

**Loyal Jones**  
Prestonsburg Courthouse  
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Jones: Thank you very much, and thank you John. John had billed me as a historian. I was going to point out that Peter Edelman, Tom Kiffmeyer and I are the REAL people at this whole tour, you, know. Lots of other folk portrayin' one person or another. So I'll admit that, I should say I'm not a historian – I don't know what I am – but I do pay attention and I try to read history. It also gives me a story.

Down in Harlan County there was a man named Fiddler John Lewis. He was an old nineteenth century man. And he played the fiddle very well and he spoke in a very ancient English and so, a lot of people had played attention to him. Well, eventually, a professor at Berea who was interested in fiddle music went down there to interview him and he had him play and he played several tunes and he said, "Those are wonderful tunes. You play well, have good technique. Why don't you play me your favorite tune." So he played one. And he said, "That's really nice. What do you call it?" He said, "I call that 'Napoleon crossing the Rockies.'" Well, this was a professor, you see, who feel that they have to confront falsehood and establish truth whenever the occasion arises. So he said, "Well, you play well and you have good technique, but you know, Napoleon never crossed the Rockies..." Clever John reflected and said, "Well, historians differ." Truer words were never spoken, of course, you know.

I'm going to talk about the Economic Opportunity Act and the War on Poverty and I have a piece...(unintelligible)...so I need some notes here. It brought, I think, great hope to people that finally, at last, we were going to commit the money and the energy and the people to do something about poverty, which had plagued some of our people throughout the republic. And uh, of course, this was a time, it was a heady time. We all thought, "Gees, this is really great." Well, uh, the first president Kennedy established the Appalachian Volunteers, which Tom's Going to talk about, because when he came to West Virginia, we was greeted warmly, but also – and also, they voted for him, as everybody said they wouldn't – and this keeps uh, just a minute, yeah, I think that's fine... And so he wanted to do something for Appalachia and he arranged for his staffers to come down and the Appalachian Volunteers was formed as sort of the first part of that War on Poverty. And Tom Kiffmeyer's going to talk about that. But the Economic Opportunity Act that came out of the ideas of both Robert and John Kennedy was, of course, brought to fruition by Lyndon Baynes Johnson, who knew a few things about getting things done. And when people like Bill Moyers and others met to talk about what you might do in the War on Poverty, they had in mind a few of what they call "pilot projects," you know those that usually get reports and put on shelves and Lyndon said, "No!", you know, "We're going to do something. I want a program." And so, to the surprise of a lot of people, a lot of money was appropriated for this. And of course, the Vietnam War did cause some problems there, but it was – there were a lot of new thinkers involved in this who felt that welfare, while it kept people alive, had not done enough to involve the people so that they might think that this was their program and that they might contribute ideas and do the things that they think needed to be done. So, it was important, I think, that the War on Poverty was not just giving money to people, but to try to get them involved in all sorts of things like that. Of course, there were other

anti-poverty programs that came at the same time that need to be mention. The Appalachian Regional Development Act, of course, that created the Appalachian Regional Commission. They became two different kinds of programs. The War on Poverty with it's "maximum feasible participation of the poor" was a different way than appropriating money and building things like roads and all of that. But, of course, this program, the Appalachian Regional Development Act brought all sorts of new facilities, not only water and sewer and the hospitals and roads. Most of the money went for roads. And I'm still appreciating those roads. It used to take me four hours to get to Hazard and even longer to get to Pikeville, you know, and now you can zip along and do it and it was a wonderful idea. Even though, as a lot of people said, it helped people to get out of here. Of course, a lot of people DID get out of here.

The Economic Development Administration, the area development program gave grants for all sorts of grass roots types of industry. The Labor Department gave grants to retrain workers. This Work Experience and Training Program, Congressman Perkins, I found out that was really under the Economic Development rather than the Labor Department. As a historian, I was wrong there. The Department of Health Education and Welfare, of course, initiated, improved welfare support such as aid to families with dependent children and gave more generous grants to state departments of education, better educated disadvantaged students under the elementary and secondary act and all of that, which congressman Perkins had so much to do with. The Department of agriculture moved from surplus commodities to Food Stamps and then, eventually moved from people having to pay about half what the food stamps were worth to these being presented. And of course, the program of free school lunches, which the Appalachian Volunteers and other groups pushed for because a lot of people, as we heard today, could not afford to pay that 30 cents a meal for six or eight or even eleven children to have these hot lunches.

Of course, the Civil Rights Movement is all very much a part of this, which brought about the civil rights laws which integrated our schools, which integrated all sorts of public facilities. And our black citizens made a great contributions because they were focused and dedicated into getting new things done and things done in a different way, particularly in public education. And then, of course, there were funds to provide legal aid for the poor, and I, to mention John Rosenberg, and Apple Red, and Ed here who've worked so hard to provide legal aid for people who, before that time didn't have any means of getting a good lawyer, and sometimes didn't have any money whatever to do this sort of thing. Not all the programs, of course, were successful. Some had unintended consequences. Solutions to problems always bring new problems.

Welfare programs did create dependency among some clients, as an example, but on the other hand, welfare housed, clothed, fed, and gave medical care to generations of Appalachian children and kept them going and kept them in school. And I have taught of a lot of these students at Berea. I had a letter from one, just a month ago, he is full professor and dean of a college in Tennessee and is a decorated faculty member. But I know a lot of people who came out of very, very hard circumstances who, because of welfare and all of these programs for education and so forth, were able to stay in school and go on to become productive citizens. So don't let people sat that welfare's a failure. We've sort of minimized everything now, so we say 'this is good' and 'that is all bad.' But housing and feeding people, and particularly children, is a good thing to do.

Of course, another problem was that a lot of the money went to experts, rather than to the people, and they were the first to sort of notice that. You know, the director of the poverty program made a rather lot more than what a lot of the clients were making. And I know we talk about that, we always do that anyhow. But this was back in the days when, maybe, the director of the poverty program might have made twice as much than a working miner, but now its up to 450 times, in some corporation, what the minimum wage is and what the corporate officer makes. So, it was a different time.

But anyhow, I wanted to tell you a story or two. I had a real good friend. He was fighting the war on poverty. He worked for the old ...(unintelligible) that I worked for. He had had a modest Dodge Dart, which, you know, an appropriate poverty fighting vehicle. But he got hit by a coal truck, and he had, it was totaled, and he was almost totaled. But he got out, and got through, rehabilitated himself. And he was getting' ready to buy another car and a friend of mine told him, "You need to get a Buick. A used Buick is better than any Dodge Dart you'll ever get," he said. So he bought a Buick Electra – this was probably a 1962 Buick – and it had fins and it had chrome and it had...Electra...So anyway, he went over in eastern Kentucky, got lost going to a meeting in Leslie County and he couldn't, uh... He saw a fella standin' on the side of the road and pulled up beside him – he's over on that side, he reached over here and put down the window on that side – said, "Could you direct me to Lower Grassy?" This fella said, "Yeah, you down here and turn left, you can't miss it." They always say that, you know. He said, "Thank you very much." He put the window up and this fella, he wanted do a little talkin'. He pecked on the window and he put it back down again and he said, "What line of work are you in?" Well, he didn't quite know – this is Larry Greathouse, some of you know him, he was in the news recently, by the way – but anyhow, he said, "What line of work are you in?" and Larry, not knowing what else to say, said, "I'm with the war on poverty." Fella stepped back, looked over that Buick, said, "It looks like you won." Ron Thomas' son who has that wonderful band called The Dry Branch Fire Squad, said that when the war on poverty came his grandmother came down to the courthouse and offered to surrender. And then there's another one. There used to be, I think it was Temple University ran all these workshops to help people, you know, come down and work with the poor. And they had one course on "communicating with the poor." And, so, this fella, he took that course and he came down here to eastern Kentucky and he wanted to go around and meet some of the clients and a local poverty worker took him around. And he sat down and talked to this lady for awhile in a sort of pigeon English, you know. And then he went out to get something in the car and she said to the fella with him, said, "You know, that fella you brought down here from Washington?" He said, "Yeah." She said, "He's not right bright, is he?" Well, some of the programs were defended or defunded after the draining by a lot of the local political leaders. You know, after they had some control over what kind of things these programs did. And the Appalachian Volunteers was one of those when governors and local officials noticed they were doing things that seemed to be disturbing to people who'd bee – Tom will tell you more about that.

But even with failures, I think The War on Poverty was a great benefit to places like eastern Kentucky. Community Action is still going and it still has programs like Head Start – by the way – a parent-run program that every study has shown that Head Start helps children to do better in school, and yet we still have only partial funding of

Head Start. Adult care, Weatherization, VISTA, renovation of housing, homeless shelters, bus service. Madison County has something like, I mean the Kentucky River Foothills with four counties has something like 32 busses out there to take people to the doctor and hospital, welfare offices and that sort of thing. Family nutrition program, home-ownership program, and the opportunity for ordinary people to serve on boards and committees and to have a say in what the organizations do. We know that that doesn't always work out ideally, but it's still a great thing for any kind of program. Because, I've been in Appalachia all my life and worked with all kinds of do-good programs, and there's always that division between those people who, the locals may say, are "in from off", you know. They're outsiders, you know. And somehow, the programs are never the people's programs because the money's coming, and the people are coming in from someplace else. So it's important, I think, that the local people you're working with have something to say in how the programs are run.

This involvement of people in programs that affect their lives, I think, brought a new activism into this region. The idea of war on poverty liberalized, that's not – it's a good word in a sense that, you know, it freed people to think about new ways of doing things. Some would say "radicalized". Whatever it is, people did sort of move to the left in terms of what they thought might be possible and what government might do. And at the same time, of course, some people became more conservative, and even reactionary. There were positive results, I think, to all this activism. And I think one of the most successful citizen participation programs coming out of the era is Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. And of course, it involves people from all levels. (Applause) Thank you, it's a great pleasure and I'm proud to be a member of it. And of course, the lobbying they do in Frankfort is, it's a chance for real citizens, lobbyists, to go down there and try to out-talk those hundreds of corporate lobbyists who're always there. And so, they were successful in getting the constitutional amendment to limit strip mining to get a tax on un-mined minerals. They also have worked on environmental problems such as waste disposal, mountaintop removal, the silting and destruction of streams, oil and gas drilling on private land, and tax reform that would limit the taxation of poor people and sort of put it around maybe where the money is. And there's a similar program to this in Virginia and other activist organizations like Save Our Cumberland Mountains, Kentucky Heartwood, and lots of local things they've worked on – industrial and toxic waste from industry that they're always trying to dump in poor counties.

A good many programs have started by anti-poverty agencies – The Cumberland Grower's Market Association in Monticello, the Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation in London, which has a lot of money, by the way, for grassroots industry sorts of things. And the Appalachian Film Workshop of Whitesburg, Kentucky came out of the War on Poverty. I've admired the artistry of Appalachian people all my life. People who wrote poetry or wrote songs or could pick the guitar or fiddle, or, you know, even write stories and novels and do all sorts of things. But one thing they couldn't do was make films because it cost so much money. And that whole idea of creating a sort of a collective workshop in Whitesburg so that local people like Herb and others could make films. Because it made it possible. It couldn't have been done without that.

Well, these are all things that came out of it. Other programs started, poverty warriors, about the same time as the head corporation in Macy and Berea, which is community economic development and education organization. They organized The

Federation of Appalachian Housing, The Appalachian Federal Credit Union, and other such programs. The commission on religion in Appalachia was around a long time, but they began to think of how the churches, namely the mainland churches of the region, could do something in Appalachia. They didn't do very well, by the way, in relating to local churches. The Episcopalians and the Old Regular Baptists never could seem to always communicate successfully on the same thing. But they did know how to raise some money from liberal Christians up there somewhere and they brought back down and a lot of that money was invested in things. And also the Appalachian community in Knoxville has raised and given hundreds of thousands of dollars to other people.

I want to draw attention to the community development initiative that Hindman, by the way, as an example of what can be done cannot be true without a large scale of involvement of citizens and trying to grade what they'd really like for the future in Hindman. And of course, they have the new Opportunity Building there that is a base for Hazard Community College and classes from other colleges, Moorehead and so forth. They've got a brand new, beautiful library in a county that doesn't have a library tax, that the Hindman Settlement School has provided over the years. They have Head Start in that building and they have a wonderful adult education program. The new Craft School will be opening this Fall, you know they – it's about a 30 million dollar investment and then there was no money to run it. But I want to thank the government for coming up with some money to open at least the two classes in woodcraft and in jewelry-making, and I hope there'll be others. They have state-of-the-art tools, really fine woodworking equipment and so forth. And that's the sort of thing – the technical school might make a difference in this part of the country. Of course, we have a lot of people producing crafts, but they need some help in the whole business of craft, of design and marketing, and how to keep the bottom line so you can continue making these things. Well, anyhow, they also have a new city building built out of the blocks of rock that came out of one of the only WPA schools, by the way. It's a wonderful building as you come into town there. They've got a new artisan center. They've beautified that whole town and they're making a whole walkway around, amongst all these things. Go down and visit if you haven't been there.

I think that The War on Poverty, the programs that are still going, have kept alive in a great many people, the desire to help people who are in trouble. These programs succeeded in many ways. In the 1960's when Bobby Kennedy visited us, there was a massive, uh, there was massive unemployment, widespread malnutrition, poor housing, and children that needed help, and of course, poorly educated, and we've heard a great deal about that today. And the whole thing, the median family income of Floyd county was \$4800 in 1970, Knott county 3200, MacGoughan was 3600, and Johnson county was about 4200. The good news is that in 2000, the median family income for these counties is dramatically up: for Floyd, 21,168, Knott county 23,373, McGoughan 19,421, and Johnson county 24,491. The bad news is that the median family income of these counties is still under two-thirds of the Kentucky median income of 33,672 dollars.

We still have a lot of people living in poverty. 30 percent in Floyd, 31 in Knott, 31 percent of the whole population, 26 percent in Johnson, and 36 percent in McGoughan. More children in these counties are in poverty from, than those in the total population. Among the children of these counties, 45, really 50 percent in McGoughan, 39

percent in Floyd and Knott, and 35 percent in Johnson. All of these figures are better, of course, than they were when Robert Kennedy was here, but they're still too high.

Another significant change is the growth in the percentage of children born to unmarried mothers. And this is important because of the correlation between single-parent families and poverty. Floyd had only 6.8 percent of the children born in 1970 and had 27 percent in 2000 of the children born. In Johnson it was 5.4 percent in 1970, it was 27.4 in 2000. Knott had 8.9 in 1970, it's 29 percent in 2000. McGoughan 6.8 in '70 and 26.5 in 2000. However, the birth to teenage mothers has declined and that means older women are having the children.

Education in general has improved thanks to, care of the Pritchard community and other community and state groups and the governors who have appropriated, and legislatures, enough money to run these systems. I think the community and technical college system is really there for anybody who's able and willing to take part in the educational programs that're out there. But the fact is, we have a large reservoir, particularly of men who have very little education and don't have jobs, but who, somehow, venture forth in these programs. Women do it better. They're more progressive than men. But, anyhow, only 46 percent of Floyd county's residents had completed the eighth grade in 1970. 46 percent hadn't. In 2000 it was 79, excuse, I misspoke. 46 percent HAD completed the eighth grade in '70. It was 79 percent in 2000. Knott went from 29.6 to 79 percent who've completed high school. That's a great jump there. And Johnson went from 38 percent to 82 percent graduating high school. McGoughan from 26.6 to 71.4 in 2000. The percentage graduating from high school in these four counties between 1970 and 2000 more than doubled, and yet, a large percentage are still not graduating from high school –

28 percent in Floyd, 26 in Johnson, 41 in Knott, and 49 in McGoughan county, of the total population. Although the percentage of those completing four years or more of college has more than doubled between 1970 and 2000, the percentage is still only around ten percent (of the people in these four counties I'm talking about), with the exception of McGoughan, which has only 6.3 percent of the population who've graduated from college or have done better than there.

These statistics do mean that we have a large reservoir of people who're not educated or trained for today's economy, that pays, at least an economy that pays decent wages. And jobs in manufacturing, and even mining, are declining, where anything being shipped overseas is going and most people will have to prepare for largely service and technical jobs or other things that they can think of to make some money. A further problem is the drying up of state money for education and all that. There's not as much money to do any of these things, and that might raise some questions about how we are spending the money we have.

I want to finish up about speculating about Robert Kennedy would have to say and what he would be doing about the problems of today if he were here. This is speculation. Remember that Kennedy, though, was an unabashed liberal in a time before the neo-conservatives had made 'liberal' into a bad word. He believed that there are some problems that people ought to come together on and solve as a group, in a communal way, and especially those problems caused partially by a competitive economic system that certainly has winners, but certainly has losers.

Best example of this coming together, as a nation, I think, is Social Security and Medicare. This is a way, I think that, designed to take care of people who may have had great disadvantage at some point in their lives, or in their old age, in a collective way, whether recipients have been successful in life or not, or competent in their old age. It is a social system that is good for, both the individuals, and I think, for the country as a whole. Bobby Kennedy, I think, would try to improve this system, and if he invested social security funds in the stock market, they'd be invested by the system, for the system, to be spread out to all of the people. I think he would be smart enough to know that if funds are turned over to individuals to invest, some would be successful and some would not, just as they have been in life. So, Robert Kennedy ... (unintelligible) ... I think that more than a million more people slid into the poverty in 2003, most of them children. And the children's poverty rate rose from 16.7 percent to 17.6 percent in 2003. Americans lacking health insurance rose from 43.4 million to 45 million. And that full-time working women earned only 76 percent of what men earned, down from 77 in 2002. Kennedy would be working, I think, to raise people out of poverty. He would also be trying to find out what happened to all those people with dependent children who were dropped from the welfare rolls into a stagnant job market without adequate supportive services. I think he would be calling attention to the massive transfer of wealth from the lower and middle classes to the very wealthy, with the incomes of the top-earning 20 percent rising by 76 percent between 1967 and 2002, while the incomes of the bottom 20 percent remained, essentially, flat. He would also call attention to the transfer of massive amounts of money from the federal treasury to corporations in the name of free private enterprise. Robert Kennedy would be appalled at the rollback of regulations designed to ensure worker health and safety and to protect the environment. He would be outraged that corporate executives and lobbyists are writing legislation that is supposed to regulate their operations. He would be dismayed that corporate money now determines just what legislation will or will not be passed, no matter which party is in power. And I believe he would be a voice crying out against this outrageous evil, whether or not he had a following. A family man, he would be fighting to last to make sure that his children, and our children, and our grandchildren will inherit a world that is not hopefully, hopelessly spoiled for profit. Lastly, I believe Robert Kennedy would be smart enough to figure out a way to provide health care for all of our citizens with all of us paying into a fund that would pay medical costs for all of us, spread over the entire population, sick and well. And that is the way that insurance is supposed to work. He would also be smart enough to show the corporate heads that such a plan would relieve them of the onerous burden, to be matter of frank, get you to understand, of providing coverage for all their workers, because health care in corporations is a dwindling idea – it's not a first priority anymore. I believe Kennedy would also point out that drug companies selling drugs to foreign population at half or less the price charged to citizen's of the United States is ranked discrimination that is ungrateful, and indecent, and of course, greedy, if not criminal.

I believe that if Robert Kennedy were here today, he would be leading us up a path of decency, rather than down a path of discrimination, exploitation, and dis-correlation. Robert Kennedy is not here, but his presence 35 years ago gives me some hope, and I hope all of us some hope, and man, maybe a vision, and a lot to think about. I think the United States is in grave trouble, and not just from the terrorists. We citizens have lost control of our government to vested interests, whose interests are not always

our interests. Our workers and our environment are being used up without adequate recompense or respect or rehabilitative care. If not the current contenders for the presidency, then who will rise in our time to begin to fix these problems? And how do we make sure that most of us would support such a leader? Thank you all.