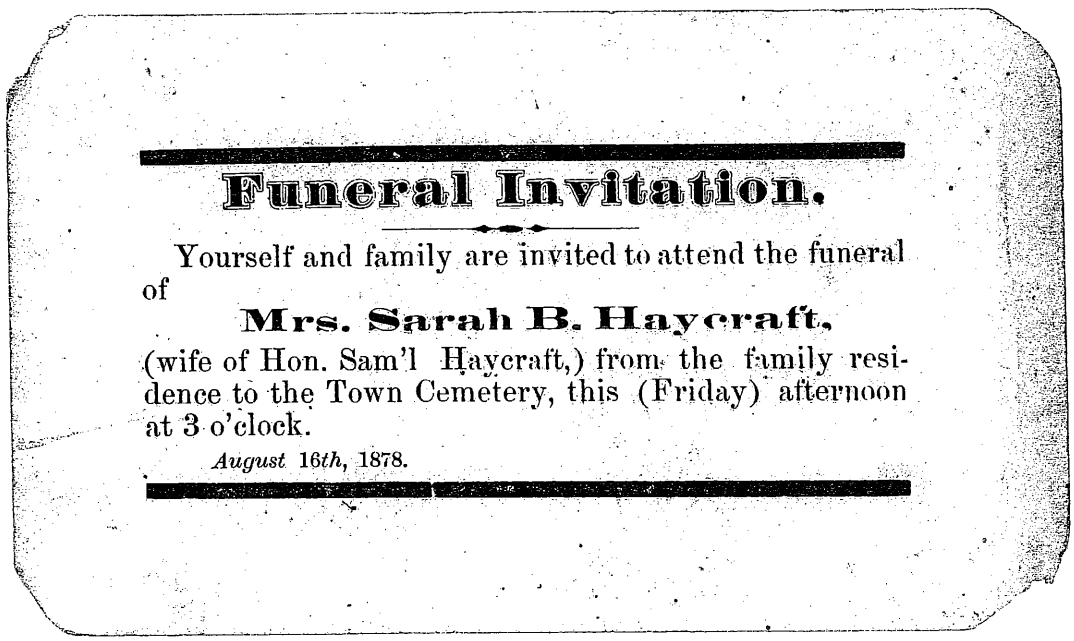
ISSN 1536-1667

Bits and Pieces

of Hardin County History

A PUBLICATION OF HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL XXV NO. 1 MARY JO JONES, EDITOR SPRING 2006



Funeral Invitation.

Yourself and family are invited to attend the funeral of

Mrs. Sarah B. Haycraft,

(wife of Hon. Sam'l Haycraft,) from the family residence to the Town Cemetery, this (Friday) afternoon at 3 o'clock.

August 16th, 1878.

FUNERAL INVITATION

In the days before the coming of the local daily paper or the telephone or the computer, disseminating news around town was a problem. Most of the time when it wasn't urgent, it was just passed by word of mouth, or by sending notes by children or servants. However, when there was a death in the family, more affluent families would rush to the printer and have obituaries and/or "funeral invitations" printed and delivered to their friends.

One such funeral invitation is shown here. It reads, "Yourself and family are invited to attend the funeral of Mrs. Sarah B. Haycraft, (wife of Hon. Sam'l Haycraft) from the family residence to the Town Cemetery, this (Friday) afternoon at 3 o'clock. August 16th 1878."

WAS THIS ELIZABETHTOWN???

Only a few people in Syracuse outside Helen Smith's family know what happened to her that terrible day in 1945, as she sat in a bus station, dressed in her U. S. Army uniform.

The hurt never left her.

"We talked about it often," said her daughter Grace Blair, who is now 85 and lives at a Loretto facility in Syracuse. "Here she was serving her country, here in the United so-called States of America, and this is what happened to her."

The whole idea of Smith joining the military, at age 43 in 1943, had stunned her three children and husband, Howard, himself a World War I veteran. But Smith was determined to join the World War II fight. She was assigned to an all-black unit at Kentucky's Fort Knox.

This is the story as Blair heard it growing up.

One day, Smith was in a bus station, waiting for the shuttle back to the post after visiting a friend. A white sheriff confronted her. He said she was in a seat reserved for whites only.

Smith politely protested. "I haven't done anything," she said. "Why can't I sit here?"

This infuriated the sheriff. "You nigras from up north think you know everything," he said.

He grabbed Smith and beat her with his billy club. She fell, injuring her ankle. Someone ran to alert nearby base patrol officers. But the sheriff wouldn't let the officers touch Smith. He hauled her to his squad car, drove to the jail and locked her up.

Smith kept calm, but cried a little. She sneaked a letter address to her family to a jail visitor.

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the civil rights leader and congressman from New York City, helped spring Smith from jail on the 10th day, and ensured she was in good standing with the military.

Back at Fort Knox, Smith mailed home a photograph of herself with a black eye. She was not smiling. She also had nasty bruises on her ankle, and walked with a limp for months.

But her next letter had this proud message: "By the time you read this, I'll be overseas."

Her unit was shipping out. But the war ended, and Smith came home.

"It made my father very happy–all of us, but daddy more than us," Blair said.

Perhaps Helen Smith's civil disobedience was inspired by her husband's. Howard once refused to leave the white section of a segregated train traveling between a military camp and Philadelphia. "He told them," Blair said, "he was a black FBI agent."

. . . . After 70 years of marriage, Howard died at 92 in 1987. Helen died at 96 in 1996.

(Source: *Post-Standard,* Syracuse, N.Y., Feb. 7, 2004, p. B-2.)

****

"GALLANTRY IN ACTION" -- SGT. GEORGE ELMER LARKIN, JR.

There is an historical marker in the Hardin County Courthouse yard headed "Gallantry in Action," and I must confess that not until a few days ago had I read it. It is a memorial to the World War II heroism of George Elmer Larkin, Jr., of Colesburg.

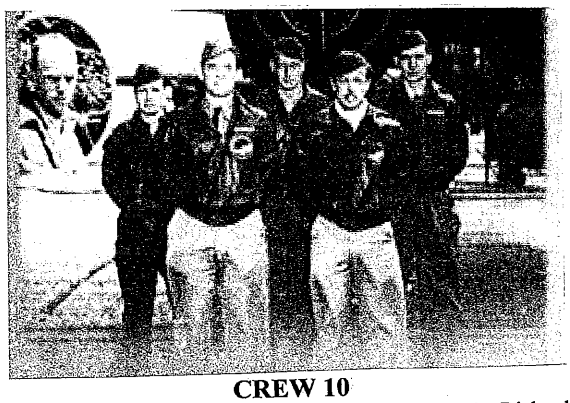
Elmer Larkin was a member of the graduating class of Elizabethtown High School in 1936. His picture is in the yearbook, and he is mentioned in the class prophecy. Two ladies who were also in that class remember him simply as having played football and worked at Kroger. They believe the family lived in Elizabethtown, having moved here from Colesburg, where Elmer was born.

After high school, Elmer worked at various grocery stores in Elizabethtown and Bardstown until November 27, 1939, when he enlisted in the U. S. Army at Fort Knox, requesting service with the Air Corps. Following basic training, he was sent to air mechanics school at Tulsa, Oklahoma. He graduated with a rating of 89 percent on June 4, 1940, and received the rating of air mechanic. In March, 1941, he was assigned to McChord Field, Washington, as a flight engineer and became part of a crew flying the new B-25B bombers.

The Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 stunned and demoralized America. American pride was wounded; morale was low; the U.S. Pacific fleet was crippled .The Philippines were being overrun. The Japanese were making rapid progress in the Pacific. German armies had swept through Europe and North Africa and had invaded Russia. Morale at home was low. Something successful for the United States was needed.

The April, 1942, air attack on Japan led by Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle was the most daring operation yet undertaken by the United States in the young Pacific war. Though conceived as a diversion that would also boost American and allied morale, the raid generated strategic benefits that far outweighed its limited goals. Sixteen B-25B medium bombers launched from an aircraft carrier delivered a surprise raid on Tokyo and other Japanese cities. Because of the limited fuel capacity, plans had been made to end the flight in China.

One of the eighty volunteer airmen on that raid was George Elmer Larkin. His diary tells his experiences:



CREW 10

L to R: Lt. Horace E. Crouch (navigator/bombardier), Lt. Richard O. Joyce (pilot), Unidentified man who was replaced at last minute and did not go on mission, Lt. Royden Stork (copilot), Sgt. George E. Larkin, Jr. (flight engineer). (Inset) S/Sgt Edwin W. Horton, Jr. (gunner)

April 1, 1942

We arrived in Alameda [Calif.] about 10 o'clock [in the morning]. The ships [the B-25B bombers] were then taken and hoisted aboard the *U.S.S. Hornet.* The extra men and officers went aboard at 2 o'clock. The ship was then moved out into San Francisco Bay and anchored for the night. Those who wanted to go ashore were allowed to.

April 2

We set sail at 7 o'clock this morning and as we passed under the great Golden Gate Bridge we wondered if we would see it again.

April 3

We fell into the usual sea routine and Colonel Doolittle told us where we were going and what our targets were. From the 3rd until the 18th we were checking our ships [airplanes]...planning the least possible clothes...and listening to lectures on Tokyo by a well-learned officer of the Navy.

April 18

We were told that enemy ships were sighted toward the west. One of the cruisers went to see and immediately sank the boat. We were then told to make ready for immediate takeoff. The order for takeoff came at 7 o'clock [in the morning]. We were all sweating the first plane off. As the engines turned up to their maximum rpm, the plane sat there and quivered and shook as though it were nervous and wanted to go. Then the starter gave the signal. Colonel Doolittle released the brakes and before one could bat an eye the plane was in the air. There was

applause and shouts as it cleared the deck.

We were No. 10. I think that our pilot, Lt. R. O. Joyce, made the best takeoff of the ten. We circled the ship and got our heading and then turned to our course for Tokyo. We had a little over 1,000 gallons of gas aboard. We had expected to be let off about 400 nautical miles from Tokyo but instead it turned out to be 640 nautical miles, this being approximately 700 statute miles. Our first thought was to conserve all the gas we could.

We had planned on flying about 1,850 miles but since we were let off 200 miles further out, it meant more than 2,000 miles. We first emptied our crawlway tank [160 gallons] and then our turret tank. Eddie Horton, a gunner, and I then folded the tank over, and I went to the tail to help Eddie pour the gas from ten 5-gallon cans into the turret tanks. This done, we knocked holes in the cans and tossed them overboard.

On our way to the coast we were intercepted by a patrol bomber, which we outdistanced easily. We then began keeping a sharp eye out for land and any more planes that may have been sent to intercept us. About 5 hours from the *Hornet* we sighted land, and our navigator quickly found our position, and we turned to our course of Tokyo.

At approximately 2 o'clock [in the afternoon] we started our run. We thought at first it was going to be easy, but a surprise was in store for us. The navigator lined up the sight on our prospective target, and we began our run. At that time I heard the co-pilot's voice over the interphone saying there were pursuits over us. I looked around for them, and all I could see was anti-aircraft bursting all around us. In the meantime, Lt. Crouch had dropped the bombs, and all I could see was dust and flying debris. The pursuit was getting rather close at this time, and the AA guns also had our range. The pilot then dived for the ground. We left the pursuit for a while but, as we had to turn, they were soon on top of us again. We opened the throttles and really flew.

The co-pilot later told me we were indicating 337 mph. Thank goodness for speed because when we dived it caused the ammunition to come out of the can and tangle up, throwing both guns out of commission. I finally got one straightened out and used it. It seemed that when the Japs saw the tracers coming after them they were afraid to come closer. We were finally able to climb to the clouds and lose them.

This interception had cost us much valuable gasoline. When we were at last safe we took a reading and found we had about 500 gallons left and had yet to go about 1,200 miles. The pilot put the mixture control as far lean as possible and asked the navigator for a course that would get us there in the shortest distance. This he gave him, and from time to time he checked it to make sure the course was accurate and that the pilot flew it.

We took hourly consumption data and found that we would have enough gas to reach our destination. After this was understood, we were wishing for good weather, which turned out to be the worst I have ever seen.

We could barely make out the China coast when we arrived, and since we had to climb to about 5,000 feet to clear some of the hills, it was impossible to see the ground. We proceeded on our course until we were about out of gas. Just before the gas was gone, the pilot told us to put our chutes on. This sent a cold shiver through me, because this was the last thing I wanted to do. However, I have good faith in the Army parachute, but the idea of stepping out in space is another story.

At last the order came, "Bail out." Since I was the only enlisted man up front, I was first. I think I closed my eyes and stepped through the door. I waited two seconds, I guess, and then gave the ripcord such a pull I almost broke my arm. The next thing I remember was the shroud lines unfolding from my chute. Then all of a sudden there was an awful pop and my fall was stopped. I was in the prone position and when my chute caught it almost broke my neck, it felt like, but I was very glad indeed to be floating softly toward the ground.

I was in clouds for about 30 seconds, I guess, and then the ground started showing all around. I had to think hard to figure what was going on. Then all of a sudden I found I was in a valley between two hills. I wondered when I would hit the ground, and I found out. When descending, the chute kept swinging back and forth as though in a swing. As I came back from one of those swings I landed against the hill with such force that the breath was knocked out of me, and it seemed like ages before being able to get it back.

When my chute opened I lost my flashlight and all the candy I had for rations and my map. After my breath returned I looked around awhile, hoping to see some of the lights from the others, but I could not see any, so I started up the mountain.

I was so exhausted when I reached the top I just sat down and went to sleep. I woke up several times chilled to the bone, so I beat myself and warmed up enough to go back to sleep. To build a fire was impossible because it was raining and everything was wet including myself. So passed one eventful day.

April 19

I started out at 7 o'clock and climbed two more mountains. The fog had made everything wet, and soon all my clothes were soaking wet. As though that weren't enough, it started raining, which made things heavier. At last I found a path, and I kept to the path until I came across a small village. I stayed away from it until 3 o'clock. I was hungry and tired, so I decided to go to the village. . . . I was still in doubt as to whether it was free and that they would help me. They took me to the little mission they had there, and it so happened that a Chinese boy could speak some English. With his help I got some boiled eggs, and

they gave me some dry clothes and dried my own. I slept there that night. I slept in a chair rather than a bed so as to not catch any more cooties than possible, and they put chairs, benches around me to keep the pigs, dogs and cows away.

April 20

We left the next morning for what I thought was Chuchowfu. We walked for a few miles to the next village. There the interpreter hired a sedan [a chair carried by porters], paid for it himself and sent me on my way. I think the two smallest men in the village carried the sedan. About 4 miles further on we were met by an armed guard with a rickshaw, and I proceeded on in ease. How the boy ran that far without stopping I cannot say. I arrived at Suian and saw the most cherished sight I ever expected to see. That was Lts. Crouch [navigator] and Stork [copilot] and Sgt. Horton [armorer-gunner]. I had no idea what was in store for me there. Also there was the crew of 2278 [Plane No. 12 in the order of takeoff] who was leaving by car for Chuchowfu. We were taken care of by the magistrate and two missionaries. It was a most welcome sight to see two English-speaking people after my experience with the Chinese. Their names are Miss Rosemary Loosey, a find old English lady, and Miss Eleanor Sneyder from Washington, Seattle in fact. We ate meals with them and felt almost at home.

April 21

Lt. Joyce (pilot) has not shown up as yet. Some of our chutes were found and brought to us. Nothing much happened except for an alert signal now and then.

April 22

Still no word from Lt. Joyce. We left Suian for Chuchowfu at 9 o'clock and arrived 4 hours later to find 21 more men sitting in a bomb shelter. The airport at Chuchowfu [the intended landing site for many of Doolittle's raiders] has been bombed daily since we arrived here.

April 24

Back in shelter again. Word just came in 10 more found in life raft and 2 bodies washed ashore. This makes about 65 accounted for. Lt. Joyce hasn't shown up yet. I wish they could find plane; it has 37 cartons Luckies in it. 2nd air raid and no dinner. Dinner finally at 4 o'clock. Lt. Ozuk [navigator on Plane No. 3] came in during dinner. He is worst hurt so far. A very bad leg.

April 25

One more man came in this morning, Lt. Youngblood [copilot of Plane No. 4]. This makes the number safe to 55. Most of us are to leave for Quinlene tonight traveling only at night. Lt. Joyce has not showed up yet. Am hoping to see him in Chunking. Our train left, and I must say it was the worse train ride I have ever experienced. The berths were wood with a 1/2-inch-thick mattress. Very uncomfortable.

April 29

We were awoken at 8:00, ate breakfast and were told a plane was to pick us up at 9:00. The plane arrived at 2:30, and we left immediately for Chunking at 5:30 and were glad indeed to see some fellow soldiers.

April 30

We were told about the wonderful mission we had accomplished and told also that General Arnold had awarded us the Distinguished Flying Cross. We were congratulated by generals, colonels, lt. colonels, majors and all. We were given a party by the enlisted men, and I gave each a scarf from my parachute. We went to bed about 12:30.

May 1

We were invited to luncheon by Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Madame Chiang is one of the most charming Chinese ladies I ever expect to meet. She speaks wonderful English and is very brilliant. I can easily understand why China has remained intact during all these years of war. She honored us again tonight by giving us

******

Larkin's diary ends in midsentence, as if something urgent interrupted him. He may have intended to end the sentence with the word "medals." The Chinese awarded him their Army, Navy and Air Corps Medal, Class A, 1st Grade. Lt. Joyce did rejoin his men about a week after they bailed out and eventually returned home.

Larkin never saw Kentucky again. On October 18, 1942, while on another bombing raid, his plane struck a mountain near the Burma-India border. His remains were buried in the U.S. Military Cemetery at Barrackpore, India and later moved to the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Punchbowl Crater, Honolulu, Hawaii.

****

(Sources: *Courier-Journal,* April 17, 1988, "Doolittle Raid Diary"; *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society,* Spring, 1985, "The Doolittle Raid Journal of Sgt. George E. Larkin, Jr., 1942.")

Mary Jo and World War II

(CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE)

Another popular night spot was the Fort Knox Supper Club, or "Murphys" as it was popularly called. It was opened in the late 1930's, and the building included a bar, a room for dining and dancing, and a gaming room with craps, blackjack, and slot machines. It was nominally a "private club," not open to the general public. However, I never knew of anyone being turned away from the locked door, which Mr. Murphy controlled with a release from behind the bar. It was strictly a family business. Mr. Murphy was the bartender; Mrs. Murphy was in charge of the dining room; and her brother, Bud Benham, ran the gaming room. (When the house was losing, Mrs. Murphy took over from Bud.) The clubs at Fort Knox closed at one AM on Saturday nights, and a crowd from the dance would reconvene at Murphys'. That place stayed open as long as patrons were spending money. We also often went there during the week, as the food was excellent, although a bit more expensive than the Officers' Club.

Other off-post night spots included the Club Madrid at Third and Walnut, and the Bluegrass Room at the Brown Hotel, both in Louisville. They were not as popular as night spots in the Fort Knox area.

Work at the office picked up after Pearl Harbor. Soon we were working six days a week, and office hours became eight to five, six days a week. Our paychecks reflected the added hours. We said many goodbyes to young officers who were leaving for overseas assignments. But there was always a new contingent arriving, so our social life didn't suffer.

Not having a car, I couldn't get around the post as much as I liked, so I bought a bicycle. That proved to be very satisfactory "wheels" for me.

1940; 1941; 1942; 1943; 1944–World War II was raging on all fronts. I'd said goodbye to my friends as well as my bosses as they departed for overseas assignments. My feet were getting itchy. I picked up an issue of *Mademoiselle* magazine, and there was an article, "So You Want to go Overseas." Yes, I did. I read that the Foreign Service of the Department of State was recruiting clerical workers to staff its embassies and consulates worldwide, particularly those in the areas being liberated as the war went on. I applied. Martha Shelton, one of my housemates, did likewise. She was hired. I heard nothing beyond a form letter which said my application had been received and would be considered. Martha left for Washington. I heard nothing.

Finally, one day in May, 1944, an agent of the FBI came to interview me. He said he'd been in the area doing a background check on me at the request of the State Department. We talked, and both he and the Department must have been satisfied, as shortly thereafter a letter arrived offering me employment. I must agree to go anywhere in the world after a brief training period in Washington.

What would my parents say? I was just twenty years old. Somewhat to my surprise, they agreed that I could go, but I don't believe they were very enthusiastic. Years later, Mother told me that she and Daddy discussed the matter, and decided that if they didn't permit me to go, I'd feel that my life had somehow been ruined and might hold it against them forever.

I resigned my job at Fort Knox immediately. The people I worked with were almost as enthusiastic as I. Secretly, I think all of them wanted to go to a more exciting assignment. After all, they were soldiers; this is what they had been preparing for–war.

I packed two footlockers, as well as the wardrobe trunk Mother had taken to college and left them at home until I could supply an overseas address. I was instructed to take minimal household necessities–sheets, towels, as well as clothing for any climate, which could range from Iceland to the tropics.

After almost four years, my "temporary" job had ended and I was going to further my education, but not in college.

****

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Wartime Washington was strictly a girls' town. I knew that before I arrived. But I also knew that working and living in the nation's capital would afford many opportunities. I had never been there, so there was lots to see.

After an overnight train ride, where I slept in a Pullman berth for the first time, I reported as instructed to the Walker-Johnson Building which housed some overflow offices from the main State Department building.. I had no place to live, but Martha Shelton, who had preceded me by some weeks, had told me she'd shelter me until I could make other arrangements. The office to which I reported maintained a list of available accommodations. Single rooms, except at Arlington Farms (more about that later) were practically non-available, so I selected at random a place conveniently located to my workplace.

It was a room in a row house located at 2114 O Street, NW. My roommate was a young lady about 28 who worked at the Austrian Mission. She and I got along well, but we never socialized together. The second-floor room with a southern exposure was quite large and nicely furnished: two single beds with innerspring mattresses; a two-burner hotplate for fixing breakfast and sometimes dinner (which I often did); refrigerator just outside the door; bath next door. The living room downstairs could be used until 11 PM if I ever had a date, which I never did. The rent was $22.50 per month, which was within my budget. As I recall, my net monthly pay was about $150. I could anticipate usually spending about one dollar a day for lunch and supper.

I was given a reasonable amount of time to get settled before I had to report for work. Finally, when I reported for my assignment, I was told to see Miss Edith Bland. I knew who she was–she was the person who made the overseas assignments. It was rumored that the girls who worked for her were sent where they wanted to go. She was in the Foreign Service, just temporarily in Washington because of the war. She was an "old maid," between 45 and 50, very well preserved, strawberry blonde hair in tight "beauty shop" ringlets. She was a small woman and had a very sharp nose.

The girls I worked with were nice, and the work was easy. It was exacting. I worked six days a week, nine to 5:30. It was summertime and there was daylight in the evenings. My daily routine was to get up at 8 in the morning, have a cup of tea, and leave the house by 8:35. I walked three blocks and caught a streetcar on Connecticut Avenue just below DuPont Circle. I'd ride to 17th and H, then walk three blocks more. The entire trip was fifteen to twenty minutes. I soon learned to get around on the city buses and street cars. Each Sunday morning I purchased a ticket for $1.25 which entitled me to ride any streetcar or bus in the District until five AM the following Sunday.

I immediately started preparing for my overseas assignment–applied for a passport and began getting inoculations for any place in the world, including typhus, typhoid, yellow fever and tetanus.

My first week sight-seeing included the Smithsonian, the Corcoran Art Gallery, and the big State Department building. I went as close to the White House as possible.

Many of the girls I worked with lived at Arlington Farms, the government dormitory for some seven thousand working girls. It was just across the Arlington Bridge in Virginia. It was within walking distance of the Pentagon and also Arlington Cemetery. I often went there with them for dinner in their dining room. I'd ride the city bus to the bridge and then walk across, to save the bus fare of five cents which it cost to ride across the bridge to the bus stop at the Farms. I soon met Marjorie Cleaver, a co-worker who lived there. She had roots in Elizabethtown. Her mother was a Bush, and she was some relative of Zelma Overall. I really was amazed at Arlington Farms. The various halls were named for states. Marjorie lived in Kansas Hall. There was everything there a girl might need: cafeteria, gym, clothing store, beauty shop, sewing machines for rent for five cents an hour. The rooms, all single, were about eight by nine feet, and the rent was $24.50 per month. I seriously considered moving there, but decided against it because I had a place to cook, and my room was much larger and cooler. Bear in mind, this was before air-conditioning. The food was good. One evening I had a large slice of fresh ham, roll and butter, turnip greens, choice of tomato juice cocktail or soup, choice of tea, coffee or milk, and ice cream, the regular dinner, for fifty cents. Much larger servings than I'd seen any place else.

One evening we walked across the road and through Arlington Cemetery. We saw loads of tombstones, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (around which a guard walks day and night), the amphitheater nearby, and the Lee Mansion. It was closed, but we saw the servants' quarters behind the house which contained what I considered nice furniture.

I often ate lunch in the cafeteria in the basement of the big State Department building (now the Executive Office Building)–meat, one vegetable, bread, butter and drink for thirty cents. I usually got one more vegetable, ten cents, and made the noon meal my dinner so I could snack in my room at night.

My impression of Washington was included in a letter of June 29th: " *Washington isn't such a bad place, I guess. There are just too many Gov't gals here. Everywhere you look, just more girls. And they're all always broke–takes every cent they make to live. I've thrown away clothes that look as well or better than some the average girl wears to work. However, some of them have invested in one or two good dresses, but those are few. My roommate is an average Washington working girl, I'd guess, and her clothes are few and cheap. She has one formal, bought new for a party given by her office last week. I think Washington might be rather nice in peace when you can get an idea of what's going on, but everything certainly is a mess now."*

On the Fourth of July, we were all surprised to be excused from work two hours early on account of the holiday. I went out to Arlington and went through the Lee Mansion, then had dinner and took in a movie at Arlington Farms. I didn't know about the fireworks on the lawn at the Washington Monument until I heard the next morning about the tremendous crowd that gathered to watch it. Another day we were excused from work an hour early because of the extreme heat. Remember, no air conditioning.

On August 15th I noted: "*Saturday night another girl from the office and I went to a dance at the YWCA. We had to go early, as they admit only 350 girls each Saturday night. The dance was on the roof (7th floor). It wasn't too uncomfortably warm up there. . . . We sat on a bench on the roof for almost an hour and were almost ready to leave when two rather nondescript sailors came and asked us to dance. They weren't too bad, and not at all bad for Washington, where a man is a man, regardless. But we couldn't get rid of them, so I don't know about the rest of the men there. . . . I don't think I'll try that again until cool weather, and I can hope I won't be here then.*

Big news on July 7th was that quite a few of the girls were given their overseas assignments–Wellington, New Zealand; Pretoria, South Africa; New Delhi, India; Rio de Janeiro, Quito and Ciudad Trujillo. Still no one was going to Rome. Ambassador Kirk and his staff were in Naples, waiting until it was safe to go to Rome.

By August I was beginning to get impatient because I hadn't received my overseas assignment. Girls who came somewhat after I did were getting their posts, and I wasn't. However, I did observe that I wouldn't have been happy to go any place anyone else was being sent. I was still holding out for Europe, and apparently I had a good chance of going there.

Finally in September I found out that I was assigned to the office of the U. S. Representative on the Advisory Council for Italy in Rome (to become the American Embassy as soon as diplomatic relations were resumed), as part of a pool being assembled there for eventual duty elsewhere in Italy as American consulates were opened when the war was over. My post was to be Milan.

I was excited to get my passport. I had visas to travel to Newfoundland, Bermuda and Ireland in transit to Italy; Portugal; and a military permit stating I had permission of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to enter Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in transit to Italy. My trunks at home were shipped to the Security Storage Company in Washington to be crated for shipment by boat to Rome. I insured my personal property for $1000 with Lloyds of London, highly recommended by all who knew about it.

I had a one-way ticket for transatlantic flight from New York to Lisbon on the Pan American Clipper and would go by train to New York. I knew no one in Lisbon, but I was told that someone from the American Consulate would meet the plane and arrange my onward transportation. My one-way plane ticket from New York to Lisbon cost $525, paid for, of course, by the State Department. The Clipper was a seaplane, and we took off from the water at LaGuardia. My first airplane ride. I was excited and apprehensive. We took off at 10 AM on a Sunday morning. More experiences than I could dream of lay before me!

(To be continued)

****

THE LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE TURNPIKE

Elizabethtown, which prides itself as being "The Hub of the Commonwealth," based on the fine network of modern highways which spread from it, has from its earlier days benefitted from the roads on which it was located.

In earlier days, being located on water, prior to the days of railroads and the motor age, whether as a seaport or a riverport, such towns and cities had favored opportunities for commerce and growth. Elizabethtown is located on Severns Valley Creek, which is not considered a navigable stream, thus its commercial growth has been attributable to land transportation.

Perhaps Elizabethtown was fortunate in its location on a line between Louisville on the Ohio River, and Nashville, on the Cumberland River, when the Kentucky Legislature in 1826 chartered the first two "modern roads in the state – one being the Maysville and Washington Turnpike Road Company, and the other being an "artificial road" from the city of Louisville by way of West Point to Elizabethtown, incorporated under the name of Louisville, West Point and Elizabethtown Turnpike Road Company. The capital stock was $100,000 in shares of $100 each. The Kentucky Turnpike from Louisville to Elizabethtown, build in the 1950's and financed by a bond issue, and a marvel for its time, was not the first toll road connecting the two cities.

The charter granted to the company in 1826 allowed three years for the building of the road. This it failed to do. In 1833 the Louisville Turnpike Road Company was granted a charter to build a toll road from Louisville in the direction of Nashville by way of West Point, Elizabethtown, Munfordville and Bowling Green. The capital stock was placed at $500,000.

James Young, the proprietor of West Point and his son-in-law, Samuel B. Thomas, then living at West Point, were heavy investors in the new road. The Hardin County commissioners appointed were Benjamin Helm, James Crutcher, George Roberts, Samuel Haycraft, Jr., and Horatio G. Wintersmith.

The process of building the road was very slow and the charter was extended until February, 1837 for another five years and work got under way. The company in reality was broken up into five smaller sections and managed in that manner. The five sections – Louisville to the Mouth of Salt River (West Point)–22 miles; Mouth of Salt River to Elizabethtown–22 miles; Elizabethtown to Bell's Tavern (Park City)–49 miles; Bell's Tavern to Bowling Green–24 miles; and Bowling Green to Tennessee State Line–27 miles.

The Kentucky Legislature in 1835 created a State Board of Internal Improvements with authority to invest state

funds in turnpike roads. It is said that large sums were wasted on ill-planned projects. The policy of the board was to furnish two dollars for each dollar furnished by individuals and counties. When it was finished in 1840, the cost of grading the 76 miles in Hardin County was $36,378 paid by individuals and $76,855 paid by the state.

Henry J. Eastin was the resident engineer and made the survey for the road's location in Hardin County. Mr. Eastin was accompanied on the survey by Major James Crutcher, John L. Helm and Samuel Haycraft of Elizabethtown.

It is said that the word "turnpike" originally meant a road with turnstiles or toll gates, but by 1825 it had come to signify a road with a surface of some hard material. An abundance of limestone found in Hardin County resulted in a better road being built in this section than in some others. Rough cobblestones were placed on edge across the road to form a base eight inches thick. On top of this, successive layers of pounded stones were land to give a surface coat four inches thick. This type of road was much like the roads build during the period of the roman Empire in the Mediterranean area twenty centuries ago which are still in use in some places. The base of the turnpike served as base for the old Dixie Highway (31-W) when it was built in the 1920's and followed essentially the same route.

As slaves were considered too valuable, Irish labor was employed extensively on the project. All grading was done with plows, picks and shovels.

Stephen McMurtry of the Mill Creek section of the county subcontracted one mile of the road construction. He employed Irish laborers at fifty cents per day, the laborers furnishing their own board and lodging.

The first toll gate in Hardin County was at Trueman's, about two miles south of West Point, where the I.C.R.R. trestle is located; another was at Red Hill Post Office; and another at Claysville, near Elizabethtown. The tolls were for each person, two cents; for each horse or mule, four cents; for each ten head of cattle, six and a quarter cents; for a four-wheel carriage (this would include a stagecoach), 16 cents; or for each cart or wagon with less than four-inch tread (perhaps this covered stagecoaches), 25 cents.

Soon after the establishment of the turnpike, Samuel B. Thomas, then of Elizabethtown, and Thomas Carter of Louisville began the operation of the Louisville and Nashville stages. A daily stage ran each way between Louisville and Nashville, the one-way fare being $12 in 1834. It would appear that stage operations were begun before the road was entirely completed between the two cities.

The stage firm had its Louisville office at the Galt House. In Elizabethtown the stopping place was the Eagle House.

(Source: An old newspaper clipping.)

****

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On March 18th, I had the opportunity to attend the wreath laying ceremony for Sgt. George E. Larkin Jr., a crewmember that took part in Doolittle's Raid on Tokyo. For many years we have had a historical marker on the courthouse yard that told about Elmer Larkin being the first Kentuckian to bomb the enemy capital and being a native of Hardin County. However, it took a group of young people from across the state to really bring attention to the role Larkin and the other crewmembers provided in this important morale boosting mission. The Kentucky Society Children of the American Revolution held their state convention in Elizabethtown and conducted a Memorial Service for Sgt. Larkin. As a result of the publicity, we were able to find some of Sgt. Larkin's relatives who still live in Hardin County.

Some of you probably do not have an opportunity to read *The Sentinel,* a Radcliff newspaper that is published on a weekly basis. For several weeks, I have enjoyed reading Paul Urbahn's series on the history of Radcliff. I am old enough to remember when the City of Radcliff incorporated fifty years ago. Radcliff has experienced a great deal of growth and it looks like more is on the way with the Fort Knox expansion.

Our next meeting will be April 24th. The program will be a Chautauqua Series on Simon Kenton by Mel Hakla of Jamestown, KY. I plan on having a new voting machine that we will use for the first time in the May primary on display. You will have an opportunity to try out the machine with a fictitious ballot. I look forward to seeing everyone at our next meeting.

Kenneth L. Tabb
President

NOTE FROM THE TREASURER;
IF YOU HAVE NOT PAID YOUR DUES FOR 2006, PLEASE MAIL YOUR CHECK TO THE SOCIETY, P. O. BOX 381, ELIZABETHTOWN, KY 40272. — THANKS.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

The Hardin County Historical Society will meet Monday evening, April 24, 2006, at the State Theater Gallery, 209 W. Dixie Ave., in downtown Elizabethtown. The buffet dinner, catered by BACK HOME, will be served at 6:30 PM. The price is $7.50 per person.

The program, a Kentucky Chautauqua presentation, will be given by Mel Hankla, portraying Simon Kenton. Hankla has been active in the "living history" of the frontier era since the early 1980s. He is a flintlock gunsmith and makes several traditional long rifles every year. A lifelong resident of Jamestown, Kentucky, Hankla holds a master's degree from Western Kentucky University.

Kenton, thinking he had killed another boy in a fight over a girl, fled west from Virginia at the age of 16. He was wrong; he had only knocked him unconscious, but the incident launched him on a life of high adventure. By the time he was 20, he had settled on the shore of the Ohio River in what is now Mason County, Kentucky. From there he proceeded to carve out a remarkable career as an explorer and frontiersman. A compatriot of Daniel Boone and George Rogers Clark, Kenton was a legendary Indian fighter and became Kentucky's self-appointed welcomer from his post in Mason county, personally greeting may of the early arrivals in what was then the far west.

This program is funded in part by the Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc. and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For dinner reservations, telephone Mary Jo Jones, 270-765-5593, by NOON, FRIDAY, April 21. If you find later that you can attend, phone Mary Jo, as there are occasional cancellations.

HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
POST OFFICE BOX 381
ELIZABETHTOWN, KY. 42702