

Our Readers Write

Enjoy David Owens' articles...

Dear Editor,

We just wanted to let you know how much we enjoy the Signal. We especially enjoy the Blast From The Past pictures and the historical articles of Mr. Owens. We look forward to each edition. We cut out every Blast from the Past photograph and the historical articles to save in our scrapbook. I really liked the article on Rockcastle's Rocket. Mr. Owens' research is so thoroughly deep and he has a way with words few people have. To think we are only one of two schools in the nation that has a nuclear weapon as a mascot. I think that is the bomb! Will these pictures and articles be printed in a book? If so we would like a copy.

Joe and Kathy Higgs
London, KY

Thrilled with Ponder's column...

Dear Editor,

Having read Doug Ponder's column of Feb. 14th, I was so thrilled! His honesty and sincerity is to be commended. It isn't always easy to be so open about one's spiritual journey, but Doug showed no fear. I have encouraged everyone I know to read this column. Thank you, Doug, for allowing us to see what a fine person one can be even though they are young.

Sincerely and with the highest regard,
Doris E. Wright

Enjoyed Eight Gables Hotel article...

Dear Editor,

A cousin sent me a copy of the paper from Thursday, January 17, 2013 containing the article on the Eight Gables Hotel. I enjoyed very much reading about the history of the hotel. William G. and Minerva Nicely were my great grandparents and Hubert and Ann Nicely were my grandparents. My mother was Hubert and Ann's oldest child.

Toward the end of the article, I noticed an error. The article states that Ann Soper Nicely was Hubert Nicely's widow and sold the hotel. Actually, Ann died October 20, 1931 and Hubert died October 6, 1956, many years after Ann's death.

I would be very interested in knowing the source(s) of information for this article. I plan to write a book about the Nicely side of my family when I finish some current projects. My father's mother, who lived on the Irvine Road outside Richmond her whole life, kept a diary from 1898-1901 that I edited and published with the Jesse Stuart Foundation in Ashland, Ky. It is for sale in the Kentucky Heritage Store on the highway at the Berea exit. I can't remember the exact name of the store.

I would appreciate very much your sending me your sources for the history of the Eight Gables Hotel.

Sincerely,
Deborah Nelson-Campbell

Ed's Note: Local historian David Owens was the author of the Eight Gables Hotel article. He may be reached at 606-256-9870.

Mt. Vernon's use of tourism tax unfair to other restaurants...

Dear Editor,

I wish to comment on your articles published in the Signal on February 14, 2013 and February 21, 2013, concerning the improvements that have recently been completed on Renfro Valley Marina and Restaurant and also on the utility water quality.

It was implied that most of the improvements were paid for by the new leasers (the Ratliffs) when, in fact, all except maybe the new bait house, are being funded from the "tourism tax" levied on food purchased at local restaurants (also on motel rentals) to the sum of approximately \$200,000. This appears to me to be a gross conflict of interest as the

property (Renfro Valley Marina) is solely owned by the City of Mt. Vernon. Collecting this tax places the other restaurants in the area at a competitive disadvantage, especially as these funds are being used to fund their competition!

Another point I would like to bring to your attention. The next time you have a few hundred thousand to spend, I could make a case that it would be much better spent on technology to try to improve the public utility water quality. As many of our tourists complain about the public drinking water, this would also be a boom to the local citizens. We could all use bottled water.

Another point I would like to make -- it doesn't sound like really good business management to spend in excess of \$200,000 on the marina in hopes of recovering \$42,000 over five years in lease fees on the property.

The article of February 21st attempted to sugarcoat this, however, I think Mayor Bryant stuck his foot in his mouth with the statement that the population of Rockcastle County is too ignorant to discern the difference between good quality water and "junk water." The only water I have tasted worse than this public utility water is the bad water spring in Death Valley, California and the sulfur water from some wells in North Conway, Kentucky.

It's nice to have your opinion of your electorate's intelligence known!

I acknowledge that I don't vote in Mt. Vernon. However, I use the utility water from Lake Linville and occasionally eat at local restaurants.

Sincerely,
Everett S. Owens

"Points East" (Cont. from A2)

Lone Ranger, Red Ryder, Superman etc. But the thing about Truman was that he'd loan just about anybody anything he had. And for a period of some 5 years, he was literally my big brother. From second grade through sixth, we spent a lot of time in each other's homes. He had an old guitar and I never ever tired of hearing him play Wildwood Flower, mostly because that's the only tune he knew back then.

It was over a mile and a half from Truman's house to Blair Branch Grade School, downhill all the way, and unless there was a deep snow on the ground, Truman rode his bike to school. It had a big basket between the handle bars for his books and lunch box even though I doubt that Truman ever took a book home from school in his life.

Truman was the polar opposite of "academically motivated" but a genius in his own right. The only thing he had to use a pedal for to get to school was to apply the brake and kids would draw straws to see who got to push his bicycle back up the holler. The best bobsled run on Blair Branch was from Truman's house to just below John Adams, a distance of some 400 yards. Truman would ride his brought-on sleigh down the mountain and three of us would pull it and him back to the top so that we could have a turn.

Carlos and France Adams and I would take turns chopping Lidy's kindling with Truman's hatchet and we'd pack in his coal for a chance to shoot his BB guns. And we loved him for it.

My birthday is January 5 and Truman's was January 8. For several years, Mom and Lidy would host a birthday party for the two of us. Kid's on Blair Branch, in those days, were not expected to give birthday presents to one another. We'd just get together for cake and sometimes ice cream if the mines were working.

The summer after my sixth year of school, Truman and his Mom moved back to Indiana. George had al-

ready given up homesteading and gone back to the factory. He was home for holidays, vacations and frequent week-ends, but living mostly alone in the head of Blair Branch with an adolescent son was more than Lidy could handle. Their moving broke both my mother's heart and mine.

In the mid sixties, George retired. He and Lidy built a new home and moved back to Blair Branch. In the meantime Truman had become an 18-wheeler Jockey, running coast to coast out of central Indiana.

He went through a couple of marriages that didn't work but produced a couple of boys, Georgie and Jimmie, that George and Lidy raised in their retirement.

Truman finally returned to Blair Branch to stay in the late seventies. The wives were gone and the boys pretty much grown. Somewhere along the way he had learned every truck-driving song known to man and he had become a very talented musician. His unique guitar style will always be known as the "Truman Lick". His mastery of the 5-string banjo was sort of a cross between Ralph Stanley and Grandpa Jones.

He married my classmate from first through twelfth grade, Margie Blair, and she often accompanied him in that big rig as they rode across the country. He became fast friends again with all three of my younger brothers and anytime that I went home, we'd find time to play music until my fingers bled.

We started calling each other about 20 years ago late in the evening on Christmas Day. Sometimes those calls would last three or four hours, but over the last few years they became shorter and shorter. Neither one of us had done much to brag about and we'd pretty much worn the old tales out.

Last Christmas, when the phone rang about 8:00 P.M., Loretta winked at me and said, "That'll be Truman", and, of course it was.

The call lasted maybe thirty minutes. I didn't tell Loretta and Truman didn't tell Margie, but he and I both knew that call would be our last one.

"Memories" (Cont. from A2)

Kenneth and I quickly volunteered for the venture to become Kings of the Hill. We situated ourselves with our backs together so that we could see in every direction. Over and over we were challenged, and for a short time we were successful. Glenn and Paul then decided to storm the summit from two different directions; their plan worked well. Kenneth went down the bank in one direction, and I was tossed in the opposite direction. I can still see Paul and Glenn celebrating their victory.

Every time I played on that sawdust pile, my mother would make me take off my clothes and socks before entering our house. She could tell from the smell when I approached the

kitchen door. I can hear her now, "David Joe, you take off those clothes before you come into this house!" As I walked into the house with my sawdust-covered attire tucked under my arm, she promptly directed me to the bathroom to clean up before going into my room. While I made myself presentable, she always took my clothes to the front porch and shook off the sawdust and then carefully placed them into the clothes hamper.

Fighting to be King of the Hill was a dirty business -- just the way boys like it.

(You can reach me at themtnman@att.net or you can drop me a line at P.O. Box 927 - Stanton, KY 40380. I appreciate your comments and suggestions. You can also ask questions concerning my new book, View from the Mountain.)

"Strange" (Cont. from A2)

chest.

The end was certain and I began to convey in my mind to the mist that if you were going to kill me, go ahead, but just be quick about it. I stopped resisting and gave up the fight. As soon as the mist realized that it had won the fight, it was gone in the blink of an eye.

Several years passed and I was probably about 30 years old when I was reading about something I had almost forgotten. I suddenly realized that I had been visited by the "Old Hag", a phenomenon that happens to about 15% of the population and has been documented since ancient times.

This can happen during the day or night, and has occurred the world over. In the second century, Greek physician, Galen, believed it was caused by indigestion, according to the "Encyclo-

pedia of Ghosts and Spirits" by Rosemary Ellen Guiley.

The victims awake to find that they can't move or speak, feel a great weight on their chests, and sense an evil presence about them. The victims, however, are able to see, hear, and feel.

The theory comes from a superstitious belief that a witch or old hag rides the victims' chests. That explanation isn't taken very seriously nowadays but many contribute the occurrence to ghosts or demons.

The experience is most frightening to the victims as they are paralyzed but have use of their senses. The "Old Hag" is often accompanied by strange smells, the sound of approaching footsteps, apparitions of weird shadows or glowing eyes, and the weight on the chest making breathing impossible. Often the victim loses consciousness according to authorities on the subject.

Next week, we will take another look at this strange phenomenon.

Source: About.com - "Paranormal Phenomenon" (Remember, I'm always looking for a bit of Rockcastle history. If you have a story to tell, and all of us do, please contact me at therootsofrockcastle@windstream.net)

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ACROSS

1. Kentuckian, creator of "Judge Priest"

5. Sheltered, nautically

9. It's a plus

14. Kind of rug

15. Campus military org.

16. Kentuckian, women's rights leader Clay

17. Bona fide

18. Talk effusively

19. High point

20. Kentucky town, birthplace of US Chief Justice Fred Vinson

22. Dove's sound

24. Census data

25. "Not to mention..."

27. European coal area

29. With precision

33. Kentucky county called "Crappie Capital of the World"

35. PIN requester

38. Look (over)

39. Cumberland Gap

40. Disapproval expression

41. Cumberland Falls, "___ of the South"

43. One of Kentucky's three original counties

45. Conclusion

46. Ground rodent

48. First-place

49. Chowd down

50. One of Kentucky's first famous judges

51. De Mille of dance

52. Pronoun in a Hemingway title

54. In the thick of

56. Kentucky's Lion of White Hall

58. Summer mo.

60. Tompkinsville is this county's seat

65. Perform better than

67. Happy Chandler

69. Three time Derby winning jockey

70. Precipitous

71. Start of an idea

72. Flight data, briefly

73. Shorebirds

74. Caucasus river

75. ___ Hollow Lake

DOWN

1. Former US Congressman Perkins from Kentucky

2. Creme cookie

3. Sweetheart

4. Island near Java

5. Asian wild sheep

6. Kentuckian, former big league baseball player Sweet ___ Johnson

7. Kentuckian, nicotine patch developer

8. Mammoth Cave's largest river

9. Pippa Passes, KY college letters

10. Elliott Co. area, or Fergie, formally

11. Kentuckian, alphabet series author

12. Highland tongue

13. Makes lace

21. "Come to think of it"

23. Almond drink

26. "Kentucky Is My Land" author

28. Menacing

29. Sleep disorder

30. Detail

31. W KY river that rises in Christian County

32. Journey part

34. Tell somebody

36. Claim

37. Rewards

39. Kind of center

42. BB's and bullets

44. Grade A item

47. Kentuckian, Olympic gold medalist Mary

51. Commotion

53. Leslie County's seat

55. Mosque officials

56. Outlaw

57. Cousin of a mandolin

59. Mongolian capital

61. Grant basis

62. Pro follower

63. Like some history

64. Alternatively

66. Photo ___

68. Diamond stat

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