

March 13, 2017

The Honorable Kevin Neal
Marshall County Judge-Executive
Courthouse, Benton, Ky.

Dear Judge Neal:

Operations at Kentucky Dam began on Sept. 4, 1944; Kentucky Dam was dedicated 13 months later on Oct. 10, 1945 by President Harry S. Truman. It was the only time a sitting President of the United States has visited Marshall County. I am proud to say, that though I was only 11 years old, I was there among that crowd estimated at 20,000, a record for the era.

Looking ahead a little more than two years, Sept. 4, 2019, will mark 75 years since Kentucky Dam began operations. It is no exaggeration to say that construction of Kentucky Dam and the subsequent location of manufacturing plants in Calvert City literally pulled Marshall County out of abject poverty. It all happened before my eyes as I grew from a small child, to a teenager, a young adult, parent, newspaper reporter and editor. I knew the man, Luther Draffen, most responsible for bringing Kentucky Dam to its Gilbertsville site on the lower Tennessee River, and I was privileged to interview him many times.

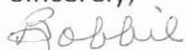
The idea occurred to me that 2019 would be an excellent time for Marshall County to sponsor a festival celebrating the 75th anniversary of Kentucky Dam's operations. That day, now more than 72 years ago, brought electricity to rural families here and in surrounding communities who never dreamed of having electric lights, heat, refrigeration, radio, television and myriad other conveniences. It also brought prosperity in the form of high-paying careers and jobs for citizens not only here but also in Murray, Paducah, Mayfield, Princeton, Eddyville, Marion, Paris, Tenn., Metropolis, Ill. and thousands who relocated here to work in the local industries.

I believe the County Commission is the ideal entity to initiate what could be a fabulous celebration of our heritage while bringing hordes of tourists here, which would also benefit our economy.

I have included a script of a presentation I first made in 2009 to the Jackson Purchase Historical Society and later to other civic groups. I also wrote a similar article for the Historical Society's annual Journal.

I would appreciate consideration of the festival idea by you and the County Commissioners.

Sincerely,



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