screening of *Pharaoh’s Army* with writer/director Robby Henson

Danville native Robby Henson will return to Kentucky for a special screening of his 1995 film *Pharaoh’s Army*. The movie stars Academy Award winning actor Chris Cooper alongside Academy Award nominees Patricia Clarkson and Kris Kristofferson. Filmed locally and based on true Civil War events, *Pharaoh’s Army* tells the story of a Yankee raiding party who come across a Confederate mountain woman and her son on a remote Kentucky farm.

The screening will be held at 2:30 P.M. on Friday, April 29 in Transylvania University’s Cowgill Center and is part of the celebration for Transy’s new President, R. Owen Williams. Mr. Henson will conduct a presentation following the screening on oral history and film. This event is free and open to the public.

## Remembering Sidney Lumet

### A guide to some of the director’s most notable films

By Grayson Johnson

Earlier this month, Sidney Lumet, one of Hollywood’s most accomplished producer/directors, passed away at the age of eighty-six. After being in the business for over seventy years and directing over fifty films, Lumet left a giant body of work in his wake. His legacy is acclaimed with forty-six Academy Award nominations and a great deal of film history. With a strong focus on crime dramas with social relevance, his films remain some of the most intriguing, well-acted, and entertaining of their time. Roger Ebert calls him “one of the finest craftsmen and warmest humanitarians among all film directors.” Since there is no better time to appreciate something than after it is gone, this is a look back at few films that highlight Sidney Lumet’s historical career.

### *12 Angry Men* (1957)

Lumet’s first film, shot almost entirely in one room, tells the story of a jury deliberating the trial of a teenager who is believed to have murdered his father. After a quick vote the ruling comes up eleven favoring guilty, and only an endearing Henry Fonda contesting. Lumet’s reputation as the “actor’s director” begins early, as the cast’s impeccable acting carry this drama through to the end while raising issues like accountability and speculation that are still very relevant

today. *12 Angry Men* was nominated for three Academy Awards including Best Director and was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.”

Rotten Tomatoes: 100% Fresh

### *Serpico* (1973)

“The reality is that we do not wash our own laundry. It just gets dirtier.” Al Pacino delivers an unforgettable performance as Frank Serpico, a die-hard New York cop who goes undercover to expose the deep-seated corruption within the department. Another fine example of Lumet’s character driven direction, the role of Serpico garnered an Academy Award nomination and Golden Globe win for Pacino, inspiring future revivals of the character such as Charlie Kelly from *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. “Who wants a piece of Serpico?”

Rotten Tomatoes: 92% Fresh.

### *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975)

Another amazing character for Al Pacino. Genuinely and painfully human, Sonny is a man at his wit’s end. With his friend Sal, played by the notorious John Cazale, he decides to rob a bank for the first time--but things don’t go quite as smoothly as planned. At times hilarious, at times heartbreaking, at times poignant, *Dog Day Afternoon* tells the real life story

of honest characters in a rough spot—characters who, by this time, Lumet has become notorious for bringing to life. *Dog Day Afternoon* was nominated for five Academy Awards including Best Director and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being “culturally, historically or aesthetically” significant.

Rotten Tomatoes: 97% Fresh

### *Network* (1976)

“I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!” Perhaps Lumet’s most praised film, *Network* chronicles the ups and downs of television personality Howard Beale as he works his way to influential public figure. In a world of MSNBCs and Glenn Becks, this film still packs a strong punch with cultural commentary while remaining entertaining throughout. In addition to being acclaimed director Paul Thomas Anderson’s favorite film, *Network* was nominated for six Academy Awards including Best Director and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being “culturally, historically or aesthetically” significant.

Rotten Tomatoes: 91% Fresh

### *The Wiz* (1978)

Okay. So not Lumet’s best film, but damn if it’s not worth mentioning for the novelty. A Motown

reinterpretation of *The Wizard of Oz* starring Diana Ross as a strangely old Dorothy, a pre-*Off the Wall* Michael Jackson playing the Scarecrow (made from trash), and Richard Pryor as the Wizard. Complete with Poppy prostitutes and a sweatshop in the sewer, *The Wiz* is absurd and hilarious. And “Ease on Down the Road” is a great song.

Rotten Tomatoes: 37% Fresh

### *Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead* (2007)

Sidney Lumet’s last film. This brilliantly acted dark tale of desperation, betrayal, and failure was released when Lumet was 83 years-old. Philip Seymour Hoffman, Ethan Hawke, Marisa Tomei, and (Lexington native) Michael Shannon are among those he directed into amazing performances, albeit quite depressing ones as their criminal plans go awry and their family unravels on itself.

Rotten Tomatoes: 87% Fresh

“I don’t know how to choose work that illuminates what my life is about. I don’t know what my life is about and don’t examine it. My life will define itself as I live it. The movies will define themselves as I make them. As long as the theme is something I care about at the moment, it’s enough for me to start work. Maybe work itself is what my life is about.”

—Sidney Lumet

# Creatives demand world class disc golf course

## NoC Sports

Appreciation for sports in this city has long been ignored by city leaders, or so say some Lexington citizens.

“I drove out to Nicholasville yesterday to check out the Riney B, and dammit if their disc golf course don’t go to 24,” says Danny Mayer, 35, a passionate amateur disc golf player and regular faculty member at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. “Along with the 22 hole course out near Keene, this gives Jessamine County 2 extra long golf courses.”

It didn’t take too long to put two-and-two together and realize, Mayer

says, that “Lexington doesn’t have any 24 hole disc golf courses. None. Nothing here is bigger than 18 holes.”

Not content to rest easy on this knowledge, Mayer got to thinking. Disc golf is real popular with young creative types like himself. The hip downtown paper he owns, *North of Center*, has strong creative class demographics, and it covers a “league” (the BDGA) that “plays” in disc golf “tournaments.” One of the city’s most progressive companies, LexMark, has its own set of baskets. Heck, Austin and Portland and Pittsburgh and all those places have kickass disc golf courses.

*It’s not just a slacker leisure sport*, he

thought. *It’s also an attractor of economic actors.*

“Leaking premier disc golf courses to Jessamine County is no way to attract people here to Lexington who are creative like me,” Mayer observed. “But it’s not just disc golf. Before we know it, the entire downtown scene could very well be all moved out Nicholasville way, to the Boot Store perhaps, or Cracker Barrel.”

Determined to save his city, Mayer started a Facebook page, attracted some like-minded souls, then called a meeting. Two weeks later, the editor of the quirky northside newspaper found himself front and center in front of a

crowd, transformed suddenly into a genuine community organizer.

“The park facility our disc golf players compete in, and our fans go to, must be the gold standard! It can be nothing...less than that,” Mayer thundered from atop a milk carton to six white people and one multi-cultural assembled at Al’s Bar this night. “I think on that we can all agree!”

The group, called Creatives for Common Sense Solutions (CCSS), has come to listen to Mayer and embark on their first community project: demanding Lexington “develop a 25

*continued on the next page*

## High Bridge (cont.)

*continued from page 1*

ecosystems. “Papaw, don’t send Peanut to the spring. It’ll be an hour before we get our drink of water ‘cause he’ll be catching whirligigs, doodlebugs, or craw daddies.” Snake was right. Peanut did in fact have a fascination for the insect world and the spiral of worlds issuing ever up and out in increasing molecular intensities.

After his stint in the crotch, he returned to High Bridge, knocked around doing this and that, grease-monkey, tobacco-hand, assembly-line worker. He familiarized himself with the seedier bars on the south side of Lexington, Bolivar Street and the old train station, 1958.

In the fall of ’59 he immersed himself wholeheartedly in the Kentucky River fur-trade. He’d learned to trap along the river as a boy, mainly muskrats. It took him several seasons before he trapped his first mink, the wiliest species of *Mustela*. Apparently, with each traversing, the mink picks up on the smallest of alterations, a broken

across from Handy’s Bend and the Fox Bend farm that Sprout Horton built in the early ‘40s). Up the Dix, he had a small cabin and a small bookshelf with works by London and Hemingway, narratives befitting a man alone with his thoughts in the unlikely wilderness of his home place. For four months commitment, he showed around 50 fox pelts, mostly grays with some reds, twice as many muskrats, and several dozen minks and ermine.

He continued to trap, even after I (his youngest son) was born some ten years later, and sell fur pelts until a game-changing encounter with a big sow coon. She’d sprung a trap set for muskrat along a remote bank on the Kentucky. Her determination to be free wrecked the ground around her, the earth furrowed by her tiny claws, and she finally settled on gnawing off her own leg.

He found the trap with the gnawed-off leg still attached and, peering over the high bank, located her distorted, ragged body tangled in the roots of an ancient basswood and drowned at

overhead in the foggy palisades of my childhood, smiling, rowing hand-made johnboats, drinking clear liquor from mason jars. The lot at the end of the road was mostly cleared, with a few mammoth poplars, reminiscent of some earlier river-scape that today only shimmers, unarticulated, in the gene-pools of Daniel Boone and John Harrod. This little Eden was, and is still, owned by one Roy Lee Barns, the unofficial official mayor of Dix Drive, a quasi-retired river-rat who acquired his dead-end paradise for peanuts in the great postdiluvian riverfront sell-out of 1978.

Ever the mindful neighbor, Roy introduced me to the art of “poaching” trout in the tail waters of Dix River. Two miles up from the confluence, a sign on the Mercer County sides announces to all would-be anglers the beginning of the “artificial bait only” section that continues all the way to the earthen dam below Herrington Lake. The sign is large enough to shoot at and small enough to miss. I’ve done both.

From Roy, I learned the art of tying night crawlers, halving them, looping the slimy, squiggly sections on a gold #2 Eagle Claw, and leaving an inch or two to writhe and flirt in the current. Deadline was the preferred method of choice, a couple of Gremlin split-shots biting the line several feet above the hook. It’s my firm conviction given a long weekend and sufficient supply of live bait, a man could catch every trout in Dix River.

And why not? They’re certainly not a native species, and besides the “trout-truck” would just reappear with its sloshing load and re-up the river. No harm done. Plus, I’ve always gotten a kick out of pissing off the fishing elite, fuckwits from the pages of the Orvis catalog who blather on about purity of form and catch-and-release—two phrases that carry little truck for me up the Dix and certainly none on the Kentucky. If you’re a purist, take your shiny, new Gheenoe, thousand dollar fly rod and reel, overpriced waders, vest, hat, and dry-fly box out west and fish the native populations.

For me, it’s always been “catch-and-relief”—from hunger. During the lean, between-jobs-summer of ’95, Dix River trout and Idaho potatoes accounted for, well, our entire diet. We had trout on the grill, trout on a stick, trout casserole, trout and bean soup. Smoked, barbequed, pan-fried, deep-fried, baked, broiled, and roasted. I took on the smell of trout and

couldn’t wash it off in the shower. Our tiny freezer was jam-packed with bags of trout. On the weekends we’d have friends over for trout and wine, and in the mornings we’d have trout and eggs. In the words of Stephan Porter of the Bald Knob String Band, “The trout truck’s a-coming, there’ll be a fish-fry tonight!” And tomorrow night, and the next night, and...

Honestly, I have nothing against fly fishing or trout. Rightly done, casting flies is an art form, a choreographed (and perhaps deeply personal) expression influenced by the physical characteristics of the riverine and streambed topography and the various contingencies moving water makes possible. And trout, in their native habitats are beautiful, as in Richard Hugo’s poem:

Quick and yet he moves like silt.  
I envy dreams that see his curving  
silver in the weeds. When stiff as snags  
he blends with certain stones.  
When evening pulls the ceiling tight  
across his back he leaps for bugs...

...Swirls always looked one way  
until he carved the water into many  
kinds of current with his nerve-edged  
nose.

Of all species, trout are positively charged by rheotaxis. Of the native fish fauna of North America, they’re tops in terms of striking coloration. Nothing over the top like some tropical discus, but simple, dramatically appropriate to its habitat, its skin and patterning an artful interpretation and reflection of its place.

But the fact remains, trout were never native to the Dix River. Never. They survive only, here and elsewhere in Kentucky, because of the cold water pulled from the murky bottom of some man-made lake. And they’re enthusiastically stocked each year with little thought to how their presence impacts aquatic species that are native to the region. Maybe this is all a grand rationalization for breaking the law, but I see no harm in dispossessioning the Dix of this foreign introduction with live bait, no matter how many Trout Unlimited members I offend.

*Tune in next issue for the thrilling conclusion to the High Bridge Trilogy, as the author poaches wildflowers and secures bootlegged spirits, all in the name of local community.*



George Wesley Houpp, far left; Robert David Houpp, Civil War Veteran, far right, 1932.

twig, a heavy footprint, even a leaf out of place, and most often will abandon that particular route in favor of another. It’s like you have to float in on the air, set your trap from a state of suspended animation, and hold your breath. For a kid, bagging a mink was a pretty big deal, and back then in the early fifties, a mink pelt brought 35 dollars, serious knocking around coinage.

But in the fall of ’59, he had his sights set on a different level of commitment: he would run his traps, but more than that, he would live out the winter and spring on the river, a small v-hull aluminum boat with a piece-meal 10-horse Mercury his only mode of transport. Granted he came to town from time to time to stock up on provisions, gas for the outboard, batteries for the flashlight, but for the most part of four months he moved in river-time, filling mornings and afternoons with exploration of the watershed and the numerous, isolated hollows, running traps by night on a sixteen mile stretch of the Kentucky and the Dix.

He slept in a tent and on the ground beneath the stars, and on particularly nasty nights took refuge in either one of two established fish-camp shanties upstream (one, still standing, across from Bowman’s Bend that Georgie Horton built in the late ‘40s, the other

the river’s edge. “I’d had enough killing for one lifetime,” he later told me, and at that moment in the early 1970s he resigned from trapping and hunting altogether.

**Young, Married, and Living By**

In 1993, after six-month’s honeymoon in the Glyndon Hotel in Richmond, Kentucky, Laura and I moved to 1325 Dix Drive, which, at the time, was the fourth house from the end of the road, a non-descript split level, all above grade, with a deck, some whiskey barrel halves, and a stretch of riverfront between two giant water maples primed for the human equivalent of an otter slide. We were just downstream and across the river from Slade’s Hollow, a small rivulet casting an even smaller towhead forming the southern boundary of Bowman’s Bend on the Garrard County side (and where George and Amanda Horn—yet another set of ancestors—succumbed to the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918-1919).

At the end of Dix Drive, a nine acre plot pinched the upstream bank past two springs and narrowed to a beech leaf-littered slope inhabited only by ghost-men...river rats from the distant past like “Pigtail” Anderson, “Fuzzy” McGuinness, and Georgie Horton, men who still loom large



Dix River trout.



# Opinion

## Another college numbers racket UK’s statistical blame game

There’s a certain power inherent in numbers and statistics. They have a way to solidify ideas, give them density. Rhetorically, statistics are like concrete piers, heavy anchors for thought.

Take the examples of UK’s recent tuition and salary increases. Lee Todd and Public Relations Director Jay Blanton have been quick to place the proposed 6% increase in student tuition alongside declining state support for higher education and a faculty salary increase averaging 3%. UK’s anchor stat has been a comparison of the state’s 2007/08 contribution (\$335.1 million) to the school’s operating budget against its 2011/2012 contribution (\$303.4 million)—“an almost 10 percent decline” in state funding, the *Herald-Leader* duly reported on April 20.

The numbers have driven home the idea that the state has not adequately funded the university, its students or its faculty. Lack of state funding, Lee Todd and Jay Blanton and the *Herald-Leader* and others have determined, is largely the culprit to blame for UK’s lengthening laundry list of infrastructure, salary, educational, economic and moral woes. A *Kentucky Kernel* editorial went so far as directly citing an email Todd sent to students to explain her position on the imminent tuition and salary increases.

“It is going to be very difficult to provide the funds necessary to create the salary pool because we must absorb a one percent (\$3.1 million) reduction in our state appropriation next year,” Todd said in the email. “With this cut, our operating state appropriation will have declined from \$335.1 million in 2007-08 to \$303.4 million in 2011-12 (almost 10 percent).”

The numbers as Todd and others anchor them seem to speak for themselves—a stark decline in state support over a short amount of time, all around bad shit—except of course when they don’t. Statistics are helpful, true, but we must understand their context and, at the least, consider other numerical anchors to tell other possible stories.

### Context: This bubble’s a bursting

In addition to being the numerical high-point in state funding for UK, the 2007/2008 school year was also the tail end year of a gigantic global financial bubble, spurred on most visibly in the U.S. by real estate speculation and over-construction, a real mother of all peaks. The year also happened to be the first coming after Todd had released

his much publicized Top 20 Business Plan. Local and national media outlets, businessmen, and administrative types, all of whom roundly applauded it, had over a year with which to advocate, with a serious Top 20 document in hand, for the state to get on board with increased funds.

Point being, 2007/2008 may not represent the best year to benchmark state support for higher education. Comparing the absolute peak days of the market to today’s depressing moment—the current not-yet-reached bottom of the worst recession since the Great Depression—seems either insane or obtuse.

A more telling statistic, taken from UK’s 2009 budget plan, compares similar numbers but instead uses a different benchmark year: state support in 1999/2000 and 2009/2010. In part, these years also capture bubble to bust territory, too—the ‘99 budget came in the midst of the dot-com bubble—but because the bust plays out over ten years rather than four, the comparison tells a little different story. In 1999, the state contributed \$295.3 million dollars, or 26.1% of UK’s oper-

boogeyman it is made out to be. The state’s declining percentage as a part of university’s operating budget seems more a function of UK’s rapid—bubble-like—rise in operating costs. As a budget, UK has grown way faster than the state has been able to support.

For the state to have continued even with its support of ten years ago, 25.6% of UK’s \$2.45 billion operating budget, taxpayers would need to shell out \$625 million dollars a year, every year, for UK to operate at a Top 20 level—an increase of over \$300 million dollars annually from present state funding. Is this what Lee Todd and public advocates of increased public support for education seriously have in mind when they complain about ignorant Frankfort politicians not showing due support?

### Different stories, different anchors

UK’s increased budget is traditionally presented by Todd, Blanton and the *Herald-Leader* as a sign of progress and growth, but such growth is at best limited and very likely destructive.

For one, the latest budget shows that UK’s main economic burden is

the increase in the school’s operating expenses.

The skyrocketing of operating expenses (along with capital outlays) have coincided with the college’s Top 20 push and rapidly increasing budget. In 1999, operating expenses of \$420 million accounted for 37.3% of the school’s budget. A decade later, operating expenses tallied over \$1.1 billion alone; they now account for over 45% of the school’s \$2.4 billion dollar total budget.

These same increased operating costs seem to play a factor in limiting campus salary increases. As operating expenses have increased from 37 to 45 percent of the school’s budget, personnel costs have correspondingly decreased from 56 to 45 percent of that same budget. Over that ten years, for every \$7 going to operating costs, only \$5 went to personnel costs.

A pro-growth businessman, Todd charted progress in part by benchmarking operating budgets; the college’s sudden super-human increase in operating costs, from 1.2 to 2.5 billion dollars in a little less than 10 years, became a measure of excel-

lence, a process not unlike using GDP as a gauge of economic health.

A more simple way to convey all this might be to ponder these riddles: how did it get so that a well-greased \$2.5 billion dollar business organization like UK can’t muster the \$12 million (0.4% of the school’s operating budget) to give some of its workers a raise, and how is it that a \$2.5 billion dollar organization can’t secure the \$14.2 million (0.6% of its

budget) needed to spare its students a tuition increase. For the UK budgetary behemoth, these are minuscule numbers. What’s all the fuss about? Are we to believe that UK is really so efficient as to operate on margins so slim? Is UK over-leveraged, simply maxed out?



ating budget. Ten years later in 2009, the state contributed \$324.6 million—a 10.17% increase in state funding—yet it now accounted for only 13.3% of the budget.

### What happened?

UK has spun these numbers to claim a lack of state support, and they’ve had support in promoting this view. Writing in an April editorial, the *Herald-Leader* observed “a sense almost of resignation about eroding state support. Twenty years ago, 40 percent of UK’s operating funds came from Kentucky taxpayers through legislative appropriations. By 2001 state support had dipped to 25.6 percent. It’s now just 12.5 percent” (“Mixed bag awaits UK president”).

Unfortunately for UK and the *Leader*, the 1999-2009 statistic suggests that the state is not quite the

increased operating costs, and not declining state support. This year the state has cut \$3.1 million of support but it’s the \$21 million in increased operating expenses that the school really has to cover. Realistically speaking, student tuition is not paying to attract faculty, whose numbers at the college are considered ahead of schedule, according to the 2009 budget report. Nor is tuition solely covering state funding shortfalls, a whopping \$3 million this year.

Increasingly, student tuition hikes are papering over increased operating expenses, which among other things cover utility costs and scholarship money (needed because of a 130% increase in tuition over the past decade). Todd doesn’t tout it so much, but there’s a good chance that the infrastructure he’s built for Top 20 status has been responsible for much of

## Letter to the editor

### Kent State, Part IV?

I have been anxiously awaiting the concluding fourth part of Richard Becker’s excellent series, the first three parts of which ran in February, April, and May of last year. Assuming I did not overlook it somehow, any chance that we will see it soon, or must I abandon all hope?

Dan Casey, Kentucky expatriate

### Editor responds:

That is a very good question Dan, and truth be told, you’re not the first person to ask it. So here’s what I’m gonna do. I’m gonna put your question in our letters to the editor, and maybe Richard—who is currently back in Lexington—will by hook or by crook come across your question, and get inspired to complete part IV.

And if it doesn’t inspire him, maybe some others might be interested

in continuing the series. Four parts was pretty arbitrary. Civil Rights era protests of Rupp, the development of UK Fine Arts as “Berkeley West,” and SDS conventions all were part of UK’s pre-Kent State stew; falling out from Kent State, the development of new media like *Blue Tail Fly*, tales of Weathermen sightings, and the college’s slow descent—both faculty and student—back into a midwestern collegiate Babbitty might also need to be explored.

That’s a lot to ask for one final piece. It doesn’t even leave room for the obligatory then/now comparisons: war, faculty, the state of education, student activism, etc.

That’s a lot to put on Richard. He may be game, but if he’s not, maybe your question will inspire other archive hounds. We’ve certainly got the interest as a paper.

## Disc golf (cont.)

*continued from the previous page*

hole disc golf course somewhere in the city.”

CCSS’s first task will be to secure the \$35,000 in private donations necessary to ensure its existence. Times are tough, money is tight, and thus far Mayer has refused to comment on speculation that Mayor Jim Gray may kick off the CCSS fund-raising effort by making a personal contribution of \$2,000.

“This project is all about activating our city,” Mayer says while playing a recent soggy round at 18-hole Lexington course Shillito Park. “Taking the opportunities in our sports community and engaging those opportunities in imaginative and inspired ways... [P]eople want to be around that kind of energy. We’ve got to be realistic, but we’ve also got to dream.”

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

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