

Daryl Grigsby, a Bate descendant, was presented the John G. Fee award by keynote speaker **Larry Shinn**. The award features the African symbol "sankofa" on a walnut box handmade by the college's woodcraft staff. Sankofa means "go back and retrieve." Grigsby spoke after accepting the award.



Photos were contributed by Berea College

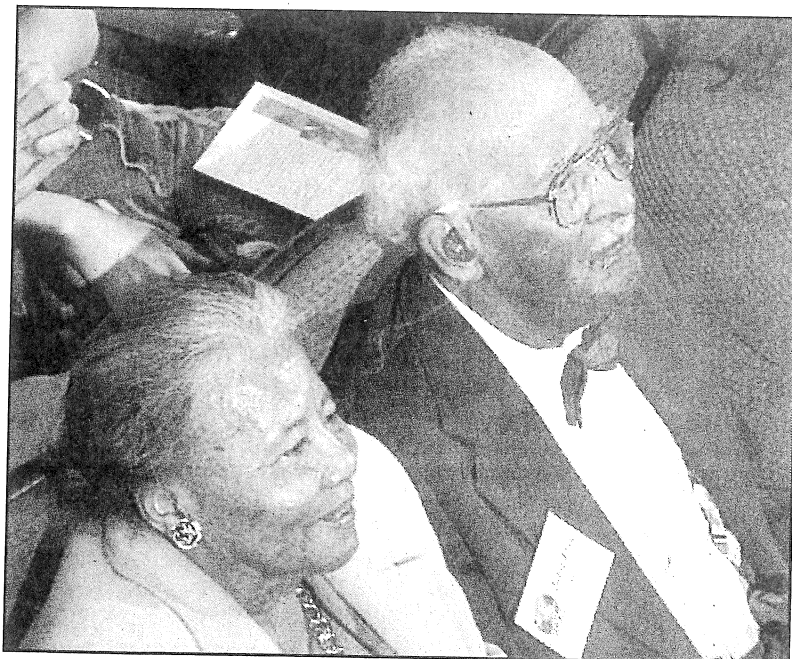
Honoring Danville's Booker T.

Berea ceremony recognizes Professor John Bate

BEREA — Nine grandchildren and other descendants of John W. Bate, Danville's "Booker T. Washington," were honored recently with the John G. Fee Award at the Founder's Day Celebration at Berea College.

The Founder's Day celebration honored the vision and perseverance of John G. Fee in founding Berea College, and paid tribute to Bate, one of the college's African American pioneers, who was committed to Fee's vision.

"By sharing Berea's story with you, it is my hope that we will not only increase our understanding of Fee's legacy, but that we will also revive the memory of Professor John W. Bate in a way that inspires us all to carry the special mission of Berea College with us as he did in his life and work," said Larry D. Shinn. Berea College pres-



Among those attending the luncheon tribute to John William Bate were Helen Frye, left, and husband John Frye, above, of Danville. Mrs. Frye is a Bate graduate and former teacher at the old Bate School. At 97, Frye is the oldest living graduate of Bate High School. Camille Bate Moncrief, above right, is a grandchild of Professor John William Bate, and Zeretta Hyson, bottom right, represented her



Fee was born in 1809 to a northern Kentucky farmer and slave owner. While in Lake Theological Seminary, he rejected his pro-slavery upbringing and embraced what he called "the gospel of impartial love." Taking his gospel to heart, Fee decided that all people were equal in God's sight, and should be treated so here on earth, according to Shinn.

Fee returned to Kentucky in the mid-1800s, became an abolitionist and persisted in his abolitionist views despite the fact that he was disowned by his family, dismissed as a pastor by his own church's synod, and threatened by opponents with physical violence, said Shinn.

Berea College and town were extremely radical for that time. Students were admitted to the college without respect to race or gender. They lived in the same residence halls, studied in the same classrooms and participated in the same social clubs and activities.

For over 30 years, the population of the Berea schools and college was 50 percent black and 50 percent white. For Fee, equality was to be preached and practiced, Shinn said.

For Bate, the equal educational opportunities provided by the Berea schools would profoundly influence his future as well as the future of countless other African-Americans whose lives he touched.

Bate, founder of Danville's all-black high school, devoted his life to distinguished service in his community that reflected the ideals of Berea's founder, as evidenced in the motto, "God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth," said Shinn.

During the years 1915 to 1964, Bate High School grew from one room to 20 and from one teacher to 15. After starting with six students, the school grew to 600 at the time of Bate's retirement.

Bate was born a slave in Jefferson County on Dec. 22, 1855. He and his family were freed in 1863 and joined the

exodus of freed slaves to Louisville, where he attended the Mission School, and followed his favorite teacher to Berea.

Shinn told of how the Bate family survived hardships after being set free.

The family was very poor and had to endure extremely sparse and inadequate living conditions, from which his sister eventually died, Shinn said. Although his mother worked hard at various housekeeping jobs and was able to improve the living conditions for her remaining children, the family did not escape the Louisville small-pox epidemic. All but John

received an honorary master's degree from the college a decade later.

Upon his graduation from Berea College and "wishing to serve (his) people by teaching," Bate, accepted a position at a public one-room schoolhouse in Danville. In addition to the many hardships he overcame throughout his life, his new vocation provided him with new challenges, as the all-black school did not have the support of either the white or the black communities in Danville.

Bate recalled, "The Baptists had their own private school and the principal ... put all sorts of obstacles in

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were stricken with the disease, and his two brothers did not survive it. While his mother survived, she was not able to work, which left John with the responsibility of being the breadwinner.

In a 1941 newspaper interview, he acknowledged that he worked at a variety of small odd jobs and even salvaged food "scraps out of garbage pails and wilted vegetables thrown away by the white people" for survival.

Meanwhile, the arrival of northern missionaries in Louisville provided access to basic education for black children. Bate said he "liked being in school and tried to do what was expected of me." In fact, he liked school so much, that he worked for two years in a tobacco factory so he could follow one of his teachers to Berea. Bate worked at a variety of jobs during his nine years in the Berea schools, graduated with his bachelor's of arts from the college in 1881, and

my way. He even urged me to give up 'that little common school' and go on back to Berea. I've always liked to fight in a nice way, so do you know what I did? I employed the daughter of the (black) Baptist minister to be my primary teacher. The first day ... she brought 10 little children of the Baptist congregation with her. In two years time, the Baptist school went out of existence. Don't you see, you must always use diplomacy."

Bate's diplomacy and dedication resulted in a 59-year career as a teacher, administrator, and educational leader. His descendants have carried on his commitment to education and spiritual well-being in their professions as teachers, professors, scholars and public servants.

In a 1943 letter, Bate acknowledged the positive influence of Fee and other Berea founders, "whose examples and teachings were exemplified in the lives and



the work of Bereans who became ministers, doctors and teachers and who are proud ... to call Old Berea their alma mater."

In reciprocation of his great respect for Berea, the college honored Bate as its oldest living graduate in 1944. In conferring the citation of honor, President Hutchins said of Bate, "Your alma mater honors you for your sincere devotion to the cause of education and to your fellow (people). Through adversity and difficulty you gained your education so that you might serve others. ... You have won for yourself a place of honor and affection in the hearts of your students, and the place of a respected citizen in your community."

Members of Bate's family who were present for the recent tribute were his grandchildren, Camille Bate Moncrief, Kenneth Bate and Monroe Peeler. Also, Zeretta Hyson, Yvonne Peeler, Kenneth Glenn, and Daryl Grigsby, who represented the family.

Special guests were Margaret and Melvin Alcorn, Monnie Bedinger, Mr. and Mrs. June Christy, John and Helen Frye, Charles Gray, Ozenia Hawkins, Elsa Hunn, May Rice, Emma Shannon and Tillie Stallworth, all graduates of the Bate High School in Danville. At 97, Mr. Frye is the oldest living graduate of the Bate High School. Mrs. Frye and Ms. Hawkins also were teachers at the Bate School.

J.H. Atkins, another former Bate School teacher, and Bob Rowland, the current Danville school superintendent, and Paige Stevens, principal of the now-Bate Middle School, also attended the celebration.

“The Legacy of John G. Fee and the Bate Family”

Larry D. Shinn

Welcome to the Berea College Founders' Day celebration for the year 2002! This Founders' Day convocation provides our campus community and special guests with the opportunity to celebrate the heritage of Berea College in a way that unites us in a common legacy and inspires us to appropriate and build upon that legacy today. First, this convocation is intended to recognize the vision and perseverance of John G. Fee in founding Berea College. Second, this convocation is a tribute to one of Berea's African American pioneers, John William Bate, an 1881 graduate of Berea College who was committed to living out Fee's vision as expressed in the College's motto "God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth." By sharing Berea's story with you, it is my hope that we will not only increase our understanding of Fee's Legacy, but that we will also revive the memory of "Professor" John W. Bate in a way that inspires us all to carry the special mission of Berea College with us as he did in his life and work.

I would like to begin by recognizing members of the Bate family who are here on stage with me. Could each of you please stand as I call your name? Camille Bate Moncrief, Kenneth Bate, and Monroe Peeler are all grandchildren of John W. Bate. The other surviving grandchildren were unable to join us in this celebration, and unfortunately, two grandchildren are no longer living. However, we welcome them in spirit as we welcome their family members who are representing them today. Representing John William Bate III is his sister Camille. Randall Bate is represented by his niece Zeretta Hyson. Yvonne Peeler is

represented by her brother Monroe. Representing George Glenn is his cousin Kenneth. Langston Fairchild Bate is represented by his nephew Daryl Grigsby. And finally, Daryl is also representing his mother Jacqueline Bate Grigsby. Also on stage with us is Jessie Zander, one of the first African-American Berea College graduates after the Day Law was repealed in 1950. Jessie has been an accomplished professional, serving as a school principal in Tucson, a Berea College Alumni Council member, and a leader in preserving African-American history. Let us give a welcoming hand to these guests. In our audience today, we also have several special guests with us who are well acquainted with the educational legacy of "Professor" Bate. Margaret and Melvin Alcorn, Monnie Bedinger [Mah-nee Béhd-in-jer], Mr. and Mrs. June Christy, John and Helen Frye, Charles Gray, Ozenia [Oh-zee-nya] Hawkins, Elsa Hunn, May Rice, Emma Shannon, and Tillie Stallworth are all graduates of the Bate High School in Danville. Mr. Frye is 97 years old and is the oldest living graduate of the Bate High School. Mrs. Frye and Ms. Hawkins were also teachers at the Bate School. J. H. Atkins is another former Bate School teacher who is with us today. Bob Rowland, the current Danville Superintendent and Paige Stevens the Principal of the now Bate Middle School are also in our audience. I would also like to recognize the other members of the Bate family who have traveled here to Berea to celebrate with them. Would those of you who are members of the Bate Family and who are Bate High School alumni please stand? Thank you. Would everyone please join me in welcoming these special guests?

At Berea College, our heritage is inextricably linked with the faith, life, and work of Rev. John G. Fee. As our current time of global turmoil and conflict reminds us, religion has been and continues to be used by some to justify racial and ethnic prejudice and even violence; however, it has also been the source of healing,

understanding, and hope among different peoples and races. The very beginning of the Berea community can be attributed to the positive influence of the Christian faith, which was made concrete through the leadership of John G. Fee.

Born in 1809 as the son of a northern Kentucky farmer and slave-owner, John G. Fee's study of the Christian Scriptures while at Lane Theological Seminary led him to reject his pro-slavery upbringing and to embrace what he called "the gospel of impartial love." Taking this gospel to heart, Fee decided that all persons are truly equal in God's sight, black or white, male or female, and should be treated so here on earth. It was a difficult and courageous leap of faith for Fee to become an abolitionist in the mid-1800s in the South. Nonetheless, Fee returned to his native Kentucky and persisted in his abolitionist views despite the fact that he was disowned by his family, dismissed as a pastor by his own church's synod, and threatened by opponents with physical violence.

The College and town that Fee and his collaborators created were extremely radical for their day. Students were admitted to the College without respect to race or gender. Furthermore, black and white, male and female students not only sat in the same classrooms, but lived together in the same residence halls and participated in the same social clubs and activities together. To provide the security of the black families and to achieve his Christian utopian vision of the equality of all the races, Fee insisted on the "interspersed" of black and white families in the village. For over thirty years, the population of the Berea schools and College was fifty percent black and fifty percent white. For Fee, equality was to be preached *and* practiced.

For “Professor” Bate, the equal educational opportunities provided by the Berea schools would profoundly influence his future as well as the future of countless other African-Americans whose lives he touched. John William Bate was born into slavery on December 22, 1854, on a farm outside of Louisville, Kentucky. When he and his family were freed in 1863, his mother moved him, his sister, and two brothers into the city. Freedom for the Bates was not without hardships, however. The family was very poor and had to endure extremely sparse and inadequate living conditions, from which his sister eventually died. Although his mother worked hard at various housekeeping jobs and was able to improve the living conditions for her remaining children, the family did not escape the Louisville small-pox epidemic. All but John were stricken with the disease, and his two brothers did not survive it. While his mother survived, she was not able to work, which left John with the responsibility of breadwinner. In a 1941 newspaper interview, he acknowledged that he worked at a variety of small odd jobs and even salvaged food “scraps out of garbage pails and wilted vegetables thrown away by the white people” for survival.

Meanwhile, the arrival of Northern missionaries in Louisville provided access to basic education for black children. John said he “liked being in school and tried to do what was expected of me.” In fact, he liked school so much, that he worked for two years in a tobacco factory so he could follow one of his teachers to Berea. John worked at a variety of jobs during his nine years in the Berea schools, graduated with his B.A. from the College in 1881, and received an honorary master’s degree from the College a decade later.

Upon his graduation from Berea College and “wishing to serve [his] people by teaching,” John W. Bate, accepted a position at a public one-room schoolhouse

in Danville, Kentucky. In addition to the many hardships he overcame throughout his life, his new vocation provided him with new challenges as the all-black school did not have the support of either the white or the black communities in Danville. John Bate recalled, “The Baptists had their own private school and the principal ... put all sorts of obstacles in my way. He even urged me to give up ‘that little common school’ and go on back to Berea. I’ve always liked to fight in a nice way, so do you know what I did? I employed the daughter of the [black] Baptist minister to be my primary teacher. The first day ... she brought ten little children of the Baptist congregation with her. In two years time, the Baptist school went out of existence. Don’t you see, you must always use diplomacy.”

John Bate’s diplomacy and dedication resulted in a 59-year career as a teacher, administrator, and educational leader. His descendants have carried on his commitment to education and spiritual well-being in their professions as teachers, professors, scholars, and public servants. In a 1943 letter, John Bate acknowledged the positive influence of John Fee and other Berea founders, “whose examples and teachings were exemplified in the lives and the work of Bereans who became ministers, doctors and teachers and who are proud ... to call Old Berea their alma mater.’ ” In reciprocation of his great respect for Berea, the College honored John Bate as its oldest living graduate in 1944. In conferring the citation of honor, President Hutchins said of John Bate, “Your Alma Mater honors you for your sincere devotion to the Cause of Education and to your fellow [people]. Through adversity and difficulty you gained your education so that you might serve others... You have won for yourself a place of honor and affection in the hearts of your students, and the place of a respected citizen in your community.”

Today we echo these sentiments in the presence of “Professor” Bate’s descendents, numerous graduates of the Bate School, contemporary Danville educators, and you who are the Berea College students of today. The struggles and triumphs of Berea College through students like John William Bate stand as an inspiration to us all. Therefore, it is my distinct honor to present to the family of John William Bate the third annual John G. Fee Award. **The Fee Award intends to honor those Berea alumni families (1) who reflect the ideas of John G. Fee and his vision as evidenced in the motto, “God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth,” and (2) who have rendered distinguished service to their local or national communities.**

The symbol that is featured on the John G. Fee Award itself is the African symbol of the *sankofa*. The word *sankofa* is from the Akan (Ä-kan) language of Ghana and is translated “go back and retrieve.” This symbol conveys the concept that knowing ourselves requires that we know our heritage and what it means to us today. These walnut boxes were made by our woodcraft staff with help from student crafts workers. The table runners contained inside were woven by Berea College students. The weavings are good metaphors for the intertwining of all our lives, black and white, Northern and Southern, American and international throughout all generations. Truly “God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth.”

Today it is my privilege to present the John G. Fee Award to the present-day descendants of John William Bate and to ask them to share some reflections about “Professor” Bate.