

Points East

By:
Ike Adams

Thinking that I could avoid any mention of eclectic dysfunction and still get important news at the same time, I headed for Kentucky.com's home page on my computer at the office last Friday morning.

Normally I don't do this sort of thing at the office because I share an Internet phone line with four other people and I feel guilty if I'm tying it up any longer than absolutely necessary to take care of business. Even at that I'm considered the Internet hog at work. But since everybody else was off for the Holidays, I decided to splurge.

Unfortunately, the very first headline I ran across was about new census figures for Kentucky. Specifically the story said that seven of the fifty poorest counties in the nation were in eastern Kentucky and that nine of the fifty counties in the nation with the most children living below the federal poverty guidelines were in our part of the state.

It was not in the news story, but I'm pretty sure there are 3,141 bounties in the nation so this is not good news. And, of course, right away I wanted to find out where other forty something were so I could figure out what sort of peer group our more economically depressed counties had around the country.

The news story said that the information had come from a new release from the Census Bureau. I went to the Census Bureau's web site, but the news release was not there. I clicked on it. All I found was a bunch of stories touting the Bureau's effectiveness and

millions of pages of data from 1990. The Bureau has all kinds of information about the 2000 census that make good advertising, but it contains absolutely nothing of any value to anybody other than folks who may need to feel good about working at the place.

So I finally tracked down a number and called them up. I'm here to tell you that a bunch of folks work at the census bureau and I spent a lot of time talking to them on Friday. They are so friendly that they want you to become acquainted with their co-workers and after you've spoken to a Census Bureau employee, he or she will promptly suggest that you speak with yet another. This could probably go on for the rest of your natural life if you had nothing better to do with your time than pow-wow with government employees. The down side is that at the other end of your life you still wouldn't know anything.

I tried calling the newspaper and the guys who wrote the story. Apparently they were off somewhere digesting yams and turkey. Which was probably a good idea. If you're like me and you eat too many sweet taters you need to be in an office with a bunch of other people anyway.

All of which has nothing to do with the census information. The short end of that story is that I've really come to know how counties in the rest of Appalachia stack up on this poverty scale and I can't find out. I even called newspapers in Tennessee and West Virginia to see if they had got-

ten similar releases because I figure that both of those states have to have at least a couple of counties that made the bottom fifty. But they were as clueless as the Census Bureau. I've been all over the Internet and I've talked to all these government employees to the tune of about 18 hours since last Friday morning and I still don't know where the information came from or how to go about getting my hands on it so I draw my own conclusions. The information has led to nothing but dead ends and if any of you readers know how to get hold of it, E-mail me pronto at theadams@ad.com. It's driving me crazy that I can't find out how poor I actually am.

In other news, Rufus Harrison and some other folks have been sending me lawyer jokes as a result of the one I shared with you last week when I was crying about the fact that our presidential election is going to be decided by a bunch of shysters. I feel obligated to pass them along.

Do you know why a polecat can't spray a lawyer? Professional Courtesy.

Know the difference between a lawyer and a carp? One is a shiny, mud sucking, bottom feeder. The other is a fish.

What's brown and black and looks great on a lawyer? A Doberman Pinscher.

What's the difference between a sperm and a lawyer? The sperm has one chance in a million of becoming a decent human being.

Do you hear that? I'm recruiting lawyers to participate in some behavioral science experiments? Seems there's some things even a rat won't do.

Did you hear about that plane load of cowboys that hit UK is recruiting lawyers to participate in some behavioral science experiments? Seems there's some things even a rat won't do.

If you have anymore, send em in and we'll put them in the paper until we get used. In the meantime, we're going to get our long Johns on and go hunker up by the fire.

Sweet and Sour

By Zi Graves

America the Beautiful!

I may forget the author of that beautiful song but the words and melody is engraved on my heart, so often, my voice wants to join the tune being strummed on the harps tucked away there.

This morning the realities of the changes in the Beauty of America, since that song was written, nearly exploded into song as I did my daily walk around the Kastle Inn Motel - on the top of the hill at the Burr exit from the height of this hill, the top of which has been covered with asphalt or concrete, one can see the hills and valleys surrounding it for miles each way. Now you aren't looking down into the Grand Canyon or into the depths of Carlsbad Cavern, you are looking down at what makes this country - "America The Beautiful." Hill sides still covered with leaves that tint of late fall, clinging to bare branches above the tree tops, the shapes of the trunks supporting them.

On the hillside across the narrow valley, and close enough to the I-75 interchange to watch the traffic whiz by, is what looks like from this distance to be a thriving farm. A big black barn can be seen surrounded by fields of grass with cows grazing or lying contentedly around. And close to the home below the barn one can see the remnants of a garden, one patch of vivid green surely must have been a turnip and mustard patch. A birdseye view, or looking at these scenes from a distance, which I was doing from the parking lot at the Kastle Inn Motel, reveals a growing community surrounding Mt. Vernon, the county seat of Rockcastle County. Clusters of houses now take the place of a lone cottage, suggesting the need for companionship of kin and friends to be close by. Filling stations - food marts and restaurants have sprung up like spring flowers. And hillsides that were once covered with timber or brush now have little roads tracing a path to some ones door.

As I look down one side of the motel I see scenes of yesterdays - Rt. 25, once the busiest road in the county. And feeder roads from the other side of the hill joining it at various places. A long white house, recently built, on a clearing close to the top of the hill, above two of these county or state roads, with a new driveway or road leading to it adds a touch of prosperity, and daring to do something different, to the scene below.

Another captivating sight was when I walked to other side and saw below me the intersection of I-75 with W25, leading into Mt. Vernon and Livingston. There was a constant stream of traffic, both north and south in their respective lanes of gray with white lines down the center and separated by an expanse of green berm. This in itself was a picturesque panorama of a constantly changing scene alive with vehicles of every description, giving the highway an appearance of being a live ribbon decorated with a moving design. The overpass being the bow and the darker colored roads meeting there, the streamers, drifting into the countryside. The national Highway I-75 is in itself a beautiful scenic highway that brings in Michigan and ends in Florida. And it's path through Ken-

tucky is one of the prettiest sections. When it crosses the beautiful Ohio River each scene it passes through is one of exceptional beauty. The Blue Grass area has been called "The garden of the world." The acres and acres of farm lands enclosed by white wooden fences and showing off the horses it is famous for. The mares frolicking with their colts across the pastures of bluegrass. Then soon the bridge across the Kentucky River takes I-75 out of the blue grass and the foothills of the Appalachia Mountains change the scene to one of rolling hills and valleys.

(It's time for one of my gripes) Today it is about how much natural beauty, the rivers and streams winding there way from the hills to the sea, between banks with wildlife and wildflowers vying for attention, is hid from the traveler, and the all important "tourist" by bridges with a solid roadbed beneath and sidewalks high enough to neither the driver and passenger can see over it. Therefore much of the beauty of Kentucky has been hidden beneath "man made barriers." Come on, you engineers and experts on the newest technology of highway and bridge building, surely if you can send a man to the moon and fix space-ships circling the earth you can build bridges with materials that one can see through. Why advertise the beauty of a state if the tourists can't see it? I read in a book whom most of us are familiar with **Don't Hide Your Light**

Under a Bushel. So, why should Kentucky hide much of her beauty under a bridge.

Now, back to I-75 and the path it takes through Kentucky as it meanders, the highway I mean, not the traffic whizzing by at full speed, on its way to Florida. Just a few miles down the highway all evidence of Lexington and the bluegrass disappears as foothills appear in the distance. At this particular place I always slow down and drink in the beauty of the mountains surrounding Berea and continuing on as far as one can see, with gaps between the hills-topps assuring the observer there is either a valley, with perhaps a cornfield or hay field, dominating the space, or a hollow with a cool stream of water winding its way between the banks or rocks while supplying the needs of the folks living close by. This range of hills leading to the mountains always seem to be inviting me to "come and see all the beauty beyond me."

Then I-75 bypasses this invitation and turns south. Of course the "beauty by the way-side of I-75 doesn't end at London, but I must get back to the Kastle Inn Motel and try to describe what I see passing my window.

I am looking down at the traffic on I-75, trucks dominate most of the pattern so instead of the train of cars; all makes and styles, and bumper to bumper dominating the highway the trucks are taking over today to prove the shelves of shopping malls, emptied by holiday shoppers, must be refilled for the next bunch.

A section of the cuts made in the hills of Kentucky that expose the layers of rock beneath the surface, so highways such as I-75 can get from Michigan to Florida is directly below my window. It isn't the deepest nor longest cut through a mountain, but one can see and appreciate the difference in our country, The United States of America since the - America The Beautiful was written.

Our Readers Write

Dear Editor,

I want to say we still have some honest people in Rockcastle County. Last Wednesday morning, November 22nd I lost my billfold, money and all important papers in it at Hardee's in Mt. Vernon.

Wednesday evening I received a phone call from Mr. Howell Holbrook from Brindle Ridge. He asked if I had

lost something. I told him I had lost my billfold. He said meet me at Dairy Mart in Brodhead. He returned my billfold and everything in it was the same.

He is an honest man, and I appreciate this so much.

Thanks again Howell,
Nina Burton Burkhardt
Brodhead, KY

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MAYOR KAREN KING

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