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Travis Wright Running for District 8 School Board Seat

By Focus Staff

Travis Wright has announced he is a candidate for the Knox County Board of Education 8th District seat held by Mike McMillan in the Republican primary. Mr. McMillan recently announced he was not seeking reelection.

The 8th District is the largest in terms of land mass in Knox County, encompassing all East and Northeast Knox County.

Asked why he wanted to serve on the Knox County Board of Education, Travis Wright said, "A good

education matters and I want all students to have the best opportunities they can get to become productive and happy members of society.

"I think the great majority of parents in the 8th District feel the same way."

Wright has a 13-year-old son who attends Gibbs Middle School.

Wright says parents have no greater investment of "hearts and minds and financially" than in their children and he believes parents should have a big say in

how their children are educated. Wright says parents face many challenges in today's world that members of the board of education need to always remember.

"I think the school board needs to always keep in mind who pays for everything," Wright says. "Parents are also taxpayers and that's what keeps the schools running."

"I think board members need to remember there are a large number of parents who are working very hard to keep their homes warm, food on the table, and their

children clothed," Wright said. "Those people need to always have their voices heard and if I am elected, I will do my very best to represent their views."

Wright also stresses his belief in parental rights. "Good parents have their hearts and minds completely invested in their children," Wright explains. "Parents need to be involved in the education of their children. Parents have expectations about what their children watch or read. Things

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Travis Wright



PHOTOS BY KEN LAY.

Attendees enjoy food and fellowship at Tuesday's Three Rivers Republican Club Christmas Party. Pictured left - right: Terri Reece, Kenny Boatman, Focus columnist Ray Hill, Focus publisher Steve Hunley, Michael Cates and 8th District School Board candidate Travis Wright.

Campaigns in motion for 2024 elections

By Mike Steely
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2024 will be a heavy political year as voters will pick a U.S. President, House and state House representatives, Senate members, a Knox County Criminal Court Judge, commission members, a law director, a property assessor, school board members and two Town of Farragut board members.

The filing deadline for the March 5 primary election was Thursday at noon and the Knox County ballot will have more than 40 folks on the ballot seeking county seats. Thursday, December 21 is the last day for prospective candidates to withdraw from the races.

Only incumbent Hector I. Sanchez stands alone in his bid to retain his

position as Criminal Court Judge, Division II, District 6.

Early voting for the local primary races is set to begin on February 14. The races for the seven open Knox County Commission seats are drawing a lot of attention as both Republicans and Democrats choose their candidates. Independent candidates will not appear on the primary ballot but will show up in the General Election.

District 1: The race to replace Democrat Dr. Dasha Lundy has four primary candidates with Democrats Evelyn Gill and Damon L. Rawls competing. In the Republican primary are Charles Frazier and Justin Hirst

District 2: Incumbent Democrat Courtney Durrett is alone in

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Three Rivers Republicans celebrate Christmas

By Ken Lay

Christmas was in the air Tuesday night as the Three Rivers Republican Club celebrated the holiday season at its Christmas party Tuesday night at Marbledale Baptist Church in Strawberry Plains.

Club members and guests, which included several county leaders and political candidates, enjoyed a holiday dinner with ham, macaroni and cheese, corn, sweet potatoes and fried okra. Of course, no party would be complete without a dessert table full of cakes, pies and cookies.

The party was a charity fundraiser by the club. Members and guests also brought unwrapped toys, which will be donated to Mission of Hope and the Isaiah 1:17 House.

The club also had a silent auction. The highlight of the evening, however, was a cake auction, hosted by emcee, guest auctioneer, entertainer and East Tennessee native Phil Campbell.

Campbell, the son of East Tennessee entertainment legend Archie Campbell, has recently retired from show business and opened his appearance



Phil Campbell and Three Rivers Republican Club Vice President Mike Brown ran the Cake Auction at Tuesday's Three Rivers Republican Club Christmas Party. Proceeds from the auction and toy drive go to Mission of Hope and the Isaiah 1:17 House.

with a few jokes.

"I'm retired and I'm happy to be back. I'm an East Tennessee native," Campbell said. "I'm from Tennessee, where the men are men and the women win National Championships."

He also exhibited a self-deprecating side of his

personality as he noted: "I'm not a trained auctioneer. I just have a big mouth."

Three Rivers Republican Club President Chuck Frazier said he was pleased with the evening's event.

"We had a great turnout and we have presents that we're donating to both

Mission of Hope and the Isaiah 1:17 House," Frazier said.

Knox County Republican Party Chairman Buddy Burkhardt announced that the party's website www.knoxcountyrepublicanparty.com/ has been officially launched and is fully operational.

Council OKs Young-Williams for animal control

By Mike Steely
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Janet Testerman's final Knoxville City Council meeting saw the passage of transferring all animal care in the city to Young-William Animal Center, which she directs, but only after several amendments to the agreement.

One of the most discussed changes was removing the center as a voting member of the Animal Control Board and giving it a seat there in an advisory capacity instead. The new agreement removes animal response from the police and sheriff's departments except when requested, funds the center's effort for five years and transfers the animal control building and vehicles to YWAC.

Testerman pledged to hire and train response personnel and be ready for duties on April 1.

Councilwoman Lauren Rider led the effort to alter the initial agreement and had told Testerman, in a previous meeting, that she should not be CEO of the center and, at the same time, serve on the Animal Control Board.

"No member will be an employee or affiliate of the Young-William Animal Center," was the new language and Testerman said, "That's reasonable."

Both City Police Chief Paul Noel and Knox County Sheriff Tom Spangler supported the idea of transferring animal calls to Young-Williams, freeing up their departments from that duty.

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I Hope Everyone Has A Merry Christmas

From a distance



By John J. Duncan Jr.
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Next Monday will be Christmas Day, and I hope everyone has one of the best Christmases they have ever had.

Last year, I wrote a column about the night my grandson, Beau, corrected the preacher during the Christmas Eve service at Eastminster Presbyterian Church.

Beau was probably only seven or eight years old at the time, and he had gone forward for the children's sermon. The preacher said, "Boys and girls, there is a song which says Christmas is the most

won-won-wonderful time of the year." Beau then piped up, much to my great surprise, and said "It is not the most wonderful time - it is the hap-hap-happiest time!"

I hope this is a very happy time for you and your family. But I have read and heard that it can be a very sad or even depressing time for many people.

Very early in my adult life, I realized that everybody gets hurt by life. Everybody needs help at times during their lives, and during my career as a lawyer, judge and congressman - and even at times in my retirement - many people have come to me for help.

I never promised or guaranteed anyone anything other than that I would try hard to help them. I have seen things that I thought would be easy that became extremely difficult. I also saw things that I thought would be impossible that

somehow worked out.

We have a human-run system, and I knew that if I contacted someone to ask for help for one of my constituents, if they were in a good mood they might do almost anything I asked. But if they were in a bad mood for some reason, they might not be helpful.

I said several times that my main goal was to try to help as many people as I could for as long as I could. And I can assure you that over 99% of the people I have helped never contributed to any of my political campaigns.

I have spoken to many thousands of students over the years, and I have often told them that life is filled with far more good times than bad - maybe 95% good, 5% bad - but everyone gets hurt in some really bad ways.

I have told the young people to try to work on their faith, especially when

times are good so they will be prepared for those bad times that hit everyone.

For anyone who is having a very difficult time now, I would strongly recommend the entire 34th Psalm. Psalm 34:6 says "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

Psalm 34:18-19 says "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

All of us worry about almost everything important in our lives. But I once heard a minister say that a friend of his had lived a life of terrible tragedy, almost none of which had ever happened.

We are blessed beyond belief to live in this country. I read not long ago that almost half the people in the world have to get by on

\$4.00 or less a day, and that about three-fourths have to get by on less than \$10.00 a day.

Over these last couple of months, I have felt so sorry for the people of Gaza. One report said there may be as many as 20,000 killed when all the bodies are retrieved from under all the rubble of bombed buildings, with possibly two-thirds being women and children.

Two million have been made homeless, and those who are still alive are having to search desperately every day for food, water and a place to sleep. Thousands of children have been denied even rudimentary medical care and medicine. We need to all pray for these people, very few of whom had anything to do with Hamas.

My Iowa grandfather, Dr. Jacob Swisher, wrote poetry as a hobby. I have a framed copy of a poem he

wrote entitled "Blessings Everywhere". That poem starts out this way:

"Seek and you shall find" is a phrase we often hear. Seek the good and you will find it, for it is often very near. Seek the blessings that are near you and blessings far away. Then at evening you'll be grateful for the blessings of the day."

This Christmas, if you feel lonely or the Christmas music makes you feel sad, play the old Nat King Cole version of the song "Smile" and make that your theme song. That song says "When there are clouds in the sky, you'll bet by if you smile through your fear and sorrow. Smile and maybe tomorrow you'll see the sun come shining through for you."

Merry Christmas.

My University of Georgia Commencement Address

Let me be among the first to congratulate all of you on your achievement - that of graduating from this wonderful university.



By Dr. Harold A. Black
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You are joining an extended family of proud Georgia graduates - and that pride will grow as you age. I am proud of this university and of my youngest granddaughter, Haley Savannah Rose, who is a member of this class. The university has come a long way from when I first arrived as a freshman in 1962. The society was still segregated so much so that I had never had a conversation with a white person before arriving at UGA.

My windows in Reed Hall were broken so often that a window crew came by every

morning. Lighter fluid was squirted under my door and set on fire three times. Firecrackers were put into the slats in the door. My bathroom was sabotaged. There was always gum to be dug out of

my keyhole. The first time I went swimming in the university's pool, they kicked everyone out and drained it. I went back the next day. Although I got five band scholarships out of high school, I was not allowed to be in the "Dixie" Redcoat Marching Band. I was the only one of us to go to the football games where I was often the only black in the stadium not carrying a broom or a mop. It was like a Ku Klux Klan rally with all the Confederate

flags. After the national anthem, the band played Dixie and I sat. Debris and curses rained down upon me but I refused to stand. Dean Tate seemingly materialized out of nowhere to gather student ID cards. By the third game, I could sit in peace. My father told me that I would not have any friends. But at our first dorm meeting, the three boys directly in front of me turned around and asked if they could sit with me. They became steadfast friends even though they were constantly harassed. Am I bitter? No. To quote Stevie Wonder: "You can always look at the negative but you should always live in the positive So I try every day to live that way." I hope you do that as well. All of us who came here focused on our objectives and shut out all the noise. My parents

said to not let others discourage you and to ignore those who tried. They said to find your limits and when you do, to find someone who could help you push past them. I embraced that here at Georgia and in my career. I encourage you to do the same.

The university has come a long way, not just racially but also academically. My degree is more valuable because of what this university has accomplished over these 60 years. The true purpose of a university is to help you learn how to learn, to think critically, to investigate, to gather and process information in order to make more rational informed decisions. Conclusions can differ because information more times than not yields contradictory results. Your truth is guided in large part

by what you cherish and what you believe. But just because your conclusions might differ from others it does not mean you can claim "truth" unless you explore the truth value of contrary evidence. Don't be dogmatic. I say, "Prove me wrong and I'll adopt your opinion."

Work hard. To paraphrase Thomas Edison: Success is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration. Life is a challenge. The world is made up of three types: the two percent who make things happen, the eight percent who know what's happening and the 90 percent who haven't a clue as to what's happening. The university and its education cannot put you into the two percent but it can put you into the eight percent provided you are not intellectually

lazy. Unfortunately even with information being so readily available too many of us are intellectually lazy and will be relegated to the 90 percent. If you are intellectually curious and hard working you may get to the two percent. Look around you. Look at your extended family. Alma mater means "foster mother." Alumni means foster children. Understand that I do not care what you look like. I don't care if you are black, brown, white, red, yellow or shades in between. What I do care about is your character, your desire to get better, your desire to make a difference and your humanity. So welcome to the family. Go forth. Make us proud. Again, congratulations, and Go Dawgs.



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Matlock Tire Service celebrates 70 years in business



The Matlock Tire Farragut location at 10730 Kingston Pike hosted an Open House on Wednesday, December 13 thanking customers for continuing to choose them for their tire and auto service needs. All those in attendance enjoyed breakfast, coffee and giveaways. Among those present were (left to right) Tim Williams, Terry Goodwin and company owner and President Jimmy Matlock. All three of these gentlemen have been with the company since the 1970s. Congratulations to all the folks at Matlock Tire for 70 years of providing East Tennesseans with quality auto service.



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Publisher's Positions



By Steve Hunley, Publisher
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Woke College Presidents Are Hypocrites

Anyone who saw the performances of the three college presidents before the congressional committee attempting to address the shocking and still rising anti-semitism on their respective campuses have to be repulsed and puzzled. The utter failure of those college and university presidents, supposedly civilized and well educated women, to condemn the genocide of the Israeli people is proof positive of the moral rot left in the wake of the DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) culture. Each of the college presidents carefully parsed out their language and despite repeated opportunities to denounce the wholesale persecution of Jews on their campuses and support for genocide against the Israelis, never once chose to condemn it.

The fact the antisemites would suddenly invoke the right of free speech is both astonishingly hypocritical and immoral. Harvard in particular can no longer even pretend to be what it once was. Once one of the most prestigious citadels

of higher education, it is now a cesspool of Leftist propaganda and nothing more. Harvard was recently ranked dead last amongst colleges and universities for permitting free speech, according to the Foundation of Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), which surveyed 55,102 students. The students at 254 different universities and colleges were asked how comfortable they felt in expressing their opinions publicly on their respective campuses, as well as how much support they felt from the administrators of their respective college or university. The top five schools in the expression of free speech were Michigan Technological University, Auburn University, the University of New Hampshire, Oregon State University, and Florida State University.

The bottom five were, in order, Fordham University, Georgetown University, the University of South Carolina, the University of Pennsylvania, and dead last, Harvard University. Harvard was the only school in the survey to achieve an "abysmal" campus free speech climate. 27% of students surveyed stated they believed using violence to stop a campus speech is, at least sometimes, acceptable.

Claudine Gay, a Black woman, would no more tolerate anti-Black racism or the like. Harvard's Iron Curtain would come crashing down at the mere whiff of prejudice against any number of groups, LGBTQ, Black, Palestinians, trans or any number of others. But NOT on behalf of Jews. In fact, the very same campus leaders and professors who

have made Harvard University the capitol of anti-free speech in the United States raised the banner of free speech in an attempt to protect their right to antisemitism. The same logic would allow the Ku Klux Klan to march on Cambridge and say whatever they liked.

They claim the right to free speech, which they extend to no one else but themselves just like the Nazis did.

Republicans Need To Learn To Work Together

Democrats in Congress have no trouble sticking together, perhaps one reason why there is very little divergence of view in their caucus. Democrats who oppose abortion are as scarce as hen's teeth and their party is becoming increasingly moved to the Left. There really isn't much difference between the political philosophy and that of the radical leftists that make up the "Squad."

Unfortunately, Democrats aren't the worst enemies of Republicans in Washington, D.C. Republicans are the worst enemies of fellow Republicans in Washington and that is a virus that has been spreading for sometime. Some Republicans compete with one another as to who is the most conservative, often times times when there is simply a matter of degree in a difference of opinion. Things have become quite difficult for Republicans precisely because of an element of fellow Republicans who seem to live by the notion "rule or ruin." If they aren't in charge, if they

aren't driving the car, they would rather drive it off a cliff, or simply blow it up with all occupants aboard. They seem to have the same mindset as an Islamic terrorist; blow yourself up along with your enemies, and you will go straight to paradise.

Oddly, it never seems to occur to these people just who benefits the most from this policy of rule or ruin: the Democrats. The GOP majority in the House continues to shrink in advance of the 2024 elections following Speaker Kevin McCarthy having been deposed, not by Democrats, but rather by Republicans. Now some Republicans are grumbling about Speaker Mike Johnson.

The rule or ruin crowd never seems to realize the ultimate goal is to get something done, to pass something that helps the American people. That will never happen when the Republicans are too busy fighting amongst themselves. The terrible excesses and foolish policies inflicted by Joe Biden need to be rolled back, but it's not going to happen when House Republicans bicker, fight, and name call one another. The same thing happens in GOP primaries where a collection of loud and proud self-appointed far right Republicans feel they are the final say in deciding which candidate is the conservative candidate. Many of those same folks have not spent their lives working in the party vineyards, nurturing the party, funding it and supporting its candidates. It's time to remember, any jackass can kick down a barn, but it takes a

carpenter to build one.

Three Rivers Republican Club Dinner A Huge Success

The Three Rivers Republican Club has been growing nicely. Easily the largest Republican club in Knox County, the club just celebrated Christmas with a ham dinner and all the trimmings. The Three Rivers Republican Club is a combination of the 8th and 9th Districts and once the two came together, it has become the largest and fastest growing GOP club in Knox County.

Chancellor Bud Armstrong, County Commissioner-at-Large Larsen Jay, Law Director David Buuck, County Clerk Sherry Witt, State Senator Becky Duncan Massey, Criminal Court Clerk Mike Hammond, Trustee Justin Biggs, and Republican State Executive Committeeman Brian Hornback were among the elected officials to attend and join the festivities. There was a dessert auction to raise money for charity, which included numerous Bundt cakes while Travis Wright, an announced candidate for the Knox County Board of Education from the 8th District circulated through the crowd greeting friends. Barry Neal, candidate for the Knox County Commission in the 9th District did the same. Adam Thompson, a newly declared candidate for the Knox County Commission from the 8th District, was spotted having fun talking to folks. Buddy Burkhardt, GOP party chair, and Janis Crye, vice chairman of the

Knox County Republican Party were on hand to participate and wish friends a Merry Christmas. Long-time South Knoxville businessman Herman Goddard and his lovely wife helped to represent the GOPers from south of the river. Doug Beeler from Ritta and Alan Branch from Riverdale also attended.

The crowd filled up the vast fellowship hall at Mabledale Baptist Church. By any standard, the meeting was a great success and folks had a wonderful time of greeting old friends and making new ones.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

It seems this year has flown by with incredible speed and here we are once again in the midst of the Christmas Season. The Knoxville Focus wants to wish you and your family a joyous Holiday Season and a very Merry Christmas! We have been blessed by the fact you pick up our newspaper every week, that you read our stories and have made our columnists so notable. A few of our columnists are almost as widely read in Washington, D.C., and Nashville as they are here, but it is because of you our newspaper has been successful and we thank you from our hearts.

We hope you are blessed throughout this most holy of seasons and that the New Year will bring you and your family every good thing.

Knox County in good fiscal shape

By Mike Steely

Knox County Financial Director Chris Caldwell told the Audit Committee last week that the county is in good financial shape as he reported on the last three months. Caldwell said the county is \$3.8 million ahead of last year. "We're outpacing what we've seen," he said, adding that while the received wheel tax revenue is down and the property

taxes that were paid is fairly flat, the overall revenue is up. Caldwell said that the local sales tax funds are about 4.59% above last year. He cautioned that the funds expected next year from the state may only increase by about one percent. He said that collection of delinquent taxes are up and that interest from bank investments is up as well, at about 4.5%.

Travis Wright Running for District 8 School Board

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need to be age-appropriate at all times." Wright said. The 44-year-old businessman is a big believer in looking to the future and thinks that's a very useful quality for someone aspiring to serve on the Knox County Board of Education. "Board members need to look to the future because the future of our children is entirely in front of them," Wright insists. "We have to think ahead and while we should acknowledge the past, we need to always be thinking about tomorrow. "My family has always taught me to give back to my community and I intend

to do that," Wright said. Wright said is ready to be an advocate for the 8th District. "The communities that comprise the 8th District include Gibbs, Carter, Corryton, Ritta, Skaggs-ton, Sunnyview, Hills, Fort Sumter, Dora Kennedy, Thorngrove, Shannondale, Chilhowee and Ellistown-Arminda. The 8th District needs a representative who will represent the 8th District and all of Knox County on the board of education," Wright said. "I believe a representative owes his or her best efforts on behalf of those who elected him or her. That's who I will speak

and work for, the people who elected me." Travis Wright has been a life-long resident of the 8th District, having been born in Corryton. Wright graduated from the University of Tennessee in 2002 and began his working career at First Tennessee Bank and eventually started his own business, Informed Logic. Wright coaches two baseball teams; the Base Knox Royals, which Wright started about three years ago

for boys 12-13 years old. Wright also is a volunteer baseball coach for boys that attend Gibbs Middle School. Early voting runs through February 14-27, 2024, and election day is on March 5, 2024. The primaries for local offices such as the Knox County Board of Education and County Commission will be held in conjunction with the presidential preference primaries.

Wishing you & your family a Wonderful Holiday Season!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

From your 2024 candidate for Knox County Property Assessor,
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Merit board, county commission regulation talks continue

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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The Knox County Sheriff's Office Employee's Merit System Board of Directors and the Knox County Commission continued to struggle to find common ground last week. Four of the seven board members had voted to ask the commission to revise the new policy inhibiting board members from publically supporting political candidates.

The current policy, adopted two years ago, prohibits board members from wearing candidate clothing, raising funds and placing political signage in their yards. The former merit council butted heads with the Knox County Sheriff over what employee grievances they could hear and some members openly supported a candidate for Sheriff.

One former chairperson, Gina Oster, ran for commission while serving on the council and was elected. The current commission responded to the turmoil of the former council by adopting several new policies to reform that body.

One of those policies prohibits the unpaid volunteer members, each approved by the commission, from openly supporting sheriff candidates or any other candidate while

serving. The policy was upheld last Monday when Commissioner Larsen Jay, who basically wrote the reform policies, moved to deny a resolution that would have removed the political restrictions.

Jay said the political retractions were installed "to protect our officers from politics."

"What is now broken that needs fixing and how does this benefit our officers?" Jay asked merit board member and attorney John Valliant.

Valliant had led the effort to overturn the new policies calling them "unconstitutional" and said the commission doesn't have the power to restrict free speech. Oster said the merit board is the only committee to be so restricted and called on Merit Chairman Christopher Manning to speak.

Manning did so but, when asked about the 4-3 vote by the board to change the rules and permit political involvement, he said he voted against the proposal.

"All the members knew the rules. If they don't agree they can step down and get involved," Commissioner Kyle Ward said of public political involvement. Deputy Law Director Mike Moyers confirmed the commission's powers to make rules for the Merit Board. He

said the policy does not prohibit members from taking part in partisan meetings and clubs or voting.

Commissioner Courtney Durrett made a substitute motion to move the issue to today's commission meeting but that failed.

Jay asked Valliant why he volunteered to join the merit board if he knew he would be restricted in political activity while serving. Valliant replied he hadn't read or understood the rules until after he became a member.

The motion to deny open political involvement by board members passed with Commissioners Jay, Ward, Rhonda Lee, Richie Beeler, John Schoonmaker and Carson Dailey voting to deny. Voting "No" were Commissioners Durrett, Oster, Rhonda Hill, Dasha Lundy and Kim Frazier.

The denial removed the resolution from today's regular commission meeting.

One rule amendment involving KCSO and the merit board policies did move on to today's meeting regarding the removal of the "three-day" policy on suspension of deputies and permitting pay to continue during a suspension.

Campaigns in motion for 2024 elections

Continued from page 1

the Democratic Primary and the Republican is Debbie Phillips. Ethan Grantham seeks the office as an Independent.

District 4: The race to replace Republican Commissioner Kyle Ward has Republicans Garrett Holt and Liz Tombras facing off in that primary with Democrat Shane Jackson alone in his bid.

District 5: Looking to replace Republican John Schoonmaker are six candidates. The Republican candidates include Brad Hall, Angela Russell, Dale Skidmore, Toni S. Scott and Brian Walker. S. Arthur Moore stands alone on the Democratic primary ballot.

District 6: Commission Chairwoman Terry Hill and fellow Republican Julie McBee-Fritts face each other with Democrat Daniel Edward Green as the sole Democrat on that party's primary ballot.

District 8: Republicans looking to replace Commissioner and former Chairman Republican Richie Beeler are D.J. Corcoran, Kara Dailey and Adam Thompson. The sole Democrat in the primary is Charles V. Chandler.

District 9: Hoping to replace Republican Commissioner Carson Dailey are two fellow party members, Andy Fox and Barry Neal. The Democrats have Matthew

Park in the primary and the Independent is Stacy Bryan Smith.

Assessor of Property: Two Republicans want to replace Republican Property Assessor Don Whitehead. They are Phil Ballard and Jackie Raley. Drew A. Harper is in the Democratic primary.

Law Director: Incumbent Republican David L. Buuck is challenged in that primary by Daniel A. Herrera. Jackson Fenner is the lone Democrat in the primary.

School Board: Jennifer Owen is seeking re-election on the District 2 seat as an Independent as is Pat Polis. The Democratic primary has only Anne Templeton. There is no Republican in that race.

The District 3 race has three candidates wanting to replace Daniel Watson. The Republicans are Robert V. Daspit and Angie Goethert. Democrat Patricia Fontenot-Ridley is alone in her party's primary.

In the District 5 school board race is Republican Lauren Morgan. The Democrat Primary has Terrye Whitaker. Republican Renee Jackson apparently did not file her petition for the seat by the deadline.

Facing each other in the District 8 race to replace Republican Mike McMillan are Republicans Tommy Lakins and Travis Wright.



Janet Testerman's final City Council meeting saw her honored for her service and her Young-Williams Animal Center was awarded a contract to respond to all animal control calls.

Council OKs

Young-Williams for animal control

Cont. from page 1

Testerman told the council that members of the board have been in support of the revised agreement. The council voted to approve the revised agreement on an emergency basis, negating any need for a second reading.

In other action, the council voted to approve a \$70,000 purchase of two properties in Burlington where a new two-bay fire station may be built. The group also approved the funding of renovations at the current station in that community so it can be sold. Councilwoman Gwen McKenzie said the current station is too small and noted that closing an alley between the two properties is welcomed.

Mayor Indya Kincannon

noted that the new station is part of the Burlington and Magnolia Avenue Streetscapes projects. As part of those projects, the council also voted to give Knoxville Leadership Foundation a tax break on projects along Magnolia. One project includes the renovation of an existing building for housing and the construction of two new housing buildings.

Cornerstone Government Affairs Inc. was hired as the city's Washington, D.C., lobbying group and Fred D. (Tony) Thompson Jr. was rehired to lobby for the city in Nashville.

Outgoing Municipal Judge John Rosson JR. also spoke and noted the many people whom he met during his long career.



The late community activist and former council member Larry Cox was honored by Councilwoman Janet Testerman, Councilman Charles Thomas and the entire council. His wife, Brenda, accepted the honors.

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The Doctor is in
a weekly column by
Dr. Jim Ferguson

The Christmas Message

Not everyone can do great things, but everyone can do small things with great love.

Mother Teresa

Every year Becky and I begin our annual pilgrimage through our stack of Christmas movies. Like Holiday music, these timeless movie classics help us to get in the Christmas spirit. It's as if we're visiting old friends and memories are rekindled.

Some contend that we are in danger of losing the "reason for the season" because of our increasingly secular state and commercialism. Actually, I think these problems of modernity demonstrate the necessity of the Christmas message.

In this era of relativism, there could not be a dramatic contrast between what is right (Christ) and what is wrong (Hamas). And yet Ivy League presidents,

the Squad and many Progressive Democrats have trouble stating that genocide, sexual atrocities and kidnapping are wrong. Folks, it's not hard to see the facade of relativism. That which is oppositional to the absolute goodness of God is wrong.

I'm proud of my advanced academic degree from the University of Tennessee. And I'm glad I was educated to think instead of being indoctrinated with the lies of wokeness and political correctness. My education wasn't perverted by a so-called "elite" school group-think ideology.

Antisemitism and racism are wrong and can never be explained away or justified. The Ivy Leagues have shown their colors and destroyed their brand. They deserve to be "Bud-Lighted" along with all the supporters of the Hamas savages. And though I've seen Budweiser's latest

commercial attempt to rescue their brand, not even Peyton Manning can save Bud Light.

December 7th is a special day of remembrance for me. I've told the story before, but on that day in 1941, my father's ship, the aircraft carrier Yorktown, was three days out of Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked. My Dad was a 22-year-old naval aviator and probably would have been killed in the attack because the Japanese were looking for carriers, but had to settle for battleships like the Arizona. As a result, I might never have been born.

The sense of what's right is never in question with Frank Capra movies like "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" or "It's a Wonderful Life." And at this time of the year, I reflect on George Bailey and what he learned from the ingenious plan devised by his guardian angel, Clarence. Life is precious. I think about all that is lost because of untimely death. Even the word "untimely" is challenging.

I have a few early Christmas gifts and suggestions for you. Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" is a timeless classic with many adaptations. Please try the 1999 movie starring Patrick Stewart as Ebenezer Scrooge. Stewart is not over the top with his

British elocution, but just enough to be authentic. And the movie captures 19th century London and the timeless story of a transformed soul.

And while I'm "gifting," go to YouTube and listen to the hauntingly beautiful Christmas carol, "I Wander as I Wander." Fragments of the carol were collected by John Jacob Niles when he heard a waifish young girl performing the song in Murphy, North Carolina, in 1933. Next, search and listen to Nancy Wilson's, "That's What I Want for Christmas," a non sacred homage to love and Christmas.

Lastly, I shamelessly offer some last-minute Christmas gift suggestions or stocking stuffers. My novels, "Mantis" and "Epiphany," as well as a collection of my essays, "Well, What Did the Doctor Say?" are available at amazon.com (James V. Ferguson MD books)!

I embrace both the sacred aspects of Christmas and the more secular, fun-filled activities of the Holidays. Why do we have to choose? Most of life is a continuum. Yes, there are rights and wrongs, but being kind, loving, and respectful of others and their traditions should not be debatable. And since there are many options for sacred Christmas Eve services, Santa Claus can keep

his tight schedule.

America is perhaps the most pluralistic culture on earth with 330 million opinions. There may be billions of people in China, but diversity is not a characteristic, nor is divergence from group-think tolerated by the communist masters. Europe is having lots of problems from Muslim immigration which is causing cultural shock waves in their historically homogeneous populations.

Problems of a different nature are evident in Democrat sanctuary cities which are struggling to deal with the financial issues of supporting ILLEGAL aliens, which they assumed would be other people's problems. You may be surprised to learn that "legal" immigration in America was closed for many years in the early 1900s to allow assimilation of European immigrants. The Democrat open border policy is a disaster and has set the stage for enmity between citizens and illegals. Assimilation means becoming an American citizen legally and learning English.

I believe humans are tribal and not inherently selfless. We can be made better with sufficient resources, laws, proper education and certainly religious precepts, but we are not perfectable. I doubt Mother Teresa would argue

this point with me.

In 1943 Abraham Maslow outlined a hierarchy of human needs, often depicted as a pyramid. Physiological needs like food, water, and even air are preeminent and occupy the base. Above these basic needs come subsequent levels of safety, then belonging and love, esteem, cognitive needs such as creativity, aesthetic pursuits like beauty, self-actualization where someone reaches their full potential and finally transcendence with spiritual connection. I think about the poor people in Gaza, Ukraine, the horn of Africa, American ghettos, and countless other places where people can't aspire to their full potential, let alone seek their Maker.

We live in an imperfect world and we are imperfect beings. I am blessed. And I know that I can't fix the world's problems. I don't feel guilty about that. What I feel is thankfulness and the desire to do my best and my duty to God, country and those I love and serve. This is my modification of the Boy Scout pledge.

The Christ, whose birthday we are celebrating, said, "To whom much is given, much is expected." And wise men still seek and listen for His message.

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

What is your earliest memory of meeting Santa?

I was about 8 years old and on Christmas Eve my brother, sister and I were watching TV and begging to open presents. There was a knock at the back door and it was Santa! He came in

and did his "HoHoHo" and gave us each a gift. I learned years later that Santa was the teenage nephew of my stepfather but that memory of Santa coming into our house was a surprise and a childhood delight.

I've asked a few other folks about their earliest

More Than A Day Away



By Mike Steely

or most fond memory of meeting or seeing Santa and got some replies:

Carson Dailey: Four years old at the Maryville Christmas parade. Santa was handing out candy.

Laura K Kildare: I waited up all night because I just knew that this was the year... we had moved into a new house with a fireplace and it actually snowed. Heard a bump and there to my delight was a Dancerina doll. Didn't actually see him, but was completely convinced! I think I was

around five. We were living in Norris.

Caterina Angel Heatwole: When I was eight (1971) we (there were six kids) went to see Santa and I got a box of eight big crayons and a book about how Santa began delivering gifts. The book was not new but I loved it. I still have the book. Well, I actually gave it to my grandson 3 years ago on his 8th Christmas. I read that book to so many children over the years.

My second best memory was when I was 10 (1973). My family moved to Cleveland, Tennessee, and it took all our money to get moved and the utilities turned on. My aunt worked at a large sewing factory and the workers sponsored my family for Christmas. We

had a Charlie Brown tree that year. We had lived years in Jellico where you went into the mountains and cut you a Christmas tree. My dad was gifted a little tree (barely 3 feet tall) and when he brought it in my little sister asked him where he got the "branch." All six of us kids went into our own stuff and picked something to give each other. My aunt brought scrap material home and I made each sibling something. One of my brothers still has the pillow shaped like a car I made for him.

Judd Davis: My grandmother worked at Millers on Henley Street and I remember getting to go to the breakfast with Santa as a young child.

Continue on page 2



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Many of us remember when we first met Santa and some of us were too young, like my grandchild, pictured above.

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Merry Christmas!

What makes Christmas so special? It could be SNOW! Though a white Christmas in our area is rare, it certainly is special when there is one. It could be the Christmas tree decorated in multicolored lights, sparkling garland, and ornaments that bring back years



By **Ralphine Major**
ralphine3@yahoo.com

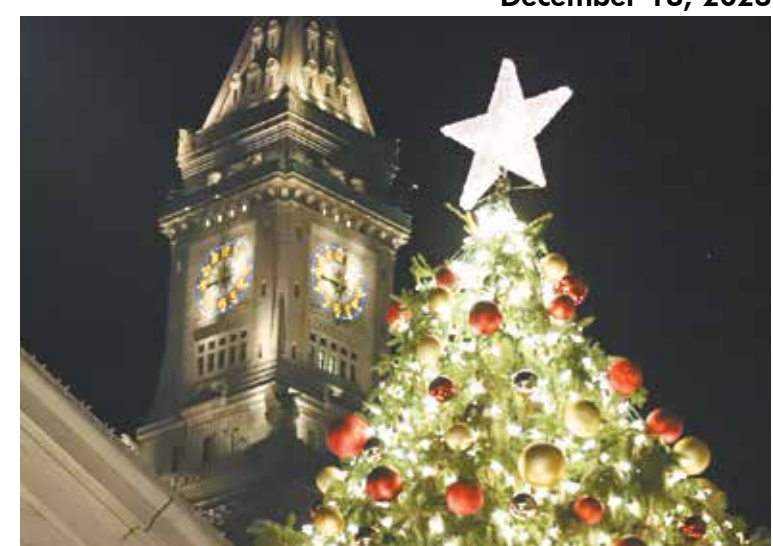
of memories. It could be the Christmas cards with their beautiful winter scenes and thoughtful verses and the feeling of friendship when opening them. It could be the excitement that the Christmas parades bring with marching bands and festive

floats.

What else makes Christmas so special? It could be singing the treasured Christmas carols and sharing the birth of the Christ child by going caroling. It could be those tasty treats like fudge, fruitcake, eggnog, and sugar cookies cut out in Christmas designs and

topped with sprinkles. It could be dining with friends and family, opening gifts, and taking priceless pictures of one another. It could be quiet time at the end of the day while sitting by a crackling fire and counting the many blessings of the year.

True. All these things make Christmas special. But what makes Christmas most special is a place called Bethlehem, the manger, and the virgin birth--- the gift of God's Son who would one day die on a cross, rise again, and bring eternal life to those who believe--- the Savior, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace. Without the birth of Jesus, there would be no Christmas. As the countdown to Christmas continues, may we remember to pray for our Tennessee neighbors who were devastated recently by deadly tornadoes and for peace in our country, in Israel, and around the world. God bless you and your family during this holy season. May you have a blessed,



Picture of a quiet and beautiful Christmas scene in Boston, Massachusetts, courtesy of Bryce Williams, Meteorologist, National Weather Service.

safe, and Merry Christmas!

Words of Faith: "For unto you is

born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11 (KJV).

Busy Times

It's a busy time of year for all of us. I used to have things that ate away at my time and kept me busy. These days, other people, organizations, and conditions demand my time, in addition to some standard occurrences.

Some of my time is spent with my brother Jim. We try



By **Joe Rector**
joerector@comcast.net

to play golf once a week. Both of us are rather poor players, but it's fun to knock golf balls around and just hang out together. Yes, we'd like to have better scores on our cards after rounds, but being together is most important. Jim and I also find plenty of projects to keep us busy. Just today, we finished a

two-day job at his daughter's house. We cleaned a basement area at Mindy's. Her house is an old one in Fountain City with plenty of yucky stuff that has accumulated over the years. We emptied the place, tore out a dilapidated workbench, and rearranged items. I built her a worktable for the basement, and we placed it in a convenient place. None of the work was that important, but that "hanging out" was priceless. We've been doing the same thing since we were wild little twin boys.

Aging has a way of eating up my spare time. I've visited doctors too many times this month. One trip had me in a chair at an ENT specialist. He checked me out, prescribed an antibiotic cream, and scheduled another visit in February for a check-up and a CT scan of

my nose and sinuses. This week I am visiting an imaging center for a lung scan. It's something that doesn't cost me a dime, and it offers a look for anything that might need attention. I also visited the eye doctor and received a prescription for new glasses.

Earlier this year, someone talked me into joining the church choir. I discovered that hitting low notes still is a challenge, but I don't do too badly. Besides, I've had fun working with the choir and the director Gage and the accompanist Paula, who keeps me in stitches during practice. I sang in the church choir during high school, and returning has been a blessing. I still might ask to join the praise band before long. That would take up even more time.

Christmas of course, is

right around the corner. Amy and I will travel to Hendersonville for a few days to celebrate with our daughter Lacey and Nick and Madden. We also want to visit friends we made when we owned a condo down there. We'll return to Knoxville in time to celebrate Christmas with our son Dallas. Our menu for the day will be chili and tamales. My Christmas shopping is completed. Like most men, purchases are limited to ones for my wife; she stresses and deals with the rest of the shopping. I don't think she trusts me to do much more than pick up items she's already bought.

While we are in Hendersonville, Amy and I will celebrate our 49th anniversary. Next year will be the big one, but I'm stunned every time I think

about my dear wife having put up with me for so long. I am not an easy person with whom to live; I have quirks that would drive most folks up the wall. Some years have been rougher than others, but overall, we still love each other and enjoy the time we have together.

I hope you all have a Merry Christmas. Your reading my thoughts and gripes and praises has blessed me more than anyone can imagine. I hope that the Good Lord allows me to continue to peck away on the computer and create an occasional piece that is special to readers. This is the one thing that takes my time but rewards me for every second I spend.

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Charles Temple
Sevier County School Board

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What is your earliest memory of Santa?

Cont. from page 1

George Bove: I was 8 and 1/2 years old, completely sleepless with the thoughts of Christmas racing in my mind. I slowly and quietly snuck my way to the living room where our Christmas tree was displayed and then...my eyes, my poor, poor eyes!

It was so real and so incredibly revealing as I watched my mom making out with Santa!

I remember clearly as Santa glanced at me with his kind eyes and an incredibly familiar voice saying, "George, get your -ss back to bed now."

I still feel like I may have met him before....hmmm?

Deanne Charlton: I first met Santa at an event in the basement of our Methodist church. He was jolly and sounded exactly like my daddy.

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The Tribune's Sentinel

Charles Wayland Brooks

Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill
rayhill865@gmail.com

From 1940 until 1949, Charles Wayland Brooks served in the United States Senate. A successful attorney who had fought in the First World War, Brooks was known to his friends as "Curly" because of his hair; TIME magazine had referred to Brooks as a "kinky headed" attorney in 1936. Indeed, when Curly Brooks became a candidate for public office, there were rumors he had Black ancestry because of his hair. Brooks was a Republican and like many of his fellow Midwesterners, was largely an isolationist in outlook. Brooks became known as the favorite Republican of Colonel Robert McCormick, owner of the Chicago Tribune, a newspaper Franklin D. Roosevelt had described as one of the "three furies of isolationism" in the country.

Brooks was the son, grandson and great-grandson of ministers, grew up on a farm and became a Marine. C. Wayland Brooks was attending the University of Illinois when America entered World War I. Brooks and his older brother, Russell, left to enlist. Brooks' exploits during the First World War made him a genuine hero who captured twenty-seven German soldiers manning a machine nest by himself. Later, Brooks was seriously wounded seven times and returned to the United States with the rank of first lieutenant and a handful of medals. General John J. Pershing, head of the American Expeditionary Force pinned the distinguished service medal on Brooks' chest. While fighting near Soissons, an exploding shell blew off part of the future senator's left foot. Brooks returned home for surgery, which enabled him to once again use his left foot. "I came back from France determined to have something to say about running my government and determined that no American soldiers should ever again be sent to die in foreign lands."

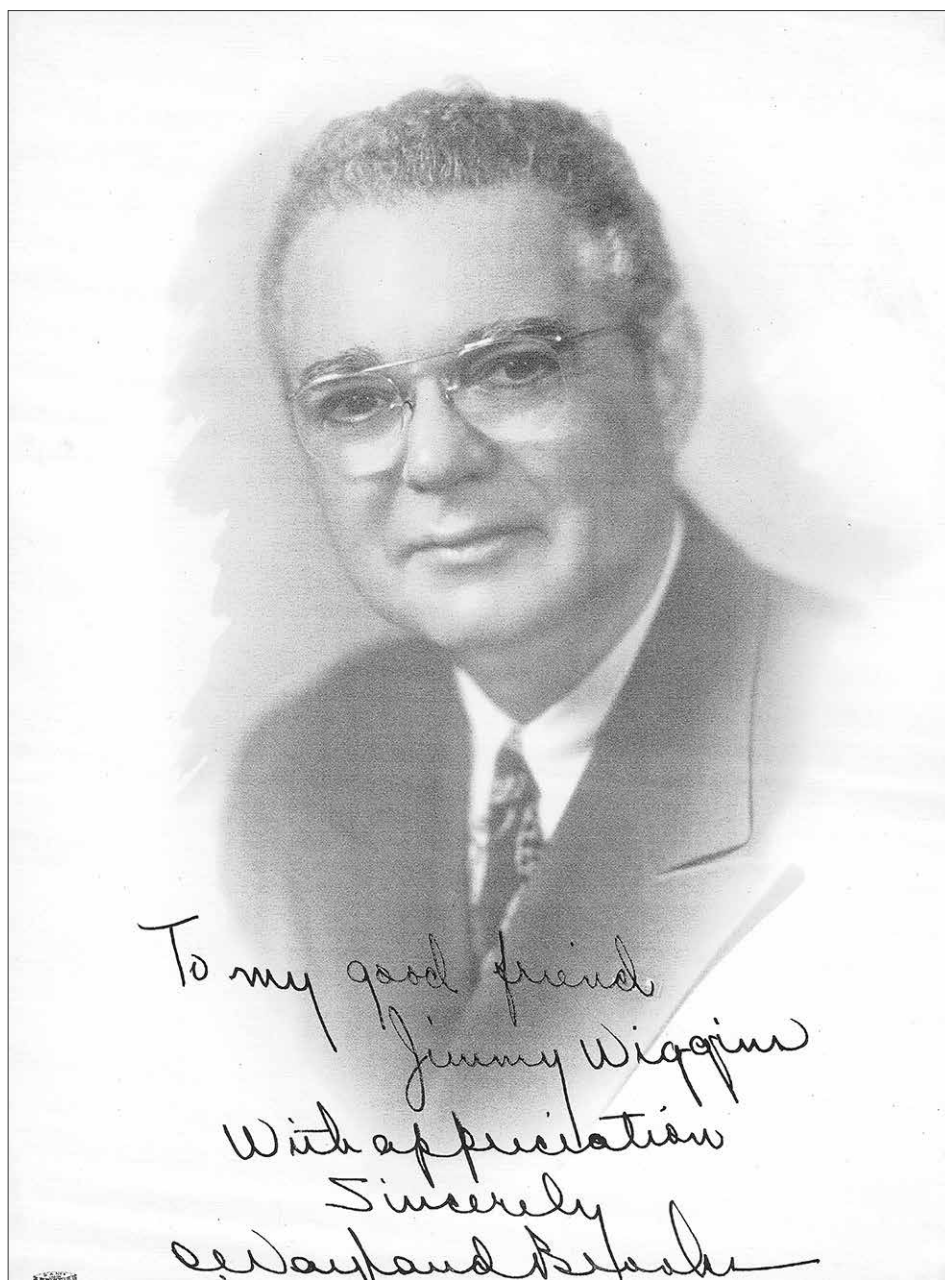
From that time, C. Wayland Brooks became active in two organizations: the American Legion and the Republican Party. Brooks became a captain in his precinct and worked hard for the GOP. Brooks attended law school and became an assistant prosecutor in the state's attorney's office. It was the height of the era of Al Capone and Brooks was deemed utterly fearless in his pursuit of "Chicago kidnapers, bombers, murderers" and other criminals. It was C. Wayland Brooks who prosecuted Leo Brothers, a gangster who had murdered Jake Lingle, a reporter for the Chicago Tribune.

Curly Brooks made his first statewide campaign in 1932 when he ran for state treasurer. While Brooks and the rest of the GOP ticket lost in the Democratic landslide, Brooks was notable for at least having polled a goodly number of votes in a very bad year for Republican candidates. Two years later Brooks was campaigning for an at-large seat in the U. S. House of Representatives from Illinois. Only a flood of ballots from the corrupt Chicago machine in Cook County kept him out of Congress. In 1936, Brooks was the "good government" candidate inside the GOP primary to forestall the comeback bid of former Governor Len Small, who knew quite a bit about corruption himself. Brooks won the Republican nomination easily but lost the general election in what was one of the best years Democrats had enjoyed in decades.

TIME magazine, owned and published by fervent internationalist Henry Luce, frequently derided Brooks as the Tribune's senator. The weekly magazine described Brooks as "an oldtime rabble-rouser, a flag-waving Billy Sunday orator who can jerk tears from any group of mothers with a recital of his own World War I experiences..." Paul Douglas, who succeeded Brooks in the U.S. Senate, once described his rival as "a public speaker of great ability and persuasiveness."

In April of 1939, J. Hamilton Lewis, the flamboyant senior United States senator from Illinois died unexpectedly. Governor Henry Horton appointed James Slattery to fill the vacancy. Slattery was a candidate to succeed himself for the six-year term in the 1940 special election. Curly Brooks won the GOP primary easily, beating Congressman Ralph Church. Colonel McCormick's Tribune reflected the publisher's thorough dislike of President Roosevelt and his administration, as well as his own Republicanism. Throughout the fall campaign between Brooks and Senator Slattery, the Tribune trumpeted the GOP senatorial candidate and pounded the Democrats. Brooks eked out a 20,000-vote lead in more than 4 million ballots cast to win the election. Still, C. Wayland Brooks had been swimming against the tide as Franklin Roosevelt carried Illinois for the third time. During the campaign, Brooks had forthrightly opposed American intervention in the Second World War.

The GOP candidate also had warned of the United



FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

Autographed photo of Senator C. Wayland Brooks of Illinois.

States doing anything to help the Communist government of the Soviet Union. When C. Wayland Brooks died, one newspaper confessed Brooks had been "reviled by interventionists in both major parties, who were dominant in the financial and publishing fields." It was quite true. C. Wayland Brooks remained a special target of interventionists. Even after supporting the American war effort, Senator Brooks was a highly disliked political figure on the part of many interventionists. They overlooked the fact Brooks had volunteered for service the day after Pearl Harbor to return to the Marine Corps. The senator was politely told he could be more useful to his country in the United States Senate.

As a member of the U.S. Senate, C. Wayland Brooks had always been a strong proponent of building up America's own defenses and was an especially forceful advocate for a strong air force. Senator Brooks was popular amongst his Black constituents for his sponsorship of legislation that removed the poll tax from servicemen. That same legislation also enabled American servicemen to send mail without postage.

Living in Chicago for his law practice, C. Wayland Brooks looked forward to the times when he could retreat to the peace and quiet of his farm in LaSalle County on the Fox River.

Brooks remained a strong isolationist, as did many Midwestern senators and congressmen, until Pearl Harbor. Democrats targeted the GOP senator for defeat in the 1942 election for a full six-year term. Illinois Democrats chose Congressman Raymond McKeough as their senatorial nominee and Colonel McCormick promptly labeled the representative as "Small Potatoes McKeough." In fairness, McKeough was not likely

the strongest candidate Democrats could have nominated but was the choice of Pat Nash and Chicago, the rulers of the Democratic machine. While in Congress, Raymond McKeough had only rarely spoken on the floor, sponsored no legislation of significance, and had largely been just another vote for the Roosevelt administration in the House. Once nominated, McKeough paid tribute to Patrick Nash, who had made a sizeable fortune by tearing up the streets of Chicago and installing sewer pipes. Nash's political partner in running the Chicago political machine was Ed Kelly, who had risen from sewer worker to the mayor's office.

Brooks won reelection by more than two hundred thousand votes. Evidently, Brooks' service in the Senate took a toll on his marriage. Gertrude Ackerly Brooks sought a divorce in Reno in 1943. Three years later Brooks wed Mary Thomas Peavy, the daughter of the late John Thomas, U.S. senator from Idaho. Mrs. Peavy was a widow, her husband having been killed in a hunting accident. She brought two children to the marriage, which Brooks proudly claimed as his own. The senator also had a son from his first marriage, named for his brother, Russell. Wayland and Mary Brooks would become one of the most prominent "power" couples of their day as Mary, the daughter and wife of United States senators, understood politics as well as anyone. Eventually, she would be elected to the state Senate in her native Idaho. The couple remained married until C. Wayland Brooks' death in 1957.

Senator Brooks was highly popular with his fellow Republicans and was renominated easily in 1948 for a second six-year term. Governor Dwight

Green was renominated for a third four-year term and the duo was believed to be a very strong ticket for the fall campaign. Thomas E. Dewey, the governor of New York, was the GOP nominee for president and virtually nobody believed he could lose the general election to Harry Truman. Dewey's campaign for the presidency was run as if the New York governor were an incumbent. Dewey spoke in generalities and was careful to make no mistakes and said little or nothing of significance. President Harry Truman ran a slashing underdog campaign and was drawing enormous crowds as he campaigned across the country, a fact which Republicans ignored until it was too late. Senator Brooks and Governor Green were also the heavy favorites against Paul Douglas and Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic nominees for U.S. senator and governor, respectively.

Douglas, a former Chicago alderman and professor of economics, traded barbs with Senator Brooks in the general election. Brooks said Douglas was "irresponsible" and thought him a "socialist-minded professor" as well as "a demagogue with a lot of cock-eyed ideas." Douglas fired back that Brooks was "a dyed-in-the-wool, reactionary isolationist dominated by the Chicago Tribune" and "a tool of the monopolists."

Election Day brought quite a number of surprises to the professional political prognosticators, the biggest of which was Harry Truman's defeat of Thomas E. Dewey. Truman carried Illinois by just over 33,000 votes, while Paul Douglas beat Senator Brooks by 407,000 ballots. The difference was the huge vote in Cook County, which Douglas carried by almost 430,000 votes. Curly Brooks ran well ahead of

his running mate, Governor Dwight Green, who lost by more than 570,000 votes to Adlai Stevenson. The 1948 election was a disaster for Republicans, who went from a majority in both houses of Congress to a minority in both houses. Both Governor Green and Senator Brooks conceded the election shortly after midnight. It was readily apparent, the governor said, that the entire GOP ticket had lost.

Only fifty-one when he was defeated for reelection to the United States Senate, Brooks was mentioned as a candidate to challenge Senate Majority Leader Scott Lucas for reelection in 1950. Brooks chose not to run and in 1952 was unanimously elected as the Republican National Committeeman from the Land of Lincoln. Out of elective office, Brooks was still in demand as a speaker for various clubs and organizations across Illinois. Masons and American Legionnaires still enjoyed the oratory of former Senator C. Wayland Brooks. During his lifetime, Curly Brooks had run no less than twelve statewide campaigns in the Land of Lincoln. For a person who likes and enjoys people, it is a hard habit to give up.

Brooks had originally favored his former Senate colleague Robert A. Taft of Ohio for the 1952 GOP presidential nomination, but once the convention chose Dwight D. Eisenhower, the former senator enthusiastically backed the general. Throughout the decade of the 1950s, Brooks was periodically plagued by a series of heart attacks, which slowed his usual frenetic pace. The former senator had resumed his lucrative law practice and was a frequent visitor to Washington, D.C., for clients and political business.

On January 8, 1957, C. Wayland Brooks entered Passavant Hospital in Chicago suffering from chest pains. Brooks had suffered a massive heart attack. Still, the initial prognosis seemed good as the former senator's physician noted the patient was progressing nicely. The former senator's doctor said Brooks had enjoyed an "excellent day." Brooks woke up after a peaceful rest, only to complain of chest pains and died shortly thereafter. The cause of death was a tear in the artery leading from the left ventricle of the heart.

Colonel McCormick remembered his friend in an editorial strongly praising the former senator. McCormick described Brooks as one "who always managed to smile when the going was toughest." McCormick praised Brooks for having "always put his country first." "Bertie" McCormick, a stiff and difficult man, lamented the loss of one he readily acknowledged he would greatly miss "as our friend." "He was unselfish and warm hearted in his associations, stimulating, and always kind," the colonel wrote. "His thoughtfulness in doing for others will long be remembered."

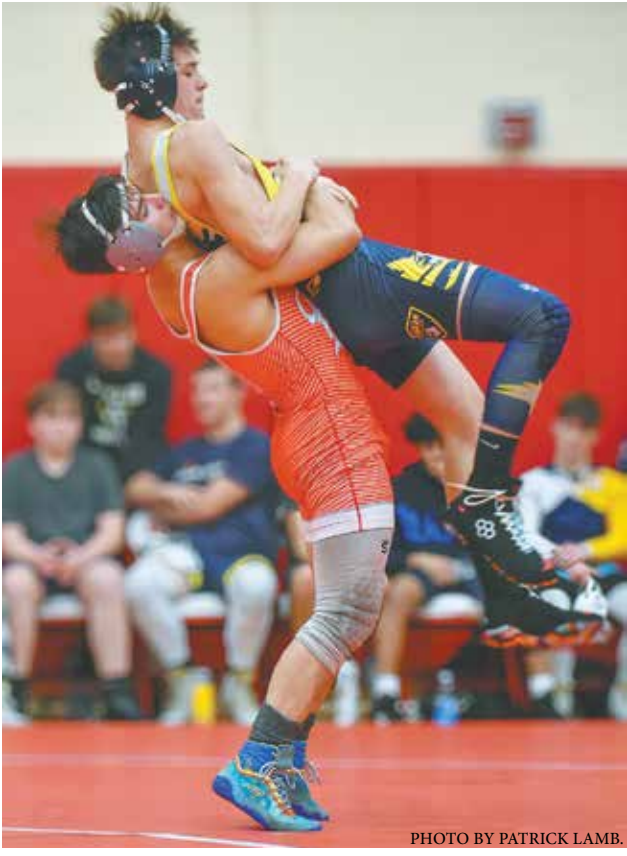


PHOTO BY PATRICK LAMB.

Halls 150-pound wrestler Harlan Hunley controls Seymour's Lucas Burnett in midair. Hunley scored a pin early in the second period of the bout. The Red Devils defeated the Eagles 69-12 at Halls Thursday.

Halls wins first home dual meet of 2023-24 season

By Ken Lay

The Halls High School wrestling team finally had a regular-season dual meet at home late last week. And the Red Devils didn't disappoint their fan as they notched a 69-12 victory over Seymour before a packed house Thursday night.

It was the Red Devils' first home meet since they hosted the preseason KWOA Jamboree on Nov. 4.

"It was great to finally have a dual at home," Red Devils' coach Shannon Comes said. "It was great to wrestle in front of our crowd.

"We came out and shook off the rust and we took

care of business. Our kids stepped up and wrestled.

That was perhaps the understatement of the season as the defending Class A traditional and dual meet state champion Red Devils lost just one match on the mat.

With Halls now reclassified to Class 2A, the Eagles are looking to be a factor on the state wrestling scene. But their only outright victory came in the second bout of the night when Samuel Comes scored a pin over Brady Moreland in the 113-pound weight class. Comes won by fall in 1 minute, 35 seconds.

Seymour's Skyler Campbell won by forfeit in

the 175 division.

The Red Devils opened the night with a pin as Tanner Kitts (106 pounds) stuck Jermaine Vazquez in just 44 seconds, giving Halls a 6-0 lead in the match.

Comes' win tied the match at 6-6 before the Red Devils took control of the match.

Only one match went the three-round distance. Halls scored three team points as Rylan May claimed an 8-5 decision over Caden Zeit.

Trey Griffin (120 pounds), Ty Davis (132), Jordan Sexton (138), Trevor Sexton (144), Harlan Hunley (150), Barrett Whaley (157), Gabe

Freeman (165); Matt Cook (215) and Caleb Turner (289) all scored victories by fall.

The Red Devils' Gavin Self won by forfeit in the 190-pound weight class.

Sayne said that his team was clicking on all cylinders against the Eagles.

"We just came out and took it to them a little bit," he said. "I don't think this was indicative of the Seymour program.

"We just had our night and they didn't."

Halls won't have another home dual meet until it hosts geographic rival Gibbs in an in-school dual meet on Jan. 10.

Holiday Helpers making season merrier again

By Steve Williams

The Knoxville Focus received some good reports on "Holiday Helpers" again this year and would like to recognize these high school student-athletes for making the season merrier!

Thanks to the cheerleaders and coaches from Central and Powell high schools. And we also salute the Bearden High softball team and its coach.

Our recognition starts with a quote from Ella Grossman, senior/captain of the Central cheerleaders: "Giving this time of the year is so important because it is a time that should be enjoyed by

everyone. It is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus with family and friends. Giving back at this time of the year gives more people the opportunity to embrace and enjoy this season!"

CHS Cheer Coach Kara Clark Cardwell reported: "The Central High School Cheerleaders have been extremely active in the community this holiday season! We just recently volunteered with Fantasy of Trees supporting East Tennessee Children's Hospital, and we rang bells for the Salvation Army.

"We are always thrilled to serve our community, especially this time of year."

At Powell, Cheerleader Coach Emily Lanus reports: "The Powell High School cheerleaders volunteered at Fantasy of Trees on Sunday, Nov. 26. Some girls worked at the sand art booth and the others worked at the wooden ornament booth. "The girls also decorated trees and donated them to Children's Hospital through the Tiny Trees event. This event is designed to make sure each patient at Children's Hospital has a Christmas tree in their room for Christmas."

Last but not least, Bearden Coach Kenneth Boles and his softball team

were scheduled to participate in Wreaths Across America in Knoxville this past Saturday.

Said Coach Boles: "Bearden High School Softball program will be helping with this program to honor our heroes that have made the greatest sacrifice."

The Focus hopes to receive pictures from the Bearden team's efforts and share them with our readers in the Dec. 26 issue, along with more information and pictures of "Holiday Helpers."



Central High School cheerleaders help out the Salvation Army as bell ringers.



The PHS cheerleaders wore Christmas hats and aprons in their work at the Fantasy of Trees. Front Row: Hannah Simmons, Addison Arnold, Kenzie Elliott, Araya Browning, Ella Riggs. Back Row: Yeye Morgan, Campbell Moore, Ariana Daugherty, Lily Meyers, Kenzli Lambert, Kellie Whiteley, Kennedy Byrd, Kiersten Sheppard.



CHS cheerleaders get together for a group shot at the Fantasy of Trees. Left to right: Mackenzie Lynn, Kylee Lynn, Aubrey Collins, Maddie Lynch, Mary Mcswain, Laiken Lawson, Iasia Cline, Harper Rossini.

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Powell seniors sign softball scholarships

By Steve Williams

Pitcher Kayleigh Smith and catcher Leslie Hensley, battery mates throughout their high school softball careers at Powell, recently signed college scholarship papers.

Hensley signed with Roane State Community College on Friday, Dec. 8, and Smith with Bryan College on Monday, Dec. 11.

As for being battery mates, PHS Coach Jeff Inman said: "They've been together even before they got here. It's like sisters out there; they know each other so well."

"It (going to the same college) was close to happening."

Hensley, who has a 3.75 GPA, had an offer from Bryan College, but she chose RSCC and said she will major in Nursing. Her mom and sister are in the Nursing field, according to Coach Inman.

"Leslie was looking for a school with a good Nursing program and Roane State fit that bill for her," said Inman.

Smith plans to major in Exercise and Health Science at Bryan, a four-year school, and has a 4.25 grade point average.

"Both of them are great



PHOTO BY LIZZI LOWE

Powell High pitcher Kayleigh Smith sits in between parents JT and Jenny Smith with brother Parker at far right during her signing with Bryan College on Monday, Dec. 11. The back row, from L-R, are Powell Assistant Coach Brittney Franse, Powell Head Coach Jeff Inman, Bryan College Head Coach Leah Thompson, pitching coach/does pitching lessons Holly Vance and Heat 18U travel coach Courtland Styles.

kids," said Inman. "You never have to worry about them in the classroom or their behavior in school. Just all-around good girls."

On the field, Kayleigh split time in the circle last season with freshman Rianne Boone. A highlight of Smith's junior year was pitching a no-hitter in a 10-0 win over Karns. She has been a two-time All-District honoree and was named to the district All-Tournament team as a sophomore.

"Kayleigh is a pretty good

hitter," said Inman. "She played some first base for us last year when she wasn't pitching. She also has played a little bit at second for us. But primarily in college, she will be a pitcher."

Inman said Hensley can hit with power and for average and has been an excellent catcher behind the plate with a strong arm. She has been an All-District honoree as well as making the district All-Tournament team.

"She can play a few



Lady Panther teammates surround Leslie Hensley at her signing ceremony on Friday, Dec. 8. Top, Emersyn Mayes, Alivia Collins, Jaylan Heatherly and Maddie Crawley. Bottom, Lizzi Lowe, Leslie, and Kayleigh Smith. The Powell catcher signed with Roane State Community College.

different positions, which makes her more valuable," he added. "She's hit in the No. 3 or 4 hole for us pretty much the majority of her career here."

Hensley also is considering the possibility of being a utility player at Roane State.

Leslie's main reason for choosing Roane State was it is "closer to home." Another reason was it provides a "better opportunity to go to a four-year school" and play softball.

Smith said she "liked how

small the school (Bryan) is, being close to home and the coaches."

Leah Thompson is head coach of the BC Lions, while the RSCC Raiders are coached by Marty McDaniel.

Roane State is located in Harriman and Bryan College is in Dayton, about 40 miles away.

Inman noted: "We're really blessed for Leslie to still be playing. A little over a year ago, she was in a bad car wreck after a Friday night football game.

"She battled through that and didn't have to miss any of the season."

Hensley and Smith are the only two seniors on the Lady Panthers' team for the upcoming season.

"Our numbers are down," said Inman. "We are very young. We've got three upperclassmen and 10 underclassmen."

Powell finished second in the district behind champion Karns last season and lost at Farragut in the region semifinals.

Army's Fortner fulfills 'request' from 2020

By Steve Williams

As Central High School's Kalib and Liam Fortner began signing their National Letter of Intent papers with Army in December of 2020, "Go Army, Beat Navy" was shouted from the crowd.

It's been three years since that moment, but well worth the wait for those that were at the signing at the Armory on Sutherland Avenue.

Kalib made two huge plays on Saturday, Dec. 9, just a little over a week ago, to give and protect Army's 17-11 victory over Navy.

Here's the report from The Associated Press soon after it happened:

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Army linebacker Kalib Fortner scored on a fourth-quarter strip sack and then stuffed quarterback Tai Lavatai six inches from the goal line with 3 seconds left to help the Black Knights beat Navy 17-11 on Saturday and win the 124th meeting of the nation's oldest service academies.

The next night on "The Nation," a weekly radio show that airs on The Sports Animal in Knoxville (990 AM), Kalib was interviewed by ESPN's Chris Low, who hosts the show.

"It was an unbelievable



Former Central High players at their signing ceremony with Army in 2020. L-R, Liam Fortner, Coach Nick Craney and Kalib Fortner. Kalib made two huge plays this season in Army's 17-11 win over Navy on Dec. 9.

experience," said Kalib. "That was insane."

The Fortner twin brothers helped lead Central to back-to-back Class 5A state championships in 2018 and 2019 before playing their senior season in 2020.

In their last season playing for the Bobcats, Kalib was a Mr.

Football finalist and The Knoxville Focus / Coaches Player of the Year, while Liam stood out as a wide receiver and strong safety and ran a lot out of the Wildcat formation.

"I didn't know about West Point until my junior year," Kalib told Low.

"That game is all about service.

It's not like Auburn vs. Alabama. You got to be there to take it all in."

Kalib said he was on the scout team all last year.

"I took advantage of my opportunity around Week 4 (this season) when we played Syracuse. It was my first start," he pointed out.

Getting back to his touchdown run after his strip sack, "Honestly, it truly was all a blur," said Fortner. "I don't remember running into the end zone. I got mugged on the sideline."

Later in the show, Low asked Fortner to describe what a day was like for an Army cadet.

"At 6:42, we have morning formation," began Kalib.

The first class starts at 7:40 and the last class starts at noon.

"Practice starts at 2:40 and ends at 7," he said.

Later, more time hitting the books.

"We (he and his brother Liam) are really glued at the hip," he said. "We do homework together. We watch film together."

Low asked Fortner, who still has two more years to play for the Black Knights, where's his 'place to go' eat when he's back in Knoxville.

"Dead End Barbecue," answered Kalib, which is just right down the road from where that guy shouted "Go Army, Beat Navy" that December day three years ago.

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Fascinating Interviews

Who might be among the most fascinating people you have interviewed or written about during your professional writing career? That question has been raised more than once in a number of forums.

Col. Tom Elam, the self-described "shade tree attorney" from Union City, was a "one question interview" in June 1988 about his time with Gen. Neyland in his days as a student on the Hill and his lifetime of involvement with the University of Tennessee and its athletic program.

That interview went on for hours on a Friday morning and afternoon and really could have lasted longer. He settled two legal cases over the phone while we were talking.

Knoxville's Stuart Worden was the president of the U.T. Pep Club in 1953 and led the search for a school mascot that year, the one known as Smokey I. A Blue Tick Coon Hound was selected at a contest at halftime of the season opener against Mississippi State on Sept. 26 and was formally introduced at the Duke game a week later.

According to a brief story in the Knoxville News-Sentinel the next day, the dog would be known as "Smokey."

With few exceptions, there has been a Smokey on the sidelines ever since. That whole process led to a Smokey bio published in 2012, "Smokey: The True Stories behind the University of Tennessee's Beloved Mascot," with co-author Dr. Earl C. Hudson, Smokey's owner at the time.

Marvin West is a treasure trove of information about Vol athletics and a good friend. He has a seemingly unlimited supply of stories at the ready from years of sports coverage.

He was present under the upper deck at Candlestick Park in San Francisco in an auxiliary press box during the 1989 World Series earthquake (Oct. 17, 1989, at 5:04 p.m.). That experience led to a column ("an unusual one," he termed it) titled, "What a Man Thinks When He Thinks He Is Going to Die."

John Ward was equally delightful. That famed voice was always in full flower. Over the years, listeners heard Ward's calls of the great plays in Tennessee football and basketball, peppered by such famous

phrases as "Bottom!" "Give it to him!" "Did he make it?" [Pause for effect] "He made it!" and "Give him six!"

There were many magic moments on the gridiron, such as in the 1985 Alabama game ("Shula back to throw, left-handed, out into the flat... Broken up... Was that intercepted in mid-air? Ladies and gentlemen, what a play by Dale Jones!"), the 1986 Sugar Bowl ("Powell just came roaring down the greensward..."), the 1995 Alabama game ("80 yards, Joey Kent... Touchdown... on Play... No. 1") and many, many others.

One night in early 1977 at Rupp Arena, when Bernard King was at his best, Ward uttered these memorable words: "We don't editorialize much, but this young man can play this game."

It wasn't really part of an interview, but working as a spotter for NBC's Tom Hammond (at Notre Dame in 2001) and Charley Jones (against Penn State in the 1992 Fiesta Bowl) was definitely an education.

Jones was demanding. He was professional. He didn't suffer fools lightly. When you spotted for him, whichever way your team was going was where you sat. If they were going right to left, you sat on his

left side. Left to right, you sat on his right side. That necessitated some scrambling between quarters in a tight booth.

Woe be unto the spotter who blew an identification. The media timeouts were an occasion for review and evaluation. You were expected to know your own team. Period. Once the "lesson" was over, it was over.

I never met Jim McKay of ABC Sports, but he is deserving of special mention. Seeing him on ABC sports programming over the years elicits memories that span the generations.

His legacy begins with a one-of-a-kind lead-in to memorable Saturday afternoon television programming. "Spanning the globe to bring you the constant variety of sport... the thrill of victory... and the agony of defeat... the human drama of athletic competition... This is ABC's Wide World of Sports!"

Described as "understated, dignified and with a clear eye for detail", McKay covered 12 Olympics, but none with more historical import than the 1972 Summer Games in Munich.

McKay never embodied those characteristics more than in early September, covering the terrorist



Stuart Worden (R) is shown with Smokey I and Miss Tennessee 1953, Ruth Ann Barker (L), near the old cheerleaders' platform on the east side of Shields-Watkins Field, on Sept. 26, 1953.

attacks at the Olympic Village. Published reports said he had been on the air 14 straight hours.

"It was the loss of whatever innocence there was in the world," he later wrote.

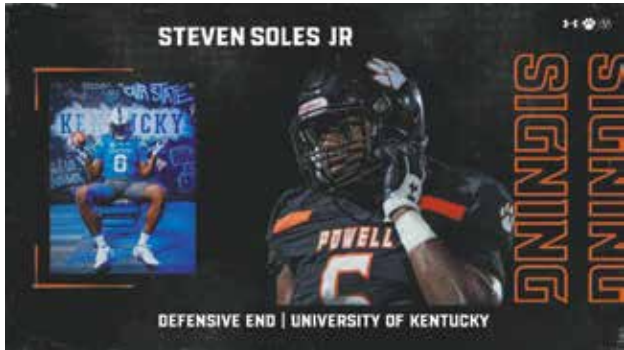
After Black September terrorists had kidnapped 11 Israeli athletes, McKay went into the annals of broadcast journalism as he announced their

deaths after a failed rescue attempt. Never have three words had more power, more emotion.

"They're all gone."

That was Jim McKay (Sept. 24, 1921- June 7, 2008).

These were some initial answers to questions posed over the years.



Soles to sign with Kentucky Tuesday

By Steve Williams

Defensive end Steven Soles will be signing with Kentucky Tuesday afternoon at 2 at Powell High. Soles was a semifinalist for the Titans' Class 5A Mr. Football award in Tennessee this season and also was voted The Knoxville Focus / Coaches' Knox County Player of the Year.



District 2 titles Wednesday. Runner-up teams in District 2 were Gibbs' girls and Sevier County's boys.

In District 3, Oak Ridge girls and William Blount boys took top honors, while William Blount's and Karns' boys were runnerup.

Knox Stars fall to ET Stars, 42-7

In post-season all-star football games this year, the East Tennessee Stars beat the Knox Stars 42-7 at Sevier County High School on Dec. 9.

In the 16th annual TACA East vs. West All-Star game at Austin Peay State on Dec. 8, the West defeated

Continue on page 4

Eckerman earns All-American honors

Colin Eckerman, a Webb School senior who has had a banner season in cross country, took 12th place in the Foot Locker Nationals' 5-kilometer race to earn All-American honors Dec. 9 in San Diego.

Carter sweeps in District 2 bowling

Carter's girls and boys bowling teams captured

Welcome to New York

By Mark Nagi

2015. That's the first time I took my oldest daughter to see my favorite team, the New York Rangers, play a game in person. We had watched them play so many times on television, but getting to walk into a hockey arena was a delight.

It's a sport I grew up watching and, for my money, there is no better sport to watch live in person. The speed, the grace, the aggression... think of a bunch of Al Wilsons. Then think of them skating as effortless as running.

That's hockey. Fast forward to earlier this month. We take an annual holiday trip to New York City and the journey is scheduled around seeing the Rangers play at Madison Square Garden, the World's Most Famous Arena. Yes, we shop... and see the sights.

We went to the top of

the Empire State Building during what felt like a monsoon and yes, it sure is strange being above the clouds. We went ice skating at Wollman Rink in Central Park, and I took a lot of pride in the fact that I didn't fall one time.

We saw the Taylor Swift exhibit at the Museum of Modern Design because these days everything revolves around Taylor Swift.

We also visited the 9/11 Memorial and Museum. That is sacred American ground. They've done a wonderful job documenting that awful day in our nation's history and keeping the memory of the victims alive.

New York City is a great place to visit but is just so massive. You could be there for weeks and never get to everything you want to see. I grew up three hours north of Manhattan, and we'd visit once or twice a year. I love making modern-day

New York memories with my daughter.

Oh, so back to our story. Game day. The Rangers are one of the best teams in the National Hockey League, and on this night, they'd host San Jose, one of the worst teams in the National Hockey League. On paper, this game was going to be a cakewalk, but as we all know, games are not played on paper.

Madison Square Garden is one of my favorite places on this planet, but I've rarely seen the Rangers win a game in that building. But that hasn't stopped me from going to games. Maybe I'm a glutton for punishment. But I first saw the Rangers play there in 1992, and still get chills walking into that structure.

Last year was my daughter's initial game at MSG, and we saw the Rangers get smoked by

Chicago. It was a better experience this time around. On this night Rangers star Artemi Panarin picked up a hat trick, the fans were loud throughout the night, and New York hung on for a 6-5 victory.

You know how you hear people say that winning and losing don't really matter and just going to the sporting event is enough? That might be true, but it sure was a better trip back to Tennessee because our team was victorious.

Regular readers of this column know that from time to time I get on my soapbox about travel, and this is one of those times. Make some memories with your loved ones while you can because tomorrow isn't promised. Mix a trip around a sporting event because there are all sorts of games to choose from whenever you like.

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- HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL -

Roadrunners notch comeback win at Oak Ridge

Shane Cherry scores 39 points

By Ken Lay

Oak Ridge --- A fourth-quarter rally netted a signature road win for the Austin-East High School boys basketball team Friday night.

The Roadrunners overcame a sixth-point deficit to capture an 83-77 win over Oak Ridge in the 5 Star Prep Hoop Jam before a spirited crowd at Wildcat Arena.

"We wanted to come over here and play them so we could find out where we're at," Austin-East second-year head coach Darnard Bertrum said. "They're always well-coached and this is a great environment for high school basketball."

Bertrum is certainly familiar with the atmosphere at Wildcat Arena, having served as an assistant coach to Oak Ridge coach Aaron Green.

"He's my boss," Bertrum said. "I used to work over here and I knew that Aaron would have his team prepared because he always does."

The Wildcats (10-2) darted out to a fast start and took a 7-0 lead when Ray'Quan Watson knocked down a shot with 5 minutes, 48 seconds remaining in the first quarter and Oak Ridge appeared poised to run away with the game. But brothers Shane and

Condis Cherry had other ideas.

Condis, a freshman, scored seven of his 21 points in the opening frame and Shane, a junior who has received NCAA Division I scholarship offers from several schools including Tennessee and East Tennessee State, had seven of his game-high 39 points in the inaugural stanza and the Roadrunners narrowed the deficit to 25-22 by first quarter's end.

Then, the game turned into a heavyweight prize fight with the two top area high school basketball powers trading punches. It was also a roller coaster ride with teams matching buckets throughout the contest.

For Austin-East, the week was one of the toughest. The Roadrunners (9-3) had three road games against West High, Central and the Wildcats. They prevailed in all three, knocking off the Rebels, 61-59, on Sutherland Avenue on Tuesday and outlasting the Bobcats, 65-63, in Fountain City Thursday night.

The Roadrunners have beaten Central twice this season, but their week wasn't over Friday night. They played Chattanooga Howard on Saturday afternoon (results were unavailable at press time).

"We had a big win at West Tuesday. We won by two points, and then we beat Central (Thursday

night, and we won this one tonight, and I'm not even sure what the final score was, but we won."

The Roadrunners, despite holding a lead several times in the second stanza, trailed, 43-39, at halftime and were down, 64-58, heading into the final frame.

In the fourth quarter, Shane and Condis Cherry took over. Shane had 26 points after halftime and made four free throws down the stretch to seal the victory and Condis nailed a 3-pointer with 34 seconds left to give Austin-East a 79-77 lead.

Kaden Brightharp scored 24 points for the Wildcats, who led, 71-66, midway through the fourth quarter. Watson, who was saddled with three fouls in the first half and eventually fouled out, had 19 points and Cooper Williams finished with 17.

Fulton 73, Stone Memorial 39: In Friday's other boys game at Wildcat Arena, the Falcons improved to 11-0. Taj Kimber scored 14 points and Derrick Smith added 12. Nick Skeen had 11. Dexter Moulden scored 10. Tyler Lee had eight and Denaj Kimber finished with seven.

Moulden and Lee grabbed seven rebounds each for the defending Class 3A state champions in the 2023 state sectional rematch between the Falcons and the Panthers.



PHOTO BY LUTHER SIMMONS.

Austin-East point guard Shane Cherry drives to the hoops as Oak Ridge's Cooper Williams defends. Cherry scored 39 points to lead the Roadrunners to an 83-77 win over the Wildcats Friday at Wildcat Arena.

Soles to sign with Kentucky Tuesday

Continued from page 3

the East 14-7.

Miner steps down at Hardin Valley

Jeff Miner resigned as head football coach at Hardin Valley Academy last week after two years on the job. He had been a longtime defensive coordinator at Oak Ridge prior to filling the HVA post in 2022.

In other news at Hardin Valley, baseball coach Tyler Roach was placed on paid administrative leave last week. Roach, who turns

32 today, guided the Hawks to state runner-up behind Farragut in Class 4A last spring. He's been at HVA five years.

Halls matmen drop to No. 15 in state poll

Halls' boys wrestling team was ranked No. 10 in the first Tennessee poll of the season, but dropped to No. 15 in last week's second rankings.

Cleveland is No. 1 in the latest poll.

Now in its 31st year, The Poll is primarily a measure of dual

meet strength with some consideration to individual tournament strength. Votes are cast by a state-wide panel of high school wrestling coaches and are based on a maximum Power Ranking of 131.

Swimming as a sanctioned sport denied

In a TSSAA Legislative Council meeting in Hermitage earlier this month, a proposal to add Swimming as a sanctioned sport was denied and a proposal to add Girls' Flag Football was tabled

until the April meeting.

Time to sign up for KFOA scholarship

It is time to remind high school students in the Knoxville Football Officials Association's service area that it is time to apply for a college scholarship from the KFOA. The East Tennessee Fund, who manages the KFOA's scholarship program, is now accepting 2023 KFOA Scholarship applications for our annual scholarship awards. Scholarship application deadline ends is Feb. 15.

Last year the KFOA awarded two - \$2500 scholarships each for two years. There were less than 25 applications last year. The possibilities of receiving an award is very high with so few applications, pointed out Harold Denton, who is on the Scholarship Committee.

An applicant must have either played football at his/her school and/or be directly associated with the team (such as cheerleader, dance squad member, football manager or football trainer).

For additional information, contact Denton at 865-256-1948.

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