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## Remembering Jake Butcher

By Ray Hill  
rayhill865@gmail.com

For those wanting an opportunity to bask in the limelight, it would be well to remember the glare burns far more frequently than it shines. That thought was rekindled yet again in my mind with the passing of Jake Butcher. Media across Tennessee have recounted Butcher's public career; his time as twice candidate

for governor, as well as a banker.

My own experience with Jake Butcher came not with campaigns, finance or politics. Jake and I became friends due to my column in the Knoxville Focus. The first time I received an email lauding a particular column signed 'Jake Butcher', I thought someone was playing a practical joke. That first email was polite,

but slightly reserved as if the writer was not entirely sure of precisely what sort of response he might receive. I replied in kind and soon enough another arrived from Jake. Emails led to conversations and Jake and I had planned to have lunch when he was in Knoxville next, but something came up on his part and we promised to reschedule. We kept up

our emails and conversations and I was startled at the details Jake noticed in a particular column, nor was his interest confined to Tennessee; he had a serious interest in people, places and history.

Reflecting upon his passing, I have yet to see any reminders just how very close he came to winning the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1974.

There were a plethora of serious Democratic candidates that year, all vying for the nomination. Ray Blanton, a former congressman who had been the nominee for the U. S. Senate against Howard Baker in 1972, was running, as was Hudley Crockett, a former newsman and one-time press secretary to Governor Buford Ellington, who had run Senator Albert Gore a

close race for renomination in 1970. Former congressman and U. S. senator Ross Bass was making a quixotic bid for the gubernatorial nomination, as was Stan Snodgrass, who had lost to John Jay Hooker in 1970. Tom Wiseman, a former state legislator and Tennessee's State Treasurer, was a candidate along with several others.

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## Civil rights leaders honored by overpass signs

By Pete Gawda

Three Knoxville champions of the civil rights movement were honored Saturday by having interstate overpasses named for them. Harold Middlebrook, Theotis Robinson and Diane Jordan were honored at the official overpass naming ceremony held at the Beck Cultural Exchange Center by members of the Tennessee Black Caucus of State Legislators.

Rev. Renee Kessler, in her welcoming remarks, said she was grateful for history being unveiled that day. She said that Knoxville has scores of the best people who do the best things. "You are always welcome at the Beck," she told the around 75 guests including elected officials, Tennessee Democratic Party officials and candidates for city council.

State Representative Rick Staples introduced each honoree. He said that Diane Jordan served on the Knox County Commission from



PHOTO BY PETE GAWDA

**Civil rights leader Harold Middlebrook, right, was honored Saturday by having a interstate underpass named for him. On the left is State Representative Rick Staples who introduced the honorees at the naming ceremony.**

1994 to 2007 and was the first female African American to serve in that position. Staples noted that when he decided to run for office Jordan asked him if he had ever served tea. She told him that an elected official has to serve and work their way to the front.

Jordan said she was never nervous but that this was a nervous occasion. She noted that she successfully ran in four elections and thanked the people for Knoxville for that. "My phone rang off the hook and I enjoyed it," she said of her time in office.

Her sign is located at

the I-275 overpass on Hill Avenue.

Staples said Middlebrook "is" a civil rights activist, meaning that the retired pastor is still active in the struggle. He said Middlebrook did more to teach him personal responsibility than

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## Lonsdale youth center, paintball, and sports tourism

By Mike Steely  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Emerald Youth Center's hopes to build a \$9 million facility in Lonsdale came one step closer to a reality recently when the Knox County Commission agreed to give the city a portion of the Sam E. Hill School Property.

The commission voted unanimously to pass a "no recommendation" of the gift, located at 1725 Delaware Avenue, on to today's regular meeting with some stipulations. The donated empty lot from the Board of Education, coupled with the city's promise of \$1 million, means plans for the community center can move ahead.

"Thank you for all you do," Commissioner Brad Anders told Steve Diggs, who briefly addressed the commission's work session. Knoxville Public Works Director David Brace said, "This is a community with real needs for youth" in speaking of Lonsdale.

"Our initiative is to bring about transformation of youth and it's unlike any project I've been involved with," Diggs told the commissioners.

Chairman Dave Wright said the resolution allows the law department to back out of the agreement until the contract is signed and explained that the property would not be transferred until both the city and county mayor sign it.

The transfer of land has a 15 year life for use and, if the project isn't completed or changes hands, the city will pay the county a percent of the

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## Pleasant Ridge mural gives a glimpse of the past

By Pete Gawda

Pleasant Ridge Elementary School has a unique window to the past thanks to artist Gale Hinton. She recently covered the walls of the school's hallway with murals. The most striking and probably the most personal is dedicated to the Nickle family.

While the Knoxville native did not go to school at Pleasant Ridge, as a child she went to church with the Nickle family at Virginia Avenue Methodist Church and played with the Nickle children, all of whom attended Pleasant Ridge. The striking mural contains the boyhood home of Louis Nickle, 87, and his

present house. It also depicts the house of his grandfather, William Harrison Nickle, which once stood on Sullivan Road. In addition the mural pictures the famous airplane service station turned barber shop on Clinton Highway.

Of the five siblings in Nickle's family, four are still living, including his 96-year-old sister, who once lived in a house built on the site of their grandfather's house.

The mural also shows the Nickle's pond and barn and the tree in which the children played.

Hinton pointed out herself in the

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Artist Gale Hinton, who painted the mural in the background, stands beside Louis Nickle, 87, a life-long friend whose boyhood and present homes are pictured in the mural. The mural graces a wall in the hallway of Pleasant Valley Elementary School. Photo by Pete Gawda.

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