

Elmira's sage

It's not the Mark Twain we're used to. *The Private History of a Campaign That Failed*, filmed in the Oneonta and Morris areas, will be shown on public television tomorrow night. Producer William Perry talks of his Mark Twain series in an interview on page 12 of today's TV section.

The current effort is a dark and troubled story, partly autobiographical, of the experience of war. It grew from a speech that Samuel Clemens — Mark Twain — gave as the first account of his Civil War military service. Later he reworked and expanded the speech into a magazine article, doing much of the work at his beloved Quarry Farm in Elmira.

What had started out as a comic adventure became a tale of heartache. As producer Perry, himself an Elmira native, notes, it's not one of those boys-on-rafts stories the world associates with Mark Twain.

As an epilogue, the PBS version adds *The War Prayer*, an example of an even more bitter Mark Twain. In it, he underlines the paradox of both sides in a war claiming God's support. Clemens' daughter Jean told him it was sacrilegious and he decided not to publish it in his lifetime. "I have told the whole truth in that," he said, "and only dead men can tell the truth in this world."

Biographer Albert Bigelow Paine said Mark Twain "did not care to invite the public verdict that he was a lunatic."

And *The War Prayer*, which deals with the message a Stranger gives to a church congregation, closes with this: "It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said."

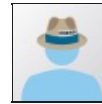
But many will find a great deal of sense in what Mark Twain has to say, and we owe William Perry thanks for reminding us that there is more to the sage of Elmira than painting picket fences.

—Darrel Burkhardt

ON THE COVER: Binghamton General Hospital's Sports Medicine Center treats about 65 patients a week. In photo (by Chuck Haupt), George McLean tests the leg strength of Gabe Yankowitz. Story starts on page 3.

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