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Former resident writes about early years spent in Clinton



Author returns to Clinton

Frank L. Gertcher and his wife, Linda, paused briefly in Clinton on Tuesday during their return to west central Indiana and a book signing for his new book: "Shaman on Wind Grass Hill." The book is one of five Gertcher has planned. See story. (Photo by G.B. "Sonny" Carey)

by George B. "Sonny" Carey

From time to time we all think of "how things were" when we were much younger. One former Clinton resident — Frank Gertcher — has put many of his own experiences and teachings to the printed word ... and he has published a book.

Gertcher and his wife, Linda, have spent the better portion of the last three years compiling facts about his pre-teen years in Clinton and other locations in west central Indiana. Last weekend he and his wife arrived in the Terre Haute area for the book signing of his new book: "*Shaman on Wind Grass Hill.*"

The Gertchers live in Colorado Springs, Colo., and have returned to the Clinton area several times in the past few years.

During the book signing at Waldon Books in Honey Creek Square, Gertcher greeted nearly 100 persons — many of them old friends whom he had not seen in 50 years. It was a pleasant reunion for everyone.

Frank L. Gertcher was born in 1943 and he grew up on South Main street in Clinton. He attended Matthews South School through his fifth grade.

Shaman on Wind Grass Hill is a 246-page novel containing mystical tales of life, love, death and redemp-

tion. It passes through countless generations with a few tales being told along the way. The ancient "hill" is the focal point for each generation, and it is the place where the "spirit of the hill" resides.

Much of the action occurs on the Wabash River near Clinton, especially in Chapter 5. References are made to the early bootlegging which transpired around Clinton as well as other historic happenings.

At age 10, Gertcher's parents moved to Lyford. His teenage years were spent on a farm near Hymera where he attended high school, and at the age of 17 — and with less than \$100 in his pocket — he left to seek his fortune.

He completed his education and forged a career in science and engineering. He holds a Ph.D. in economics, master and bachelor's degrees in engineering, and holds a master's degree in business administration.

During his science career (1961-2006) he co-authored two college textbooks. He also wrote eight articles for nationally recognized technical journals and over 25 technical reports on systems engineering and socioeconomic issues.

From 1979-1984 he served at the U.S. Air Force Academy, rising to the rank of tenured associate professor of economics. He was also an

adjunct professor at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs from 1984-1999.

From 2000 to 2006 he also had his own consulting service in Colorado Springs. He fully retired in 2006 and began his writings.

"Besides meeting all the people we also sold over 40 copies of the book," Gertcher said. During the signing, the question heard most from those who had read the book was "Where is Wind Grass Hill?"

Frank Gertcher just smiles when questioned. Many of those to whom he spoke gave him their guess on the exact location of the hill, but he just smiled when questioned ... because there is more to come.

Before heading to Indiana, Gertcher sent in the final manuscript for his second book entitled *Wind Grass Hill and Other Poems*. It is expected to be released in early 2010, he said.

"I like to write out my text in long-hand on an engineering pad," Gertcher says. He then edits his writings as he types them into his laptop computer, and combines book illustrations and poems throughout the text.

He will certainly be busy for the next several years because he already has the basic outlines completed for three more books bringing the total to five in the set.

Book number three will be entitled *Foxtales from Wind Grass Hill*. It will be written from the perspective of the animals in the book.

Book number four will be entitled *Dark Cabin under Wind Grass Hill*. It will contain stories about the Clinton area coal mine operations. Gertcher's grandfather worked in coal mining and eventually died of black lung disease.

Book number five will be entitled *Small Voices from Wind Grass Hill*. Gertcher will, again, be writing this book from the animal perspective.

While in the Clinton area, the Gertchers stayed at a Bed and Breakfast in the Terre Haute area as well as the Turkey Run Inn. They are now headed back to Colorado via Linda's home near Maquoketa, Iowa. She attended school in a 2-room schoolhouse and became a teacher before she retired in 2008.

In reference to the characters in Gertcher's book, he smiles and says: "The names have been changed to protect the guilty!"