

# Perspectives in HISTORY

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**Perspectives  
in  
HISTORY**

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## FOREWORD

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At the end of two years as editor of *Perspectives in History*, I am proud to present my final issue. Proud not that four issues bear my name, but proud that so many people helped in bringing this publication together. This journal has gained wide recognition throughout the Commonwealth and caught the attention of students, professional historians, and individuals with intense interests in all fields of history. My role has been the smallest aspect of this growing popularity. The many authors who have contributed to this and past issues helped to establish the solid reputation of this journal as a work *par excellence*. The hard work of typing done by Ms. Shirley Raleigh and Miss Sarah Beth Phillips for this and previous issues has made it a visually pleasing work as well.

Finally, thanks to Dr. James A. Ramage for giving his all to this chapter for the past six years. Everyone who knows him can attest to his devotion to Phi Alpha Theta and the welfare of each of its members. He is an exceptional leader, teacher, and friend.

# **“I Wouldn’t Have Missed it for the World:” Central Kentucky Women and the Rebirth of Feminism in the 1960s**

**by  
Claria Horn**

After winning the vote in 1920 as a result of their World War I contributions, most American women returned to the world of the home, and it appeared that feminism had died. The Nineteenth Amendment established equal voting rights for women, but a solid female vote failed to emerge and women still found themselves well short of equality. The National Women’s Party attempted to address this problem in 1923 by proposing the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). However, women proved to be divided about the possibilities of such an amendment. Thus, a solid backing for the ERA at the time never achieved fruition.

During the Great Depression the small degree of feminism existing was forced to turn its attention to matters of economic and physical survival. Women were strapped with the concerns of feeding their families and maintaining a disease-free household. The 1940s and 1950s was a period of drastic change for American women. With American entry into World War II, women were urged to enter the workforce and do their part. This they did in record numbers. But at the war’s end returning soldiers pushed women back into the home. The 1950s brought greater complacency in women and an apparent affirmation of the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers.

Since the 1920s, feminism persevered only in a small, elite number of women, but by the 1960s women began once again to mobilize behind self-defined goals. As historian William Chafe contends, the behavioral change of women in the 1940s and 1950s laid the foundation for ideological changes among women in the 1960s. Mirroring the national experience of women, central Kentucky women sustained great changes in the 1960s which fostered a refined awareness of women’s problems and promulgated a women’s liberation movement which significantly changed the role of women in society and constituted another step in their long quest for full gender equality.

The term “feminism” refers to a form of activism whose aims were to expand women’s participation in the political sphere, to ensure equality for women in the workplace, to expand their independence and economic well-being, and to enhance the emotional and psychological health of women. And “women’s movement” refers to the collection of groups which sought to realize feminist goals.<sup>1</sup> Women

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Claria Horn graduated from Transylvania University in 1991, and she is a student at the Vanderbilt University College of Law. This paper won the best paper award at the Regional Phi Alpha Theta Conference on March 23, 1991, and the 1991 Thomas D. Clark Award from the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History.

were drawn to this movement by a litany of circumstances. The massive increase in women in the workplace began to undermine the traditional belief of a women's place as being in the home.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, women's involvement in the civil rights movement and New Left movements revealed that women were not as free or equal as their male counterparts. Through this involvement, women acquired the tools for a movement of their own, such as tactical knowledge, a language to describe oppression, and a sense of their own potential.<sup>3</sup>

The women's liberation movement quickly spread throughout America's colleges and cities with its main vehicle being "consciousness raising." These small, loosely-structured, informal groups enabled women to build trust in each other and realize that they were not alone.<sup>4</sup> Women's groups then branched into social and political involvement with groups like Women's Liberation in the 1960s, and the National Organization for Women in 1966, and the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971.

The existence of other movements such as the civil rights movement and the student New Left movement in the 1960s had great influence in the formation and structure of the women's movement. The struggle for racial equality emerged in the 1960s and many Americans struggled to create a world that was free of the immorality of treating any human being less equally because of a physical characteristic. Many groups organized in the pursuit of this ideal. Dr. Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization of southern black ministers, was an initial crusader of racial equality and midwived a few student civil rights organizations.<sup>5</sup>

The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was organized by students like Stokeley Carmichael and Bob Moses, a young black philosophy student from Harvard. Idealistic and adventurous in its pursuits, this organization of young black students sought equality along non-violent lines and the creation of a "redemptive community" where all people would be equal.<sup>6</sup> The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) shared much of SNCC's ideology and attempted to adapt these goals to projects in the South.<sup>7</sup>

While these groups were actively pursuing their ideals in the South, a similar dissatisfaction was occurring in the North. The New Left was characterized by an ideology accepted by many students that a new society must be created enabling participatory democracy and racial and social equality. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), founded by Tom Hayden, sought the goals of the New Left.<sup>8</sup> Its "Port Huron Statement" in 1962 claimed *men* as being "infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom and love."<sup>9</sup> Anti-war organizations like the Student Peace Union formed as well.<sup>10</sup>

In each of these male-dominated organizations, the roles of women were to perform clerical duties and to support the men. Needless to say, this led the women to realize that they must fight for their own equality. Young women in both the civil rights movement in the South and the New Left movement in the North mobilized

within their groups to strike out at this discrimination and form networks of their own. Women like Casey Hayden and Mary King of SNCC organized their constituent women to demand a greater voice in the organizations which they helped to create.<sup>11</sup>

College women in these organizations often formed women's caucuses to address discrimination. However, more commonly, they created organizations of their own like the Women's Liberation group. Women's Liberation groups could be found throughout the country and were started by small groups of radical women in 1967 and 1968 who were made conscious of their common problems by their experiences in the civil rights movement and the New Left movements. Their primary foci were the social and economic exploitation of women and the elimination of male chauvinism.

While female students were working to confront women's problems, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 spoke to middle-aged women. Friedan claimed that women at home were discontent because homemaking was boring. She disclaimed the Freudian idea that women, because of their nature and biological makeup, received their greatest fulfillment when performing the roles of wife and mother. Her influence was tremendous and led women to the realization that their dissatisfaction was not an individual one, but was shared by many women. Thus, a women's problem was realized.

In response to these realizations, women, young and old, created small groups of consciousness-raising. These groups soon became the main instrument of the women's movement largely because they helped women to build trust a belief that they were not alone.<sup>12</sup> In these sessions, women discovered their similar experiences with sexual and job discrimination, stereotyping, and male chauvinism.

From these informal groups women organized into political and social-action groups to pursue a variety of objectives. In 1966 the Third National Conference on the State Commission on Women met in Washington, D. C. At the conference a consensus was reached among women, including Betty Friedan, on the need of an organization to pressure the government much like the civil rights organizations had functioned for blacks. This desire was realized in Friedan's hotel room, where plans were formulated for the National Organization for Women (NOW).<sup>13</sup> This organization mobilized women to work within existing structures to secure equal protection before the law for women and equal protection in political, social, and economic life.<sup>14</sup> In 1968, the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) was formed by academic and professional women to eliminate sexual discrimination in employment, education, and taxation.<sup>15</sup>

Other women decided in 1971 that the time had come for women to be more influential in political policy-making. A call was made by NOW activists, political party regulars, women labor leaders, and women from other local movements for a national conference in July 1971. Over three hundred women attended the conference in Washington, D. C. to found the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC). Among the founders were Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, and Betty

Friedan. The founders structure this organization to represent a broad spectrum of women, being composed of both Democrats and Republicans. Electing women to office and increasing their influence in politics were its major goals.<sup>16</sup>

Some women worked through the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and other political groups to expand the anti-discrimination legislative gains which were being created like the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1972, Congress amended the Equal Pay Act to include administrative, executive, and professional positions. During the same session, the ninety-second Congress passed the Educational Amendment Act whose Title IX for the first time banned sex discrimination in education. Women from a variety of organizations rallied in support of these changes.<sup>17</sup>

Women also formed pro-Equal Rights Amendment Alliances in a broad-based effort to push the amendment through Congress and the states' ratification. After more than fifty years of debate and uncounted hours of lobbying, the ERA was passed in 1972.<sup>18</sup> The Amendment was sent to the states for ratification, and by the end of the first year, twenty-three of the needed thirty-two states had approved the ERA.<sup>19</sup> However, a fatal conservative attack brought the destruction of the ERA in 1978 when its time for ratification expired.

Women on the national level were able to achieve significant gains for women. College women moved into occupations historically restricted to males and a great increase occurred in the number going to professional schools.<sup>20</sup> Significant political and legislative gains were made as well. Not only were these substantive gains made, but improvements were made in women's personal and emotional lives. Many women, through their involvement in the women's movement realized potential and strength in themselves which they never knew they possessed.

Central Kentucky women participated in their own women's movement which greatly paralleled national developments. They realized their own sexual discrimination in many of the same ways that women throughout America did. In addition, the formal and informal organizations and networks that women in Kentucky established were similar to, and in some cases, branches of national organizations. Undoubtedly, central Kentucky women faced the same inequity, anger, fear, self-actualization, and accomplishments as women throughout America in their pursuit of full gender equality.

At the onset of the 1960s, many of the young adult women of central Kentucky were acting out the typical roles of women at home without recognition of the discrimination facing them. These women had grown up in the complacency of the 1950s and were often patterning their lives after their parents. "We were our parents" recalls Suzy Post, currently with the Metropolitan Housing Coalition in Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>21</sup> Women were restricted to the roles of wife and mother. Anne Binford, a part-time art instructor at Transylvania University described her life in the early 1960s in two words: "having babies."<sup>22</sup>

All too often these women were functioning within their "comfortable concentration camps" and restrictive gender roles while their husbands pursued education



and career accomplishments.<sup>23</sup> Suzy Post doubts, "if many were even cognizant of the fact that we could have needs or aspirations."<sup>24</sup> Women were being denied the opportunity of discovering themselves and their own potential by a society which simply dictated what they could be. Ms. Binford recalled, "you don't rock the boat, you don't be an uppity women, you just be sweet."<sup>25</sup>

However, this boat became leaky and housewives began to question the equity of their roles. Women began to examine their marriages and household responsibilities, and they often realized their lives were unfulfilling and unrewarding. Because of the lack of emotional support she received from her husband, Suzy Post began to question her marriage, "What's in it for me — money or sex?"<sup>26</sup> Other women like Ruth Ravitz, a former elementary school teacher, began to question the household duties they had been performing, "What in the hell do you think about when you're cleaning house?"<sup>27</sup> Anne Binford felt increasingly angry that she solely was responsible for preparing the meals and she "really resented it."<sup>28</sup>

By the 1960s many women were leaving the home for the workplace, either by economic necessity or the desire to supplement the family income. In 1960, twenty-seven percent of Kentucky women over the age of fourteen were in the labor force, and fifty-seven percent of the women who worked were married.<sup>29</sup> The double burden of work responsibilities and household chores made the lives of these women especially burdensome and inequitable. The exodus of women from the home brought the advent of even more roles for women to assume. A conference on contemporary women at the University of Kentucky in 1968 cited a great difficulty for women in bridging the gap between cultural lag and the rapid changes in women's roles.<sup>30</sup>

Coupled with the duties of wife, mother, and homemaker, over a quarter of Kentucky women were adding employee to their list of roles. With this new role, some women were confronted with new problems as well. Ruth Ravitz was an elementary school teacher in the early 1960s, and she recalled the burdens of teaching all day and then being expected to prepare dinner, do laundry, supervise the children, and clean house, all without the help of her husband who was a professor at the University of Kentucky.<sup>31</sup> A dissatisfaction occurred with women who were told by the media and home economics teachers one thing about female roles, while, in reality, their lives did not resemble this.<sup>32</sup>

The inequity of pay and opportunities that some women encountered in the workplace led them to question for the first time their own satisfaction of the treatment of men and women in society. In the 1960s, a feeling prevailed that women were inferior to men in supervisory positions. The Governor's Commission on the Status on Women reported that a woman must be "highly trained and or superior capability to compete on an equal basis with men."<sup>33</sup> This prejudice was reflected in the types of jobs that women occupied at the time and their wages as well. At the beginning of the 1960s, women were employed predominantly in the lowest paying occupations.<sup>34</sup> Their labor was usually spent in eating and drinking

establishments, hotels and lodges, laundry and dry cleaning establishments, and other service occupations.<sup>35</sup>

Along with less prestigious work came lower wages. The median income of Kentucky women was \$984, while that of men was \$2,823; women made sixty-five percent less than their male counterparts.<sup>36</sup> Because of the directness of this discrimination, many women were compelled to challenge these practices, and become aware for the first time of their own need to fight for the equality of women. Delores Delahanty recalled that one of her first "eye-openers" was when she applied for a job as a juvenile court probation officer in Louisville. Ms. Delahanty was told that since the male officers' jobs were more dangerous, they would be paid more. She protested and was eventually paid equally.<sup>37</sup> Nelle Horlander, who had been working with Southern Bell Telephone Company, was repeatedly told that the supervisory positions that she kept applying for were "male jobs."<sup>38</sup> But after much persistence, in 1965, Ms. Horlander became one of the first women to hold the position of communications consultant with a telephone company.<sup>39</sup>

Other central Kentucky women had their awareness of feminine issues raised by their contact, either direct or indirect, with other feminists. Whether it was from reading a particularly touching book, listening to a feminist speaker, or meeting with more radical women, they were drawn to the movement by the progress that had already been made. As was the case with many women on a national level, Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* generated quite an awakening in Kentucky. As one Kentuckian noted, "it raised the sights of all women."<sup>40</sup> Friedan successfully challenged the traditional roles of women and often uncomfortably led women to examine the reality of their own lives. Anne Binford said that the initial "spark" for her occurred when she attended a lecture at the University of Kentucky by the radical feminist, Marlene Dixon. "She echoed things I'd felt and thought and fumed about."<sup>41</sup> Binford realized that she had "been kind of asleep" while other women were fighting for her.<sup>42</sup> Ruth Ravitz became acutely aware of her "subservience" through her membership in a women's group at the Unitarian Church.<sup>43</sup> "When I saw what these women were doing, I thought I was nowhere."<sup>44</sup> After analyzing her own life, she realized she "wasn't as free as everyone else."<sup>45</sup> That is when Ms. Ravitz began to concentrate on improving her own life.

Other women in Central Kentucky became involved in both the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement, through their churches and organizations.<sup>46</sup> Ironically, it was through their struggle for freedom for other people that they often realized they were not free themselves. Suzy Post, who worked in both movements, recalled, "You get involved in other people's struggle and you realize...this is my struggle."<sup>47</sup> When supposedly working among equals, women in these movements were relegated to the menial jobs of typing and paperwork while the men assumed the leadership positions. Ms. Post remembers that she and a number of women she worked with decided, "we're not going to do that anymore."<sup>48</sup> A group of women participating in an anti-draft teach-in at the University of Louisville in 1970 turned its attention to issues of women's liberation and expressed the need to change

America's attitudes about women.<sup>49</sup> As Sara Evans stated in her book, *Personal Politics*, women revolted "when the movement that had opened for them a new sense of their own potential simultaneously thrust them into menial domestic roles. Feminism was born in that contradiction—the threatened loss of new possibility."<sup>50</sup>

From their work in the civil rights movement and the New Left movements, women learned invaluable lessons for their own struggle, and they became keenly aware of their own strengths and potential. Suzy Post remembers the powerful realization of women's potential when she and her friends "got in touch with our own power and you just don't let go of that, you just don't go back home."<sup>51</sup>

Without looking back, many women embarked on a struggle that was to change their lives tremendously. The women's movement in Kentucky cannot be categorized into neat classes or ages of women who got involved in particular activities. In fact, in almost all groups, women, black and white, rich and poor, young and old worked side by side for a common cause. The main thread which bound these women together was a sense that in some way, their lives were not as free or equal in comparison to the lives of men. Some women "got it in the neck" and were moved to fight back, while other women had their consciences raised more subtly.<sup>52</sup> Just as the reasons for women's involvement were diverse and numerous, so too were the vehicles through which women chose to direct their actions. Most of the groups which emerged were organized around anti-authoritarian lines and consisted of small groups of women who had similar goals. Each woman chose how she wanted to manifest her interest in women's rights, but they all came together in the realization that, "Women can't just solve the problems themselves."<sup>53</sup>

Just as the organization of the women's movement is hard to categorize, so are the goals. Above all else, the women's movement in Kentucky attempted to better in some way the lives of all women. Some women focused on economic gains, some on political gains, and some on emotional gains. But a conscious feeling was among all women that they were a part of a bigger phenomena and that their efforts were not only to improve their own lives, but to enhance the quality of life for others.<sup>54</sup> Suzy Post remembered that it was this concerted effort which "made the 60s so great. We realized that society was inequitable and wrong, and we were going to change it."<sup>55</sup>

America's youth were often the first to protest social and political injustice. Indeed the events of the 1960s such as the civil rights protest and America's long-term involvement in Vietnam sparked a new "radicalism" in America's youth.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the young women of Kentucky were among the first to criticize the role of women in society. "We're supposed to be sexually appealing, but we're not supposed to use our bodies in any other way."<sup>57</sup> Most of the overt feminist action at the University of Kentucky (UK) emerged in the late 1960s. Prior to this, women's issues and accomplishments were occasionally addressed by the Women's Residence Hall Council, which was a group of the women's residence hall advisers. Although not overtly feminist, its activities were a break from the past and often served to promote the image of UK women and to educate them about feminist

issues. This council recognized coeds with high scholarship and showed educational films such as "Psychology and Sex."<sup>58</sup> The council also promoted high educational and professional aspirations for women. In February 1966 the council sponsored a speech by Katherine Peden, Kentucky Commissioner of Commerce, who urged coeds to become more active in the managerial and executive levels of business in their professional careers.<sup>59</sup>

By the fall of 1969, feminism was making its mark on UK's campus. One extremely active feminist organization was the Women's Liberation group. This group was founded in September 1969 and grew out of a Free University course on issues of women's liberation.<sup>60</sup> The group, which met weekly, consisted of women from the community at large "as well as students and teachers from UK."<sup>61</sup> Although started by students and women close to the university, the group grew until a majority of its members were married women, some of whom were mothers and grandmothers.<sup>62</sup> Their weekly meetings consisted of "consciousness-raising" as well as general discussions and the organizing of activities.<sup>63</sup> The Women's Liberation group at UK was organized around a grass-roots, authoritarian idea.<sup>64</sup> Its goals were diverse and covered most of the feminist issues of the day. But its primary focus was on the social and economic exploitation of women and on the elimination of male chauvinism.<sup>65</sup> Women's Liberation also supported women's struggles for "equal job and educational opportunity, repeal of abortion laws, and establishment of parent-controlled day care centers."<sup>66</sup>

In an effort to realize its goals, the Lexington group embarked on many activities both at the university and in the community. In its newsletter it provided information on the history and goals of the group, feature articles on the "hot" feminist issues of the day, and printed poems and other works by feminist writers.<sup>67</sup> The newsletters also contained articles about overcoming stereotyping and getting the most out of a college education.<sup>68</sup> In January 1970 the Lexington Women's Liberation group sponsored the Midwest Women's Liberation Conference which consisted of two days of workshops, speakers, guerrilla theater, films, and slides.<sup>69</sup> The featured speaker was Marlene Dixon, former professor of sociology and human relations at the University of Chicago, who claimed that only a revolution could set women free.<sup>70</sup> In the spring of the same year, the group also protested against the United States census which stated, exclusively, the male as "head of the household."<sup>71</sup> The establishment of day care centers for students and faculty members was another project for the group.<sup>72</sup> The University of Louisville's Women's Liberation group was working on similar goals.<sup>73</sup>

Other more radical feminism emerged on UK's campus as well. Pam Goldman, an attorney who is currently researching a book about a group of radical feminists in the early 1970s in Lexington, stated that radicals made up a significant part of the women's movement.<sup>74</sup> The Socialist Feminist Union was both a study group and activist group.<sup>75</sup> It was not satisfied with feminist groups or traditional left groups and desired to break down hierarchical, individualistic, and competitive relations and wanted to affirm lesbianism, the women's movement, socialism, and other far-

left ideologies.<sup>76</sup> Another women's study group in Lexington consisted of lesbian students and working people.<sup>77</sup>

Other feminist literature circulated on UK's campus. *Women in the Ivory Tower: A Survival Handbook for UK Women* was published by the Council for Women's Concerns, a commission for student government, in 1971.<sup>78</sup> This handbook warned women about male-oriented classrooms, sexually-aggressive professors, and the typical male chauvinism on campus.<sup>79</sup> It provided information on dating, sex, birth control, and the under-representation of women in high positions at the university.<sup>80</sup> Women's liberation groups were also linked with other radical organizations on the campus. In *Collective One*, which was a semi-radical pamphlet circulated throughout UK, the Lexington Women's Liberation group submitted information on women's concerns and listed telephone numbers for interested women to call.<sup>81</sup>

Similar feminist activity was occurring across town at Transylvania University. By 1974, the Student Government Association had banned the Crimson Beauty Contest on campus because it was "degrading to females."<sup>82</sup> Teresa (Terry) Isaac was a member of the Student Government Association, feature editor of the University newspaper, *The Rambler*, and a very active feminist.<sup>83</sup> In 1974 when the administration failed to respond to her plea, Ms. Isaac filed the first Title IX complaint in Kentucky against Transylvania because of discriminatory dorm regulations for women.<sup>84</sup> As a result of her complaint, the policy which prohibited freshmen women from being outside their dorms after midnight on weeknights was eliminated.<sup>85</sup>

Many women both in America and in Kentucky chose to use political work to improve the status of women. Their attempts were usually through changing discriminatory laws, enforcing new laws like Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972 and encouraging women to get more actively involved in politics. In a traditionally conservative state like Kentucky, one would not expect to find a great deal of women's political activity. Kentucky women, however, were on the cutting edge of political lobbying for women's rights, on the state and national levels. Indeed, a number of Kentucky women held positions in national women's organizations and were thus able to fight for the betterment of women both in their home state and across the nation. Echoing the words of other feminists, Suzy Post stressed the importance of women's activities, "Honey, it's all political."<sup>86</sup>

In 1964, Governor Edward T. Breathitt established the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>87</sup> This commission was guided in part by the President's Commission on the Status of Women and by similar reports by other states.<sup>88</sup> It was created to determine the progress of women in Kentucky and to make recommendation in areas of employment, education, legal status, home and community, culture, volunteerism, citizenship, and religion.<sup>89</sup> Although this commission cannot be labeled as actively feminist, it did provide information about the inequitable status of women in Kentucky. The commission stated that the "homes and communities of tomorrow must have homemakers ever conscious that individual

freedom of choice must not be limited by sex, race, creed, or economic status.”<sup>90</sup>

In the early 1970s, this commission was reorganized as the Kentucky Commission on Women under Governor Wendell Ford and streamlined to focus on three main areas: employment, education, and public information.<sup>91</sup> The commission consisted of such women as Martha Layne Collins, later Governor of Kentucky, Lieutenant Governor Thelma Stovall, labor leader Nelle Horlander, and Delores Delahanty who was a member of the steering committee for the National Women’s Political Caucus.<sup>92</sup> The commission published its own bulletin, informing Kentucky women of a number of feminist activities and issues in the state such as feminist speakers, sex discrimination guidelines, educational opportunities, consumer education, and individual women’s accomplishments.<sup>93</sup> The commission issued a report in 1970 outlining discriminatory laws which existed in Kentucky.<sup>94</sup> The legislative committee of this commission successfully lobbied for an omnibus bill to be passed creating gender neutral language in all Kentucky laws. This was passed in 1974.<sup>95</sup>

In the late 1960s, the Kentucky Civil Liberties Union (KCLU), an affiliate of the ACLU, became an avenue through which women were establishing their rights. Suzy Post, who had been extremely active in the anti-war movement, wanted to use the union as a viable instrument for the anti-war movement. Post, a native Louisvillian, grew up in a personally conservative, politically liberal, middle-class household. Being Jewish and having had relatives who experienced the holocaust in Germany, Post was compelled at an early age to fight for the rights of oppressed and discriminated people.

She began her activist career in the civil rights movement but became especially involved in the anti-war movement. In 1969, Post was elected as President of the KCLU. In the early 1970s, she was elected as Vice-chairperson of the ACLU. Throughout her activist career, Post championed the cause not only of women, but of other oppressed peoples as well. Today she is the director of the Metropolitan Housing Coalition in Louisville which seeks housing for underprivileged families.

Post began to revive the KCLU which had become inactive.<sup>96</sup> Within six to eight months, Post realized that she was having trouble getting women involved. To foster interest, she set up a Women’s Rights Committee which became a political and legislative “watchdog” for discriminatory laws and practices in the state. Not only did the KCLU become more attuned to the rights of women in the early 1970s, but the national union did also. Post did not feel that the national ACLU was responding to the needs and aspirations of women. When she was elected to the national board, her agenda was specific — to make the ACLU more responsive to the needs and aspiration of women. As the fifth woman on the eighty-women board, Post organized the women into a Women’s Caucus which would meet before the ACLU meetings to plan and organize its agenda and design ways to get more women elected to the board. In 1970, the ACLU made women’s issues its number one priority. Post proudly recalled the efforts of the women on the board, “We just beat . . . that board and we said ‘the time is now!’”<sup>97</sup>

Kentucky women made great political strides with the formation of the Kentucky Women's Political Caucus (KWPC) in 1971. Delores Delahanty was involved in the women's subcommittee of the KCLU. In this capacity, she and Rebecca Westerfield, who was Vice-President of the UK Student Government Association, attended the charter meeting of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) in July 1971.<sup>98</sup> Upon her return to Kentucky she started contacting Kentucky women to establish a Kentucky caucus. The first convention of the KWPC convened in September 1971 at the University of Louisville and consisted of both Democrats and Republicans. The goals of the caucus were to get women more involved in Kentucky politics, to get women elected to political office, and to educate women about politics. The KWPC wanted to stress the egalitarian spirit of the women's movement, "In the early days of the caucus, we didn't want a hierarchical structure."<sup>99</sup> It also attempted to cut across party lines, socio-economic lines, and racial lines. The caucus began as a state-wide organization and in 1972, branches were established in Louisville, Lexington, Bowling Green, and northern Kentucky. Although its membership never rose above 300, "its influence far exceeded its numbers."<sup>100</sup>

This organization also became involved in the women's movement on the national level. A group of the KWPC attended the International Women's Year in Houston in 1977. In addition, Kentucky was represented on the national Women's Political Caucus's Steering Committee by Delores Delahanty. In this capacity, she worked for the same goals of the state caucus. In the early 1970s Delahanty was chair of the National Women's Political Caucus Convention and in 1975 she ran unsuccessfully for the Chairperson of the NWPC. Later in the 1970s, Delahanty was elected President of the National Women's Education Fund. This was a non-membership organization which held workshops across the nation to teach aspiring female politicians campaign techniques and tactics.<sup>101</sup>

Kentucky Women were also fighting for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. As an opinion in the *Louisville Times* stated, by the 1970s, "the ERA [was] less an instrument of social change than a reflection of it."<sup>102</sup> In an attempt to guarantee rights and open opportunities that currently eluded women by the passage of the ERA, Kentucky women organized a pro-ERA Alliance in the early 1970s. The alliance in Lexington consisted of about fifty percent college women, mostly from UK, and the rest were middle-aged women. One of its chief proponents was Allie Hendricks who later helped establish the Women's Center of Lexington.<sup>103</sup> In 1972 the Kentucky General Assembly passed the ERA, but, to the disappointment of many Kentucky women, its time ran out in 1978 when a majority of the states failed to ratify it.

Another way in which Kentucky females championed feminist causes was through the organized labor movement. One of ten children, Nelle Horlander was raised on a farm and received her elementary education in a one room school in Dry Fork, Kentucky. Horlander grew up convinced that women could do anything that men could do and was not faced with discrimination until she went to the "city." She

originally planned to pursue a career as a chemist, but learned that only men would be considered for jobs in that field. After two years of study at the University of Louisville, she took a job at Southern Bell and worked her way up to a communications consultant, one of the first for her company.

Horlander became active in her union, the Communications Workers of America (CWA), and discovered the same discrimination. Unions have historically been a man's world and obviously a tough environment for anyone, especially a woman. Horlander was the first female President of the local CWA and was appointed as a full-time staff person in 1969. She has fought for feminist causes throughout her life within her union and in the community.<sup>104</sup>

Horlander's involvement has certainly not gone unrecognized. She has been the recipient of numerous awards on the local and national level. In accepting the Brotherhood Awards of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1977, she boldly expressed her feminism saying, "In the spirit of sisterhood, I proudly accept the Brotherhood Award." This award has now been re-named the Brotherhood/Sisterhood Award.<sup>105</sup>

Horlander was among the workers who rallied for a permanent committee to address the problems of women within the CWA. In 1969, the Concerned Women's Advancement Committee was established and Horlander was appointed as director for the nine southern states. The committee rallied women to gain access to positions on bargaining committees. In addition, it addressed issues like equal pay for comparable work, the upgrading of clerical jobs, and it sponsored comparative job studies.<sup>106</sup>

Horlander was also a member of a subcommittee of the AFL-CIO called the Women's Activities Department (WAD), which was established in the early 1960s. In 1974, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) was formed in Louisville and designed to integrate women more into labor organizations instead of segregating them into separate committees. This coalition also worked outside the labor sphere by fighting to keep the ERA from being rescinded in the mid-1970s.<sup>107</sup>

The women's movement in central Kentucky was a viable and important phenomena in the 1960s and early 1970s, influencing women in all aspects of life including politics, labor, and the home. Ultimately, however, the women's movement must be deemed honorable, not in how it was organized or who it involved, but in what it made possible.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, the movement fostered many possibilities for the women of central Kentucky.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, women began organizing counseling centers for women. Both the Women's Center of Lexington and the Rape Crisis Center grew out of the women's movement and functioned to address special problems of women. The Women's Center was started in the late 1960s by Lexington feminists including Allie Hendricks and Paula Cline. It was started because of a concern for women and prescription drug use, but it branched out into other social and political activism.<sup>109</sup> In the early days of the Center, its organizers met at Alfalfa's restaurant and sponsored self-help films for women, supplied information on other women's



counseling services, and published a newsletter.<sup>110</sup> In one newsletter, the Center described the circumstances around a grand jury indictment of a group of radical women in Lexington who the FBI were investigating for allegedly hiding other radicals.<sup>111</sup> The group also endorsed a "A statement of purpose" by the Lexington Grand Jury Defense Fund Committee which was a committee set up in the community to help rally behind the women being indicted.<sup>112</sup>

The Rape Crisis Center of Lexington started as a special program of the Women's Center but was independently incorporated in 1974. A group of concerned women at the Women's Center recognized that Lexington had no special services for women who had been raped and so they formed the first rape crisis center in Kentucky. Diane Lollis, who at the time of this writing is the Executive Director of the center, remembered the "grass roots" beginning of the center and has watched it grow from handling between twenty and thirty cases per year in the early days, to over seven hundred in 1989. Lollis attributes this incredible increase in numbers not to the greater incidence of rape in Lexington, but to this greater availability of help and understanding for rape victims, largely due to the women's movement.<sup>113</sup>

Planned Parenthood of Lexington, though established years before the 1960s, changed its focus in the early 1970s, largely due to the women's movement.<sup>114</sup> This organization became very controversial in the early 1970s when it initiated abortion counseling and became a staunch advocate for the reproductive rights of women.<sup>115</sup> Planned Parenthood sent newsletters to its patients, informing them of birth control methods and clinics throughout the city.<sup>116</sup> Thus many central Kentucky women were given the opportunity for information to control their bodies and subsequently their own lives.

Aside from the abolition of discriminatory laws and commercial practices that resulted from the women's movement, important changes occurred in the views of women, both young and old, regarding their roles in society. Fewer college women views their roles as wife and mother to be their only choice.<sup>117</sup> Young women no longer felt it was unfeminine to pursue both a career and a family.<sup>118</sup> Professor Paul Fuller of Transylvania University recalled that by the early 1970s, "no question" existed that college women from Transylvania were moving in much greater numbers into the professions of law and medicine.<sup>119</sup> Colleges in the state were also taking a greater interest in women's issues and women's history. By 1971, both Transylvania and the UK were offering women's history classes.<sup>120</sup> Hence, a new breed of women, better educated about women's struggles, more ambitious, and less inhibited were emerging from the state's universities. In fact, most collegiate women by the 1970s would have agreed with Nora's response to Helmer in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*:

Helmer: Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

Nora: That I no longer believe. I think that before all else I am a human being, just as you are — or at least, I will try to become one. I know that most

people agree with you, Torvald, and that they say so in books. But henceforth I can't be satisfied with what most people say, and what is in books. I must think things out for myself and try to get clear about them."<sup>121</sup>

The personal gains of many women who were involved both directly and indirectly in the women's movement also reflect a profound and significant change in women's lives as a result. Delores Delahanty became more assertive and self-sufficient, "I stopped apologizing for things which I had no control over."<sup>122</sup> Delahanty benefited from the trusting, working relationships which she was able to establish with women on both the local and national level of the women's movement.<sup>123</sup> Anne Binford, through her association with other feminists and her own personal study was able to make art for the first time in twenty years, "I am making [my art] for myself and for other women."<sup>124</sup> Ruth Ravitz, through the strength she had gained from feminist friends and literature, was able to muster the courage to leave her husband.<sup>125</sup> Many women, through their work in the women's movement, realized strength and potential in themselves they never knew they had. Suzy Post recalled, "Getting in touch with my own power was very important. I was going to become an important person, not only that I was going to, but I could do it."<sup>126</sup>

Many women, both young and old, participated in the women's movement in central Kentucky. In numerous ways, their involvement mirrored the national experience of American women, and in some instances participated directly in it. As a result of pure human struggle, the lives of many Kentucky women were improved economically, politically, and personally. Women in Kentucky "took each other from where we were in the women's movement and what we were doing in the struggle."<sup>127</sup> Some women were extremely active on the national level and believed that "the greatest harm is done by people who do nothing."<sup>128</sup> While other women were more comfortable behind the scenes, cheering their sisters on and reflecting, "I am grateful to my sisters."<sup>129</sup> And whether it was Suzy Post beating the national ACLU board, Nelle Horlander "hit[ting] them between the eyes" in the smoke-filled rooms of a labor bargaining committee, or Ruth Ravitz being able to make positive changes in her life "one little step at a time" the women's movement affected all types of women in central Kentucky.<sup>130</sup> And as a result of the courageous efforts of many, the lives of all Kentucky women are filled with greater possibilities and expectations. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world" were the sentiments of Suzy Post.<sup>131</sup> And all subsequent Kentucky females are indebted with gratitude to the brave Kentucky women who made our lives a little more important, a little more worthwhile, and a lot more free.

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# **For the Little Ones: Louise Torrey Taft and the Free Kindergarten Movement in Cincinnati**

by  
**Mary Alice Mairose**

...the smallest germ of good, though no larger than a grain of mustard seed, deserves shelter and care. If it has in it as we believe, the principle of life, it will not perish.<sup>1</sup>

The name Louise Taft means little to most people. A few may recognize her as the mother of William Howard Taft, but even fewer are aware of the great contribution that this woman made to the children of Cincinnati. The charity kindergarten was one of the many "Child Saving Institutions" that were popular around the end of the nineteenth century. Louise, along with others of her day, believed that it was imperative to provide opportunities for "those to whom existence seems hardly a blessing, so destitute are they of all that constitutes the happiness and well being of childhood."<sup>2</sup> In the years that Mrs. Taft presided over the Kindergarten Association the work of these women benefited hundreds of poverty stricken children.

In 1853 Cincinnati lawyer Alphonso Taft lost his first wife Fanny, and was left with two sons, aged ten and seven. Within a few months Alphonso was making inquiries to New England friends about a young woman to become his second wife. His search led to twenty-six-year-old Louise Torrey of Millbury, Massachusetts. Louise was a well educated and strong minded young woman. She had attended the South Hadley Seminary, later Mount Holyoke, for a year; later she taught music. Louise's mother believed that the views of her four daughters should not be restricted because they lived in a small town. They traveled to Boston, New York, and Washington. Their home was often visited by celebrity lecturers who came through the Millbury area; among the most notable were Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., Horace Greeley and Lucy Stone.<sup>3</sup>

After a brief courtship, Louise married Alphonso Taft on December 26, 1853. Mr. Taft took his young wife to his home in the comfortable Cincinnati suburb of Mount Auburn, where she met his sons and parents who also lived in the house at 60 Auburn Avenue. This new life was quite busy for Louise; she and Alphonso had four children who survived infancy, including William Howard Taft, twenty-seventh President, and tenth Chief Justice of the United States. In spite of the fact that Louise had many family responsibilities she had a strong belief in community service which is evident in a letter she wrote to her father: "it does not suit me to live in any community and not be identified with what is useful and desirable in it."<sup>4</sup>

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The Taft children were bright and received a great deal of encouragement from their parents to excel. As a young mother, Louise was struck by the great responsibility that was part of raising children. She observed that they need "constant watching and correcting. The role of a parent requires great caution and firmness to do the right things always [since] it is what we are not what we do in reference to them, which will make its impression on their life."<sup>5</sup>

Louise was disappointed that her children were denied the chance to go to kindergarten since the appropriation of state funds for educating children under the age of six was forbidden by Ohio law.<sup>6</sup> Middle and upper class women were bombarded with advice on how to raise their children. The pros and cons of kindergarten training were debated, and mothers were told to instill such values as self-denial, benevolence, and the love of labor in their children.<sup>7</sup> Even though Louise lived in a comfortable suburb, she was aware that the children in the poorer parts of the city often lacked the benefits of a positive influence early in their lives.

Many people throughout Europe and the United States were concerned about the teaching of young children. Primary education was seen as a system of rote memorization; it was believed that teaching young children was a job that required little energy or knowledge.<sup>8</sup> In Germany during the 1830s and 1840s, Friedrich Froebel had advocated some radical ideas about teaching young children. He disagreed with the theory that information should be drummed into children's heads through rote memorization. He theorized that early education should be fitted to the needs and interests of the child, and children could only learn by figuring things out for themselves.<sup>9</sup> Froebel based his theories on a series of non-sectarian religious beliefs. According to his teachings, God was the "Divine Unity" and the source of the unity that provided order for the rest of the world. By encouraging children to be alert and observe the world around them they would learn about God through His creations. They would gain a greater appreciation of the Almighty in this manner than they would being constantly drilled in religious dogma."<sup>10</sup> This turning away from accepted beliefs scandalized many.

For one thing, accepting Froebel's principles meant rejecting the Calvinistic idea of infant damnation.<sup>11</sup> According to Froebel, the ages between three and seven were the most important in a person's life. It was during these years that a child picked up evil habits; they were not born into the child, but learned from outside influences. This belief caused kindergartens to be considered vehicles for social reform. Often, parents were uneducated themselves and could not teach their children; others were immigrants who were unfamiliar with the language and culture of their new land. In some case the meanness or drunkenness of the parents was the primary influence that the child received at home. This early education was seen as a way of breaking down class barriers, and giving poor children the chance to become productive members of society. In some cities kindergarten-aged children were given instruction in temperance by being taught to refuse any alcoholic beverage.<sup>12</sup>

The role of the teacher was very important in the kindergarten movement. The "Kindergartener," as she was called, needed such qualities as refinement, education

and imagination. These young women should come from good homes, but it was not necessary that their families be wealthy.<sup>13</sup> It was absolutely essential for teachers in poor neighborhoods to possess sympathy for their pupils, as well as the tact needed to approach them and their parents in a non-judgemental fashion.

In St. Louis, a wealthy young woman named Susan Blow became interested in the kindergarten movement. She had traveled throughout Europe with her parents and spent much of her time there visiting schools, observing activities and taking notes. Her father supported her efforts and offered to finance the project, but she believed that the kindergarten should be conducted as part of the public school system. William Torrey Harris,<sup>14</sup> Superintendent of the St. Louis public schools, was impressed by Susan Blow's dedication and intelligence; he had also been urged by Elizabeth Peabody, one of the earliest advocates of kindergarten education in the United States, to incorporate the program into the St. Louis school system. Harris agreed to provide a classroom and a paid assistant for Blow's experiment.

Cincinnati did have some private kindergartens by this time but an effort to start a free school in 1873 had failed for lack of financial support. Louise collected articles on kindergartens with great care, including an undated story from the *Cincinnati Gazette* in which Mrs. A. E. Wilde, one of the founders of the earlier kindergarten mourned its demise. Mrs. Wilde stressed that kindergartens provided a valuable service to teachers by helping children form good habits while they were still pliable. When a child's education does not start until the age of six, "the teacher no longer works in the plastic clay, but must chisel the stone."<sup>15</sup> Wilde cited, among other examples of the kindergarten's service to the community, the case of two children under the age of five who were confined to a darkened room with their dying father; the kindergarten allowed these children to have the chance to learn, play and interact with other children. When she visited their home, Wilde took great satisfaction in seeing that the children applied many of the things they learned in school to make things better at home.

Interest in kindergarten education was once more aroused in Cincinnati in the summer of 1879. Louise wrote: "...the ladies most interested in it are urging me to let my name stand at the head and take the lead. But I am not sufficiently enthused and I don't want to be a figurehead unless I go into it *con amore*."<sup>16</sup> It was the goal of these women to open a school with the intent of introducing the kindergarten into the public school system. Meetings were held every two weeks at Hughes and Woodward High Schools with good attendance. But as the summer progressed interest began to flag. At the end of August, a frustrated Louise wrote to her sister that almost nobody came to the last meeting: "It looks like a great burden to take up that work again, but I hope I shall feel more in the spirit of it bye and bye. If it was to do over again, I think I would let it rest and spend my energies at home."<sup>17</sup>

The actions of Louise Taft deny the reluctant tone of her words. She launched a vigorous letter writing campaign to St. Louis in an attempt to bring Susan Blow to Cincinnati to speak with the women who were interested in the kindergarten movement. Louise was forced to content herself with Blow's assurance that the best

possible teacher would be sent from St. Louis when the first Cincinnati Kindergarten was ready to open. Susan Blow promised that the young woman would not only be skillful in working with children, but would be able to instruct future teachers both in theoretical insights and practical application.<sup>18</sup>

When the ladies held their first official meeting on December 13, 1879, Louise was appointed to the post of President of the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association. She delivered a paper on January 20, 1879, urging the members of the Association to move forward in their noble efforts. It was their goal that all children of Cincinnati receive a kindergarten education regardless of class, but legislation to introduce the program to the public schools came slowly. She reminded the other women that "we can not wait for the slow process while the little ones wander neglected in the streets." She spoke of the young children of her day as the future of Cincinnati, and the rest of the state. "Ohio can not afford to be in the rear of the march of progress in education. Nor is Cincinnati usually content to see other cities taking the lead in new ideas."<sup>19</sup>

A Constitution was established; it decreed that meetings be held on the third Tuesday of every month. Besides the President, other offices included six Vice presidents, recording and corresponding secretaries and a treasurer. Committees were formed on finance, publication, housing instruction and visiting. Anyone who wished to become a subscriber of the Kindergarten Association could do so by donating two dollars.<sup>20</sup>

The ladies were especially excited about a lecture that was presented to them by Professor Harris. He described his work in St. Louis, and urged them ahead in their own work. During his lecture he told them that twenty five percent of criminals were men with no education, and that training at a young age would give the children of the poor a better chance in their adult lives. Harris warned wealthy parents that placing their child in the care of a servant could be harmful in the long run, since most servants lacked the directing force that was necessary to positively influence a young child.<sup>21</sup>

The ladies selected rooms for their school in the Spencer House on the corner of Broadway and Front streets. The rooms were large and well suited for their purpose, and the neighborhood was "locality for such missionary work as kindergarten."<sup>22</sup> Miss Blow was true to her word and sent Sallie Shawk from St. Louis to Cincinnati. On March 1, the Spencer House School opened. Six children came the first day, and attendance increased as the little pupils spread the word about the food, games, and songs at school. Before long an average of fifty children were coming to the Spencer House each day.<sup>23</sup>

By the end of the year the Kindergarten Association numbered over three hundred as support came from various members of the community. A few weeks after the school was opened Mrs. Taft was promised that the proceeds of an "English-French parlor reading" would go to the benefit of the fledgling Kindergarten Association.<sup>24</sup> A series of letters were exchanged between Louise and Richard Bissell, an elderly Hamilton, Ohio resident. He encouraged her and the other ladies

of the Association in their important work. "Children are human plants," he wrote "and need very much the same treatment in their starts in life, that is their minds need horticulturing as flowers need training by skillful hands and minds." Bissell criticized the "rich misers" of the city, and promised that an endowment of one thousand dollars would be given to the Cincinnati Kindergarten upon his death.<sup>25</sup>

Word of the Cincinnati Kindergarten was spreading throughout the country. Louise received letters from as far away as Indianopolis, Detroit, and Bethel, Vermont from women seeking employment at the Spencer House School.<sup>26</sup> It would not be necessary to look for teachers outside of the Cincinnati area since a Normal School was conducted by Miss Shawk; part of their training was working in the kindergarten, and future teachers would be hired from among the graduates of this program.

The Kindergarten Association was hopeful as it entered its second year. Children who had attended the Kindergarten the previous year would be eligible for the afternoon class while the younger pupils would attend the morning session.<sup>27</sup> A minor skirmish broke out among the ladies over the establishment of a "Kitchengarten." This program for girls between the ages of nine and fifteen would train them in household arts, in the hope that such training would improve living conditions in the slums.<sup>28</sup> A compromise was reached wherein the kitchengarten would be a committee of the Kindergarten Association, and the school rooms would be used for the purposes of this program on Saturdays.<sup>29</sup> The Cincinnati Kindergarten Association expanded its charitable efforts by opening a second school on Elm Street with morning and afternoon sessions.<sup>30</sup>

On November 26, the ladies went to the public to demonstrate how well children learned from this method of teaching. The children of a private kindergarten performed their songs for an audience at Music Hall. The critics were pleased by the concert and one paper declared that "no other system of teaching could so soon, and so readily teach them to comprehend and render music so well."<sup>31</sup> Another praised the "excellent energy manifested by those ladies in their charitable and educational works."<sup>32</sup>

By the year's end the women were happy to report that they had been able to reach about two hundred children, and regretted that they did not have the facilities to give every child in the city an opportunity to attend kindergarten, but believed that it was absolutely necessary to reach the poorest children. Louise knew that the work of the Kindergarten Association would alleviate only a portion of the suffering of Cincinnati's poor. "We do not pretend to work miracles," she wrote "but these are the objects we aim at, and we observe so much improvement that we recognize the beginnings of good results."<sup>33</sup>

The following year the fortunes of the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association were mixed. Smallpox in the Spencer House made it necessary to move to rooms on Front Street, while the school on Elm Street continued with morning and afternoon sessions. One of the greatest successes of the Kindergarten Association at this time was the training program for new kindergartners. Under the watchful eyes of Sallie

Shawk, young women were trained in the theory and practice of teaching young children, and went on to become "the centers of influence in neighboring towns." Graduates of the Normal School were teaching in Dayton, Hamilton, Greenfield, and Covington, Kentucky, among other places.<sup>34</sup>

The Cincinnati Kindergarten Association lost two of its most vital members in 1882. Because of the lack of funds, it was impossible to keep Sallie Shawk as the director of the kindergartens any longer. This, coupled with the resignation of Mrs. Taft as President, proved to be a great blow to the organization. Alphonso Taft had been appointed to the post of Ambassador to Austria-Hungary as a reward for his many years in political service, and his wife would join him in Vienna.<sup>35</sup> The women of the Association acknowledged her years of service and the void her absence would create:

To those who know the unflagging interest which from the first characterized her able leadership of our association, it will not seem exaggeration, when we say that we felt in an orphaned condition, when she left us for her residence abroad.<sup>36</sup>

As Mrs. Taft carried out the duties of a diplomat's wife in Austria, and later Russia, the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association fell on hard times. Members made no efforts to raise more money for the schools, which drew heavily on their current assets. Then in 1883, Cincinnati experienced a flood that closed the school on Elm Street for three weeks and caused extensive damage.<sup>37</sup> The Flood Relief Committee gave the Kindergarten Association \$200 to help make up for their losses. The North School was now located on the corner of Vine and McMicken, and the South School was moved to 97 East 3rd Street.

The following year the kindergartens suffered along with the rest of the city from financial difficulties caused by the even more devastating flood of 1884 and a general slump in Cincinnati's industry. The attempts to persuade individuals or churches to sponsor schools proved to be unsuccessful. The ladies lamented that although their work was "saving the State the vast expense of reformatories and prisons," that fact was "not yet sufficiently impressed into the public."<sup>38</sup> Some positive aspects resulted as young women over the age of seventeen who had completed high school, and had talent in music and art were accepted into the training school. Twenty three graduates were pursuing careers as kindergartners around the Cincinnati area, while one graduate was teaching in Texas.<sup>39</sup>

Some comfort could be taken from the knowledge that they were making a positive contribution to the lives of poor children. The ladies regretted that the bread and milk fund, established to give poor children decent meals on a daily basis, had to be discontinued because of a lack of funds. Christmas was a major celebration and individuals donated food for a special meal for the children, as well as toys, a tree, and a Santa Claus suit. One woman on the visiting committee reported on a poor family, dressed in rags and the father drunk. The family received assistance from the Kindergarten Association, and even though the father went back to



drinking, the writer was happy to report that “the mother was a changed mother, and the children were influenced in their whole lives in the direction of goodness, cleanliness, and respectability.”<sup>40</sup>

In an attempt to raise more money the Kindergarten Association tried a new approach to fund raising with larger subscriptions and paid in installments. Although Louise Taft was still in Europe, several members of her family were actively involved in the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association. Her stepson Charlie was a member of the Advisory Committee, Charlie’s wife and Fanny, the youngest of the Taft children were on the Committee for Entertainments, and Helen Heron the future Mrs. William Howard Taft was a member of the Instruction Committee.<sup>41</sup>

An important milestone in 1886 for the Kindergarten Association was the opening of a third school on Western Avenue. With morning and afternoon sessions in each of the three schools, three hundred children were able to attend.<sup>42</sup> In spite of this, many children had to be turned away for lack of space. The ladies of the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association, along with the students and teachers of the Normal School formed a Froebel Society to meet and discuss the theories of the man who conceived the idea of kindergarten education. Since many of the children who attended the charity kindergartens were not decently clothed, the Kindergarten Sewing Society was formed to remedy the problem.<sup>43</sup>

When Alphonso Taft’s term of diplomatic service ended in 1886 Louise once more took up the work of the free kindergartens in Cincinnati. She received a letter from her old co-worker Sallie Shawk who welcomed her back to the United States and wished her “improved prospects for carrying out such noble work in the coming year.”<sup>44</sup> It would be a busy year for the women who worked to educate the city’s poor children; fund raising efforts would include musical and literary events as well as dramas and comedies.<sup>45</sup> Even more people became aware of their work when they participated in Cincinnati’s Centennial Exhibition in 1888. A model school was set up and an exhibit focused on the training of kindergarten teachers. Once more the school benefited from the kindness of outside benefactors. Donations ranged from food, clothing and kindling to cigar boxes and diamond dust for the children’s art work.<sup>46</sup>

It was an important year for the Association because another school was opened bringing the enrollment up to four hundred. The Deer Creek School was located at 8th and Gilbert. At this time Louise Taft spoke out on the importance of educating girls. Many said that domestic training was enough for female children since they did not have the right to vote. “The forbidden fruit of political privilege they can forego,” Louise wrote, “but how are they to arm themselves in the struggle for existence.” She added that in the fight for daily survival the victor “will not be of the strongest, but of those best trained.”<sup>47</sup> Louise had always believed that an education was essential to a woman. She scorned men who believed that women should be frivolous and superficial, when these were the same women who would become the mothers of their children, sons as well as daughters. She would always hold men in contempt who “did not value [education] for its own sake, but turns

round to push his sister down the ladder when she strives to follow him."<sup>48</sup>

The Kindergarten Association was now able to concentrate on needs other than the education of poor children. They tried to introduce them to activities that children of the upper classes took for granted. Pupils were taken to Eden Park, Coney Island, and Burnett Woods for picnics; Froebel's birthday was celebrated; and the frailest of the children were able to spend part of the summer in the country thanks to the Fresh Air Fund.<sup>49</sup>

Louise visited St. Louis and met with Professor Harris who stated that he thought "the kindergarten cause has never been as hopeful as today." The St. Louis schools had been gaining support for the last twelve years which gave many children the chance to attend. This was important "not as much for its effect on the child's school education," as it was "to direct the beginnings of the child."<sup>50</sup>

Another model school and training class was held in conjunction with the Cincinnati Exhibition. This year Louise had managed to secure the assistance of Madame Krauss Bolte, one of Froebel's most noted followers, to conduct a summer session in Cincinnati.<sup>51</sup> It was a huge success with so many visitors that "it was only with the greatest difficulty that sufficient space for the children could be reserved."<sup>52</sup> Louise's daughter Fanny is listed among the graduates of the training school of the summer of 1889, but no evidence exists that she actually taught in a kindergarten.<sup>53</sup>

Louise Taft's last year in the Kindergarten Association was 1889, when her husband's health was failing. She and Alphonso moved to San Diego hoping that the climate of that city would be kinder to him than Cincinnati's. The Kindergarten Association's Annual Report records the deep affection that the members had for their first President:

We find ourselves obliged at this annual election of officers to accept the resignation of Mrs. Alphonso Taft as President, first presiding officer, and one who has for so many years was our leader and inspiration. Her indomitable courage will, we trust continue to animate the officers of our Association, and an ever-increasing success demonstrate that we have builded [sic] even better that we knew."<sup>54</sup>

In 1892 a bill was passed in the Ohio legislature making it possible for a board of education of a first or second class city to establish kindergartens in their public school systems. Two years later the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association was incorporated into the laws of Ohio. Louise's goal had finally come to fruition.<sup>55</sup> Although her work would not be as far reaching as that of other Tafts, Louise helped to bring the chance of a better life to thousands of Cincinnati children.

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# Racial Injustice In Vietnam

by

Todd M. Novak

The Vietnam era was a turbulent one for blacks. They were fighting for their rights here in America and being drafted in huge numbers to fight in Vietnam. More than 500,000 blacks served in the military during the Vietnam era, and over 7,000 were killed.<sup>1</sup> Due to the harsh situation at home, partly because the war on poverty was at a standstill, many blacks had no other alternative but to go to Vietnam. The draft system was geared toward recruiting the lower class where many blacks resided; hence, unlike the middle and upper classes, blacks did not receive a great number of deferments to keep them out of the military. Furthermore, Jack Foner states:

Blacks were underrepresented on local draft boards. Of 17,123 local board members in 1967, only 261, or 1.5 percent, were black. Not a single black served on a draft board in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, or Mississippi. By June 1970 it was increased to 6.6 percent nationwide.<sup>2</sup>

Blacks; therefore, were being drafted out of proportion to their numbers in the total population. A 1964 study concluded that 18.8 percent of eligible white males were drafted, whereas 30.2 percent of eligible blacks were drafted. Three years later, the numbers had risen to 64 percent of blacks compared with only 31 percent for whites.<sup>3</sup> Eldridge Cleaver felt the United States was intentionally sending an enormous amount of blacks to Vietnam for a specific purpose: "to kill off the cream of Black youth by sending 16 percent Black troops to Vietnam."<sup>4</sup>

In basic training, discrimination still existed and the separation of races was still somewhat prevalent. Reginald Edwards who was in boot camp in 1963 claims he did not mix with whites; he socialized with Mexicans and expected the whites to treat him badly.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as late as 1966, some barracks in the Army during basic training were segregated — blacks on one side, whites on the other. Blacks also tended to get the dirtiest undesirable details through basic training, like sweeping under the barracks and KP, while whites were assigned to more creditable jobs.<sup>6</sup>

Once blacks got into Vietnam they were assigned menial tasks and infantry duty due to their poor education and lack of necessary skills. According to Foner:

The racial and cultural biases in the military tests, combined with the low educational training and experience of the average black inductee, assured him assignments in the infantry and the low-skilled jobs that the military termed "soft-core" — food service, supply, and transportation — rather than to such "hard-

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core"technical specialties as communications, intelligence, and the handling of electronic equipment.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the military did treat blacks differently from whites because an overwhelming number of blacks were sent to combat duty which is far more dangerous than anything else. The numbers sent to combat were out of proportion to their overall population and to their numbers in the military.<sup>8</sup> "As of December 1965 almost 27% of black soldiers were assigned to the infantry, compared to less than 18% of white soldiers. In 1967, 20% of all army fatalities were black."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, between 1961 and 1967, blacks suffered 17 percent of all deaths in Southeast Asia compared with the percentage of black troops being at 12 percent.<sup>10</sup> Blacks were not only being placed in combat units, they represented a large majority of the point men. The point man was the first soldier into a hostile area and therefore was more likely to be wounded or killed.<sup>11</sup> At the onset of the war, blacks tended to volunteer for these hazardous positions for two reasons. First, a bonus incentive was used for the point man in terms of dollars and promotions; secondly, blacks wanted to prove their courage to themselves and others (particularly whites).<sup>12</sup> As the war dragged on, blacks became less interested in walking the point. "Sgt. Paulson handpicks the men for this job," wrote a black soldier. "So far, it seems to me he's fingered only Negroes and Puerto Ricans. I think he's trying to tell us something."<sup>13</sup> A similar letter from a black soldier read:

You should see for yourself how the black man is being treated over here. And the way we are dying. When it comes to rank we are left out. When it comes to special privileges we are left out. When it comes to patrols — we are first.<sup>14</sup>

Larry Wilson, a machine gunner on a helicopter, served in Vietnam from 1969 until 1970. He claimed that about six out of every ten men he pulled from the bush after a fire fight were black. Although this figure may be somewhat exaggerated, he was correct in believing that too many blacks were being killed and the dangerous tasks should have been better distributed.<sup>15</sup>

Further, a black veteran contends that after a black was wounded and came out of the field he would be assigned latrine duty, while whites would sit at a desk or work in the mess hall.<sup>16</sup> The Navy was not excluded from this sort of job discrimination either. On large vessels and overwhelming number of blacks were down in the bowels of the ships doing the most degrading jobs.<sup>17</sup> Overall, blacks suffered most when it came to job placement. Their lack of skill and education, not to mention the scarcity of high ranking black officers, all contributed to this. A more significant component of the war, however, would be the cohesion needed between white and black combat soldiers while in the field.

The relationship between black and white servicemen was better in Vietnam, especially in combat units, than in America, perhaps because in the field everyone

is dependent upon everyone else. This critical quality of interdependence along with close living and working conditions created a unique black-white relationship. It was unique because blacks and whites were not used to working together in order to achieve a common goal. They were forced into fighting side by side, saving each others' lives, and ultimately becoming friends while in combat.<sup>18</sup> This relationship was not without flaws; the turmoil at home and the small "buddy system" unit composed of eight to ten men created tension among the soldiers. According to Jerome Kroll:

the tension of having to be dependent upon the very man hated, feared, despised, and perhaps secretly admired. Black and white soldiers wore the same uniform, were endangered by a common enemy, and had to work together, cooperate together, take risks together, and depend upon each other for their lives, while at the same time they distrusted each other.<sup>19</sup>

This tension was more prominent among troops stationed in rear base camps. In these settings, segregated groupings, discrimination, tension, and frequent interracial conflicts became more apparent.<sup>20</sup> "Once back from the actual combat mission, the black and white soldiers went their separate ways and had relatively little to do with each other."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, inside the combat unit bases, bunkers were segregated for blacks and whites; in the mess hall blacks and whites sat at separate tables; and they congregated apart from each other at service clubs. Although some black and white friendships carried over into non-combat situations, the majority of blacks and whites went their separate ways outside of the bases. Even black bars and white bars and other facilities were off limits to a specific race.<sup>22</sup>

Another relationship which must be considered was between the black soldier and the Vietnamese as a whole.

"Six times as many white soldiers as black soldiers were incarcerated for violent crimes against Vietnamese persons. . . . This process of transferring hostility onto the Vietnamese civilian was facilitated by other prejudicial attitudes common in the upbringing of white America."<sup>23</sup>

Blacks tended to feel for the Vietnamese because they could relate to the situation they were in — fighting against a prejudiced white establishment that stereotyped them as inferior. Black soldiers had greater sympathy toward the Vietnamese, and when not in actual combat, some viewed American whites as the enemy and the citizens of Vietnam as their friend and ally.<sup>24</sup> One black soldier summarized his attitude toward the Vietnamese as: "No Vietnamese ever called me a nigger!"<sup>25</sup> Possibly the Vietnamese treated the black soldiers better than they were used to being treated in the United States.<sup>26</sup>

The enemy was aware of the situation that blacks were facing, at home and in their country. They tried to capitalize on these conflicts between the two races while fighting. One black veteran asserted that, "to play on the sympathy of the black soldier, the Vietcong would shoot at a white guy, then let the black guy behind him



go through, then shoot at the next white guy.’<sup>27</sup> The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and National Liberation Front (NLF) forces began distributing propaganda and broadcasting to black soldiers that this was not their war and they did not want to shoot black Americans.<sup>28</sup> Thinking that the Vietcong (VC) and the NVA did not shoot blacks, whites tended to stay close to their fellow black soldiers or simply sent out a troop made up of mostly blacks, alleged one black veteran.<sup>29</sup>

By the late 1960s the tension between blacks and whites was increasing considerably. Overt discrimination was observable in every facet of military life in all branches. In the base camp areas, Confederate flags flew and racial slurs were prevalent among whites. Blacks were considered troublemakers by superiors and put into the field if they were not already assigned there.<sup>30</sup> Foner writes:

In addition to discrimination by prejudiced superiors in the allocation of hazardous and unpleasant assignments and in awarding promotions, black servicemen complained of the military’s lack of sensitivity to black cultural identity, citing as evidence the facts that black periodicals and books on black history and culture were unavailable in the dayrooms and libraries and that past newspapers rarely published articles of interest to black servicemen and their families.<sup>31</sup>

Superiors refused the playing of soul music, opposed black literature and labeled anyone who read it a militant. They withheld overdue promotions from blacks who wore Afro hair styles yet whites were allowed to wear it as long as they wanted. The officers, who were supposed to keep unity between the men and set an example for the rest of the squad, were airing their prejudices in racial jokes, stories, and references like immature children. Worse yet, it blacks assembled in groups of more than three or four it was considered a threat and they were split up, whereas similar groups of whites were merely carrying on social conversation.<sup>32</sup>

Discrimination was also found in military justice, military police, work assignments, promotions, the management of clubs, and housing facilities. Whites would threaten owners if the discrimination policies were not upheld.<sup>33</sup> Blacks suffered discrimination that they could do virtually nothing about. The consequences of standing up for themselves was physically worse than “taking the heat” from a prejudiced white. Speaking out against unequal treatment sent blacks either into confinement or into a dangerous combat zone.<sup>34</sup> Harsh treatment carried over into arrests and punishments. Blacks were arrested more frequently and given stricter sentences. Foner contends that,

In the case of blacks, it was charged that pretrial confinement was repeatedly employed as a punishment, no matter how minor the alleged offense. An Article 15 action permitted a commanding officer to punish minor infractions without recourse to a court-martial and subsequent appeal. Statistics revealed that this action, like pretrial confinement, was generally meted out to more blacks than whites even when charged with identical offenses.<sup>35</sup>

Brigs and stockades showed a disproportionately large number of blacks because

blacks were receiving stiffer penalties and being issued more court-martials for the same offenses that whites were getting away with. For example a black and white sailor returned late to the ship; the white was excused and the black was not. Moreover, if a black and a white got into a fight — sometimes the black would be punished and the white would not be.<sup>36</sup>

This inequality played on the black soldier's psychological behavior. Blacks had been mistreated throughout history yet they were fighting in a war to gain nothing for themselves and were still forced to submit to discrimination. James Fundenberg wrote: "You are telling the brothers to join the Army when almost 50 percent of the people in jail over here are black. They are serving time for something whites over here get away with every day."<sup>37</sup> By 1968, many blacks were fed up with the treatment they were experiencing. They were twice as likely to desert or be discharged, everything from brothels to drug sources was segregated, and they were deliberately being singled out for discrimination. In spite of this, blacks began to band together and institute a new kind of attitude accentuated by special modes of dress, unique language, and different forms of greetings which alienated them from whites.<sup>38</sup>

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in April 1968 perhaps was the turning point for black soldiers in Vietnam. Since 1966, King had been speaking out against the war with increasing sharpness. He wrote in 1967:

We are taking the young black men who have been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee the liberties in Southeast Asia which they have not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same school. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they could never live on the same block in Detroit.<sup>39</sup>

Their cherished leader of nonviolent resistance had been removed by a violent act. Blacks had nowhere to turn but to resist the white establishment and denounce the war. King's assassination created a large amount of racial tension between the two races which ultimately resulted in fighting a new enemy. After the killing of King, whites resorted to some of the tactics that had been infamous in the south:

"At Que Viet, a navy installation, whites wore makeshift Klan costumes to celebrate the black leader's death, and at Da Nang Confederate flags were raised. On the day of national mourning for Dr. King, whites burned a cross and hoisted a Confederate flag in front of navy headquarters at Cam Ranh Bay."<sup>40</sup>

After continued coverage of the assassination on the television, whites were tired of hearing about it. One white soldier went as far as saying; "I wish they'd take that nigger's picture off," in a room outnumbered by blacks. The black soldiers,

showing their resistance to this racial slur, lectured the bigot about when to use that word and when not to and followed the briefing up with a physical lesson.<sup>41</sup>

From 1968 until the last troops left Vietnam, blacks created a new consciousness among themselves in both violent and nonviolent ways which reflected a changed black soldier that was no longer willing to absorb the inequality he was facing. Foner declares:

The new dimension reflected itself in self-imposed separation, especially off the job, and in displays of racial pride and solidarity, along with quick reactions to what they felt were racial slights, acts of discrimination, or racist behavior, whether conscious or unconscious. Many black servicemen insisted on the right to wear Afro hair-styles and to listen to soul music in mess halls and clubs.<sup>42</sup>

Blacks not only began standing up for themselves against white prejudice; they became more interested and identifiable with their own culture. They began reading black literature and identified with militants such as Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X. Wearing specific amulets and medallions symbolized their pride for their culture which enhanced their determination to defend themselves, much like a cross is to a Christian. White pinups were taken down and replaced by black ones. Black servicemen created new rhetoric and black power handshakes which became identifiable with the black race. They formed their own groups which discussed problems they were facing and how to deal with them. Increasingly, they denounced black military careerists as "Uncle Toms" or "Oreos" and questioned whether they should be fighting in Vietnam.<sup>43</sup> It must be realized that by the late 1960s, a large number of black draftees had just been removed from marching in Civil Rights Movements or rioting in cities across America. This new generation of soldiers protested harsh treatment and refused to overlook the discrimination that previously was the norm.<sup>44</sup>

A horde of racially motivated riots and anti-war activities spilled over from the revolution going on in the United States, creating havoc between soldiers and officers which was detrimental to the fighting capacity of the units.<sup>45</sup> Racial upheavals and riots were prevalent throughout Vietnam. A fight started at Camp Evans in 1970, when black and white soldiers started throwing racial slurs at each other. Both groups raced for their guns and faced off. A commander stepped in and averted a possible racially induced firefight. The Marine 1st Division reported seventy-nine racial assaults and three racially motivated fraggings over ten months in 1969.<sup>46</sup>

One of the most notable riots took place in August 1968 at Long Binh Jail which was to be the worst prison riot ever experienced in the United States Military. When the incident began, it was between a small number of blacks and whites but eventually progressed into a large scale brawl. Military police, carrying sticks, were called in to break it up but were taken over by blacks who beat them up and stole the keys. They proceeded to unlock some other cells and set fire to a number of buildings. Reinforcements arrived to put down the rebellion but not until seventeen

MPs were wounded, 70 of the black rebels lay wounded, and one white lay dead from the clubs of black prisoners. Blacks had been expressing their grievances for some time about the verbal abuse they were being subjected to in prison, and about the far better treatment whites were receiving. "Black soldiers, rightly or wrongly, felt they faced the same kind of prejudice that they had in the ghettos of the United States and quickly rediscovered their built-in resentment of authority."<sup>47</sup>

A more hostile form of protest used by blacks was "fragging" — attacking one's own officers with fragmentation grenades or other weapons. Although the number of fraggings was exaggerated, it happened enough to create a sense of paranoia among white officers sending black troops into the field.<sup>48</sup>

The increasing black protest forced the Pentagon into reducing the number of blacks in dangerous units. It also eliminated restrictions on black hair styles and allowed them to perform black power salutes.<sup>49</sup> Attempts at reducing the friction between whites and blacks was useless. It might have shown slight progress for a given period of time but ultimately the tension between the two races was inevitable. Blacks felt they were fighting in a war that the white man had started. They were trapped in a country fighting against two enemies, neither of which could be beaten. After returning home from Vietnam, blacks continued to struggle in a white-dominated society. They found themselves stuck in the middle again, much like in Vietnam, where many of the blacks resented them for fighting in the war and the conditions of inequality were still present throughout their environment.

After previous wars the returning soldiers have been regarded as heroes, the epitome of a patriotic American that helped to save democracy. Vietnam, however, was different. Many soldiers who returned from Vietnam were shunned from society; some were spit on, cursed at, and referred to as baby killers. Blacks evidently found it more difficult in the post-war years than whites. Their training in the service was inapplicable to civilian jobs, which made it difficult to find a job, much less a well paid one.<sup>50</sup> Many blacks returned to the United States with less than honorable discharges caused by discrimination, anger, or outspokenness which undoubtedly denied them a decent job and took away their veterans' benefits.<sup>51</sup> Blacks came back to the United States stuck in the same predicament they faced in Vietnam — in a situation they could virtually do nothing about with no way of bettering themselves. According to Francis B. Ward:

A bad discharge often based on racist consciousness or white insensitivity; rejection by numerous employers because of the discharge; adamant refusal of the military to review, much less change, an undesirable, general, or dishonorable discharge; and consequently, a continuing, potentially dangerous build-up of frustration inside angry, bewildered young blacks faced with the contradiction of not being able to go to work in the world's so-called greatest democracy which they just got through defending in the Jungles and rice paddies of Southeast Asia.<sup>52</sup>

Many blacks still feel like they were used in Vietnam because the government has failed to help their situation today. Many black Vietnam veterans cannot hold

regular jobs. At the end of 1984, the unemployment rate for black Vietnam veterans was 12.6 percent, compared to 5.9 percent for whites.<sup>53</sup> Blacks have been forced to deal with these problems on their own by creating such organizations as the Black United Vietnam Veterans of America, which makes black veterans aware of their benefits.<sup>54</sup> Another organization consisting of 7,000 members, the Concerned Veterans from Vietnam, made up mostly of blacks is geared toward providing jobs for unemployed Vietnam veterans. Unfortunately, many of these helpful organizations are closing because funding is drying up which leaves the black veteran in a state of hopelessness.<sup>55</sup> As late as 1982 when the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated, blacks still had scars of discrimination and racism. They could not come and embrace their fellow white soldiers; therefore, few attended the dedication.<sup>56</sup>

The Vietnam War was catastrophic for the black race. Really, they had no other alternative but to be drafted and shipped out to Vietnam due to their economic situation and the draft methods. The treatment they received in Vietnam was horrific; many were standing targets for the enemy, but also, blacks had to face countless acts of discrimination which they did not deserve. Undoubtedly, this had a psychological impact on the black servicemen which came to the surface in the later stages of the war. Although Vietnam was the first truly integrated war, it created more polarization between the races than other wars. This led to a great deal of tension and hatred that was harmful to the war effort itself. Discrimination in Vietnam consisted of much of the same type that was seen in America, such as Confederate flags, racial slurs, cross burnings, segregation, and Klan masks. It is hard to believe these inhumane tactics carried over into Vietnam considering that both whites and blacks were fighting for the same goal. Prejudice had not changed since emancipation in 1865 so why would it change in Vietnam?

## Endnotes

1. "Black Vietnam Vets despair over current status in U.S.," *Jet*, 70 (June 30, 1986), 6. I am grateful to a number of people for helping me along in this research project and without their expertise and guidance accomplishing this would have been endless. Dr. Jeffrey Williams and Dr. Michael Washington of the History Department at Northern Kentucky University answered numerous questions for me and selected certain avenues I should take. I would also like to acknowledge the librarians who helped me when I was lost. Furthermore, to my fellow students I am very grateful for making me aware of material that was essential to the finished product. And most of all, I would like to deeply thank Sharon Jones for proofreading my paper, and Mr. Terry Jones for typing it.
2. Paul Lawrence Dunbar, quoted in Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History* (New York, 1974), 203.
3. *Ibid*, 202.
4. Eldridge Cleaver, quoted in Robert W. Mullen, *Blacks in America's Wars* (New York, 1973), 79.
5. Reginald Edwards, quoted in Wallace Terry, *Bloods* (New York, 1984), 6. Alan M. Osur's review of *Bloods*, in *Military Affairs*, January, 1987, 45, claims "History written with passion is the best way to describe Wallace Terry's *Bloods*." Sam Cornish also had a favorable review of *Bloods* in *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 26, 1984, 23, 24. "*Bloods* is highly recommended for all undergraduate and public libraries. It will stand as a vivid testimonial to the sacrifices of blacks for the American war effort," stated E.K. Eckert in *Choice*, December, 1984, 608.
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23. Kroll, "Racial Patterns of Military Crimes," 51, 57.
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25. Unknown author, quoted in Clyde Taylor, "Black Consciousness and the Vietnam War," *The Black Scholar*, 5 (October 1973), 6.
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27. Dwyte A. Brown, quoted in Terry, *Bloods* , 172.
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30. Hayward T. Kirkland, quoted in Terry, *Bloods* , 103.
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38. Helmer, *Bringing the War Home* , 100.
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40. Ibid., 213.
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52. Francis B. Ward, "De Mau Mau: Myth and Reality," *The Black Scholar* , 5 (October 1973), 29.
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# **Camp Dick Robinson Holding Kentucky for the Union in 1861**

**by  
Susan Lyons Hughes**

With the outbreak of civil war in 1861, Kentucky found itself between the warring factions not only geographically, but politically and emotionally. While Kentucky was a slave-holding state and its agricultural interests tied many citizens to the South, growing commercial and industrial interests persuaded other Kentuckians that secession would be destructive to Kentucky's economy. Politically, Kentucky had long held the position of mediator between South and North. Henry Clay and other Kentuckians had helped forge several compromises which held conflict at bay for forty years. While many state leaders counseled caution, others found themselves involved in the growing conflict. Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin personally supported the southern cause, but a pro-Union majority in the state legislature prevented any overt action favoring secession. As their leaders debated, many Kentucky citizens were making their own choices, and joining the armies of one side or the other. For those Kentuckians who joined the Union, their first experience of war came in late August 1861, at Camp Dick Robinson in Garrard County, amid great controversy.

Kentucky's official response to the outbreak of war was dictated by the conflict between pro-secessionist Governor Beriah Magoffin and pro-Union legislators. When Abraham Lincoln called on the loyal states to furnish 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion, Magoffin replied on April 15 that "Kentucky would furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister southern states."<sup>1</sup> The next day, however, Magoffin had to turn down a similar request from Confederate President Jefferson Davis for troops to serve in the Confederate army.

The Kentucky legislature convened on May 6 and faced the question of secession or support of the Union. Both sides had strong support among legislators and constituents, but pro-Union legislators prevented a secession convention similar to those held in other southern states. After great debate, the legislature and governor adopted a policy of neutrality.

From the perspective of hindsight, Kentucky's attempt to maintain neutrality seems ineffective. At the time, however, the position was applauded by many inside and outside Kentucky. Governor Magoffin and legislators were assured by leaders on both sides that they would support and enforce Kentucky's neutrality. Within Kentucky itself, a strong state military force was well prepared to protect Kentucky's borders.

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Kentucky's geographic position, as well as its resources, made neutrality difficult to maintain. Strong pressure to choose sides came from within the state, and, in many ways, the neutrality policy aided those forces favoring the Union. The passions aroused by secession conventions in southern states quickly overpowered moderate voices and catapulted eleven states into secession. In Kentucky the neutrality policy gained time for Unionists and moderates to organize opposition to secession and to develop strategies that would keep Kentucky in the Union. Unionists looked forward to legislative election in August 1861 to return a Unionist majority that would prevent secession, and they used the intervening months to their advantage.

The central area of Kentucky, around Lexington, and the southernmost tier of counties from the Barren River to the Jackson Purchase comprised the area of strongest pro-southern sentiment. Citizens of other areas, particularly in eastern Kentucky, favored the Union. Eastern Kentucky had particular reason to favor the Union side when it contemplated the fate of Unionists in east Tennessee. Out voted in the Tennessee secession convention, east Tennessee Unionists faced persecution and harassment when their state joined the Confederacy.

The eyes of these people had turned with grave apprehension to the position of their neighbors in east Tennessee, . . . and profiting by the experience of that state, determined that Kentucky should not be bound hand and foot before she had had an opportunity to exert herself at the polls.<sup>2</sup>

Sentiment was not the only tie that joined Eastern Kentucky Unionists with Unionists in east Tennessee. From the beginning of the war, the Lincoln administration was committed to "rescuing" Unionist east Tennessee from the secessionist sympathies of the rest of the South. On June 27, 1861, Kentucky and Tennessee were organized on paper as a Military District. That district was commanded by General Robert Anderson, recently arrived in Cincinnati after his surrender of Fort Sumter. Anderson was authorized to organize ten thousand soldiers from east Tennessee to liberate the area from secessionist control, and was promised arms and supplies for the purpose by General Winfield Scott. In addition to the ten thousand east Tennessee troops, Anderson was authorized to raise four regiments from southeastern Kentucky. This combined force was intended for a campaign into East Tennessee.<sup>3</sup>

One impediment to Kentucky's open avowal of Unionism was Kentucky's own State Guard, a force of ten thousand armed, trained militia commanded by Simon Bolivar Buckner. Kentucky's long military tradition played an important role in deciding Kentucky's course in the Civil War. As war threatened, Kentucky logically turned to leaders with experience in the militia or the Mexican War. First among these was Buckner. By 1861, the State Guard was a well-organized, well-disciplined organization which contained the highest degree of military experience in the Commonwealth. The State Guard was generally perceived as secessionist in sympathy, but as early as May 8, 1861, Buckner had promised the Federal

government to protect Kentucky's borders against invasion by either side.<sup>4</sup> In a private meeting with George B. McClellan, then commanding the Department of Ohio, Buckner promised that the State Guard would not allow Confederate Tennessee troops to enter Kentucky, and would call on McClellan's Federal troops for aid in the event. McClellan, in turn, agreed not to occupy any portion of Kentucky with Federal troops unless requested by Buckner to repel Confederate troops.<sup>5</sup> Buckner and the State Guard occupied this ambiguous position in Kentucky until the autumn of 1861, frustrating both Federal and Confederate designs in Kentucky.

In accordance with his orders to organize troops in southeastern Kentucky, General Anderson appointed United States Navy Lieutenant William Nelson, a native of Maysville, Kentucky, to raise four regiments of Kentucky troops and to establish a camp of instruction. On July 15, Nelson commissioned as colonels Thomas Bramlette, Theophilus T. Garrard, and Speed S. Fry each to raise a regiment of infantry, while William J. Landrum would form a regiment of cavalry. Each of these men were staunch Unionists and leaders in their communities, making them obvious choices to organize military support in the area.

Thomas Bramlette, a native of Cumberland County and lawyer by profession, had a large political following in his area of Kentucky. A lieutenant in Bramlette's regiment, John Tuttle, described Bramlette as an intellectual man whose political stature was responsible for keeping Kentucky in the Union.<sup>6</sup> Bramlette was an ambitious and charismatic man whose political strength was vital to the Unionist cause in Kentucky in the early months of this most political of all wars. His regiment, initially styled the First Kentucky Regiment, was raised in the Wayne-Clinton County area of Kentucky.

Theophilus T. Garrard was state senator from Clay County in 1861. The grandson of Governor James Garrard and a veteran of the Mexican War, T. T. Garrard owned the Goose Creek Salt Works near Manchester. Garrard's own political network was very strong in his area of Kentucky. Some of the men who enlisted in his regiment in 1861 had served with him in the Mexican War. Men from Owsley, Jackson, Laurel, and Clay counties joined Garrard's regiment, which was originally numbered the Third Kentucky, but later was changed to the Seventh Kentucky. They would be the first of the Camp Dick Robinson recruits to see combat.

The Fourth Kentucky Volunteers were commanded by Speed S. Fry, a native of Danville. Fry, like Garrard, previously had served as a captain in the Mexican War. His regiment, raised in Mercer, Boyle, Washington, and Anderson counties, was the first to arrive at Camp Dick Robinson.

Following General Nelson's directive to raise a cavalry regiment, W. J. Landrum of Harrodsburg organized the First Kentucky Cavalry from the Lincoln-Casey-Marion county area. Landrum decided in August 1861, that he would prefer command of an infantry regiment, so he resigned and later organized the Nineteenth Kentucky Infantry. Command of the First Kentucky Cavalry then went to Lt.

Colonel Frank Wolford. Wolford, another Mexican War veteran, commanded the regiment through most of the war.

General Nelson, looking for a site to establish a camp for the new regiments, accepted the offer of Richard Robinson to use his Garrard County farm as a base of operations. Located in the northern section of Garrard County, the Robinson property stood at the vital intersection of the main routes between Lexington and Cumberland Gap, and Danville and Crab Orchard. Eleven miles away was the Hickman bridge across the Kentucky River, and a few miles farther north was the town of Nicholasville, the terminus of the Lexington and Ohio Railroad. The site was ideally situated as a supply base for expeditions to east Tennessee and to protect supply lines in Kentucky.

Political considerations also governed the choice of the site. The property owner after whom the camp was named was staunchly pro-Union, and his family included many of the most influential men of the area. In addition, Garrard County itself was a Unionist stronghold.<sup>7</sup> Although some residents of Garrard County joined the Confederate army, three times as many joined the Union army.

General Nelson ordered Bramlette, Fry, Garrard, and Landrum to report with their regiments to Camp Dick Robinson on the first Tuesday after the state elections in August (August 6, 1861).<sup>8</sup> This was an entirely political decision, designed to allow the recruits time to vote in the elections for state representatives and senators and, it was hoped, help return a pro-Union majority to the capital.

The establishment of Camp Dick Robinson proved controversial from the beginning. Pro-secessionists and southern rights advocates naturally distrusted efforts to organize Union troops in Kentucky, but some pro-Union men also opposed the establishment of Camp Dick Robinson, fearing that the camp would provoke open conflict with the Confederates. Recruiting was slowed for a time in late July, when local politicians warned Colonel Fry and Colonel Garrard that the organization of their regiments would furnish an excuse for an invasion by Confederate troops in camps just across the border in Tennessee. On July 28, General Nelson firmly disavowed any postponement of recruiting and instead urged more haste in organizing the regiments.<sup>9</sup>

As troops began to encamp near the Robinson house, protests became more insistent. Determined to prevent conflict within Kentucky's borders, Governor Magoffin sent commissioners to President Lincoln with a request to remove the troops from Camp Dick Robinson. W. A. Dudley and F. K. Hunt met with Lincoln on August 19, and received the answer that Lincoln would not interfere with the recruitment of Kentucky troops on Kentucky soil. The president wrote to Magoffin:

Washington, D.C. August 24, 1861.

To His Excellency B. Magoffin, Governor of the State of Kentucky.

Sir: - Your letter of the 19th inst., in which you "urge the removal from the limits of Kentucky if the military force now organized, and in camp within said State," is received.

I may not possess full and precisely accurate knowledge upon this subject, but

I believe it is true that there is a military force in camp within Kentucky, acting by authority of the United States, which force is not very large, and is not now being augmented.

I also believe that some arms have been furnished to this force by the United States.

I also believe that this force consists exclusively of Kentuckians, having their camp in the immediate vicinity of their own homes, and not assailing or menacing any of the good people of Kentucky.

In all I have done in the premises, I have acted upon the urgent solicitation of many Kentuckians, and in accordance with what I believed, and still believe, to be the wish of a majority of all Union-loving people of Kentucky.

While I have conversed on this subject with many eminent men of Kentucky, including a large majority of her members of congress, I do not remember that any one of them, or any other person, except your Excellency and the bearers of your Excellency's letter, has urged me to remove the military force from Kentucky, or to disband it. One other very worthy citizen of Kentucky did solicit me to have the augmenting of the force suspended for a time.

Taking all the means within my reach to form a judgment I do not believe it is the popular wish to Kentucky that this force should be removed beyond her limits, and, with this impression, I must respectfully decline to so remove it.

I most cordially sympathize with your Excellency in the wish to preserve the peace of my own native State, Kentucky, but it is with regret I search, and cannot find, in your not very short letter any declaration or intimation that you entertain any desire for the preservation of the Federal Union.

Your obedient servant,  
A. Lincoln <sup>10</sup>

Magoffin also sent George W. Johnson as a commissioner to Jefferson Davis, asking for assurances that Confederate troops would not enter Kentucky's borders. Davis replied that the Confederacy would respect Kentucky's neutrality as long as Kentucky honored it. He chided Magoffin for permitting the recruitment of Union soldiers in Kentucky:

Richmond, August 28, 1861.

To the Hon. B. Magoffin, Governor of Kentucky, etc.

*Sir:* I have received you letter informing me that "since the commencement of the unhappy difficulties yet pending in the country, the people of Kentucky have indicated a steadfast desire and purpose to maintain a position of strict neutrality between the belligerent parties." In the same communication you express your desire to elicit "an authoritative assurance that the government of the Confederate States will continue to respect and observe the neutral position of Kentucky."

In reply to this request, I lose no time in assuring you, that the government of the Confederate States of America neither intends nor desires to disturb the neutrality of Kentucky. The assemblage of troops in Tennessee, to which you refer, had no other object than to repel the lawless invasion of that State by the forces of the United States, should their government seek to approach it through Kentucky without respect for its position of neutrality....

In view of the history of the past, it can scarcely be necessary to assure your excellency that the government of the Confederate States will continue to respect the neutrality of Kentucky so long as her people will maintain it themselves.

But neutrality, to be entitled to respect, must be strictly maintained between both parties; or if the door be opened on the one side for aggressions of one of the belligerent parties upon the other, it ought not to be shut to the assailed when they seek to enter it for the purpose of self- defense....

And am, Sir, very respectfully your, etc.,

Jefferson Davis <sup>11</sup>

In fact, neither side fully respected Kentucky's neutrality. As early as June 11, General McClellan reported to Governor Magoffin and General Buckner that Tennessee troops had orders to occupy Island Number One below Cairo. McClellan requested that Buckner fulfill his earlier agreement to prevent Confederate troops from entering Kentucky.<sup>12</sup> On the other end of Kentucky, Confederate General Felix Zollicoffer occupied the Cumberland Gap, including areas of Kentucky, in early August 1861.<sup>13</sup> Camps just across Kentucky's borders with Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio were rapidly filling up with soldiers, many of them Kentuckians. The neutrality Kentucky hoped for was bound to be broken, and open warfare within Kentucky's borders would be the inevitable result.

The first regiment to arrive at Camp Dick Robinson was the Fourth Kentucky under Colonel Speed S. Fry, which marched there on August 7. One of the captains in that initial group wrote:

We reached Camp Dick Robinson about daylight on the morning of August 7, where we met other volunteers, and they commenced pouring in from all points. Thus was neutrality discarded and the first camp established on Kentucky soil.<sup>14</sup>

As the various companies arrived in camp during the early days of August, they found shelter under the large grove of maples near the Robinson house, which was offered to General Nelson as headquarters. Other companies came in to camp daily, and a shortage of supplies quickly became evident. Tents, uniforms, and camping equipment, which should have been supplied by the Federal government, failed to arrive. To the men experiencing their first taste of soldier life, the problems seemed minor at first.

Typical of a soldier's experience upon arrival at Camp Dick Robinson was that described by a soldier of The First Kentucky Cavalry. Sergeant Tarrant's company left Liberty on August 6, riding to Camp Dick by way of Hustonville and Danville. They arrived about sundown on August 6, were met by a guide, and escorted into camp. There the column of cavalry was halted and a salute fired by a mountain howitzer. The men dismounted and unsaddled their horses, only to find that there were no provisions for men or animals. A scanty meal was made on hoe cakes and coffee donated by the men of Fry's regiment and the cavalymen went to sleep under the trees. Tarrant continued:

The next morning the romance of soldiering began to vanish. The only idea of the soldier's life to the unsophisticated had been gathered from glowing accounts of the fertile pens of historians, and the more exciting words of fiction . . . But stern realities stared the enlisted men in the face.<sup>15</sup>

The citizens of Danville and Lancaster came to the rescue and provided food for the immediate needs of the newly arrived cavalrymen.

On only its second night in camp, the First Kentucky Cavalry experienced its first "call to arms." The men were roused late that night by the sound of horses galloping, and feared that the enemy was approaching on the turnpike which ran in front of the camp. Officers quickly organized the men into line, giving them muskets, and leading them toward the sounds. They discovered, to their chagrin, that the sound of horses galloping came from their own mounts galloping in the fields.<sup>16</sup> This false alarm was the first of many at Camp Dick, as the threat of war loomed in Kentucky.

Troops from the regiment raised by Colonel Bramlette arrived after the First Kentucky Cavalry, and met with similar experiences. First Lieutenant Tuttle's company left Albany on August 6 with no money or provisions, but citizens along the way had food waiting for the men at every stop. The company arrived at Crab Orchard on August 10, and joined three to four hundred other volunteers in a camp at Bryant's tavern. There they received arms, tents, and one blanket apiece. The uniforms issued, however, lacked coat and overcoat. On August 15, they marched to Camp Dick Robinson. Tuttle wrote of their entry to camp, "There we were received with the honors of war and enthusiastic demonstrations. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

Saturday, August 10, was a special day at Camp Dick Robinson. With the first troops settling into army life, a service dedicating the camp was held, conducted by a Presbyterian minister, W.H. Hornell. Reverend Hornell would later serve throughout the war as the chaplain for the First Kentucky Cavalry. Using a goods box as a pulpit, Hornell led soldiers and citizens in a hymn and prayer, and then dedicated the site, himself, his congregation, and the citizens of Kentucky to the service of God and Country. Near the end of Hornell's sermon, one soldier noticed some of the ladies batting their fans frantically about their heads. Another soldier rose up and slammed his hat around his head and ran away. Angry bees had attacked the congregation, but amidst these distractions, the Reverend Hornell continued the service until the benediction.<sup>18</sup>

All accounts agree that General William Nelson governed the tone of Camp Dick Robinson by the force of his own exuberant personality. A former lieutenant in the Navy, Nelson was well known for his roaring voice (hence, his nickname "Bull") and his bountiful supply of epithets sprinkled with Navy slang. Nelson was also a strict disciplinarian with an intolerance of carelessness. He grasped immediately the need of these raw soldiers - officers and enlisted - for a regimen of strict discipline to turn them into good soldiers. He was particular about drill and guard duty. Sergeant E. Tarrant, of the First Kentucky Cavalry, described General Nelson's appearance in camp:

With the exception of the Mexican War veterans, but few, if any [soldiers] had ever seen a live army general before . . . . Most of the members in the regiment had read about them in romances and histories, and looked upon them as a superior order of beings. On the General's first appearance in camp, we all looked with



pride and admiration upon his imposing, manly form . . . But some of our delusions soon vanished. We soon found him to be only a human being like ourselves, with like passions, a strongly marked temper, and what we considered overbearing ways.<sup>19</sup>

General Nelson abhorred politics, and yet during the early days at Camp Dick Robinson, politicians and political discussions flourished. Every day brought visitors to the camp, among them local politicians with a variety of plans to save the Union. In the words of one author, "If it had been possible to talk down the rebellion, it would have met its death at Camp Dick Robinson."<sup>20</sup> Nelson broke up such political discussions among his officers, and substituted drill and army discipline. In his dealings with his lieutenants, it was soon discovered that Nelson was more favorable to officers who eschewed politics and spent their time instructing their men in the science of war.

Nelson paid particular attention to the performance of guard duty by the new soldiers. Emphasizing the dangers which might overtake an army during the night, Nelson was intolerant of laxity by guards on duty. Officers of the various regiments, heeding Nelson's example, "tested" guards on duty, with the result that guards became well versed in the routine, and would not let anyone pass. One of Colonel Bramlette's privates demonstrated his efficiency to Nelson one evening when Nelson strolled out after "Taps" to smoke. Private Lewis G. Sumter ordered Nelson to "Halt" and "Mark time" until the officer of the guard came up. Nelson identified himself as the commanding general, but Sumter would not let him pass. When the officer of the guard gave permission, Nelson praised Sumter for his performance. "Right my hearty! Always do your duty as you understand it."<sup>21</sup>

Nelson was also particular about dress parade, which was a formal review of all the regiments, held every day under his supervision. On one occasion the center of the line grew more and more crowded as the troops came up on line and pressed to the center. Nelson grew angry as officers could not get their men to line up properly. Nelson finally shouted, "Bear away there! Bear away! About a fathom to the starboard, luff you damned lubbers!"<sup>22</sup>

Under Nelson's command the new soldiers quickly learned discipline and army regulations. Camps were laid out by regulation and the men and their equipment were regularly inspected. Nelson's imperious manners were resented by many, and the men found that "soldiering was 'harder work than farming' ...."<sup>23</sup> But Nelson was fair to enlisted men, and his departure on September 15 for a new assignment was regretted by many who had become soldiers under his tutelage.

Before the new soldiers faced Confederate enemies, they faced an enemy just as deadly in camp. Living in rural isolation for much of their lives, many new soldiers in the Civil War were exposed for the first time to many diseases in the crowded conditions of camp. The first cases of measles appeared among the men at Camp Dick Robinson late in August, and soon grew to an epidemic. In Bramlette's regiment, eleven men died of measles and accompanying pneumonia. Though each

of the regiments had a surgeon, these men were seriously overworked in dealing with the number and severity of cases. A hospital was established in a large grove of trees, and sick men slept outdoors because there were no tents. As September drew to a close, the cooler weather worsened the plight of the soldiers, who now took deep colds because they did not have warm clothes. Many were still without tents, overcoats and blankets. Lieutenant Tuttle wrote that it was impossible to hear orders at dress parade for the men coughing. After one dress parade, Colonel Bramlette became angry and chastised his men for not having measles as children.<sup>24</sup>

During the epidemic, the citizens of Garrard County rallied again to the assistance of the soldiers, offering their homes to ill men. Dick Robinson's house soon was filled with the sick, and Robinson's niece, Eliza Hoskins, nursed soldiers with untiring zeal. The soldiers began to call her "The Angel of Camp Dick" for her efforts on their behalf.<sup>25</sup>

The deaths of friends and neighbors saddened the soldiers who survived. The graves of sixty-one soldiers marked the fields around camp, and one soldier described the melancholy sight of dead friends and childhood playmates,

... now simply rolled in a blanket, dumped into a shallow hole and lightly covered over with earth and stones, like the carcass of a cholera hog, but we had then much to learn of the glorious war upon which we were entering.<sup>26</sup>

On August 21, 1861, word reached General Nelson at Camp Dick Robinson that a shipment of arms from Cincinnati to Camp Dick was threatened by Confederate sympathizers in Lexington. Lexington was home to John Hunt Morgan's Lexington Rifles and other militia groups, which were strongly pro-southern. Nelson sent a force of three companies of the First Kentucky Cavalry under Lt. Colonel Letcher and armed with Sharp's carbines to Lexington to escort the arms to Camp Dick. Colonel Bramlette, enraged at being left behind, took off by himself to follow the cavalry. Colonel Fry and three hundred infantrymen provided reinforcements.

The troops were met on the outskirts of Lexington by Union men who counseled caution. The cavalry stabled their mounts and marched with fixed bayonets to the railroad depot. Under the hostile eyes of pro-southern citizens and militiamen, the arms were secured and loaded on wagons without incident, despite great provocation by both sides.<sup>27</sup>

Tarrant wrote of his experience:

The Author has been in many thrilling scenes since, but never has he seen men act with such cool bravery, with such subordination to their superior officers, as they did on that day. Not a man faltered.

It is pleasing to reflect now, after the lapse of so many years, that we hearkened to the voice of humanity instead of resentment and passion, and avoided the effusion of so much blood which might have followed if we had fired into that dense throng.<sup>28</sup>

The cavalry was met in Nicholasville by the infantry and, after eating breakfast

provided by the citizens of Nicholasville, the force returned to Camp Dick Robinson.<sup>29</sup>

In early September the Kentucky Military Board offered the Kentucky regiments at Camp Dick Robinson and those raised in Ohio and Indiana to the United States Army. As these regiments were accepted into service and mustered in, another controversy arose over the numbers of the regiments. The regiments at Camp Dick Robinson had adopted the designations of the First (Bramlette), Second (Fry), and Third (Garrard) Kentucky Infantry Regiments. The Kentucky Military Board changed the numerical order, designating the regiments of Colonels Woodruff and Guthrie, then in camp in Ohio, as the First and Second Regiments. The question was one of precedence, and the colonels at Camp Dick felt their honor impugned. The change sparked a protest by Colonels Bramlette and Garrard, who resented having their regiments changed to the Third and Seventh Regiments. Colonel Fry appeared to be less irritated by the change, but Bramlette directed a spate of furious letters to the Board. His regiment had already been issued a flag bearing the inscription "First Regiment Infantry, Kentucky Volunteers."<sup>30</sup> Garrard and his officers continued to call themselves the "Third Kentucky" as late as 1863.<sup>31</sup>

Other troops were joining the Kentucky regiments at Camp Dick Robinson. Lieutenant Carter, United States Navy, and a Tennessee senator with strong Unionist sympathies, had been instrumental in raising the First and Second East Tennessee Regiments for the Union Army, and in sheltering refugees from East Tennessee who sought to come to Kentucky. Following the orders of President Lincoln, Carter organized the regiments in "Camp Andy Johnson" near the Tennessee border at Barbourville. Promised arms and support from Nelson at Camp Dick Robinson, Carter took in as many refugees as he could care for, with assistance from a company of T. T. Garrard's regiment being organized in the area. Carter appealed to Nelson for assistance, but Nelson, under pressure from the controversy surrounding Camp Dick Robinson, ordered Carter to bring up the First and Second East Tennessee regiments to Camp Dick Robinson. In the last week of August, Carter did so, and the two Tennessee regiments shared the experiences of the four Kentucky regiments at Camp Dick Robinson.<sup>32</sup>

General Nelson was ordered to open a new recruiting camp near Maysville, and on September 15, General George H. Thomas took command of camp Dick Robinson. Visitors thronged to the camp, including such notables as United States Senator Andrew Johnson, Major General Robert Anderson, and Senators Joshua Bell and John J. Crittenden. Along with the famous, however, were the local citizens of Garrard, Boyle, Jessamine, and other counties, who flocked to see the soldiers "at war."

Within the next few days old "Camp Dick" became quite a gay and festive place and exhibited much of the pomp, pageantry, and circumstance of war . . . .

Nor were the charms of Beauty wanting to the scene. Scores of Kentucky's fairest daughters graced it every day with their presence. Through the day we had drills, serenades, speeches, and songs.<sup>33</sup>

On the eighteenth of September, Bramlette took his Third Kentucky Regiment to Lexington and established "Camp Robert Anderson," at the Lexington Fair Grounds (now the site of the University of Kentucky). The citizens of Lexington were generous in supplying food and in attending the sick while the regiment was in Lexington. Tuttle wrote that:

Portly old gentlemen in stunning turnouts and attended by likely "darkies" also came with immense baskets . . . . Who of us Kentuckians is not proud of our lovely women, capacious men and fine horses?<sup>34</sup>

Bramlette reported to Thomas, in a dispatch dated September 23, 1861, that he had reports of three thousand secessionists planning to attack his camp. Bramlette cited the "inertness of the Union men, their sensationalism, their utter backwardness in rushing to the call of our country" as the reason for Kentucky's danger at this time. He claimed that Humphrey Marshall was moving toward Frankfort with one thousand Confederate cavalry, and, in a later dispatch that same day, reported that he was moving his regiment to Frankfort at the request of Kentucky State Senator H. J. Todd.<sup>35</sup>

The threat to Kentucky's capital failed to materialize, and it is hard to make any other conclusion but that Bramlette took his regiment to Frankfort for its political effect. Lieutenant Tuttle of the Third Kentucky certainly believed that, when he wrote:

As General Marshall did not come to Frankfort and probably had no such intention, Colonel Bramlette, after having aired his military plumage for two or three days at our State Capital and brought on himself some rather amusing criticism, returned to Lexington.<sup>36</sup>

While Bramlette fenced at imaginary Confederates in Frankfort, Colonel Garrard's Seventh Kentucky Infantry and Colonel Wolford's First Kentucky Cavalry faced real Confederates who threatened the position at Camp Dick Robinson. On September 23, Lieutenant Samuel P. Carter, United States Navy reported that there were four hundred Confederate cavalry at Laurel Bridge and that he was taking his east Tennessee troops to guard the road to Richmand from Rockcastle Hills.<sup>37</sup>

Responding to Carter's request in September, General Thomas sent Colonel Garrard's Seventh Kentucky Infantry and Colonel Wolford's First Kentucky Cavalry to a position in Rockcastle Hills below Mt. Vernon. The wild, dreary aspect of the site suggested its name, Camp Wildcat.

The Seventh Kentucky had been mustered into the United States Army on September 22, with 1,018 men, the largest Kentucky infantry regiment. Six days later the regiment was entrenching the position at Camp Wildcat. On September 29, Colonel Garrard sent a dispatch to General Thomas reporting that Confederates were at London with six hundred cavalry. He also reported that his men were still without provisions, coats and blankets and that there was no forage or water for horses within ten miles of the camp.<sup>38</sup>

He wrote Thomas on September 30 with a report that General Felix Zollicoffer's Confederates had taken Manchester, and "pulled down the flag, tore it up, and in addition, placed theirs on the same pole." The Rebels had also taken Garrard's own Goose Creek Salt Works, and confiscated fifty wagon loads of salt. Although Garrard's family was not harmed in this attack, his reaction was one of outrage. Garrard went on to report that he still lacked food, overcoats, blankets, and clothing for his men, and that there had been frost on the ground that morning.<sup>39</sup>

General Thomas *was* trying to alleviate the shortages faced by the troops at Camp Dick Robinson and Camp Wildcat. Repeated requests for supplies and the wagons to haul them were approved, but the goods never reached the camp. Supplies seemed always to go to areas of active campaigning in Missouri, Western Virginia, and Western Kentucky. Despairing of obtaining these supplies through regular channels, one member of Thomas' staff circumvented the system and got clothing in a manner best related by a principal in the affair:

Finding that no assistance could be rendered by the quartermaster's department at Louisville or Cincinnati, and that Gen. Thomas, by the very fact of his military education, was committed to regular army methods for obtaining supplies through regular channels, the writer, then a member of his staff, conceived the idea of procuring them by the same means that had proved successful in the hands of Gen. Fremont. Making out a requisition upon Capt. Dickerson, assistant-quartermaster at Cincinnati, for a large quantity of clothing, tents, and other camp equipage, and having it approved by Gen. Thomas, he proceeded to Cincinnati and presented to Capt. Dickerson. He was informed that the quartermaster's department was powerless to furnish the articles enumerated, and that, being indebted to the clothing manufacturers over \$1,000,000, his credit with them was exhausted. He then applied to Col. Swords, assistant quartermaster-general at Louisville, to know at what time he might expect to receive funds for the equipment of camp Dick Robinson, to which Col. Swords responded, designating the middle of October as the probable date. Knowing that the uncertainty as to the time fixed would debar him from competing in open market for goods with the agents of Gen. Fremont, who were able to pay cash on delivery, and feeling deeply the necessities of the men whom he had left shivering in their rags in camp, he determined to purchase the goods, if possible, and agree to pay, the 15th of October, on delivery at Nicholasville.

He visited several of the largest establishments and found large quantities of clothing. Tempting piles of warm flannel shirts, blankets, blouses and overcoats, pantaloons and woolen hosiery greeted his eyes, while accommodating clerks stood ready to sell them — cheap for cash. Exhibiting the requisition as his credentials, he left copies of it at several places, requesting the proprietors to mark opposite each article the price at which they would sell it for cash on delivery and hand it to him the next day as a sealed proposal.

The plan worked admirably. The clothing was purchased in accordance with the bids, and the officer returned highly elated with his success. But his triumph was of short duration. The next evening a stranger alighted from the stage at the camp, and, inquiring for the acting quartermaster, was shown to his quarters. "I have never visited a camp," he said, "and I came to see one." The officer welcomed him and expressed his willingness to render his stay as agreeable as possible. "When our house heard that I wished to visit your camp," said the stranger, the proprietors made me supercargo of a little invoice of clothing that comprises a part

of the goods you purchased yesterday." The officer glanced at the bill and found that it was from one of the houses with whom he had contracted; he compared it item by item with the proposal and found no variation in prices; he added it and found it correct; he examined the checks of the receiving clerk at Nicholasville and found that the packages had all arrived at the depot. There was no reason why he should not pay the bill, except that he had no money.

He knew, as well as he knew his own name, that a draft had been sent with a small quantity of goods to test his ability to meet engagements. Taking down a check-book on a banking house at Lexington (where he had no account), he deliberately wrote a check for the amount, and handing it to the stranger, took his receipted bill, excused himself and mounted his horse to ride to Lexington. It may well be imagined that the emotions of the officer were not of the most pleasurable description during that lonely night ride of twenty miles. For the first time in his life, he had been guilty of a flagrant crime, and one which he feared Gen. Thomas would not condone. Arriving at Lexington, he sought rest at a hotel, but could not sleep. Rising early in the morning, he rang the bell at the residences of the late D. A. Sayre, for it was necessary to arrange if possible for the payment of the check without being seen by the bearer. The banker came down and the officer introduced himself. He stated the condition of the camp, and that the half-clad troops stationed there constituted the only defense of Lexington against the enemy, who was reported to be advancing into Kentucky from east Tennessee. He then exhibited the telegram from Col. Swords, and asking him if he (the banker) would advance money upon it, provided Col. Swords verified the dispatch. "Yes," said the old man, "to the extent of my ability." "I am glad to hear it," said the overjoyed officer; "for I have already drawn a check upon your bank," "The check shall be paid," said the banker.

The homeward ride, through the crisp September morning air, was a pleasanter trip than the one of the previous night.<sup>40</sup>

Several companies of Home Guard were operating in the area near Camp Wildcat, and their encounters with the Rebel forces were less than satisfactory to veterans like Carter, Garrard, and Wolford. Carter wrote Thomas on the first of October, "I fear that the Home Guards will not do much towards defending Big Hill, from the sample they gave near London. Organized troops are needed there."<sup>41</sup>

Garrard wrote Thomas on the same day:

A negro of mine reached camp last night with a letter from my wife, she says they [the Rebels] left there [London] Sunday morning and returned towards their encampment on Cumberland River. Rumor says they have destroyed much property in Knox.

P.S. I would like very much for General Crittenden to send someone here to take command of his forces [the Home Guard] . . . I will endeavor to get Colonel Brown to move them on the river, two miles from us; they are in our camp and it is impossible to do anything with them on our men.<sup>42</sup>

Only two days later, Garrard complained that he could not hold his position at Camp Wildcat if he had to depend on the Home Guards:

You will see before this reaches you that Colonel Brown has moved to the river some two miles from us. I would be afraid to place them between the enemy and

our camp. Some of his men are, I fear, a little timid, and I doubt whether or not they will do their duty on that side of us.<sup>43</sup>

Fortunately for Garrard and for the Union cause in Kentucky, organized regiments from the other states were arriving at Camp Dick Robinson to augment the number of men available to meet the Confederate threat. By October 3, the Fourteenth and Thirty-first Ohio Regiments and Thirty-Third Indiana Infantry had arrived at Camp Dick Robinson, but they lacked sufficient arms, clothing, and wagons.

Illness and shortages remained a problem for the troops at Camp Dick Robinson and at Camp Wildcat. Garrard requested ammunition for rifled muskets for his regiment on October 3, complaining that the most recent shipment was of the wrong caliber for his men's muskets. He also requested a tent for the regiment's assistant surgeon. That same day, one of Garrard's captains, Elisha B. Treadway of Owsley County, wrote his wife with a list of the men from his company who remained at Camp Dick Robinson in the hospital. He expressed the hope that they would catch up with the regiment soon, as a fight was expected any day.<sup>44</sup> Some members of the regiment must have returned to Camp Wildcat because Garrard reported to Thomas on October 10 that he had 975 non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates present for duty.<sup>45</sup>

Garrard's and Wolford's regiments remained at Camp Wildcat under increasing pressure from Confederate forces, who moved closer to their post. On October 18, Garrard wrote to Thomas with reports that the Confederates had engaged a skirmish line of Wolford's cavalry and that a full-scale assault was imminent. Garrard warned Thomas that he was moving his sick and commissary stores across the river, and that unless reinforcements were sent, he would have to abandon the camp. "I have no idea of having my men butchered up here where they [the Rebels] have a force of six or seven to one, with artillery."<sup>46</sup>

Fortunately for Garrard and Wolford, their superiors recognized the importance of Camp Wildcat and the threat posed by Zollicoffer. On October 13, Brigadier-General Schoepf was ordered to Wildcat, and took with him the Seventeenth Indiana and the Thirty-third Ohio. The reinforcements arrived in time to reinforce the line held by Wolford's Cavalry and Garrard's men when Zollicoffer attacked on October 21, 1861.

The Confederate attack was brief and unproductive, due in part to the entrenchments prepared by Garrard's men. The Confederates first attacked the line where Wolford's men and the Indiana regiment stood, then tried Garrard's portion of the line. The Confederates withdrew, neither side having lost many in casualties. Garrard wrote to Thomas:

My impression is that we did not kill to exceed sixteen and wounded some thirty or forty. Many say we lost a great victory by not pursuing the enemy. It is true, if we had have known as much then as now we might have done wonders . . . We have a great many here who know precisely how to manage affairs when the enemy is out of hearing, but would be as much at a loss to do so in a fight as I would be.<sup>47</sup>

Garrard's would be a complaint much heard during the Civil War.

The Confederates continued to threaten southeastern Kentucky, and soon Thomas joined the regiments at Camp Wildcat with the rest of the troops quartered at Camp Dick Robinson. Thomas ordered a general movement towards London and Barbourville, and the troops who had spent August and September learning their new trade began their careers in earnest. Soon the regiments would engage the Confederates again at Mill Springs and fight battles at places no one had heard of before, but whose names would go down in legend—Stone's River, Chickamauga, Big Black River, Vicksburg, Perryville, and Shiloh. Those early days in Garrard County would seem peaceful by contrast and full of a romance which would never again be a part of war for those soldiers.

Union troops continued to use Camp Dick Robinson until the summer of 1862 as a supply depot and base of operations. Confederates occupied the site during the Perryville campaign. During the campaign, Confederate troops tried to burn Hickman bridge, which connected Lexington with areas farther South. When Federal troops returned to the area after Perryville, the bridge was rebuilt, and a new camp established nearer the bridge. The new camp was christened in memory of General William Nelson, who in September had been killed by another officer in the Union Army. General Nelson's remains were buried at the new camp. Camp Nelson remained an important supply depot for the remainder of the war.

The troops which came to Camp Dick Robinson in August 1861 were raw and green, and unfamiliar with the tragedy which war would bring on them, on their state, and on their country. Yet those "volunteers of '61" answered the call of their country without hesitation, and many of them lived to see the union of states restored. Kentucky remained faithful to that Union, despite the storm which battered Kentucky from all sides. Kentuckians in the Twentieth Century owe a great deal to those ancestors who ventured to Camp Dick Robinson in August, 1861; those ancestors wagered their lives, their fortunes and their happiness to keep Kentucky in the Union. A member of Colonel Wolford's First Kentucky Cavalry summed up that debt in words which eulogize the "graduates" of Camp Dick Robinson:

It would be difficult to do full justice to that band of patriots composing the First Kentucky Cavalry, Third, Fourth, and Seventh Kentucky Infantry, the First and Second East Tennessee Infantry, and Hewitt's Battery, who assembled at Camp Dick Robinson early in August, 1861. It was the darkest hour of the government's peril . . . .

If it had not been for those five devoted regiments at Camp Dick Robinson, the strong probability is that the enemy would soon have held a formidable line along the Ohio River . . . The saving of the state from falling into the hands of the Confederates was unquestionably mainly due to the forces at Camp Dick Robinson . . . .<sup>48</sup>



## Endnotes

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3. Ibid.
4. Perrin, *History*, 358.
5. Ibid.
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9. Perrin, *History*, 355.
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11. Ibid., 359-60.
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13. Tarrant, *Wild Riders*, 8; Felix Zollicoffer to Samuel Cooper, 6 August 1861, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume IV (128 volumes, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 381 - 83 (hereafter referred to as *OR*).
14. A. C. Quisenberry, "Kentucky's 'Neutrality' in 1861," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 15, (1917), 17.
15. Tarrant, *Wild Riders*, 13.
16. Ibid., 14.
17. Tapp and Klotter, *The Union, The Civil War and John W. Tuttle*, 42.

18. Tarrant, *Wild Riders*, 16.
19. Ibid., 24.
20. Perrin, *History*, 361.
21. Tapp and Klotter, *The Union, The Civil War, and John W. Tuttle*, 43.
22. Ibid., 43-4.
23. Tarrant, *Wild Riders*, 24.
24. Tapp and Klotter, *The Union, The Civil War, and John W. Tuttle*, 53.
25. Eliza A. Herring, "The Hoskins of Kentucky," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 15 (1917), 10.
26. Tapp and Klotter, *The Union, The Civil War, and John W. Tuttle*, 53.
27. Tarrant, *Wild Riders*, 28.
28. Ibid.
29. Tapp and Klotter, *The Union, The Civil War, and John W. Tuttle*, 44.
30. Ibid., 53. The flag is currently in the collection of the Kentucky Military Museum in Frankfort.
31. Elisha B. Treadway to Sarah E. Treadway, March 6, 1863.

"I do think if you write to me there must be something wrong in the post masters between me and you or in all probability the others you write to me goes to the other 3rd Kentucky regiment that is stationed at Murfreesboro Tennessee. The next time you write to me in this style Capt. E. B. Treadway 3rd Regiment Kentucky Volunteers Army of the Mississippi before Vixburg"

Copies in the collection of the author.
32. Perrin, *History*, 361-62.
33. Tapp and Klotter, *The Union, The Civil War, and John W. Tuttle*, 60-61.
34. Ibid., 53-54.

35. Thomas Bramlette to George Thomas, 25 September 1861, *OR*, Series I, 4: 270-71.
36. Tapp and Klotter, *The Union, the Civil War, and John W. Tuttle*, 55.
37. S. P. Carter to Thomas, 23 September 1861, *OR*, Series I, 4:272.
38. T. T. Garrard to Thomas, 28 September 1861, *Ibid.*, 281.
39. T. T. Garrard to Thomas, 30 September 1861, *Ibid.*, 282-83.
40. Perrin, *History*, 370-71.
41. Carter to Thomas, 1 October 1861, *OR*, Series I, 4: 285.
42. Garrard to Thomas, 1 October 1861, *Ibid.*, 286.
43. Garrard to Thomas, 3 October 1861, *Ibid.*, 291-91.
44. Elisha B. Treadway to Sarah E. Treadway, October 3, 1861.
45. Garrard to Thomas, 10 October 1861, *OR*, Series I, 4:301.
46. Garrard to Thomas, 18 October 1861, *Ibid.*, 310.
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***April 12, 1988***

Susan M. Burgess  
Lori Ann Dinser  
Stacey L. Graus  
Timothy Craig Grayson  
Jeffrey Hampton  
Derick Rogers Harper  
Christopher Gary Holmes  
Virginia Johnson

Sarah Suzanne Kiser  
Joyce Borne Kramer  
William H. Lowe  
Michael K. G. Moore  
Jennifer A. Raiche  
Debra Beckett Weigold  
Nancy Lynn Willoughby

## ***Members Initiated***

***April 11, 1989***

Roger Craig Adams  
James Lee Breth  
Edward R. Fahlbush  
Linda Holbrook  
Christopher Iannelli

Tracy Ice  
Elizabeth W. Johnson  
Wylie D. Jones  
Mary Elaine Ray  
Rebecca Rose Schroer  
Jeffrey A. Smith

## ***Members Initiated***

***April 10, 1990***

Fred Quintin Beagle  
Kyle Wayne Bennett  
Susan Claypool  
Daniel Paul Decker  
Gregory S. Duncan  
Mark A. Good  
Richard Timothy Herrmann  
Rebecca Leslie Knight  
Mary Alice Mairose

Bryan P. McGovern  
Ernestine Moore  
Christina Lee Poston  
Preston A. Reed, Jr.  
Christine Rosse Schroth  
Scott Andrew Schuh  
Michael Scott Smith  
Eric Lee Sowers  
Dorinda Sue Tackett

## ***Members Initiated***

***April 9, 1991***

Patrick Thomas Berry  
Nicholas Brake  
Shelly Renee Helmer  
Toni Hickey  
Tina Holliday  
Charles F. Hollis, III  
Rick Jones  
Michael Shawn Kemper

Todd Michael Novak  
Greg Perkins  
Larry Prine  
Janine Marie Ramsey  
Brian Scott Rogers  
Sandra Seidman  
Stacy E. Wallace  
Steven David Wilson

## ***Faculty***

Michael C. C. Adams  
Lawrence R. Borne  
John P. DeMarcus  
J. Merle Nickell  
W. Michael Ryan  
Louis R. Thomas  
H. Lew Wallace  
Michael H. Washington

Leon E. Boothe  
James C. Claypool  
Tripta Desai  
James A. Ramage  
W. Frank Steely  
Robert C. Vitz  
Richard E. Ward  
Jeffrey C. Williams

