



There is a book to read and a movie to see.

This weekly column is intended to be all about family, the most important institution in our society. If you would like to take a closer look at family, then I have a book and a movie to recommend to you.

Let us begin with the movie. "Kingdom Come" will be opening in theaters in April. It is about the Spocum family. If you think your family is dysfunctional, wait until you see this one.

When the patriarch of the family dies suddenly, the family gathers for the funeral and related activities. Family members bring out the worst and the best in families, and this is definitely true of the Spocums. Jealousy, marital problems, sick-religion and addiction are all evident as the family members struggle to cope with their loss.

I have not seen the movie, but I have read the play "Dearly Departed" on which the movie is based. It is heartwarming and hilarious at times. Prepare to have your funny bone tickled in a major kind of way.

The movie has a local connection. The coauthor of the play and the screenplay is David Bottrell, who spent a part of his childhood in Somerset.

His parents currently reside in Science Hill (in Pulaski County). Bottrell is in Los Angeles pursuing a career in acting and writing. The play has been produced off-Broadway in New York.

The movie has an all-black cast, headed by Whoopi Goldberg and LL Cool J. Whether the family is black, Asian, Hispanic or white, I can assure you that the problems are the same. I am eagerly anticipating this movie.

There is also a book I recommend to you. It is "Clay's Quilt" by Silas House. House is a rural carrier for the United States Postal Service and lives in Lily, Kentucky (population 800). This is his first published novel. He has drawn on his knowledge of the people and customs of Eastern and Southeastern Kentucky to create a story that I could not stop reading until I had finished it all.

It is definitely a first novel. By that I mean that it is uneven at times and perhaps too sentimental, but I like sentimental. (Remember, I am the one who cried at "Ernest Saves Christmas.")

"Clay's Quilt" is the story of Clay Sizemore and his family and friends. Clay's mother died when he was four, and he was raised by relatives.

The book chronicles Clay's search for a life of his own and his attempts to understand his mother, whom he knew only briefly. His great-uncle who makes quilts helps Clay to piece together the story of his own life.

Clay moves ten miles away from his family when he turns eighteen, but he never really leaves them. Family is too important to him to forsake.

The book chronicles the pretty and the not-so-pretty pages of the lives of 'Clay's family' members. Getting drunk on Saturday night is a big part of the social life for Clay and some friends and relatives. Domestic violence is a part of Clay's mother's life and rears its ugly head again in the life of one of Clay's friends. Clay's family is no stranger to the sin

of adultery either, but the relationship to kin and friends is a strong force in their lives.

While this may sound like a sad book, it is not. It deals honestly with the life of one young man as he tries to make a place for himself in this world. I highly recommend it. The author, Silas House, understands family life in Kentucky.

agement, will receive the attention they deserve in the months to come.

Those who follow the legislature may feel that the best way to measure the success of this year's session is in what we did not do, rather than what we did. We did not enact any tax increases. We did not enact legislation without considering the consequences it would have on all of our citizens. We did not enact expensive policy then send the unfunded mandate to our local governments to foot the bill.

However, one of the things we did not do does concern me. Once again the Democratic leaders in the House and Senate refused to allow equal representation on statutory committees during last Thursday's Legislative Research Commission meeting. There was hope, when the meeting began, that they would see the light and agree to allow both chambers to have the same number of legislators serve on these committees. However, as the meeting progressed

it was obvious that they would once again let politics keep the interim committees from meeting. As a result, we were only able to approve an April meeting of subcommittees from the Interim Committee on Education.

This session gave us a taste of what we will consider during the 2002 Regular Session, as well as a chance to understand how the odd-year, 30-day regular session will work. While we can act on legislation until January 8 of next year - unless of course the governor calls a Special Session in the meantime - we will continue studying proposals.

During that time, I intend to continue these legislative updates as issues arise. I hope you will respond if a particular issue interests you. Until then, I can be reached here anytime, or call the toll-free message line at 1-800-372-7181. Those with hearing impairments may leave messages for me by calling the TTY message line at 1-800-896-0305.

## Legislative Update

by State Rep. Danny Ford

Innovative measures take center stage as legislators take other issues home with them at the end of 2001 Regular Session.

The end of the 2001 Regular Session came as the Senate President and House Speaker brought their gavel down in their respective chambers. That gavel concluded 29 legislative days worth of discussion and debate on 579 bills and 320 resolutions. In that time we took up several familiar measures, and many unfamiliar ones.

When we adjourned for the 10-day veto period on March 9, we had planned to return to Frankfort on March 22 and March 23 to reconsider any bills the governor may have vetoed. Yet when we convened at noon on Thursday, March 22 the governor had chosen not to use his power to veto. So, in keeping with our intent, we adjourned sine die at around 3 p.m. that afternoon.

Our Commonwealth has undergone tremendous change since 1850, the last time legislators met annually in regular session. A century and a half ago the legislature was comprised of 138 men. There were no women, no minorities. Voting was a right reserved only for white, male landowners and the makeup of the General Assembly reflected just that.

Today the legislature does a better job of representing who Kentucky really is and what we are really about. We not only meet under a different dome but also with different challenges, yet a common thread still lies in the tapestry of our history - the welfare of the people is still our primary concern.

That's why Thursday we enacted SB 58, a Constitutional Amendment that would create Family Courts to specifically address the needs of our families. The Kentucky Supreme Court will carve these courts out from divisions of the state's Circuit Courts. This innovative idea would help give our justice system better leeway and help ensure that the welfare of Kentucky families.

The Senate Committee Substitute promotes the 6 district judges that currently serve as Family Courts Judges to circuit court judges. The bill passed on a vote of 98-0. Because it is a Constitutional Amendment it now goes to voters for approval in November 2002.

We saw another innovative approach turn to law when HB 186 passed both the House and Senate and received the governor's signature. The measure creates a special fund to promote the state's agricultural products throughout the nation and world. Through the "Agriculture Promotion Fund" we can do a better job of finding a market that will give favorable value to our products.

Over the past decade we have paid particular attention to developing alternative crops to help tobacco farmers recover; this fund will help us continue that legacy.

We also took pioneering steps when we enacted HB 112 into law. The measure expands the telehealth network that we created during last year's session.

The network allows patients in rural and mountainous areas to have their x-rays and medical records examined by experts in Louisville and Lexington from miles away. This bill puts our state, which garners praise throughout the nation for our use of technology in the classroom, on the forefront of medical technology.

As I mentioned two weeks ago, we have also been paying particular attention to the needs of Kentucky's foster and adopted children. HB 62, a Republican sponsored initiative that would provide tuition waivers for foster or adopted children who are full-time students at state postsecondary institutions.

As I assure you know some special interest groups have already cried out about what we have, or specifically what we have not, passed this year.

Some, like "black" lung, telemarketing and solid waste man-

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