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## Adam Thompson running for District 8 Commission Seat

By Ken Lay

Adam Thompson is running for Knox County Commission. He's thought of throwing his hat in the ring in the past.

But now, he said that the time is right to run for office.

"I've contemplated running before, but with Richie (Beeler) not running for

re-election, and not having an incumbent now is the right time," said Thompson, a lifelong resident of District 8. "I'm running to give the people of District 8 and the people in Knox County, in general, a voice."

Thompson is one of four candidates seeking to replace Beeler. He's

opposing Republicans D. J. Corcoran and Kara Daley. Democrat Charles Chandler is also bidding for the District 8 seat on the commission.

Thompson is a graduate of Gibbs High School and a sixth-generation farmer in Corryton. He attended the University of Tennessee, where he earned a degree

in Animal Science.

District 8 is the largest district geographically in Knox County and includes voting precincts in deep North, Northeast and East Knox County.

"District 8 is unique. It's the largest in Knox County," said Thompson, 42, who attended Corryton Elementary School and

Holston Middle School. "The people have a 'cando' attitude and they look after their own.

"We're concerned about a lot of the same issues. We can be rivals on a Friday night, but we also come together."

If elected, he will prioritize the land use issue

**Continue on page 2**



Adam Thompson

## Snow Day Memories

By Focus Staff

Before the thaw began this week, Focus staff shared memories of their Snow Days of yore.

### A Fun, Carefree Time in North Knoxville

My family did the regular things — making snow angels, building a snowman, having snowball fights. There was a big ridge across from where I grew up and my brothers (not me) would always go sledding for HOURS on ole tire inner tubes.

My Dad was a worrier in bad weather, I'm sure because he felt the responsibility of providing and keeping us safe. I am a lot like him now. That comes with responsibility I guess. But my Momma was much like us kids. She loved the snow! After we'd all play outside she would pop popcorn in a cast iron skillet. She'd make homemade snow-cream and homemade hot chocolate with real cream and real sugar. It was wonderful! I have cherished memories!

I love making new memories now with my hubby Burton and our pup

Sadie Mae.

- Ruthie Akers, Focus Office

### Cocooning in 2024

For Focus Senior Writer Mike Steely, last week's weather was certainly memorable!

Tuesday morning I found the canvas garage that sheltered my Yukon had collapsed with the weight of the snow, ripping the canvas and breaking the frame. That was frustrating and, aside from pulling the SUV out, it was too

**Continue on page 4**



From left: David Klein and his father, Albert, skied at Winterplace, West Virginia, the first weekend of January 2024. Sadie Mae and Burton Akers return to the warmth of the house after an outing in the yard last week. Contributing photographer Barry Houchin shared a picture of the cheery birdhouse in his wife's garden as the snow began to fall again last week.

See this week's Sports and Recreation, Section C this week for area coaches' fond winter memories!

## Election commission approves ballot, hears of lawsuit

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The five members of the Knox County Election Commission have a lot on their plates with the huge county, state and federal elections looming this year.

The three Republicans and two Democrats met earlier this month and heard everything from UT students and staff requests for a polling location on campus to a lawsuit filed against the election commission by a former candidate.

The commission also voted to certify the existing list of candidates for both primaries in March. The West Knox Republican Party had asked that Garrett Holt not be permitted to run for county commission District 4, charging that Holt is a "liberal Democrat." That charge was not discussed and Director Chris Davis told The Focus the Tennessee Republican Party had approved Holt's candidacy.

Davis told the meeting that Knox County election

**Continue on page 4**

## Kingston Pike Connections gets more city funds

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Knoxville City Council is poised to add additional funding to the Kingston Pike Connections Project when it meets Tuesday evening.

The project includes building bike lanes, a new sidewalk, drainage, curbs and gutters, and some widening, lighting and signal modifications. The work stretches along the south side of the street from Wesley Road to Golf Club Road and along the west side of Golf Club Road to the Messiah Lutheran Church driveway. The idea is to create connections for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel.

The council may vote to add \$93,727 to bring the contract with Southern Constructors Inc. to \$2.3 million. A similar contract adjustment with Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson Inc. for the construction and engineering of the project is on the agenda boosting that agreement to \$293,852. In both contract amendments, the date of completion may be extended.

In zonings and housing resolutions, the council will hear appeals from John Holmes and Daniel Sanders. Holmes wants a 22-bedroom duplex designated as an "Independent Living Facility" and not a "Two Family dwelling." He's appealing a zoning

administrator's opinion.

Sanders speaks for the Oak Knoll Homeowners Association in appealing a Board of Zoning Appeals decision for a variance. Scott Buroff wants to increase the front setback at 5660 Lyons View Pike from 84.9 feet to 213 feet.

The council will consider changes to the city code regarding accessory dwelling standards and closing portions of Layden Drive, Bonnyman Drive and Reed Street. A lot at 2812 Merchant Drive may be changed from Low-Density Residential/Neighborhood Commercial to Residential.

In other action, the council may approve an agreement for a study and design for the Broadway

Accelerated Bus Corridor project for \$1.3 million and revise an agreement for \$1.5 million for low-income housing for senior citizens.

The Knoxville Police Department is asking that Larry M. (Mike) Patty be hired part-time to oversee the Wellness Program and be a police representative on the Mental Health Forum.

Kentucky Oil Refining may be hired as the bulk fuel provider for the Fleet Service Department for one year for \$4 million.

Ellie Kittrell may be approved to the Community Health Council and Claudio Gomez and Oren Yarbrough reappointed and Joe Tolbert Jr. appointed to the Public Arts Committee.

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# Ben Byrd Did Not Like Bobby Knight

From a distance



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

Reprinted from The Knoxville Focus, April 25, 2023

When my fellow Focus columnist, Tom Mattingly, wrote recently about Ben Byrd, the longtime sports editor for the Knoxville Journal, it brought back some memories for me, too.

I knew Ben well from being around so many Knoxville sports events and also because I worked full-time as a reporter for the Journal during my senior year at UT, 1968-69.

For younger readers and

the many thousands who have moved here since the '90s, the Knoxville Journal was our morning daily newspaper. It closed in 1991.

Ben Byrd was named Tennessee's Sportswriter of the Year five times and worked at the Journal from 1947 until it closed.

He was always nice to me and seemed to like (and be liked by) almost everybody. However, one man he did not like was Indiana basketball coach Bobby Knight.

I saw this firsthand at a UT basketball banquet at which Knight was the featured speaker. I had been invited to present an award at the banquet and my late wife and I sat at the head table next to Ben Byrd and his wife.

Bobby Knight was basketball's version of Donald Trump, and that night his speech was a colorful, lengthy, and sometimes

obscene blast at the media.

Ben was clearly disgusted. I could tell because he shook his head a couple of times and made a critical comment or two to me.

At the end of Coach Knight's speech, everyone stood to give him a standing ovation. Ben and his wife remained seated.

The next morning Ben wrote a story about the event telling which players got awards and about some of the comments made and stories told.

He did not mention Knight in his article until the very last paragraph. My memory of what he wrote is as follows:

"The featured speaker for last night's dinner was Indiana basketball coach, Bobby Knight. It is unfortunate that the high caliber of speakers at previous basketball banquets was not reached by last night's performance."

When I was a boy and not yet old enough to get hourly-pay jobs, I sold programs at UT football games and popcorn and Cokes at the basketball games.

When I was 12, I saw Tennessee play West Virginia in a basketball game on Dec. 29, 1959. Jerry West wore number 44 for West Virginia and scored 44 points.

His team was behind 41 to 37 at halftime, but came back to win 76-72. The Knoxville Journal the next morning reported it this way:

"The old basketball maxim that one man can't beat you holds up 99 times out of 100. Last night was that 100th time. Make no mistake about it. Jerry West IS West Virginia. He is unstoppable...impres- sive as they are, the statistics still do not tell the full story. You have to see this boy to appreciate him." West that night hit 17 for

25 from the field (68 per- cent), 10 of 11 free throws, and had 12 rebounds. It was a game I have never forgotten.

Another impressive player I saw in person was Pete Maravich when Tennessee played LSU. He averaged 44.2 points a game during his college career and had an amaz- ing 28 games in which he scored 50 points or more. What makes all this even more amazing is there was no such thing as a three- point shot at that time.

I got to go with my father and brother to an NCAA Final Four Championship game at the University of Maryland in 1966.

That game has gone down in history because it was the first time an all black team, Texas Western, played and all white team, Kentucky, for that cham- pionship. The Texas team beat the Kentucky team coached by the legendary

Adolph Rupp by a score of 72-65.

Four years later, Boyd- son Baird, the longtime Maryville College coach and athletic director, let me go with him to see another Final Four Championship game at the University of Maryland.

UCLA was led by Lew Alcindor, who later became Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Jacksonville State was led by Artis Gilmore. UCLA won the game 80-69.

I thought I knew quite a bit about basketball until I sat with Coach Baird that night. He pointed out little things to me that I never would have noticed. More importantly, he was just a really nice man.

If you want to read about the complete opposite of these great players, look up the March 13, 2021 issue of The Knoxville Focus and the column I wrote entitled "My Pitiful Basketball Career."

# Some Random Thoughts

Nikki Haley is trying to beat Kamala Harris to become the first Asian-American president. She had better hope that Biden lives out his term.



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

"Elite" college campuses are not the only places inhibited by the pro-Hamas crowd. It seems that the "progressives" in Washington government jobs have been infected as well. Did you see where 17 Biden campaign staffers anonymously wrote a letter opposing his stand on the Israeli-Hamas war? The staffers called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to military aid to Israel. Obviously, this is a bunch of cowards or else they would have penned their names to the letter and they should

resign or be fired. The chief of staff to the controller at the Pentagon also called for a ceasefire. The Wall Street Journal reports that 500 appointees and staff from 40 agencies, including the National Security Council and the Justice Department, have sent Biden a letter demanding a cease-fire and "de-escalation" between Israel and Hamas. Also, more than 1,000 employees at the U.S. Agency for International Development have signed a similar letter. Members of the State Department also objected to the administration's policies. Then there were the gutless congressional staffers on the Capitol steps wearing masks to express their displeasure.

One minor official in the Department of Education did resign over the administration's stance in the war as did one in the Department of Education. All the rest should do the same.

Is it just me? I am tired of every article on race, DEI, and Critical Race Theory saying "after the killing of George Floyd." I bet if young people were asked who is the most prominent black person in American history, they would answer George Floyd.

This year's college football playoffs featured two teams from the Big Ten (Michigan and Washington) and two from the SEC (Alabama and Texas). I have no doubt that Washington and Oregon will continue to thrive in the Big "10" but have my doubts about USC and UCLA. But it will be

interesting to see how Texas and Oklahoma will fare with an SEC schedule.

Claudine Gay, forced out as Harvard's president, says that her ouster was due to racism and was an attack on the "pillars of American society". She refuses to acknowledge the obvious - that her elevation to Harvard's presidency was due to her race, gender and progressivism. As to the attack on the "pillars of American society," she is referring to the education establishment. Yet given the rot at the core of American education as evidenced by the student pro-Hamas protests, abuse of DEI, Critical Race Theory and LGBTQ indoctrination, it needs to be attacked. She obviously is not going quietly but her whining is tiresome.

Predictably, the

"everything is racist" crowd of grifters said that her resignation was because of her race when her rapid rise to become Harvard's president was due to her race. A white male with the same resume would never even get an interview.

When did we get the mandate to call illegal immigrants illegal? Now they are just "migrants."

Post George Floyd, the Oracle Who Names Stuff dictated that we now capitalize "black" but not "white." The rebels out there responded by starting to capitalize "white." Obviously, a bunch of racists. Me? I refuse to capitalize either unless it's my name.

A climate scientist (Willie Soon) has confirmed what I have been saying for years

that climate change is due to the sun's axial tilt and not from carbon dioxide. I have said that we got global warming when the ice age ended and there were no automobiles or weed eaters then.

I've also said that if the fossil fuel energy companies had put the first wind turbines the Save the World crowd would have wanted them banned given how many migratory birds were being killed. Now the wind farm contractors are admitting that the sea-based turbines are killing all the whales and dolphins that are dying in their vicinity. Yet not a peep from the green crusaders.

If systemic racism is due to the government, I might be in favor of reparations. More on that later.

## Adam Thompson running for District 8 Commission Seat

Cont. from page 1 and noted that as development expands, in the area, it must be responsible and respectful.

"Land use is the No. 1 and No. 2 issue. We have a lot of rural undeveloped land and we're next to the county line, so we're about as deep in the county as you can get," Thompson said. "Development has to be responsible and respectful to the community."

Knox County is growing exponentially and Thompson views that as a positive, but said land must be protected in some instances, saying that land must be respected and some things that the district has

had for years must stay in place.

"We need to think about the people who are already here, and we want the people who are coming to enjoy those same things that we already enjoy," he said.

He also noted that the district features several businesses and industries that are unseen.

"We have a lot of industry here that a lot of people don't see," Thompson said. "We may not have as many brick and mortar businesses, but we have a lot of industry."

Thompson also said that support of education and law enforcement will be priorities for him.

"I'm not running for school board, I'm running for county commission," he said. "But I'll see that we have a responsible budget," he said.

Thompson noted that many educators and law enforcement personnel live in the district.

"I know people in law enforcement. They are my neighbors and my friends," he said. "They're the people that you have dinner with and they're the people that you see in church on Sunday morning."

"Our educators in our schools, like our law enforcement officers, also live here."



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Deadline for ad design is Monday at 5 p.m.  
Deadline for Classified ads is Thursday at noon.  
Deadline for submissions is Thursday by noon.  
Articles, announcements, photo attachments and outlines may be submitted by e-mail to staff@knoxfocus.com.  
Publisher ..... Steve Hunley  
Editor, Art Director ..... Marianne Dedmon  
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# Publisher's Positions



**By Steve Hunley,**  
**Publisher**  
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## Idiotocracy: The Beat Goes On

I appreciate all the many comments received from readers of last week's editorial about our new "Idiotocracy." We may begin a new regular feature whenever some idiot reaches new heights of idiocy. We already have a new contender for "Idiotocrat of the Week." Jamaal Bowman, the fire alarm-pulling congressman from New York and the Squad's token male member deserves that designation and is almost certainly a prime candidate for "Idiotocrat of the Year." Bowman is pushing a bill to hold the federal government responsible for slavery at a cost of \$14 TRILLION in proposed reparations. Now, Bowman says that can be accomplished without raising a dime of taxes. To quote Bowman: "When COVID was destroying us, we invested in the American people in a

way that kept the economy afloat. The government can invest the same way in reparations without raising taxes on anyone."

"Where did the money come from? We spent it into existence," Bowman said. Evidently, the congressman never got over his uncle producing a quarter out of his ear as a child.

Bowman also insisted the "incarcerated should be able to vote." "And I definitely think that when they come out, they should automatically be enfranchised."

Jamaal Bowman is not only an idiot, but ignorant as well. A school principal before being elected to the House of Representatives, Bowman seems not to realize the federal government fought a civil war over ending slavery. Nor does he have any grasp of economics, claiming our country can spend money into existence.

It is an idiotic idea, sponsored by an idiot and has earned Jamaal Bowman the "Idiotocrat of the Week" award. I doubt it will be his last.

## Good Job, Tim

On the other hand, our congressman, Tim Burchett, is reintroducing a simple, yet important bill for consideration by the U.S. House of Representatives. Burchett's bill may be one of the shortest bills to be introduced in Congress

thus far. The Burchett Bill reads: "After the reading of a bill title, the Clerk shall read the estimated cost, if any, of such bill as determined by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office." Law requires the Congressional Budget Office to estimate the potential cost of any legislation passed by the House and Senate once it has received the approval of a committee.

The state legislature similarly has an estimated cost to bills being considered in Nashville. Requiring the Clerk of the House of Representatives to reveal the projected cost of legislation can't hurt a thing, and nobody would be able to say later he/she didn't know what it was going to cost. I don't doubt for a moment some of the price tags would cause eyes to pop and, in some instances, heads to explode.

Our country is more than \$35 TRILLION in debt as it stands and cost matters. Statics indicate the cost of that debt equates to \$101,288 per person in the country and \$264,090 for each individual taxpayer. That's a good reminder there's no such thing as "free" stuff from the government, somebody pays for it.

Someone should ask that genius Jamaal Bowman why don't we spend the debt out of existence. To give him credit, he and his fellow Squad members are

trying to spend it all.

## Rachel Maddow: What A Joke

Rachel Maddow, the anchor of DNC/NBC "News," could be the poster child for the Idiocracy of the American Left. Smugly self-righteous, secure in her self-righteousness and her belief she is smarter than just about everyone else on the planet, Maddow presumes to speak as if she were the embodiment of the spirit of the late Walter Cronkite, an icon of the news broadcast in the United States. While Ms. Maddow opines and talks about "truth" and "lies" on her own show, she wouldn't know the difference if either were to run her over. When she accused one network of being the most "obsequiously pro-Trump right wing news outlet in America" that was "paid Russian propaganda," that same network filed a lawsuit against her. What's interesting about that case is an Obama-appointed judge dismissed it, citing in her dismissal Maddow's audience, small as it is, realizes her show consists of mere opinion, as well as "hyperbole" and "exaggeration." It was an open recognition that Rachel Maddow's broadcast is not news, but rather a broadcast to share her own leftist views. Ms. Maddow is as far from a journalist as the

Earth is from the foot of God's throne.

## Antisemitism Is Unamerican

The rise of antisemitism in this country should be highly disturbing to all intelligent people. The world has seen nothing like it since the heinous regime of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Investor Leon Cooperman, who has donated tens of millions of dollars to colleges and universities, recently said too many young people have poop for brains. That isn't exactly what he said, but you get the idea. Cooperman noticed some students parading around with signs proclaiming themselves to be "Gays for Palestine," while likely having no clue Israel is the only country in the Middle East that accepts gay people. Nor do the students realize Hamas spent its foreign aid to build underground tunnels, leaving their people to suffer in filth and poverty, while Israel has spent foreign aid on humanitarian programs.

It is utterly disgusting to read a Holocaust memorial has been vandalized - - - twice in a matter of days. The first incident was a swastika, the symbol of Hitler's Nazi Germany, painted near the memorial. In the second incident, garbage was literally strewn about the Horowitz Wasserman Holocaust

Memorial Plaza.

When people forget history, terrible things happen to a civilized society.

## Stay Safe

With Knox County under a heavy blanket of snow, all of us here at The Focus pray you and your family have begun to emerge from the awful cold unscathed. We hope you remained warm and endured no more hardship than being homebound.

Virtually everything came to a standstill with businesses and government offices unable to open, employees stranded and unable to report to work. Even the Post Office seemed unable to deliver mail to residents for most of the week. Knoxville hasn't seen anything like this winter storm since the blizzard of 1993, which dumped 14 inches of snow on Knox County.

The terrible weather has delayed the intended opening of the Tennessee General Assembly. Legislators are supposed to gather in Nashville on Monday, January 22, 2024, although it may still be problematic. We must face one problem at a time.

## Rules changes, merit board on county commission agenda

**By Mike Steely**  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

More than 8 inches of snow and below-freezing temperatures forced the cancellation of the Knox County Commission's work session and other meetings last week. The commission will apparently meet today and approve the majority of the agenda as "consent" items but Chairwoman Terry Hill has designated several items for discussion and a vote. Individual commissioners may also call for some of the "consent" items to be discussed.

### Attendance of meetings

The commissioners may discuss changing the attendance rules for all board and committee members. Over the past few years, attendance at some meetings, including commission meetings, has fallen off. The rule change, if passed, will require

members to attend at least 75 percent of meetings over 12 months or they will be asked to resign.

If a committee chair is unable to reach a member that is absent, that member will be considered to have resigned. That seat would then be considered vacant.

"A member's record of attendance shall be considered with respect to renewal of a board term or future assignment to a committee" states the proposal.

### Anonymous Correspondence

Last month Commissioner John Schoonmaker mentioned letters and correspondence being received by the commission without a signature or the identity of the sender given.

Anonymous correspondence protocol **Continue on page 4**

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A peaceful view from Focus writer Jamie Schnell's home.

## Snow Day Memories

Cont. from page 1

cold to do any repairs.

We brought in the propane heaters, just in case, and went to bed after checking the ZERO forecast, cutting off any unneeded lights, and waited for sleep by worrying about waking up to no heat.

By Thursday the Knoxville temperature climbed up to almost 34 degrees and the sun came out briefly. The evening was forecast for freezing rain followed by snow and, again, it was going to be about 10 degrees outside.

I've got to praise KUB for keeping the electricity flowing and the city and county for doing the best they could on the streets. Our street, however, stayed frozen and slippery to a point that some cars could not use it safely.

### Taking to the Slopes

Focus writer David Klein grew up in Knoxville and still looks forward to snow days any time they happen. "I love sledding on snow days and making snowmen. I've been sledding every day this week since the snow started on MLK Day. Love to ski as well on powder days.

Klein fondly recalls making a sled track and ramp during the Blizzard of 1993.

### Riding a sled and playing basketball fill my Snow Day memories

My favorite two Snow Day memories are riding a sled in Clinton with my brothers and friends and playing basketball in the Rec Hall gym downtown.

We lived at the bottom of a dead end street with the road going downhill on the left and a hillside of neighbors' yards on the right, where we would like to build ramps to fly over.

As I got older, I remember going to some of the biggest street hills in Clinton to sled down at night, with a bonfire burning at the top of the hill to provide light and keep you warm after you made the climb back up.

The Rec Hall gym would be opened for us to play by George Margrave or Mr. Carden. The basketball court was about two-thirds



The heavy snow was just too much for senior writer Mike Steely's new canvas garage. The roof fell with the weight onto the frame of the Yukon but did little damage. It was a very unwelcomed surprise last week.

regulation size and the only court to play on at that time in the late 1960s and the winter of 1970 (my senior year).

We usually played games with three or four players on a team. While a game was going on, other teams would wait on the side for their turn. If your team won, you would say "next!" If your team lost, you had to get back in line. Obviously, you wanted to win and keep playing!

- Steve Williams  
Sports Reporter, Columnist

### Snowy Travels

Snow days are definitely the most fun for the young of heart! I remember many snowmen constructed in childhood — which gave way to more ambitious snow forts in later years. Mom's "snow cream" was always a hit after changing into dry clothes and finishing off a mug of hot cocoa.

More recent memories include being caught on interstates during winter blizzards while traveling to Peoria, Illinois, or Jackson, Tennessee, from Knoxville. Driving at a snail's pace made it very easy to take note of all the vehicles and semis pulled into the medians and shoulders.

- Marianne Dedmon, Editor

### Cherishing the Stillness

Growing up on Long Island, N.Y., I experienced the magic of snow days. The stillness and peacefulness accompanying these special days remind us to slow down in a fast and ever-changing world and appreciate the beauty



Judy Dedmon takes a break from pulling Marianne and Kenneth on a snowy Seawee morning in the early 80s.

surrounding us. These snow days allow me to continue this magic by creating more memories with my family by photographing the snow-covered landscape and wildlife, building snowmen and

snow angels, and sledding together, followed by hot chocolate and warm cuddles. I cherish this stillness and the opportunities it brings to spend quality time together.

- Jamie Schnell, Writer

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## Council seeks public input on alternate response

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

If you are interested in speaking to the city about its mental health, substance abuse or homeless policies you may want to attend a public hearing on "alternate response" on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

The Knoxville City Council is inviting the public to attend and voice opinions and suggestions. The meeting

Each speaker will be permitted to comment for five minutes and is asked to address three questions:

- What is your experience with emergency services related to mental health, substance use,

and homelessness in Knoxville?

- What aspects of these services need to be improved in Knoxville, and what opportunity do you see for additional services such as "alternative response"?

- What is your organization's capacity or interest in improving existing emergency services or future potential alternative response?

Those wishing to speak should contact Will Johnson, city recorder at wjohnson@knoxvilletn.gov or by calling 865-215-2075. The first 25 registered to speak will be confirmed before the meeting.

## Rules changes, merit board on commission agenda

Cont. from page 1

will be discussed in a possible rule change or amendment. The proposal calls for any notification to be forwarded as a copy to the "proper authority."

### Abolishing the EMS Cost Review Board

Last year when the county was asking for proposals by companies to provide ambulance service, a cost review board was appointed to review the various proposals. American Medical Response was eventually chosen to continue service and the board's review played into that selection.

"The new Ambulance Service Contract which

goes into effect on February 1, 2024, does not provide for the existence of the EMS Medical Services Cost Review Board," is the proposed change recommended by the Knox County Health Department.

### Right to file a grievance

Current rules of the Knox County Sheriff's Office Employees' Merit System limit the right of KCSO employees to file a grievance to any loss of pay longer than three days. The merit board is asking the commission for a second and final vote to permit employees to file a complaint about any suspension where there is a loss of pay.

## Election commission approves ballot, hears of lawsuit

Cont. from page 1

workers will simply ask voters which primary they wish to vote, noting there is no statewide "bonified" party membership. He said that if anyone challenges a voter in a party primary, the decision would be made by three election officials in that precinct.

The commission approved both parties' primary ballots for March, authorized two new precincts, and approved appeals for several voters who mistakenly checked "felon" on their registration forms.

Davis told the commission of a lawsuit filed by former candidate R. C.

Lawhorn against them in an attempt to get the paper ballots from his election to be made available to the public.

Davis said the lawsuit is the first in the eleven years of his service there and that the state requires the ballots to be "Kept secure and not for public inspection." The commission voted to turn the lawsuit over to the Knox County Law Department.

The Knox County Election Commission consists of Administrator Davis, Chairman Hannah Hooper, Secretary Julie Gautreau, Bob Bowman, Eddie Smith and Adronicus Thomas.

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## The Doctor is in

a weekly column by  
Dr. Jim Ferguson

### Forecasting

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them for the fruit they produce.  
Jesus Christ

Becky loves snow, and so do I. Since we're retired, we were not inconvenienced by the first snow of 2024. We were prepared, but that included a quick trip to Kroger's after church to pick up a few items; and it seemed the rest of Knoxville did as well. It is my observation that snow-prep includes the trinity of bread, milk and hotdogs.

I was critical of the Knox County school system's recent closure because of a rain and wind forecast. A well-connected friend said that the administrators were worried that wind would blow the buses over. Give me a break. It did rain, but far more wind emanates from Ol' Joe. I wonder if anyone has done a study on the cost to businesses

and for childcare when schools close.

It is difficult to predict weather in the Tennessee Valley. But it is hubris to think that we understand the climate, weather systems or can predict mother nature. The ancient Greeks thought that arrogant pride (hubris) was the worst of human sins. In fact, the Greek tragedies were written to portray the foibles of man, and hopefully educate people to choose virtue and avoid mistakes.

I'm not a meteorologist, but a forecaster for the "storms" ahead. A friend asked me why the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) is recruiting workers with "severe intellectual disabilities, psychiatric problems and those with disabilities such as paralysis or those with missing extremities." A rational person can't understand how an organization that oversees American aviation can promote such DEI lunacy. Or why the

Johns Hopkins Hospital has a DEI Chief who disparages "white people, heterosexuals, men and Christians." She was forced to recant, but the damage was done. Their culture has been revealed. This "forecaster" could never advise a patient to go to Johns Hopkins because such cultural rot endangers patient care. The modern trope - go woke, go broke - says it for me.

DEI is a tornado tearing across America. It is in corporate boardrooms, medicine, government, sports, academia and virtually all aspects of our culture. DEI stands for diversity, equity and inclusion. However, progressives have turned diversity into a divisive cudgel. Progressive Democrats have made equity an execrable policy. Equity is a policy of mandated outcomes, rather than equal opportunities under Constitutional rule of law. And lastly, tolerance has become intolerance of anyone who disagrees with Democrats. Therefore, DEI must "DIE" if America and its ideals of freedom and equality are to survive.

The ancient Chinese general, Sun Tzu, maintained that you must know your enemy. You may not understand the mindset of a DEI loon, but you should know about them. DEI advocates are neo-Marxists and of the same stripe as ANTIFA, BLM and

the pro-Palestinian insurrectionists swarming the White House or glueing themselves to highways.

It's snowing as I write on MLK Day. It's also the day of the "Hawkeye-Cauci," as Rush Limbaugh used to say. But I'm distracted by the execrable Fani Willis, Fulton County District Attorney, one of the many Democrat operatives using law-fare against President Trump to interfere with the 2024 election. This hack is having an illicit affair with a married attorney she hired to prosecute Trump. And when caught trying, she told her church congregation the criticism is racial. Like Dr. King, I believe the content of one's character is what's important, not skin color. This woman has a dark heart.

The vast number of Americans are good, decent people, even if they disagree on politics. Unfortunately, there is a small number of anti-Constitutional subversives who are already making plans if President Trump is reelected. If you doubt me, read the NBC News article of January 14, 2024 entitled "Fears grow that Trump will use the military..." I've previously written of the dangerous times in which we are living, and especially the crisis period between November 4th and Inauguration January 2025. You should never underestimate the danger

of hatred.

The climate change loons make long range forecasts based on computer models. I'm not a computer expert like my son-in-law. However, I do understand the trope "junk in, junk out." In other words, the highly suspect inputs in the computer models have corrupted the models' results. The loons who follow climate "scientists" Al-gore, Lurch (aka John Kerry), barista AOC and "neurodevelopmentally" impaired Greta Thunberg, to block highways, destroy art and howl at the moon are clueless and their forecasts should be ignored.

So, with these disclaimers, I'll venture my intermediate range forecast for 2024. Ol' Joe is way too old, demented and the Progressive Democrat policies he's rubber stamped have been disasters. He has no achievements to run on and will step down after pardoning Hunter and his family of current and future crimes. Pomade Newsom will be the Democrat nominee in Chicago. Kamela is toast, but don't ask her for toast recipes.

Iowans have spoken and President Trump triumphed in the Hawkeye-Cauci. Trump will be the Republican nominee and will be historically reelected as President. To paraphrase the odious Maxine Waters, 45 will historically be 47. And anarchists and

loons will become violent when Trump is reelected.

There is a high risk of attempted assassination, but 47 will persevere as he has done since he first became a presidential candidate. And because Trump now understands the enemy, the FBI, CIA, the DOJ and the Deep State will be reformed, justice will be done and America will be great again.

President Trump will finish the wall and those who broke the law will be deported. We will become energy independent again because this is a national security issue. Our economy will recover with more businessman-like perspectives and reforming the entitlement mentality. The January 6 political prisoners will be pardoned and released. And we will be safer in a hostile world because our enemies will again respect and fear us.

I was a pretty good doc in my day and part of that was prognostication. I may not be as insightful as a forecaster of national affairs, but I'm working, writing and praying to hopefully make a difference for my country, kids and grandkids. Past generations fought for me, and now it's OUR time to stand in the gap and support President Trump, the true leader.

You may email Dr. Ferguson at [fergusonj@knoxfocus.com](mailto:fergusonj@knoxfocus.com)

## Friends of Parrott-Wood Memorial Library looking for new members

The Friends of Parrott-Wood Memorial Library (3133 W. Old A.J. Hwy., Strawberry Plains) are seeking new members. The Friends are currently planning a History Tour fundraiser in April. If you are interested in volunteering to help support Parrott-Wood Memorial Library, please come to the Friends' meeting on January 23, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. Please call (865)933-1311 for more information.

The Friends of Parrott-Wood Memorial Library are dedicated to assisting the library with

raising funds for enrichment programs for all ages, advocating for library services, and volunteering for various projects for the library.

### Roles of a Friends Group

Friends are citizens who value the service of public libraries and volunteer to help them. Friends usually operate with a self-elected board of directors, representing the community.

Friends are kept informed of

**Continue on page 2**



Parrott-Wood Memorial Library's staff and director have been named Modern Woodmen of America's Hometown Heroes. Each employee has received a certificate and a \$100 donation for the Friends Parrott-Wood Memorial Library in his/her name. Sharon Redden, president of the friends group was very excited to receive the checks on behalf of the Friends of the Library. Hometown Heroes from left to right: Ginger Spradlin, substitute and program helper; Jason Ray, substitute; Lisa Ebel, clerk II; Teresa Clark, clerk I; and Donna Phillips, director.

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FROM THE MOUNTAINS BY JADON GIBSON

# Chief Little Crow's War Part Three

By Jadon Gibson

Was it a coincidence that the Dakota tribe's annuity payment from the United States government arrived on the day the Dakota War, or Little Crow's War, began? In any event, it arrived too late to stop the destruction as Dakota attacks were already set in motion.

The annuity payment was for the Sioux or Dakota land, the sale of which relegated the Indians to a 20-mile-wide reservation along the upper Minnesota River. The Dakota was part of the Sioux. The annuity payments had been consistently late or non-existent causing the Indians untold hardship. Chief Little Crow was largely responsible for the beginning of the war which caused him to lose much of his good standing among his people.

The need for food was the main cause of the Dakota War of 1862. The Dakotas had several early successes due to the number of adversaries and the advantage of surprise attacks but it soon turned against the Dakotas. Most Dakota fighters surrendered soon after the Battle

of Wood Lake on September 26, 1862. They also released 269 captives to former Minnesota Governor Col. Henry Sibley including 162 mixed-bloods, some of whom were descendants of Dakota women. Little Crow avoided capture by fleeing to Canada.

Over three hundred Dakota prisoners were brought before military tribunals in early December. They were convicted of murder, rape and mayhem with many of the trials lasting less than five minutes. Most Indians didn't fully understand what was happening nor were they represented by defense counsel.

Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple, who lobbied for the reform of government policies toward Native Americans, urged President Abe Lincoln to offer leniency. Minnesota Sen. Morton Wilkinson and Gen. John Pope told the president that "leniency would not be received well by the settlers because of the atrocities committed during the Indian uprising." President Lincoln reviewed the trial records, desirous of distinguishing between those who engaged in warfare

against the United States and those who committed crimes against civilians.

"Private revenge will take the place of the official sentence if all 303 are not executed," Minnesota Governor Alexander Ramsey wrote in a letter to the president. "It would be wrong to refuse this. More hangings would result in a large electoral majority in the election of 1864."

"My conscience would not allow me to hang men for the purpose of gaining votes," the president replied before commuting the death sentence of 264 prisoners. An additional Indian, Tatemina, was granted a reprieve therefore he did not face the gallows.

A mass hanging of 38 Dakotas was carried out on December 26, 1862, in Mankato, Minnesota, all on a single platform. They were led from their quarters blindfolded and in single file. Their hands were tied tightly before them. Once the nooses were tied around their necks the 38 men began singing the Dakota death chant in unison "hi-yi-yi" and began swaying back and forth as a group causing the scaffold to

move back and forth with them.

When the provost marshal yelled for them to stop, the Dakotas asked that the death masks covering their faces be removed. They were not and the Indians began individually yelling their names and the names of others who were being hanged. They swung their arms side to side in harmony until several of the doomed men were able to grasp the hand of those next to them. The provost marshal and soldiers hurriedly climbed down from the scaffold.

A drummer began slow, rolling beats and the Indians resumed their shouting which could be heard throughout the large crowd. Soon the trapdoors were sprung and the men fell through and death followed almost immediately. The rope of one of the men broke and his body fell clumsily against the frozen earth. Although his neck was broken like the others, he was hanged again.

All but two had been baptized two days prior. All were buried in a single trench on the riverbank. It was the largest mass execution

in American history. The Indians who were granted a reprieve by President Lincoln watched the hanging through the chinks of the building in which they were held.

Interestingly, Little Crow mistakenly felt it was safe to return to Minnesota one year later. On the fateful day of July 3, 1863, the famed Dakota chief was shot and killed while picking raspberries with his son. A bounty of \$500 was paid to Nathan Lamson.

Little Crow's son converted to Christianity and became a Presbyterian minister, serving as a Marine in France during World War I. He attended medical school following military service and became an outstanding medical doctor.

It is unfathomable that one of Little Crow's granddaughters, Ida, discovered her grandfather's bones hanging on display in a Minnesota museum. After notifying her brother, Jesse, he took legal steps to gain the return of the bones of his grandfather. They were returned and properly buried by the Dakotas in 1971.

The United States Congress

**Continue on page 4**

## Friends of Parrott-Wood Memorial Library looking for new members

**Cont. from page 1**

Friends decide how to spend the money raised for the library after conferring with the Director of the library.

Friends recognize that they do not perform a policy-making role for the library, but should feel that their opinions are valued.

Friends serve as "connecting links" between the library and community.

Friends supplement what cannot be provided by the library budget with funds, materials, equipment and services.

Friends decide how to spend the money raised for the library after conferring with the Director of the library.

Fundraising by the Friends is done in coordination with the library director.

Individually and collectively, Friends use their influence to assist the library in obtaining desired financial support, representing the library point of view to legislators and the media.

## The Snow Did Return

It snowed. I'd about decided that we humans had screwed up the environment so much that snow would never fall on East Tennessee again. I'm glad to see I was wrong.

At our house, I took my tape measure and stuck it in the white stuff Monday evening. It hit the ground about ten inches down, and the snow increased its intensity as it fell from the cloudy sky. I wondered if the area was in for another 1993 event. No one should think that I've changed my mind and now love the stuff. The feeling of being trapped still brings on anxiety. Years ago, I was afraid of running out of smokes, but quitting that habit has erased that fear. Boredom also sets in quickly when the only thing to do is watch television or read something. The frigid temperatures keep me from any project outside, and working on mowers or woodworking projects isn't comfortable in our unfinished basement.

I don't worry about bread, milk, and eggs, so neither



By Joe Rector  
joerector@comcast.net

Amy nor I made a mad dash to the store. If our children were still little and at home, things might have been more alarming. Instead, we can eat the items we already have in the house.

I recalled the snow days we had when Lacey and Dallas were young. He even called me before the snow began and asked if I would pull him down our icy road on the giant coal scoop my older brother once used to fill the coal furnace at home. I laughed as I thought of pulling a son larger than I am on that shovel.

During my teaching years, I was caught at school on one occasion when the snow hit suddenly. Buses began running routes, but the roads quickly became treacherous. The drivers stopped at the high school and dumped the elementary and middle school students. The youngest were terrified to be in a place where they'd never been before. I finally made it home at 10:00 p.m. when the last student was taken

home by volunteers with four-wheel drive vehicles.

During graduate school, the most remembered ice storm hit. I was in night class, and by the time the professor dismissed us, driving on the roads was impossible. Until 3:00 p.m. the next day, I wandered between the building in which the class was held, the Krystal, and the motel behind it. Even driving out of the parking lot proved difficult with a thin coat of ice covering the asphalt. Another hour and a half was spent navigating the roads home as I dodged abandoned and wrecked vehicles and crept across black ice.

My plan was to stay inside and watch the snow come down. My dog Sadie had different plans. At least half a dozen times, she barked and barked until I took her outside. Since the day we rescued her, the dog has loved the snow. She turns into a pup and runs, jumps, and plays. Sadie plunges her entire head into the deep snow and sniffs for only God knows what before scooping a mouthful of snow to chomp on. Finding a place to take care of business was difficult for

her. The dog hates for the wet ground or deep snow to touch her bottom as she relieves herself.

Once inside, wiping the ice and moisture from her feet, legs, and belly takes a few minutes. Then she's ready for a treat and a long nap, after which she goes through the same routine. On a couple of occasions, her quick sprinting almost dumped me into the snow. Those times outside with her reminded me of dealing with my own children when they were toddlers. The big difference was my age and ability to control a muscle-bound mutt. Still, I love the dog as if she were one of my children, and her spoiled acts are my fault. Besides, walking around in the deep snow was fun and brought back plenty of good memories.

The snow has ended, but a deep freeze is predicted for tonight. I'm ready for the sun to come out and clear the roads so that I can get on with my life. Yes, I liked "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening," but now the things I want and need to do are calling me back.

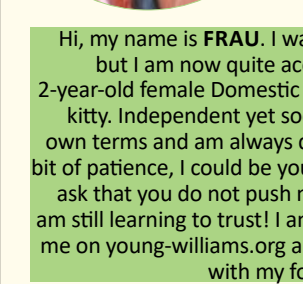
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Hi, my name is **FRAU**. I was once the queen of playing hard to get, but I am now quite accustomed to a bit of pampering. I am a 2-year-old female Domestic Shorthair cat who is quite the unique kitty. Independent yet sociable, I savor petting sessions on my own terms and am always down for a nice chat. With love and a bit of patience, I could be your perfect chill-out companion. I only ask that you do not push me too quickly to be a cuddle bug as I am still learning to trust! I am currently in foster care. You can find me on [young-williams.org](http://young-williams.org) and fill out an application to get in touch with my foster pawrent to set up a meet and greet!

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# Appointing a Senator: John D. Hoblitzell Jr. of West Virginia

## Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill

rayhill865@gmail.com

The process for replacing congressmen and U.S. senators is quite different. When a congressman resigns or dies in office, that vacancy must be filled by calling a special election. When a member of the United States Senate resigns or dies in office, the governor must appoint a successor who serves until the next election. In Tennessee, the Class I seat has never had a vacancy in modern times. In fact, since 1911, that particular seat has had only eight occupants to this date. Of course, one of them was Kenneth D. McKellar, who held the seat for thirty-six continuous years. By contrast, the Class II seat from the Volunteer State has had nineteen occupants during the same timeframe. Six of those occupants were appointed to fill vacancies.

Those appointed to the United States Senate are free to run to hold the seat, although some governors purposely appoint someone with the clear understanding he or she will not run in the next election, but rather hold the seat until the people have elected a replacement.

Matthew Mansfield Neely had held every office the people could elect him to of importance in his home state of West Virginia. Neely was the political Lazarus of his age; he could suffer a defeat and come roaring back in the next election. At various times, Neely was elected to the House of Representatives, the United States Senate, the governorship, to the House once again, and made a triumphant return to the Senate in 1948. Neely was reelected in 1954 at age eighty. Senator Neely seemed to be in relatively good health when he was elected to his final term but by 1956 he was ailing. Neely had undergone an operation on his prostate, which may well have been for cancer. That November, Neely fell and fractured his hip.

His colleague Harley Kilgore had died and a 1956 special election saw Republican Chapman Revercomb returned to the U.S. Senate by the people of West Virginia. Revercomb had defeated then-Governor Neely in 1942 to serve a six-year term. Neely came back in 1948 to beat Revercomb. The two served together briefly. Neely, who had lost three fingers on his left hand to cancer, was suffering from the dread disease once again. Harry McPherson, a young aide to Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, recalled his feeling there was even then something of the mines and hollows of West Virginia about old Matt Neely still.

The 83-year-old senator suffered from cancer for eighteen months before finally dying on January 18, 1958, in Bethesda Naval Hospital.

As is usually the case, the incumbent's body is hardly cold before speculation in the news media begins about the potential successors. Neely was no different and the same day the Beckley, West Virginia Post-Herald and the Raleigh Register printed an obituary for the dead senator, they also printed an article about a prospective successor.

1956 had been a big year for Republicans in the Mountain State. Not only had Chapman Revercomb been reelected to the U.S. Senate, but President Eisenhower had carried the state and the GOP had elected Cecil Underwood governor. Underwood was the youngest man ever to be elected governor of West Virginia, being 34 years of age when he won his first term. Underwood remarkably is also the oldest man ever to be elected governor of West Virginia, winning his second term 40 years later on his 74th birthday. A former high school teacher who had been elected to West Virginia's House of Delegates, Underwood won an upset victory over a nominee who was a protégé of Matthew Neely.

The name most prominently mentioned in the speculation as to who would succeed the colorful Neely centered around John D. Hoblitzell Jr. Hoblitzell was the chairman of West Virginia's Republican Party. A businessman from Ravenswood, Hoblitzell had raised money and worked hard for the GOP ticket and its success in the general election. Immediately following Senator Neely's death, neither Governor Underwood nor John Hoblitzell would comment upon the rumors about the latter being appointed to the United States Senate. The governor said he would not consider the appointment until after Senator Neely's funeral. That consideration and respect for the late senator and his family did not stop the speculation in the daily newspapers. For the first time in 30 years, West Virginia would have two Republican United States senators.

When Senator Harley Kilgore died in 1956, Governor William Marland appointed attorney William R. Laird III, who was an old friend from college. As Marland was a candidate for the U.S. Senate in the 1956 special election, Senator Laird served as a placeholder until the voters chose between the candidates. In 1958, the situation was different, although there was some



FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

Senator John D. Hoblitzell of West Virginia, 1958.

speculation Underwood might opt to run for the Senate, although most political observers thought the governor would remain in Charleston as he still had two years remaining on his term as the state's chief executive.

Governor Underwood considered several prominent West Virginians for the senatorial appointment, including Helen Holt, the widow of former U.S. Senator Rush Holt, a Democratic firebrand who had become a Republican and had quite nearly been elected governor in 1952. Some years later, Underwood told me some of those he had considered for the appointment to the United States Senate were bitterly disappointed when they did not receive it and never spoke to him again.

Hoblitzell was sought out by reporters, who asked if he would accept appointment to the U.S. Senate should Governor Underwood offer it. Jack Hoblitzell carefully replied, "anyone interested and involved in politics would consider it a high honor to be appointed to the Senate." Hoblitzell then reminded the reporters, "It will be the governor's decision and I will abide by the decision and work for whoever is appointed." Cecil Underwood and John "Jack" Hoblitzell were friends of longstanding, and few were surprised when the announcement came.

Governor Underwood made the announcement with the kind of flair Matthew Neely would have appreciated. Underwood made known his choice in a 30-minute live press conference on television. At the mid-point of the news conference, the 45-year-old banker and real estate man walked into the room. Hoblitzell readily acknowledged the weight of serving in the United States Senate, saying he was fully aware of the "awesome responsibility" of the office. Underwood had stated in his press conference his

appointee would be a candidate in the 1958 election. Hoblitzell reiterated his intent to run, saying he had already started his campaign for the Senate and would soon file his candidacy officially with the secretary of state. A reporter quizzed the governor about 1960, inferring the senator might step aside so Governor Underwood, who could not succeed himself, might run for the Senate. "Any speculation about 1960 is just that - - - speculation," Underwood replied. "If you are trying to intimate that a deal has been made, there is none."

While it was certainly true Jack Hoblitzell was a loyal and active Republican and had done yeoman work in helping the GOP state ticket to victory in 1956, it was also equally true the newly appointed senator had, at best, a spotty electoral record. Hoblitzell had run for Congress in West Virginia's Fourth District in 1956 against former Congressman Will E. Neal, who was seeking to make a political comeback. Neal won the Republican primary and went on to win the general election. 1958 was not looking to be a banner year for Republican candidates as the country was in the midst of a painful economic recession and both of West Virginia's seats would be up for election that year. Senator Chapman Revercomb had already demonstrated his vote-getting prowess when he had won a six-year term in the U.S. Senate in 1942 by beating the best vote-getter amongst the Democrats in the Mountain State, Matthew M. Neely. While Revercomb had lost his reelection bid in 1948 and another in 1952, Chapman Revercomb was very well known to West Virginians and was a highly popular figure, especially in Republican circles.

West Virginia Democrats were well aware of the vulnerability of the Republican candidates, which encouraged strong candidates to

run. Congressman Robert C. Byrd of Charleston announced he would challenge Senator Revercomb for the full six-year term. Byrd even then was a formidable campaigner and had served six years in the House of Representatives. Byrd had no serious opposition inside the Democratic primary. The contest for the Democratic nomination for the seat held by Jack Hoblitzell was a fight between former governor William Marland, who had been defeated by Chapman Revercomb two years earlier, and former congressman Jennings Randolph of Elkins. Randolph had first been elected to the House of Representatives in 1932, riding the tidal wave that was Franklin D. Roosevelt's campaign. Jennings Randolph, named for William Jennings Bryan, had served in Congress during the first one hundred days of the New Deal. Randolph remained an old-time New Deal Democrat and was an able speaker, having taught public speaking as a college professor. Jennings Randolph had been elected and reelected to seven terms as a congressman, finally losing in another tidal wave election in 1946. That year, Republicans campaigning on the slogan "Had Enough," got solid support from American voters tired of the deprivations and sacrifices made to win the Second World War.

Out of office, Jennings Randolph became a lobbyist for the airline industry. Randolph wisely kept up his ties to West Virginia and the Mountain State's Democratic primary. Former Governor William Marland had been the youngest person ever to be elected chief executive of West Virginia before Cecil Underwood claimed that title for himself in 1956. Marland's term as governor had been turbulent and his proposed tax on the coal industry had started a brutal fight in the West Virginia legislature. Marland had only

narrowly defeated Attorney General John Fox inside the Democratic primary in 1956 and lost the general election to Revercomb. Seeking a comeback in 1958, Marland's stormy term as governor did little to help him and Jennings Randolph won the Democratic nomination easily.

Chapman Revercomb almost did not seek reelection to the U.S. Senate, as he very much wanted a federal judgeship. What Senator Revercomb may not have known is his hopes for a judgeship were undermined by his own party. Governor Underwood and Senator Hoblitzell thought Revercomb too old to be appointed to a federal judgeship and gave him only lukewarm support. The appointment never materialized. Ironically, Chapman Revercomb would outlive the much younger Jack Hoblitzell.

Robert Byrd and Jennings Randolph ran as a duo in 1958 while Chapman Revercomb and Jack Hoblitzell cooperated, but each was running his own campaign. The 1958 elections were disastrous for Republicans, who lost thirteen seats in the United States Senate, including two in West Virginia.

Jack Hoblitzell left office in November when Jennings Randolph was certified the winner of the special election, making him West Virginia's senior senator. Robert Byrd would remain in the U.S. Senate for the next 51 years, making him the longest-serving senator in our country's history.

Hoblitzell remained active in business and politics. He died of a massive heart attack in 1962; he was only 49 years old.

Chapman Revercomb became a candidate for the GOP nomination for governor in 1960 and considering his large following inside West Virginia's Republican Party, it took the open and determined opposition of Governor Cecil Underwood to stop him. It left a bad taste in the mouths of many Republicans and Underwood lost the Senate race that year, the gubernatorial race in 1964, the GOP nomination for governor in 1968 and a humiliating loss to Jay Rockefeller in 1976. Underwood's political career was revived twenty years later when he was urged to run and was again elected.

All politics is local and even a pebble tossed into the pond ripples back to the shore.

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## Coaches' memories of 'Snowball' Days

By Steve Williams

There were no basketballs bouncing or bowling balls rolling last week.

Wrestling, where no ball is needed, had been halted too by the deep snowfall that many Knox County residents woke up to on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday last Monday.

Schools were closed and sports shut down all week due to the snow and frigid temperatures that created treacherous roads to drive on.

You could have called it Snowball Season!

With sports pages needing to be filled, The Knoxville Focus asked coaches if they would like to share Snow Day memories and pictures.

Five coaches jumped at the opportunity.

Enjoy, with Hot Cocoa!

### Best part is spending time with family

**Russell Mayes, Fulton:** "I have certainly enjoyed this big snow with the kids. They wake us up every morning ready to go outside. We have a nice little hill next to us for them to sled on. The best part of the time off is to just be with family. It is nice for the world to stop for a few days so we can be together."

Mays wears many hats at FHS. He is the WKCS-FM radio station manager, a production and

broadcasting teacher, does play-by-play at the Falcons' football games, is the school's Sports Information Director and is an assistant baseball coach.

"I remember during the blizzard of '93 that our family walked in the snow from North Hills to the McDonalds on Broadway just because we needed something to do," recalled Russell. "I remember it being strange that we were the only ones there!"

### Snow war in the cul-de-sacs

**J.P. Burris, Farragut:** The head boys basketball coach and Physical Education teacher said he grew up in the Farragut/Bearden area and "we had a few good snow days over the years."

His favorite things to do: "Going over to sled at (hilly) West Valley Middle School and play snow football games in Tan Rara (a neighborhood in West Knoxville). "It's on Fox Road and used to be right were the Bearden High / Farragut High zoning line was."

His special memory: "One of my years in high school our whole neighborhood got snowed in because the entrance was a very large hill. We gathered almost 30 kids in the neighborhood for a huge snowball fight where we built two bases in two side by side cul-de-sacs and stayed out for almost three hours in the dark having the time of our lives."



Russell Mayes and his two kids, Anderson (left) and Reagan enjoy last week's "big snow."

### The Mains thing was he won the game

**Travis Mains, Knoxville Catholic:** "Riding a sled into the side of the house when I was 12 years old and cutting my knee so bad I had to go get nine stitches and then played that weekend in sweatpants," said the Lady Irish basketball head coach.

"All the kids were asking why I was playing in sweat pants and playing with a limp," he added. "Man I loved some basketball and my parents knew how much I loved it and let me play anyways. Still have the scar and remembering how I didn't want to miss any games. Still got double figures and got the W!!"

### Six inches of snow looked like a 'blizzard'

**Lauren Williams, Berean Christian:** "I grew up in Florence, Ala., where we had more tornados than snow days, but when we did, it was so exciting to see at least an inch and get out

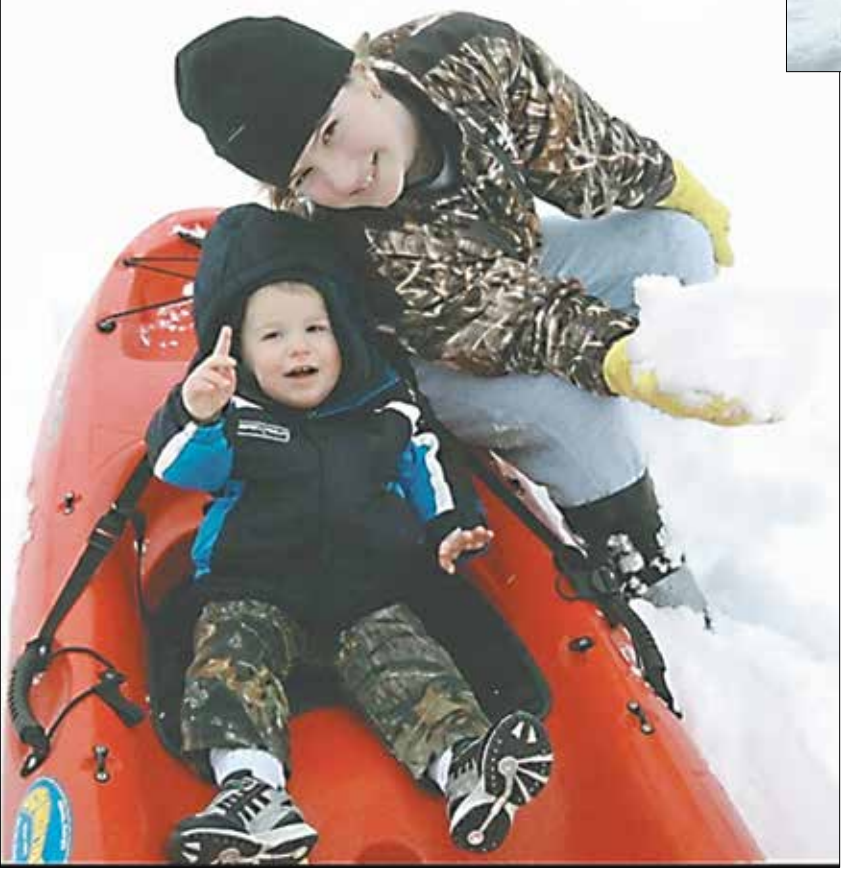
of school for it.

"My favorite thing to do on snow days as a kid was to walk down to my friend's house and we would go make snowmen with the little snow that was on the ground," continued Williams, who is the Head Women's Volleyball Coach at BCS. "We would use all the snow in the yard that we could find. After that, we were too cold to stay out and would come in and drink hot chocolate."

"When I got older and we traveled for volleyball in the winter, at some of the places we would go it would be snowing," pointed out Lauren, who played on the Carson-Newman beach volleyball team in her college days. "It was always so fun to play in the snow with my teammates because we hardly ever got snow back home."

"My favorite memory is when I thought we had so much snow and we only had about six inches," she added, "and I got to spend the night at my friend's house on a school night and her mom made us a blanket fort. We

**Continue on page 2**



Lauren Williams and baby brother, Drew, use a kayak as a sled on a rare snow day in Alabama in 2011.

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# Homegrown Gibbs OC earns TnFCA state award

**Tyler Kitts:  
'It's a humbling honor'**

By Steve Williams

Tyler Kitts may be the head football coach at Gibbs High School someday.

At age 37, he is putting together quite a resume. He has been coaching at Gibbs for 15 years, including the past 11 seasons as the Eagles' offensive coordinator.

In 2022, Kitts was named the Tennessee Football Coaches Association's Assistant Coach of the Year in Region 2-4A. And for this past season, he has been selected the TnFCA Assistant Coach of the Year in the state for Class 4A.

"It (the award) means everything," said Tyler. "Obviously, you want to be respected by your peers. You don't necessarily do stuff to get noticed. You do it for the kids. You do it for your community. And you do this because you're at Gibbs and you want to be successful. The fact that your peers take notice while that's happened; it's humbling and honestly an honor."

Like 75 percent of the coaches on the Gibbs football staff, Tyler is a Gibbs guy.

"On our staff alone, there are so many guys that have put in so many years and



PHOTO BY JJ SPEARS

**Gibbs High School Offensive Coordinator Tyler Kitts is the TnFCA Class 4A Assistant Coach of the Year**

poured into the kids; they do just a phenomenal job," added Kitts. "We have so many good coaches and (the award) is humbling, because I know just even in East Tennessee and throughout the state, there are so many great coaches who have been doing it for a long time and have made such a big impact on football in the state."

Gibbs line coach Brent Gibson is a former TnFCA Assistant Coach of the Year award winner on the region

level.

Record-setting running back Boone Brockwell also made the TnFCA All-State team this year. "He had a phenomenal season," said Kitts.

Tyler grew up playing youth football and baseball at the Ruritan Park in Corryton and with GYA (Gibbs Youth Athletics).

He continued to play those two sports at Gibbs High and was a quarterback for former longtime head coach Randy Carroll.

Brad Conley was Tyler's QB coach for three years and Geff Davis was his baseball coach.

A 2005 Gibbs graduate, Kitts played baseball at Carson-Newman University and graduated in the spring of 2009.

"I was really lucky," said Tyler. "Coach Conley (who succeeded Carroll) hired me on for football in the fall of 2009 and Coach Davis added me to his baseball staff in the spring of 2010.

"I'm forever grateful to him (Conley) for giving me an opportunity," said Kitts.

"In 2013, Conley promoted me to OC and I've been doing that ever since and Coach (Brad) Turner retained me (when he became head coach). We are really close and teach in the same department (Physical Education)."

Kitts said the success Gibbs has had in the past few years is a direct correlation to how great of a job the middle school program is doing in the MAC (Middle School-Age Conference).

"Johnny Hibbett is the (GMS) head coach and Zack Beeler has a huge part in that too," said Kitts. "I'll be honest, I don't think I would get an award like this if those guys didn't do such a great job, because the players are so ready and prepared when they get to us.

"As a high school staff, we are reaping the awards of an awesome job that the

middle school is doing. And obviously we have great kids and great community support. That's the coolest thing about Gibbs; it's just such a good community."

It's no secret that most good high school football programs have a good feeder system.

"The past two years we've been blessed with some really skilled kids on the high school team," said Kitts. "In 2022, we threw for 2,500 yards and then rushed for 2,000. This year was more ground based. I think we threw for around 1,000 yards and the rushing total was at least double that.

"Boone had like 1,300 yards himself and scored 30 touchdowns. There were a lot of other guys that played really important roles. We had a young offensive line that really grew as the season went on and developed an identity. And some guys stepped up that were behind the scenes."

His aspirations to be a head coach someday?

"That's something I've always wanted to do," said Tyler. "With Coach Turner, I see all the responsibilities. There's a lot of stuff, but yes, most definitely (it's) a career goal. But the timing would have to be right with everything ... if it presents itself.

"It's not anything I'm going looking for," he added. "It would have to

be whatever Coach Turner decides. Because, like I said, I'm a Gibbs guy. I love our school. I love teaching at our school. Love our community. Grew up here and have no desire to leave."

In other words, the talented OC is happy with where he is right now.

"A hundred percent," he said.

"As Coach Turner says a lot of times, that's the fun part - getting to call the plays and scheme and stuff like that. As a head coach, everything comes back to him. And I guess we kinda get to still play, because we get to do the Xs and Os and all the fun parts and he has to manage."

Kitts added that Coach Turner is an "absolute blessing" to work for. "He brings energy to our program, to our coaches and to our kids.

"One of the big things with him is he doesn't want to have our kids want for anything. He has a second to none mentality as far as materialistic things and opportunities. He wants to be cutting edge with everything and wants to offer the best. And not just from the competitive element of that, but from just the true, deep caring nature he has for kids and our community and our school."

He also has an award-winning offensive coordinator who someday may follow in his footsteps.

## Karns bowler leads local girls into state individual tourney

**Lady Hornets to face Dickson County**

By Steve Williams

Karns High's Abigail Dalton posted the top Division I girls' individual qualifying score among Knox County bowlers this season and will compete Wednesday in the TSSAA State Bowling Championships at Smyrna.

The Lady Beavers' senior had a 983 total score in her six games in the qualifying round.

Others who will be competing in the girls' Division I individual competition are Carter seniors Kayla Rucker (959) and Gracie Miller (941) and Gibbs junior Malyiah Smith (919).

In Division II girls, freshman Madeline Scott of The King's Academy qualified with a 832 score and Catholic senior Lauren Prince with a 797.



*Abigail Dalton, Karns High School senior, will be making the trip to Middle Tennessee this week to compete in the TSSAA Bowling Championships' Division I girls individual tournament Wednesday at Smyrna. Dalton posted the top score among Knox County qualifiers earlier this season.*

The lone qualifier among local boys was TKA senior Brody Blazier with a 984.

In team competition, the unbeaten Carter girls (21-0) will carry the Knox County banner



at the state and face Dickson County (21-1) in the first round Thursday at 12:30.

Coach Ray Wynn's Lady Hornets will be making their third straight appearance at the state,

which runs through Friday's finals at the 52-lane Smyrna Bowling Center.

The TSSAA state bowling tournament was originally scheduled to be held last week, but due to the weather conditions statewide it had to be postponed.

**Mullins, Hardin Valley AD, is retiring**

Hardin Valley Academy Athletic Director Mike Mullins announced Friday that he is retiring, effective today (Jan. 22).

The longtime AD worked for 15 years at Oak Ridge and the past two years at Hardin Valley. He has been involved in high school athletics for 37 years.

Mullins graduated from Lincoln Memorial University in 1986 and started his teaching and coaching

career at Powell Valley High, his alma mater. He joined the Oak Ridge football coaching staff in 1989.

Mullins was named the TSSAA Athletic Director of the Year in 2009-10 - the first year that award was given.

Hardin Valley currently has an opening for a head football coach and its baseball head coach is on paid leave.

**Fulton still No. 1 in AP rankings**

Fulton, which lost 69-67 to Austin-East in its last game on Jan. 13, remains No. 1 in The Associated Press boys basketball state poll as of Jan. 16. Coach Jody Wright's Falcons are 18-2.

In Class 4A, Bartlett (18-2) is

**Continue on page 4**



*High school sophomore Lauren Williams and her friend, Katherine, celebrate the biggest snowman they have ever built back in 2015.*

## Coaches' memories of 'Snowball' Days

**Cont. from page 1**

probably slept and played in the fort for over a week.

"My dad used to bring out our kayaks and we would pull my baby brother around on it like a sled. We would also try to use it going down a little hill in our backyard."

In addition to being the Lady Eagles' volleyball coach, Williams is an elementary SOAR teacher at Berean. The condensed version that SOAR stands for, according to Williams, is Support, Opportunities, Accommodations and Reach our goals.

"We work with kids with Learning Disabilities such as ADHD, Dyslexia and other reading/Math disorders," she said.

**The 'Snow' must go on, despite dog bite**

**Buzz McNish, Fulton:** "We definitely had snow days growing up," said McNish, the Falcons' head baseball



*Buzz McNish and his son, Manny, put the finishing touches on a Manny-sized snowman a few winters ago.*

coach and a College and Career teacher. "We had a big hill by where I grew up. Everyone in the neighborhood would gather there to sled. We would sled all day long.

"A funny memory, or maybe not so funny, from one of those snow days revolved around sledding," added McNish. "The hill was right in front of our

house.

"The dog we had growing up was very protective," pointed out McNish. "One day while we were sledding, I was wearing a ski mask, so my face was completely covered. I was yelling, like kids do. Our dog (named Rebate) got out of the house about the time I started to take off down the hill.

"I guess our dog thought something was wrong, he jumped on me and bit a hole through my ear inside the ski mask. It was painful, but I put the dog back in the house and kept sledding.

"Then you have a family of your own and make new memories with them," concluded Buzz.

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# A true All-American football player

When I once wrote a column asking Vol fans to name the legendary figures over the course of Tennessee football history, someone wrote in and nominated George Cafego, the Vol tailback from 1937-39 and assistant coach from 1955-84. There are numerous others, on and off the field, but George Cafego was a good starting point.

Some people say that a number on a Tennessee orange football jersey is merely a number, a ready means of identification. There is, however, more to the impact of a number than you might realize.

There was a night in early 1998 that that thought process hit home. It was Feb. 11, the night the Tennessee community paid tribute to George's life at Rose Mann Heritage Chapel in West Knoxville. The line of visitors stretched up the aisle and nearly out the door.

On the sign-in book outside the chapel, the following signature appeared, short and to the point: "Frank Kolinsky, No. 72." Here's the connection.

Nicknamed "Bad News," George Cafego had worn No. 72, rising from obscurity to become a Tennessee legend on and off the field. For his part, Frank had also worn orange jersey No. 72 during his time as a Vol lineman from 1955-57.

"I was proud to wear his number," Frank said. "It was an indication of the

respect and admiration I had for him, on and off the field. I wanted people to know how honored I was to share that number with him."

There have been numerous stories written about Cafego's journey to Tennessee from Scarbro, West Va., starting with an all-night bus ride to Knoxville. He became an All-American selection in 1938 and 1939 in Gen. Neyland's second tenure as head coach.

Gen. Neyland once described Cafego as "the only practice bum I ever coached who was a true All-American football player. He couldn't do anything in practice, but, for two hours on a Saturday afternoon, he did everything an All-American player is supposed to do."

The SEC "Player of the Year" in 1938, George was featured in a Look magazine spread on the lure of college football and centered around the 1939 Alabama game. He was a consensus All-America selection in 1938 and 1939 and the No. 1 NFL draft choice of the Chicago Cardinals in 1940.

A member of the Vol coaching staff from 1955-85 under head coaches Bowden Wyatt, Jim McDonald, Doug Dickey, Bill Battle, and John Majors, George coached the backs and kickers and oversaw the scout squad. He earned great loyalty from his scout team members, as evidenced by another reference in the guestbook.

After a former Vol walk-on signed his name, he

wrote: "Proud to have been a scout team member for Coach Cafego."

"It's a great chance to be with the boys who are going to be leaders in the community one of these days," said Cafego about his experience with the scout team. "Most of the boys who work for me think they'll make it to the varsity. Many do. These boys are part of the team, and they make a great contribution. Once they come to realize this, they work hard."

Cafego, who came to Knoxville as an undersized tailback (5-10, 145), challenged his charges to make the most of their opportunities on the practice field.

"Sometimes we move the ball down to the five-yard line, and there is the varsity defense across the line," said George. "I put the monkey on their backs. I tell them every man on the field is watching to see what they can do. If they want to get on the varsity, right there's the place to make it. Take that ball and stuff it down their throats."

On ABC's telecast of the 1999 Fiesta Bowl, Keith Jackson paid tribute to George's life and Tennessee career. Here's what Keith said late in the game: "Phillip Fulmer went to see George Cafego, who is an absolute legend in Tennessee football history, two days before he passed away. George said, 'Good luck. I'll be watching.' Good night, George, and thanks. Nobody's name rests higher in Tennessee football than George Cafego."

Players wearing No. 72 may come and go (31



George Cafego, shown here in a 1930s publicity shot, was a VFL long before anyone coined that term.

players have worn that number to date), but, for one night in 1998, there were entries in a funeral home guestbook that revealed special truths about the life of a great man and his impact on Tennessee football.

No. 16 will always be

Peyton Manning. No. 17 will always be Tee Martin. No. 45 will always be John Majors. No. 57 will always be Steve Kiner, No. 64 Jack Reynolds, and No. 92 Reggie White.

No. 72 will always be George Cafego.

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