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Trustee's office launches program to assist elderly, disabled residents



Justin Biggs
Knox Co. Trustee

Last Friday, the Knox County Trustee's Office announced the launch of its new mobile office program, a community-focused initiative designed to bring essential services directly to the homes of elderly citizens and those with mobility limitations. This innovative program aims to enhance accessibility and provide

personalized assistance in processing payments and completing necessary paperwork, ensuring all residents have equitable access to the services they need.

The mobile office is available to visit homes throughout Knox County by appointment, offering a convenient and accommodating option for those who may face

challenges visiting the trustee's office in person.

- Services Provided:
- Property tax payment processing
 - Assistance with completing and submitting paperwork
 - Guidance on tax relief and freeze programs
 - General inquiries and personalized support

"We recognize the importance of accessibility and its pivotal role in maintaining independence and peace of mind for our elderly and mobility-limited residents," Knox County Trustee Justin Biggs said. "Our Mobile Office Program is designed to provide essential services and foster a sense of community and

support." Residents can contact the Knox County Trustee's Office at (865)215-4331 to schedule a visit from the mobile office. For more information about the Mobile Office Program or other services offered by the Knox County Trustee's Office, please visit www.knoxcounty.org/trustee.

Road access to Tipton Road development on commission agenda

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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In their January regular meeting, the Knox County Commission voted to create infrastructure development districts, approving a large D. R. Horton Inc. housing development along Tipton Station Road. The \$6 million agreement passes along street and utility costs to future homebuyers for an additional \$1,000 per year on top of local real estate taxes.

Improvements along Tipton Station Road to allow access to the new development are on the commission agenda this month which includes the Horton company paying for county road improvements. A vote on the two proposed Tipton Station Road intersection improvements, at Martin Mill Pike and Maryville Pike, has been delayed monthly since October at the request of the sponsor.

The increase in daily trips, when the subdivision is completed, is estimated at 3,136. The additional traffic and the current Tipton Station Road conditions led to a proposal for one new entry and exit and the addition of a roundabout. According to the agreement before the commission, the county would do the roadwork and D. R. Horton Inc. would pay for the improvements.

The creation of the infrastructure development district passed last month in a 10-1 vote with Fifth District Commissioner Angela Russell opposing the motion. The plan's 342 residential homes on 86 acres are expected to be complete in 2027.

Middle School Basketball Tournament Time!



Bearden's Paxton Tedford races in for a layup against Seymour in the AAA Sectional tournament finals on Feb. 10 at Clinton Middle School. The Bruins along with the Vine Golden Bears and the West Valley Lady Wolves played in the TM-SAA state tournament this past weekend in Middle Tennessee. Check out how these three teams did in the sectionals and at the state in Sports & Recreation, Section C.

Ray Hill's biography of Senator McKellar available for preorder

By Focus Staff

Faithful readers of The Knoxville Focus can now go online and preorder a copy of Ray Hill's new book about Senator Kenneth McKellar from Amazon.com. The Kindle version will be released on June 20, 2025, and the hardback edition of the book will be shipped on June 10, 2025, if you order soon. The book's title is "Senator Kenneth McKellar: Feudin' Son of Tennessee."

Ray Hill has been writing one of the most popular features of The Knoxville Focus for the last fourteen years. "Pages of the Past," which focuses on history, has a wide readership not only within the metro Knoxville area, but also in Nashville and Washington, D.C. Hill's column also is a big draw with folks from states all over the country. "I'm asked all the time when I am going to write a book," Hill said recently. "Well, I've written one."

The University of Tennessee Press is publishing Hill's biography of Tennessee's Kenneth D. McKellar, who served longer in Congress than any other person in the Volunteer State's long



Ray Hill
Focus columnist, author and historian

history. McKellar served for six years in the U.S. House of Representatives and for thirty-six consecutive years in the United States Senate for an amazing total of forty-two years.

The description of the book on Amazon reads, "In his new biography of McKellar, Ray Hill traces the political career of Tennessee's longest-serving senator and paints a colorful, nuanced portrait of the senator's character and convictions. He chronicles McKellar's decades-long political contributions to Tennessee and the United States as a whole, from the beginnings of the Boss

Cont. on page 2

Fire and Rescue Committee talks funding, recruitment, Rural Metro status

By Ken Leinart

Global Medical Response Inc., owner of Rural Metro Fire, announced in October 2024 that it was selling the Knox County fire service provider to Alabama-based Brindlee Fire Services.

The sale is anticipated to be finalized by the end of 2025, pending regulatory approvals.

During Wednesday afternoon's Knox County Fire and Technical Rescue Committee meeting, Rural Metro Fire Chief Jeff Devlin gave an update on the sale.

Sort of. "There's really nothing to update," Devlin said. "Just a list of 1,000 things long to switch over. The CEO (of Brindlee) has not been down and when that happens we'll get together."

Devlin said he was "super excited" to be working with "a community-based" fire company.

"They will look to solve Rural Metro's problems, and by extension, the community's problems."

The committee did, however, answer some questions from Knox County At-large Seat 11

Commissioner and vice-chair Kim Frazier about what the departments "are facing."

Said Frazier, "I just want to hear about the agencies ... So that (County Commission) can respond accordingly."

Karns Fire Department Chief Daron Long spoke first since his department answered a call on the morning of Dec. 31, 2024, in which two houses were lost.

He said when his department first arrived one house was about 75% involved. Then the wind shifted and a second house caught

fire. Long said wind gusts that day were as high as 50 miles-per-hour.

"Weather played a part, setting a second house on fire," Long said.

But other challenges greeted firefighters, such as cars parked along both sides of the roadway the houses were on.

"It makes it challenging when cars are parked on both sides of the road," he said.

Long and other members of the committee said it would help if the county could enforce parking restrictions.

Continue on page 4

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CLINTON, TENNESSEE

Hate For Trump Has Now Expanded To Musk

From a distance



By John J. Duncan Jr.
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The hatred in the hearts and minds of many on the Left is just astounding. Having spent a lifetime closely following and being involved in the American political scene, I have never seen anything as extreme as the bitter hatred and anger directed toward Donald Trump.

Now, just as love expands so that a parent can love a second and third child as much as the first, apparently political hatred can expand, too.

While the hatred for

President Trump has not abated, and in fact has grown because of many of his executive orders, the hate in the hearts of many liberals has expanded to cover Elon Musk, too.

I mentioned in a column a couple of years ago that I am in a men's book club. We have just finished reading a lengthy but easy-to-read biography of Musk by Walter Isaacson.

I have never read a book that made me feel so unsuccessful. I have felt good about being able to help thousands of people during my career as a teacher, lawyer, judge and congressman, usually in small ways, but still very important to those people.

But everything Musk did (and is doing) was HUGE, and almost everything has seemingly turned to gold. Forbes Magazine estimated his net worth by 2025 as \$397 billion and said he

is the world's richest man. He is the world's most successful man except in the most important way - his personal life.

He has fathered 12 children with three different women, only one of whom he was married to. He works around the clock, leaving little time with his children, one of which is now a trans-gender woman who has changed her last name because she wants nothing to do with Musk.

He has been divorced three times (twice from one of his wives), and has had numerous short-term relationships. He has a touch of Asperger syndrome - a form of autism - which causes him to have difficulty in social relationships with other people. He has fired many people who have worked for him.

He seems to be a very rich, very brilliant man, and I am sure he has had many

moments of great joy. But he seems to be a never-satisfied, very unhappy man.

But in spite of his personal problems, I believe the American taxpayers are very fortunate to have him helping Donald Trump at the top of our federal government.

His success seems to be because he questions every requirement, rule, regulation, and expenditure, and always wants to know if anything can be done in a better, cheaper, faster way. No detail is too small.

I am proud that I can honestly say if everyone had voted the way I did in my 30 years in Congress, we would not have any federal debt, and this nation would be much stronger.

But the Democrat way, aided and abetted by some Republicans, was to vote for any and every kind of spending and then to pay

for it through a combination of taxes and tremendous inflation of our currency,

With the unfortunate exception of many billions going to Israel, Trump and Musk are making the first serious effort to bring federal spending down.

Anyone who doesn't think this has to be done (with our debt now at an incomprehensible \$36 trillion) should read this from Eric Metaxas' best-selling biography, "Bonhoeffer":

"For Germany, 1923 was disastrous. The German mark, which had begun to slide two years earlier, went into free fall. In 1921 it dropped to 75 marks to the dollar, the next year to 400; and by early 1923 it plunged to 7000. But this was only the beginning of sorrows.

"Germany was beginning to buckle under the pressure of meeting the payments stipulated by the

Versailles Treaty. . .The resultant economic turmoil would make the bleak conditions of a few months earlier look like the good old days: by August a dollar was worth one million marks; and in September, August seemed like the good old days. By November 1923 a dollar was worth about four billion German marks."

In the years leading up to this crash, Germany was considered to be the most educated country in the world. Our worst depression occurred 16 years after the Federal Reserve System was created, supposedly to prevent such things happening here.

Too many of our people naively think the German inflation of the 1920s can't happen here. It can if Trump, Musk and other lose their fight to bring federal spending under control.

Ray Hill's biography of Senator McKellar available for preorder

Cont. from page 1

Crump political machine to McKellar's historic victory as the first popularly elected US senator from Tennessee in 1916. Hill offers a balanced account of McKellar's forty-two years in office, exploring his early Democratic successes under Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, his steadfast support for the Tennessee Valley Authority, and his fierce, unwavering commitment to Tennessee and its people.

"As the only full-length biography of McKellar to date, Hill's meticulously researched volume fills a significant gap in scholarship, shedding new light on the life and career of one of Tennessee's most prominent political figures. Drawing on articles from more than one hundred U.S. newspapers on

McKellar's life and politics, this biography will not only appeal to both scholars and students of US political science but also offers a captivating story to all who love Tennessee and the state's rich history."

It will surprise no one who regularly read's Ray Hill's column that his book on the life and career of Senator McKellar reads like a Bible of Tennessee politics for the period of 1911 through 1952. No aficionado of Tennessee history or politics can do without a copy of "Senator Kenneth McKellar: Feudin' Son of Tennessee." With a forward written by former Congressman John J. "Jimmy" Duncan Jr., who is also a Focus columnist, it is a volume with the complete cast of colorful characters which populated Tennessee's political stage for decades. Readers will



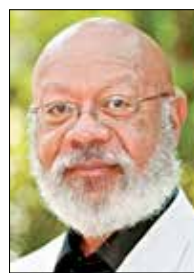
"Senator Kenneth McKellar: Feudin' Son of Tennessee" by Ray Hill is available for preorder.

be able to read about the rough and tumble political wars, "Boss" Crump, Luke Lea and how the State of Tennessee lost most of its money over a few days and McKellar's reputation as Washington's most feared-feudist.

Be sure to preorder your copy as soon as possible.

Why did Putin invade Ukraine?

I was wondering why Putin invaded Ukraine. It was obvious that he was going to do so. You don't amass 200,000 troops on the Ukraine border just to have a parade.



By Dr. Harold A. Black
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Putin made noises about annexing the two Russian-speaking provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk and supporting their insurgents during the buildup. Putin was emboldened by Russia's seizing of Crimea in 2014 without hardly a peep from the West or resistance from Ukraine. Although some pointed to the seizure as a result of Crimean residents wanting to reunite with Russia, the main reason was to keep the Black Sea port of Sevastopol. This gave the Russian navy access to the Mediterranean. Some say that Russia invaded Ukraine to prevent it from joining NATO. If that were the case, then why didn't it invade Finland? Some say that Putin was trying to reclaim the borders of the old Soviet Union. So why didn't he annex Belarus? Others say that Russia considers Ukraine as part of Russia and not a separate country, yet the Ukrainians have a separate language and culture.

I have never believed any of this. I am an economist so I looked for economic reasons for Russia to invade Ukraine. If Russia annexed Crimea for military reasons, then it likely wanted the rest of Ukraine for reasons other than unifying Russian speakers. First, they probably

perceived that Ukraine was weak and they could annex it as easily as Crimea. Second, they thought that the Russian speakers would rebel against Ukraine. Third, they were greedy.

Russia invaded because Ukraine is rich in agricultural and mineral resources. Ukraine is called the breadbasket of Europe - while Russia is simply a basket case. Ukraine has some of the world's most fertile land and is one of the world's largest exporters of grain. More than 70% of the country is agricultural. It is the world's largest producer of sunflowers and sunflower oil. It is a major producer of barley, wheat, corn, rye, soybeans and potatoes. Obviously, the war has adversely affected food production with prices increasing for agricultural produce. However, isn't it interesting that Russia has an agreement with Ukraine to keep the safe transport of produce out of Ukraine? If Russia had blockaded agricultural exports, experts said that there would have been a food crisis in much of Africa and parts of Asia. That would have turned those countries, some of whom are Russian allies, against the invasion.

Although Ukraine being an agricultural giant is well known, less well known is that the country is rich in other resources. The country is a mineral superpower, home of some of the largest reserves of vital minerals. The US says that of 50 minerals that are vital to its

national security, Ukraine has ample supplies of 22 of them. In fact, Ukraine has large reserves of 117 of the 120 most vital minerals in the world. Iron ore, graphite, shale gas, uranium, lithium, manganese and others are in Ukraine valued in excess of \$26 trillion. Ukraine also has offshore hydrocarbon deposits, oil and natural gas. It has coal reserves valued at over \$20 trillion along with deposits of cobalt, copper, beryllium, nickel and tin. Russia wants these riches.

I may be naïve with regard to foreign affairs but the agriculture, the minerals and the energy reserves are reasons enough for Russia to try to seize control of all of Ukraine. I wonder why this has been ignored in the press. Moreover, we keep hearing that we have no strategic interest in Ukraine so why should we keep supplying them with weapons? One very strategic reason is not to let the country's riches fall into the hands of the Russians.

Since we have supported Ukraine with over \$200 billion in arms and supplies, I would be disappointed if Trump didn't continue to support Ukraine and establish a significant trade agreement with it. Rather than continuing to be dependent upon China for rare earth materials, we could trade with Ukraine. In fact, Ukraine could replace China as the major source of minerals for green energy. Trump loves tariffs but a free trade agreement with Ukraine makes a lot of sense. It would be foolish if we didn't seek to end this war with a trade agreement that would benefit America.



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Publisher's Positions



By Steve Hunley,
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Good Job, Betsy Henderson

Betsy Henderson, chair of the Knox County Board of Education, was polite and professional under the severe provocation of some rude people who demanded her resignation. Why? Because Henderson dared to go to Nashville and speak up for Governor Bill Lee's voucher plan. Anybody who knows anything about Betsy Henderson knows she is outspoken in her belief that parents should not only be involved in the education of their children but also ought to be respected and listened to by the school system where their children are taught. Henderson has always believed parents have a right to know just exactly what their children are being taught. Betsy Henderson has never hidden the fact, quite the contrary, she has always been upfront about her belief in parental rights and school

choice. Henderson's position is thoughtful and she has won every election in which she has run, and not by just a little bit, either.

"We can support both public schools and school choice," Henderson said. Henderson also pointed out the legislature had demonstrated its support for public schools by increasing Knox County schools' budget by 35% over just the last five years. A letter written by someone living in Henderson's district condemned Henderson, writing her "enthusiastic public support for school vouchers is an egregious betrayal of the students, teachers, families, employees, and community members of Knox County Schools." It is no such thing.

Commissioner Terry Hill charging it was a "gross misuse of a position of power" for her to have testified before the Education Committee in Nashville is absurd. Terry Hill's public service is notable only because she has a well-deserved reputation for talking out of both sides of her mouth. If anything is a gross misuse of a position of power it is Hill's denouncing Ms. Henderson. Terry, in the United States of America, even public officials have the right to freedom of speech. Just as you have the right to fling a baseless accusation, so, too does Betsy Henderson have the right to speak as a private

individual before the state legislature. Ms. Henderson was careful to state she was not there to speak on behalf of the board, but rather as a mother and citizen of the State of Tennessee.

I don't recall much of anyone condemning former board member Jennifer Owen who went to Nashville every year while she served on the board to lobby against vouchers. Terry Hill served on the board with Ms. Owen and never complained about Ms. Owen lobbying for her own personal point of view. No member of the county commission or board of education speaks for the full body, something anybody with a lick of common sense should know.

Just about everybody in Terry Hill's family seems to have served on the Knox County Board of Education and so did I, but unfortunately, Commissioner Hill was more interested in representing the teachers' unions and the bureaucracy than she was in the parents and students. Evidently, Ms. Hill is still representing that same constituency on the Knox County Commission. And would Terry Hill's comment have been worthy of being printed in the daily newspaper had she not been a member of the county commission? Surely not. Maybe Hill should have followed her own advice and kept her own mouth shut. But then few politicians

have kept one finger in the air and a baton in the other hand, ready to run and get in front of the parade as has Terry Hill. Unfortunately for her constituents and Knox County, Terry Hill has a USAID mindset.

Historically, teachers unions do not want any kind of oversight or accountability. These unions and their supporters bray we should fully fund schools, yet they can't tell anyone what that would be; it just takes more and more money and we aren't turning out a better product. And Betsy Henderson is representing the people who elected her, much as the vocal teacher unionists would like to disbelieve. Henderson has always put the students and parents above the school bureaucracy. The same people who hate accountability inside the school system also loathe the idea of the taxpayers having any say in what they pay for. Members of the board of education are not elected to represent the system; they are elected to represent the families who are the reason the system exists.

Here in Knox County, fully two-thirds of every local tax dollar goes to support the schools. Three-fourths of the budget goes for just two entities: schools and the sheriff's department. Every other aspect of county government is run off the remaining quarter out of every tax dollar.

Betsy Henderson was NOT elected to represent the school bureaucracy, teachers, or administrators; she was elected to represent the students and parents. As stated previously, after all it is the parents who pay for it as taxpayers. The Knox County Board of Education has been well represented by those who think of parents as an afterthought. The late Mike McMillan, who served on the board for more than a decade and had spent his entire adult life as a teacher, once observed some of his colleagues constantly mentioned teachers without ever once mentioning taxpayers. McMillan also liked to point out the only time some of his colleagues mentioned students and parents was as a shield to protect themselves.

Betsy Henderson is free to speak her mind, as a member of the Knox County Board of Education, as a parent herself, and as an American just as those who disagree with her can jump on her Facebook page and howl and squall in outrage. That's what free speech and democracy is, after all.

Sam Lee Would Make A Great U.S. Attorney

Knox County District Attorney General Charme Allen has done a good job in serving in a very important office. Sam Lee is General

Allen's chief deputy and has done much to contribute to her success in prosecuting criminals. Lee has made an application to serve as the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Tennessee. The U.S. Attorney's post is a position of great importance to our community and all of East Tennessee.

Sam Lee not only has the legal knowledge necessary to hold such a post but also possesses the administrative ability necessary to make a success of the appointment. Lee also has the vital experience of having served as a prosecutor and is uniquely well-positioned to serve during the second Trump administration. With the U.S. government finally enforcing the laws on the books and making a herculean effort to remove the violent illegal alien gangs from our streets and communities, it makes a great deal of difference just who is appointed to serve as our U.S. Attorney. Sam Lee would be the perfect choice to cooperate with the federal agencies and local governments as the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

Sam Lee is able, hard-working, and very much a part of our local community. While there may be one or two who rival Lee in ability, patriotic zeal, and experience, there are none better.

Brief ethics meeting reviews no complaints

By Mike Steely
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In what may have been the shortest meeting ever held in Knox County, the ethics committee spent only seven minutes together Wednesday morning. The new chairwoman, Deborah Stafford, headed the committee for her first time and new member Michael Bittel was introduced.

The committee heard a devotional from Commissioner Damon Rawls and Vice Chair Byron Wood led the Pledge. With no new business and no old business to discuss, Chairwoman Stafford used the gavel, for the first time, to

adjourn the meeting.

In previous years the Knox County Ethics Committee, under Chairman Michael Covington, heard several complaints involving elected county officials. The law department now screens any complaints filed and passes any complaint deemed credible on to the ethics committee. Previous complaints involved candidates prior to an election. The rules for the ethics committee were changed and for more than two years no new complaints have been heard by the body.

The next meeting of the ethics group is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13.

Want to run for Knoxville City Council?

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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Knoxville has a city election this year with five council seat contests on the primary and general election ballots. Already five people have indicated they want to seek the positions. The primary is August 26 and the top two vote-getters in each district will face off in the November 4 general election. Early voting in the primary starts August 6.

Candidates may pick up petitions starting March 17 and the withdrawal deadline is May 22.

Efforts to have city-wide ballots failed last year and city voters will vote by district only.

The five seats are currently held by Tommy Smith in District 1, Andrew Roberto in District 2, Seema Singh in District 3, Lauren Rider in District 4 and Gwen McKenzie in District 6. Four of the five current council members are term-limited according to the election office. Smith was appointed to the council to replace Stephanie Welch in 2020 and was elected in 2021, only serving about six years.

"I am able to run for another term but I have decided to pass the baton," Smith told The Focus last week.

There's plenty of time for other people to enter the races.

So far Karyn Adams seeks the District 1 seat, Nathan Honeycutt in District 2, Judy Mullins and Frank Ramey in District 3, and Matthew DeBardeleben in District 4. Rev. Sam Brown has indicated he may seek McKenzie's District 6 seat.

Knox County Elections 101

Whether you have announced or are thinking of running you may want to attend the Knox County Elections 101 seminar that will answer questions on what steps you might take, how the county ensures fair and accurate elections, why polling places change and why a ballot appears a certain way.

This will be the third seminar presented by the Knox County Election Commission, which oversees federal, state, county and city elections. The

three-hour seminar will be held on Saturday, March 1 and you can register at www.knoxvotes.org.

During the session you may take part in a mock election and learn about several topics including the different types of elections and voting, how polling places are determined, what candidates need to know, how accurate voter rolls are maintained, the role of poll workers, how votes are counted, and election integrity and security procedures.

There's no cost for the seminar but attendees must register and the class is limited to 40 people with frequent voters given a preference. You must be registered to vote in Knox County and the session runs from 9 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. It's being held at the Downtown West Early Voting and Training Facility at 1645 Downtown West. The deadline to register is Friday, February 21.

Additional information is available by calling (865) 215-2480.

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More residential housing decisions before Knox Commission

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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When the Knox County Commission meets for its monthly zoning session on Wednesday it will consider many requests for additional residential projects.

One of the two requests on the agenda from Benjamin Mullins has been postponed each month since November. Mullins is asking to rezone property at 8920

Karns Valley Road from agricultural to planned residential for six dwelling units per acre. The zoning commission approved the change, in a 13-0 vote, with one condition: the District 6 property would retain its floodway zone.

Mullins also has a request to change the number of units in a planned residential zoned property, upping the dwelling units from 2.5 to five per acre. The request was moved from January

to the February meeting by the applicant and the property is at 4923 Shipe Road in District 8. The planning commission is recommending three units per acre.

District 8 has three other rezoning requests. Stefan Claar is asking to change 8007 Millertown Pike from agricultural to planned residential for two dwellings per acre; Molly Hughes is asking to change property at 2425 Mine Road from industrial

to agricultural; and Mesana Investments LLC seeks to change 204 North Wooddale Road from agricultural to planned residential for six units per acre. The Mesana request was made in January and moved to February on a motion by Commissioner Larsen Jay.

Two requests fall within District 9: Paul Blake is asking for a change from agricultural to low-density residential (RA) for 125 Highland View Drive and Terry

Romans is asking that 1907 East Governor John Sevier Highway be rezoned from agricultural to neighborhood commercial (CN). Both rezonings were approved in a 13-0 vote by planners.

Within District 3 is a request from Benchmark Associates Inc. to change 2007 Robinson Road from agricultural to low-density residential, with a planning commission approval.

Finding Old Railroad Depots

A Day Away

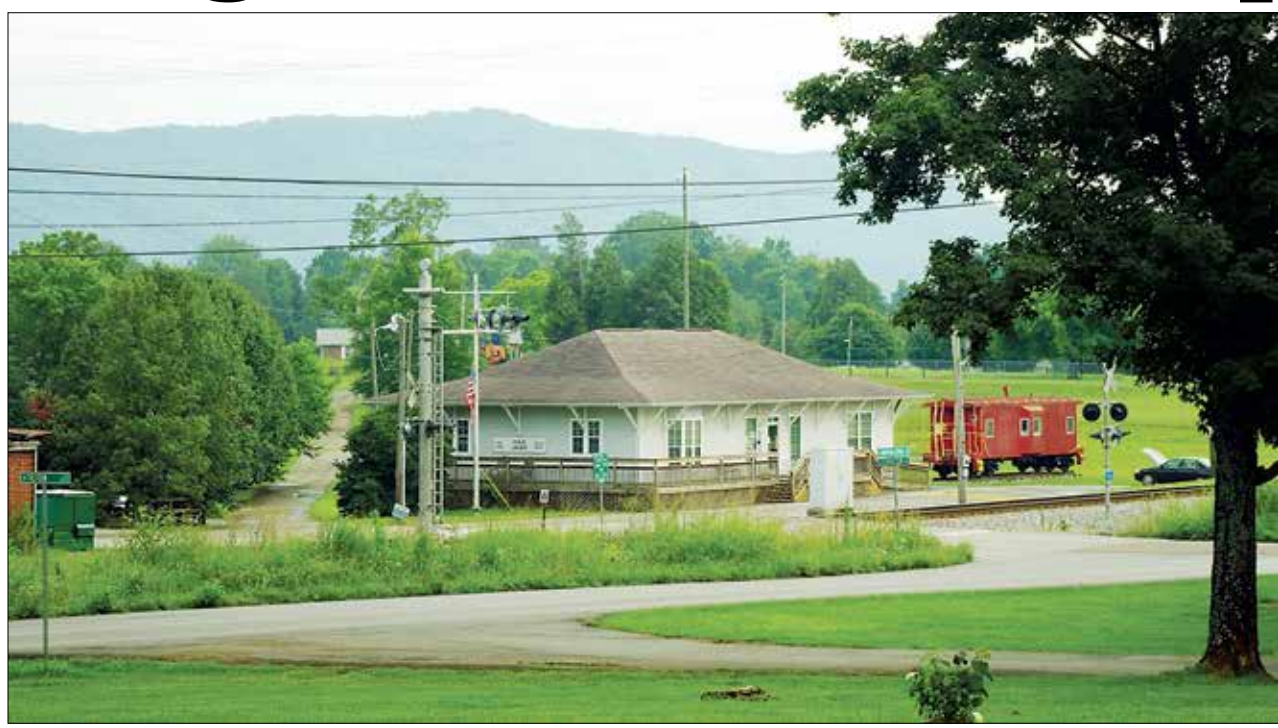


By Mike Steely

I grew up about a block away from a railroad station, back when passenger trains still ran. That old station is still there and when I'm visiting my hometown I often drop by and peek in. The station is now used by the city and houses a few offices.

My family's house was just across the street from the tracks and I became used to trains passing and the noise and rumbling. I now live in Knoxville and my backyard borders the railroad; I seldom notice the noise.

I guess that's why I'm so interested in railroads and particularly the old railroad stations and depots. Many of them, like the Heiskell



BRIAN STANSBERRY, CC BY 3.0, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Nice railroad depot, right? Nope, it's the Corryton Public Library built by the railroad to look like a historic train depot. If you've only passed by there and never stopped in, you probably thought it is a depot.

station, have long disappeared. Some, like the L&N Station and the Southern Depot yet stand in one form or another. My neighborhood's station in Inskip has long disappeared but was once a stop between Knoxville and Fountain City for the short line that once

served the area.

There are several that continue to exist today and are either empty, used for storage, or now have a different function. The Loudon, Cookeville, Crossville, Greenback, Clinton, Rogersville, Bulls Gap, Sweetwater, and

Philadelphia depots still exist but with other uses.

The Etowah train station is one depot worth a visit. It was once the headquarters for the train company and now is a museum with a caboose and many exhibits. The Fountain City depot still stands and now houses

several businesses yet you wouldn't know or recognize it as a train depot.

The real surprise to me is the Corryton Depot. Or should I say Corryton Library?

Built in 1993 with funds raised by local residents to resemble a train depot,

the library continues to serve the community and was acquired by the county after the "depot" style building was completed at 7733 Corryton Road.

You might think that the Corryton Historic Society is housed in the "new" depot but the society's museum is housed in a historic one-room schoolhouse that was built in the early 1900s. The building has been restored to its original condition and now serves as a showcase for the society's collections. Visitors can explore the museum and learn about the town's early settlers, its agricultural heritage, and the impact of the Civil War on the area.

The Corryton Historical Society is located in Corryton and is dedicated to preserving the rich history and culture of the area. Founded in 1987, the society has a vast collection of artifacts, documents, and photographs that tell the story of Corryton and its people.

Fire and Rescue Committee talks funding, recruitment, Rural Metro status

Cont. from page 1

Another situation that provides a unique challenge for firefighters are homes built on ridge tops because the water pressure for fighting fires drops in those situations.

"It's not the county's planning department's fault," Long said. "That rests more with planning from the developers."

Funding for the fire departments making up coverage of areas in Knox County not covered by the City of Knoxville - Rural Metro, Karns, and Seymour Volunteer Fire Department - was another topic discussed.

One form of funding for

departments comes from residential subscriptions. If you live in Knox County and your house has a fire emergency and (as an example) Rural Metro responds, you won't be billed by Rural Metro if you have an annual subscription.

Annual subscriptions are not that expensive and can save homeowners money with their home insurance fees.

Dwight Van de Vate, Chief Operating Officer of Knox County, said about half of the residents in rural Knox County subscribe for fire protection. But that subscription is tenuous.

He said you can tell by chatter on social media.

Using Karns Fire Department as an example, Van de Vate said, "Karns gets \$200,000 in a budget of more than \$4 million and suddenly, 'Karns is already funded, why should I subscribe?' You have to be very careful about that. Someone gave them \$50,000 so I'm cancelling my subscription."

Long said it's also very hard for departments in the county to be awarded federal grant dollars.

"There are grants," Long said. "But few and far between grants of significant amounts."

"What hurts us the most is the population of our county."

While counties around Knox County, those with smaller populations, are having grant applications approved, not so for Knox County, although the Knox fire departments applying for those grants serve about the same make up of residents as those other counties.

Van de Vate said there are three models for funding fire departments. There is the residential (city) and rural volunteer departments, "And there's Knox County. And I'm not saying that in a good way."

Staffing is another concern for the departments serving Knox County.

"It's always a challenge,"

Devlin said.

Training a firefighter is one thing. Keeping them is another.

"People tend to move on," Devlin said. "When factories are hiring, we lose people. We fill our slots, but it's tough sometimes."

"They are looking for a job. We know that. But

(recruiting and training) eats up a lot of resources and time."

Following the fact finding session, a consensus was reached by the committee to have a list of at least 10 questions/concerns to present to Knox County Commission by June 30.

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The Doctor is in
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Purpose

Trump isn't radical. He's just radically changing our country back to normal.
Jesse Watters

I never heard what Punxsutawney Phil saw on last Groundhog Day, but I saw Woodland Crocus last week and Daffodil shoots pushing up through the mulch, so spring must be close. I know it's early February and winter is not done, but these early signs fill me with anticipation and the hope of spring.

Daffodils trigger in my thoughts William Wordsworth's famous poem of the same name. Even now a spring "crowd" of yellow "flashes upon my inward eye" (Google the poem and enjoy).

I read that January was the coldest month we've had in a decade, so I am more than ready for spring and the special green of new growth immortalized

in Robert Frost's beautiful poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay." Take a moment and treat yourself. Google both of these poems and think of spring!

It is human nature for people to take things for granted, even the return of spring. Perhaps conjuring spring might help. We also resist change, especially as we get older. The pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that everything changes (a nuanced translation). However, people are "more disposed to suffer" than to rise up and "abolish" government, even those governments that are destructive of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Declaration of Independence).

We are definitely in need of change in our government. However, we are witnessing the resistance to change as we watch Democrats like "Mad"

Maxine Waters rage against the DOGE Boys and the stalwart security agent standing guard at the Department of Education. Meanwhile, Democrat dinosaur Chuck Schumer screams about everything Trumpian while waving a Corona beer and an avocado as he explains guacamole. Even progressive Jon Stewart was embarrassed by the feckless Democrat fossil.

And don't think Democrats have reserves on their bench. Kamala is a proven loser. Pocahontas is a fraud. After the California Fire mismanagement, Gavin Newsom is a bust. Nor would I let bartender AOC open my beer.

It is stunning that the Democrats are on the wrong side of every issue, especially those issues Americans care about. Examples include the deportation of criminal illegals, the open border, DEI, trans operations for kids or trans men in women's sports and bathrooms. The Democrats have become the anti-common sense and anti-government reform party. It is stunning to watch an entire political party disintegrate.

Obama once said "Elections have consequences" and "I have a pen and a phone" to govern without legislation. So does President Trump. Perhaps Obama should hold a

seminar to explain reality to those who still call themselves Democrats, but who are actually progressive "corrupt-o-crats."

Maybe the Democrats and the unelected Washington bureaucrats took their USAID gravy train for granted. And like a child whose toy has been taken away, all they can do is throw exhibitionist tantrums and curse. And of course, Democrats are returning to their lawfare gambits to hinder the duly elected president's lawful executive orders and actions. Ultimately, the Supreme Court will have to settle whether the president or some federal judge is the leader of the country.

Amazingly, some Dems are even threatening to shut down their precious government to protest President Trump and the DOGE Boys. What kind of fool would oppose an audit of the federal government or side with Washington, D.C., bureaucrats over We The People of Main Street? I watched some of the ridiculously partisan DOGE subcommittee hearings, but I did learn from expert testimony that the federal government accepts a 20% fraud rate, whereas private businesses hold fraud to 3% or go out of business! The government doesn't go out of business and gets to just print more money, producing more

inflammation and deflating the value of the dollars in your pocket.

Democrats rant that Elon Musk and his DOGE team are not elected officials and therefore can't be trusted to audit federal agencies. Only the president and vice president are elected in the executive branch. Anthony Fauci wasn't an elected official and was in charge of hundreds of millions of dollars and authorized \$40 million in funding for the Wuhan lab to do gain-of-function research. The mismanaged Chinese lab leaked the modified Covid virus to escape and kill millions. Sure seems like an outside auditor needs to review everything in Washington. Incidentally, Harry Hopkins was an unelected "informal advisor" to FDR during the Depression and actually lived in the White House for some time. Elon Musk is the audit advisor to President Trump and was given such authority by our country's CEO.

The Dems now have a Hobson's choice: defend the indefensible USAID and the status quo in Washington or lose their USAID gravy train and power. Now you see why Dems are going to court. Follow the money, the root of Washington power. The Democrats are in a crisis because the "forever government is being uprooted"

(Buck Sexton). The status quo with waste, fraud and abuse is the modus operandi for Washington Democrats.

Every reputable business does audits, except our government. No wait, the Pentagon has audits but has failed the last seven. I guess this means the Pentagon can't explain where the money or procurements went. Of the armed services, I read that the Marines passed their last audit. The new Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has welcomed a DOGE audit of the Pentagon.

In a fraud situation, there are three categories: victims, investigators and perps. Americans are the victims, DOGE is the investigator and you can see why the Dems are in a panic (Greg Gutfeld).

The high energy DOGE whiz kids with their investigative computer algorithms are the future, not Mad Maxine or fossils like Schumer, McConnell or obstructionist Democrats.

I'm not the future. I look at my grandkids and see the future. Someday, my days will be done, but not yet. So, like President Trump, my purpose is to "fight, fight, fight" for my grandkid's future and our country.

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

No more cars and trucks on Gay Street Bridge

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon held a press conference recently and announced some sad news, especially for the growing South Knoxville waterfront. The historic 127-year-old Gay Street Bridge is being permanently closed to car and truck traffic because of some serious structural problems.

Kincannon said that about \$2 million will go into stabilizing the span for the use of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Eventually, with future federal, state and local funding, a new bridge may be constructed. She said that safety comes first and the historic bridge may be open to bike and walking traffic by the end of the year.

The Gay Street Bridge, built in 1898, has been closed since June of 2024. The structure was called "an iconic part of the city"

by Mayor Kincannon.

The bridge spans the Tennessee River at the site of a Civil War pontoon bridge built by Union General Ambrose Burnside. That temporary bridge washed away in 1867 and a covered bridge opened in 1875 but was destroyed by a tornado. It was replaced by the Saulpaw Howe truss bridge that stood until 1898 and was demolished with the completion of the Gay Street Bridge.

The bridge was built to handle trolley and vehicle traffic and greatly helped the expansion and growth of South Knoxville. It was closed for repair from 2001 to 2004 but failed a recent state inspection. The bridge may possibly be opened for EMS vehicles and Knoxville Area Transit buses.

Access to South Knoxville from downtown is available over the Henley Street Bridge and the James White Parkway Bridge.



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

The Gay Street Bridge is permanently closed to car and truck traffic with repairs too expensive. The city is converting the bridge to pedestrian and bike traffic only by the end of this year, with the possible use of emergency vehicles if needed.

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1. RxSight P160055: FDA Summary of Safety and Effectiveness Data.

**OLD MAN'S
STAMP
STORE**



By Harry Brooks
hrbrooks68@gmail.com

Stamp Collecting: My Specialty

Most decisions placed the stamp-related purchase at the bottom of the list. Since collectors always look to fill in the blank spaces in their albums, in most instances, they will purchase a used stamp rather than a mint (unused) stamp. Why? It is less expensive. Finances, or lack of finances, drive most collectors with purchases and related expenditures. The exception is the investor purchasing a very expensive item.

Used stamps are easier to store and protect. Mint stamps must be stored or placed in an album in such a manner that the gum is not and will not be damaged. High humidity can

cause a mint stamp to stick to any object touching the gum. For example, a collector I knew acquired a significant number of mint stamp sheets that were stored in an upright accordion-type file without glassine dividers. He was away from home for an extended period of time, and during his absence, his air conditioner stopped working. When he returned home, he found many of his stamp sheets had stuck to the file dividers. He lost most of his collection. The final use for most of his stamps was regular postage. While I have some mint stamps, I store and preserve these collectible items with great care.

International stamp collectors find used stamps to be the more popular and practical approach to their hobby. A member friend of mind from the Knoxville Philatelic Society is a worldwide collector. Over the years he has accumulated over 100,000 stamps for his collection. The items he has purchased averaged less than fifteen cents per stamp. He has developed contacts around the world that save stamps for him. For this collector, a major expense is the shipping cost. He also acquires thousands of stamps by purchasing in bulk at stamp shows or online from other collectors and dealers.

Another longtime friend has been a U.S. collector and is now adding a few countries to his stamp collection hobby. Many collectors of foreign stamps tend to concentrate on one country, group of countries, or a geographic area. For example, some only collect British Commonwealth Country stamps. Still others collect from Spanish- or French-speaking countries. Each collector's specialty is a personal preference or historical familiarity with a country or region.

How can you find stamps? A number of business/church offices still receive a lot of mail or packages. This is a great source.

Just ask them to save the stamps for you. Your great aunt who might be a hoarder will have lots of saved mail that she might share with you. While I collect anything with a cancellation mark on the stamp, others develop their own interests. In future articles, I will discuss various unique specialties or niches that might interest you. Hopefully, this information will spike your interest, and perhaps you will try your hand at stamp collecting.

You can reach me at hrbrooks68@gmail.com or (865)604-0164 if you have questions or comments. Until next month, happy collecting.

Let's Talk About Love

In 1986, Jake Garn, a Republican United States Senator from Utah, did the unthinkable: he voluntarily gave away a part of his body to someone else. Ok, it wasn't just to anybody, but it's still an amazing thing considering that 78% of Americans say they would be an organ donor, yet only 13% sign the dotted line. Senator Garn's 27-year-old daughter, Susan, was suffering from progressive kidney failure due to aggressive diabetes and was in desperate need of a kidney. Without hesitation, her father stepped up and, at the age of 55, he gave her one of his. The greatest attention-getter was not so much the procedure but the comment from his surgeon at a national press conference. When asked how the



By Justin Pratt,
Clear Springs Baptist
Church Senior Pastor

senator was, the doctor replied, "The senator is awake, he has a grin on his face, and he seems to be very self-satisfied and happy and peaceful." That grin described by the doctor could only mean one thing: No regrets! Senator Garn's daughter said, "He gave me something better than a kidney,

and even better than giving me life, he gave me love."

Love makes it possible for people to do the most dreaded of things without second guesses, without looking back, and with no regrets. If there is anything this world needs right now, it is love. Both the reception and the reciprocation of it. Everywhere we turn we see that regardless of the color of a person's skin, the status in which they grew up socially, or the economic circumstance they

have been exposed to, they feel the need to be loved. There is a primitive and natural inclination in every human to love someone and be loved by someone in return. It is rooted deep within our emotional and psychological well-being. The older I get, the more I realize that love is not just an emotional luxury but it's a vital necessity, and I believe that it was placed there by God.

One day a man who was full of religion but empty in life thought it would be entertaining to try and trip Jesus up concerning the 613 laws that his religious order lived by. This Pharisee asked, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" And, the answer that Jesus gave him was not what he bargained for! He quoted the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 6 when He replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." I imagine as

the lawyer looked up with surprise, Jesus barely missed a beat or a breath when He concludes, "This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." A Pharisee looks at the Son of God and says, "Let's talk about the law" and the Son of God looks at the religious leaders of the day and says, "Let's talk about love." Love God. Love others. Love yourself.

It is interesting to me that Jesus says that the greatest commandments are so intricately woven together that you cannot discuss one without talking about the others. The commandment is relatively clear in its implications. If the vertical love we profess to have for God doesn't line up with the horizontal love we have for others, then something is wrong with our understanding of love. It's the most concise and inclusive statement that Jesus

ever gave us regarding what life is all about. Loving God and loving others.

Jesus simplifies our love into three areas: Love God. Love others. Love yourself. A declaration of loving God is a matter of keeping His commandments. To obey His rules and laws. It's good to remember that loving God is not a warm fuzzy feeling, it's doing what we know God expects of us. The demand of loving others is specifically to love our neighbor. Our neighbors are not those who live in a geographical location beside or near us, they are those who are within our proximity and are conspicuously in need. We must teach our children to learn to love others beyond all racial, social and economic lines. Lastly, there is a duty to love ourselves, not in an egotistical, self-centered way but in a healthy way that honors God.

Continue on page 6

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FROM THE MOUNTAINS BY JADON GIBSON

The Death of Cornstalk

By Jadon Gibson

The great Shawnee Chief Cornstalk thought his people should make peace, not war. It was in the summer of 1777 and he contemplated visiting General Lewis the following day but the majority of those present voted against the tired old warrior.

"So you choose to fight the long-knives," he chastised them. "Then you must fight. If any man is faint, I will kill him with my own hands."

The following day Cornstalk led his warriors with great cunning into what would become known as the Battle of Point Pleasant.

"Be strong," he exhorted his men. "Be strong against these white devils. They killed even our women and children at Captina and at Yellow Creek."

The opposing forces met soon after sunrise and a heavy volley from Cornstalk's men caused their adversaries to give ground. Soon the force of pale faces received reinforcements and the Indians gave ground and formed a line behind logs and trees. A battle continued from their positions all day not ceasing until sundown.

The settlers lost 75 men and another 140 were wounded. Although the number of Indian dead was not determined, a large number of their warriors were found on the battleground while others were found in the river.

One of Cornstalk's men refused to fight and was dispatched to the Great

Spirit with a thunderous blow from the chief's tomahawk. That night back in the Indian village of Chillicothe there was another council.

"I offered to call on General Lewis and ask for peace but you wanted war," he began. "What do you now choose to do? The long-knives are coming on us from two sides. Will we rise up to fight them?"

No one answered.

"Shall we kill our squaws and children and then fight the long-knives until we are all killed?" he asked.

Silence.

Cornstalk rose and thrust his tomahawk into the war post in the center of the council house.

"You have spoken," he uttered. "I will go and seek peace."

The following morning Cornstalk along with young chief Red Hawk and another Indian rode to the Point Pleasant garrison. He found Captain Arbuckle in charge as General Lewis was called away along with a force of Indian fighters.

"We come in peace," Cornstalk told Arbuckle. "Many of our brothers have joined the English. Cornstalk and our people have held to our fathers' way of life but now seek peace. If we cannot have peace we will run with the stream."

Due to Lewis' absence and the Indian uprisings, Arbuckle thought it would be wise to keep the three Indians as hostages for the time being. After a while, a son of Cornstalk "halloed" from the opposite river bank. He was brought

across the river and he too was kept hostage. He and his father embraced.

The following day a small group of Indians lurking on the opposite bank killed one of the men by the name of Gilmore as he returned from hunting. When his body was brought to the fort there was an increased hatred toward the Indians and an outcry to kill the Indian hostages.

A group led by Captain Hall bent on revenge immediately headed to where they were being held. A small group of men attempted to stop them from their task but they stepped aside when they were threatened with cocked guns.

Cornstalk and his fellow hostages heard and understood the commotion. They knew that their death was imminent. Cornstalk's son, the newest prisoner, became very upset.

"Don't be afraid to die, my son," Cornstalk said. "The Great Spirit sent you to die with me. It is his will."

Cornstalk rose to meet the men at the door and was promptly shot seven times. The others were also shot and tomahawked in short order.

Chief Cornstalk, the great king of the Shawnee, was dead.

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

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The Fall of Congressman John Jennings, II

Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill
rayhill865@gmail.com

Guy Smith, editor of the Knoxville Journal, was left seething with anger following the 1948 election. For the first time since 1916, Tennessee Republicans had nominated serious candidates for both the governorship and the United States Senate only to see them receive a third of the ballots cast. Carroll Reece, who had been in Congress for 24 years, had been the GOP nominee for the U.S. Senate, while legendary country music entertainer Roy Acuff had been the Republican candidate for governor. The two candidates had toured all three Grand Divisions of the State of Tennessee and had drawn audiences well into the thousands. The Democratic Party, both nationally and in Tennessee, had been blown apart by intraparty factionalism. The defeat rankled still more because of the fact the national trend had indicated presidential nominee Thomas E. Dewey would sweep Harry Truman out of the White House and Republicans had been expected to increase their numbers in the House and Senate. Instead, Dewey lost to the peppery little man from Missouri and Republicans lost nine seats in the U.S. Senate and 75 seats in the House of Representatives.

The Knoxville Journal was the voice of Republicanism in East Tennessee; in fact, it was the most unabashed Republican daily newspaper in the Volunteer State. Guy Smith was not only the editor of the Journal, he was also the chairman of Tennessee's Republican State Executive Committee. While Tennessee remained a thoroughly Democratic state, the First and Second Congressional districts had been Republican since the Civil War. Guy Smith was furious because there was clear and convincing evidence the Reece-Acuff ticket had been the victim of being "cut" by tens of thousands of Republicans in East Tennessee. The powerful editor's baleful eyes fell upon the two men whom he believed to be the culprits: Congressmen Dayton Phillips and John Jennings. Phillips had served two terms in the House of Representatives when Carroll Reece had not sought reelection in 1946 after having been elected chairman of the Republican National Committee. Phillips was considered a "liberal" Republican and portrayed himself as the friend of the working man. Phillips had astonished Reece when he had voted against the Taft-Hartley Act. Dayton Phillips had twice defeated candidates sponsored and supported by the powerful Reece organization in the First Congressional District.

John Jennings had won a hotly contested convention to fill the vacancy caused

by the death of incumbent Congressman J. Will Taylor in 1939. Jennings won a December 30, 1939, election over Democratic nominee Hammond Fowler. Jennings had been the most prominent supporter of New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey south of the Mason-Dixon Line; Dewey had been the GOP presidential nominee in 1944 and 1948. Jennings, after a period when he got along with Carroll Reece, began to chafe under the domination of his colleague. In truth, there were few ideological differences between Carroll Reece and John Jennings, but Reece was thought to be the more conservative of the two because he was more closely aligned with the wing of the Republican Party headed by Senator Robert Taft of Ohio. Dewey was considered by many Republicans to be the candidate of, if not the actual head of, the "Eastern Establishment" of the Republican Party nationally.

Jennings, having been a chancellor, was widely known as "Judge" and was 68 years old in 1948. There were signs Jennings' hold on Tennessee's Second Congressional District was slipping. That same year Jennings had faced Hobart Atkins, inside the Republican primary and had won by only 2,400 votes. As 1950 approached, Guy Smith was absolutely determined to oust both Dayton Phillips and John Jennings from the House of Representatives. Jennings was also widely recognized for his opposition to "bossism" in Tennessee. A doughy fighter, Jennings thoroughly disliked the Crump machine and openly fought with that of Burch Biggs in Polk County. The Biggs machine had stolen votes which it applied to the total of Jennings' opponents, which the congressman found highly objectionable. The Nashville Tennessean reported the political complexion of Tennessee's Second Congressional District was changing, becoming more Democratic, pointing to the declining percentages won by John Jennings. As it happened, the declining percentages were less because of more Democrats than voters tiring of their congressman. Undercutting the Reece-Acuff ticket had caused both Estes Kefauver and Gordon Browning to have carried the Second Congressional District, which gave Democrats hope for beating John Jennings.

Well able to take his part in any dispute, Judge Jennings had immediately challenged the News-Sentinel when the newspaper wrongly reported the congressman's position having to do with



COURTESY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Congressman John Jennings (left) shaking hands with Speaker of the House William Bankhead (right) after having been sworn in with Congressman Carroll Reece standing in the middle.

eliminating the tax on "colored" margarine. Jennings ticked off an extensive list of people he had written throughout the district, which included Guy Smith, to say he would vote to remove the tax on margarine and allow the sale of yellow margarin (its natural color was white).

Defeated for the Senate and without a Republican administration in Washington to afford him a seat in a Cabinet, the only office available to Carroll Reece was yet another campaign for the House. Dayton Phillips was quite popular inside the First District, and it appeared only Carroll Reece had the political strength to defeat him in a Republican primary. Long friendly to Carroll Reece, the Knoxville Journal steadily heaped praise upon the former congressman while at the same never missing an opportunity to portray a negative image of Congressman Dayton Phillips.

The Journal was, if possible, even more unfriendly to Congressman Jennings. Guy Smith continuously roasted John Jennings over an open fire constantly throughout 1949 and into 1950 when the congressman would have to run for reelection. The Journal gleefully reprinted an editorial from the Maryville-Alcoa Daily Times, which detailed the failure of Judge Jennings' supporters to elect their candidate for mayor. That same editorial wryly noted that it was "characteristic" of the Journal "to interpret election returns in terms of unfavorableness to Congressman John Jennings." The editor of the Daily-Times attempted to refute the notion, as asserted by the Journal, was a defeat for the sitting congressman, but rather merely a routine municipal affair.

Guy Smith's editorship and direction of the Knoxville Journal were always bold, and the editor never flew false colors. The Journal was as lively and colorful a daily newspaper as its competitor, the Knoxville News-Sentinel, was dreary and dull. One theme Guy Smith and his newspaper hammered home throughout 1949 was that John Jennings and Dayton Phillips had joined with Gordon Browning and Estes Kefauver in trading out the Reece-Acuff ticket.

The Journal insisted the congressmen were traitors to Tennessee's Republican Party.

By February of 1949, the combative Jennings was already in a verbal fistfight with Guy Smith. Stung by the charge he had aligned himself with Gordon Browning, Jennings snapped that Guy Smith had been allied with an even more notorious Democratic machine, that of Memphis Boss E. H. Crump. Jennings released his statement through the Washington news correspondent for the Knoxville News-Sentinel. Guy Smith had sent both Phillips and Jennings a telegram demanding to know if the congressmen supported a proposal made by Governor Browning to alter the composition of the State Election Commission. Jennings growled that Smith's communication was "excited and impudent." "I have never lined up with anyone to injure the Republican party," Jennings insisted. The congressman said Smith's charges were "measuring my corn by the half bushel." "Having all these years down to the present been aligned with the Crump machine, he naturally thinks every other Republican who has not been hooked up with Crump must be in league with Browning," Judge Jennings sniffed.

There was good reason to believe the Browning Administration was cooperating with Congressmen Jennings and Phillips. Joe Gamble of Maryville was one of Jennings' strongest supporters and Blount County had long been one area in the Second District where the congressman was highly popular. Gamble had been named to the election commission at the behest of Governor Browning. "I do not recognize the right of Smith to speak for the Republican party or to pass on anybody's Republicanism," Judge Jennings said. For his own part, Guy Smith charged Dayton Phillips and John Jennings were conspiring to make Republicans in Tennessee a mere "appendage" to the Democratic apparatus in the state. Phillips and Jennings were, according to Smith, "playing ball" with the Browning Administration.

The internecine war between the two factions of the Tennessee Republican Party had

begun. For his own part, John Jennings intended, at least according to the Chattanooga Daily Times, to "unhorse Reece as the top boss of Tennessee Republicanism." The Knoxville Journal reminded its readers the congressman's highest-paid employee was his daughter, Helen.

Edward B. Smith, associate editor of the Knoxville News-Sentinel, wrote a weekly column for his newspaper, usually emphasizing political topics. Smith enjoyed no reputation as a political prophet, but he was in a position to hear the latest gossip. By the end of 1949, both Hobart Atkins and Howard Baker were thinking about running for Congress against Judge Jennings in the GOP primary. Smith opined as Baker had supported Atkins in 1948, the latter would return the favor should Baker decide to run. If the Knoxville Journal was the voice of Republicanism in East Tennessee, the Knoxville News-Sentinel was, at the very least, a counterweight inasmuch as it was a Democrat newspaper. The News-Sentinel took the opposite view of Carroll Reece, being a harsh critic of the former congressman and strongly supported Estes Kefauver in the 1948 Senate race. The News-Sentinel had been equally loud in its backing of Gordon Browning for the governorship and had bashed Roy Acuff at every opportunity. Ed Smith was quick to note his belief the primary "handicap" for a Howard Baker candidacy was Baker's support for Reece and Acuff. Smith wrote Baker had ridden "the Carroll Reece-Roy Acuff circus wagon last summer, and on many occasions introduced the hillbilly fiddler as 'the next governor of Tennessee.'" Smith sniffed Baker couldn't possibly have been serious and dismissed it as "political double-talk." Ed Smith spent the rest of his column enthusing about the prospects of the Democrats believing they would win the Second Congressional District House seat in 1950.

Father of the future U.S. senator, Howard Baker had been a popular attorney general for a collection of counties, including his own Scott County. Baker was an old hand at campaigning and had been the GOP nominee for governor

in 1938 and the United States Senate in 1940. Baker practiced law, but he spent most of his time looking after his interests in coal, natural gas and oil.

Judge Jennings was under no illusions and knew he would face the political fight of his life to win another term in the House in 1950. The congressman began the year by reminding the people of the Second District of his service. Before leaving Knoxville to return to the Capitol, Judge Jennings made a public declaration he intended to press to "defend and keep" the island of Formosa (Taiwan). "I'm opposed to turning it over to the Chinese Communists and Russia," Jennings said. "I have spoken out against this before and I'll slap Secretary of State Dean Acheson around anytime I get the chance," Jennings barked. When asked by a reporter for the News-Sentinel if he would work to get federal money to help with flood control for First Creek, the congressman roared, "Work for it! I'm the fellow who started it."

Jennings promised to fight efforts to repeal the Taft-Hartley law, as well as any attempt to "socialize" medicine, and any notion to revive the Brannan Farm program.

"But there's no danger about those things," Congressman Jennings chuckled. "President Truman is like a hound after foxes. He keeps turning the Taft-Hartley fox loose for campaign purposes, but he doesn't expect and doesn't want to catch it."

The alliance between Carroll Reece and Guy Smith would be a formidable combination and John Jennings knew all too well he would need every advantage his incumbency could afford him.

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TMSAA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT TIME

Knox teams bring home two TMSAA state titles

By Steve Williams

Coach Jadarius Suber said his Vine boys were the first in Knox County to bring home a TMSAA state basketball championship trophy Saturday, and later that evening Coach Josh Ballard's West Valley girls brought one back, too.

Suber's Golden Bears edged Avery Trace of Cookeville 36-34 in the AA classification at Stewarts Creek High, while Ballard's Lady Wolves toppled Woodland of Brentwood 41-30 in AAA at Rockvale High.

Vine roared past Crestview 70-31 and West Valley beat Mt. Juliet 40-27 in Friday's semifinals.

The Bearden Bruins, coached by Ben Zorio, also advanced to the state in AAA, but lost to Richview 47-38 and Page 49-47.



PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMS.

The Vine Middle School boys basketball team celebrates its sectional championship last week following its win over Norris at Anderson County High School. The Golden Bears would go on to win state with a 36-34 win over Avery Trace on Saturday at Stewarts Creek High School.

Aiming at state title from the start

"This is something we've been looking for since August, literally since open gym when we walked in the gym and said we ain't playing for no Knox County

championship, we ain't playing for no Sectional championship," said Coach Suber. "We're playing for a state tournament and a state championship and I'm just glad that my boys can finally finish off their eighth grade year correctly."

When asked what the key to the win was, the Vine coach said: "Rebounding the basketball and actually who want it, because we went down six with like 1:50 to go. And then we got a big shot from Kaveon Stinson and then we just got some big boys that are

Julius Young and really who wanted it more."

1-2 and 3-punch for Lady Wolves

Janiya Turner scored 15 points and Reese Underwood 14 to lead West Valley to its semifinal

win, but the Lady Wolves were only ahead by three at halftime. They got some breathing room by outscoring Mt. Juliet 14-6 in third quarter as Underwood and Turner continued to score. "Our team really took advantage of our press **Continue on page 2**

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Valiant effort falls short for Red Devils

By Ken Lay

Even in defeat, Halls High School boys basketball coach Brian Stewart found plenty of positives about his team's performance in its regular-season District 3-4A finale against Campbell County.

"I told our guys once we got in here (the locker room after the game) that I was really proud of them for the way they played tonight," Stewart said after the Red Devils lost to the Cougars, 68-64, Wednesday night at Halls High School. "I'm really proud of these kids. They played hard and they were tough. They played well together.

"A lot of people outside had questioned the toughness of this team but I think those questions were answered tonight."

Halls, which dropped to 16-10 overall and 5-5 in the district with the loss, was short-handed as one of its best players, Gabe Holmes, missed the game due to illness.

Continue on page 4

Kirby Connell speaks at West High's preseason dinner

By Ken Lay

The 2025 high school baseball season is looming and West High School has a new coach looking to make the sport relevant again on Sutherland Avenue.

Rob Stacy took over as head coach of the Rebels over the summer and immediately began preparations for the upcoming season, which gets underway this month.

The Rebels had their first official event recently at a first-pitch dinner, an event that sold so many tickets that a change of venue was necessary.

The event was held on Friday, Feb. 7, at First Presbyterian Church.

There, Stacy introduced his team and coaching staff to the fans who were treated to a barbecue dinner in the church's fellowship hall. He also outlined his expectations for the upcoming campaign and his long-term vision for the program.

Stacy, who reversed the fortunes for the baseball program at Clinton High School in recent years, also got the opportunity to moderate a question-and answer session with a College World

Series Champion, former University of Tennessee relief pitcher Kirby Connell.

Connell, who recently completed a five-year career at Tennessee during the school's best baseball run in program history, had plenty of stories for the fans and lessons for the players on West High's young 2025 roster. The fan favorite played a huge part on the Diamond Vols' 2024 team that went 60-13 and bounced back from the loser's bracket to win the SEC Tournament on its way to winning a national championship in Omaha last season.

The former Vols' reliever discussed the importance of conditioning, an element of the game that he said he hates, and the characteristics of being a good teammate.

"It's important to take care of your arm and do conditioning, and I hate conditioning because I'm fat," he said. "It's also important that you accept your role on the team."

Connell was a fan favorite for the Vols but he wasn't the biggest guy and he didn't have an overpowering fastball.

But he played a crucial **Continue on page 4**



PHOTO BY KEN LAY.

Former Vol Kirby Connell speaks at a question-and-answer session at West High's First Pitch Dinner recently held at First Presbyterian Church.

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TMSAA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT TIME



PHOTO BY SCOTT ANDERSON

At a crucial time late in the game, Bearden Coach Ben Zorio instructs his five starters. The Bruins pulled out a 56-53 win.

Bruins hold off Seymour for AAA Sectional title

By Steve Williams

Bearden had to win its game against Seymour twice before it could leave Clinton Middle School with the TMSAA Section 1 championship trophy Feb. 10.

The Bruins twice built huge leads and saw the Eagles chop them down, but Bearden managed to hang on for a 56-53 victory behind the play of its four eighth grade starters — Dontae Campbell, Paxton Tedford, Jamerson Moore and Isaac Kannah.

The Bruins' 33-15 lead early in the second half all but vanished as the Eagles went on a 17-1 run to get within two points (34-32) with 1:25 left in the third period.

Bearden broke away again for a 48-35 advantage with a little over three minutes remaining in the game, but Seymour still wasn't through and cut the deficit to three (48-45) with 10 straight points.

An interception and layup by the Bruins' Tedford finally stopped the bleeding and Seymour would never get closer than three the rest of the way at the Joe Hollingsworth Jr. Gymnasium.

"Just gutting it out," Bearden Coach Ben Zorio said was the key to the win. "It was such a physical game both ways."

The Bruins earned their



PHOTO BY SCOTT ANDERSON

Dontae Campbell was the Bearden Bruins' leading scorer in their win over Seymour in the TMSAA Sectional finals.

first-ever Final Four state tournament berth and set a school record for wins (23-1) with the victory.

Campbell led Bearden with 19 points, including 13 in the second half before fouling out with 38.3 seconds left. Tedford contributed 13 points, including six in the first period. Kannah and Moore also were in double digits with

10 apiece. Brian Tate Jr. chipped in four.

Caeden Soulages stood out for Seymour with 26 points, including 18 in the final period. Bryson Comer added nine, Ethan Roper seven and Luke Carr five. Kiki Bohanan and Peyton Davis each scored three points.

"Two free throws each by Isaac and Jamerson

were just huge down the stretch," said Coach Zorio. "And Dontae was humorous for us all game long."

With two Bearden players fouling out and one having four fouls, Aiden Reed came off the bench to help finish it out.

"Seymour is a great team," said Zorio. "No. 5 (Soulages) did just a tremendous job on the boards. We had to change our defense up because they were taking advantage of us inside at times."

The pressure-packed game saw Seymour have an off-night shooting and Bearden commit a large number of turnovers.

The Bearden coach said he was proud of his team for keeping their composure.

In the closing seconds, Soulages put in a rebound basket to pull the Eagles within three points (56-53) and a timeout was called with 5.3 seconds on the clock.

When play resumed, Bearden ran the end line and threw a long pass down court, which was touched and started the clock. The ball ended up in Soulages' hands and his desperation heave fell far short of the basket.

After the game, Seymour Coach Dave Leist said he tried to get a timeout to set up a last play, but one was not given.

Bruins' offense 'on fire' in semifinals

By Steve Williams

Bearden Middle Coach Ben Zorio said his team's 71-43 semifinal win over East Hamilton in the TMSAA Sectional semifinal contest Saturday (Feb. 8) may have been his team's best game of the year.

The game had originally been scheduled for Thursday but was postponed by tornado warnings.

"We just played well from start to finish," said Zorio. "East Hamilton was the longest and most athletic team we have faced this year."

The Bruins had a total of 21 assists in the game, recalled the Bearden coach, and in the backcourt point guard Brian Tate Jr. had 23 points and seven assists and Paxton Tedford had 19 points.

"We did a good job on their length on the boards," said Zorio, "and did a good job defensively. We played a 1-2-2 the entire game."

But it was the Bruins' offensive total that really raised eyebrows.

Scoring 71 points in a middle school game that consists of four 6-minute periods is awesome.

"We were hitting our fair share of perimeter shots and came out on fire and just kept on going and had 44 points at the end of the first half," said Zorio. "We really played our best offensive game by far from start to finish."

The Bruins hit nine 3-point shots in the game, including six in the first half.

"We really played our best offensive game by far from start to finish."

Coach Ben Zorio

Seymour fans show great support

Seymour's fan base was a sight to see as it filled half the basketball court at Clinton Middle School Monday night (Feb. 10) waiting for their boys to come down from the locker room after a 56-53 loss to Bearden in the TMSAA sectional finals.

"It's awesome," said Seymour Coach Dave Leist. "What happens in athletics is this: you unite a community. And these guys did that. The great thing is, high school is next. So they've got four more years coming and that's what is exciting about this group."

"Bearden is a great team — well-coached," added Leist. "They gave everything they had tonight and we knew that coming in. There wasn't going to be a cakewalk. We knew it was going to be a tough game and we had to bring our best game."

"We struggled a little bit shooting at times tonight," continued the Seymour coach. "That was kind of our downfall."

"But the thing is, at half-time this team could have quit."

"I think a lot of people in here started thinking this was going to be like the East Hamilton game (that Bearden won 71-43). But these boys don't quit. They've got fight and they want willpower. When you play that way that will stick with you the rest of your life. Those are life skills they're learning."

As for his team's amazing comeback: "I couldn't ask for more," said Coach Leist.



The West Valley Lady Wolves won the TMSAA Class AAA state championship Saturday.

Knox teams bring home two TMSAA state titles

Cont. from page 1

defense and was able to turn defense into offense and not allow Mt. Juliet to get into the flow of their offense," said Coach Ballard. "It seemed like every possession they had to spend maximum energy just to get a good shot."

West Valley jumped out to a 7-0 lead in the title game, but Woodland, a team with very tall players, caught up at halftime (16-16).

The Lady Wolves' Emery Cooper didn't feel well in the semifinal game and struggled. Coach Ballard said the night before the championship game she "was very sick."

Emery started getting her strength back by half-time of the finals and hit three 3-point shots in the third period. Without her,

the game would probably have been a lot closer. But Cooper finished with 14 points to go with 10 each from Underwood and Turner.

Zorio gives Richview credit, but all those missed FTs!

Bearden led Richview by four points (12-8) at the end of the first period and by three (21-18) at halftime, but Richview captured the lead late in the fourth period. "I give Richview credit," said Coach Ben Zorio. "We had a difficult time stopping them in the second half. Richview's Aree Hines was as talented a point guard as we've seen all year long. The boys never quit but could not pull

through in the end."

Brian Tate, Jr. led the Bruins with 13 points and Dontae Campbell added 11.

As for the game against Page, Coach Zorio said: "I am so proud of the boys for the fight they showed throughout this game, overcoming major foul trouble throughout the game and a deficit throughout the first half before tying the game on Tate's 3-point shot at the end of the half."

The Bruins continued to battle foul trouble throughout the game, as two starters fouled out and two others played in the fourth quarter with four fouls.

Campbell made two key fourth quarter baskets, Jamerson Moore added an important fourth quarter bucket, and Paxton Tedford

also hit a clutch 3 very late in the fourth quarter to cut the lead to 1. The Bruins had a chance to win the game at the buzzer after a Page missed free throw, but Tedford's long contested 3-point attempt just missed. Tedford led the team with 15 points and Isaac Kannah added 12.

Free throw shooting hurt the Bruins in both games. After shooting 79 percent from the free throw line during the three games of the Sectional tournament (including 10 of 12 in the championship game versus Seymour and 5 of 5 in the fourth quarter), the Bruins struggled from the line in both State Final Four games (shooting 7 out of 16 from the line versus Richview and 5 out of 17 from the line versus Page).

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Who's on the Cover?

When two major sporting events are held on the same day, which event gets the cover picture in a magazine such as Sports Illustrated?

Here's one answer. I found a copy of the Sept. 23, 1968, edition of Sports Illustrated in the home office desk a week or so ago. Time has not dulled the significance of that issue. It recounts two major events on the sporting scene on a Saturday nearly 60 years ago, one baseball and the other college football at Neyland Stadium.

Alfred Wright wrote about Denny McLain winning his 30th game ("Golden 30 for Show Biz Denny") in a game earlier that afternoon against Oakland at Tiger Stadium in Detroit. The story featured McLain pictured with Dizzy Dean and Sandy Koufax and a number of other celebrities, including CBS' Ed Sullivan. All the photos were black and white. Only the cover photo was in color.

Dan Jenkins wrote the lead story about Tennessee's 17-17 tie in the season opener against Georgia, titled "A Rouser on a Rug." It was four pages long, with five color photos by Walter Iooss, Jr., augmenting the text.

Tennessee's game was played later that afternoon, ending in the gloaming of a September evening.

It was a historic game on a historic day. Chris Schenkel and Bud Wilkinson were in the ABC television booth. John Ward and Bill Anderson were making their debut on the Vol Radio Network. Ward has said that sometime during the second half he got the impression the duo might make it as a broadcast team. Wide receiver Lester McClain became the Vols' first African-American player.

The Vols were the defending SEC champions after a 9-2 season and appearance in the Orange Bowl against Oklahoma nine months earlier.

A revolutionary new surface called Tartan Turf, a product of 3M, adorned Shields-Watkins Field, consigning the hallowed turf to history. The Vols would play on some type of artificial surface through the 1993 season until grass made its comeback under the careful tutelage of groundskeeper Bobby Campbell.

Times were on the upswing football-wise in Knoxville and across Big Orange Country. There was a new East side upper deck, adding 7,307 new seats. Stadium capacity was now 64,429.

Inside the magazine, Vol wide receiver Gary Kreis is pictured coming perilously

close to dropping the final TD pass from quarterback Bubba Wyche. That happened mere seconds after the final horn had sounded.

A NOTE FOR HISTORY: I found a seat in the press box that day next to the head statistician, conversing on a headset with the TV booth and another crew under Section X. I did likewise at the Alabama game a month or so later. When Wyche was leading the Vols on their final drive to steal the deadlock, another voice was heard on our headsets. Someone was exhorting Wyche to get the ball in the end zone. No one knows why, but he was saying, "Go, Bubba, go!" play after play. I found out later that voice belonged to ABC's Beano Cook.

Georgia head coach Vince Dooley and many Georgia fans were convinced Kreis had dropped the ball. Pete Williams, the referee that day, did not stride to the center of the field to let fans know that the "previous play is under review." That didn't happen in those days. Good thing, too.

Tight end Ken DeLong, Steve's brother, had a firmer grasp on the two-point conversion reception that tied the game, eluding Georgia safety Jake Scott to make the grab.

For the Vols, it had to be one of those "inspirational ties," as the Vols escaped the gallows at the

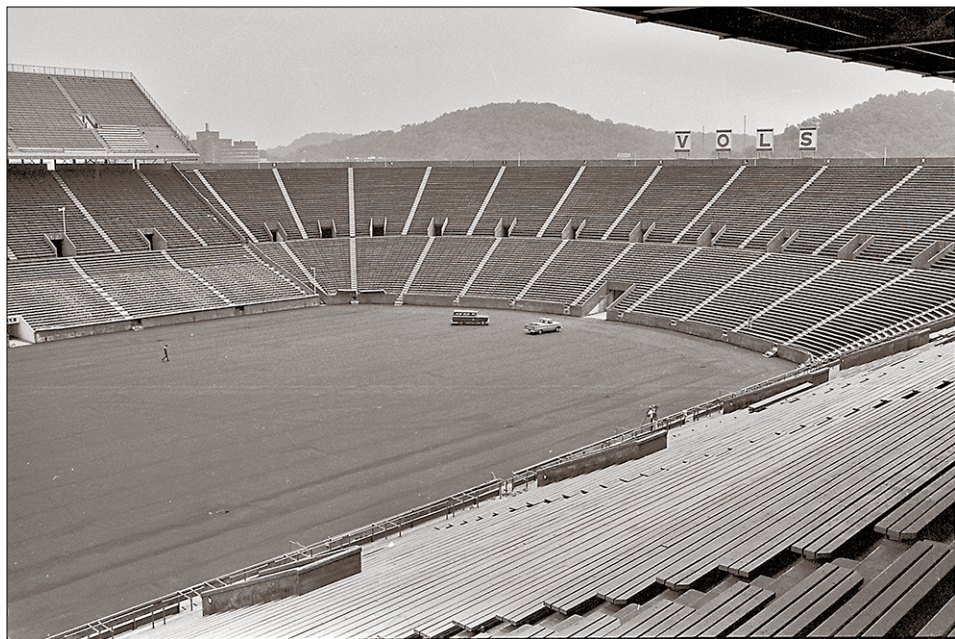


PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL DYE COLLECTION.

In the 1968 Tennessee football season, there was a new playing surface for Shields-Watkins Field, along with the new East side upper deck.

last possible moment. For Georgia, it had to have been a downer. For one thing, the Bulldogs were more than 100 yards from their dressing room at the South end, since the game's two critical plays had taken place at the North end of Shields-Watkins Field.

The Bulldogs recovered from the apparent setback, going undefeated the rest of the way to win the SEC crown, their second in three seasons. The Vols had lost 28-14 to Auburn at Legion Field on Nov. 9, the only other blemish on their schedule.

Both teams ended up in major bowl games. The Vols lost to Texas in the 1969 Cotton Bowl, while Georgia lost to Arkansas in

the Sugar Bowl. So, who was on the cover?

The cover was a color shot of legendary Tiger outfielder and Hall of Fame selection Al Kaline congratulating McLain once the baseball game safely belonged to the Tigers. The legendary Tiger broadcaster Ernie Harwell had probably just said so.

It was one of a number of Tennessee games covered by SI in those days, with John Underwood and Jenkins doing the honors. Tennessee defensive back Mike Jones and Alabama wide receiver Dennis Homan made the cover of the post-Alabama SI on October 23, 1967.

One other side note. SI mistakenly let its readers

think that the Tennessee player pictured was not Jones, but Vol defensive back Jimmy Weatherford. Not so. Vol players from that era have confirmed that Jones was indeed the Vol player pictured.

All of which raises this question: Do five color pictures inside the issue as part of the magazine's lead story trump the one color picture of McLain on the cover? You can judge for yourself. By the way, you can find this issue and see the pictures on eBay.com, under the heading "Sports Illustrated Al Kaline Denny McLain 9/23 1968."

Regardless, this magazine is definitely a keeper. If you're a Vol fan and a Tiger fan, it's a double keeper.

TMSAA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT TIME

Lady Wolves win second MS sectional championship

By Ken Lay

West Valley Middle School has long had one of the top girls basketball programs in Knox County.

And now, the Lady Wolves have their eyes on a Class AAA State Championship after recently winning their second state sectional championship at Clinton Middle School.

West Valley punched its second-ever ticket to the Midstate for a performance on the Volunteer State's grand stage with a 40-29 victory over defending state champion Sevier County Jr. High School on Saturday, Feb. 8, at Clinton Middle School.

The Lady Wolves were the sectional tournament's No. 1 seed and had a

first-round bye. But that was about the only break. The victory over Sevier County culminated a tournament run that saw West Valley nab wins over Cleveland and Maryville, two of East Tennessee's top middle school programs.

"We had a hard draw," West Valley coach Josh Ballard said. "We played Maryville, Cleveland and Sevier County. Sevier County won the state last year.

"Our bracket was hard and I don't think being the No. 1 seed was the easiest thing for us."

But the Lady Wolves made it through, thanks to some big contributions from some seventh graders, who have some deep

basketball ties in East Tennessee.

Emery Cooper scored 17 points in the section championship game. Her father, Gary, was a standout player at both Halls Middle and Halls High. Jamiya Turner scored eight points. She's the daughter of former Lady Vol Gwen Jackson, who is currently the girls basketball coach at Austin-East High School. Carsen Nesbit also had eight points. She is the granddaughter of longtime Roane State basketball coach Randy Nesbit.

"We have some legacy players in our program for sure," Ballard said. "I'm only the third (girls) coach at West Valley. "We have good players and we have

good coaches around like (Bearden High School girls coach) Justin Underwood, so they all make me look good."

In recent years, Ballard, who formerly coached at Cedar Bluff, has continued the sustained success of a program started by coaches Alex Comer and Tim Goddard (the long-time boys coach at Karns Middle, where he coached the likes of Webb coach Ricky Norris, Karns High coach Lee Henson and former Knox County middle and high school basketball coach Lynn Allen) and is making his impact on the program that has won two sectional championships.

Ballard has a solid group of eighth graders that

provides solid leadership. But his top athletes are in the seventh grade this season.

"My eighth graders are good leaders but in the sectionals, we had five players on the floor and all five were seventh graders," he said. "My eighth graders provide leadership, but in crunch time, my seventh graders are the ones on the floor.

"This time of year, you shorten your rotation and our girls know that everything we do, every time we practice and every time we play, we do what's best for the program. You only have five players on the floor at one time, but this is a total team effort and all of our players are always involved."

Big second half propels Vine to State Final Four

By Ken Lay

Vine Middle School's boys basketball team won a sectional championship early last week and the Golden Bears claimed the title by winning a virtual road game.

But early on against Norris Middle School, which was playing on a familiar court at Anderson County High School, it looked as though the Senators would return to the Final Four in the Midstate.

But a halftime pep talk from coach Jadarius Suber and a big second half helped the Golden Bears punch their ticket to the state tournament with a 58-42 victory over Norris in the sectional championship

tilt on Monday, Feb. 10. Vine (22-1) got off to a lackluster start against the Senators, who opened a 13-6 lead in the first quarter before rallying. The Golden Bears held the Senators to just seven points in the second stanza and pulled to within 20-19 by halftime.

Still, Suber wasn't happy. "We told them at the half that we weren't playing disciplined basketball and we weren't rebounding," Suber said. "We weren't aggressive on the offensive and defensive glass.

"If we're going to win, we're going to have to control the boards. I think they just wanted it more than we did at that point."

After the break, Vine

began to take control of the game. The Golden Bears took the lead in the third quarter. But the Senators were still within striking distance, trailing 35-30 and setting up a potentially thrilling final six minutes with a trip to state hanging in the balance.

Vine outscored Norris 23-12 in the fourth quarter and pulled away.

Jamir Kimbrough, who led the Golden Bears with 18 points, scored 10 in the final frame and Julius Young, who had 13, tallied nine after halftime to spearhead Vine's comeback.

Norris' Colton Lawson, one of the state's top scorers, had a game-high 25 points in the sectional final.

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Kirby Connell speaks at West High's preseason dinner

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role in Tennessee's success. On some days, he would face only one hitter. But he was the man that head coach Tony Vitello and pitching coach Frank Anderson called on to get big situational outs.

"Looking back on it, I wish I would have gotten to throw more," Connell said. "And I guess that was kind of a selfish thing."

"But coach Vitello knew he could trust me and that gave me the opportunity to throw more. If your coach doesn't trust you in your role, you won't get to throw at all. You have to be willing to accept your role."

As far as being a good teammate, Connell said that a player must know the players around him.

"Baseball is a game where you can go 0-for-4 and strike out three times, and when a player does that, you have to let him throw his helmet in the

dugout and do what he does," Connell said. "Later, you can go and encourage him."

Connell will never throw another pitch in the Orange and White, but he remains with the Vols as a member of Vitello's staff. He's a quality control analyst, a position that he can't really describe.

"I'm a quality control analyst and I don't even know what that means," he said. "I know that I'm supposed to work with our pitchers to make them better."

Going from player to coach has been a tough transition for Connell.

"The transition, I hate it," he said. "I was their teammate last year and they think that I'm supposed to still be their friend and I'm not."

"My job is to tell them what they need to hear and help them to get better. I hate the transition but I love (coaching) and I love helping our guys get better."

By Steve Williams

Christian Academy of Knoxville and Grace Christian had a see-saw battle most of the night, so it was fitting that the two teams would stick around for an overtime period in the Division II-A District 1 tournament at CAK Saturday.

The Lady Rams had a three-point lead in the fourth period, but two big plays pulled the Lady Warriors into a tie and kept the score even. Sophomore Karlie Whited's 3-pointer tied the score and Colie Thompson battled for a tie-up in front of the GCA basket with 1.7 seconds left.

Sophomore standout Maddie Braden quickly gave CAK the lead in OT with an old fashion 3-point play that included a driving 10-foot shot and a successful free throw. The Lady Warriors never lost the lead after that and won 61-55.

"It was a team effort collectively. I mean every kid that stepped on the floor tonight and even the ones that didn't, they've all bought in."

Coach Abby Williams

"It was a team effort collectively," said Coach Abby Williams. "I mean every kid that stepped on the floor tonight and even the ones that didn't, they've all bought in."

That's an awesome mindset for a team to have when it's tournament time. And Coach Williams and her Lady Warriors (22-7) hope to make it to Cookeville for the fourth straight year.

Braden, a Miss Basketball nominee, led the win with 25 points. Thompson contributed 14 and Whited 10.

Sophomore Abby Roberts led Grace Christian (17-10) with 19.

Thompson, Sophie Carroll and Braden

represented CAK on the All-Tourney team and Braden was named the MVP.

CAK BOYS FALL: Two lengthy dry spells doomed the Warriors in a 47-44 loss to Lakeway Christian Academy in the boys' championship game.

After leading 16-11 at the first stop, CAK didn't score again until only 2:38 remained in the second period.

In the third period, both teams became victims of a scoring drought. LCA finally scored at 5:32 and the Warriors got their first points at 3:36.

Despite its offensive woes, the Warriors pulled even with Lakeway

Christian in the fourth period when Foster Coleman swished in a 3-point shot from the top of the key to make it 44-all with 2:44 on the clock.

The Warriors would not score again and Jaleel Ali put the Lions ahead with a free throw. Ali scored on a layup to give LCA a three-point edge.

CAK called timeout with 8.4 seconds remaining. Hunter Bennett, who led the Warriors with 10 points, missed a 3-pointer from the left corner right before the buzzer.

Ali finished with a game-high 18 points and was named the boys' MVP. Ivan Moskalenko chipped in 14 points.

CONSOLATION GAMES: Grace Christian boys defeated The King's Academy 75-67 and Providence Academy girls defeated TKA 48-44.

Valiant effort falls short for Red Devils

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"We didn't have our best player. Gabe Holmes is home sick and I don't know what he's got," said Stewart, who is in his first year as the Red Devils'

head coach.

Despite all the good things that Halls was able to accomplish against the Cougars last week, the loss would prove costly for the Red Devils. A win

would have landed them in second place in the regular-season standings, netted them a first-round bye in the upcoming postseason tournament and an automatic bid into the Region

2-4A Tournament.

But the loss forces Halls to play Black Oak Ridge rival Central in the opening round of the tournament and a win over the Bobcats would net the Red Devils a spot in the regionals.

Against the Cougars Wednesday night, Halls started by falling behind, 19-9 early. But the Red Devils battled back and pulled to within 19-17 by the end of the opening frame.

Halls never led in the contest but things remained close in the second stanza but the Cougars had a double-digit advantage at half-time when Luke Browning knocked down a three-pointer as time expired on the first half, making the score 39-28.

Halls clawed its way back into the contest in the third frame. The Red Devils narrowed Campbell County's lead to 55-51 when Elijah Elliott scored at the end of the quarter.

The Red Devils pulled to within 55-53 to open the final eight minutes as Ethan Hawkins grabbed

a rebound and promptly scored.

The fourth quarter was a roller coaster ride and Halls had a shot to win late after Colby Comparato's basket made it 57-54 with 23 seconds left. The Red Devils got the ball back but were called for a traveling violation and later had to foul. The Cougars' Jake Hatmaker clinched the game with a free throw with 16.9 seconds remaining.

"We just couldn't get over the hump," Stewart said.

Comparato and Gaige Harold scored 13 points to lead the Red Devils and Elliott finished with 10.

Campbell County runs past Lady Devils: Halls saw its tough season continue Wednesday night as it dropped its district finale to the Lady Cougars, 65-19, at home.

Campbell County led 22-8 after the first quarter before extending its advantage to 40-13 by halftime.

Kadence Fisher and Bella Wires scored five points each to lead the Lady Devils, who will be the

No. 4 seed in the district's upcoming postseason tournament. Campbell County will be seeded second.

District 3-4A Tournament: The district's postseason tournament will be contested at Karns High School. The girls portion of the event opens Tuesday night with a pair of elimination quarterfinals as fourth-seed Powell plays No. 5 seed Halls at 6 p.m. and the host Lady Beavers (seeded third) will play No. 6 Central.

On Thursday, top-seeded Oak Ridge plays the Halls-Powell winner at 6 p.m. and Campbell County will play the Karns-Central winner at 7:30.

The boys tournament will open Wednesday with No. 4 Halls taking on No. 5 Central at 6 p.m. and No. 3 Campbell County playing No. 6 Karns.

On Friday, top-seeded Oak Ridge will play the Halls-Central winner and No. 2 Powell will play the Karns-Campbell County winner.

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TSSAA is solid on three important things

By Steve Williams

At the beginning of the special-called Legislative Council meeting on Feb. 4, Mark Reeves, Executive Director of the Tennessee Secondary Schools Athletic Association, told Legislative Council members three important things – be careful to not exploit athletes, the TSSAA is education-based athletics and the association wants to have level playing fields.

A bill proposed in the Tennessee state legislature

this past December would prohibit public schools from using public funds to join an interscholastic athletics association that prohibits a student from participating in sports due to a one-time transfer. The bill, HB0025, would take effect if the TSSAA Legislative Council did not pass its own one-time transfer rule.

Even a one-time transfer to another school to play a sport without a bonafide change of address would be permissible under the proposed law by the state

legislature.

It was asked at the meeting if in almost 100 years the TSSAA has operated, has the state legislature got involved with TSSAA rules? No one recalled it happening before.

Longtime football coach Joe Gaddis, who is now the principal at Oak Ridge High School and on the Legislative Council, compared it to the current college rule – “Once the season is over, get back in line to go to another school program.” Gaddis said he

doesn't want to see that happen (on the high school level).

Council member Catherine Chubb from Hutchison School said she wants to keep education-based athletics. Some states already have changed to current college-like ways, she said.

One Council member said high school coaches recruiting now show up at middle school games with their staff in school colors.

“TSSAA knows what's best for the state,” said

Mike Reed, TSSAA Board of Control president, who attended the meeting. “Other states look to Tennessee and what they are doing.”

In regard to Transfer Rules and/or the Residence Rule, all three proposals presented to the Council were denied as written, although the Council had extensive discussion regarding plans for future proposals.

The Council has asked for a special called meeting prior to the regularly

scheduled April meeting. In preparation for that special called meeting the staff has been charged to bring language for the Legislative Council's consideration which would allow a transfer without loss of eligibility if the transfer is for reasons unrelated to athletics. The staff was also charged with bringing back potential changes to the residence rule which would make the rule apply equally to all students.

Braden, Green and Hodge are Miss Basketball finalists

By Steve Williams

Three Knoxville girls are finalists for TSSAA Miss Basketball Awards this season. They are Maddie Braden of CAK in Division II-A, Meeyah Green of Webb in Division II-AA and Natalya Hodge of Bearden in Class 4A.



Knoxville's Dodgen and Fox to enter TSSAA Hall of Fame

Knoxville's Donald Dodgen and Jim Fox, a coach and an official respectively, are among eight new members to be inducted into the TSSAA Hall of Fame this year.

The festivities will be on April 7 at the annual luncheon at the Student Union Building on the campus of MTSU in Murfreesboro.

Other members of the Class of 2025 are: Bill Bingham, administrator from Bristol; Clint Jackson, administrator from Memphis; Jinx Cockerham, coach from Nashville; Pat Simpson, coach from Nashville; Thomas Frierson, official from Columbia; and Chip Walters, contributor from Murfreesboro.

Bearden dancers continue success on national level

Bearden High's dance team placed fifth in all three divisions at the UDA National Championships this year. The team also won its fourth consecutive national title.

The team's fifth place score was 87.375.

Bearden also won the pom category for the first time since 2019.

The BHS dance team is considered to have the most successful dance program in the state.



PHOTO BY TAMMY DAVIS KREGEL

Bearden's dance team once again brought home high awards in national competition this year.

A sizzling week of shooting for Grace Christian's Mercer

The last week of January was a special one for Grace Christian Academy's Cam Mercer when it came to shooting the basketball.

In three games including two wins and an overtime loss, Mercer averaged 26 points per game, shooting 59 percent from the field (26 of 44) and 94 percent at the free throw line (17 of 18). An additional stat was awesome too (9 of 19 from 3-point land) for 47 percent.

Cam also had four rebounds and two steals per game.

Thomas and Daugherty sign football scholarships

Two Powell High defensive football standouts signed scholarships papers

Friday. Cardell Thomas, a defensive end, will continue his

career at Carson-Newman, while Adrian Daugherty, a middle and outside

linebacker, is headed for Lindsey Wilson College (KY).

Smith repeats as Gatorade Player of the Year in boys' cross country

Keegan Smith, Knoxville Catholic High senior and a University of Colorado signee, has earned another Gatorade Award.

“Keegan Smith's lights-out kick at Nike Cross Southeast truly ranked among the nation's jaw-dropping moments of 2024. The best nationals double-qualifier this past season, he proved himself to be among the country's distance elite last fall.” -- Rich Gonzalez, PrepCalTrack

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Assistant Coach Cannon Duke gives instruction as Grace Christian's baseball team works on outfield drills where they make throws back into the infield. That's pitcher Asher Harris standing on the mound.

Spring sports prepare for 2025 season, weather permitting

By Steve Williams

Blue skies and a cool breeze greeted TSSAA's spring sports for their first official day to practice on Monday, Feb. 10, but the next two days saw Mother Nature pouring rain on the baseball, softball and soccer fields, tennis courts and tracks throughout Knox County.

That's the way it usually is this time of the year. And when opening day arrives on March 3, don't be surprised if snow is falling.

Eddie Turpin, longtime local assignor of high school baseball and softball umpires, knows that too well. There are a lot of days he has to cancel umpire assignments and reschedule.

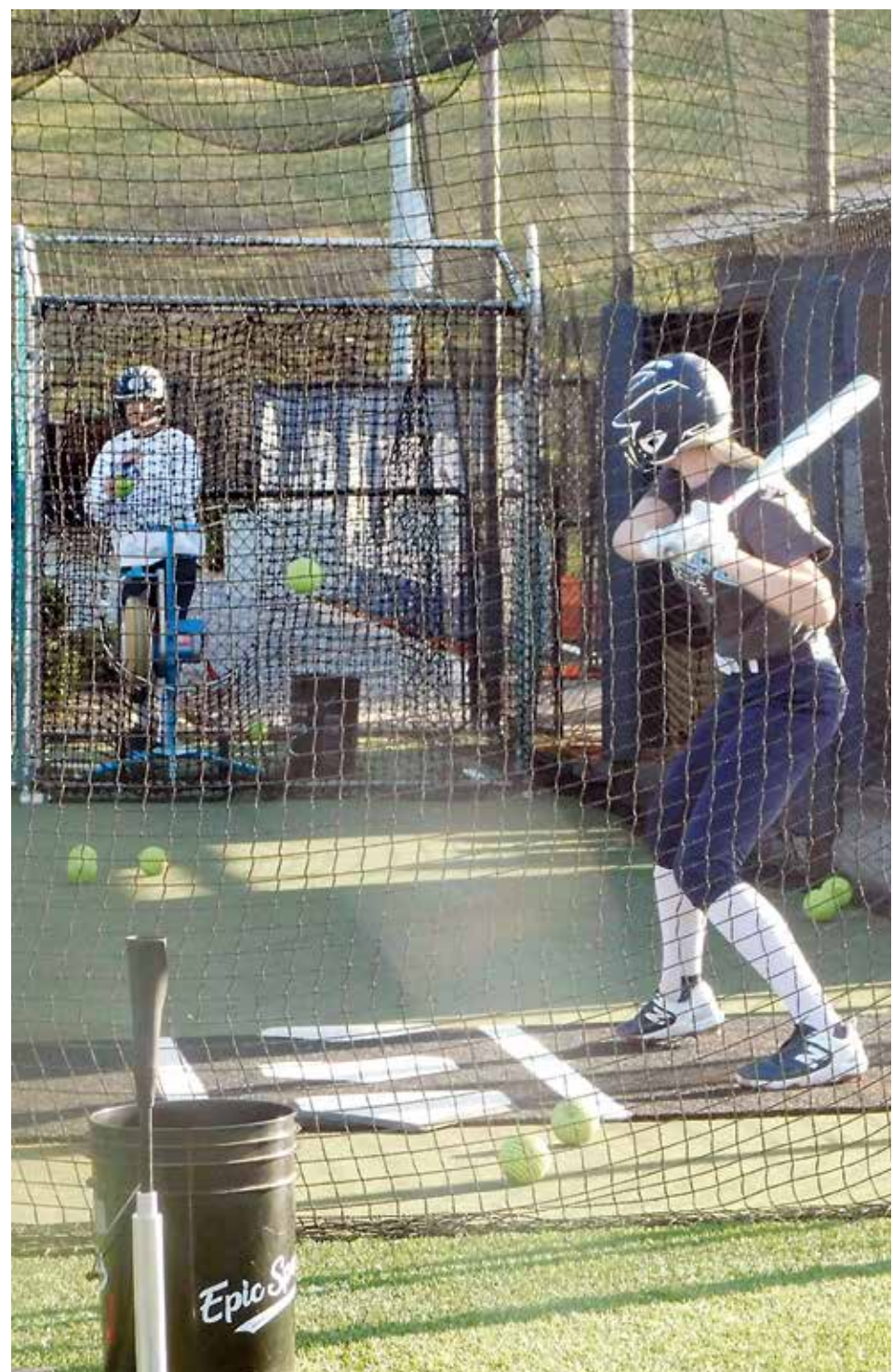
By the way, more umpires are needed in baseball and softball, Turpin said. If you're

interested, you can register online at www.tssaa.org

There are several new head coaches in baseball and softball in Knox County this season.

New coaches in baseball are Aaron Simmons (Hardin Valley), Rob Stacy (West) and Garrett Copeland (Farragut). New softball coaches are Sierra Hucklebee (Fulton), Kaitlyn Walker (Webb) and Brandi Weaver (West).

Lacrosse, TSSAA's newest sanctioned sport, had its first official practice date on Feb. 3 and will play its first contests next Monday (Feb. 24). Both boys and girls can play lacrosse. The TSSAA voted unanimously to sanction lacrosse for both genders in January 2023.



Hannah Hill operates the pitching machine and Cenzie Collin swings the bat during Grace Christian's first practice of the season.



Sophomore Leonardo Bertoncello maneuvers across the back line in an opening day "challenge match" against teammate Paxton King, also a sophomore, on Feb. 10 at the GCA tennis courts.



There's a lot of activity on the soccer field as the Rams begin their season with practice No. 1.