

Supplement to  
Lewis Newspapers

# Tales

Spring 1996

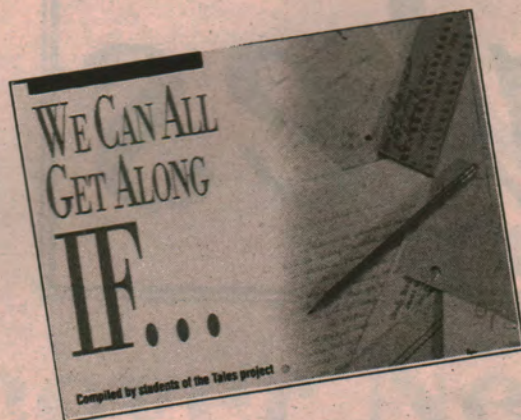


**a Collector's  
Fantasy**  
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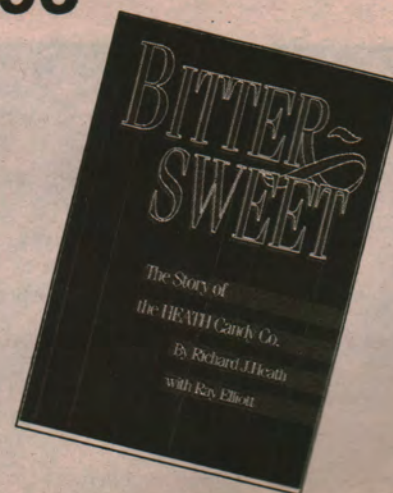
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**No. 9:** "Enoch's Comin'" by Ray Elliott, madstone as folk belief, memories of oil boom days, a child's pet remembered, St. Francisville history, poetry, country photo scrapbook

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Photos by Ray Elliott and Lloyd Askew

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By Kami Blackwell

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By Lloyd Askew

As a reminder of the glory days of the Industrial Revolution, antique sewing machines make for a fascinating history lesson to this collector.

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## Tales from the general store, inc.

**Editor**  
Ray Elliott

**Managing Editor**  
Vanessa Faurie

**Copy Editor**  
Gaye Dunn

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By Ray Elliott

## An iron can't get much done unless it's in the fire

In a recent conversation about the toll teaching can take on you, another teacher mentioned a comment somebody had made to him about me having "too many irons in the fire." I'd known and respected the man since I was in high school and waited for him to continue.

"I said sometimes teaching gets in your way," he said, a smile on his lips and a gleam in his eyes. "But I meant that as a compliment."

And I'm sure he did, just as surely as the other person hadn't meant it that way. No matter. I see both sides.

Teaching today is a stressful, full-time job. I could do nothing more than teach and be busy all the time. But I think there's more to life, more to teaching than that. Thus, the irons in the fire that cause teaching to get in my way.

Some of those irons are working with a foreign-exchange program and taking students to Europe and journalism conferences. These activities keep me busier than I probably should be. But I believe they bring experience and ideas that enhance my teaching, too.

Seeing students from around the world get off the plane at your local airport or just arrive in New York to spend a year experiencing an academic year is invigorating. These young people who are adventure-some enough to leave their families to learn about another country and culture offer a great deal of hope for the future, I think.

It's not always that way in the Midwest. I know people in southern Illinois who don't like to cross north of Interstate 70 and who think Chicago should be a state all by itself, completely separated from Illinois. And provincial attitudes are found everywhere. When people get out and spend some time with the people of an area—not just the interstate hotels and amusement parks—those kind of ideas and attitudes often disappear.

American kids don't like to go away during high school in quite the same way their counterparts from around the world do. Obviously, everybody thinks the United States is the place to be in your teens.

"I want to spend a year or a semester in Europe when I'm in college," one female high school student told me when I was talking with her about spending a year there now. "There's too much going on while you're in high school to miss it."

If only I could have had the opportunity to miss some of it, I thought. That kind of absenteeism might have been good for me.

It's rather disheartening now to see American students eating at a McDonald's on the Champs-Elysees in Paris when they could be eating an authentic French dish, something a bit different than the usual fast food they get at home.

But the kids do get to travel, meet other people and see other cultures. It's not a quantum leap of the imagination to believe they'll want to continue to travel and expand their experiences as adults that might result in a broadening of understanding and acceptance of people different from themselves. No imaginary lines of bigotry and cultural bias would be as likely to exist, either.

Journalism conferences in Washington, D.C., have much the same effect, bringing student journalists together in the nation's capital to see what it's like to cover the government and all that happens in the most influential city in the world. These kids learn tolerance by experiencing the differences they've avoided before.

I laughed heartily a few years ago when a very liberal Democratic young student came back to me after a day on Capitol Hill and told about meeting conservative Republican South Carolina Senator Jesse Helms on the elevator down to the underground small trains. Helms had taken the young man on the "Members Only" train to the senate building and talked with him all the while.

So as long as I see the benefit of these irons, I'll continue to keep them in the fire. Know anybody who'd like a foreign-exchange student this year, a student who wants to go spend a year or a summer in another country, someone who wants to place and supervise exchange students spending an academic year in America, a student who wants to go to a journalism conference or anyone who wants to take a short trip to another country?

If you do, give me a call at 217 384-5820 or drop me a line. Besides infrequent publications of Tales, this column and a book project now and then, the above is what the Tales project is up to these days. I'd like to keep at it for a while longer and teach, too. It all seems compatible.



# Mail's Here

## Readers offer letters of support

I have found, in checking my old *Tales*, I have four missing. I would like to have them. The issues are Nos. 8, 13, 14 and 23.

I have lived all my married life, which is 60 years, six miles south of Bellair in the White Oak community. I'm proud of my collection (of *Tales*). Thank you.

— MILDRED McCLEAVE  
OBLONG, IL

We received the Fall/Winter 1994 issue of *Tales* with our daily paper and enjoyed each article. (We) especially enjoyed "Thunder on the Embarras." So glad to see it being cleaned up.

— HAZEL FRITCHIE  
PALESTINE, IL

Enclosed is a small contribution to *Tales*. We really enjoy the paper and hope you can continue with it.

— DEBRA LINGAFELTER  
WILLOW HILL, IL

## Another tale of an honest person

While reading the episode of your (Ray Elliott's) lost billfold, I kept thinking of the time I lost mine. So at the end of the article when you asked for similar experiences, I thought I would just submit mine.

Since I keep a daily diary, I know this happened on April 25, 1986. We, being farmers, were extremely busy planting corn. The night before, my husband had asked me to make a hurried trip to the Rural King store in Mattoon for a sprayer part. I was to rush back without any other shopping around. We live near Hidalgo, which is about 40 miles from there. I was going through Toledo and thought surely I could take time to stop at Jim's Greenhouse there and get some plants for my garden on my way up there. That I did do.

On to Mattoon I went. When I went to write a check for the sprayer part, I realized I had left my purse containing the checkbook at Jim's Greenhouse. I had walked out of there with my plants and billfold only. (I often carry just a billfold—hate a purse.) Since I had quite a lot of cash in my billfold, I just paid

cash since it was a small but important sprayer piece.

Rural King usually has a big pot of coffee handy for employees and customers. So I got myself a cupful to sip on my trip home. But I knew I had to stop at the greenhouse to get my purse. When I got out of the car there, I realized I had no billfold. Of course, the nice people there knew I had left my purse and had it in safe keeping.

I knew I couldn't take time to go looking for the billfold then, so I came home, debating what I should do first. I called the Rural King store. They looked and inquired, but there was no trace of my billfold. After mentally tracing my steps, I decided I had probably put it on top of the car to open the door and get my hot cup of coffee to where I could drive, drink and not spill it. But where had it fallen off if that was so?

About that time, my daughter-in-law drove in, and I told her it looked like I had lost my billfold full of valuable papers and quite a bit of cash all over a cup of coffee to be enjoyed on the way home. We both had to laugh when she said, "Well, Mary, don't you know that you aren't supposed to have any enjoyment during planting time?" (Any farmers and wives understand that.)

While I was standing in the kitchen, dreading to tell my husband of my stupidity and wondering what to do next, the phone rang. A strange man's voice said, "Is this Mary Shull?" I said, "Yes, it is." "Would you like to take me out for a steak dinner and pay the bill?" he said next. "Oh, you found my billfold," was my exclamation. This man and his son had left the Rural King store to return to their farm near Humbolt. He told his son to stop the truck because he thought there was a billfold on the highway.

As it was, I knew my aunt and uncle in Mattoon were coming down that weekend. So I told him I would call them to pick it up and save me a long trip. When I talked to my Aunt Midge, I said to be sure and give him \$10 out of my billfold. That she did, and all was well.

Yes, there are still honest people in the world. They are certainly appreciated, too.

— MARY SHULL  
HIDALGO, IL

# Project Get Along replies keep coming

The following Project Get Along responses were recently received from Richard Bruns of Burges High School in El Paso, Texas.

## We can all get along if ...

... we start to understand each other. Misunderstanding is a major reason for hatred in today's world. I think that is the reason why people don't get along because they don't take the time to get to know each other. People tend to just assume things about others and don't try to understand due to the power of stereotypes.

— Jaime, 18

... we get together and form activities shows to go to. That way, we will all have fun and we'll forget about violence and the hatred.

— Mike, 17

... everyone would communicate in the same manner, if there would be no discriminating against anyone's race or color. Also, if there were more friendly people that would make peace. Mainly, though, I think we can all get along if everyone would mind their own business and stick to themselves.

— Michelle, 17

... we would be nice and considerate to other people, if people would just treat people the way we would like to be treated. But just imagine if the whole world would get along—it would be BORING! We all need a little bit of feeling mad towards another. That way the actions of competition and revenge would come into play. I just know while there is competition, there will be no peace. So that day will never come.

— Luis, 17

... guys would stop being such big jerks, especially the ones that break up with their girlfriends in a damn NOTE!

— Veronica, 18

... people would stop being racist. There are too many issues in our world today about racial hate and articles about the Ku Klux Klan. These people in the KKK need to get a life and learn not to hate other races of people because it affects their children's attitude

toward other ethnic groups. Then their children will be more like their parents and hate everybody except for white people. I wish all the members of the Ku Klux Klan would realize that they are part of the cause that is breaking up the United States. Why do these people hate other ethnic groups?

— Vincent, 17

... racism around the world would stop; if minority groups would be accepted for who they are, not by how much income they make; if, for once, an African-American could go down a white neighborhood without one white person thinking he was a nigger instead of an African-American. The world would have to get rid of Nazis, the KKK and other such hatred groups. The world would need to pull together to solve each other's problem. The main point would be to stop the violence that connects with racism. For example, you can get shot just for wearing a certain kind of clothing—that also needs to stop.

— Daniel, 17

... we understand that we must work together in achieving a common goal. Anything else is futile.

— Richard, 35

... we try to put our differences behind us. Of course, I think that is impossible. For one, diversity is what makes our society, but when a group or an individual puts too much emphasis on diverse qualities, it makes other break out in hate and deception. For example, the war going on in Bosnia is and was caused by diversities, those being religion.

— Leah, 17

... people communicate. Fights and arguments evolve because people mix up message and misunderstand each other. When friends get upset with one another, they often close themselves off and do not talk it out. Friendships last longer with proper communication. The same goes for countries. If governments could communicate in conferences and talk out their differences, then wars could be avoided. It is amazing the way something as simple as communication can save lives, money and hurt feelings. Conversation is a

healthy alternative to physical battle and should be used in every situation. Talking should take place in areas as simple as sibling rivalry and as complex as national disagreements.

— Bryanna, 18

... everyone would look at people's inner-person instead of what appears of a person's outer shell. If we all did this, there would be no racism. This is one of the greater problems that we have in the world today. It is sad that this is a deciding factor in whether or not we like a person, but it is. We must find a way to get past this problem.

— RaShawn, 18

... people would just let people do their own thing. Then everyone could have a great big kickback with a couple of drinks and laughs without disputing their differences. This isn't too much, considering you wouldn't have to give any respect to those whom you do not feel worthy, you would just go on marching to your own tune. Then those people with low self-esteem that feel that they have to do stupid stuff for attention will stop because everyone will be busy minding their own business. There would be no judging. The world would be pretty cool. Everything would seem normal, nobody would be ostracized; therefore we wouldn't be producing anymore dysfunctional people.

— Vanessa, 17

... we stopped using violence to try and fix certain situations. If everyone could just talk about it and understand each other, then we wouldn't have to worry about anything. If we only took the time to put ourselves in other people's shoes, then maybe, just maybe, we could understand what the other person was going through.

— Robert, 17

... we wouldn't carry so much anger against other people. All the hate in the world isn't getting us anywhere. Putting a smile in everyone's face may bring more friendship along, instead of always judging people by the outside instead of the inside. We can all get along with a simple "hi."

— Irasema, 17





Villa Grove, Illinois

Photo by Bill Lyons

## Did You Know...

### Former Leaf exec joins Tales board

New Tales Community Advisory Board member James A. Hanlon is now back in the candy business after his recent retirement as former North America chairman for Leaf, Inc., which now owns the Heath candy bar made in Robinson, Illinois.

Hanlon has teamed up with two executives of Harmony Foods to acquire the Santa Cruz, Calif.-based company. He is chairman, president and CEO of the firm which makes trail mixes, gummy bears, jelly beans and other candies.

### OshKosh B'Gosh locates oldest pair of overalls

In celebration of its 100th anniversary, OshKosh B'Gosh launched a search for its oldest pair of bib overalls in January 1995. Hundreds of entries poured in from nearly every state, and the average reported bib age was 40-50 years old.

OshKosh B'Gosh has identified the overalls historian researchers say may actually be the company's first children's bib overall. Clyde Mehder, a Wisconsin native now retired in Sarasota, Fla., responded to the call for entries with a pair of child-sized bibs that were designed in 1901 by his uncle, Louis Mehder, who was a tailor for the original OshKosh B'Gosh company, Jenkins & Clark. In an era when the company's sole focus was adult workwear, the overalls, designed as a junior version of the workwear garment, were a special gift to the Mehder family by Clyde's uncle.

"The bibs were made as a baby gift for my older sister, Alice," said 89-year-old Clyde. "After Alice outgrew the bibs, they were handed down first to me and then to eight more Mehder children. These bibs have been through three generations of Mehders, and we think that they can still hold up for another generation or two."

In addition to Mehder, nine finalists with adult and children's overalls dating before 1930 were



Clyde Mehder and his old bibs

recognized with Bronze Bib Awards of \$100. Mehder was honored at the 100th anniversary celebration in OshKosh, Wis., last summer and was presented with a \$1,000 grand prize.

The following are some letter excerpts from people who had anecdotes to go along with their entries in the search:

"Grand is the man wearing OshKosh B'Gosh! My husband wore them all the days of our lives together. Our first date was

in 1936 ... and he was the grandest, handsomest man ever in the world in his white shirt, white shoes and crisp, deep blue bib overalls. ... This sparked such treasured memories."

— Marion, Ill.

"This pair of overalls represented a 'memory item' from my grandfather's estate. My grandfather would wear these out to the farm to help my dad with chores and jobs such as haymaking. I remember he never closed the side openings during the summer. 'Cool,' I thought. 'Disgusting,' said my mother."

— Cedar Falls, Iowa

### Cable channel boosts history education

The History Channel, a relatively new cable channel that features historical documentaries, movies and mini-series, has established affiliations with three national organizations to promote historical education to students throughout this school year.

Together with Cable in the Classroom, KIDSNET and the

National History Day Organization, these groups have launched "History for Kids and Teens Too!"—a grassroots effort promoting education in communities all across the country. Following a June 1995 launch, the campaign included a summer-long screening of The History Channel's "History For Kids" programming at libraries across the country where The History Channel was already available. The programs included "Year By Year For Kids," the animated "Christopher Columbus," "Once Upon a Time ... The Americas" and "Once Upon a Time ... The Discoverers."

The History Channel Classroom Initiative that began last fall is a package of special lesson plans for schools that accompanied programs on the air. The History Channel also has sponsored a series of grants and scholarships for students in recognition of achievement in history education.



# The Journey of a FREEDOM RIDER

By Kami Blackwell

**W**ork for the American dream" is the advice Ben Cox gives to his students. He is Urbana High School's first and only African-American history teacher.

Cox was born in Whiteville, Tenn., and moved to Kankakee at the age of 5. His first encounters with racism occurred in Tennessee.

"Blacks had to get off the sidewalk to let white people pass," he said. "We couldn't look them straight in the eye. We had to say 'ya sir,' 'no, sir.'"

"Kankakee had segregated public facilities," he continued. "We had to go in the back door of restaurants and take the food out to eat or sit in the kitchen and eat."

Life was rough, and as the seventh of 16 children, he dropped out of high school in order to go to work and help his mother and father pay the bills. However, after a year and a half, he went back to graduate from high school and head on to North Carolina in 1951 to attend college.

"Everything was segregated there," Cox said matter of factly. "The restaurants, drinking fountains, restrooms, Howard Johnson's, the buses (blacks had to sit in the back), libraries, churches, newspapers—they were all segregated. Blacks even had a separate newspaper called Colored News."

Cox left North Carolina to go to a seminary school in Washington, D.C. After graduating, he decided to head south and pastor a church. It was about this time that he started getting involved in the organized civil rights movement.

First he began traveling for the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). He then became field secretary for CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality).

Cox worked with young people and taught them that it

was important to control their anger and to impress people by how well-mannered they could be. He taught them that they had to take in what they dished out in order to win and influence people.

His work put him in the ranks of people like John Lewis (a fellow Freedom Rider), Medgar Evers and even Martin Luther King Jr. Cox met King several times, the first of which was at Cox's graduation from Howard University in 1967. King was impressed with Cox's teachings on the non-violent approach to achieving social change.

"We met in High Point, N.C., with some black leaders to discuss keeping the civil rights movement non-violent," Cox said. "He really taught us about non-violent methods."

Cox was "elated" with meeting King "because, in his presence, you felt humble because he was a humble person. He made you feel at ease. You would never know that he had his doctorate degree or the Nobel Peace Prize. I'd like to say that in his presence you felt like

butter melting on a hot piece of toast."

Cox achieved his own notoriety within the civil rights movement when he and 12 other "Freedom Riders" (six blacks and seven whites) rode in two buses (one Greyhound and one Trailways) from Washington, D.C., on May 4, 1961, bound for New Orleans. Along the way, the group stopped at bus terminals and used restrooms and waiting areas designated for the other race to test the system of segregation. The group did manage to peaceably block some whites-only trains for two weeks.

Sometimes they went into public meetings and told local

townspeople why they were riding to try and raise money for the trip.

But the bus never made it to New Orleans. The Greyhound bus was burned in Anniston, Ala., and the others were beaten off of the Trailways bus in Birmingham. No other bus driver wanted to drive the group to New Orleans after that.

After seeing on television what the Freedom Riders endured, President John Kennedy asked them to end their ride. When they refused, he sent a plane to Birmingham to fly them to their destination.

Freedom Rider John Lewis when to Nashville from New

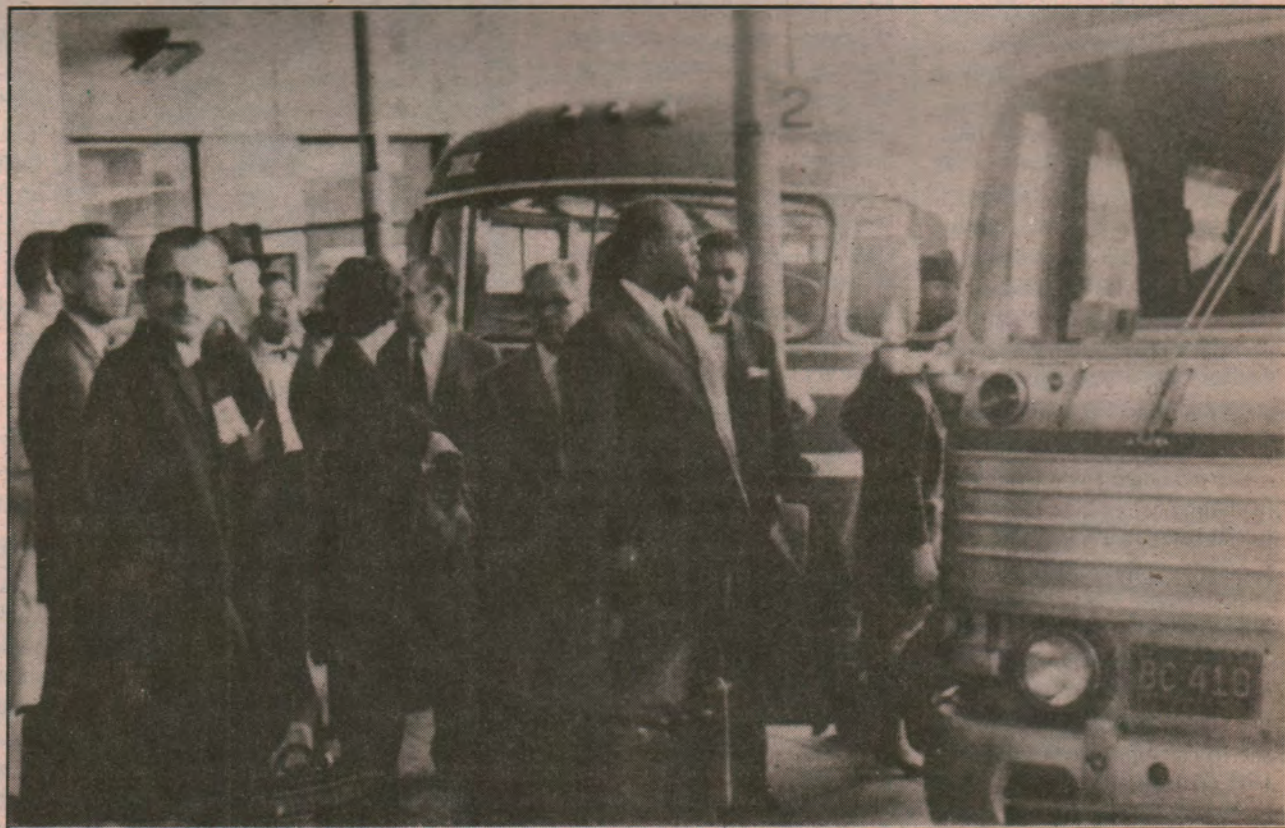
Orleans and organized a student group to go back to Birmingham and continue the ride where it left off. They got as far as Jackson, Miss., when 300 of the students were arrested bus by bus.

Their efforts were not made in vain, however. By October 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission ended all segregated public travel.

Cox participated in many more sit-ins and subsequently was arrested at Howard Johnson's, Hardees, parks and even in cemeteries. In all, he was arrested 17 times and has had a case brought before the Supreme Court.

In that instance, Cox was assigned to work in Baton Rouge, La., in 1961 to teach the students at Southern University how to conduct sit-ins, demonstrate, remain non-violent and set their minds on higher goals instead of just social activities.

One day, Cox sent some of the students downtown to test a



The Freedom Riders, including Ben Cox, prepare to board buses to ride through the segregated South.



# The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

— Martin Luther King Jr.

segregated lunch counter. All but one was arrested. The following day was rainy, but Cox and the students organized a silent march in downtown Baton Rouge to protest the arrests.

"We got downtown," he said, "and I showed to the high sheriff an order of service we were going to conduct outside the courthouse."

The sheriff told Cox it was against the law for the protesters to stand on the same side of the street as the courthouse but that they could go across the street. The students made a pledge to the flag, although there was none flying because of the rain, and started their silent march.

"After our 18- to 20-minute celebration on camera, I looked at my watch and said, 'Well, you know it's lunch time. I think we'll go eat at those lunch counters.'

"When I said that, the deputy's finger kicked off the tear gas canister. Everyone thought it was the high sheriff's signal to tear gas us. They had dogs and night sticks, and when that first tear canister went off, it was terrible because no one can inhale that stuff."

Everyone started to run. Cox had six men with him to help protect him from the dogs. The police couldn't grab him, so they rolled canisters down the sidewalk. One hit Cox and fractured his ankle. His protectors managed to drive him off to the hospital.

"The doctor made me swear I would not bring him in the court as a witness before he waited on me, and when the white nurse got ready to touch me, he said 'Don't touch that nigger before you put some gloves on.'

"So those were shocking things," Cox said.

Later that evening, some blacks were having a public rally in a Baptist church when the high sheriff came in and arrested Cox in the pulpit. He faced six charges, including disturbing the peace, failure to obey a police

officer and insurrection.

"They took me to jail, and they locked me up in solitary confinement for 38 days before they let me go back to the cell block with the others," he said. "They were afraid if I went back to the cell block I would organize a protest back there."

Cox was convicted in the local court, the district court and the regional court until the case made its way to the Supreme Court on Dec. 14, 1964. The court didn't reach its decision until Jan. 18, 1965. He won the Cox vs. Louisiana case by one vote. The case is widely considered to be a landmark decision.

That march at Southern University closely resembled a larger, more famous march in which Cox also participated—the Selma, Ala., march.

"John Lewis and Rev. Williams marched 700 people trying to get from Selma to Montgomery," Cox said. "Before they could cross the bridge, the police tear gassed them, ran horses over them, pushed with night sticks, beat them something terrible."

"That march led President Johnson to sign the Voter's Rights Bill that followed in August. Because of that, there are 11,000 black men and women elected to public office today."

Although no longer professionally involved in the civil rights movement, Cox is a life member of the NAACP and still works to combat violence and drugs in the Champaign-Urbana area.

Of the new NAACP president, Myrlie Evers, Cox said, "I feel somewhat related to her. On June 12, 1963, when her husband was assassinated, I was supposed to have been assassinated that same night in Baton Rouge, La. A man named Bernard Lafayette was to have been assassinated in Selma, Ala."

Apparently while a mob was beating Lafayette, a group of blacks rescued him. The FBI



A firebomb hurled through a broken window forces the Freedom Riders off the bus outside Anniston, Ala. Ten people were treated for smoke inhalation.

interviewed him about the incident the next day and told him that it was a tri-state conspiracy.

"The reason they didn't get to me was my boss then shipped me to Chicago," Cox said. "He hoped to get the blacks organized for the famous march on Washington on Aug. 28. So I missed my funeral, so to speak. Every June 12, I call that my funeral day."

After a lifetime of working for civil rights, Cox continues to teach and advise, not just students in a history class but people of all ages.

"It takes people of all races to work together in harmony in a non-violent way to bring about change," he said. "The only way to bring about change in any nation is through cooperation of all people. And you must remain non-violent because if you become violent, the opposition

will immediately kill or destroy you."

*Kami Blackwell is a student at Urbana High School. Reprinted with permission from The Echo, the UHS student newspaper.*

## Non-violence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek.

— Martin Luther King Jr.



# a Collector's Fantasy

By Lloyd Askew

**T**he story started a couple of years ago when my wife, Mary Sue, commented about wanting to find an old Singer treadle sewing machine like her mother used many years ago. Mary Sue thought it would make a nice decoration for our den.

I began a search of antique shops during my business travels around the country. With our 30th wedding anniversary approaching, a sewing machine became my answer for an appropriate gift for Mary Sue.

During a weekend visiting friends in Independence, Mo., we found a peculiar Wilcox & Gibbs. This was my first exposure to what I later learned is a rather common sewing machine that changed very little from its introduction in 1857 until production ceased in about 1940. But it was a little too expensive for my taste and knowledge at that point.

A few days and many antique shops later, I found my first purchase in Charlotte, N.C. Not only did I buy a Singer, but I had an additional Singer head and a Franklin treadle machine shipped to my home in California. Little did Mary Sue know of the madness that was about to evolve because of her innocent comment about having a Singer treadle for the den.

I began to search for books and information about wood restoration and old sewing machines. I discovered the name of Jim Slaten, the Singer Museum in Oakland, Calif., and Jim's book, *Antique Sewing Machines*. I have subsequently purchased a few hundred dollars worth of other books, including a first-edition of *A Capitalist Romance* by Ruth Brandon. This book is best described in the first few lines from the book cover: "This captivating biography and social history tells the rags-to-riches story of a self-made man who epitomized the great American dream while rambunctiously flouting its conventions. Issac

Merritt Singer, the sewing machine magnate, had a penchant for invention, a fondness for extravagant living, and an unblushing penchant for notoriety." It is a great book to read and appreciate the era of the sewing machine development.

This was about the time when I met Walter Hunt in nearby Santa Ana, where he had been in the sewing machine sales and repair business for many years as Wheeler Sewing Machine Co. He was kind enough to show me a few machines from his collection and supply a bobbin cover for the Singer, belts and some all-important sewing machine oil.

By the end of April, I had a few books and a menagerie of machines about 70 years old. In May, I found my first German portable machine inlaid with mother-of-pearl in a Las Vegas antique shop. Marvin Tabic of

Tabic's Sewing Machines in Las Vegas introduced me to ISMACS, the International Sewing Machine Collectors' Society. He also showed me his prized Moldacot that was built in either England or Germany in about 1886.

During a visit with friends in Pleasanton, Calif., over the Memorial Day weekend, I found my first fiddle-base Singer portable that was built around 1890. By this time it was apparent that my addiction was serious. By June, I had about a dozen machines and three toy sewing machines. I also began collecting sewing machine-related oil cans, oil bottles, sewing thread displays and various wooden accessory boxes. The precision machining, fine woodwork, highly decorated bright work and history related to the Industrial Revolution was captivating.

During a business trip in

Indiana, I found a 1910 Singer toy in the original box to add to the collection. During another business trip in July, I arranged for a brief stop-over in Dallas/Fort Worth to look up Frank Smith at his Sewing Machine Museum. Frank has a terrific collection with some of his machines dating back to the mid-1850s.

I then acquired a Wheeler & Wilson, a GE Sewhandy, a Muller No. 1 and a few more accessories. Then I found another Wheeler & Wilson that was built in 1867. I also discovered the interesting Singer Featherweight model 221. These models, first built in 1934 and through the 1960s, are still popular with quiltmakers. A few of the 221s have found their way into my collection.

In August, Mary Sue and I flew to New England for a short vacation and, as usual, found our

way to a few antique shops in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. We found a Howe head that was more than 130 years old and had apparently been exposed to the outdoors. However, for \$8 it was quite nice and found its way into our rental car. At our last stop of the day in Conway, N.H., I met Richard Plush at his antique shop. I asked if he ever ran into any sewing machines, and he indicated he knew of a barn where there were about 80 old sewing machines. The term "fantasy" came to mind. I left my card, and Richard said, "Perhaps in the fall I can contact the owners of the barn."

In September, I learned that I was going to be in New York on business and contacted Richard Plush about visiting the collection he had mentioned a couple months prior. He had contacted the owners and offered to take me to Maine, where the collection was located.

I found my way to Conway, and Richard and I drove through some beautiful countryside into Maine and finally arrived at the 1835 farmhouse and barn. Richard introduced me to Ken Doffing, a retired orthopedic surgeon, in front of the beautifully restored old barn, and we chatted for what seemed to be two hours. Ken and John Dauteuil had been working for several years on restoring the farmhouse, barn and grounds. They had done a picture-perfect job.

Ken explained that about 20 years ago, Earl Chamberlain died and left the farm and his collection to his widow, who then sold the farm to Ken and John and willed the sewing machines to Ken before she died about six years ago.

We walked into the ground level of the barn and no sewing machines were to be seen. The

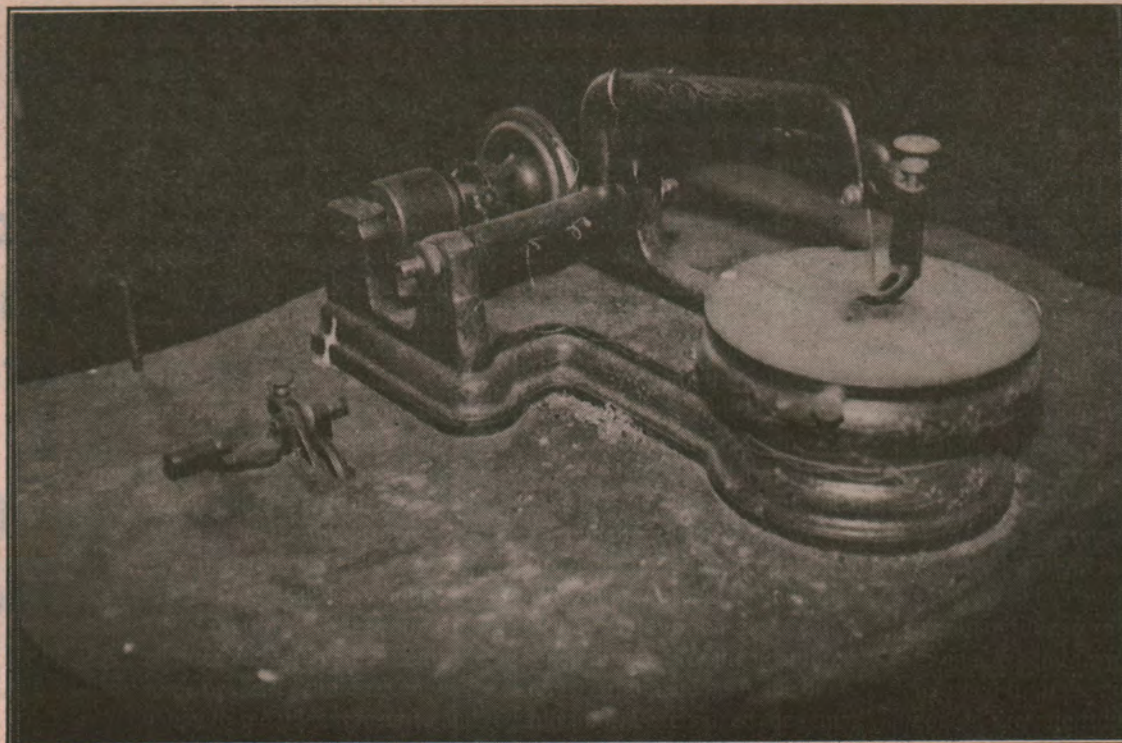


Photo by Lloyd Askew

A Florence is among the treasures that were discovered in the New England barn.



# Dr's

## A signpost of the Industrial Revolution sparks an interest



Photo by Ray Elliott

second floor above us was made of wood about two inches thick and had slots of about two inches between the boards to allow air to circulate for drying seed corn over the past 160 years. For several decades it appeared that the barn had been used for storage of various farm equipment and old household furnishings.

There were three or four treadles pretty well intact and very dusty on the second floor. These machines were probably vintage 1920. There was another slotted floor on the third level of the barn. When we climbed the stairs to that level, only a collector could understand the thrill of looking about and seeing perhaps 30 sewing machines dating back to the 1850s. I immediately recognized a Florence built in 1867, an American Button Hole Overseaming, which was built in about 1875, several Singers dating back to the 1860s, a Weed from 1875, several Wheeler & Wilsons, some Davis Vertical Feed machines, and a couple of Howes from the 1860s.

The fourth floor, which was like an attic, was filled with many treadle base side irons leaning against the roof, several early Singers and other machines that I could not identify. The cleaning and restoration hours required to bring them back to reasonable condition for display was almost impossible to estimate; however, that never entered my mind. Many had severe rust, but some appeared to require just some cleaning and TLC.

I asked Ken if it would be OK if I returned to take some pictures and attempt to identify some of the machines. Ken was happy to see my enthusiasm and readily agreed. As Richard and I drove back to Conway, I said, "It

was a pity that there were no Grover & Bakers to be seen in the barn." I stopped by a hardware store and bought a flashlight, batteries and some cleaner so I might be able to read some of the brands and serial numbers.

When I returned to the Old Chamberlain Farm, I took notes with each camera shot. I discovered two machines I wasn't able to identify. After a bit of cleaning, and to my surprise, was the Grover & Baker logo on both of them and serial numbers dating them to 1864. There was also a Home Shuttle with the owners manual dating back to about 1870 and two Franklin heads of about the same vintage.

After several rolls of film to document this fantasy, I met with Ken outside the barn for negotiations. I made what I thought was a fair offer for 30 of the machines, and after perhaps five seconds, he agreed. Ken agreed to hold the machines until the following spring when the roads again became passable.

Back home in California, the task of retrieving the machines from Maine loomed before me. I didn't think that I could wait for the weather to clear in the spring and began plotting a course to perhaps go back East during the Thanksgiving holiday. My plan was to fly to Boston, rent a truck, load it, and with the help of a friend, drive straight through (3,200 miles) to Anaheim.

On Nov. 18, Mary Sue's cousin, Ray, and I met in Chicago for our flight to Boston. We drove through blinding rain from Boston to Portland, Maine, that Friday night for our last night's sleep in a bed for the next three days. Bright and early the next morning, I exchanged the rental car for an Isuzu turbo-charged, 15-foot enclosed truck. We drove

to the Old Chamberlain Farm, and I introduced Ray to Ken and John. A few hours later, the truck was duly loaded, and John drove us to the cemetery where the Chamberlains were laid to rest. He then drove us to a house to meet Betsy, the Chamberlains' unofficially adopted daughter. Betsy, 84, recalled playing as a child in the old barn with Mr. Chamberlain's old sewing machines. It was enlightening and refreshing to experience a few brief moments in the lives of these wonderful people in this rural New England community.

We bid Ken and John farewell and left at 1 p.m. on our adventure. Our first stop, other than for fuel and food, was in Cincinnati, where my friend had another sewing machine ready for the trip West. The weather was pretty kind to us until we arrived in central Missouri, where we drove through driving rain and severe winds. We were equipped with a CB radio, a cellular phone, a computer and a radar detector. That little four-cylinder diesel motor could maintain 75 miles per hour on flat ground. On hills, we rarely moved less than 52 miles per hour. We almost ran out of fuel at some ungodly hour in Oklahoma City. Arizona wasn't too bad; however, fatigue was settling in. We finally made it to Anaheim at 10:20 p.m., just 60 hours and 20 minutes after leaving Maine.

The next morning, we had some breakfast, shared our story with Mary Sue and then took Ray to catch his flight back to Chicago so he could be home in plenty of time to enjoy Thanksgiving. When Mary Sue and I returned from the airport, I couldn't refrain from opening the truck just to look at my prizes. A friend stopped by, and one thing

Left: Askew loading his new purchases. Immediately Below: A Singer Traverse Shuttle Bottom: An American Buttonhole Overseaming

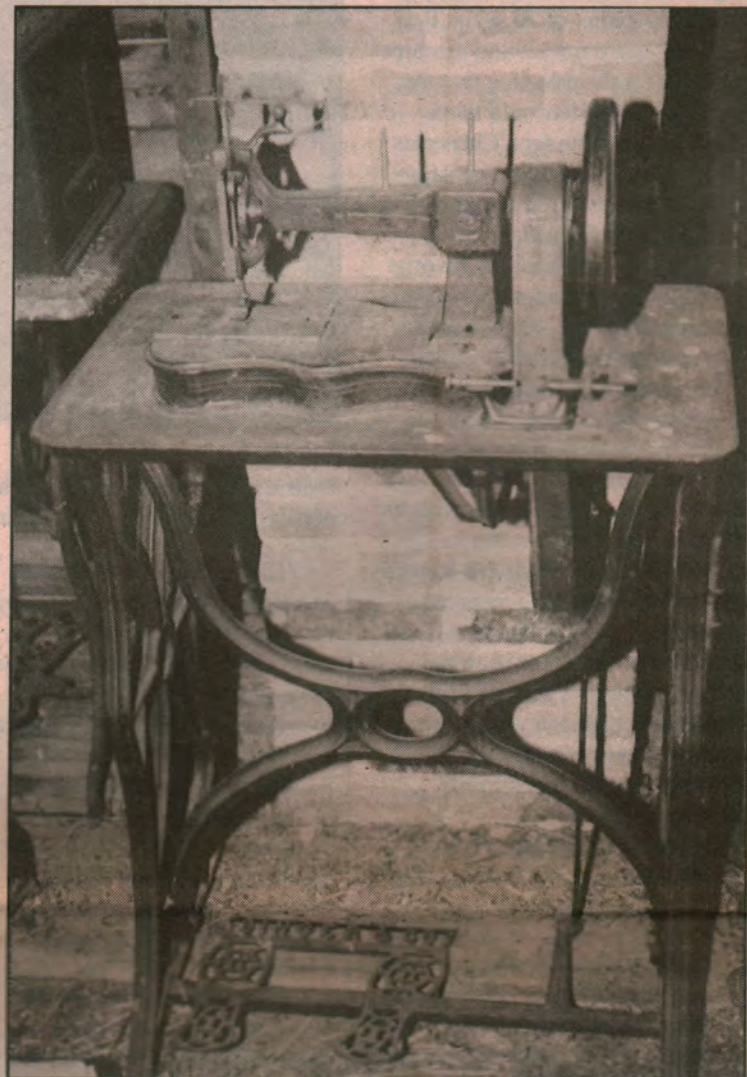


Photo by Lloyd Askew

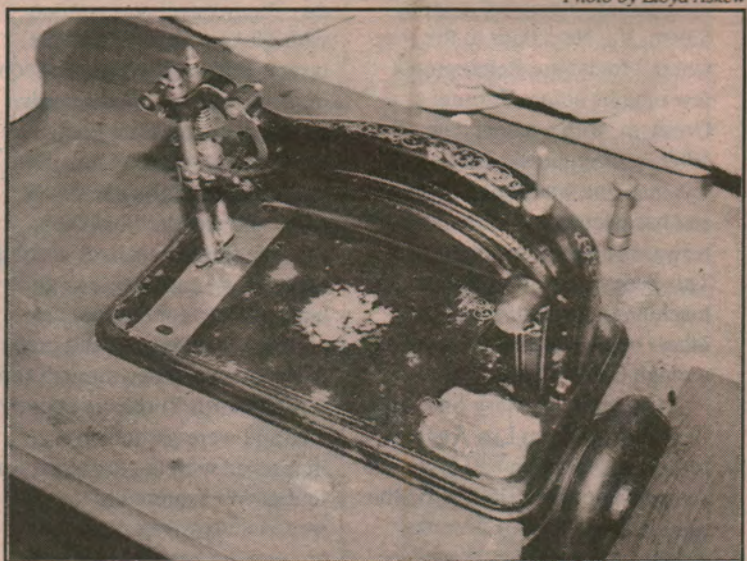


Photo by Lloyd Askew

led to another. Before dark, the truck was empty and the spot in the garage where Mary Sue's car had been was filled with sewing machines.

I was then back to work, which is a necessity to support my habit. After working for 22 years at ArmorAll Products, I am committed to at least another eight or 10 years before the sewing machines completely

consume me. In December, I was near Columbia, S.C., where I visited Carter Bays, who wrote *The Encyclopedia of Early American Sewing Machines*, and saw his collection. I also stopped in Salem, Va., where I found an 1870s Remington treadle just before catching a flight for Atlanta. The Christmas holidays

Continued on page 10



# Collector

Continued from page 9

allowed for some time to get it presentable and displayed in the bathtub of our front bathroom. Mary Sue insists that it be removed when she bathes our granddaughters.

My barber of 20 years, Ron, having heard my sewing machine stories for the past nine months, thought his wife would like a sewing machine for a Christmas gift. I thought he might be happy with a modest \$100 portable. He became fascinated with my collection and chose my favorite TSMs (toy sewing machine), a Singer from the '40s in a miniature steamer trunk. Ron called Christmas Day to thank us and said his wife, Edna, shed more than a few tears of joy when she opened her gift.

February was hectic with the planning of our first trip to Britain and the ISMACS convention in London. We received a call from Graham Forsdyke, who wanted to welcome us to the convention and give us further details. I had read with relish each ISMACS News and felt I knew Graham and his wife, Maggie.

A March business trip to Flint, Mich., allowed me a visit to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn. It has one of the finest displays of old sewing machines that I have seen or heard about. The museum is well planned and covers the Industrial Revolution era extensively. The trip also included an unplanned stop in Salem, Va. Next door to the shop where I found the Remington a few months before, I found a Gresham, with a patent date of 1867. I subsequently learned that this machine was built in England and has a lever that allows forward and reverse stitching. This became my third British machine in the collection, the others being a miniature Ideal and a rough Caldo TSM.

On April 20, Mary Sue and I flew nonstop from Los Angeles to London. Graham had given me some advice about driving on the right side of the road from the wrong side of the car; however, two things were difficult to master. First the turn signal control is on the wrong side of the steering wheel, and I found myself turning on the windshield wipers when I intended to turn or change lanes. The second was the surprise on the motorways of being passed by Peugeots at 95 miles per hour. After getting very lost in Leeds, we found our way to Harrogate for the ISMACS convention.



Photo by Lloyd Askew

Outside the barn at the Old Chamberlain Farm in Maine, the rental truck waits to be loaded with nearly 30 antique sewing machines.

The accommodations were excellent; however, we suspected that they simply forgot to leave wash cloths for the bathroom, and I was unable to locate the thermostat to control the temperature. I called the front desk to inquire and learned that wash cloths (or face flannels) are not supplied, and yes, the windows would suffice for a thermostat. We freshened up and went to the lobby to meet Graham and Maggie.

I immediately recognized them from pictures in the ISMACS News; however, Maggie's dog, Dizzy, stumped me. Dizzy travels everywhere with Maggie, and we became instant friends. We then met some of the most friendly and cordial people ever and were invited to Les Coley's watering hole, The Squinting Cat for some fish & chips and wonderful ale.

We found ourselves waking up at 3 a.m. and unable to go back to sleep for the first few nights. We recovered and drove to Fountains Abbey through some terrific North Yorkshire countryside and were particularly impressed with the dry stone wall fences. We returned to the Imperial Harrogate Saturday afternoon where ISMACS members were bringing in sewing machines of every size and shape for sale, display and an auction on Sunday. Only a fellow collector (certainly not Mary Sue) could imagine the thrill of meeting other collectors and seeing such a great display of machines dating back to the 1850s. Thanks to the efforts of Irene and Les Coley and Norma and Geoff Dickens, the entire convention was most enjoyable

and perfectly executed. Graham and Maggie were constantly sharing their great sense of humor and vast knowledge with everyone. The Coleys (after an exhaustive weekend) inviting us to their home for drinks and showing us their magnificent collection was the highlight of our stay in Harrogate.

On Monday morning, we drove through York and visited Yorkminster. We stayed that night in Edinburgh and drove the next morning to Clydebank. Graham and Maggie had arranged for a private tour of the Clydebank District Council Singer collection. At the turn of the century, Singer employed more than 1,000 people at Clydebank, and after the plant closed the machine collection was placed with the District Council.

We returned to Edinburgh to tour the beautiful city and stay one more night before continuing on to Chester, where we spent two nights at a lovely bed & breakfast. We found our way back to London on Friday and met Maggie on another specially arranged visit to the Science Museum collection.

Most of the flight home was spent reading my newly purchased back issues of ISMACS News and one of the remaining out-of-print issues of the Grace Rogers Cooper comprehensive book, *The Sewing Machine: Its Invention and Development*. We also started planning for this year's trip to the ISMACS convention. While Mary Sue doesn't have my affliction, yet she wouldn't miss the great fun and terrific people again this year.

I had to call Jim Slaten in Oakland to tell him about our trip

and my recent purchase of the Gresham. Before I knew what happened, he was offering me a Cookson, which is a British machine built in the late 1880s. When I flew to Oakland to meet Jim for the first time, I also bought an equally unique Beckwith that was built in 1875 in New York.

May was time to get back on the road for business, including stops in Louisville, Atlanta and Boston. I had been trying to reach Ken or John in Maine for several weeks to see if they would mind me coming back to see some of the 20 or so machines that were still left in the barn. I planned to go to the Brimfield, Mass., Spring Antique Show and Sale over the weekend and then stop by the Old Chamberlain Farm. Friday afternoon I once again tried to call Ken from the airport in Atlanta.

After a few rings, there was an answer, and I said, "Is this Ken or John?" I explained that I would like to stop by on Sunday if it was all right. There was a short hesitation, and then John said, "I have some bad news. We buried Ken last Saturday." I was unable to reply. John went on to say that Ken had contracted AIDS from a patient about six years ago and that the last few months had been very difficult. Finally, I told him that, under the circumstances, my request to stop by was out of the question. He said that I should proceed with the plan and that he would be happy to see me.

That flight from Atlanta to Boston was one of the longest and roughest that I remember. There were no delays, the plane was not crowded and the weather

was fine. Ken and I were the same the same age, and when we first met, I recall thinking how fortunate he was to be able to retire and do the things that gave him pleasure on that beautiful farm. When Ray and I picked up the machines last November, I remember the pride that both Ken and John had in showing us their 150-year-old home with the rough-hewn beams and granite fireplace.

The Brimfield antique show was so huge that after eight hours I was no longer able to walk, and there was still about a third more to see. There must have been 10 miles of display tables and booths with everything imaginable for sale. There was a terrific booth with several TSMs, including the first toy treadle (\$2,600) that I have seen. The antique show was all that I had expected, however, my mind returned to Ken and seeing John the next day.

This was my third visit to the Old Chamberlain Farm and each visit was distinctly different. The excitement and anticipation which was heightened by the dramatic fall New England colors in mid-October made the first visit almost intoxicating. The second visit with Ray, loading the truck, visiting with Betsy, stopping by the cemetery and facing the challenge of the trip West through the bare trees was unique. This visit with the trees beginning to have leaves caused me to consider what is really important in life and how I might encourage John through this rough time. We had a few cups of coffee, chatted with one of the neighbors who stopped by, and talked about Ken and his abbreviated career.

I had planned to write this story for several weeks but wasn't sure how to deal with the ending. I talked with John about dedicating my paltry literary efforts to Ken, and he agreed.

This story of one collector's fantasy is dedicated to Ken Doffing with gratitude for having met him and sharing just a few of his joys at the beautiful Old Chamberlain Farm.

Have an old sewing machine you'd like to part with?

Call  
Lloyd Askew  
(714) 772-8337



# Goin' cross-country to help a dream

By Ray Elliott

By the time he was only a few words into the conversation, I knew I was going to go. I just didn't know how. He wanted me to meet him in Chicago, fly on to Boston with him, drive a rental car to Portland, Maine, sleep for a few hours, exchange the car for a truck, take it to Brownfield, Maine, load up a number of antique sewing machines he'd stumbled across some months earlier and drive them to his home in Anaheim, California. Then I'd fly back to Illinois.

I told him I could only get two days and a weekend.

He said we could do it in four days, leaving from Chicago on Thursday evening and getting me back in there on Monday evening; he'd pay expenses and a few hundred on the side.

I ask him if he'd really pay someone to take a trip like that. My wife knew I'd go for nothing. I told her she could take our daughter and go visit family. The money could go for Jessica's college fund.

"So we'll all get something out of it?" my wife asked wryly.

I said of course.

At the airport, Lloyd upgraded my ticket to first class, I boarded and he reboarded a flight from Los Angeles to Boston. We had a drink and a filet mignon on the ground while the airplane waited for takeoff because of wet nasty weather on the East Coast. He filled me in on the great finds and buy he'd made on a barn full of sewing machine some former newspaper man who'd died in the early seventies had been buying and storing in his barn beginning in the late thirties or early forties.

I wasn't as excited as Lloyd was, but it was interesting.

Late Thursday night at the Logan Field, the Boston Airport, he tried to pay for the rental car with a credit card that had been stopped because he'd lost some cards in Miami a couple of weeks earlier.

"I wouldn't trust him either," I told the nervous young woman at the counter. "He looks dangerous to me. Probably a sewing machine thief."

Thief obviously isn't the correct word. He's a collector. Lloyd Askew travels around the country looking for sewing machines that were made in the last 150 or so years and are seeped in the settlement and development of the United States and Western Europe. The first time I saw him sitting on my front porch with an antique toy sewing machine on his lap, a screw driver and an oil can nearby and spend an hour working with the machine until it was back in working order, I was dumbfounded. He'd never struck me as somebody

who'd go gaga over sewing machines. Cars, yeah. But not sewing machines.

"What are you going to do with these machines after you get them restored and your house and garage are full?" I'd ask him several times.



I'd already heard that he was taking over guest bedrooms, spare rooms and the garage in his southern California home.

"Aww, I don't know," he'd always say. "I may open a museum, give them to a museum or some place where they can be on display. They're too valuable and too much a part of our history to let them go. They were such a factor in the Industrial Revolution because of the interchangeable parts and what the machines were able to do. And Singer introduced the time payment plans (to sell them) that we all use today. Right now, though, I'm just having a blast looking for them all over the country and finding them and restoring them. Makin' 'em pretty."

Even I was impressed with his find in that barn in rural Maine. What really intrigued me was what had possessed the old small-town newspaper man, Earl Chamberlain, to buy those old machines and pile them away in three floors of his barn. But I could almost see him smiling that someone was finally coming to take them away and get them back into shape so everyone could see another part of history kept intact.

For the better part of two hours, we picked and poked around the barn while Lloyd decided what to take and what to leave. He'd paid for the lot, so I thought we could just load them all and sort later. It soon came to me that he wanted to leave some behind so he'd have an excuse to come back again.

By a little after noon, we had nearly 30 machines and various heads and parts secured and covered in the back of the truck. With the tough schedule ahead of us, I was a bit anxious to get on the road. Not Lloyd. He wanted to visit with the people who owned the farm, visit the graveyard where

Chamberlain was buried and meet his relatives and neighbor.

The next 60 hours and twenty minutes blend together in my mind as the montage of Americana rolled by, and we met people all across the country. In Cincinnati, we stopped at

a Randy Somebody's house for another sewing machine. He was a fishing lure collector Lloyd had met on business.

Mile after mile rolled by. We amused ourselves with old stories, new stories, the CB radio and the cellular telephone. By the time the second morning rolled around, we looked rode hard and put away wet. We'd been through rain storms and one sunrise with another one not far away when we stopped for breakfast at a truck stop in Amarillo,

Texas.

Sleepy-eyed truck drivers sat hunched over after-breakfast coffee and cigarettes with felt cowboy hats pulled down over their eyes as protection against the glare of neon lights and the coming morning. Only the waitress seemed awake.

"What y'll goin' have this morning?" she asked, pencil poised above her pad.

"You got Egg Beaters?" Lloyd asked with a straight face. His cholesterol count was in the high 200s, he'd said earlier, as we continued our diet of greasy hamburgers and french fries or biscuits and gravy while explaining that he normally "eats healthy."

"Egg Beaters?" the waitress asked, echoing him. "Nope. Sure don't." "How 'bout sausage, eggs over easy, fried p'tatoes and coffee then?"

With those on-the-road meals fueling us and diesel fueling the truck, we rolled into southern California pretty much on schedule. Lloyd's adrenalin from his find and the trip kept him behind the wheel much of the time we moved westward. The evening traffic looked like an accident waiting to happen the closer we got to his house in Anaheim. And he drove us on in home safely.

After a shower, a couple of bowls of spiced lentil-barley soup Mary Sue had waiting for us and a beer or two, we went to bed. I woke in the middle of the night and didn't know where I was for a few seconds. And when I realized it, I got up and walked right into a table as I headed for the wall instead of the door. Metal, glass and other objects came crashing down, but nobody woke.

The next day, I flew back to Illinois. I'd been gone a little more than 100 hours and had been on both coasts, helping collect sewing machines.

# Lakers were Paris' boys of summer

By

Kathleen M. Stephens

The old days in Paris, Illinois, included many simple, yet satisfying activities. Although some of the exercises found in big cities for fun would not be found in this rural community, the residents here were quite happy with what they had. A wonderful lake was available for swimming, fishing, boating, picnics, family reunions and ice skating. In the 1950s, this was also the setting for a Minor League baseball team, the Paris Lakers.

The Lakers were a member of the Mississippi-Ohio Valley League, Class D—the bottom. Even if this town didn't have the highest-rated team in the country or even the league, Paris still took great pride in its boys.

There were three blacks on the team: Butch McCord, Quincy Smith and Harold "BeeBop" Gordon. Many people favored McCord as the team's MVP as he was the league's top batter with a .392 batting average. Other members of the team were George Case, Bill Savoree, Gene Brand, Doyle Chadwick, Jim Payola, Don McAndrews, Russ Gilmore, Jack DeRousse, Jim Turner, Glenn Brickey, Neil Maxq, Herb Heiser and a man called Milligan. A powerfully built man by the name of Jim Zapp would hit awesome home runs and served as an outfielder. The team's pitcher was Kenny Grubb, and the manager was Tom Sunkel.

Laker Stadium sat on the south side of what is now the west side of Twin Lakes Park.

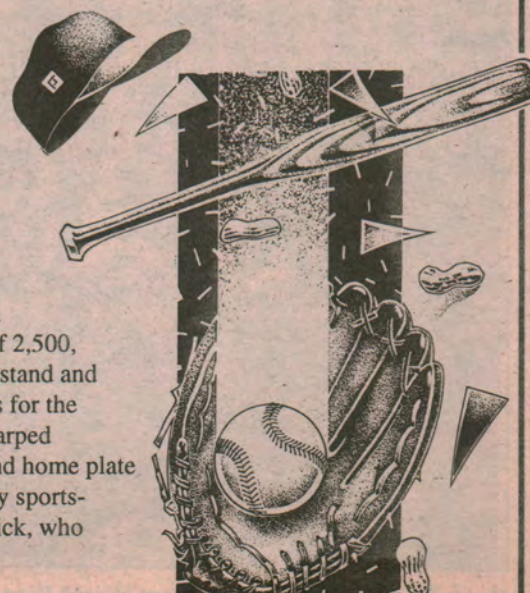
Part of the original stands, as well as the original field, can still be found in that very spot. Originally, the stadium was a neat, fenced square with unsheltered bleachers. It had a seating capacity of 2,500, plus a concession stand and even locker rooms for the players. A small tarped pressbox sat behind home plate for the town's only sportswriter, Bud Whittick, who

wrote from his wheelchair. The outfield fence served as quite a billboard, advertising everything from donuts to Cadillacs. The small concession stand served the usual fare for a ballpark: popcorn, cotton candy, hot dogs and, most importantly, peanuts.

One fan from the time recalls her box seat just in front of third base. Dr. Chittick and Skinny Ewing had boxes on either side; they were always faithful in attendance. With a small-town, county-fair atmosphere, the townspeople spoke of crops, business and babies as they waited for the players to appear for the pre-game warmup. Door prizes were given out at each game, such as a dozen donuts or a free meal at a downtown restaurant.

The game of baseball hasn't changed much over the years. The same thrill comes from seeing those awesome players. The excitement of a child (or adult) can still be seen when fans enter a ballpark for the first time. Although the menu has been added to with a few choice snacks and beverages, the memorable, "Peanuts! Popcorn!" is still a widely used phrase. In Paris, professional baseball made its mark and now has all but disappeared. The potential is still there, though, with those who play in Little League on the same diamond once used by the Paris Lakers Minor League baseball team.

*Stephens is a student in Anne Pool's American History class at Paris High School.*





# LONG TRIP HOME

## A Downed Airmen's Plight During World War II

By Mike Leichty

During the month of June 1995, Captain Scott O'Grady was the focus of interest of many Americans. The Air Force pilot was shot down by a Serb missile over Bosnia on June 2 during a NATO mission.

His six-day ordeal in hostile territory was retold countless times on the major television networks and in the nation's newspapers. His story of survival made him an American hero and earned the 29-year-old flyer a meeting with President Clinton.

This story isn't about Captain O'Grady, though, but rather concerns another young American flyer who was shot down in the same area of the globe. This Air Force sergeant demonstrated the same faith, strength and determination as Captain O'Grady in escaping capture by a ruthless enemy.

During the fall of 1944, Roger Richards completed his training and along with eight other members of a crew, left for an American air base in Foggia, Italy. Richards was the flight

engineer and top turret gunner on an American B-17 bomber, the legendary "Flying Fortress."

Many Casey, Illinois, area residents are acquainted with Richards, a soft-spoken father of eight who for many years operated Biggs and Richards, an area farm implement dealership. What few people realize is his incredible story that unfolds on Thanksgiving Day 1944.

The crew of nine joined the 15th Air Force in Italy at a makeshift airfield at Foggia. At this point in World War II, the Allies had the end of the war in sight.

At midnight, Richards' aircraft left on an unescorted mission to Linz, Austria. The target was a ball-bearing factory and was the crew's seventh mission since arriving overseas. It would prove to be its last.

"Our previous missions had been during the day when we flew in squadrons of 21 planes with fighter escort," Richards recounted. "But this trip was described as a nuisance mission. One plane left alone each hour

with a different target as an objective."

Somewhere near the Austrian-Yugoslavian border, around 2 a.m., they encountered German anti-aircraft fire. One of the wings was hit and caught fire.

"We flew a zig-zag course in an attempt to avoid this anti-aircraft fire," Richards recalled. "This time we weren't lucky. The plane was vibrating so much and then the pilot radioed he was putting it on auto pilot and for everyone to get out."

Richards and the bombardier opened the bomb bay doors, jettisoned the four 2,000-pound bombs and then jumped out the same opening. It was Richards' first experience with a parachute.

"I pulled the ripcord and the chute didn't open," he noted. "I jerked it a second time and thankfully it unfurled. I looked down and saw a patchwork of light and dark. I remember hoping I didn't land in the water."

Actually, the illusion of water was caused by clouds surrounding a small mountain range. Richards landed in those

hills, hid his parachute and avoided the treacherous terrain by staying put until the light of morning.

"I remember hearing a church bell in the distance at daybreak," the downed American flyer said. "It was reassuring to hear that sound. It was a good feeling.

"As I started down the hillside," he continued, "I heard someone whistling. A young boy with a red star on his cap was walking nearby. We had been told the star would signify someone who would aid Americans. So I approached him."

Loyal partisans of the area and members of Marshall Tito's resistance movement proved to be those who aided the downed allied airmen. The young lad took Richards to his house where arrangements were made to contact other resistance members.

"The next day they brought the radio operator in and he could communicate with the people," Richards recalled. "They asked where we were from and I said near Chicago. A young boy immediately got excited and asked about gangsters and Al Capone.

"They also wanted my parachute and we retrieved it," he added. "They were made of silk, and the mother of the family was very excited to get it."

From that day, Richards began a 65-day journey to the seaport of Split and his eventual return to the United States. During that time, he was joined by other allied servicemen. As the group grew to 16, it became a mix of Americans, British and even a Greek attempting to avoid capture by the German forces.

"We walked at night or in the late evenings and hid and slept in barns during the day," the Casey resident explained. "We wore the same clothes, same shoes, never showered or never shaved during that time. We were covered with lice by the end of the trip.

"The partisans would give us hard cornbread for breakfast and always a stew for supper," he

continued. "To this day I don't like cornbread.

"I also remember the absence of any vehicles and the devastation of the towns we would pass through," he added. "The area was destroyed by war."

Christmas 1945 doesn't stand out in Richards' memory, but New Year's was memorable. The group was finally put on a truck for part of the trip, but a blizzard hit and the vehicle was stuck.

Meanwhile, back on the homefront, Richards' wife, Leola, received the news every serviceman's family dreaded.

"An official car pulled up to the house one day, and a man told me he was sorry and handed me a yellow envelope," she recalled. "I knew when I saw the car it was bad news. The memo said Roger had been shot down and was missing in action in Austria."

Eventually, the group in Yugoslavia neared the coast and met a British radio operator who arranged for their escape and return to Italy. They waited about a week for the plan to develop, during which Richards received a pleasant surprise—a new pair of socks.

Finally, in February the stage was set. The group of downed airmen boarded a British torpedo boat undercover at Split, Yugoslavia, and traveled to the Isle of Vis in the Adriatic Sea.

There, at a totally destroyed airfield on top of the island, a plane landed. The men raced to the plane, jumped aboard and flew to freedom.

Upon his return to Foggia, Richards learned other Americans had sold all of his belongings. "They sold my shoes for \$50 and a watch Leola had given me as a gift," he noted.

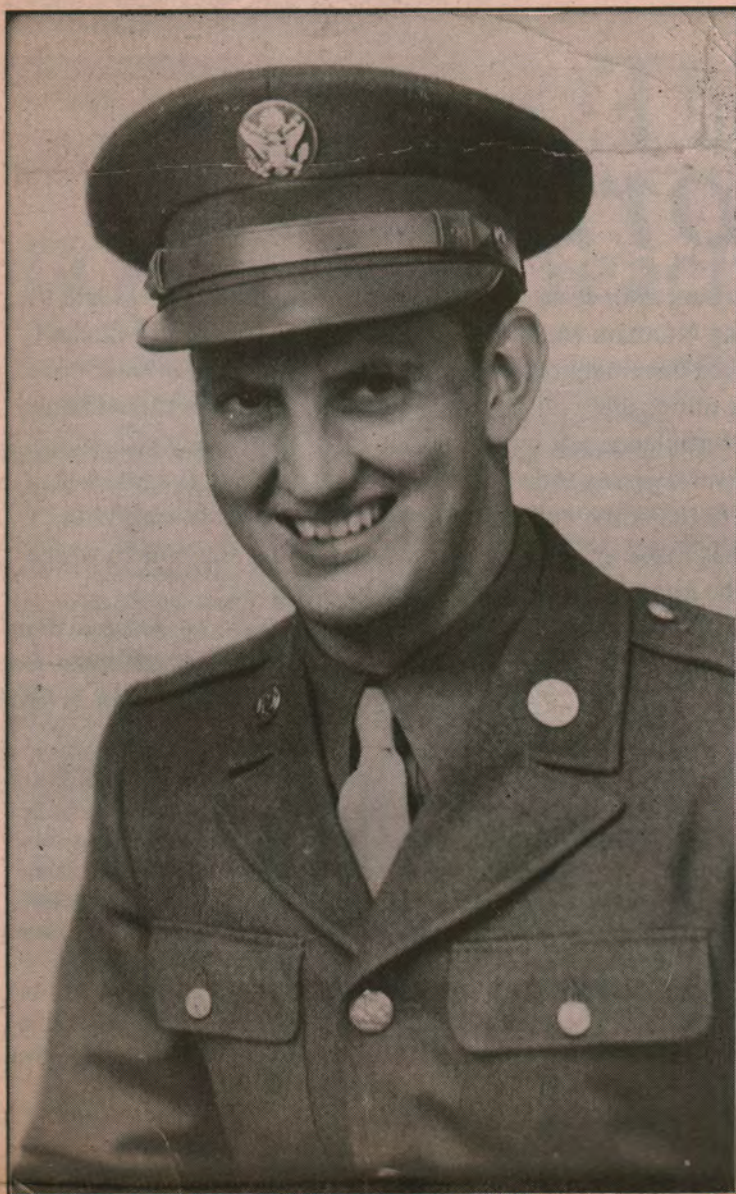
"The first thing they did was spray us for lice and then debriefed us for a short period," he added. Then after just a few days at Foggia, he headed for America on an empty cargo plane.

Back in Westfield, Illinois, his wife made her usual daily trip to the mailbox. There was a letter



Roger Richards' flight crew from World War II, 1942





Richards

Photos courtesy of Roger Richards

**'I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT  
BEING TAKEN PRISONER AND HAD  
NO CHOICE BUT TO TRUST  
THE UNDERGROUND AND THE PEOPLE.'**

from Italy and her first instinct was that it had been written prior to the fateful mission. "I looked at the date and realized it was written after Roger had been shot down," Leola explained. "It was the first notice I received that he was OK. I went up the driveway waving that letter and yelling and screaming."

The very next day she received a call from her husband, who already was in New York.

Richards completed his duty stateside and spent a year or so adjusting to civilian life. "His nerves were shot when he returned," Leola said. "It took awhile for him to adjust."

"I never thought about being taken prisoner and had no choice but to trust the underground and the people," Richards commented. "After I got back, I tried not to think about it, tried not to dwell on it."

"When the American was shot down (in June 1995), a newsman mentioned the city of

Split," he went on. "That brought back some memories."

"People of that time didn't complain," Leola added. "We were consumed with the war and listened to the radio every night. I had a feeling all along that he'd come back."

So did Richards receive anything close to the welcome home that Captain O'Grady received? "No, my reward was that I could return to America," he said. "I don't think I received any medals or anything."

"Another thing is that eight members of the crew made it out," he concluded. "No one ever heard from the bombardier. After the war, I never saw or talked to any of the crew again. I've always wished I could hear from them again."

Now readers know Richards' story, which had gone untold for 50 years.

*Reprinted with permission from The Casey Reporter, July 10, 1995.*

# Illinois offers ancient sites to explore

Some of the nation's most renowned settlements and cultural heritage sites are located in Illinois, and the western half of the state is one of six locations in the world where the development of complex civilizations occurred without any outside influences.

The remains of an ancient city built more than 1,000 years ago can be found at Cahokia Mounds, located a few miles west of Collinsville. Native Americans built this State Historic and World Heritage Site in southern Illinois, and it is the most sophisticated prehistoric city north of Mexico. Inhabited from about 700-1500 A.D., the city contained more than 120 earthen mounds used as platforms for elite residences or as sites for ceremonial activities and burials. Sixty-eight of these mounds are still visible.

Next to the massive 100-foot-tall Monks Mound, a state-of-the-art Interpretive Center features educational displays, videos and live recreations of ancient ceremonies. The greatest mystery of Cahokia is how the city vanished, and visitors to the center can put their mark on history by voting on how they believe it may have disappeared.

In addition to the permanent displays at the Interpretive Center, special events and activities throughout the year provide learning opportunities. Visitors can track the latest discoveries at the Mounds through films, lectures and special exhibits. A special presentation of Indian music, dance and clothing was held in November, and the Kahok dancers performed on selected weekends through December. Visitors also joined in the equinox and solstice sunrise celebrations that are observed at Woodhenge, Cahokia's reconstructed sun calendar. January through April, monthly guest speakers discuss various Native American and archeological topics, and craft classes

for adults and children are offered periodically.

In Lewistown, approximately 65 miles northwest of Springfield, one of the few on-site archeological museums in the Midwest rests on the site of a prehistoric Native American burial ground called Dickson Mounds. The museum reopened in September following major renovation and is a center of study and interpretation of Native American archaeology and civilization in the Illinois River Valley. Workshops, demonstrations, artifacts, interpretive exhibits and multimedia presentations tell the story of 12,000 years of Native American life in Illinois.

Another point of interest is Black Hawk State Historic Site in Rock Island, located on the Mississippi River to the northwest. The site is among the largest Native American centers on the continent. Once home to the Sauk warrior and leader Blackhawk, the wooded park covers more than 200 acres. One of the least-disturbed nature preserves in Illinois, the forest is

part of the Center for American Archaeology. Named in 1994 to the National Register of Historic Places, this center unfolds the unbroken record of nearly 10,000 years of human habitation on this continent. The center's field schools attract students of all ages who gain a hands-on introduction to the field of archaeology.

Among these older sites are two revitalized western Illinois settlement towns that boast colorful histories. Situated near the Mississippi River is Nauvoo. Originally called Quashquema by Sac and Fox Indians, the town was later named for the Hebrew word for "beautiful place." The community saw the arrival of the Mormons in the 1840s and grew to become the 10th largest city in the nation at that time. The town's restored homes and shops are open to the public, and old-time craft demonstrations by skilled artisans recall the charm of the past. Nauvoo visitors can also tour Baxter's Vineyards, Illinois' oldest

winery with an adjacent factory known for its bleu cheese.

For 19th century religious dissidents from Sweden, Bishop Hill was "utopia on the prairie." Much of the original Swedish colony still remains today, including such historic buildings as the Colony Church and

Bjorklund Hotel. Restored buildings, museums and the village park also preserve memories of the first Swedish settlers. More than 90 paintings by Olof Krans, one of America's foremost folk artists, are exhibited at the Bishop Hill Heritage Museum.

Native American settlements and cultural heritage sites all along the western border of the state make Illinois a bridge that connects modern America to the ancient world.

*Editor's Note: More information about these sites is available from the Illinois Bureau of Tourism at 800/826-9808.*

**THE GREATEST MYSTERY OF CAHOKIA IS  
HOW THE CITY VANISHED,  
AND VISITORS TO THE CENTER CAN PUT  
THEIR MARK ON HISTORY  
BY VOTING ON HOW THEY BELIEVE  
IT MAY HAVE DISAPPEARED.**

home to nearly 175 species of birds and more than 30 wild-flower varieties. In the Hauberg Indian Museum, visitors can interpret the culture of the Sauk and Mesquakie tribes through full-scale replicas of Sauk dwellings, a collection of artifacts and dioramas that depict life-size figures engaged in traditional activities.

Illinois is not only home to Native American settlements but many other cultural sites, activities and attractions that form America's history. In Kampsville, located along the lower reaches of the Illinois River in southern Illinois, there is an archeological



# A Moving Memorial

The following essays were written after some students in my U.S. History class had the opportunity to visit the Moving Vietnam Memorial Wall while on display in Marshall, Illinois, in May of 1994. I asked the students to view the film, "Run for the Wall," and visit the Wall and observe the atmosphere during their visit. These essays show that my students did feel some of the turbulence left by this period of history. They also recognized that small towns lost several young men that were not thanked for the effort they made for our country. I want to thank the veterans who sponsored the Moving Wall. More important, their effort has made an impression on some young students to whom Vietnam was just a blurb in the history book. Thanks you so much.

— Anne E. Pool  
Social Studies teacher  
Paris (Illinois) High School

## Suzi McDaniel

The Vietnam War was the longest war in United States history. It lasted from the mid-1950s to 1975. The United States had a death toll of more than 58,000, and the Vietnamese lost hundreds of thousands.

When the soldiers came back from the war, they were treated badly. The soldiers came back as individuals instead of in a group and never were acknowledged for the price they paid in this unpopular war. Some Americans placed blame for this war on these young men and women. These survivors have mixed feelings about the war even today.

The movie, "Run for the Wall," shows the yearly trip by a group of motorcyclists from San Diego, California, to Washington, D.C. The Wall contains names of those who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. Some of the veterans on the run visit the Wall to heal old wounds. Some say the visit is a healing process and a chance to say goodbye. Some meet old friends and veterans along the way.

There is a tradition at the Wall called "Rolling Thunder." This is when the bikers travel the capital streets to call attention to the 2,000 prisoners of war unaccounted for after the Vietnam War.

The Paris High School Band visited the Wall in Washington, D.C., (in 1993), and I noticed the reactions to the model Wall were a little different. For example, there was more talking at the model Wall. In Washington, you could feel the reverent silence. Not as many people were rubbing names on the model Wall as in Washington. Many flowers were at the Wall in Marshall, but the saddest one was the wreath with

the photo of a young man. There was a flag that a veteran had left that had flown over his camp in Vietnam.

I enjoyed this experience. It meant a lot to me. At first I was uncomfortable, but the longer I was at the Moving Wall, the more comfortable I felt. Watching those who had emotional ties to that time in history brought tears to my eyes. All I could think about was the risk those young people took for our country, and we did not take the time to thank them.

## Robbi Brooks

The video, "Run for the Wall," was very touching. As I watched the movie, tears rolled down my face. At first, the movie looked as though it would be boring. I was wrong. It was so touching how all those people took time to put together such a tremendous group. All those men and women drove hundreds and even thousands of miles to meet one another again. After they all met, they got on their motorcycles and rode to Washington, D.C. A lot of emotions were shown during this part of the movie. Many of the ones that went to Washington, D.C., were, in a way, visiting their friends or family who died. Although tears were shed, the movie was excellent.

The Moving Wall was fabulous. It was like the one in Washington, D.C., but smaller. When I was in Marshall, I saw one man who was a little angry and anxious. He was looking for his brother's name on the Wall. The information helper missed the name, I guess, because I heard the man keep saying, "Look again. Look again." Deep down inside I felt sorry for him. I thought of how he must feel. As I

walked down the path, I started reading the wreaths. The wreaths that got to me said, "Dad," "Brother" or "Son." Again, tears rolled down my face. Experiencing the Wall made Vietnam more important to me.

## Jeremy Muchow

On my visit to the Moving Vietnam Memorial Wall, I saw several things. For instance, the movie, "Run for the Wall," depicted Army veterans riding motorcycles yearly to the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C. I also noticed that people from small towns appreciated seeing the replica of the Wall and were touched by the names of the young men and women that died or are missing as a result of the Vietnam War.

The movie showed Vietnam vets from across the United States who ride to view the Wall in Washington, D.C. This group travels together and stops in small towns along the way. In one town, the kids are released from school to watch this parade of motorcycles. The bikers appreciate this parade because they feel they did not get any public thanks when they returned from 'Nam. A young girl of this town make friendship bracelets for the parade veterans because she appreciated what these men did for the United States.

Marion Shelton started the "Run for the Wall." Her husband was shot down in the war and was later declared dead. She went to court saying that her husband was a prisoner of war. She won her case, but after many years she realized that he probably was dead. So one day she placed the mementos of her husband in a pile and killed herself. The annual trip exists because it eases the pain of the vets every time they

participate.

While I was standing at the Wall, a young boy was writing on a panel with a pencil, not realizing the importance of the Wall to many people. An old man pulled the kid to the side and explained the importance of the Wall and what it meant to people. I was really surprised that the man cared that much for the Wall. I am really glad that I went to see the Moving Wall, even though I have seen the original in Washington, D.C. I feel that I learned about the people who lived during the Vietnam era and the pain that was experienced during the war.

## Melissa McMahan

The Moving Wall was created by three California Vietnam veterans: John Devitt, Gary Haver and Noris Shears. The building of the replica began in January 1983 and was completed on October 11, 1984. It was erected for the first time in Tyler, Texas. Of the more than 58,000 names on the Memorial Wall, approximately 1,300 of these names are noted as prisoners of war or as missing in action.

While viewing the Wall, I overheard some interesting conversations and comments. One that moved me the most was the comment made by a woman standing behind me. She stated, "I bet people wish the names were in alphabetical order so they would be easier to find." Her companion simply stated, "They didn't die in alphabetical order." The last statement was followed by total silence by all that heard it. "So simple and yet so true," I heard someone say as he walked by the person who spoke.

Also, I observed a man

addressing his family and pointing to a name on the Wall. "This guy sat behind me in algebra, and he was worse than me, if you can believe that. The only way he passed was because I let him copy from my papers." The man was silent for a moment, then stood and wiped tears from his eyes. I got the idea he did not want his family to see the tears and he slowly moved down the path.

One other conversation I heard was one woman talking to another about her veteran son. "He said that their clothes and shoes rotted. Their feet were one solid blister or sore." Her companion said, "I wonder if he ever had the crud?" The woman paused, looking at the ground and then looked the woman in the eye and said, "They all had it."

The display of emotion observed at the Moving Wall proved, in my mind, that time has not eased the pain of the many lives lost. I witnessed a woman who, after locating the name of her son, broke into tears as if she had that instant been informed that her son had died.

I visited the memorial four times while it was on display in Marshall. Each visit was different, and each time there was a man (obviously a veteran) in the same place, looking sadly at the same panel, 64E. There are no words to describe the emotions that seeing this man made me feel. Being able to see and touch the Wall allowed me to appreciate the history it represents. No textbook could have done this for me. You cannot get the full impact of people's emotions from reading a book. You have to witness those feelings as an observer of their souls. The Wall allowed me that opportunity.



# The Last Word

## FOI request teaches more than the law

By Ray Elliott

During the bombing in Oklahoma City last spring, I was working as a faculty adviser for the Washington (D.C.) Journalism Conference. Part of my responsibility in working with other advisers and 350 high school journalists from around the country and a few from Europe was to put a staff together and publish one of two daily newspapers as the student reporters covered life in the nation's capital.

The day after the bombing, an editorial cartoonist brought a well-drawn cartoon, depicting a Yasser Arafat-looking man in traditional Middle Eastern garb holding a map of the United States upside down, to the staff on a tight deadline for its four-page magazine-sized newspaper. The caption said, "Oklahoma City? What is an Oklahoma City? Aw ..." with the clear implication about who was responsible for the bombing.

Obviously, the young cartoonist was reflecting what people everywhere were thinking and discussing regarding the likelihood of "Middle Eastern terrorists" being responsible. Some of this unfounded speculation was reported in the media. But after a short discussion among the newspaper's staff, it was unanimous in rejecting the cartoon as "racist and unfair."

The issue of fairness and how the bombing responsibility apparently is playing out brought to mind a situation I became involved in during the past school year. As a high school journalism teacher and student newspaper adviser, I've always made students aware of the Freedom of Information law to secure information the public has a right to know.

In the past, this has merely been assignments to acquaint the students with the law and the procedures by which information can be secured. One of the most comprehensive of these assignments was supplied by the editor of the local newspaper a few years ago. The New Mexico State Journalism Society had devised a project whereby students were given areas within the school district and local governmental agencies to seek information through Freedom of Information requests and report the results of the assignment.

Both Urbana (IL) school district and local government personnel were cooperative when students presented themselves professionally and clearly about the informa-

tion desired and why they had the legal right to have access to the information requested. Until recently, however, no issue had ever been pursued during the course of story research that might result in an article for publication in the student newspaper.

Then a controversial budget-cutting decision by the board of education became a heated issue in the district after the board had given the teachers a three-year contract the board said the district couldn't afford without drastic cuts. The issue was debated hotly at board meetings and covered extensively by the local press. Finally, the editorial board of the student newspaper got involved in the controversy because of projected cuts in class offerings and sizes, teaching staff and extracurricular activities.

In the first mention in the school paper on the subject prior to the board's action, the staff editorial recommended cutting one of the three principals at a savings of nearly \$60,000, thereby saving most of what the students feared losing (teachers and classes) and making it possible to cut the remaining \$30,000 from the board-required \$90,000 cuts from the high school budget in the coming year.

That recommendation in and of itself was controversial (and later followed). High school faculty members approached me before the paper had been on sale for 10 minutes and questioned everything from why the editorial was unsigned (it was the staff position) to the advisability of students being involved in the controversy.

The local press carried the recommendation in an attendant story and received many letters on the budget-reduction controversy. One letter-to-the-editor writer dropped a copy of her letter in agreement with the staff position to the high school newspaper editors.

Throughout the ensuing debate on how to make cuts without harming the quality of education, the school board had been adamant in proclaiming the cuts had to be made. The board president, a high-ranking University of Illinois official, had been particularly vocal about the need to make the cuts to keep the board solvent.

At the height of the controversy, I became aware that the teacher's association had received an anonymous telephone call from someone who apparently was a university employee, regarding a

letter the board president had allegedly written to another university official during an earlier university budget-cutting period. The letter was supposedly an effort to save the board president's husband's job at the university by using her influence, a position the high school newspaper staff thought to be hypocritical and unethical, if not illegal when I brought the matter to the attention of the newspaper editorial board.

Although nothing had previously come up, I'd seen a conflict of interest between my role as association public relations chair and adviser of the school newspaper in my first year in both roles simultaneously. Now, because of the student newspaper's involvement in the issues at hand, I thought my primary responsibility clearly was to my students in the classroom and on the newspaper staff and resigned from the executive board.

It was decided to pursue a Freedom of Information request to the university for a copy of the letter the board president had allegedly written and to check out the tip before doing anything further. Before doing so, however, I spoke with legal and informed sources at the university to better understand the ramifications. One expert at obtaining university documents advised me that we were dealing with "a tough person" within the university who rarely lost battles and further advised me that incriminating documents at the university often "had a way of disappearing" when requests were made for them.

Undeterred, the newspaper staff decided to request the letter to see what it said and to see if there was any conflict of interest apparent in the letter or if it was merely hypocritical. I had previously obtained the gist of the letter as corroborating the caller's information, the time period and the university official the letter was allegedly written to from the local association official who said he had obtained a copy of the letter through "other means."

As I had been advised would possibly happen, the board president knew immediately that the letter arrived at the office of information on campus. The school district superintendent called me shortly afterwards, wanting to know the details.

When I explained the situation to him, he said it sounded "like a

pretty sophisticated approach for high school journalists to be using" and wanted to know what the staff was going to do with the letter. I told him the staff didn't know what, if anything, it would do with the letter until the letter was available, the content read and discussed, and reminded him that he had been aware of previous Freedom of Information assignments I had made.

He then asked why the board president had not been approached prior to the request. I explained that was not the way it seemed to best pursue the situation. The board president would have been contacted after the letter was received and its contents evaluated.

The superintendent said it sounded to him like "adults using students" for obtaining information the adults were seeking. At first, I thought he was referring to me. Then I remembered the student who had been identified as writing the editorial and who had signed the Freedom of Information request letter was the daughter of a rather vocal association member who had previously been an association officer.

The FOI request came back on time but denied because the only pertinent letter the board president had written was to another university official and was of an opinion nature, which is exempt from FOI requests. On behalf of the students, I went back to the association official, since he had supplied the original name and other relevant information.

He laughed about the results and said, "So that's what they said. Well, I have a letter that says otherwise."

But when I asked to see the letter to verify what he had told me earlier and for other specifics, he declined and said he had "taken the letter home because this whole thing is making me nervous. I'm not in the business of expose."

Then he advised me that he was going to consult an attorney and really didn't want to talk about the matter again. All of which put the student newspaper staff and me in an untenable journalistic position since he had been cooperating by supplying information from the outset, and we had no other source to support the position except the anonymous caller. And he had not called anyone again. Without any evidence to the contrary, the staff had little choice but to back off the search.

The board president informed all other board members about the request and supplied the student requesting the letter, through the superintendent, the letter that had been previously denied for perusal and support for her contention that there was no other letter. I called the board president at this time and apprised her of where we were in the situation.

She denied that such a letter as the staff had been seeking ever existed and supplied various people to contact in support of her position. At the same time, she asked that the individual with the letter come forward with it and she would waive anything to do with how the letter was obtained and any other problems that would come from the matter because she felt her reputation had been impugned.

Giving up the letter or going public was not something the association official was willing to do. The board president said, "Of course, he/she isn't willing to because the letter doesn't exist."

At my last contact with the association official, he advised me that his attorney, to whom he had paid "a \$1,500 retainer," had advised him not to talk to anyone about the matter, and he didn't want to talk to me about it any more. And that's where the matter now stands.

The students dropped it because they hit a wall they couldn't find a way around or over. Nobody knows exactly who or what to believe, although everyone has suspicions. Which puts everyone involved in the same position the country was in the first days after the bombing in Oklahoma City when all most of us had to go on was speculation.

Like the student's cartoon at the time of the bombing, a person has been accused of doing something on little more than speculation. The anonymous caller and the letter the association official said he had might as well not exist for all the proof they provide until the real thing comes along.

Student journalists don't have the FBI following thousands of leads as the government did after the bombing or aren't trained investigative reporters themselves. So they weren't able to determine who is lying and who isn't and didn't get a story. But the students do know a bit more about the FOI procedures and a whole lot more about how things in the adult world really work.





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