

In the Fall 2011 issue, GOLDENSEAL published the story, "The Great Kanawha County Textbook War," by Trey Kay, based on the radio documentary titled, "The Great Textbook War," produced by Trey Kay and Deborah George. Kanawha County resident Karl Priest provided the following, responding to points in the earlier article. This article by Mr. Priest and Alice Moore appears without editorial modifications. The photographs, selected and submitted by Mr. Priest, are taken from local newspapers and are used by permission, with their original captions. —ed.

AMERIC' A FIRST MODERN TEA PARTY

By Alice Moore and Karl Priest



Long procession of textbook protesters winds its way up Kanawha Boulevard toward a round of speechmaking on the Capitol grounds. Gazette photo by Leo Chabot.



Patriotic pickets flank the flag in front of du Pont's Belle plant. Junior Woodrum (right) and Harry Whittington identified themselves as coal miners. They said they didn't intend to disrupt the plant's operation. "We just want them to know we're here," Whittington said. Gazette photo by Leo Chabot.



Moment of prayer – Kneeling on the parking lot at Kanawha County Board of Education offices on Elizabeth Street, textbook demonstrators are led in prayer. They turned their faces and lowered their heads so a police photographer could not take their picture. About 300 persons waited calmly throughout the early afternoon, singing hymns, praying, and listening to Rev. Ezra Graley, their new leader. As the afternoon wore on, the crowd became more emotional, with many of the women and some men crying as they praised the Lord.

Patient pickets stand in the rain as school convenes at J.E. Robins Elementary. They opposed textbooks recently adopted for use in Kanawha County schools. School officials reported no violence in the opening day boycott. Gazette photo by Lawrence Pierce.



Old Glory flaps in a gentle breeze as protesters to Kanawha County textbooks mass on the Capitol's front lawn to hear the words of encouragement from the demonstration's leaders. Gazette Photo by Leo Chabot.



KARL PRIEST

The Kanawha County Textbook War was not a simple matter. It involved thousands of people (about 12,000 signed a petition against the books) with their own unique personalities and perspectives. The protesters were not perfect, but they were good people—the kind of folks most West Virginians would want to have as neighbors. As an historian of the protester side

of the Kanawha County Textbook War I take very seriously leaving a legacy of accurate information for future generations.

Trey Kay is an excellent journalist and I have no doubt he prepared his article (“Great Kanawha County Textbook War,” Goldenseal, Fall 2011) without malice. However, Mr. Kay was influenced by a mixture of mistakes, hyperbole, and outright

propaganda that has been perpetuated about the protest since 1974. I want to address one glaring omission and two inflammatory items from his article. These matters are discussed in depth in my book *Protester Voices—The 1974 Textbook Tea Party* and on a set of webpages found at <http://www.insectman.us/testimony/textbook-protester-truth/the-facts.htm>.

(1) Kay failed to mention that the Business and Professional People's Alliance for Better Textbooks was a MAJOR protester group. That fact is often omitted because it does not fit the stereotypical image of the protesters as unsophisticated and uneducated.

(2) The alleged sign "Get the n - - - - books out of the county" was never photographed even though the media had cameras all over the place. If it existed, most likely 99.9% of the protesters would have torn it down. Also, such a sign could have been posted by anyone—including someone unsympathetic to the protest. The protest was NOT racist!

(3) The only serious personal violence during the protest was inflicted by a leader of a pro-book group who shot an innocent bystander. Another man (also pro-book) emptied his pistol at some union pickets grazing one man. Except for a tiny group of radicals (less than a dozen) who caused property damage the protesters were NOT violent!

Kay concluded his article with a quote from a protest critic that was insulting to the protesters. The full context of that vitriolic quote (calling the protesters "stupid") is in Kay's radio documentary and can be heard (47:00) at <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/textbooks/>). That attitude is sadly prevalent with many of those who disagree with the protesters.

In contrast there is Alice Moore who is recognized by friend and foe as the epitome of graciousness. After the protest Mrs. Moore won reelection by an impressive majority of votes and was supported county-wide. In spite of the opposition of major news media and the education establishment, she was re-elected to the Board of Education by almost triple the vote of her first election. Mrs. Moore received over 25,000 votes, which was an unprecedented total for school board, defeating the pro-textbook organization's candidate by over 7000 votes. Her insights

into this event which (excluding disasters) has to rank as one of the top in West Virginia history is worth reading. (Mrs. Moore has her own chapter in *Protester Voices*.)

ALICE MOORE

Radical leftists in the decade of the Sixties, gave up their street fights, arson and mayhem, hid their public disdain for the law and followed the advice of Saul Alinsky, a self-decried "community organizer," who told them they would be more successful at bringing about "change" if they got out of the streets, went back to school and got into positions of power and influence. So they did! As well as getting into other places of influence, in time, they took over the US Department of Education, became teachers of teachers, writers of textbooks and teachers of our children. Reshaping society through the schools was not lost on Kanawha County. One Kanawha County principal boasted,

Book protesters in court – Twenty-two persons appeared this morning in Kanawha Circuit Court to answer charges in connection with a sit-in to protest public school textbooks Monday and Tuesday at the Board of Education offices on Elizabeth Street. Daily Mail Photo by Earl Benton.

Candlelight vigil – Textbook protesters began a 57-day candlelight vigil Friday night for the Rev. Ezra Graley in front of the Kanawha County Jail, where he has been confined since Tuesday. Protesters said they will continue the vigil around the clock until Mr. Graley is released from jail. Shane McGraw, left, 2, of Tupper's Creek, helped the adults in their stand. Mr. Graley was sentenced to serve a 60-day term for violating a court injunction, granted to the Kanawha County Board of Education, which prohibits more than five protesters at entrances to school board properties. Daily Mail Photos by Chet Hawes.





Old Glory backdrops the Rev. Marvin Horan at Watt Powell Park Sunday, when he urged a crowd of more than 3,000 to resume a boycott of schools as part of the antitext protest.



White for purity was the way a textbook protester explained why she pinned a white carnation on the Rev. Avis Hill as he was released from jail Friday and was greeted by about 50 supporters. She said the carnation symbolized that even though the minister had been in jail he wasn't a criminal. Gazette Photo by Leo Chabot.

"We are no longer transmitters of information. We are transformers for social change." It was in this climate of social change, that Kanawha County selected so-called multicultural textbooks, as required by the State Board of Education for first through eighth grade schools. But in 1974, the State Board had no authority over secondary books. These were selected by each local county.

At that time of the 1974 English Grammar and Language Arts adoption, I had one primary concern. That was the latest, now defunct, education fad of teaching non-standard English. I had no objections to multicultural textbooks, until I learned at a National School Boards Association conference that multiculturalism had little to do with culture or ethnicity. I attended the conference less than a week before our scheduled adoption of English Grammar and Language Arts books. Speaking at the conference, was retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Stephen S. Jenkins, employee

of IBM, President of Arizona State Board of Education, and a black man. His subject was the need for school board control of textbook adoptions and for parental involvement in the selection process. Jenkins objected to the way blacks were depicted in the new multi-cultural textbooks. He mentioned, Inner City Mother Goose, being used in some New York City schools. "Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Grab and knife and give a stick. . . ." I didn't think I had to worry about anything like that in West Virginia, but I had been reading a lot of education sources advocating non-standard English and that learning non-standard English was as important as learning standard-English. Spending thousands of dollars on textbooks and teacher salaries to make children feel comfortable using street slang and sloppy grammar made no sense to me, but I quickly learned, upon examining our newly proposed books, so-called "multiculturalism" far outweighed any concern I had

over non-standard English.

Shortly after our textbook battle became national news, Lt. Col. Jenkins was interviewed by *Human Events Magazine* (Feb. 22, 1975, p. 3). (H)e emphatically agreed with Mrs. Moore that the West Virginia textbooks portrayed blacks in a very negative way, and said he thought she was correct in wanting to get other textbooks into the schools. . . . (Jenkins said) "There is a group within the black community . . . that feels that . . . kids have got to go out into today's world, so you have to go out and show them the gory details . . . so they [the texts] talk about kids with switchblade knives and their going out and knifing policemen. They are 'cussin' and 'fussin'. They're dealing with pimps and prostitutes and all that kind of thing. . . . But while we are at the level of force feeding, more or less, we should put quality in. Hopefully, when the children are through school, they will be able to differentiate between the bad and the good."

(Jenkins) said Arizona has been . . . in

the process of reviewing many of the same texts that have been embroiled in the West Virginia controversy. "We found that many of them were objectionable. They were objectionable from the standpoint of content and vulgarities and obscenities. They were objectionable from the standpoint of very, very low quality."

Jenkins advocates...parents getting involved in textbook selection as a way to avoid the adoption of textbooks with vulgarities, racial slurs and other objectionable materials.

Jenkins pointed out some of the texts invaded the privacy of the family in that they instructed teachers to question young people on their attitude toward their parents and the home.

Isn't all of this what Kanawha County parents were saying?

Lt. Col. Stephen S. Jenkins, black, successful, educated, patriotic American and President of the Arizona State Board of Education, agreed with Kanawha County parents, who were often referred to as un-educated and racists. Fascinating!

A humorous incident that demonstrates the quandary the selection committee had, in publicly defending the books, took place at the May 1974 board meeting. I asked the chairman of the selection committee if she would read a poem from one of the books for me that I just couldn't read in public. She refused saying there were passages in the Bible she would not read publicly and pulled out a prepared list of Bible verses. I said, "I'm not asking you to read the Bible, just a poem to be read by minor children in class or elsewhere." She said, "No. I won't do it." I then turned to fellow board member, Russell Isaac, who had assured me he would read anything that I could not read. Mr. Isaac looked at the poem and said, "I won't read it." No other teachers or administrators in the audience would agree to read it. Finally, another board member, Dr. Harry Stansbury, said, "I'll read it. We're all adults here and I don't want anyone saying we can't read a poem we are considering put-

ting in the schools." With that, Dr. Stansbury began to read, "i like my body" by e.e. cummings.

At the completion of the reading the room was in stunned silence, until Dr. Stansbury said, "Well, obviously it refers to sexual intercourse." An assistant administrator, who had lead in the selection of the books, leaped from his chair, pointed at Dr. Stansbury and shouted, "It does not, Dr. Stansbury! It does not! That's just your interpretation." The tension at that moment was so great, the entire room, including me, exploded in uproarious laughter.

Not so funny is the fact that all board records of this incident have disappeared. Though the board secretary kept numerous pages of detailed notes on all our meetings and tape recorded every word spoken, there are no written notes, of that incident, beyond a one-line statement that the books were discussed, and there is no recording though such notes and recordings exist for all previous and

Lobbying for the antitext movement at Watt Powell Park Sunday, the Rev. Charles Quigley (left) asks Sen. Jennings Randolph, D-W.Va., to take a stand on the controversy. Gazette Photo by Lewis Raines.



More demonstrators – This is a portion of the crowd which turned out at Sissonville school bus terminal this morning in the continuing protest of new English literature a grammar textbooks. The crowd prevented some buses from making runs in the Sissonville area this morning, although sheriff 's deputies were able to get seven buses out. The deputies made three arrests at Sissonville this morning. Daily Mail Photo by William Tiernan.





Smiling school board member Alice Moore eyes one of two floral arrangements sent by supporters of her antitextbook stand. The flowers were delivered to the board of education building prior to Tuesday's meeting.



Mixing mortar for new school is Karl Priest, who will be principal. Working in the background are (from the left) Pastor Dave Kilburn and Harry Crowder. Staff Photo by Leo Chabot.

following board meetings. The news media did not report the incident, but there are letters to the editor, exchanged between the chairman of the selection committee and me, that reference the event.

Before the vote to purchase the textbooks, it was clear the great majority of parents were opposed to them. Later, when parents were offered the opportunity to opt their children out of using the books, they did so overwhelmingly. About 75% of elementary students and 33% of secondary students were opted out. To anyone who has raised teenagers, the reluctance of many parents of secondary students to expose them to the taunts and teasing of fellow students, and perhaps some teachers, as being "too immature to read the books" is understandable.

The board spent \$300,000 on textbooks and most of them were eventually destroyed without ever being used. Boxes of books, many never opened, were gathered up all over the county

and hauled off to the trash dump where they were either burned or buried. All that waste could have been avoided, if the school system had been more in touch with the community.

The book controversy, brought to the surface the great cultural divide that exists in this country between those who of us hold to the original intent of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence and who believe in our heritage as a unique nation under God; and those who seek to destroy our heritage and turn us into one more socialist/communist country in the great global economy--and they are using our tax-supported school system to do it. I have no doubt if what happened in Kanawha County had not taken place, we would have lost our country to international globalism long ago. Kanawha County stalled the advances of the radical-left's agenda for many years, but the battle continues.

Many positive changes resulted from the textbook controversy. From

the Pacific to the Atlantic the message swept the country that something was terribly wrong with our schools and our school books. The publisher of the elementary series could not sell their books after Kanawha County, and orders already placed by some schools were cancelled. James Moffett's Interaction books were some of our most objectionable. After Kanawha County, many book salesmen refused to offer his series. After two or three more years, Houghton Mifflin Company, the publisher, dropped the series completely. There was no textbook publisher left unscathed. All lost sales and had to clean up their books thanks to Kanawha County, West Virginia. There is no joy in the personal financial losses of any of those companies, but there is great joy that for a time the Kanawha County textbook protesters stalled the attempt of the left to take over the elementary and secondary schools of this great nation.