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McMillan to Retire From Board of Education

By Ray Hill

Mike McMillan, East Knox County's member of the Knox County Board of Education, has announced he will not seek reelection next year. During McMillan's tenure, the board of education has seen something like \$100 million come through new buildings and improvements to area schools.

"The Bible says there is a time for seasons, and it's time to hand this off to someone else. I've accomplished most of what I set out to do on the school board," McMillan said.

Mike McMillan, after a 10-year tenure as a Knox County Commissioner, sought election to the board of education in 2010. The election was to fill the seat left vacant by the resignation of Bill Phillips. McMillan ran as an unabashed advocate for the 8th District and said he was strongly in favor of building a new middle school in the Gibbs community, as well as a new elementary school in the Carter community. McMillan had credibility as he had been a big backer of a new middle school for

Gibbs while on the county commission.

Mike McMillan hammered home his belief the 8th District needed someone on the Knox County Board of Education who would stand up for the people rather than the school system. McMillan won the election, carrying virtually every precinct in the district, with 53% of the vote.

It was a new kind of campaign for the school board. Before Mike McMillan's comeback, campaigns for the board had been largely sedate affairs, pretty well

devoid of real issues, with all candidates mouthing the same platitudes that they loved children and were for "good schools." The days of beauty contests for the Knox County Board of Education were over. It was a high watermark in Knox County elections.

For the first few years of his service on the board of education, McMillan risked ridicule and became something of an outcast for his insistence upon representing the people of the 8th District. McMillan grumbled that the philosophy of **Continue on page 4**



FOCUS FILE PHOTO.

Knox County Board of Education District 8 representative Mike McMillan stands on the property of the now-Carter Elementary School on the site tour held January 6, 2012.

Farmers, residents concerned about Growth Policy changes

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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The City of Knoxville is running out of housing space and Knox County has lots of remaining agricultural land with room for houses. The Growth Policy Coordinating Committee met Monday evening and got an earful from county farmers who fear proposed changes could threaten their lifestyle.

The Growth Plan Policy is part of "Advance Knox" and was established by Mayor Glenn Jacobs to review the possible land use policies over the next 20 years when, according to some estimates, more than 70,000 new residents will join the already rapidly growing county.

The public meeting drew a large crowd and the meeting began with the committee choosing Jacobs as chairman over KUB's John W. Williams in a friendly nomination process which saw Williams vote for Jacobs. After the 9-2 vote, Jacobs called on

Deputy Law Director Mike Moyers to explain the powers of the committee and the process.

Moyers said the committee can recommend amendments to the plans but added that Mayor Jacobs may change proposals. Knox County, Knoxville and Farragut governments must then agree to the final growth policies. Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon questioned the power of Jacobs in the final recommendations and Moyers said the committee could approve the final plan by a simple majority vote but added that Jacobs can choose the results.

Jacobs told the meeting that public engagement has gone on for two years and said the new Growth Policy developed is a "financially responsible plan" that makes the county more proactive in land use policies.

Jim Snowden, Knox County Engineering and Public Works Director, said **Continue on page 2**



Knox County Board of Education Chair Betsy Henderson stands next to the Knox County Schools Security Officer Training Program Class of 2023-02 graduates. Photo by Ken Leinart.

Ten new officers graduate KCS School Security

By Ken Leinart

Now they have a stake, a shared responsibility, in the future of Knox County.

Ten candidates were presented their graduation certificates from the Knox County Schools (KCS) Security Division Friday night, Dec. 1, during a ceremony at South-Doyle Middle School.

That shared stake was highlighted by those who spoke during the ceremony.

Knox County Schools Superintendent Jon Rysewyk

said he knew it was an "extra" part of the security team's job. That becoming a part of shaping young people's attitudes was "not in the job description."

"But it is something I have witnessed with the Knox County School's security team," he said. "Our security officers do play such an important role in the education experience for our students."

Rysewyk said the Knox County Board of Education made a \$9 million

investment in the system's security division in the last budget cycle.

He said a lot of that was for physical security measures such as perimeter fencing and upgrading some school security windows.

But, he added, it also included a 12% raise for the system's security officers. He said that showed a commitment to not only recruit the "best folks but also to retain the officers they have."

"Because of that kind of investment we're seeing that's a possibility," Rysewyk said.

The superintendent told the graduating class, "This may be the most important job you'll ever have but we take it very seriously. We are raising the next generation. The future of Knoxville depends on what we do in our school system. The kids that walk our halls are the future leaders of this community."

Continue on page 4

Animal Control discussed by Knoxville City Council

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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Amid the yelling and loud chanting of protesters Tuesday the Knoxville City Council managed to vote on other agenda items after adjourning twice during the session so the crowd could calm down.

One of those votes saw the council postpone the agreement to pass along all animal control to the Young-Williams Animal Center and modify the Animal Control Board. Several council members had questions for Councilwoman Janet Testerman, who is director of the facility.

Councilwoman Lauren Rider was concerned about how appeals and complaints might be handled once YWAC assumes responsibility for animal problems and was critical of Testerman serving on the Animal Control Board while also heading the center. Testerman responded that the Animal Control Board is "lined up the way it should be."

"You can't be in multiple roles," Rider said.

The first reading of the agreement was moved to the council's December 12th meeting and, if needed, could be approved **Continue on page 3**



Councilwoman Lauren Rider has some questions about Young-Williams Animal Control taking over animal control from the police department and quizzed Janet Testerman on the issue.

Protesters disrupt city council meeting

By Mike Steely
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While some local news media has reported that the Knoxville City Council voted against a resolution calling for peace and support of the Palestinian people, that vote never actually took place.

Councilwoman Amelia Parker's proposal drew hundreds of citizens to the Tuesday council meeting and Mayor Indya Kincannon used her gavel often in an attempt to

stop shouting and chants of "Ceasefire Now" from local Knoxville activists and Palestinian supporters.

The Parker resolution called on Congressman Tim Burchett to vote on criticizing Israel's reaction to the bombing attack from Hamas.

Citizens spoke in favor and opposition to the resolution and faced verbal hostility from the crowd. Mayor Kincannon often **Continue on page 4**

JFK: U.S. Cannot Solve Every World Problem

From a distance



By John J. Duncan Jr. duncanj@knoxfocus.com

On November 16, 1961, President John F. Kennedy gave one of his most famous speeches at the University of Washington in Seattle. The words he spoke then are even more true today, and I wish every member of Congress and leader in our government would hear them now.

He said, "We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient - that we are only six percent of the world's population and that we cannot impose our will upon the other 94 percent of mankind - that we cannot right every wrong

or reverse each adversity, and that, therefore, there cannot be an American solution to every world problem."

Our national debt then was less than one percent of what it is now, and we were not economically vulnerable to China, Japan, or any other nation. And we are now less than four percent of the world population.

It would be good if President Kennedy's words from this speech could be placed on the walls of every Congressional office and in the White House and State Department.

It is disgusting to me when I hear chickenhawks who have never fought in a frontline war demanding now that we start another war in the Middle East.

I saw Sen. Tom Cotton on television trying to prove how tough he is by demanding "massive retaliation" against Iran. And, as my fellow Focus columnist,

Dr. Harold Black, wrote recently, Sen. Lindsey Graham seems to want to bomb everyone.

A few weeks ago, I described Stephen Walt of Harvard and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago as "probably the two most respected experts on U.S. foreign policy". Several years ago, they wrote a best-selling book entitled "The Israel Lobby."

They said, "In addition to encouraging the U.S. to back Israel more or less unconditionally", the Lobby shaped "American policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the ill-fated invasion of Iraq, and the ongoing confrontation with Syria and Iran." They added that "these policies were not in the U.S. national interest."

David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. The U.S. officially recognized that country the same day.

Since then, the U.S. has sent untold billions of dollars in foreign aid there despite the fact that Israel has been in much better shape financially than we have for many years.

We have spent several billion already to aid Israel in the war with Hamas, and Congress is planning to send at least \$14 billion more.

This makes us a partner in what Ron Unz, a Jew, described recently as "the greatest televised slaughter of helpless civilians in the history of the world."

He added, "What we are now seeing is the deliberate massacre of civilians aimed at driving out the Palestinians living in Gaza and rendering their enclave uninhabitable. Most of Gaza's hospitals and medical facilities have been eliminated and when the Jordanians established field hospitals in South Gaza, those too were bombed. Schools, bakeries,

and other facilities necessary for continued human existence have also been deliberately destroyed, along with the bulk of the housing stock...."

Columnist Caitlin Johnstone wrote on Nov. 27 that "Israel has done more to damage Israel's image in the last seven weeks than anti-semites did in the last seven decades."

Everything Hamas did on Oct. 7 was horrible. As terrible as Israel's treatment of the Palestinians had been for 75 years, those attacks were not justified and it was very wrong to take hostages.

But while we are now hearing about the cruel treatment of the hostages who have been released, at least they are still alive. More than 14,000 innocent Palestinians have been slaughtered, and thousands more are still buried under the rubble of bombed buildings.

We should have trade

and tourism, and cultural and educational exchanges with all other nations. This is the opposite of isolationism.

What isolates us more than anything is our completely one-sided policy toward the Middle East. Have we not learned anything from our disasters in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Most of our foreign interventions, both militarily and economically, have been more about money and power for the Defense Department along with other federal departments and agencies and their contractors.

As President Kennedy said, we cannot solve every world problem. The only people who can bring peace to the Middle East are the people who live there. Our interventions there have only created more hatred and animosity toward us.

The border and the inaction of the Republicans in Congress

Virtually everyone I know thinks that the southern border is a disaster. I just returned from my annual deer hunting trip in Eagle Pass, Texas, the epicenter of the illegal crisis. More illegals stream



By Dr. Harold A. Black blackh@knoxfocus.com haroldblackphd.com

(from India), Chinese, Africans and those from the Middle East. During the Biden years, more than 8 million illegals have entered the country.

Then there are the got-aways, those who have not been apprehended. It is highly likely that terrorists have walked into the country along with rapists, drug dealers and other criminals. Last year when I was in a shooting tower looking at deer, two columns of young men with backpacks wandered in front of us. The rancher has many videos on his trail cameras of others, mostly young men, walking through his ranch on their way to the highway after crossing the Rio Grande.

His family has owned the property for five generations and he is at his wits end because the federal government refuses to enforce the immigration laws.

I've wondered why. Some say the Democrats are trying to import their next generation of voters, provided they cannot get the vote for those who are crossing the border now. I am not so sure. The Hispanics are typically pursuing the American dream, something that many young native-born Americans denigrate. Hispanics are hard-working. Have you ever seen a Hispanic panhandling? Me neither. They are religious mostly Catholics and are anti-abortion, anti LGBTQ with strong family ties. Their values are those ridiculed by "progressives". Do you really think that these Hispanics will become

Democrats? Maybe some, but most? I doubt it. So please enlighten me and tell me why the Democrats seem to favor open borders.

The Republicans in Congress rant and rave about the failure of Biden to do something about the border and sought to impeach his head of homeland security, Alejandro Mayorkas who is a Cuban-American. The vote to impeach failed because 8 Republicans voted not to impeach and 12 Republicans didn't vote at all. Some conservatives had a cow over the failure to impeach. I was not one of them. Impeachment proceedings are for show and are not to be taken seriously. Their purpose is to keep a hot topic issue before the voters. Much like the Democrats dragging out the January 6 committee lest the voters forget the alleged "insurrection," the only

purpose of the Republican's impeachment hearings is to not let the voters forget the disaster at the border.

Much like the Democrats, the Republicans are not serious about solving the problem. They know that even if they voted to impeach Mayorkas (or Biden for that matter), the Senate would never vote to convict. Basically they are wasting our time and money and are not devoting themselves to the serious business of governance. The Republican complaining and bemoaning is just for show. If they were serious about addressing the problems of the border, they would grind to a halt all other business. All spending bills originate in the House. They would say that there will not be any business conducted until the mess at the border is addressed. There will be no spending bills, no bills of any type

introduced except bills limiting the inflow of illegals into the country. They would cite national security concerns. They would cite the myriad of problems faced by border towns and residents. They would cite the burdens placed on social services, school systems, hospitals and law enforcement. But what do our representatives do? They cite all those problems and they do nothing about it. Like my father used to say, "That sounds good - if you are interested in sounds." Again, the reason is that the Republicans really don't want to do anything to solve the illegal surge now. They want to wait until after the presidential election. If a Republican president is elected, then maybe they will move to address the problem. But not before.



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Farmers, residents concerned about Growth Policy changes

Cont. from page 1

three main areas will be the most affected by the plan: Hardin Valley, Gibbs/Ritta, and Strawberry Plains/Chapman Highway.

Planning Commission Director Amy Brooks said the plan for those rural areas within the growth area allows no more than 2 houses per acre. Several real estate representatives, including the Chamber's Amy Nolan, said the current policy of 1-3 houses per acre should be used in the new plans and added that little farmland is being taken in the plan.

More than two dozen citizens spoke on the issue including farmers, rural

residents, developers and home builders.

Kevin Murphy of Knox County Planning Alliance noted the plan hasn't been changed in 20 years and any proposed plans "will need to be balanced." He noted that some of the larger farms fall into the urban growth area.

Various farm-owning family members spoke against placing housing developments in or near farmland but one speaker noted that much of the land zoned agricultural is not being farmed.

Lisa Starbuck of the Ritta community said that certain parts of the proposed map are "inappropriately


being changed."

Larry Silverstein of Community Forum said the plan must be put on hold and wait for the Comprehensive Plan and Map.

Other speakers charged that the public has not been properly engaged and one said the plan simply looks at what spaces can be developed and disregards the agricultural zoning.

The committee will meet again this month and then make their proposals after the new year.

It was estimated that in order to meet the estimated population increase, 25,000 to 30,000 housing units would be needed.



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Publisher's Positions



By Steve Hunley,
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For Leftists, 'Stupid' Is The New 'Smart'

If 80 is the new 60, then in today's society stupid is the new smart. It is nothing less than amazing to see a host of people readily swallow things that not only defy logic, frequently knock common sense in the head and are in fact detached from reality. When did any society ever excel by lowering the educational standards in the name of equity? Never. The very same people who squall and caterwaul about the threat of "white supremacy" are the architects of "affinity classes," which are classrooms filled by students of the same color, taught by a teacher of color, all because of the theory it will help Black and Latino students with advanced curriculum. So, think about it if you have a still-functioning brain, the very people in this country who stoutly maintain the greatest threat to our society is "white supremacy" are pushing for segregated classrooms. In fact, they make the very same arguments utilized by those who opposed the desegregation of schools in the 1950s.

An entire generation has been under-educated precisely because our educational system, into which we pour billions and billions of tax dollars, is much less interested in teaching students to read, do math, and learn anything practical to focus on social issues. The educational system has become permeated with the notion of equity, diversity and restorative practices. Things are more focused on race and division in this country than even when Jim Crow was alive and well. Those who insist nothing has improved in this country as far as race is concerned are either really quite stupid, entirely ignorant of history, or merely liars. Simply think of it in reverse, were somebody trying to make the argument classes should be all White, taught by White teachers, because it provided a better, safer

learning environment for those students. If that doesn't make you uncomfortable, God knows what will. What's the difference? We can segregate Black and Hispanic students into their own classrooms, but by golly we can't mention what rests at the other end of that particular pole? Again, the wokesters embrace STUPID, which is their smart. Hypocrisy is at the very heart of just about everything they do, almost always topped off with a thick, rich gravy of "not for me, but for thee" and a heaping helping of everything comes down to race.

Logic, along with gravity, can be completely ignored if the situation warrants it. How is it possible to take a person seriously when they begin chattering about there being as many (if not more) than 72 genders and men having babies? That the government knows what is better for children than parents?

Lefties squealing that any sentence they don't like is violence is nothing less than moronic. Violence is somebody dragging you out and beating the stuffing out of you, raping or killing you, yet the same people who squawk about words being "violence" usually want to keep criminals, the people who inflict real harm and violence upon their fellow human beings, out of jail.

The Left delights in calling those they dislike "Nazis," and most of them are so empty-headed they don't realize they have more in common with the Nazis than the folks they oppose. The Nazis, like the Left in this country, believed all power should be centralized in the government. The Nazi government, headed by a dictator, Adolf Hitler, smothered, imprisoned, murdered or sent off to concentration camps those who disagreed with them. The Nazis had no sympathy or use for those who were mentally challenged or gay or unlike them. Like Hamas, the Nazis hated Jews and were dedicated to the literal eradication of the Jewish people through systematic murder. One difference between the Nazis and Hamas and their supporters is the Nazis tried to hide their crimes while Hamas and their fellow antisemites celebrate theirs.

The very same people who cluck about "Islamophobia" turn a blind eye to the extremists like Hamas who believe gays should be killed, mutilate and demean women, and

refuse to tolerate any religion but their own. Indeed, for the American Left the only religion they seem to hate is Christianity.

Colleges and universities have become less citadels of education than indoctrination camps for the Left, who were quick to stamp out the "violence" of those voices with whom they disagreed. It became popular for campuses to become "safe spaces." I bet the Israelis wish they had more safe spaces right about now. Free speech was throttled with a swiftness and brutality the Nazi Minister of Propaganda would have approved of. Now "free speech" has been revived so that students and faculty can pour out their hatred of Israel.

The Nazis and the Communists had one big thing in common with the Left and the wokesters. They did not value the contributions, much less the lives, of the individual; rather they hailed the collective. Nothing outside of the official narrative was to be tolerated and dissent was to be stamped out by whatever means necessary.

There is a very ugly streak running through our society and too many of us prefer to pretend it isn't there; too many of our children and grandchildren value the collective more than they value the lives of others. Worse still, they seem not to value the lives of those with whom they disagree at all.

The wokesters have attributed every worthwhile human trait to themselves and one would think their bodies and minds were positively coated with compassion. Unfortunately, too many of those minds are coated with a terrible sickness and evil that ran through the authoritarian dictatorships.

Anyone who can countenance beheading a baby for any reason has ceased to be a member of any civilized society. For the God of love who knows every sparrow that falls, it is as far from the teachings of Christianity and most every major religion of the known world. The final retreat for these people is to simply insist it never happened. There were those who denied the Holocaust and it's happening again.

One of humorist Mark Twain's greatest quotes was, "It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt." Now in America, we celebrate fools daily and worse besides.

Ross Bagwell, A True Gentleman

Ross Bagwell truly was a pioneer in the television industry. Bagwell's first job was with the old children's TV show from the 1950s, "Howdy Doody." First and foremost, Ross Bagwell was a gentleman of the first order. Ross was as successful in the art of living and doing for others as he was in business.

A native Knoxvilleian who attended the Staub School, Tyson Middle School, Knoxville High School and the University of Tennessee, Ross Bagwell had his eyes on bigger things. Learning the business from the ground up, Bagwell formed Cinetel Productions. Knoxville owes a debt of gratitude to Ross Bagwell for his foresight and determination as he provided the impetus for our community's expanding role in television production.

Ross was the father of such productions as "I-40 Paradise" and "America's Castles," which was a remarkably popular show. Bagwell sold Cinetel Productions to Scripps Howard, which became the Scripps networks and HGTV. The thriving TV industry in Knoxville, the likes of ID Discovery, are here because of Ross Bagwell's vision.

Ross Bagwell was a kind and good man, one who truly gave of himself to others. Mr. Bagwell leaves behind him a legacy of success, an extremely able man who made his mark in a difficult and oftentimes bruising industry. More importantly, Ross Bagwell was extraordinary in his thoughtfulness and mentoring of others. Never content merely to live and enjoy the American Dream, Ross wanted to share it with everyone willing to work for it.

The Focus extends heartfelt sympathies to the family of Ross Bagwell and pays tribute to a great man who lived well and accomplished more than most. Knoxville has lost a brilliant native son; the Bagwell family has lost a beloved father, and the television industry one of its true innovators. Ross had deeply felt the loss of his wonderful wife, Sue Burchfield Bagwell, who passed away in 2022. The couple first met while in the 8th grade while attending Tyson Middle School. Family and friends can now rejoice that Ross and Sue are together once again.

Thank you, Mike McMillan

Mike McMillan has announced he will not be a candidate for the Knox County Board of Education next year. Please see our big story on Mr. McMillan and his time on the school board on Page 1.

The Knoxville Focus will be the first to acknowledge just what Mike McMillan has meant to the people of the 8th District. Keep in mind, I am a former member of the board myself and I do not hesitate at all, quite the contrary, I am proud to say that our community has never had a better representative on the school board than Mike McMillan. During the 14 years he has served, Mr. McMillan has been faithful in looking out for the people who elected him, letting nothing deter him, even serious illness.

For 24 years Mike McMillan has served the 8th District as either a county commissioner or board of education member, but I think he actually managed to accomplish more while serving on the school board. Certainly, nobody accomplished as much as Mike McMillan. Now that we have the Gibbs Middle School, it's all too easy to forget what a long and difficult road it was to tread. The disappointments were many and the opposition great. The naysayers were everywhere right up until the school was actually built. Well-paid consultants and some folks who just plain looked down on the residents of Gibbs sneered the new middle school would be sparsely attended. They had very little to say when it opened filled to the brim, as Mike McMillan had insisted it would.

There will be tangible monuments to Mike McMillan's service on the board of education dotting the landscape of the 8th District long after many of us are gone: the Gibbs Middle School, the new Carter Elementary School, the Career Academy at Straw Plains, the new football stadium at Gibbs High School, and the gym at Carter Middle School.

Throughout most of his service as a member of the Knox County Board of Education, Mike McMillan paid close attention to the people who elected him. Mr. McMillan routinely tried to handle every matter that was brought to him by any person in the district if it was possible. Although not always successful, Mr. McMillan really did care and was more successful than not when setting out to help his people.

Undoubtedly conservative, Mike McMillan treated the taxpayers' money like it was his own and he oftentimes bragged he paid \$2 for a pair of dress shoes at a thrift store. Perhaps because of his own fiscal and personal conservatism, Mr. McMillan was able to accomplish things that probably would have been difficult or impossible for other board members. It was the hardcore Republican from a ruby-red district that authored the amendment to the school policy prohibiting discrimination of any kind. When some were asking for special treatment through language referring to their group, Mr. McMillan read off his all-inclusive amendment. That settled the argument, which would probably still be raging today had he not brought his usual common-sense approach. Mr. McMillan was never going to be accused of being politically correct, far from it, but he was sincere in his belief in people and the welfare of the children populating our schools. Mike McMillan was never going to tolerate a bully if he could help it and he usually could.

Mike McMillan was no far-seer into the future or idealistic dreamer; no, Mr. McMillan was imminently practical, careful with a dollar, and wanted and demanded the most for the least amount possible. Mr. McMillan was never so closed-minded that he couldn't be brought around to a different point of view, but he never gave ground on a matter of principle. Nor would Mike McMillan ever agree to support anything he believed was at the expense of the people who elected him.

That same commitment and caring for the people who had honored him yet again was not lost on the folks in the 8th District. Mike McMillan will leave office with a record of high achievement, the best of any modern official from our district in memory. Mr. McMillan will also take with him the thanks of a grateful community, as well as their affection for the public servant who was true to the people who elected him.

Animal Control discussed by Knoxville City Council

Cont. from page 1
then on a second or emergency vote.

Other concerns about the agreement, a joint resolution of the city and county supported by both the sheriff and the city police chief, were voiced by the council. Approval of the agreement would mean the city police would give up its Animal Control office, vehicles, and eight jobs.

The council did vote to allot just over \$3 million over four years to YWAC to promote the responsible care and welfare of animals.

Police Chief Paul Noel said the department will

respond to requests from Young-Williams civilian control officers to assist with handling pet owners and aggressive animals. If approved, YWAC would assume animal control duties with new employees on April 1st.

The council approved agreements with Berkshire Hathaway for Stop Loss Insurance, Sutherland Lofts to permit a fence encroachment, CDM Smith Inc. for improvements to 16 bus stops, and Clyde Tant Jr. for the purchase of 421 Oakcrest Road for \$120,000.

A property at Zero State Street and 121 Union

Avenue went from DK-G Downtown to DK-B in that district. Piney Grove Church Road's 2031 and 2033 went from RN-1 to Agricultural and Zero Westridge Drive went from Civil and Institutional zoning to Low Density Residential. A request for a hilly lot at 2812 Merchant Drive to be rezoned to commercial was postponed by Councilman Charles Thomas at the request of the developer.

One rezoning involved a property at 114 Sylvia Drive which moves from very restrictive RN-1 zoning to a much more open zoning for houses as RN-5. Councilman Charles Thomas

noted the unusual change, pointing out the property's location and access make it a "better place for added density."

A property at 4600 Ernestine Drive went from RN-1 to RN-2. Lots at 1500 Fort Promise Drive and 1203 and 1331 West Oldham Avenue moved from RN-5 to Neighborhood Commercial.

Also approved was an agreement with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation to support the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force and to authorize two annual training conferences financed by a \$130,000 grant.

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McMillan to Retire From Board of Education

Cont. from page 1

his colleagues seemed to be largely the “protection, preservation and perpetuation” of the system rather than the children, parents and educators who made up the system. Mike McMillan was the lone member who constantly invoked the “taxpayers,” a habit that frequently seemed to annoy his colleagues.

One woman posted on her social media that Mike McMillan was the “honey badger” of the Knox County Board of Education. The nickname stuck precisely because it accurately summarized McMillan’s attitude and refusal to be budged from what he believed was right.

No other member of the board so closely questioned the superintendent at the time. McMillan

liked to say then-Superintendent Jim McIntyre was always chasing “the next big thing,” and constantly searching Google for what some other school system was doing.

McMillan was equally quick to demand to know just how much a new program was going to cost the taxpayers, a very unwelcome question most of the time.

When McIntyre requested a large property tax hike, Mike McMillan was the single board of education member notable for his own opposition to the tax grab. McMillan complained McIntyre was spending without regard for the community’s ability to pay. The proposed tax increase suffered a crippling blow when County Mayor Tim Burchett publicly opposed the tax

hike and so did The Focus.

It was McIntyre’s overspending that Mike McMillan shrewdly used to the advantage of the people of the 8th District. Caught with a shortfall, Mayor Tim Burchett, the county’s chief fiscal officer, reigned in McIntyre’s spending by giving the superintendent little other option but to sign a Memorandum of Understanding limiting spending. The agreement also included a new middle school for the Gibbs community.

The new middle school had been on the burner for decades and time and again the community was thrilled to see it almost come to fruition, only to see it removed or discarded. It is absolutely factual to say there would not have been a Gibbs Middle

School without Tim Burchett or Mike McMillan. That same duo, Burchett and McMillan, also built a new elementary school for the Carter community.

The political complexion of the board of education changed dramatically and elevated Mike McMillan to the chairmanship.

It was Mike McMillan who fended off the effort to close the Career Magnet Academy in Strawberry Plains, which was bravely resisted by its students. McMillan answered each individual student and fought on their behalf before the board. Then-Superintendent Bob Thomas decided to leave the school alone.

The last time McMillan’s name was on the ballot, he was unable to campaign personally, following his recovery from pneumonia

and two bouts of cancer, for which he underwent treatment. Even while undergoing cancer treatment, McMillan almost never missed a meeting of the board. Mike McMillan’s personal popularity continued to grow and he once tallied almost 7,700 votes just inside the 8th District.

It was McMillan’s greatest victory, winning by a landslide against two opponents while being unable to personally campaign. Four years later, McMillan has seen his longtime partner’s health steadily deteriorate, which has its effect as he sorrows for her condition.

Mike McMillan’s decision to retire comes after he has accomplished everything he set out to do. Going from an irritant on the board to the person who molded the new majority on

the board, Mike McMillan became a respected elder statesman.

McMillan intends to serve out his term, which ends September 1, 2024. Asked if he had any message for the people of the 8th District, after a moment of contemplation, McMillan said in his raspy voice, “I want the people of East Knox County to know how very, very grateful I am for the opportunity to serve them on the board of education. I did my best to do things for the people. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to serve.”

Ten new officers graduate KCS School Security

Cont. from page 1

He said he appreciated those who used their “gifts and talents” to help invest in the schools and students.

Rywesyk said there are three relationships that security officers must have and maintain: administration, students and other security entities.

Rysewyk said security teams work “hand in glove” with school administrations in every aspect. He said security officers are highly trained in every protocol and procedure, as are administrators.

On students: “I think this one is very valuable in education, especially now,” Rysewyk said. “You may be the only the only relationship some of our students

have with law enforcement officers.”

He said he has seen their interaction with school staff and students. He said the students “really feel comfortable talking” with them. “That’s such an important part of the future of our society to know there’s a trust level in our folks who wear the badge and are there to protect them,” Rysewyk said.

Rysewyk said that at all of the system’s schools, there were either Knox County Sheriff’s Office personnel or Knoxville Police Department officers on site.

“The sharing of intelligence, the sharing of tips, the sharing of strategies is critically important,” he said.

Knox County School System Security Chief Jason Periard said KCS started with a lofty goal “a little over two years ago,” in raising a security team. With Friday night’s graduation ceremony, the system achieved a 100% staffing goal.

While acknowledging the work of the KCS Security Team staff, the KCS Board of Education and KCS leadership, he also acknowledged those receiving their certificates.

He said that the 10 graduates represent 20% of those who began the eight-week training process.

“Today you join not an organization. You join a family,” Periard said. “We are a family.

“We are a rare breed who

choose service and sacrifice over self.”

State Senator Becky Duncan Massey (6th Senatorial District) was the keynote speaker for the graduation.

Past recipient of the Russell B. Kocur Jr. Award, Scott Sutton, presented the 2023-02 Class Award to Richard McNutt, who also served as the 2023-02 Class President.

The new officers who received their certificates Friday night are Johnathan Dyer, Jim Graber, Hunter Hunley, Patrick Leach, Ricard McNutt (class president), Matthew Muga, Steven Sobel (class vice president), LaAnn Soloman, Jeff White and Cameron Tal-



A resident spoke to the city council Tuesday evening calling for a ceasefire and support of Palestine during a disruptive meeting. A lack of a second to a motion by Councilwoman Amelia Parker effectively killed the resolution amid shouts of “Ceasefire Now” from supporters.

Protesters disrupt city council meeting

Cont. from page 1

Councilwoman Parker warned those present to be quiet and let the speakers speak, or be removed from the meeting. Although numerous people signed up to speak on the resolution, three speakers for the resolution and three against were allowed to speak. Some pro-Palestine speakers were critical of Kincannon’s prior statement in support of Israel.

finished her statement and moved to get approval but the council was silent and the mayor ruled the motion failed for the lack of a second.

The council then moved on to the remainder of their agenda but several protesters stayed until the end of the meeting and six spoke at the public forum before the meeting was adjourned.

When the Cops Tell You It’s a ‘Civil Matter’ that Means They Are Not Going to Help You



By Jedidiah McKeehan
jed@attorney-knoxville.com

From time to time I have individuals call me and recount to me a story about trying to obtain their kids from their ex-spouse, or trying to have someone arrested for assaulting them and the story will occasionally include a part where the person tells me something like this, “I showed them the court order where it’s my time with the kids but the cops said it was a civil matter and I need to hire an attorney.” Or, “I told the cops I wanted them to have

my husband leave because he choked me and they said it was a civil matter and I should file an Order of Protection the next day.”

I will freely admit I was not there when these interactions took place so all of my information is obtained second hand, but when a cop states that something is a “civil matter” at any point, that is code for, “they are not going to help you or be arresting anyone.” Maybe the matter truly is a civil matter,

but be aware of what you are actually being told when you hear these words from law enforcement.

Jedidiah McKeehan is an attorney practicing in Knox County and surrounding counties. He works in many areas, including family law, criminal, and personal injury. Visit attorney-knoxville.com for more information about this legal issue and other legal issues.

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The Doctor is in

a weekly column by
Dr. Jim Ferguson

Winds of Change?

I care about the reality of goodness, not the perception of it.

Elon Musk

Perhaps it's just me, but I don't remember so many salutations of "Happy Thanksgiving" as I heard this year. I found it infectious, so I responded in kind.

My family had a wonderful Thanksgiving gathering of "kith and kin," as Clark Griswold would say. There was a cornucopia of goodies, the absence of politics and everyone was convivial. So, as I sit down to collect my thoughts after Thanksgiving, I consider us blessed, and I hope I'm sensing winds of change.

Becky and I love the late-night Greg Gutfeld show which, thankfully, is not on too late at night. Nonetheless, we aren't night owls any longer so we just DVR/record the "king of late-night." Gutfeld is quick-witted, has a good stage presence and has

interesting guests as well as regulars Kat Timpf and Tyrus. And they all seem happy, something I don't see on other talk show programs.

Recently, Gutfeld played a segment from the MSNBC Morning Joe show which got me thinking about happiness. As I watched Scarborough's unhinged rant about President Trump, comparing him to Hitler, the Devil, et cetera, I wondered what it would be like to view the world with such bilious hatred. Apparently, the rant struck a nerve elsewhere because it was discussed in the commentariat. We've seen the Trump derangement syndrome, but Gutfeld envisioned Morning Joe as possessed with full-blown "Trump derangement disease." Joe is not a happy camper by my observation.

Sympathy and empathy have different meanings. I don't know Scarborough, and it's risky to make snap judgments. I'm only

commenting on what I saw in his rant. I might feel sympathy for the "deranged" Scarborough, but I would not try to project myself (empathize) into his hate-filled reality. Likewise, I can't project myself into the dark souls of Hamas demons.

Philosophically and theologically I believe there is a right and a wrong, even though I acknowledge there exists a spectrum between those polar opposites. The ancient Hebrews were the first monotheists, believing that God was singular and supreme. However, during their captivity in ancient Babylon, they encountered dualism, a concept of polar opposites. The Babylonian religion of Zoroastrianism held that there was a cosmic battle between good and evil. This seemed to explain that bad things were not caused by God but by forces opposed to God's ultimate goodness. This became the Judeo-Christian worldview and my own.

Herman Wouk wrote the marvelous WWII novel, "The Winds of War." Apologies to the now-deceased Wouk for modifying his title as a trope for this essay. Wouk understood Nazis. And he understood right and wrong which have become so perverted in this current age. No longer is rape, kidnapping, torture and murder condemned as wrong. Everything and everyone

has excuses, explanations or someone to blame other than themselves. However, because Wouk was Jewish, few in the Arab world or the Ivy League will read his prose.

As a Christian, I believe in an absolute good, and I believe that things will work out, but perhaps not in my time or for our country. Nonetheless, I remain optimistic. I see signs that people are waking up because Biden and the Democrats have made such a mess of the economy/inflation (Bidenomics), immigration/invasion and by sending mixed signals to Israel, our ally and the only democracy in the Middle East. Consequently, Biden's support among Blacks and Hispanics is falling. And if Democrats lose Millennials, especially young women, they are toast.

But there are more signs. Oregon now wants to reverse its law decriminalizing hard drugs which led to drastically increased death rates. New Yorkers and people in Chicago now realize that illegals are a big problem because supporting aliens is affecting their wallets and increasing crime. Gavin Newsom was forced to clean the streets of San Fran-sicko when the Communist Chinese came to town. Windmills cause environmental damage and are inadequate. Even electric vehicles are found to be increasingly impractical.

Why aren't we doing gas/electric hybrids as a bridge instead of pushing full electric? Since "President Kamala" has a gas stove, she's not taking mine! And Elon Musk has had it and is suing leftist Media Matters and a host of other corrupt media for billions. If you want to grasp why the left hates Elon Musk, reflect on the quote above. Finally, Americans are sick of the utterly worthless UN that even refuses to condemn Hamas savagery.

On the world scene, Hungary, Italy, Argentina and the Netherlands are renouncing the elitist world governance movement and returning to populist nationalism because of immigration issues in Europe and economic issues in Argentina. Spaniards are on the march against amnesty for Catalan separatists, and everywhere there is push-back against the dangerous digital currency.

Last week's essay was about Cultural Marxism. If you don't know what that is, you should, because it is everywhere, and far more important than the Taylor Swift-Travis Kelce romance. The definitive discussion of cultural Marxism is the interview with Victor Davis Hanson on PragerU, but the Cliffs Notes version is my essay in last week's Focus.

Cultural Marxism presents everything as a battle between opposites: the oppressed and oppressors,

exploited/exploiters, victim/victimizers, even de-colonizers/colonizers. Actually, it's the Democrats who run big cities who are the oppressors.

I'm no sage. I'm just an optimistic fool who trusts the Lord and believes in America. I may be naive, but I've got an "itch" that we are about to see change because things are finally getting bad enough to impact American's safety and pocketbooks from crime and illegal immigration.

But hey, maybe it's just the winter itch that many of us deal with this time of the year. As I was scratching the other day, I thought about why we experience an itching sensation. My mind works that way, where segues aren't necessary! In medical school, I learned that the neural impulse for itching is carried along pain fibers, so the brain interprets itching as a form of pain. Scientists think itching is part of the injury/inflammation/repair process. And it's common knowledge that when a wound starts itching, it is healing.

Democrats rub me wrong and cause pain for everyone. But perhaps my itch signals healing and the winds of change!

You may email Dr. Ferguson at fergusonj@knoxfocus.com

Jellico to host a lost treasure forum

More Than A Day Away



By Mike Steely

On Saturday, December 9, I'll travel up to my hometown, Jellico, to be part of a forum about a lost treasure tale there. Years ago I published "Swift's Silver Mine and Related Appalachian Treasures" and the book

became a hit with treasure hunters and history buffs from West Virginia to Georgia.

Most of the book focused on the 1760s legend of claims made by Jonathan Swift, an Alexandria, Va., historic figure. His cryptic "journal" had many variations and contained landmarks and clues to the locations of silver mines and hidden coins.

Jellico plays into the legend because of Pine Mountain there which stretches from Scott County to the West Virginia line. I wrote of living and dead treasure hunters who combed the region, including the Jellico area, for the

lost treasure.

I'll be joining my longtime friend and fellow researcher and community leader Roy Price. Roy and I will be joined by Ed Henson, the former Kentucky State Parks Director, and also a treasure researcher and book author. Several other Swift buffs have said they hope to attend.

Jellico's legend centers on the Clear Fork River area south of town in an area known as Primroy Hollow. That section in the famed "Narrows" has tall bluffs, rock shelters, and an old tale that Swift mined and camped there. The area also has tales of stolen Union payrolls, lost Indian

loot, moonshine stills and family wars.

I became interested in the Swift legend after my late grandmother told me of family men finding lead in Pine Mountain while searching for the treasure. They never found the silver but the idea that my family had looked for it interested me.

While editing the Pineville Sun newspaper in 1970, I found myself in the middle of the Swift legend there as well. So I began researching the main character, his associates, and the many, many places in Appalachia with a related legend.

As the newspaper guy in Jellico years later, Roy

discovered an odd carving on Pine Mountain near the Frakes community east of Jellico. When Roy and I spoke about the legend here and there I was always the skeptic. Together we researched the legend and then sponsored a "Swift Silver Mine Weekend" in Jellico for a few years. The effort got noticed by WBIR's Bill Landry who brought his crew there and did several Swift features on "The Heartland Series."

My finds in the search and research included a surprising find with a metal detector just outside a cave. I didn't think about finding an arrowhead with a detector but decided to

give it a shot. Turns out the arrowhead is mostly silver. While still a bit skeptical, I still have the relic and I'm proud to own it.

The Swift event will be held at the Jellico City Hall at 10 a.m. and the public is invited. It's a free event being held by the city as that little town tries its best to promote itself and various events.

My book did very well for several years and is still available online and from Overmountain Press in Johnson City. You can also follow the Swift research on Facebook on the Swift Silver Mine page.

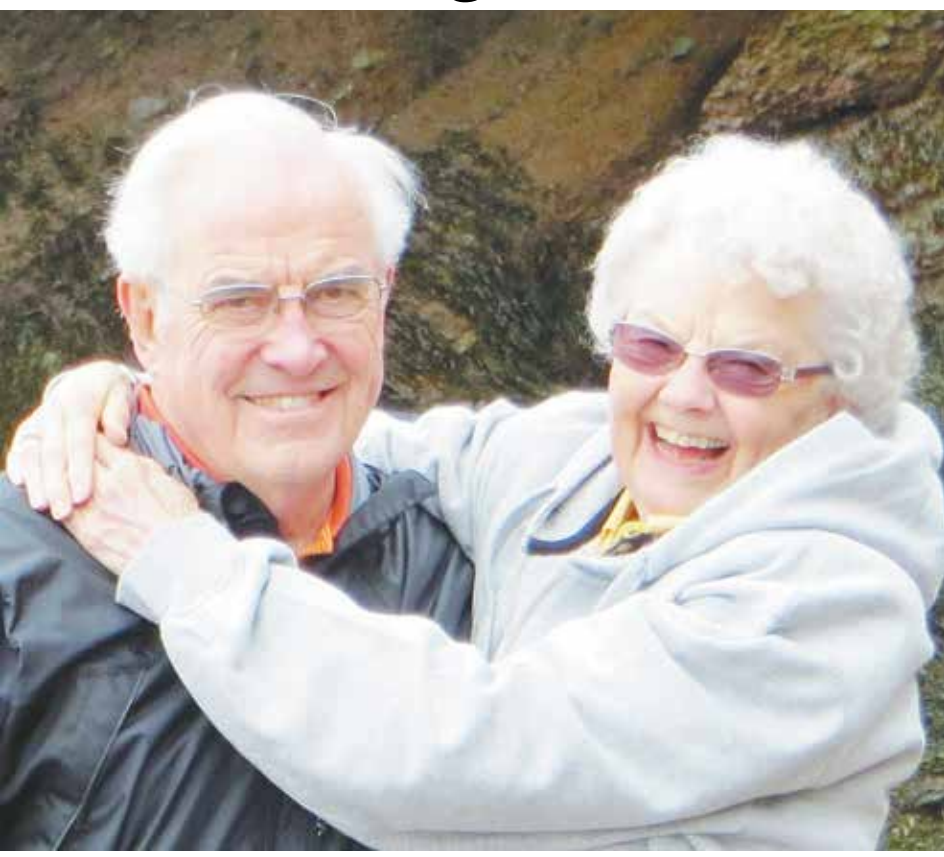
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The Amazing Life of Elizabeth 'Lib' Peters McCluskey



Picture of Jim and Lib McCluskey, courtesy of Jim McCluskey.

I thought she had a look of elegance. She was friendly and kind. She was also a great role model. She was Elizabeth Peters McCluskey---a pastor's wife, a mother, a grandmother, and a



By **Ralphine Major**
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great-grandmother. Most people knew her as "Lib."

Unlike many who knew Lib during the years that Dr. Jim McCluskey served as the Senior Pastor of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, I did not meet her until their retirement years. We met at the cardiac rehab facility. Later, I would talk to her many times on the phone when I called Dr. McCluskey to learn about the Living

Christmas Tree. For several weeks, I wrote a series in The Knoxville Focus about the incredible history of the Living Christmas Tree for which Wallace is still known today. On the Bill Wallace

Tour led by Dr. McCluskey, I saw more of Lib in a supporting role. It was obvious that she had been a great help to Dr. McCluskey during the 37 years they faithfully served at Wallace Memorial. Eight years ago, Lib suffered a stroke. While her health may have slowed the McCluskeys down, it certainly did not stop them. Neither their spirit nor their faith ever seemed to waver. It was so inspiring to see how this

couple handled adversity. Though Lib was in a wheelchair, they seldom missed a church service or event. They still traveled some. They went to ballgames. They continued living their life. Just days ago, Lib was called to her heavenly home. Hearing the news was sad, and she will certainly be missed. But she is in a much better place. Those of us who had the joy of knowing Lib have surely been blessed by her presence here on this earth.

Words of Faith: Jim shared Lib's favorite Bible verse, John 3:16 (KJV)--- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

FROM THE MOUNTAINS BY JADON GIBSON

The House with Golden Windows

By **Jadon Gibson**

Six-year-old Mary Evans was excited about starting school. She thought about it for weeks and anxiously awaited attending in the valley with the other boys and girls. Her 8-year-old cousin told Mary about school and she could hardly wait for opening day.

Mary's dad rose early and ate a hearty breakfast before leaving for work in the coal mine like most other mornings. He paused to leave a small purse by Mary's plate where she would find it before her

first day.

Grandpa Evans was driving up from the valley to take them to school. Her parents had only one car and her dad used it to get to and from work. Mary's mother was going to the school as well. It was little Mary's first day and she wanted to make sure her daughter got off to a good start.

A happy smile crossed Mary's face when she found the rubber purse. When she pressed it with her fingers it opened and she saw several coins

inside. She ate hurriedly since Grandpa would arrive soon and she wanted to be ready.

Mary petted her cat Moses on the porch while her Mother was busy getting her 3-year-old brother ready. He would be going along too. Mary accidentally brushed against her father's mining clothes that were left on a chair on the porch. She saw the black coal dust on her sleeve and brushed it away. Then she resumed her watch for Grandpa, all the time holding her rubber purse. Mary

knew he would honk but she would feel more secure if she saw him coming.

A bright light caused her to look toward the far mountaintop on the other side of the valley.

"Oh, how beautiful," she thought. "There's the house with golden windows."

Mary usually slept later but on a few occasions, she arose early enough to see the house with golden windows. She couldn't find it at other hours of the day. The sun had to be shining at a certain angle for her to see it.

Mary did well on her first day of school and on the second day her mother walked her to the bus stop and Mary would ride the big yellow bus. Later in the afternoon when her mother thought it was time for the bus she walked the short distance to the bus stop at the main road and waited for Mary. It wouldn't be long after that when Mary's father would return home from work.

"Mama, I wish that we could live in a house with golden windows," Mary told her mother one day.

"Now Mary, your Daddy is doing the best he can," she answered. "He's saving money for you to go to college. We're gonna make sure you and Joseph have a brighter future. Maybe you'll be able to have a house with golden windows."

Late one day she was sitting in the porch swing

with her father when she looked for the house with the golden windows on the far mountain-top.

"Papa, almost every morning when it's clear I can see a house with golden windows way over there," she pointed. "I wanted to show it to you but I can only see it in the morning."

"That must be Bill Weather's home," her Dad answered. "He works at the mine with me."

She immediately thought about a classmate, Alice Weathers, in her room at school. She and Alice had become friends and she was invited to attend a birthday party at Alice's home in the late afternoon the following day.

"Oh boy, I get to go to the house with golden windows," she exclaimed.

The following afternoon Mary's father drove her to the far mountain and into the Weathers driveway.

"Mary, it's you, come on and let's play," Alice Weathers said happily before they scampered into the house.

After a while, Mary confided in Alice that she must feel very special to live in such a beautiful house.

"It's the most beautiful house with golden windows," she told Alice. "I see it every morning when the sun shines. I always wish that my Momma and Papa could live in a house with golden windows."

"Mary, it is you that has the house with golden windows," Alice answered. "Each evening before sunset I look across the valley to the far mountaintop and there I see the most beautiful house ... a house with golden windows. And it's your house, Mary."

Mary couldn't believe what she was hearing so Alice took her hand and led her to the front porch and pointed across the valley to the far mountaintop.

There Mary saw the most beautiful house with golden windows and it was hers just as Alice had said. With the setting of the sun, the windows in Mary's house reflected the beautiful golden color from the sun just as Alice's house reflected the sun each sunny morning.

Then Mary knew that she already had her greatest wish. She lived in a house with golden windows.

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Note from Mr. Gibson: This story is based on some words Rev. Don Thomas said in 1988 at a meeting of the Wilderness Road Kiwanis Club. Although the story isn't true it certainly could be.

Jadon Gibson is a widely read Appalachian writer. His stories are both historic and nostalgic in nature. Thanks to Lincoln Memorial University, Alice Lloyd College and the Museum of Appalachia for their assistance.

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Legislative Craftsman

Robert F. Wagner of New York

Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill
rayhill865@gmail.com

Robert Ferdinand Wagner was born in Germany and rose to become a towering figure in the United States Senate. Eight-year-old Bob Wagner and his parents left their village near Wiesbaden for the United States, where he became one of the most enduring and popular figures in New York State. Wagner had few peers in crafting legislation and the United States Senate website quotes one journalist as writing, "Whether you like his laws or deplore them, he has placed on the books legislation more important and far-reaching than any American in history since the days of the founding fathers." Certainly, Senator Robert F. Wagner sponsored some of the most notable legislation of the twentieth century. One biographer credited Wagner as the father of urban liberalism.

A short, compact man usually dressed in a double-breasted suit, there was nothing spectacular about Bob Wagner, save perhaps for his ability to turn legislation into law. Wagner's legislative accomplishments included the Social Security Act, the first real public housing law, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Wagner Act. A practical politician, Wagner was once deemed to be "a shrewd weatherman of public opinion."

Isaiah Berlin regularly sent back confidential reports to the British Foreign Office on various American senators and congressmen and his written portrait of Bob Wagner bears repeating. Berlin described Senator Wagner as "a veteran Tammany statesman, author of the United States labour code and devotee of the New Deal who is respected by the White House for his political acumen within his own State no less than for his political connexions. Greatest champion of the liberal cause in the United States Senate since Norris [Nebraska's George W. Norris]. A typical anti-Nazi Democrat who has supported all the Administration measures, being usually well in advance of them."

Bob Wagner's life was the epitome of an American success story. Wagner's father was a janitor for a tenement house on New York City's East Side. Robert F. Wagner had literally risen from the slums, something he never forgot. "That is the most God-awful bunk," Wagner once said, his voice bitter. "I came through it, yes. That was luck, luck, luck. Think of the others."

Although less notable than Tennessee's Senator Kenneth D. McKellar, Bob Wagner had a positive knack for inserting folks into government posts.

appointments and positions. If McKellar was the Senate's premier spoilsman, Wagner, a favorite of the press unlike the Tennessean, was not far behind. McKellar's association with his friend and political partner Ed Crump was commented upon frequently, but Robert F. Wagner was also affiliated with a political machine. Wagner was a proud member of New York's Tammany Hall.

Bob Wagner enjoyed a long, eventful political career, first winning election to the New York State Assembly in 1904 and was continuously reelected until 1908 when he was elected to the New York State Senate. It was in the New York General Assembly where Bob Wagner served with Alfred E. Smith, who served as governor from 1919 to 1921 and again from 1923 to 1929. Wagner was a justice of the New York State Supreme Court from 1919 until his resignation in 1926.

The cause of Wagner's resignation from New York's high court was his having been nominated for and elected to the United States Senate. Wagner faced Republican incumbent James W. Wadsworth, an exceptionally able member of the U.S. Senate, but one who had seriously angered some elements of his political party, which enabled the Democrat to win the general election. Bob Wagner joined Dr. Royal S. Copeland in the United States Senate and they served together until Copeland died in 1939. From the time of his election in 1926, Bob Wagner became unbeatable, winning reelection in 1932, 1938 and 1944.

Wagner, as a loyal Democrat and member of Tammany, was a supporter of New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt for the presidency in 1932. Bob Wagner had known Franklin Roosevelt when the two of them served in the state legislature together.

Senator Wagner was acutely aware of the human suffering caused by the Great Depression and the New Deal afforded him the means to do something about it. Republican majorities in Congress were swept away by the Roosevelt tide and Wagner became one of the most productive members of Congress, at least in terms of legislative accomplishments. Bob Wagner was not a mere legislative wonk with his nose buried in books; Wagner knew something about politics and was a social creature, as are most successful politicians. Senator Wagner lived in the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., and enjoyed having a



FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION.

Autographed photo of Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York.

drink with his fellow senator and friend James E. Murray of Montana, who also had an apartment at the Shoreham. At the worst of the depths of the Depression, it was Bob Wagner who sponsored the first relief bill providing direct aid to suffering Americans under then-President Herbert Hoover. Since the advent of the Depression, Senator Wagner had insisted it was the federal government's responsibility to do something about unemployment.

Robert Wagner is perhaps best remembered for his sponsorship of the National Labor Relations Act, better known as the Wagner Act. It legalized collective bargaining through those representatives chosen by workers and compelled employers to negotiate with their employees as a group. The Wagner Act also created national and regional boards to hold elections for the designated bargaining agents while ruling on any charges of unfair labor practices. At the time, the Wagner Act caused disagreements between the country's two most powerful unions, the AFL and the CIO. The AFL complained the boards were biased on behalf of the CIO and claimed the Wagner Act "encouraged industrial over craft unionism." Much of the Wagner Act was later superseded by the Taft-Hartley Act.

Bob Wagner's legislative craftsmanship included a host of things taken for granted by Americans today; unemployment insurance, the regulation of working hours of women and children employed by businesses and industries, widows' pensions, housing, workmen's compensation, minimum wage laws and safety codes. Senator Wagner also pushed legislation to appropriate then-unprecedented sums for relief and public works.

Senator Wagner never forgot his humble beginnings and empathized

with the less fortunate. "My boyhood was a pretty rough passage," the senator once said. Wagner recalled how his brother August, a chef in a club, helped to provide money for his college education. Wagner had augmented his meager income by tutoring other students and excelled in debate while in college. Eventually, Wagner became legal partners with Jeremiah T. Maloney in a tiny office, which was a single room and one desk they shared. Maloney later became a justice of the New York State Supreme Court. Bob Wagner's rise in the Tammany organization began with a telephone call to Harry C. Hart, the district leader in Wagner's area. Young Wagner volunteered his services as a speaker on behalf of Tammany candidates in the election. Hart gave Wagner a chance and Wagner proved to be an able enough speaker that he became a regular on Tammany platforms. The boss of the Tammany organization, Charles Murphy, later picked Bob Wagner over veteran floor leader Thomas F. Grady, to become the majority leader when the Democrats came to control the state Senate.

Bob Wagner became quite well known in New York due to his leadership in chairing an investigation into the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, an appalling tragic event that claimed the lives of 147 women. The women workers had died because the doorways to the fire escapes were locked. Recalling the investigation and its aftermath, Wagner said, "The laws we put through then did what Government should do - - - look after those who are unable to look after themselves."

Acknowledged as one of the ablest men New York Democrats had nominated in decades, Bob Wagner was still viewed as the underdog in his 1926 challenge to U.S. Senator James W. Wadsworth. Wadsworth had angered the "dry"

wing of his own party by his unequivocal opposition to prohibition, which ignited the candidacy of an Independent Republican who campaigned as a prohibitionist. That drew away enough votes from Senator Wadsworth to allow Bob Wagner to win.

When New York rewrote its Constitution in 1938, Senator Robert F. Wagner was elected as one of the delegates. Wagner led the faction of Democratic delegates friendly to the New Deal, while another was led by Wagner's friend Al Smith, who had been elected honorary chair of the convention.

Much of Senator Wagner's time in the years following the Second World War was occupied by matters of social legislation. With his good friend Jim Murray of Montana and Congressman John Dingell (father of the long-serving representative of the same name who died in 2019), Wagner sponsored the first serious legislation to provide health insurance under the auspices of the federal government. The New Yorker was the prime sponsor of the Wagner-Taft-Ellender Bill to provide low-cost public housing.

The 69-year-old senior senator from New York oftentimes felt unwell during much of 1946 and colleagues saw him less frequently in his seat on the Senate floor. That year Wagner suffered from a severe case of influenza and was in a wheelchair in Manhattan's Lenox Hill Hospital where he was baptized in the Catholic faith by Monsignor Robert F. Keegan. The senator had been born into the Lutheran denomination, but Bob Wagner had been raised as a Methodist after coming to the United States. Wagner's late wife had been a Catholic and their son, Robert Jr., had been raised as a Catholic. Evidently, the senator had talked over his potential conversion with his old friend Al Smith before the

latter had died.

Senator Wagner was oftentimes plagued by colds and pneumonia. For almost two years, from 1947 through 1949, Senate clerks noted the absence of the senior United States senator from New York. Bob Wagner had been suffering from a heart ailment yet continued holding his seat. There were disquieting rumors the once brilliant senator was no longer as mentally acute as he had once been. What is certain is advancing years had not been at all kind to Robert F. Wagner. Sixty-four years after he had reached the shores of his new homeland from his native Germany, Wagner decided to retire. The senator's political career had spanned 44 years. Wagner's farewell to public life came in the form of a written rather than spoken statement. "My turn has come to step down... I have had my fair share of shining hours when the country approved my labors and when I saw the reforms for which I struggled so firmly established that many took them for granted..." Senator Robert F. Wagner resigned his office on June 28, 1949, and moved back to New York where he lived with his son. Once the colleague of the mighty, Wagner's boon companion in retirement was his young grandson.

On his last day, the former senator enjoyed a good lunch but later complained of shortness of breath. Wagner received the Last Rites of the Catholic Church before he died at 5:45 p.m. on May 4, 1953.

When death claimed 76-year-old Robert F. Wagner in retirement, the accolades poured in, celebrating the former senator's long public career and his commitment to the less fortunate. George Meany, the president of the AFL, offered a simple and fitting tribute. "Every working man and woman in the nation mourns the passing of Robert F. Wagner."

Wagner's son, Robert Jr., became mayor of New York City and sought to reclaim the seat in the U.S. Senate that his father had held. The younger Wagner was the Democratic nominee for the Senate in 1956 against Republican Jacob Javits and lost.

Only in America could a little immigrant boy work hard, get an education and rise to the top of his profession and make such an impact on the society of his adopted country. The changes wrought by the legislative craftsmanship of Robert F. Wagner last to this day.

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Bullies make life harder

As has been stated in other pieces of mine, I was an ugly child. No, that doesn't mean things are different now. A young boy with a burr haircut, buck teeth, a round belly, and pop-



By Joe Rector
joerector@comcast.net

jingle, and they stabbed me. He sang, "There's a brand-new kid in town. His name is 'round and round.' Oh, oh, oh, Joe's round and round."

I also suffered with a terrible overbite. Those exposed teeth led to stares by almost everyone and to names given by folks I knew. Some called me "bottle opener" and asked me to open my mouth and pop the top of a bottle of Coke. Even worse, some called me "Bucky Beaver." They'd make a quick, smacking noise and then try to stick out their teeth.

In fourth grade, I was tormented by a bully whom I was sure wanted to kill me. The person had a surly temper that reared its ugly head without warning. When the anger oozed, the bully walked to me, smirked, and kicked me in the legs. Most every day, I returned home with complaints

about how much my legs hurt. My mother knew the reason for my pain, and after too much whining, she threatened me. "If you come home and complain about your legs without having defended yourself, I'll spank you." It was a golden opportunity to give back without fear of being punished.

The next day, I walked confidently to class. My nemesis spied me and walked toward me, all the while smiling. After a couple of smart words, another foot connected with my leg. However, this time, a fist clashed with the jaw of the person, who then left crying. From that day on, Arlene Moore never messed with me again.

During my senior year in college, I stopped at a market to pick up a few items. A car pulled in as I was leaving, and the driver threw open his door and put a small dent in my front door. I jumped out and asked him what his problem was. He came

up to me and pushed me hard and asked me what I wanted to do about it. That morning the minister had talked about turning the other cheek and how that's what we must do to be Christlike. As a result, I just stood there. To this day, it bothers me. I know what the good Lord did, but I'm human and will never again be treated like that. Oh, I might suffer severe injuries from a fight, but I won't turn the other cheek.

I've never suffered the kind of bullying that some children have. Those incidents in my life occurred when someone was trying to be funny. The newsflash is that none of them were. Demeaning another person to feel better about yourself speaks volumes about who you are. Leave others alone; don't do or say things that will make them feel inferior. Just treat the next person the way you'd want to be treated. That's always been pretty good advice.

ple. He is, however, ripe for the picking by bullies. Over the years, I've known plenty of bullies and they are all mad about something in their lives. Others are the targets on which these unhappy people pour their misery.

The Cheek boys sometimes acted like bullies. Mike especially enjoyed picking on me. His talent for giving names was above average. Because I was fat, not chubby or large or hefty, Mike decided to call me "Round Man." The name derived from the round bread that Merita Bread had begun producing. Mike changed the words to an ad

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PHOTOS BY STEVE WILLIAMS

West football players and coaches are joined by the cheerleaders for a picture with the gold football after the Rebels' 24-19 win over Page Friday night at Finley Stadium in Chattanooga. West went 29-1 over back-to-back Class 5A championship seasons.

West is golden again!

Defense stops Page's last play for 24-19 win

By Steve Williams

It was a team that had leaned on its defense much of the season.

That unit had one more play to roll up their sleeves and go to work; a play that would determine a gold or silver football in the trophy case for years to come.

On third-and-goal at the West 5-yard line, and precious seconds ticking down, Page High chose not to clock it. William Wiebush, the Wildcat formation quarterback, tossed a pass to the left side of the end zone that was intended for Mr. Football finalist Eric



West quarterback Hunter Dance, with good protection up front, looks for a receiver down field.

Hazzard, a 6-3, 240-pound defensive lineman who was in on the play as a tight end.

Sandwiched by safety An'terius McAlister and cornerback Syxx Hoard, Hazzard couldn't make the

catch.

A celebration of the Rebels' 24-19 victory and second straight Class 5A state championship in the BlueCross Bowl at Finley Stadium in Chattanooga

began.

Coach Lamar Brown was asked to compare this season's title with last year's.

"Well, it's two totally different teams," he said. "They both were unbelievable. I wouldn't trade either one of them in."

Are you going to go for No. 3?

"We're going to try," he replied.

Following West's 15-0 season last fall, this year's team overcame some mid-season injuries to post a 14-1 record.

Page finished 13-2. It was the Franklin team's third consecutive loss in the finals.

"They all hurt," said Page Coach Charles Rathbone. "The one closest to the day

is the one that hurts the most. This is the newest, freshest wound.

"I felt like we had our chances. We got down there inside the 5 two times in the last eight minutes and didn't finish drives. I just hate it for our kids. A great group of kids."

Hoard, who intercepted three passes, was selected the game's MVP. Connor Cummings, with touchdown catches of 37 and 27 yards, was the Rebels' most productive offensive player.

West linebacker Ryan Scott racked up 14 total tackles and two TFL. Cornerback Antwain Burdine had six total tackles, linebacker Anderson Smith 5.5 and lineman Wyatt Deroche five total



tackles, two sacks and two TFL.

West punter Jones Bollig averaged 40.4 yards on five punts, including a 46-yarder and one inside the 20.

Momentum-wise, the contest felt like a rollercoaster.

Isaac Power caught a 38-yard touchdown pass from Jonathan Palmer with 4:25 on the first quarter. **Continue on page 3**

MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Lady Devils run past Farragut in in-school showdown

By Ken Lay

In its annual traditional in-school showdown against Farragut, the Halls Middle School girls basketball team notched a key Knox County Middle School Basketball Conference win before a boisterous and packed house at Halls Middle School.

The Lady Devils used a huge second-quarter surge to open a big halftime lead en route to notching a 39-25 victory over the Lady Admirals.

The two teams were locked in a battle in the opening frame as

Halls held a narrow 6-5 advantage at the end of the first quarter. Early in the second stanza, Farragut took an 8-6 lead when Elin Rotan knocked down a 3-pointer.

But the Lady Devils took control of the contest by forcing the Lady Admirals into multiple turnovers and dominating the glass.

After Rotan's long-range jumper, Farragut managed just two more points in the quarter and was held without a field goal, enabling the Lady Devils to open a 25-10 halftime advantage.

Farragut's Arabelle Wray and MaKenna Hartley made second-quarter free throws for the Lady Admirals, who never recovered after falling behind.

Halls coach Christi Bowling knew just how big her team's victory was Thursday, especially at home in front of a large crowd of Halls students.

She told the Lady Devils that they would have to come out and get off to a fast start and the team listened and did as their coach said.

"We told them that we would

have to come out and jump on them early, and they did," Bowling said. "They did. We forced them into turnovers and we rebounded well."

"This is a big win for us. They're a good team. I'm just so proud of the way my girls played."

The Lady Devils boasted a balanced scoring attack as Lola Widener led the way with 13 points. Bella Wires added 12 points and Audree Riehn finished with eight for Halls, which led 34-17 at the end of the third quarter.

Farragut coach Devan McIntyre was disappointed with her squad's effort in hostile territory.

"They were obviously the better team today," McIntyre said. "They controlled the boards and they turned us over."

"I wish we could've had a better game and the biggest thing that we take from this is that defensive intensity is not an option."

Rotan led the Lady Admirals with six points.

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All-Metro Knoxville CC teams and honorees

The Metro Knoxville Cross Country Coaches Association will honor the following individuals and teams at its banquet Tuesday night (Dec. 5). The banquet will be held at Rothchilds and start at 6.

All-MKXC Team

Boys

Gabe Allen (Hardin Valley)
Evan Beeler (Farragut)
Nicholas Burke (West)
Joshua Cross (Christian Academy)
Cade Crum (Bearden)
Harrison Cunningham (Farragut)
Bradán Ebbert (Farragut)
Colin Eckerman (Webb)
Noah Jinks (Heritage)
Vance Lester (Anderson Co)
Carson Long (Hardin Valley)
Radek Molchan (Catholic)
Rowen Moser-Bryan (Karns)
Keegan Smith (Catholic)
Matteo Tonnos (Farragut)

Girls

Carolina Areheart (Webb)
Maddie Archdale (Hardin Valley)
Emma Cissna (Hardin Valley)
Lauren Davis (Webb)
Gracie Franklin (Maryville)
Calysta Garmer (Webb)
Jazzlyn Garmer (Webb)
Rylee Gifford (Karns)
Anna Graves (Webb)
Kacey Holliday (Alcoa)
Dylan Job (Oak Ridge)
Ava Moody (Anderson Co)
Kate Robinson (West)
Allie Vesser (Hardin Valley)
Kristina Weaver (Webb)

Coach of the Year

Chelsea Osborne (Farragut)

Hall of Fame

Rebecca Story (CAK) Sean Stevens (West)
Andy Baksa (Farragut) 1978 Central Boys Team
Coach Warren Heiser (Webb)

Eckerman qualifies for Foot Locker CC Nationals

By Steve Williams

Colin Eckerman's breakout season in cross country has taken another big step.

The Webb School senior placed third in the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships' South Regional at McAlpine Park in Charlotte, NC, Saturday (Nov. 25) to qualify for the FLCC National Finals, on Dec. 9 in San Diego.

Eckerman's time over the 5,000-meter course was 14:55.25.

Earlier this season, Eckerman set an all-time TSSAA state meet record when he won the Division II-AA title.

Elizabeth Leachman of San Antonio and Patrick Koon of Tallahassee took first place in the girls' and boys' South Regional.

Leachman was timed in 16:33.27. Abby Faith Cheeseman, a junior from



Bell Buckle, TN, finished second in 16:50.09.

Koon's winning time was 14:48.61.

The top 10 boys and the top 10 girls in the championship races qualify to compete against runners from the Midwest, Northeast, and West Regional meets in the Foot Locker Nationals.

Two other Tennessee girls - Claire Stegall (fourth) of Nolensville High and Jaynie Halterman (10th) of Independence High - also placed in the Top 10.

A FIRST: According to Don Madgett of the Metro Knoxville Cross Country Coaches Association,

Webb's Eckerman is the first runner from Tennessee to qualify for both the Foot Locker and Nike national meets. Eckerman was scheduled to race in the Nike event in Portland, OR this past weekend. He will compete in the Foot Locker event in San Diego this coming weekend.

Cherry said football was fun and made him tougher



PHOTO BY DARNELL BRITTON / LARAY044@GMAIL.COM

Shane Cherry looks to throw a pass in a game this fall. The Roadrunner junior enjoyed his football season, but it still takes a backseat to basketball.

By Steve Williams

On one of the first days of preseason football practice at Austin-East High School last August, basketball standout Shane Cherry was on the sideline observing. Not long after that, he

joined the team. He started out as a wide receiver but moved to quarterback and had a remarkable season as a junior.

Cherry passed for 1,443 yards and nine touchdowns and ran for 777 yards and 13 TDs as the Roadrunners went 3-7 in the regular season. He was named to The Knoxville Focus / Coaches' All-Knox County first team as an Athlete.

In A-E's 48-43 win at Unicoi County (7-3) in the Class 3A first round playoff game, Shane completed 13 of 23 passes for 386 yards and six touchdowns. He also ran for 86 yards and a TD on nine carries.

"It (football) was fun," said Cherry after a basketball game against Central at A-E last week. "It was fun because I had taken a

couple of years off from football. I didn't know how I was going to be. I just came back and I still was good, so I liked it."

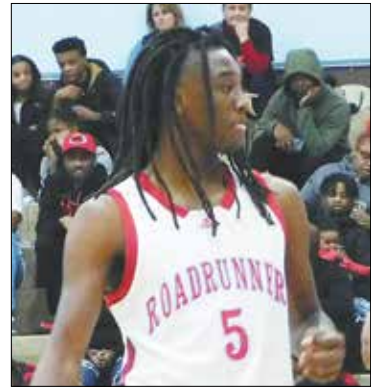


PHOTO BY STEVE WILLIAMS

Austin-East's Shane Cherry (5) was back in the basketball groove at the Clifford H. Ross Gymnasium last week. The 72-59 win over Central improved the Roadrunners record to 4-2.

As for playing football next season, Cherry said: "I don't know yet. I'm thinking about it."

He said playing football doesn't interfere with his basketball. "It just makes me stronger really and tougher. So I liked it. It got me better."

Shane, who is listed as a 5-10, 153-pound point guard, says basketball "definitely" remains No. 1 because he has scholarship offers in that sport from Tennessee, Auburn, Penn State, Radford and Tennessee State among others.

A-E basketball coach Denard Bertram has been supportive of Shane playing football from the beginning and remains so.

"The physicality of the game I felt helped him," he said following the Roadrunners' 72-59 win over Central.

Jeff Black, Austin-East Athletics Director and a former high school football coach, also weighed in on Cherry's football season.

"He's extremely raw but an amazing athlete," said Black. "Not a top level quarterback but makes plays no matter where he is on the field."

"If he worked at football like he does basketball, he would have some high level opportunities at that as well."

Black also pointed out Cherry would leave after football practice to go work on basketball.

"He now has played several basketball games and is getting back in basketball shape," added Black. "He makes everyone else better just like he does in football. His little brother Condis (a freshman) is also amazing at both sports."

Local teams excel in Dance and Cheer

By Steve Williams

Several local teams excelled in the 2023 TSSAA / TMSAA Cheerleading & Dance Championships in November.

The competition was held at Murphy Center on the campus of MTSU in Murfreesboro.

Gresham was the only local school to place in middle school cheerleading competition as the Lady Gladiators placed second.

Several local schools, however, stood out in



dance competition.

On the high school level, Bearden took top honors in Game Day Large Varsity and also earned a championship in Large Varsity Pom.

Farragut finished first in Small Varsity Jazz and Small Varsity Pom.

Halls was champion in

Small Varsity Hip Hop and placed second in Varsity High Kick.

Seymour was best in Medium Varsity Pom.

In middle school dance, West Valley won Game Day and Farragut took first place in Jazz and Pom.

A-E student-athlete receives Award of Excellence

Shaniya Cherry, an Austin-East High student and cheerleader, has

recently received an Award of Excellence from the National Federation of High Schools and the TSSAA.

The award states Cherry is "recognized for an exemplary display of sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity during the 2023-24 school year" and is signed by Mark Reeves, Executive Director of the TSSAA and Karissa Niehoff, Chief Executive Officer of the National Federation of High School Associations.

An additional letter from Courtney Brunetz, TSSAA Marketing Director, states: "You have displayed respect, integrity and commendable sportsmanship, influencing not just your teammates but everyone around you and contributing greatly to a positive environment within your school. Your actions will reach far beyond the confines of the playing fields and courts."

Craney resigns, but plans to coach again

Nick Craney, who resigned as head football coach at Central last week, was 22 years old in the summer of 2014 when he joined Bryson Rosser's coaching staff.

The young Craney was an assistant for two seasons before being promoted to defensive coordinator. He held the latter position for four seasons, including



PHOTO BY STEVE WILLIAMS

Austin-East senior cheerleader Shaniya Cherry (left) enjoys a moment in between cheers in last week's basketball game against Central. Shaniya recently received an Award of Excellence from the NFHS and TSSAA and a full-ride scholarship to UT.

KC Virtual School students approved by TSSAA

Knox County Virtual School student-athletes have been approved by the TSSAA.

"These boys and girls will be able to participate on their zoned high school teams, similar to what home school student-athletes can do," said Bryan Brown, Knox County Schools Athletics Specialist.

Johnston is 4A state baseball honoree

Farragut High Class of 2023 grad Jett Johnston, who is now a freshman at Texas A&M, has been named the Tennessee Class 4A State Player of the Year by the Tennessee Baseball Coaches Association.

Jett played on back-to-back state championship teams in 2022 and 2023. In 2023 post-season play, Jett hit .489 for the Admirals with eight home runs, 24 RBI, and a 0.00 ERA on the mound.

Russell signs with Johnson University

Seymour High's Caiden Russell has signed with Johnson University to play basketball.

'After an extensive nationwide search..'

Sometimes, the best coaching search is no search.



By Tom Mattingly

C a s e
in point. Go back to Dec. 3, 1976, a day Big Orange Country had anxiously awaited.

A Tennessee legend was coming home as head football coach, 20 years and two days after he had played his last regular season game in an orange and white uniform.

Chancellor Dr. Jack Reese provided a classic introduction.

"After an extensive nationwide search, I am pleased to welcome Coach Majors here." Those 13 words provided perspective for the day's events.

"Coach Majors" was John Terrill Majors, a Vol legend and 1956 All-American. He was also the 1956 Heisman Trophy runner-up, two-time SEC "Player of the Year," and the first of three Majors brothers to play at Tennessee.

This "coaching search" really wasn't one, but for Vol fans, it didn't matter. Majors was overwhelmingly the "people's choice."

Majors had actually lived through this drill before. In 1954, Gen. Bob Neyland had dismissed

his successor, Harvey Robinson, calling it the "hardest thing I've ever had to do."

Majors was an upcoming junior at Tennessee, when another Vol legend came home to jubilant fans and the thought Tennessee was "back" among the elite of college football. There was no one else Vol fans wanted at that time, either.

Bowden Wyatt was the "people's choice" of that era. He was captain of the 11-0 1938 team and one of the most popular players ever. He came on board Jan. 8, 1955, saying, "I'm going back to the job I've always wanted."

Wyatt had won titles in the Big Sky conference at Wyoming and the Southwest Conference at Arkansas. Coming to Knoxville was the culmination, most folks thought, of a coaching career that had begun at Mississippi State in 1939. During his tenure at Wyoming, Vanderbilt and Duke had tried to entice Wyatt to their campus, but to no avail.

After leaving Tennessee in 1963, Wyatt was an assistant for a couple of years at Oklahoma State, a move facilitated by Bear Bryant.

In 1925, head coach I.M. B. Banks left to go to Knoxville's Central

High School. University historians James Riley Montgomery, Stanley John Folmsbee, and Lee Seifert Greene reported that the Athletic Council sought to find the "best coach in the country." Dean Nathan Washington Dougherty had a unique search process. He wanted West Point grad Robert R. Neyland and employed a little subterfuge to make that happen. Here's what the three historians wrote.

"Dougherty, years later, smilingly noted that the newspapers helped immensely by recommending a dozen candidates. That was fine with Dougherty, for while he had a single candidate in mind, the papers made it appear there were several.... Neyland got the job, with results significant for the university."

The coaching search in 1963, after Jim McDonald was let go, was intriguing. Numerous names were mentioned, notably Murray Warmath (Minnesota), Paul Davis (Mississippi State), Jim Owens (Washington), and Clay Stapleton (Iowa State). Warmath and Stapleton were former Vols, Davis was from Knoxville, and Owens had no known Tennessee connections. Davis had also led his 1963 Mississippi State team to a 7-0 victory over Tennessee

in early October on Shields-Watkins Field.

In a tense and tiring Saturday night meeting after the season finale with Vanderbilt, Bob Woodruff was given permanent status as athletic director. He wanted Arkansas assistant Doug Dickey, but McDonald's future was uncertain. A compromise ensued, allowing Woodruff to hire Dickey, with McDonald being named an assistant athletic director.

In late 1969 and early 1970, there was another "search" after Dickey took the Florida job.

Woodruff let it be known that assistants Doug Knotts, Jimmy Dunn, and Bill Battle were in the running, with Battle considered by many observers as the "sleeper."

Trustee Col. Tom Elam and president Dr. Andy Holt each wanted Majors, then in his second year at Iowa State. "Your vote is my vote," Holt told Elam. Elam was, however, a firm believer in the chain of command. He swallowed hard and reluctantly convinced Holt of the organizational pitfalls of overriding his athletic director's decision on such an important issue.

Thus, Battle got the job.

As Battle's star faded in the mid-1970s, public outcry was for Majors, who had the Pittsburgh program



Head coach Bowden Wyatt accepts an invitation for Tennessee to play in the 1957 Gator Bowl against Texas A&M

in full gear.

When his alma mater beckoned, Majors accepted, but not without significant thought.

"It was the most difficult decision I've had to make in my life," said Majors. "I agonized over it. I had been away from Tennessee 17 years." Once in place, he rebuilt the program from the ground up, leading Tennessee to three SEC titles and 12 bowl appearances in his tenure from 1977 to 1992.

Here's the bottom line. Sometimes, these "searches" are what they are advertised to be, sometimes not. Jack Reese, an able and affable administrator, defined the moment and set a memorable standard for all who would follow. Good thing, too. The peasants would have literally stormed the castle had any name other than John Majors been considered and uttered that early December day in 1976.

West is golden again!

Cont. from page 1
clock to give Page an early lead. It was also the first TD the West defense had allowed in the playoffs.

The Rebels, however, overcame the Patriots' impressive start and reeled off 24 straight points and looked to be in command. Marshaun Bowers scored on a 1-yard plunge, Patrick Schmid kicked a 31-yard field goal and Cummings caught his first TD pass from Hunter Dance with no time left on the clock in the first half.

Cummings caught his second touchdown pass in the same area of the end zone where he pulled in his first and Schmid's third PAT gave West a comfortable 24-7 lead with 8:16 to go in the third quarter. Page, however, did not

quit. Wiebush scored on a 13-yard run to cut the Rebels' lead to 24-13, but Zane Cannon missed the extra point.

Presley Cozart snagged a 16-yard TD pass from Palmer to pull Page within five points with 9:22 remaining in the game. The Patriots' two-point pass failed.

"They were up 7-0 and had all the momentum and went for (a first down) from about their own 20 on fourth-and-one and didn't get it, and that kind of flipped the script for a little bit," recalled Coach Brown. "We scored 24 unanswered, and then they scored 12 unanswered. Two goal-line stands later, we're state champions."

Where Tennessee Football Stands Today

By Mark Nagi

Well, the regular season is now complete for the Tennessee Volunteers. The Vols finished at 8-4 and now wait for word on their bowl game destination (which was not yet known when The Focus went to press).

There are more than a few UT fans who aren't especially happy these days. Tennessee limped to the finish with blowout losses to Missouri and Georgia in November. They failed to start a winning streak against Alabama as that rivalry is once again in the Tide's favor after a year of celebration in Knoxville. And there was also a loss at Florida that defies explanation except for the fact that the Vols typically play their worst football of the year against the Gators and have for most of the last two decades.

But I wonder if those fans

remember what Tennessee football had been like for the last 15+ years. During that stretch, when the Vols were the perfect representation of SEC mediocrity, you could have only wished to be at the point when an 8-4 season was a downer. That's the way it used to be during some of the Johnny Majors era and almost all of the Phillip Fulmer era.

The 2022 season truly spoiled Tennessee fans, a season in which they won 11 games, beat Florida, LSU and Alabama, plus an Orange Bowl victory over Clemson. They had the best offense in all of college football and finished with their best season in 21 years.

As that time frame suggests, seasons like 2022 don't come around very often. They should be celebrated. Yes, there's nothing wrong with wanting success and having high

expectations for this program, but you shouldn't discount the achievements of the 2023 campaign.

So where does Tennessee football go from here? Well, the road to the SEC championship game only gets tougher from here. Next season the SEC welcomes Texas and Oklahoma, two programs that were ranked in the top 12 in the college football playoff rankings last week. The Vols will play at Oklahoma next September. With the expansion some of the annual games have gone by the wayside but UT still will play Alabama and Georgia, the two most dominant teams in the conference. The Vols also play Florida, who again, Tennessee rarely plays well against when they line up against the Gators.

There are more major changes on the way not only for the Vols but for the

entire sport. The College Football Playoff is expanding from four to 12 teams, opening the door for so many more teams. Should the Vols finish 10-2 in the regular season as they did in 2022, they'd be in position to earn a playoff berth.

There's no reason that the Vols shouldn't be in the mix more seasons than not... Josh Heupel is recruiting at a high level. Different NIL groups are not shy in wooing talent to Knoxville. The facilities get better and better. Neyland Stadium is on a 13-game sellout streak.

Yes, these are the good old days.

The state of Tennessee football is strong.

Does that mean that the Vols are destined for historic success over the next few years? Maybe. Maybe not. But at least they are in the conversation again.

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- HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL -

Rebels start fast, rout Central on the road

By Ken Lay

West High School's boys basketball team has yet to play at home this season but if Tuesday night's game is any indication, the Rebels are quite happy being on the road.

The Rebels started fast and never really took their foot off the throttle in a 79-45 victory over Central in Fountain City.

West (4-2) opened a 21-7 lead in the first quarter and never looked back. The Rebels have five more road games before finally getting to play on Sutherland Avenue in front of their home fans.

The Rebels were

without two players who were preparing to play for a second consecutive Class 5A State Championship on the gridiron, but that didn't matter early last week.

"We play better on the road and our first 11 games are on the road and that was done by design," West coach Aubin Goporro said. "We got off to a good start and then we fell back a little bit because I was trying to play everybody. I'm missing two football players."

The Rebels, who led 37-22 at halftime, came out in the third quarter and all but put the game away, outscoring the Bobcats 26-11 in the frame. The third

quarter against Central on Tuesday represented the reversal of a trend for the Rebels.

"We played really well in the third quarter and the thing about that is that the third quarter has been our worst quarter all season," Goporro said. "And another thing I'm proud of is that in the last four minutes (of the game), I had all my young guys out there, my freshmen, and they all got a chance, they all played well and they all scored."

Devyn Martin scored a game-high 20 points for the Rebels and Dane Britton added 12. Kevin Jack had 10. Joe Dupree had nine points as he knocked down three

3-pointers against the Bobcats.

Central first-year head coach Marcus Huie, was distraught after watching his team fall to 5-3 on the season.

"We've got to stop making excuses. I know I got the job and I got here late, but West has a culture," Huie said. "We're still learning."

"We're learning that we have to play 'we' basketball and not play 'me' basketball. When you play 'me' basketball, this is what happens. You get beat by 30 or 40 points."

JD Harris scored 13 points to lead the Bobcats.

Lady Bobcats cruise past West for fifth consecutive win

By Ken Lay

A fifth consecutive win came easily for the Central High School girls basketball team Tuesday night.

The Lady Bobcats jumped out to an early lead and cruised to an 82-20 victory against West High School.

This one was decided early as Central held the Lady Rebels without a field goal in the first quarter as it opened a 22-2 advantage and kept building on the lead throughout the contest.

The game couldn't have gone much better for the Lady Bobcats as every player who played scored. Central also had three players post double figures in the scoring column.

Scout Horner led the way with 20 points. Ayauna Ramsey added 14 and Avery Brewer had 13.

Cadence Horner chipped in with nine and Addison Brewer finished with eight.

But the team has been bitten by the injury bug early, leaving it in a search for depth. With the win, however, the Lady Bobcats improved to 5-3 after losing its three Hall of Fame games.

"Right now, we're looking to build our bench," Lady Bobcats' coach LeBrandon Marie said. "We're looking at who are going to be our eighth and ninth players. Our sixth and seventh players are both hurt right now."

"But we're in the middle of a five-game winning streak right now. We're 5-3, but we played some good teams early in our Hall of Fame games."

Serenity Geisler had nine points to lead the Lady Rebels, who trailed 43-9 at halftime.

- MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL -

Farragut outlasts Red Devils in low-scoring contest

By Ken Lay

Farragut Middle School boys basketball coach Lynn Allen knew his team was going to face a big challenge as it invaded Halls for the annual in-school game between the two teams on Thursday afternoon.

The Admirals would survive a test from the host Red Devils and leave North Knox County with a hard-fought 37-28 victory.

"In-school games are

a totally different beast," Allen said. "Halls has a good team."

"We won the game and we can be thankful for that. But we just couldn't get our motor running the way that we wanted to."

The game was a defensive struggle as the final score would indicate both teams had trouble clicking their respective offenses into gear. Farragut never trailed but they did nearly let this one get away in the

fourth quarter as the Red Devils pulled to within 30-27 when Bryce McCarty made a basket with 1 minute, 23 seconds remaining in the contest.

"The Halls coach (Jeremy Fine) did a good job with his defense and they got back in the game," Allen said. "They've done a good job getting their defense together."

While Allen praised the Red Devils for their defense in the contest, he said his

team's late struggles were not all about the Halls defense.

"They did a good job and they were able to get back into the game," he said. "But it wasn't really anything that they were doing."

"It was what we were doing, we turned the ball over."

The Admirals' defense was stiff early as the Red Devils scored just two points over the first six minutes of the contest.

Miles Comparato's basket accounted for all of Halls Middle's offense as he had an early basket in the opening quarter.

"We played good defense early," Allen said.

Farragut opened a 9-2 lead in the opening frame and held a 17-12 advantage at halftime before taking a 27-18 lead into the fourth quarter.

The Red Devils got back into the game thanks to some clutch shots by Kegan

Wayland, who scored five of his game-high 15 points in the fourth quarter. Wayland made a 3-pointer at the second-quarter buzzer to pull the Red Devils to within five points.

Colton Liner led the Admirals with 10 points. Brooks Johnston added nine. Braylen Gibbs scored all eight of his points after halftime and Kyle Clark finished with six points for Farragut.

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