

NEWS *in the interest of the future*

THE KENTUCKY LONG-TERM POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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Hellard Award Presented

NOTE: *An electronic version of this press release is available at the Center's web site: www.kltprc.net*

FRANKFORT, KY (November 14, 2001) — The fifth annual Vic Hellard Jr. Award was presented here today to the beloved and renowned historian, Dr. Thomas Dionysius Clark, who, instead of remaining content with his considerable achievements as a historian and author, chose to use his sweeping knowledge of Kentucky's past to advocate for the future of a better state. The award was presented at the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center's annual conference here today. Dr. Clark was chosen by the Center's Board from among dozens of nominees.

A Kentuckian by choice, Dr. Clark was born in Louisville, Mississippi, in 1903. As he approaches his 100th year, he continues to study and share his knowledge and further the quest for a better tomorrow. A 1928 graduate of the University of Mississippi, Dr. Clark's intentions to study law were replaced by a love for history under the mentorship of historian Charles Sackett Sydnor. He earned a master's degree from the University of Kentucky in 1929 and his doctorate from Duke University in 1930 before beginning his teaching career at the University of Mississippi. Shortly thereafter, he was named as a faculty member at the University of Kentucky (UK), personally selected in 1931 by then University President Frank McVey.

At UK, Dr. Clark simultaneously taught a full schedule of classes and launched the university library's Special Collections, bringing in works from both public and private collections and lobbying for the preservation of documents that have become an important legacy for the state. He quickly established himself as a popular lecturer and became well-known for his humor and the historical anecdotes that he still often peppers his lectures with to underscore his points.

In 1942, Dr. Clark was named chairman of UK's history department where he became instrumental in establishing the University of Kentucky Press in 1943, and the University Press of Kentucky in 1968. For 37 years, the University of Kentucky was Dr. Clark's base while at various times he taught at Harvard, Duke, North Carolina, Tennessee, Rochester, Chicago, Wyoming, Wisconsin, the Claremont Graduate School, Kent State, Stanford, Indiana, and at the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies in Austria. He also lectured overseas for the Department of State at Oxford University and in Greece, India, and Yugoslavia.

Dr. Clark began his well-known career as a historian in 1933 with the publication of his first book, *The Beginning of the L&N*, and continues today with periodic contributions to his extraordinary legacy. Altogether, Dr. Clark has authored more than 20 books, including three that encourage elementary school students to study history and several well-known official documentations of Kentucky's past. He also served as managing editor of the *Journal of Southern History* and, for 16 years, as chief editor of the volumes *Travels in the Old South* and *Travels in the New South*.

Best known to us today as our State Historian for Life, Dr. Clark has also been honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Merit Award from the Association of State and Local History (an Indiana author's award), and the title of Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at Indiana University in 1973. Dr. Clark also holds numerous honorary degrees, from institutions such as Lincoln Memorial University, Washington and Lee University, Berea College, University of Louisville, University of Kentucky, Centre College, Indiana University, and Transylvania University.

His legacy includes the Thomas D. Clark Foundation, a private, nonprofit foundation that provides financial support for the University Press of Kentucky. At 98 years of age, Dr. Clark remains an integral part of the battle to not only preserve our heritage for future generations, but also to ensure that its extraordinary value will continue to be appreciated. He was instrumental in the development of the Kentucky History Center where artifacts from the state's past are displayed in an elegant museum setting.

Moreover, Dr. Clark's understanding of our state's past has made him a vital player in our future. His opinions and his thoughts have long been sought by Kentucky's leaders. From his personal thoughts, Dr. Clark has observed that "Kentucky can do anything that it sets its mind to do, within reason ..." But to do so, he cautioned, will require that it make "some radical changes" which are certain to be painful and costly.

Over the years, Dr. Clark has often observed that the values of the past will not see the state into the future. Years before the recent moves to improve education in Kentucky, Dr. Clark noted for a 1987 biography, "I know of nothing that would improve conditions in Kentucky and give it future status more than a highly effective, efficient educational system ..." And on the championing of equality and dignity of every person, Dr. Clark's advice to women states succinctly his thoughts: "If I were a woman and went out crusading, I would crusade against the part of Kentucky's revered symbol of beautiful women. I would glorify women who get things done. And they do get things done."

As biographer Bill Cunningham noted, "Dr. Thomas D. Clark is not only a highly erudite and distinguished individual. He represents a uniquely resilient and historic American generation. Born on the tails of reconstruction, he has witnessed two world wars and the emergence of this country as the strongest nation on earth. The experiences of this age group have included the revolutionizing trauma of the Great Depression, racial upheaval, divisive wars, and monumental political scandals."

Rep. Steve Nunn, Chairman of the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center, observed, "While many only survived and some became embittered, Dr. Clark steadfastly held his vision of a better future, always seeking to advance the common good and improve public welfare while fostering an appreciation, even a reverence, for the importance of history and the lessons it holds for us as we lay the foundation for the future. He has been unafraid to challenge us and to push us to become the best we can be here in Kentucky. For that we owe him an enormous debt of gratitude. He absolutely epitomizes the standards for this distinguished award."

Dr. Clark lives with his wife Loretta in Lexington where he continues to study and pursue the passions of his extraordinary life.

Each year, the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center Board of Directors selects the Hellard Award recipient from among nominations submitted by the public. Criteria for the Hellard Award include the demonstration of long-term vision and innovation, championship of the equality and dignity of every person, efforts to enhance the processes of a democratic society, and an approach to work distinguished by commitment, caring, generosity, and humor. Hellard was beloved for his playful wit, which was often embellished with theatrical flourishes. Anyone who wishes further information about the award, whose recipients are commemorated on a plaque displayed in the State Capitol, should contact the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center.

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