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Junior commission applications due this week

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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Thursday, December 19 at 5:00 p.m. is the deadline for applications from high school juniors and seniors wanting to become a Knox County Junior Commissioner. This will be the third year of the civics education and leadership training program. The goal of the program is for students to

learn the functions of their local government and develop healthy citizenry habits while promoting the importance of community engagement and public service.

A student may apply online at www.knoxcounty.org/juniorcommission or get more information by calling (865)215-2534.

Applications will be reviewed by the Knox County Commission members on Monday, December

23. The Knox County Junior Commission Class of 2025 will be announced the week of January 6 with orientation starting on January 16.

Selected applicants will attend commission agenda review and zoning meetings, a beer board and regular commission meetings and take a field trip with the sheriff's office and district attorney to the Knox County Detention

Center in January.

In February, the junior commission will take field trips to Engineering and Public Works, Planning, the health department, libraries, and the election commission. They will also attend a special session and zoning meeting and a beer board and commission meeting.

March will see the junior commission hold its own mock

meeting and debriefing and attend another agenda review and zoning meeting before graduating and being honored at the end of the month.

The program concludes on April 1 with a graduation banquet at Calhoun's on the River.

Knox County junior and senior students in public and private schools or accredited home school programs may apply.

A Family Tradition



Sisters Jane Wright and Judy Spitzer along with their brother, Charles Wright, keep fond Christmas traditions going like baking delicious, old-fashioned stack cakes to share with family and friends using recipes handed down from their mother, Dora Staley. Pictured (left to right) are Kellie Ward, Ann Acuff, Charles Wright, Leann Dalton Berry, Jane Wright and Judy Spitzer.

Trustee's disabled veterans effort will get support from commissioners

By Mike Steely
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During the Knox County Commission's agenda review meeting last week, Trustee Justin Biggs asked for support for his effort to get the state to fully fund the local tax relief program for disabled veterans and their widows.

Biggs told the meeting that local funding of the program has dwindled to about half the available funds and the payment of taxes for that group could mean a difference at Christmas, on property taxes, medicine and other expenses. He said the current program is down 30% and he's sending letters to local state representatives with the idea of getting legislation to fund the program.

He said his efforts would continue with or without the commission's approval but all the commissioners signed on to the resolution which apparently will be on today's regular meeting agenda. Biggs is also seeking state approval to add 5% to all delinquent tax collections.

The commission may also accept two parcels of land on Dry Hollow Road and Brickyard Road to become part of the county park land including 197 acres. It may also consider adopting the Residential Infrastructure



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Trustee Justin Biggs got the Knox County Commission's approval of his state efforts to get funding for tax breaks for disabled veterans. The resolution will see final approval during today's commission meeting.

Development Act and approve using state and local recovery funds for internal county projects. Also on the agenda is accepting \$100,000 in pass-through funding for the administration and conduct of the Broadband Readiness Community Adoption Ready Program.

The commission may also discuss and vote on a resolution to request the state legislature send one-half of the real estate tax transfer tax back to the county where the tax is collected.

Appointments on today's consent calendar include Nathaniel Shelso to the Emergency Communications Board and reappointing George Ewart to the Board of Construction Appeals.

Tax break goes to historic Sanitary Laundry Building

By Mike Steely
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The old Sanitary Laundry Building has sat empty for years at 625 North Broadway. The 30,000-square-foot complex was acquired by the city in 2014 in a tax sale and the city funded needed structural repairs.

The Knoxville City Council voted Tuesday night to approve a PILOT tax break for McCarty Holsaple McCarty Inc. for its acquisition and development of the nearly 100-year-old building. The company plans to use part of the structure as its headquarters and lease out the unused section. The tax-free period was described as "an exception" because of the past city ownership of the abandoned building.

Nathan Honeycutt, an architect and principal at MHM, said renovating the building "will be a challenge" but will be "a labor of love and our future home."

Several council members commented on the agreement with Charles Thomas applauding repurposing the existing structure. Seema



PHOTO COURTESY KNOXVILLE'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The long abandoned Sanitary Laundry Building on Broadway will get new life in a tax break agreement between the city council and a new owner. The 30,000-square-foot building complex will become the MHM corporate headquarters in a 10-year deal with no property taxes.

Singh asked when the renovation would be completed and was told it would take "about 24 months."

Lauren Rider said she was "excited to see life here" on Broadway.

In other business, the city council voted to up the penalties for parking violations and metered parking. Thomas was the lone "No" vote and said \$25 is too much and "feels like gouging." The council also approved enforcement

officers of the Public Building Authority to tow and impound the vehicles violating parking laws.

It also voted to make changes in the collection of waste in downtown businesses.

The Community School Initiative was funded for 15 schools inside the city. The \$425,000 funding received some criticism for going through the United Way.

An appeal of a Planning Commission decision was

approved for 6521 Vance Road. Mohamed Abbas said he wanted to create four Section 8 low-income homes on the lot. The approval of the appeal will be on the council's January agenda.

New rumble stripes for streets were approved in a request from the Engineering Department for \$150,650 funding. Also approved were the funding of the Fountain City

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Trump Should Pattern Presidency After Eisenhower

From a distance



By John J. Duncan Jr.
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"God help the Nation when it has a President who doesn't know as much about the military as I do." – President Dwight D. Eisenhower speaking to his trusted White House Staff Secretary, Gen. Andrew Goodpaster.

These words are quoted in the book "Ike's Bluff – President Eisenhower's Secret Battle To Save The World" by Evan Thomas.

In the same paragraph as the words above are these: "When Defense Secretary Neil McElroy warned him that further cuts would harm national

security, Eisenhower acerbically replied, 'If you go to any military installation in the world where the American flag is flying and tell the commander that Ike says he will give him an extra star for his shoulder if he cuts his budget, there'll be such a rush to cut costs that you'll have to get out of the way.'"

President Trump did a good job leading this nation into four years of peace and prosperity during his first term. His next four years may be more difficult considering the challenges we face both at home and abroad.

Trump would do well to pattern his presidency after that of Eisenhower who gave the country eight years of peace and prosperity with the exception of a brief recession for a few months in 1958.

Eisenhower did it even though he had only had a Republican Congress during his first two years.

He did it in significant part by being tough enough to issue 181 vetoes (only two of which were overridden), and issuing 484 executive orders.

Eisenhower was probably the most anti-war president we have ever had, and he brought the Korean War to an end. Hopefully, Trump will end this sad, unnecessary, stupid war in Ukraine.

The speech that Eisenhower is most remembered for is his farewell address given on national television on the evening of January 17, 1961. He talked of the "grave implications" of "an immense military establishment and a large arms industry."

Then he added these famous words: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power

exists and will persist."

Less famous are these words from the same speech: "The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present – and is gravely to be regarded."

He added: "Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite."

In Eisenhower's first major speech after his inaugural address, he spoke to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington on April 16, 1953. This was probably the most anti-war speech ever given by an American President.

He said: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those

who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children ... This is not a way of life at all ... it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."

This speech is quoted above Eisenhower's grave and is also quoted in a book by Brett Baier entitled "Three Days In January – Dwight Eisenhower's Final Mission."

Throughout most of my life, I assumed that dropping the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended World War II and saved American lives. In Baier's book, he writes this about plans to drop atomic bombs: "The idea sickened Ike."

He told of a meeting with Secretary of War Henry Stimson: "I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that

Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives ... Japan was, at that very moment seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of face." He later expressed his "strong disagreement" to Truman.

Trump will probably feel pressure from the military-industrial complex, the Israel Lobby, and even some people around him and members of Congress who want to be modern-day Winston Churchills and fight some war someplace.

I hope that President Trump will be strong enough to resist these pressures and that he will leave office after his second term known as a president of peace like Eisenhower.



Rendering of the Sanitary Laundry Building from McCarty Holsaple McCarty.

Tax break goes to historic Sanitary Laundry Building

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Sidewalk Project, the Gay Street Sidewalk Repair Project, the Woodland Avenue Complete Street Project and the Neyland Drive Pedestrian Connection Project.

The council also approved the city purchase of the 312 South Castle Street property for \$31,500 as part of the Abandoned, Blighted and Vacant Properties program.

On first reading, the property at 100 East Inskip Drive was approved to switch

from neighborhood commercial to general commercial zoning. Just over \$1.04 million was approved in a contract with Highstreet IT Solutions to purchase and operate Oracle HCM Cloud Software for the city.

Other zoning changes included 7057 Pine Grove Road from highway commercial to multi-family residential neighborhood and changing 901 Kermit Drive from highway commercial CH-1 to highway commercial CH-2.

Thank you, Elon Musk

In the presidential election of 2020, aligned against Trump were both the mainstream media and all the social media giants like Twitter, Facebook and Google. All three of these social media



By Dr. Harold A. Black
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giants were in the hands of CEOs who hated Trump. Jack Dorsey ran Twitter, Zuckerberg was at Facebook and Google was run by Sundar Pichai. All suppressed stories about Hunter's laptop and refused to publish factual stories that they labeled "misinformation." The "misinformation" was not fabricated and they knew it.

Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, Shopify and Instagram all suspended Trump's accounts, putting him into digital exile. Zuckerberg gave millions to Democrats and Google buried searches it did not like. Several hundred thousand voters said afterwards that if they had known about Hunter's laptop and its link to Joe Biden, they would not have voted for him. Post-election analysis showed that if Twitter, Facebook and Google had been forthcoming, Trump would have won. Only two years later, did all the laptop deniers finally admit that the story was legitimate after contending it was part of a Russian hoax to get Donald Trump reelected.

This election was different. Zuckerberg remains a dedicated Democrat and would do whatever was necessary to reelect Biden, flip the House

and keep the Senate in Democrat hands. Google still buries searches it does not like. I googled "Liz Cheney's criticisms of Harris" and the first several pages were all links to Cheney's

appearances with Harris on the campaign trail and Cheney's endorsement of Harris. There was one lonely link to an article of Cheney's previous lambasting of Harris and ridiculing her positions buried deep in the search. However, Elon Musk had bought Twitter. Not only did he change its name to "X" (although I guess the postings are still called tweets), he became a stalwart Trump supporter and removed Twitter from the evil empire set on demonizing Trump.

Did that have an impact on the election? Millions report that social media (including TikTok) is their primary source of news – a fact that I find stunning. So in that world, the flow of information, misinformation or outright censorship is outsized. Musk turned Twitter 180 degrees. From the outset, he urged to put in place a Republican Congress to counter Joe Biden's presidency saying, "Shared power curbs the worst excesses of both parties, therefore I recommend voting for a Republican Congress, given that the Presidency is Democratic." I wonder if he still feels that way now with Trump as president-elect, a Republican Senate and likely a Republican House.

The leftist media is howling. Musk had first said

that Twitter should be neutral politically. Obviously, that no longer holds as he became one of Trump's leading cheerleaders, contributing over \$75 million to his campaign and, as NPR put it, "using X to cheerlead for Trump, smear Vice President Kamala Harris, and amplify rumors and conspiracy theories to his 202 million followers." Yet 202 million is paltry compared to the billions who use Google daily and Facebook's over 3 billion subscribers. But as seen over and over again, even influencing several thousand voters can make a difference, leaving one to wonder whether if Twitter were still led by Dorsey, would Harris rather than Trump be president elect.

Some have questioned Musk aligning himself with Trump given Trump's dislike of the Green New Deal and the EV mandates. Musk, however, has said that he opposes the banning of internal combustion engines and the mandates. Some think that he joined the Trump camp because he was furious when he was not invited to the White House to a ceremony where Biden praised the EV efforts of Ford and GM and neglected Tesla altogether. Biden's actions were because Tesla is non-union and Biden didn't dare offend the United Automobile Workers. So thank you, Joe. If you had brought Musk into the fold, he would have likely stayed on the sidelines and Trump might not be president-elect.



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Publisher's Position

January 20th Can't Come Soon Enough



By Steve Hunley, Publisher
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the national Democratic Party, then certainly an ultra-partisan and completely biased entity promoting the narratives pushed by the Left in our country. The mainstream media is still in shock that Trump won the election, polled more popular votes than Kamala Harris and carried every "swing" state. And it is appropriate to keep in mind that when you hear the corporate media and Democrats howl about "the rich" and "billionaires" with reference to Trump and GOP policies, the Democrats raised and spent close to \$2 billion in less than three months for Harris. That money didn't trickle out of the pockets of the "little fellow," but rather from the special interests, elitists, and billionaires who are their core constituency. Also keep in mind that Harris and the Democrats outspent Trump and the Republicans two-to-one in the final months of the campaign.

It is also well to keep in mind that the Left and their allies in the media really do believe that we are stupid. They haven't still quite figured out that more people saw through their deceptions and lies trying to deny for 3 1/2 years there was a crisis at our southern border. More people than not saw through their lies that Joe Biden had seriously degenerated mentally. And now, with the pardon

of his son, Hunter, they see that Biden himself is a liar. Biden also made a liar out of his press secretary Pinocchio Jean-Pierre.

Of course, the national media has been lying to the American people routinely for years now, denouncing legitimate questions and statements of fact as "misinformation," "disinformation," and "conspiracy theories." The zeal and ruthlessness with which they closed down any attempt to have an open and transparent conversation about the Covid crisis could hardly have been equaled by any autocratic ruler. Their minions in the media and the insane Left in localities from here to Cucamonga were ready to cancel and destroy the reputations and lives of anyone who questioned or disagreed with their holy orthodoxy during their own version of the Spanish Inquisition. The shoes continue to drop about things that the Left has long denounced as rumor at best and conspiracy theory at worst. For instance, it has now been verified that there were 26 FBI informants outside the Capitol on January 6, 2021. At least three of them had been assigned to be there by the FBI.

As is always the case with those who refuse to tell the truth, there is quite a lot of backpedaling going on presently. Former President Bill Clinton says he

would be willing to talk to Biden about a pardon for his wife, Hillary. There are those in the media who are calling for Biden to issue "preemptive" pardons for Anthony Fauci, Adam Schiff, Liz Cheney and a host of others. The Left squalls about vengeance and while the Left can clutch their pearls and screech that all of these folks are innocent of any wrongdoing, the fact remains people who aren't guilty of anything don't need pardons.

Taking false information, which was the product of a failed spy and paid for by a political campaign to defame its opponent and devoid of truth, to a federal court is a crime by any definition.

Joe Biden's twisted logic that Hunter had been made a target by political opponents is preposterous. Hunter Biden was found guilty by a jury in his home state of Delaware. The infamous laptop from hell filled with Hunter's sordid and squalid life adventures explains how he refused to pay income taxes and spent the money he earned through influence peddling on hookers and drugs. No political opponent did that. The nut-cake Left would have us believe that an addict is not responsible for his actions and therefore incapable of committing a crime. Wrong!

The thing that still eludes

these supposedly intelligent people, the Left and the media in this country, is their own excesses are responsible for the American people reelecting Donald J. Trump as president of the United States. Even Congress is held in higher regard by Americans than the corporate media. The media outlets would do well to read those poll numbers and consider it.

A prime example should be Joe Scarborough and his wife Mika Brezenski who, after months of calling Trump "Hitler," suddenly experience a revelation and scurry down to Mar-a-lago to show they can talk to the president-elect. Does anybody in his or her right mind really believe serious, thoughtful, rational people would hurry to have a cup of coffee with Hitler? Of course not. We knew they were lying when they said it. They have zero credibility about anything.

Now we have Don Lemon, who is less relevant now than a cable access show with two teenagers broadcasting from their basement, throwing a hissy fit about Trump having been named as Time's "Person of the Year." Don Lemon wonders if it's a joke. No, Donnie, you can see the joke in the mirror when you shave in the morning.

DNCNBC, CNN and other networks parceling out the leftist narrative in this country have seen their

ratings swirl around the bowl and for good reason.

The Biden presidency was founded on a lie; he would unite our country and would govern from the center. He did neither. Ultimately, Joe Biden will be remembered as a failing old man long past his prime who was so addled he could barely complete a sentence and his place in history will likely rank with that of our worst chief executives. Biden did that the old-fashioned way, he earned it.

There is nothing wrong with the idea of Making America Great Again. As slogans go, there could not be a better one. Any patriot should love his or her country. All of us should be ready to acknowledge that some things in our nation could be better and we should all work to make those things better. To tear down, denigrate and debase our nation is not only unpatriotic but also horrific. There is nothing wrong at all with loving one's country.

Working Americans realize that and the contempt those media types and professional agitators and Leftist weirdos have for our country is offensive. Donald Trump is the tip of the spear of those thoughts and feelings. He really is the person of the year for 2024.

Fox continues to oppose federal grants

By Mike Steely
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"I don't want to be part of the problem," Commissioner Andy Fox told the Knox County Commission during its agenda review meeting last week. Fox was referring to his opposition to any federal grants coming to Knox County.

Fox said he would vote against any resolution involving federal funds, noting that the national debt is now about \$33 trillion. His list of agenda items that he wants to be discussed in today's regular commission meeting includes such items and he said he will continue to pull any such item that appears on the consent agenda for discussion so he can vote "No."

In past meetings, Fox, who replaced Carson

Dailey as the Ninth District representative on the commission, has pointed to language in federal grants that has to do with how the money is spent and guidelines about what the federal government requires as opposed to local requirements having to do with civil liberties.

Vice Chair Kim Frazier responded that the state's pass-through of federal grants has already been approved and, if not used, the grants would go somewhere else. Chairwoman Gina Oster said that the county would miss "millions of dollars" if it refused federal funds.

Oster said that an elderly woman had federal help in building a ramp at her home and Fox replied a church or the county should pay for such projects. He said the federal funds are used "like

a credit card."

Commissioner Shane Jackson replied that federal funds are providing services to the community and asked what would happen to free lunches, roads and other projects if the grants were rejected.

"You are allowed to pull these but you can just vote 'No' and it will be on the record," Oster said, adding that about 20% of the Knox County budget comes from the federal government.

Commissioner Larsen Jay said too much time is consumed in such discussions and asked the commission to move on to other agenda items.

When asked what would replace federal funding if it is rejected, Fox said, "Maybe we need to have a tax increase."

Commission overturns planners to permit lodging in Ben Bower home

By Mike Steely
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The historic Ben Bower home in South Knoxville sits atop a tall hill just off Chapman Highway. Sandra Kopacz/Sandra LLC had been denied a zoning request by Knoxville-Knox County Planning to change from low-density residential and agricultural to general business and corridor mixed-use.

The Knox County Commission heard the appeal of the decision last week and sided with the applicant after some discussion.

Knoxville City Council Attorney Rob Frost appeared for Sandra Kopacz/Sandra LLC and said the idea is to create a small lodge inside the former Ben Bower home. He explained that the home is served by a long driveway and has "wonderful views of the mountains."

Commissioner Kim Frazier said the project is much less objectionable than what the 6.1-acre property could be used for, adding it could "turn into something we all could enjoy." Commissioner Andy Fox said he is a "strong proponent" of such projects and added, "The honey made on the

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Planting the seeds of knowledge

By Ken Leinart

How much of Earth is actually available for growing food? What food is grown in the United States and East Tennessee? What does a plant seed need to grow?

Those questions and more are answered during "Seed Survivor" a free, curriculum-based learning experience encouraging children in elementary school, specifically grades 3-4, to understand the importance of agriculture.

Nutrien Ltd. sponsors the Seed Survivor Mobile Classroom and allows students to compete as virtual farmers, dig for real fossils (and learn how they relate to agriculture), and even plant a sunflower seed to take home and grow.

Students at Norwood Elementary School were visited by the mobile classroom Thursday, Dec. 12, and were given a first-hand look at the numerous factors involved in growing food to feed not just themselves, but the planet.

They were told about food-producing plants that do not grow in the United

States. A good example was the cocoa bean – what kid doesn't like chocolate – and how the bean is dried, sent to other countries, and mixed with other ingredients to make chocolate.

It was explained that countries around the world trade agricultural products because different plants need different climates to grow.

They were told about the importance of nutrients for plants, the various types of soil, and how technology is an important tool in producing food – making the process more efficient and less labor-intensive.

The sponsor of the mobile classroom, Nutrien LTD, has been doing this project (mobile lab) for several years, Pamela Stout, one of Thursday's presenters said. But this is the first year the mobile classroom has toured Knox County Schools.

The visit to Norwood was one of four during the week of Dec. 11-13, with stops at Copper Ridge and Spring Hill completed and South Knoxville Elementary scheduled for Friday,

December 13.

Stout, who chairs the Knox County Farm Bureau Women and is a member of the board, said there are other events to "educate and communicate" the importance of agriculture to students. She noted the Tennessee Agriculture Literacy Week, held the week before Thanksgiving, and Farm Day, held in May at Chilhowee Park.

"A lot of kids don't really know where their food comes from," she said.

During Thursday's mobile classroom at Norwood, Stout explained to the students that only 12% of the surface of Earth is suitable for producing food.

"Every hour, in the state of Tennessee, we are losing 10 acres of agricultural land," she told them.

"Has everyone seen a football field? That's about an acre. Every hour we are losing 10 football fields that used to be in farming production," she told them.

Farming, she said, is "Hard, it's challenging, but we are doing it every day. That's why we have to think outside the box and come

up with new ways so that we can produce the fruits and vegetables to sustain life. Every day is a challenge to make it work."

She told the students farming is a 24-hour job. "Especially if you're a dairy farmer," she noted.

She also told the students, "Agriculture is not just farming. Agriculture is the leading industry for the state of Tennessee. That's why we come to teach you guys about agriculture."

Students were also allowed to try their hand at farming – sorta – by planting a sunflower seed to take home to watch grow so they could get an understanding of what a plant needs to thrive.

She said the mobile classroom, as well as the other events teaching agriculture, are always welcomed by students.

"They're amazed, excited," she said. "It shows them food doesn't 'just appear' in a grocery store."



PHOTO BY KEN LEINART

Benjamin Harris and Pamela Stout from the Knox County Farm Bureau used numerous exhibits and a power point presentation to interact with students at Norwood Elementary School during the "Seed Survivor" mobile classroom event Thursday.

Commission overturns planners to permit lodging in Ben Bower home

Continued from page 3

property to market is delicious."

Planning Executive Director Amy Brooks said the planning commissioners found the property "incompatible with surrounding land use."

The county commissioners disagreed and passed the appeal of the land use and changed to zoning in favor of the applicant.

The commission voted to cut a request for 24 units per acre to 12

for two lots on West Beaver Creek Drive. Neighbors of the two lots, at 2528 and 2536, said townhouses there would be inappropriate and the area is a "wildlife refuge." The discussion centered on the number of trees to be planted and Fox moved to have a 60-foot setback from the stream there. The properties were rezoned from agricultural to planned residential.

A request to rezone 7816 Ball Camp Pike was denied. The

request was to build up to 3.25 dwellings per acre on the property but 15 of the 20 acres there are too steep and unusable. The commission followed the planner recommendations and denied the change from agricultural to planned residential.

A property at 8303 Heiskell Road was approved to change from low-density residential to neighborhood commercial. A request was approved for 7960

Ball Camp Pike to change from industrial to low-density residential. Also approved was changing a Cureton Road property from low-density to planned residential for up to five units per acre.

Solway Park Enterprises LLC obtained a change in a planned residential zone for up to 3.75 dwellings per acre at 3208 Solway Road. Firas Mishu's request was approved to change an Oak Ridge Highway property from open

space to general business.

A request of Mesana Investments LLC was altered from nine to six units per acre at 2921 Bradley Lake Road if the developer widens the road to 20 feet. The property at 8303 Heiskell Road was approved to change from low density to neighborhood commercial.

More than half a dozen zoning change requests were either withdrawn or postponed.

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

Christmas & New Year Thoughts

As a writer I'm interested in words, the tools we use to convey our thoughts to others. We also nuance our communications with body language, tone and inflection of voice. The way you say, "Good morning," matters.

The Merriam-Webster word of the year is polarization (division). I hear this term, especially from Democrats, who maintain that if everyone just agreed with them there would not be any division. In fact, Biden spent \$267 million of government money (our money) suppressing what he considered "misinformation and disinformation."

The new political word is "Cheney'd." It derives by converting former Congressman Liz Cheney's name to a verb. To "Cheney" an incumbent is to run a candidate against an incumbent during the primary season because the pol (politician) has not been responsive to the will

of their voters. The lesson for politicians as "Donald comes to town" is the Christmas song ♪You better watch out...

Christmas is around the corner and I remember childhood anticipation. My brothers and I would survey and shake the presents under the tree to choose one gift to open before Christmas morning.

I received my big Christmas gift early this year, but it was never under the tree. The intervention of Providence in Butler, Pennsylvania, and the reelection of President Trump was THE Christmas gift for me. Now, I wish for President Trump's appointments to be approved, so government reform can begin.

As I began this week's essay, Daniel Penny was declared not guilty in the death of the mugger threatening people on the NYC subway. Apparently, there are sane people in Gotham,

many of whom have been threatened on the subway and understood that Penny was a Good Samaritan, not a murderer. The media talking heads have been saying justice was done. But was it? The disgusting district attorney of NY, Alvin Bragg, should never have brought charges against Penny. But Bragg should never have brought charges against President Trump either.

In the early 90s I took my daughter to NY City for a Dad/daughter weekend. We supped at a fancy French restaurant in SoHo and saw Madame Butterfly at the Met. And after doing touristy things, I wanted her to see The Cloisters antiquities museum of the Metropolitan Museum of Art located at the "top" of Manhattan. So, we jumped on the A train and rode it north through Manhattan and Harlem. Alarmingly, a disheveled and obviously disturbed man entered our train car and began moving through the car, swaying back and forth, and repeatedly shouting, "I ain't gonna kill nobody." Everyone in our car was threatened, but fortunately, nothing happened. We were lucky, but Penny and others were not.

It may be Christmas, but we are in the midst of a cultural, political and national revolution. Lawfare has been exposed and leftist lawyers like Alvin Bragg and Jack Smith have been outed

as Democrat operatives. And now Washington and world leaders see President Trump as America's political leader, though Biden retains executive power for another dangerous six weeks.

Democrats continue blaming each other for the downfall of Biden and Harris. There is plenty of blame to go around, including Democrat pols like Pelosi, Schumer and their media propagandists. Big donors are furious because they were lied to and Democrat voters are in shock. I could go on, but I won't because I don't care. They all deserve the lumps of coal they're receiving this Christmas. And the fallout will only worsen in 2025. My schadenfreude is still tingling.

It may be too early for New Year's predictions, but everyone is wondering what will happen now that "Daddy is coming home." (Sixty years ago, my mother threatened her rowdy Ferguson boys with the same four words.) I swore off prognostications, however I'll offer some things to watch for in 2025.

The overthrow of Assad, the murderous dictator of Syria, is an opportunity to counter Iranian and Russian interests in the Middle East. The downside is that the Isis-like rebel factions are supported by Turkey's Erdogan and have

been labeled as terrorist groups by our "very reliable" government agencies. What could go wrong?

Since Russia has reportedly approximately 600,000 killed and wounded in the Ukrainian war, perhaps Putin will move to settle the war as a face-saving and pragmatic move. Ukraine's Zelensky also seems ready to trade land for a NATO protection guarantee. Ukraine is much smaller than Russia and cannot win this war of attrition having lost 400,000 soldiers killed and wounded, and no telling how many civilians.

I look forward to a renewal of the Abraham Accords now that Hamas has been defeated and Hezbollah is on the ropes. And the foreign student "river to the sea" agitators on college campuses better watch out because their welcome may be revoked by Tom Homan, Trump's pick for director of ICE.

It is a certainty that a wall across the southern border will be built. Mass deportations will happen, targeting imported criminals and gangs, drug cartels and those who have broken our laws. Legal immigrants will still be welcome in America.

People will continue to flee blue states because of disastrous Democrat policies. As a result, Democrat Congressional representation, money and power

are threatened. The Democrat's strategy was to allow waves of immigrants as their "demographic destiny" plan. It has failed because legal Hispanic voters flocked to Trump's "big tent" coalition.

Many are anticipating a "golden age" as America again becomes energy-independent through drilling and fracking as well as deregulation. Like so many other positive trends, the national average price of gasoline is already falling in anticipation of a Trump presidency. Expect DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) to address government bloat and wasteful spending. And the FBI will be reformed by Kash Patel while Pete Hegseth tackles reforms in the Pentagon.

It is said, "The pen is mightier than the sword." The legacy media betrayed the 2nd Amendment and became a propaganda cudgel of the government. Citizens were unjustly prosecuted and locked up (J6 political prisoners). Free speech (writing) on the internet and in the town square was suppressed. A free people cannot allow this. The November 5, 2024, election was a referendum and a mandate for change. Expect it in 2025 ... no, demand it!

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

Catching Up With Focus Columnist

Joe Rector

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

You may read his column every week in The Focus and you may think you know him through his stories. Yet there are probably a lot of things you don't know about Joe Rector.

Did you know where Joe went to school, what his profession was for many years, and what his likes and hobbies are? The Focus caught up with Joe as we go into the holidays and asked a few questions. Here are those questions and his replies.

Tell us about your childhood and education.

Parents (Dallas and Edna), older brother (Dallas), twin brother (Jim). My parents and older brother are deceased. Childhood in Ball Camp, Farmland then. We spent time outside almost every day. Jim and I always had a playmate. I grew up in a lower-middle-class family. Jim and I were both fat as boys until he lost weight due to hepatitis. I had buck teeth and unkind nicknames like Bucky or Bottle Opener. Played plenty of Cowboys and Indians and War. We had a TV that received two stations that

we watched with family.

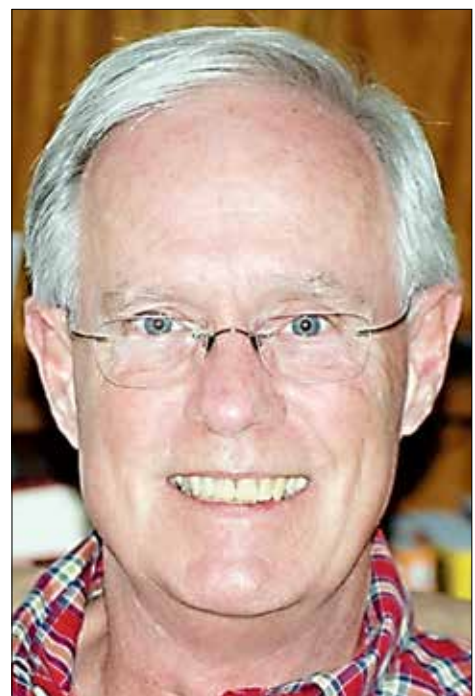
Education—1st-8th grades-Ball Camp Elementary; Karns High School; Tennessee Tech University B.S.; UTK Masters

What's the story of your family?

Daddy worked at Southern Extract in Lonsdale. In 1965, he died from cancer. Mother was at home with us (poor woman) until we began school. She'd earned a teaching degree from a school in NC in her earlier days but had to attend night classes and summer classes at UTK to receive a BS. She herded three teen boys by herself and gave us a good life.

She passed in 1996. Older brother Dallas became a father figure when our dad passed. He went to college and wrote scathing letters to Jim and me when we did something wrong. Dal died in 2004 from cancer. Our whole family smoked. Jim and I gave up the habit before the effects killed us. All three sons have master's degrees. Jim and I became teachers. Although his undergraduate degree was in education, Dal never taught. He became a recruiter instead.

How many books have you
Continue on page 6



You may know Joe Rector from his column in The Knoxville Focus. Bet there's lots more you don't know about this author and former teacher.

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The Greatest Creation

The human brain fascinates me. It is, by far, the best computer ever made. Some technological folks might cite at least a half dozen reasons that prove my statement incorrect. Changing



By Joe Rector
joerector@comcast.net

their minds is impossible, so I'll leave them to their incorrect beliefs. The good Lord made something far superior to all of mankind's inventions. It is from that brain that all other things first come to being.

It's from our brains that we learn all things. Our ability to go from sitting up to

crawling to walking starts in that control center. How amazing it is to watch a little one understand what is necessary to walk from mom to dad. That complex act that we take for granted is a miracle of millions of things inside us working together to complete.

Even more spectacular is watching a child learn to speak. His brain takes cues from his parents' speech and coaxing; his mind must understand the relationship between an object or an individual

and the identifying word. As he grows, his brain allows him to put words together to form sentences that express his needs or his thoughts.

The brain develops information that tells a person how to act in different settings. Our master control panels feed us thoughts on how to be teenagers, what is "cool" for the teen years, and what are appropriate interactions with all people with whom we make contact. The brain helps us decide who our friends will be, what activities we will enjoy, and even in what subjects we will excel in school.

The brain controls our

moods. In some way, this miracle machine takes in information and actions, analyzes them and then relays to us the proper mood for the situation. Too often, my mind makes analyses that lead to my mood being a sour one or a sad one. Only re-analyzing the same information can lead to a completely different mood, one that is much more pleasant to us and those who share space.

Most fascinating of all is the brain's ability to help us remember things from our past. I'm well into senior citizenry now, but through the wonderful workings of the brain, recalling many events from childhood is

easy. My mind can whisk me back to high school and a special date, or it can help me remember playing Davy Crocket with my twin brother. We wore leather jackets with tassels down the arms. Wiping a runny nose on the sleeve left a shiny trail on it. In a flash, my mind goes to the day I jammed a piece of broken glass into my foot while our family visited grandparents who lived in Lonsdale.

I do have to admit that our brains have limited warranties. While I can remember what I did as a 5-year-old in 1957, I stand and look with a blank expression as I try to remember why I walked into my office. I spent a

career learning thousands of students' names, but now I struggle to pull out the name of someone at church. If a list of "to-do" items contains more than three things, I have to write it down; otherwise, at least one of them will be forgotten.

The human brain is the most marvelous thing ever created. Its powers are limited only by the owner. It's sad that so many people choose to turn their brains off and blindly follow the thoughts of others. Those who fail to use their minds have decided that "ignorance is bliss." I, for one, don't believe that for a second.

Peace on Earth Meant War in Heaven

The foundation of our Bible begins with, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This introductory statement sets the tone for everything else that will happen, not only in the pages



By Justin Pratt,
Clear Springs Baptist Church Senior Pastor

of scripture but also in our world collectively. The succeeding chapters give us a glimpse into the creative process. Genesis is the creation account, but right

in the midst of it, we see a foreshadowing of both Christmas and redemption. Adam and Eve had been strategically created and positioned by God to be His stewards over His entire planet. However,

in their disobedience, they surrendered their stewardship into the hands of Satan, the arch-enemy of God. It was in that instant, that God gave the enemy

a forewarning that even though he may have temporarily bruised humanity's heel through the "seed of a woman," He was going to crush the head of the enemy (Genesis 3:15). It's the scripture's first prophecy of a coming Messiah, that will happen through a woman, fix all that the enemy had broken, and bring eventual universal peace. Though the world still belonged to God by creation, Satan set up a counter-kingdom to the kingdom of God. From that day until now, the earth has become

a central battlefield in a war between the two competing kingdoms. It's a cosmic conflict with the ramifications seen here on the earth. But this is not the whole story.

God was determined. He was going to win back the world regardless of the cost. That meant sending His message through kings and prophets and priests and poets. It meant rising up a tiny little nation through which the entire world would be blessed. Ultimately it meant that God Himself would have to enter into the conflict. As it was destined to be, God entered the human race, in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, to reclaim the world from Satan. When this baby known as Jesus Christ was born and became the man who was killed on the cross, it appeared that the enemy had won and God had been defeated. But then Sunday came and with it, an empty tomb and the risen Savior. Suddenly it became clear, even to Satan, that Jesus was the victor. Since that first Easter morning, however, the devil has continued to act as a squatter on a planet that doesn't belong to him. Jesus has reclaimed the title deed, but Satan refuses to give up his territory. This cosmic conflict has left our world in

darkness, but make no mistake, Jesus has set up little pinpoints of light promising better things to come.

We who believe are eagerly waiting for the same Son who appeared in Bethlehem to one day return personally and visibly to this earth. When He does come at last, He will trample Satan under his feet, judge the workers of iniquity, set everything right that is currently wrong, and reign from His father David's throne in Jerusalem. That day has not yet appeared, but the signs of time tell us that it is not so far off in the distant future.

What does all of this have to do with Christmas? Revelation 12 reminds us that this battle began in Bethlehem. Angels proclaimed to shepherds in that same city that this babe, who would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, would be the long-awaited Messiah who would bring "peace on earth and goodwill toward men." But it's important to realize that, peace on earth meant war in heaven. At Bethlehem God struck a blow on the enemy and His frontline soldier was not clad in the armor of a 1st-century warrior. He was not embellished in the garments of a king

and didn't have the covering or weaponry of a battle-experienced knight. No, the frontline soldier was a tiny baby boy, born of a virgin, and only given a manger to lay in on His first night on the earth. Yet, in this tiny baby was all the strength of God. In those little clinched fists was the same power that framed the worlds. That innocent cry was the same voice that spoke Creation into existence. The baby wrapped in rags was also the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. By perception, that Child that Mary laid in a manger looked like any other baby, but understand, that this child is none other than the undefeated Son of God! God had begun His mission to reclaim the world and it was going to happen through a little boy that Mary and Joseph named Jesus.

We need to remind ourselves this Christmas that the devil will not have the final word. Though he strikes many painful blows, he will not win and he cannot win, because this battle belongs to the Lord. Be encouraged, for that sleeping child in a manger will one day rise to battle and no one or nation will be able to stand against Him. If Christmas means anything to us, then let it mean this: God wins in the end!



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Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma

Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill
rayhill865@gmail.com

Having been born in Oklahoma while my father was in the military, I have always had a special interest in the politics of the United States, November 16, 1907, is celebrated. Robert Latham Owen Jr. was one of Oklahoma's first two United States senators. Owen became a workhorse in the U.S. Senate where he was instrumental in writing and passing the Federal Reserve Act and the Farm Loan bills. Part Native American, Robert L. Owen earned a well-deserved reputation as a friend of the Cherokee people. A potent orator, Owen possessed a voice rich and liquid, but could also grate like a file when the senator was harsh in his criticisms. Owen was unusual as a politician. Never one to pat people on the back or shake as many hands as possible, Robert L. Owen did not pander to special interest groups and never forgot his personal dignity.

A man of striking appearance and intense black eyes, Robert L. Owen was once described as looking like a matinee idol. Owen had been born in Lynchburg, Virginia, to a prosperous family; Owen's father was the president of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad. Robert Owen experienced a profound reversal of fortune when his family lost everything during a national financial panic in 1873 and his father died while he was still a teenager.

Throughout his life, Owen enjoyed success in each of his fields of endeavor. Following his father's passing, Robert L. Owen set out for the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) where he worked hard to make a life for himself. As was often the case during those times, Owen was a schoolteacher, although the future senator taught Cherokee orphans. Owen tried his hand at journalism, an Indian agent for the federal government, earned a law degree, and became a banker, starting a bank in Muskogee in 1909 which weathered some very difficult times and unlike many other financial institutions, never failed.

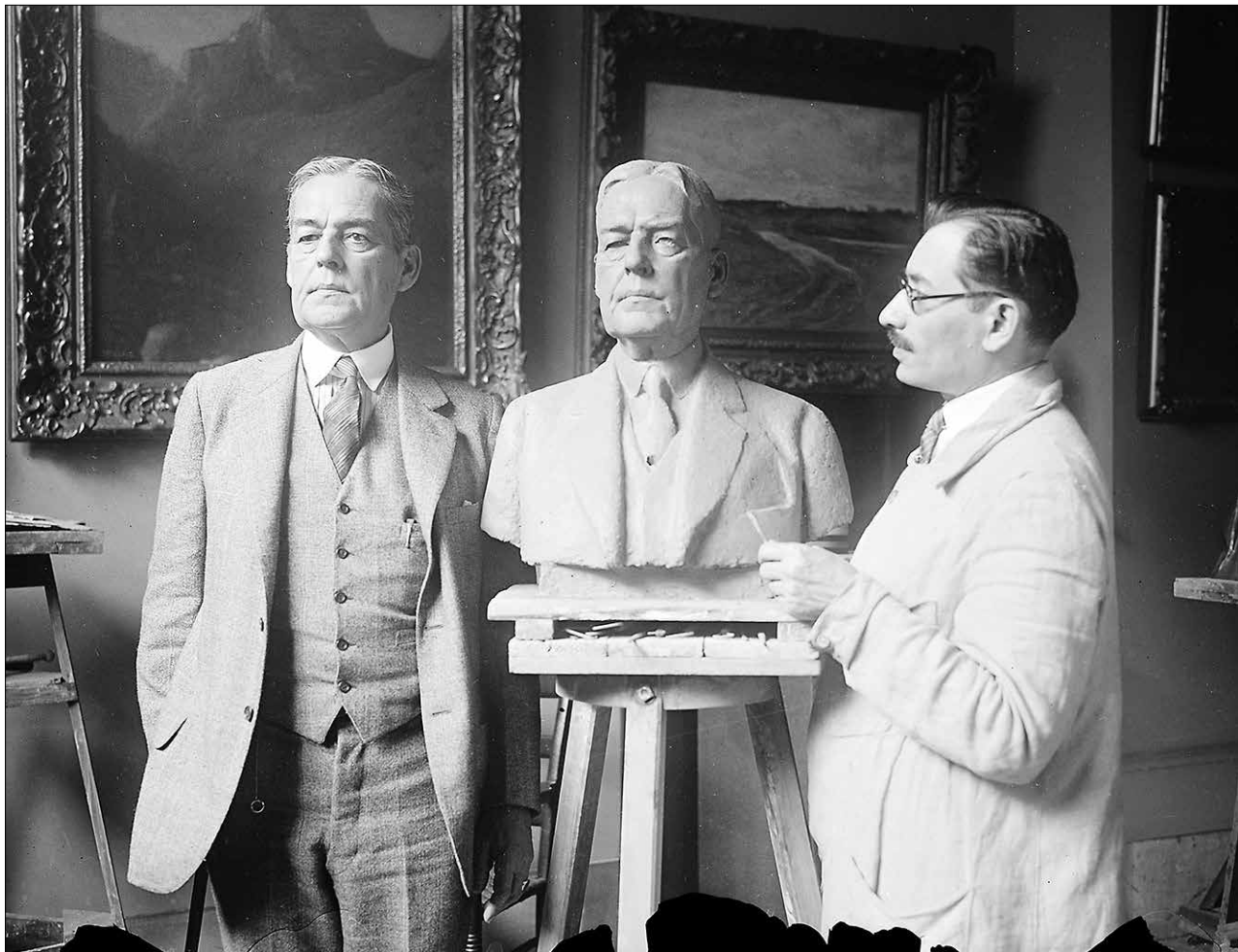
As an attorney, Robert L. Owen became renowned for his legal abilities. The future senator represented the Cherokee Nation in litigation involving land issues. The Eastern Cherokees had notoriously been moved to the "Indian Territory," as Oklahoma was then known, trudging the "Trail of Tears." Owen represented the Eastern Cherokee in their lawsuit against the government of the United States in 1900. Owen demanded payment owed to the Cherokee under a treaty with the United States signed in

1835. Robert Owen sued saying the Cherokee were owed significant compensation for the lands lost during the removal of the Indians. The courts agreed with Owen and awarded the Cherokee Nation almost \$5 million (more than \$157 million today). Owen's success in the courtroom caused other Indian nations to hire him, including the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Western Cherokee.

Active in Democratic politics, Owen advocated for statehood for Oklahoma. Owen was a progressive for the times, backing giving women the right to vote and the right of the people to vote for their United States senators by direct election. When Oklahoma held a primary to select the nominees of the Democratic Party for the U.S. Senate, Owen was a candidate. At the time, senators were still elected by state legislatures, although the Oklahoma legislature honored the wishes of the voters who had supported Robert L. Owen. Owen's new colleague from Oklahoma, Thomas P. Gore, was blind and the two men drew lots to determine the length of their respective terms as they had been elected simultaneously. Owen's term was to last five years and he faced the voters in 1912 for a full six-year term of office.

Senator Owen was challenged in the Democratic primary by Governor Charles Haskell. Reputedly, Owen maintained a mailing list of some 300,000 Oklahomans in a state whose population in 1912 was 1.7 million people. Owen turned back Haskell's bid and won the general election. Senator Owen was reelected in 1918.

It was Robert L. Owen who had pressed the United States Senate to create a committee on banking; eventually, Owen was successful, and the Senate Banking & Currency Committee was the result of his efforts. Senator Owen became the new committee's first chairman, a post he held until 1919. It was because of his chairmanship of the Senate Banking Committee that Owen became one of the sponsors of the Glass-Owen Act, which created the Federal Reserve system. Rejecting the idea of central banks, Owen worked with Congressman Carter Glass of Virginia. There were differing and competing proposals for a Federal Reserve system being considered by Congress. The approach taken by Congressman Glass centered around his proposal to create a Federal Reserve dominated by the private sector; the Board of the Federal Reserve System, under the Glass proposal, would be largely comprised of



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Former Senator Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma poses for a sculptor, circa 1926.

private bankers. Another proposal was made by Republican U.S. Senator Nelson Aldrich of Rhode Island, the grandfather of Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller. Senator Aldrich proposed a decentralized model thoroughly dominated by private interests. Secretary of the Treasury William Gibbs McAdoo, who was to marry one of President Wilson's daughters, urged the creation of a central bank inside the Treasury Department. Robert Owen, working with the assistance of former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury and Congressman A. Piatt Andrew, pushed a course that navigated the middle of the road between the various proposals being considered. Owen's bill created eight regional banks, a currency board whose members were to be appointed by the federal government, and most of those elements remained in the bill President Wilson pressed the Senate to accept.

In the end, the Senate Banking Committee was almost evenly divided between the Owen Bill and a rival bill sponsored by the Democratic Leader of the Senate, Nebraska's Gilbert Hitchcock. In the first vote by the full Senate, Owen's bill failed on a vote of 43-41. A second vote saw Senator Owen's legislation pass the Senate 54-34. In its final version, the Federal Reserve Bill more closely resembled the original legislation proposed by Robert L. Owen than that of Congressman Carter Glass. Appropriately, there is a Robert Latham Owen Park behind the Federal Reserve Building in Washington, D.C.

Republicans had won the 1918 midterm elections, which endangered Wilson's dream of American participation in the League of Nations and ended Owen's chairmanship of the Senate Banking Committee. The president boarded a special train and toured the American West in a campaign to urge the people to back the Treaty of Versailles. Wilson suffered a stroke which left him paralyzed on his left side. The train rushed back to Washington, D.C., where he was confined to his bed for weeks. First Lady Edith Wilson and the president's physician,

Admiral Cary Grayson, issued cheerful reports about Wilson's progress and in the absence of television, few Americans realized just how feeble the president truly was. Almost entirely hidden from the view of the public, Edith Wilson kept strict vigil over her husband and decided who saw Wilson and what matters were to be seen by the president. Yet Wilson wanted to be nominated for a third term. Wilson never recovered from his stroke and while his mind seemed to be clear, it had accentuated the president's more unpleasant personal traits. Querulous, inflexible and sometimes just plain irrational, the president remained physically quite feeble.

Even Edith Wilson and especially Cary Grayson realized Wilson was utterly unable to campaign. So too did the president's closest political associates know that giving Woodrow Wilson a third presidential nomination would bring disaster to the Democratic Party. Virtually all officials in Washington understood Wilson was not well enough to run again. Senator Robert L. Owen became a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the presidency. Owen's presidential campaign never caught fire and he amounted to little more than a favorite son candidate at the 1920 Democratic convention.

That same year Senator Owen broke politically with his colleague from the Sooner State, Thomas P. Gore. Unlike Owen, who had supported President Wilson and the war effort, Gore had been critical of Wilson's foreign policy and the First World War. Nor was Gore supportive of Wilson's vision of the peace to come after the war. Senator Owen did not endorse his colleague's reelection bid and Congressman Scott Ferris beat Gore in the Democratic primary. Oklahoma Democrats were stunned when Republican Congressman John W. Harrell won the general election.

Senator Owen changed his own opinion of the cause of the First World War and came to believe the heavy financial penalties and war reparations, which eventually led to the

rise of Adolf Hitler, was a terrible mistake on the part of the Allied powers. Owen's beliefs were not popular with many inside his own political party. Some Democrats were made uneasy by Owen's opinion, fearful it would erode the legacy of Woodrow Wilson.

The 1920 election saw women vote for the first time for presidential candidates and it soon became clear the American people were weary of the Wilson Administration. Republicans won a sweeping victory, electing Warren G. Harding to the presidency in a landslide and giving heavy majorities to the GOP in both houses of Congress. With a Republican administration and Congress, Robert L. Owen saw his own influence diminish accordingly. Senator Owen announced he would not run again in 1924 and retired at the expiration of his term the following year.

The 69-year-old former senator did not go home to Oklahoma but rather remained in Washington, D.C. where he began a lucrative career as a lawyer and lobbyist. Owen and his wife also adopted their grandson, who took the name of Robert L. Owen III.

Safely out of public office and enjoying his profitable new career, former Senator Robert L. Owen roiled his own Democratic Party with his blunt refusal to support the presidential nominee in 1928. Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York was wringing "wet," one of the most notable foes of national prohibition in the country, as well as a proud product of the notorious Tammany Hall political machine. Much of the opposition to Smith's candidacy was due to his religion, as he was the first Catholic to be nominated by a major political party for the presidency. Oklahoma was an overwhelmingly Protestant state.

"If ever there was a man fitted to be an advance agent of prosperity, it is Herbert Hoover," Owen thundered. It became a bitterly ironic statement. Owen became the first Democrat of note to defect to Hoover and refuse to support Smith. Four years later, Senator Owen jumped aboard the campaign to nominate

Franklin D. Roosevelt for the presidency.

Robert L. Owen was one of those former senators who never went home, but rather continued living in Washington, D.C. Owen resumed his activities as a lawyer and lobbyist in the nation's Capitol until 1935, when he lost his eyesight. When the United States Senate debated American entry into the United Nations in 1945, both of Oklahoma's first senators sat quietly on the floor, a privilege granted to former members. Both were blind at the time, and they listened intently to the discussion.

The elderly former senator began ailing in the last year of his long life. Owen's wife, Daisy, had died in 1946; the couple had been married since 1889. The 91-year-old former senator underwent an operation at Washington, D.C.'s Emergency Hospital, but Robert L. Owen died on July 19, 1947.

When Senator Owen died, the Chickasha Star remembered the former lawmaker as "the greatest scholar and statesman that Oklahoma ever produced."

Even in death, Robert Latham Owen did not go back to the Sooner State which had honored him time and again. Instead, Owen's mortal remains went to his birthplace of Lynchburg, Virginia, where he was interred beside his mother. Ironically, the Spring Hill Cemetery is also the final resting place of Owen's sometime rival Carter Glass.

The former senator's grandson and namesake erected an impressive headstone over his grandfather's grave.

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HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' FLAG FOOTBALL

Bearden bounces back to beat Halls



RAJANP_PHOTOGRAPHY

Bearden defender Taka Wilson reaches for the flag of Halls' Khloe Lawson on a foggy night at Karns. The Lady Bulldogs won to finish the season 7-3.

By Steve Williams

Two of the top teams in Girls' Flag Football on the local scene squared off in the final week of play last Monday (Dec. 9) at Karns High School.

Stunned by a 33-14 loss to Karns (2-8) in the first game of the night, Bearden bounced back with a 31-16 win over once-beaten Halls in Game 2.

The 1-2 punch of quarterback Abby Thompson and wide receiver Lainey Cox led the Lady Bulldogs' charge.

Thompson threw four touchdown passes and ran for another.

"She has been our QB in every game," said Coach Zach Scott. "She did a great job."

Cox caught the last two TD passes that covered 19 and 30 yards. She helped set up the first two that were snagged by Finley Wright (16 yards) and Jaliyah Cotner (18 yards).

An interception by Mya Thurston led to Thompson's 29-yard run and a 12-0 lead with nine minutes to go in the first half.

Bearden increased its advantage to 25-0 in the second half before Halls freshman Khloe Lawson ran for a first down at the 45 and junior teammate

Laci Roach raced 45 yards for a touchdown on the next play. Senior quarterback Bre Sanderson's two-point pass to freshman Lexie Monroe made the score 25-8.

After Bearden went up 31-8, Halls senior Bailey Roberts caught a TD pass from Sanderson with no time left on the clock and Sanderson added on a two-point conversion pass to Monroe.

"In the first game (against Karns) we got off to a little bit of a rougher start," said Bearden Coach Zach Scott. "We had some people in some new spots and new positions. It just didn't

really go very well. We had a couple of tipped balls that got intercepted, which was abnormal for us.

"We got back to our normal girls in their normal spots later on in the game and kept it really close; fought back 14 to 21, and then they had a long touchdown at the end that kind of ended it. We just missed some flag pulls.

"In the second game I thought our girls were a little bit angry about how that first one went. And they knew Halls was one of the best teams in the county. I think they had lost only once by two points, so they

Continue on page 2

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Bulldogs remain perfect after lopsided home win against Greene Devils

By Ken Lay

Bearden High School's boys basketball team kept its perfect record intact with a lopsided victory early last week.

The Bulldogs were embroiled in a tight battle early but they were able to use their depth, defensive intensity and strength to rout Greenville, 81-46, Tuesday night at Bearden High School.

The Greene Devils were able to hang around early and had the lead in the first quarter before Bearden stormed back. The Bulldogs (9-0) grabbed the lead late in the first quarter and held a 19-15 lead by period's end.

Bearden was able to open a 16-point lead by halftime and cruise into victory lane from there. The Bulldogs were up, 43-27, at the break before going on a 17-2 run coming out of halftime. Bearden took a 60-29 lead on a dunk by Sean Capshaw with just under five minutes to go in the third stanza.

Bearden features one of the area's deepest teams with several players who make significant contributions night in and night out.



PHOTO BY TAMMY DAVIS KREGEL

Bearden's Drew Parrott (5) defends an inbound pass from Greenville's Isaac McGee in Tuesday's non-district game at Bearden. Parrott came off the bench to score 16 points to lead the Bulldogs past the Greene Devils, 81-46.

"I like our depth," Bearden's coach Jeremy Parrott said. "The way we play, we force people to make plays, and they made some plays early. But then we made plays. We made plays on

defense and we were able to use those to create our offense."

Bearden boasted a balanced and potent offensive attack against the Greene Devils, who dropped to 3-5 with Tuesday night's loss.

Guard Drew Parrott (the coach's son) came off the bench against Greenville and led the way with 16 points. Parrott, a playmaker for Bearden's football team at both quarterback and wide receiver, has found his shooting touch on the hardwood out of the gate this season.

"Drew's shot it pretty well and seeing shots go down has probably helped his confidence," Coach Parrott said. "He's like the rest of us.

"He's supposed to go out there and do certain things when he gets his time."

Drew had a little extra responsibility as Justice Watson, a senior point guard, missed the contest due to illness. Parrott was his squad's leading scorer but on this night, he received plenty of help from his teammates.

Capshaw and Jermichael Blair Jr. each finished with 14 points. Justin Nordin

Continue on page 2

A Gibbs gunner or a Corryton cannon?

By Steve Williams

"A basketball gym rat is a player who is dedicated to improving their game by spending a lot of time in the gym. The term 'gym rat' is a sign of respect for players who are constantly improving their game."

— Webster's Dictionary

Zack Turner scored a school record 48 points in a 78-71 loss to Hardin Valley Academy in Gibbs High School's Thanksgiving championship game on Nov. 30.

That's an impressive output, but was it just a one-night show?

Cont. on page 2



Gibbs' Zack Turner takes aim at the basket. The Eagles' senior scored a school record 48 points on Nov. 30 and is plenty capable of scoring more.

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HIGH SCHOOL BOWLING

Carter sweeps titles again

By Steve Williams

Carter High School's success on the bowling lanes rolls on.

The Lady Hornets edged Gibbs 14 to 13 for their fifth straight district championship last Monday (Dec. 9) at Fountain Lanes after beating Career Magnet Academy 24 to 3 in the semifinals.

Carter and Gibbs will advance to the Region 1 tournament, which will be held Jan. 8, at the Holiday Lanes in Johnson City.

Carter's boys also captured the district title last Wednesday at Gatlinburg with a 17 to 10 win over surprising South-Doyle, which qualified for its first-ever region tournament berth, according to Carter Coach Raymond Wynn.

"South-Doyle caught fire," said Wynn.

The Cherokees defeated Gatlinburg-Pittman in the semifinals 23 to 4. G-P had a 9-2 record and was the No. 1 seeded team on the East side of the district.

The Carter boys, the No. 1 seed on the West side, walloped Sevier County



Carter's boys bowling team withstood a strong showing by South-Doyle to win its third district championship in a row.

26 to 1 in the semis for their third consecutive district championship in six seasons.

The Carter and South-Doyle boys also will advance to the Region 1 tourney in Johnson City.

All-District 2 Girls Team: Loren Chamberlain, Madelyn Lewis, Callie Palmer, Kali Gentry, Carter; Malyiah Smith, Savanna Melo, Olivia Shoudy, Jessica Dupler, Gibbs; Abigail Terry, Northview Academy; Alix

Goodwin, Kaelyn Flanagan, Career Magnet; Madison Fisher, Seymour; Jenilyn Bales, Sevier County; Kylie Weaver, Autumn Ogle, Gatlinburg-Pittman; Jessica Cobian, Pigeon Forge.

District 2 Girls Bowler of the Year: Malyiah Smith, Gibbs.

District 2 Girls Coach of the Year: Carrie Balent, Career Magnet.

All-District 2 Boys Team: Micah Taylor, Brandon Hernandez, Ethan Lewis, Carter; Alex Owens, Nolan

Pickard, Brandon Rand, Gibbs; Koby Bohanan, Ethan Craig, Gatlinburg-Pittman; Isaiah Jones, Leland Metcalf, Sevier County; Connor Kalmon, Career Magnet; Logan Gillson, Seymour; Justin Hunt, Northview; Eli Williams, Pigeon Forge; Tai Tanaka, South-Doyle.

District 2 Boys Bowler of the Year: Seth Stallings, Carter.

District 2 Boys Coach of the Year: Ray Wynn, Carter.

A Gibbs gunner or a Corryton cannon?

Continued from page 1

As John Ward, the late great UT play-by-play announcer often answered, "No sir-reeeee!"

Zack's record performance had fans reacting on social media. Former Gibbs High football and basketball standout Stuart Donahue posted: "How does 50 sound?"

"Awesome!!!!" said an Eagle rooter. "He was on fire Saturday!" added another.

Since then, the Gibbs senior point guard / shooting guard has played 10 games – almost a third of the 2024-25 season – and was averaging 26.1 points going into Saturday's game against Clinton.

Before Zack's big night, he swished the nets for 33 points at Northview Academy, and then afterward he poured in 36 back in Corryton against Jefferson County.

If Turner keeps up this scoring rate, he could be in the running for a Mr. Basketball award.

If you know Turner's game, you already knew he's not a one-trick pony. As a first team honoree on The Knoxville Focus / Coaches' All-Knox County team last season, he averaged 7.3 assists per game – second highest in the county – and ranked No. 3 with a 21.4 scoring average. His versatility helped him stuff his stat sheet too with 4.3 rebounds and 3.0 steals per contest.

And don't sell him short just because he's 5-foot-10 and 155 pounds. His shooting eyes must be 20-20 and his motor never seems to stop.

Through the first seven games this season, Zack was connecting on 50 percent of his field goal attempts, 40 percent on 3-pointers, 56 percent on 2-point shots and 73 percent at the free throw line.

"Zack is an extremely talented basketball player, but he is also extremely competitive in the classroom," said Coach Aaron Large. "He is a young man that is very conscious of his grades and GPA."

"He is one of the guys on our team that is always willing to lend a hand when we volunteer our time helping in the community as well."

Zack has grown up in a sports family with parents who have been teachers and coaches. His father, Brad, is the head football coach at Gibbs and strength and conditioning teacher. His mom, Amanda, is a pharmaceutical rep and previously coached volleyball at Gibbs.

Brad played baseball at Carson-Newman and Amanda played volleyball and softball at C-N. His sister Megan was a standout softball and volleyball player at Gibbs and went on to play volleyball at MTSU.

In addition to basketball, Zack loves helping with Special Olympics

at Gibbs and has been involved with that program for several years.

"As for basketball, I am a team-first player," Turner tells college recruiters. "I get excited when my teammate makes a good play. I am willing to help the team in whatever role that may be. I am a competitor and I want to win."

Zack reached the 1,000-point level on the first day of December last year. He's also been a three-time All-District player and was District MVP last season.

"He started playing basketball at age four and has played ever since," said his dad. "He also started AAU basketball in the second grade and finished his AAU career this past summer."

Coach Large said Turner is blessed to already have an offer to play college basketball at Milligan University.

"He is going to make the team he decides to sign with considerably better from Day 1," added Large. "A college coach is going to get a true gym rat. The coach is going to get someone that will go above and beyond expectations and will push his teammates to become better each day."

"The best thing about Zack as an athlete is that he's a winner. He will do whatever it takes to win each game and each day."

Bearden bounces back to beat Halls

Continued from page 1

were pretty fired up to play a great team and we got off to a really good start. Our quarterback played a lot better and we hit some big passes."

Scott, who was on Morgan Shinlever's football staff for six seasons (2016 through 2021) at Bearden, saw his team finish with a 7-3 record after its impressive victory over Halls.

In the nightcap, Halls ended its season with a 51-19 win over Karns and an 8-2 record. Katie Hicks led the defense with five tackles (flags pulled) and one interception. Cloi Roach added three sacks and Rook Shaver four tackles.

Offensively, Sanderson threw three touchdown passes and ran for another. Roberts and Roach each caught one TD pass and

ran for one. Lawson had one TD catch. Maya Patel had two pass completions. Roach also totaled three extra points.

"It was a hard-fought battle, but we pulled together as a team and came out with a well-earned win," summed up Coach Felicia Monroe. "This victory showed our resilience and commitment to bouncing back stronger."

After his team had upset Bearden, Karns Coach Luke Defur was asked first about the foggy conditions.

"I think it's better than being 19 degrees," he laughed, remembering the cold weather conditions that included spitting snow the week before.

As for his team's play against Bearden, Defur said: "I think our players were more relaxed. Before the game, I was letting

them know there is no pressure out here. Especially the last two games; just come out here, have fun and give it your all. They were less uptight and anxious and went out and just played free. And I think it showed on the scoreboard.

"I think what's been holding us all year has been the defense, just being able to understand coverages and where they are supposed to be. We've been getting beat over the top a lot and I think tonight it kind of clicked and they were able to stay over the top, keep everybody in front and just pull flags and that ended up in turnovers, which let us get an early lead.

"They (Bearden) are No. 3 or 4 in the district. That was a great win. They keep fighting; keep going even though the season hasn't gone like we thought it

would. I'm proud of them."

Defur considered it a "team" win, but did say "Ari Gill had a great game. She had that long touchdown at the end to kind of seal the deal and she also helped us subbing in on defense even though she didn't expect to do that. She made a huge pass breakup there at the end on that last drive."

Flag Football Standings

Fulton, 9-1
Carter, 9-1
Halls, 8-2
Powell, 8-2
Anderson Co., 8-2
Bearden, 7-3
Central, 6-4
South Doyle, 5-5
Farragut, 4-6
Austin East, 3-7
Gibbs, 3-7
Hardin Valley, 2-8
Karns, 2-8
West, 1-9
Career Magnet, 0-10

Runner-up Karns advances to region

By Steve Williams

Karns' boys bowling team came up a little short in the District 3 tournament, but will get another chance for top honors in Region 2.

Coach Bj Arvin's Beavers toppled Heritage 16 to 11 in the semifinals, but fell to top-seeded William Blount 15.5 to 11.5 in the title game Thursday at Crest Lanes in Maryville.

Karns, the No. 2 seed, will take a 12-2 won-loss record into the Region 2 tourney, which also will be held at Crest Lanes, while the Governors will come in at 16-1.

The Beavers posted some good scores in the district as Zylar Goodman had a 226 game and Mitchell Helgerson a 201 in the finals. In the

semifinals, Helgerson rolled a 213 and Keaton Duckworth a 201.

Other members of the Karns team are Brandon Stephens, Ian Carter and Jackson Gerdes.

In Round One of the girls' action, Bearden was eliminated by Oak Ridge 15 to 12 and L&N STEM Academy bowed to WB 15 to 12.

Maryville defeated Oak Ridge 19.5 to 7.5 in the finals.

On the boys' bracket, play-in games had Central nipping L&N 14 to 13 and Hardin Valley losing to Oak Ridge 21 to 6.

In Round One, Central was shut out 27 to 0 by William Blount, Karns cut down Oak Ridge 21 to 6 and Powell was ousted by Heritage 24 to 3.

Bulldogs remain perfect after lopsided home win

Cont. from page 1

Tennessee Vols, finished with a game-high 20 points, but managed seven after halftime. It was just another day at the office for Mahoney.

"Dom's our captain. Dom's our spiritual leader and Dom's going to do whatever Dom has to do to help us win the game," Coach Parrott said. "A lot of times, he draws tough defensive assignments out there."

Thompson, who has multiple Division I offers, including one from the

Tennessee Vols, finished with a game-high 20 points, but managed seven after halftime. It was just another day at the office for Mahoney.

"Dom's our captain. Dom's our spiritual leader and Dom's going to do whatever Dom has to do to help us win the game," Coach Parrott said. "A lot of times, he draws tough defensive assignments out there."



RAJANP_PHOTOGRAPHY

Halls quarterback Bre Sanderson turns the corner for yardage against the Bearden defense. The Lady Bulldogs prevailed, 31-16.

Fulton to play in State Invitational

Lady Falcons are District 2 champs

By Steve Williams

It has been announced that the TSSAA will have a Girls' Flag Football State Invitational Tournament that will include 16 teams May 7-8 in Murfreesboro.

Fulton will represent the Knoxville area as the Lady Falcons were the champions in District 2, which just completed a five week schedule that included 15 teams each playing 10 games.

Fulton and Carter both had 9-1 won-loss records, but Coach Trey Sewell's Lady Falcons got the nod as they defeated the Lady Hornets 40-19 in a head-to-head matchup in Week 2.

A total of 160 teams play Flag Football in the state, with the majority in the Mid-State area, where the game is played in the spring.

In East Tennessee, there are only teams in District 2 and District 4 (Chattanooga area).

'A basic flaw in the college game'

"There is a basic flaw in the college game, one that courses through its body like an infection. It is called recruiting, and it is the bane of college football."

Sports Illustrated's John Underwood (Nov. 25, 1934-April 12, 2023) made that pronouncement in a 1979 book titled "The Death of an American Game: The Crisis in Football." Underwood was known best for biographies of Boston Red Sox Baseball Hall of Fame honoree Ted Williams and Alabama's legendary head football coach, Bear Bryant. Many Vol fans remember Underwood for his coverage of the 1967 Tennessee-Alabama game, one of the great victories in school football history. In a chapter called "Of Colleges and Coaches," Underwood comes to the conclusion that the recruiting process is a "phenomenon that deserves looking into."

Underwood followed up with the story of accompanying newly hired

Tennessee head coach John Majors and assistant coach Robbie Franklin, as they visited Donnie Evans, a highly-sought player from Franklin, Ky., in early 1977. Robbie, who played at Tennessee (1964-66), was in charge of the trip. He remembered the day well, allowing that it was his first trip with Majors, in his first year back in Knoxville after tenures at Iowa State and Pittsburgh.

"I was uneasy, because I wanted everything to go like clockwork," he said. "Up to that point, my total time frame with him was about two hours out of my life and his."

Majors was fresh off a national championship at Pittsburgh and was like an "entertainment figure," said Robbie.

"With the success coach Majors had had when he came to Tennessee, we could not land at an airport in Nashville or Memphis that there wasn't an entourage of people there to meet him, news media, old teammates, and friends from U.T."

Very few writers from Sports Illustrated or any other national magazine have had the opportunity to see to the inner

workings of collegiate football recruiting.

The trip came about when Robbie alerted Majors to an "emergency" with Donnie. Ohio State's Woody Hayes had recently visited the Evans home. There was a chance of losing a highly-regarded prospect.

The flight on a University of Tennessee-owned Navajo aircraft went from Knoxville to Bowling Green. It didn't help Franklin's efforts that the rental car at the airport was not readily available.

It also didn't help that Majors noted that it was taking longer than Robbie had advertised to get there, noting the passage of time even while in conversation with Underwood.

"Afraid he had passed the boy's house," Underwood wrote, "Franklin had made a premature turn, became disoriented, and was too embarrassed to confess. He kept driving, hoping for a familiar landmark."

Finally, the house came into view, and the visit began.

Underwood wrote 14 pages, covering a more than two-hour session at a "squat, cinder-block house the washed out color of an undeveloped sepia-tone

photograph."

Majors led the conversation. He was definitely in his element.

"He was a recruiting machine," said Franklin. "When it came time to go out of town and visit prospects, he could click them off. He had a list of the ones he wanted to go see, and Donnie Evans was high on his priority list."

There were two critical moments during the visit, wrote Underwood.

"Coach Majors," Donnie's father, Buck, said before Donnie came in the house, "I think we got a problem. Woody Hayes was here last weekend and sold Donnie a bill of goods. I want him to go to Tennessee, but Donnie's like his mother. Every time he hears something new, he changes his mind."

While Donnie's attention seemed to waver during much of the conversation, Majors struck gold when he talked about Donnie's "future being formed in his own backyard."

"Coach, that backyard is 200 miles from here," Donnie replied.

Majors was ready: "How far is it to Columbus?"

"I think he's got you there," said his dad.



John Underwood had a successful career writing for Sports Illustrated, writing about Bear Bryant and John Majors, among others.

Later, Robbie told Majors he thought John had "turned him around."

He had.

Evans signed the next day, with Majors telling Underwood, "I think Robbie's looking for a raise. You have a lot invested in these athletes," said Robbie, looking back. "I was disappointed. You can't help it. I just wonder if we did everything we needed to do to nurture him."

But there was more.

"He ended up having a successful career. It just wasn't at Tennessee. He played at Western Kentucky and ended up being a Little All-America."

For his part, Franklin left

coaching after the 1978 season.

"I had made the decision I was going to change careers," he said.

For Robbie Franklin, a graduate of Knoxville's Holston High School, it all started when George Cafego proffered a Tennessee football scholarship in the early 1960s. He was a starter on the 1964 squad.

No one could have foreseen his journey over the ensuing years, but he was a part of many great moments in Tennessee history during his playing and coaching days.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Hodge scores 27 points as Lady Bulldogs rout Greeneville

By Ken Lay

When Natalya Hodge arrived at Bearden High School three seasons ago, she quickly established herself as one of the area's impact player.

Three years later, with the help of a talented supporting cast, she continues to sparkle and now is one of the state's highly recruited prospects.

Florida State head coach Brooke Wyckoff was in attendance as Hodge scored 27 points to lead the Lady Wildcats past Greeneville, 63-31, Tuesday night in a non-league tilt Tuesday night.

Wyckoff is one of multiple Power Four coaches to offer the junior guard.

Hodge's supporting cast includes wing players Kendall Anne Murphy and Aisha Patel, who have both signed National Letters of Intent. Murphy, who scored 13 points against the Lady Devils, recently signed with Lenoir-Rhyne, while Patel has signed with Tusculum University in Greeneville.

She scored three points Tuesday night.

"Nat's obviously scoring really well for us," Lady Bulldogs' coach Justin Underwood said. Kendall Anne is doing a great job, not only scoring it, but playing both ends as well and Aisha is doing phenomenal things inside for us.

"I just feel like each player is bringing something to the table. I've been really pleased so far with how we've gotten out of the gates."

The game was competitive early as the first quarter ended with the Lady Bulldogs holding a modest 14-8 advantage.

Once the second quarter started, Bearden (9-0) wasted precious little time asserting control in the contest. The Lady Bulldogs scored the first nine points of the frame and opened a 23-8 advantage. After that, the game's outcome wasn't ever really in doubt.

The surge came and was culminated when Murphy buried a long-range jumper with six

minutes remaining in the first half. Bearden kept its foot on the throttle throughout the second stanza, outscoring the Lady Devils, 22-6, in the quarter.

The Lady Bulldogs played a tenacious brand of defense in the first half, forcing Greeneville (1-4) into 16 turnovers before the break.

Defense has led to Bearden's early dominance this season, according to Underwood, its veteran head coach.

"I feel like this year for us, defensively, we have ignited our offense. Tonight, we started a little bit slow in both halves," he said. "And then, we did a couple of good things defensively in both halves, where we kind of make a play here, get a rebound, get a stop, and get out and run and play."

"I thought we did a really good job with that tonight."

Sophomore guard Riley Hunt chipped in with nine points for Bearden, while Maria Lyde led Greeneville with 13 points.

Vols heading to Columbus

By Mark Nagi

In December 2020, Tennessee athletics was an absolute mess. The Vols finished a 3-7 Covid season under head coach Jeremy Pruitt. A few weeks later, Pruitt would be fired for recruiting violations and athletics director Phillip Fulmer would "retire."

It was one of the darkest times in the proud history of Tennessee athletics.

Four years later, the University of Tennessee has, arguably one of the best athletics departments in the entire country. Men's basketball made it to the Elite 8 last March and is currently ranked Number 1 in the nation. The Lady Vols softball team won the SEC last spring. The Lady Vols basketball team is nationally ranked under new head coach Kim Caldwell. Every sport on campus made it to the postseason during the 2023-2024 academic school year.

And now the football program, the "front door of the university," is back among the nation's elite.

Even with unbalanced schedules and a bloated league of 16 teams, finishing the regular season at 10-2 with a 6-2 mark in conference play is an impressive accomplishment. That's what the Tennessee Volunteers did this season. And that earned them a spot in the newly expanded 12-team College Football Playoff.

Because college football's power brokers can't get anything right the first time (and often not at all), Tennessee doesn't get a home game, despite being ranked 7th. The system agreed upon for some reason ends up with Boise State and Arizona State getting first-round byes. The Vols will hit the road to play a reeling 10-2 Ohio State squad on Saturday night.

There's been a lot of talk about how the cold will affect Tennessee, playing a game in the heart of Ohio in late December. Apparently, those people believe that Knoxville is located on the equator.

Yes, it does get cold in East Tennessee. The end result should not be credited to the weather.

This game is a rematch of the 1996 Florida Citrus Bowl, a classic matchup in a pre-playoff era won by the Vols 20-14. Bill Duff's stop on Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George on 4th and inches near the Tennessee goal line is one of the great plays in the history of Tennessee football. The Vols finished the season ranked 3rd in the country and won the national championship three years later.

This time around, it feels like two programs heading in opposite directions. The Vols have won a combined 30 games the last three seasons. They have the upper hand on their biggest rival, beating Alabama two of the last three years. Tennessee still needs to get a win over Georgia, who they have lost to eight years in a row, but there are few who would not recognize the incredible rebuild performed by head coach Josh Heupel.

On the other hand, right now Ohio State football is a toxic environment. Head coach Ryan Day wins just about every game, except those played against their biggest rival, Michigan. Going 1-4 against the Wolverines, including losing four straight, is unacceptable in Columbus, and can't be good for his long-term future at OSU. If Tennessee can get off to a good start this weekend, the boo birds will be loud at The Shoe.

It feels like every big game is a "statement" game for Tennessee. And I guess this falls into that category as well. The Vols need to prove that they can beat a quality opponent on the road, something they've done sparingly in Heupel's tenure. A victory in Columbus would probably knock that monkey off his back.

We will find out around midnight on Saturday if the Vols need to make plans for the Rose Bowl and a meeting with top-ranked Oregon.

COLLEGE SIGNEES

Two Panthers sign with CSCC

By Ken Leinart

Powell High School's Kwade Carver and Lucas Mayes signed letters of intent Friday, Dec. 6, to take their game to the next level with Cleveland State Community College.

The Cougars inked half of the Powell infield with the signing.

And Powell Head Coach Josh Warner thinks CSCC got a steal because, he said, he's watched Mayes and Carver's progress for the last three years.

"I know they've been playing baseball since they were kids and they have shown great progress since they were freshman," Warner said.

"They have accomplished a lot. I'll be watching to see how they progress during the next two years."

Making progress and development are two of the biggest reasons the pair signed with the Cougars.

"I feel like I'm getting the best



PHOTO BY KEN LEINART.

Kwade Carver (sitting, left) and his parents Trisha and Robert Carver, and Lucas Mayes and his parents Vernetta and Chris Mayes celebrated signing a letter of intent to attend and play baseball at Cleveland State Community College.

opportunity to develop as a player at Cleveland," Mayes said. "And I really like the coaching staff there."

Mayes, the first baseman for the Panthers, has taken the hill for Powell during his first three

years with the Panthers, but at Cleveland he'll be concentrating on first base.

He has talked with four other schools about continuing his playing career, but Mayes said he "felt

Continued on page 4

Bruins survive tough road test at Gresham

By Ken Lay

Bearden Middle School boys basketball coach Ben Zorio knew his team would face its toughest test of the season when it traveled to Fountain City to play Gresham Wednesday night.

Not only are the Gladiators talented, but they play in the smallest gym in the Knox County Middle School Basketball Conference and have one of the loudest fan bases in town.

“I told the boys that this was the toughest place in town to play, but you really don’t know how tough it is until you’re actually in here,” Zorio said after the Bruins erased an early deficit to topple the Gladiators, 55-43, and remain undefeated this season.

“Gresham and Vine probably play in the smallest gyms in town and they always have solid teams.”

Bearden (8-0) got off to a sluggish start as the Gladiators opened a 7-1 lead when Jai’Shaun Dean buried a long-range jumper midway through the first quarter.

Gresham led, 16-9, by the end of the frame.

The Bruins, however, would open the second quarter with a 16-2 surge and took a 25-18 lead when point guard Brian Tate knocked down a three-pointer with 1 minute, 47 seconds remaining until halftime.

Bearden led, 29-24 at the break and it wouldn’t trail again but Zorio said that his veteran squad survived its toughest test thus far during the 2024-25

campaign.

“This was our toughest game of the season, and I knew it would be because Gresham has a skilled team and this is such a tough place to play,” “We have some tough games coming up over the next week-and-a-half and after the break.

“We’re going to have to continue to improve, but I’m really pleased with the toughness and poise that we showed to come back.”

Prior to last week’s contest in Fountain City, the Bruins had only faced one significant deficit this year. That was against Hardin Valley, in their dominant early-season run.

“We were down against Hardin Valley at the half,” Zorio said.

The keys to Bearden’s success this season are experience and talent. More than that, however, the Bruins have proven to be unselfish early on this season.

“I really like the way we share the basketball,” Zorio said. “In our last few games, we’ve had a 4-1 assist-to-turnover ratio.”

The Bruins boasted a balanced offensive attack against the Gladiators. Tate led the way with 18 points, seven of which came in the second stanza when Bearden began to methodically assume control of the contest.

Paxton Tedford added 13 points. Jamerson Moore had 10 and Dontae’ Campbell finished with seven.

Dean scored 17 points to lead Gresham.

Tate’s big fourth quarter helps Lady Bruins notch comeback victory

By Ken Lay

Bri’Naijah Tate answered the call when her team needed it most.

Tate, a wing player for the Bearden Middle School girls basketball team, had a big fourth quarter to help propel the Lady Bruins to a crucial road victory in the Knox County Middle School Basketball Conference Wednesday night.

She scored 11 of her team-high 16 points in the final frame to help Bearden notch a 43-37 victory over the Gresham Lady Gladiators in Fountain City.

Tate buried three 3-pointers and converted a pair of late free throws over the final eight minutes of the contest in Knoxville’s

smallest middle school venue, and in front of the county’s most spirited and boisterous fan bases.

“She had a big fourth quarter for us and she finally found her shot,” Bearden coach Eric Gray said of Tate. “That was big for us and big for her because she’s been struggling a little bit in our last few games.”

Tate heated up and carried the Lady Bruins late as she scored 11 of their last 15 points, playing in one of the most hostile road environments in town.

“This a really tough place to play. The crowd is loud and they’re right on top of you,” Gray said. “This was a wild game and a big win for us.”

Despite nabbing a crucial road victory, Bearden struggled out of the gate as the Lady Gladiators were hot early, opening a 9-4 lead by the end of the first quarter.

The Lady Bruins, however, responded with a run of their own in the second stanza of a frenetic contest that went back-and-forth throughout. Bearden held the host Lady Gladiators to just six points in the period and pulled to within 17-15 by halftime.

Aaliyah Robinson kept the Lady Bruins within striking distance early. She came off the bench and scored seven of her nine points in the final six minutes before halftime.

The game continued

to teeter and the lead changed hands multiple times in the third quarter. The Lady Gladiators still had a 29-28 advantage heading into the third quarter and they scored first in the final frame when center Sasha Foster buried a 3-pointer with 5:47 left in the game to make the score, 32-28.

Foster led all scorers with 17 points but that long-range jumper represented her final offensive production of the contest.

Tate’s 3-pointer a short time later gave the Lady Bruins a 34-32 lead and from there, Bearden would never trail again.

Two Panthers sign with CSCC

Cont. from page 3

really comfortable” on his visit with the Cougars.

By signing Friday Mayes said he can now fully concentrate on his senior season with Powell.

“I wanted to sign before my senior baseball season,” he said. “I don’t want any pressure going into the season.”

Mayes said he doesn’t know what he will major in yet, but he noted by the time he finished his two years at Cleveland and

moves on to a four year school, which he plans on doing, he’ll know.

Carver said hearing the experiences of past Powell players who signed with the Cougars helped him make up his mind.

“I talked with other players from here (Powell) who went to Cleveland State and they got stronger,” the Panther third baseman said. “It’s a good place to develop.”

He, too, liked his visit to the school’s campus. “It

felt like home,” he said.

Carver said he wants to major in business administration and plans on moving on to a four year school after leaving CSCC.

“I want to go to a Power 5 school, but it may be a mid-major,” he said.

Warner said Carver and Mayes are part of what is expected to be a loaded Powell baseball team this spring.

“I don’t think I’ve ever had this much depth,” he said. “They (Carver and

Mayes) are great teammates, great in our school, and they show true leadership for our other players.

“They are two great kids I truly never have to worry about. They come from great families and they do things the right way.”

The Cougars were 38-20 in the 2023-2024 season. They play in the Tennessee Community College Athletic Association/National Junior College Athletic Association (TCCAA/NJCAA) Region VII.

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