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Remembering Ben Atchley

By Ray Hill

The passing of Ben Atchley brought back many memories to me. I've known Ben and Sue Atchley since I was a teen-ager and I'm now almost a senior citizen. Ben Atchley was serving his second term in the Tennessee State House of Representatives when I volunteered to work in his campaign for the State Senate. Atchley was facing a long-time incumbent, Fred Berry, in the general election. It was a hard fought campaign, but that sort of campaigning doesn't really occur anymore. It was not a campaign of charges and counter-charges; it was a campaign of ideas and what each man would accomplish. There was no name-calling and no accusations. It was almost a sedate and gentlemanly race. Ben Atchley won that campaign easily and remained in the Tennessee State Senate until his retirement in 2003.

Tennessee wasn't as "red" back then as it is today. In fact, when Ben Atchley was first elected to the State Senate in 1976, it was a presidential election year. Former California governor Ronald Reagan had just mounted a challenge to sitting President Gerald Ford in the Republican primaries. It was a hard fight, one that went all the way to the GOP National Convention. Ford just barely won renomination and there were many like me who had worked hard for Reagan. Tennessee's junior United States Senator, Bill Brock, was seeking a second term that same year. Two years previously, former Congressman Ray Blanton had been elected governor over Lamar Alexander. The Democrats proved just how viable they were in 1976; Tennessee was Jimmy Carter's second best state in the country after his native Georgia. Bill Brock, despite meeting

his goal of getting 100,000 more votes in 1976 than he had received in 1970, lost to Jim Sasser.

Ben Atchley navigated difficult political rapids in Nashville and served much of the time when his party was the minority in the State Capitol. Whether in the minority or the majority, Ben Atchley always mattered. Perhaps one of the primary reasons Ben Atchley could never be ignored is precisely because of the kind of man he was; Ben was quite simply a very fine man. There was nothing artificial about Ben Atchley. Bennie Atchley really was a man whose word was always good, who believed in God, country, family, and community. Throughout his entire life, Ben Atchley embodied what his generation saw as the "American Dream."

Although an extremely modest man, it was readily apparent just how shrewd Ben really was when one

considers just how well he married. Bennie's choice of Sue King as his bride helped shaped his life and future well beyond any other single thing he did. Miss Sue came from one of the most prominent families in South Knoxville and she was at least as good a politician (I think slightly better) than Ben ever was. One simply couldn't have had a better help mate than Sue Atchley.

Together Ben and Sue formed a duo that served South Knoxville and Ben's Senate district for decades. Sue was eventually appointed to serve a brief term in the State Senate, a recognition of her own ability and service to the community.

It is impossible to calculate the impact Ben and Sue had upon my own life, nor is it possible to measure their warm friendship. The older I've become, the more I've realized the greatest gift life has to offer are



Curtis Bentley Atchley, Jr.

those friendships that bring us love and comfort. I have loved Sue and Ben for a very long time and like so many others, will keep Ben Atchley alive in my heart and memories for the rest of my own life.



PHOTO BY KEN LAY

The Knox County Retired Teachers Association awarded scholarships to some aspiring educators at its annual awards celebration and scholarship luncheon Thursday at The Foundry. Pictured with the award winners are their presenters.

Retired teachers association awards scholarships to future educators

By Ken Lay

Nine aspiring educators received scholarships to finish earning their respective credentials Thursday afternoon at the Knox County Retired Teachers Association Scholarship Foundation Awards Celebration.

The annual banquet was held at the Foundry last week.

Elizabeth Vandergriff was awarded the Tom Underwood Scholarship by presenter Nancy Gerhardt.

Don Loy presented the Reuben and Pat Hunter Scholarship to Skikila Smith. The Colleen Bennett Scholarship, presented by Connie Silvey, went to Daniella Moyers. Bethany Snowden received the Robert Dagley Scholarship, which was tendered by David Sincerbox.

Judy Fleenor presented the Eddie Carney Scholarship to Ashley Cody. Mary Yom was awarded the Carrie Moudy Huber Scholarship by Vicki Andrews.

Carolyn Meyers was awarded the Jim

Oakes Scholarship by Ron Thomas.

David Savard was presented with the Bill Crosland Scholarship by Knox County Board of Education Chairperson Patti Bounds and Micaela Lucas was awarded the Vicki Andrews Scholarship by Don Loy.

The annual scholarships are needs-based and awarded to students who are pursuing a master's degree or fulfilling their respective student teaching requirements.

Attorneys for sheriff retirees seek \$190,000 in fees

By Mike Steely
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The original "settlement" proposed by the Knox County Retirement and Pension Board provided \$5,000 to each of the six retiring deputies and one widow named in the county law department's suit. Per the proposed settlement this money was to be used toward legal fees and not to cost the county more than \$50,000.

That \$5,000 amount vanished after the commission split on a decision but has reappeared as \$190,000. Attorneys Herb Moncier and Al Holifield appeared before the commission work session last week presented a resolution "regarding the payment of reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the participants and retirees in the uniformed officer pension plan in defending the lawsuits brought against them."

"That the Knox County Commission hereby directs the Finance Director and his designates to appropriate County funds in the amount sufficient to pay reasonable attorney fees," the attorneys' resolution reads. Chris Caldwell, the county's finance director, also serves as chairman of the Pension Board.

It continues "as determined by the Knox County Chancery Court but in no event to exceed the total amount of \$190,000."

Moncier spoke as Holifield passed out the proposal to the commissioners and Moncier added the \$190,000 was "for us to be compensated."

"We've done our best to keep our legal

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