

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY SIDELINES

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Suspects cash in on valuable textbooks

By MARIE KEMPH
News Editor

Police are looking for four suspects who they believe comprise an organized crime ring responsible for multiple on-campus burglaries and thefts of textbooks, according to officials with the MTSU Office of Public Safety.

In just a few months, more than \$2,000 worth of stolen textbooks

has been resold to nearby college bookstores, but officials believe the suspects are responsible for thefts that occurred during the 2010 spring semester as well, according to campus police.

"They seem to have these planned out," said Adam Wortman, an MTSU police officer, who is actively involved in the investigation. "Students are not the only ones affected by this - so are the bookstores."

Brooke Shipley, a sophomore majoring in English, was working in the James E. Walker Library in February when her "Concepts of Elementary Mathematics" book was stolen.

"I went to re-shelve some books in the periodicals section where I worked, and when I came back, my math book was gone," Shipley said.

Shipley said she waited for the case to come to a resolution, but it never did.

"I definitely don't ever leave my books anywhere, under any circumstances," Shipley said, adding that she always carries them with her now.

Wortman said the subjects have managed to quickly resell the books before a complainant can report



ANDERSON

the burglary or theft to police, giving the suspects time to complete the illegal transaction before on- and off-campus bookstores have been notified.

Police have issued an arrest warrant for Sean E. Anderson, 23, but investigators have not yet determined the identity of the other three suspects involved with the case.

TEXTBOOKS, PAGE 3



Photo by Casey Warren, staff photographer
U.S. Marine Cpl. Matt Travis (Left) holds his daughter, Alyssa, upon returning home from active duty, as his wife, Ashley, stands close. The Travis family lives on the military base of Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C.

Life of a military wife

'Home for the holidays' takes on new meaning for Marine's family.

By CASEY WARREN
Staff Writer

This year, she'll celebrate her favorite time of year a little bit differently. She'll decorate the tree while singing Christmas carols at the top of her lungs. She'll wrap his presents to be put under the tree instead of sending them by mail, and she'll hang his stocking with an enormous, glowing smile on her face. This year, her husband will be home for the holidays.

Ashley Travis, a gregarious 24-year-old mother of one, is usually like the rest of us. She spends her days working, learning and taking care of a household. She wakes up at dawn to start her day, feeds her 2-year-old daughter, Alyssa, and struggles to get them both dressed and out of the door on time. After dropping Alyssa off at daycare, Ashley drives through the soldier-guarded gates to work in the next town.

Working six days most weeks, in a small real estate office in Swansboro, N.C., has become her second home.

Her daily routine seldom changes. Lately, however, after a long day, she eagerly greets the guards at the gate and pulls into her driveway on the military base, waiting impatiently to see the little waving arms of her daughter and the bigger, stronger arms of her husband welcoming her at the door. She can't wait to get inside and enjoy a relaxing evening with her family.

Unfortunately, her days don't always end this pleasantly, and her comfortable routine is often interrupted.

"The military life is a prideful one, but it truly is the most challenging,"

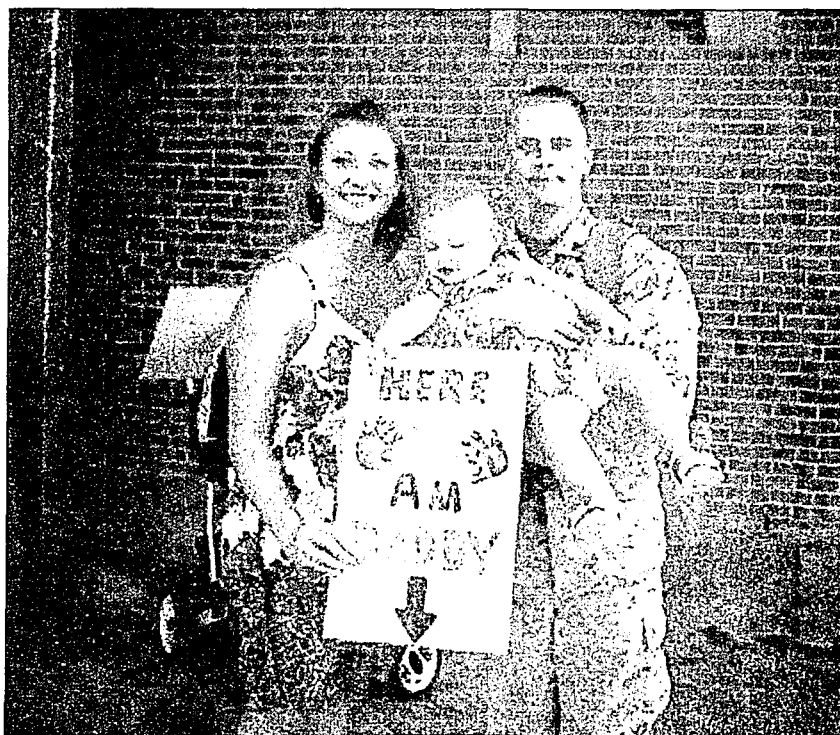


Photo by Casey Warren, staff writer
(From left to right) Ashley Travis helps her daughter, Alyssa, hold a sign that she made for her father, U.S. Marine Cpl. Matt Travis, at Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C.

Ashley said. "It's probably the toughest life I could have chosen for myself."

Ashley's husband is a six-year member of the U.S. Marine Corps, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines Lima Co. 2nd Platoon. His MOS is 0311, which means he is a GRUNT or an infantryman.

"Being a GRUNT during a time of war means my husband is really just a part-time husband and father, but a full-time Marine - so when he is gone, I have to create my own routine to help me juggle everything while trying to keep my sanity," Ashley said.

High school sweethearts Ashley and

Cpl. Matt Travis were married just before Christmas in 2006. Soon after, Ashley made the move from Murfreesboro to an overly populated military town in Jacksonville, N.C., where they currently live on the military base of Camp Lejeune.

With her new husband on active duty in the Marine Corps, Ashley said she quickly realized her new role as a military wife would be tougher than the long move away from family and friends.

FEATURES, PAGE 6

Sexual assault up statewide, reports on campus steady

By CHRISTOPHER MERCHANT
Assistant News Editor

While reports of sexual assault on campuses statewide are rising, the number of reports filed at MTSU has remained steady over the past five years, despite an increase in undergraduate enrollment of 18 percent, according to authorities.

Since 2004, there has been an average of three forcible sex offenses a year at MTSU, according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's annual Statistical Summary of Crimes Reported on the Campuses of All of Higher Education report. In the past six months, two sexual assaults have been reported on campus, both in November within eight days of each other.

However, reports of sexual assault at campuses in Tennessee have increased by 41 percent from 2008 to 2009, with 12 incidents occurring in 2008 and 17 assaults reported in 2009, according

to the report.

A variety of efforts to raise awareness of sexual assault and personal safety techniques could be why MTSU's sexual assault statistics have remained comparatively low, said Debra Sells, vice president of Student Affairs.

"We have had a variety of awareness events, campus safety events, free rape aggression defense courses with the Office of Public Safety, staff training, [resident assistant] for those working in the dorms and training for and the New Member Education Program for fraternities," Sells said, adding that more awareness about sexual assault helps students to make better decisions and avoid harmful situations.

Faculty members receive training on how to counsel students and report sexual assault through the Office of the University Provost, Sells said.

ASSAULT, PAGE 2

Retailers focus on solidifying consumer loyalty

By LAUREN HARRIS
Contributing Writer

As the holiday shopping season swings into full gear, retailers are looking to gain market share advantage by putting more focus on building a strong base of loyal customers, in addition to providing competitive prices.

For some consumers who decide to return items after they find the same product priced lower elsewhere, the experience can be extremely frustrating - leaving the customer resentful toward that particular retailer.

More than 91 percent of consumers say that a

store's return policy is extremely important when determining where to shop, according to a Harris Poll regarding customer satisfaction, almost as much as service.

Although people prefer to shop in a familiar place where they feel appreciated and are familiar with a store's policies, hard times have forced everyone to shop where they can find the best price, according to some local retailers, and efforts are now under way to give consumers the best of both worlds - low prices in an agreeable atmosphere.

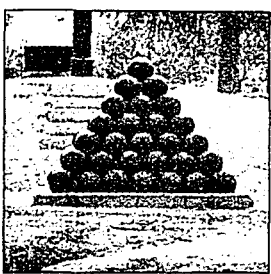
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leaves some spooked
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IN TODAY'S ISSUE



Check out the photo gallery of the Blue Raiders' reaction to Sunday's bowl game announcement.

ONLINE @
MTSUSIDELINES.COM

MONDAY FORECAST

SUNNY
NO THREAT OF RAIN
HIGH 35, LOW 19

Professor meets Russian president

STAFF REPORT

A professor recently had the opportunity to speak with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for two hours during a Nov. 4 state reception at the Moscow Kremlin, according to an MTSU press release.

Andrei Korobkov, professor of political science, met Medvedev at the fourth annual Assembly of the Russian World Foundation.

"The organization is actively supported by President Medvedev, who is very interested in pushing it and

considers it a way to reestablish links with the Russian diaspora abroad," Korobkov said. "Increasingly, he is getting interested in bringing back Russian intellectuals who left."

Korobkov said he emphasized to Medvedev that Russian professors who have tenure at universities in the West will not be inclined to return to their home country, especially given the degree of interaction with the Russian government they would be expected to have.

"To imagine that in Russia it would be possible to leave academics alone is very hard because it's an extremely bureaucratized country,

and it became more bureaucratized than it was under the Soviet regime, ironically," Korobkov said.

The development of the Skolkovo Project, a venture north of Moscow similar to Silicon Valley, has received a large amount of attention and funding from Medvedev, according to the press release, and he has expressed interest in persuading Russian professors and professionals who have emigrated to return to Russia to support the development. The project has received monetary contributions from Microsoft, Cisco and several Japanese companies.

"Huge amounts of money are being

invested there, but for now, their attempts to bring large numbers of Russian academics are in vain, basically," Korobkov said. "I have been studying this problem for a long time, so I gave the main presentation at the conference."

Korobkov said he suggested to Medvedev that incentives should be provided to attract Russian academics back for short periods of time so they could give exceptional graduate students crash courses in their respective fields.

Korobkov also met with Vyacheslav Nikonov, the Russian World Foundation executive director, who has been a Kremlin insider for some 20 years

and an adviser to both Medvedev and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Nikonov is the grandson of Vyacheslav Molotov, the former Soviet prime minister and foreign minister under Joseph Stalin.

"He is a kind of shadow operator who has access to the highest echelons of power," Korobkov said. "Nikonov is very smart, very well educated, pretty calculating, a typical political consultant. If you look in the U.S., you can probably compare him to David Axelrod working for [President Barack] Obama or Karl Rove working for [President George W.] Bush."

Kerry Roberts announces run for state Senate

STAFF REPORT

In an e-mail sent to supporters, former congressional candidate Kerry Roberts announced he will be running for the 18th District State Senate seat that was recently vacated by Diane Black, who was elected to the U.S. House in November.

Gov. Phil Bredesen announced a special election will be held in January. Early voting will begin on Jan. 4, and the primary will be held on Jan. 20.

Roberts is the fourth candidate to declare candidacy. Bryan Bondurant, William Slater, and Brad Congdon, all of Sumner County are also running.

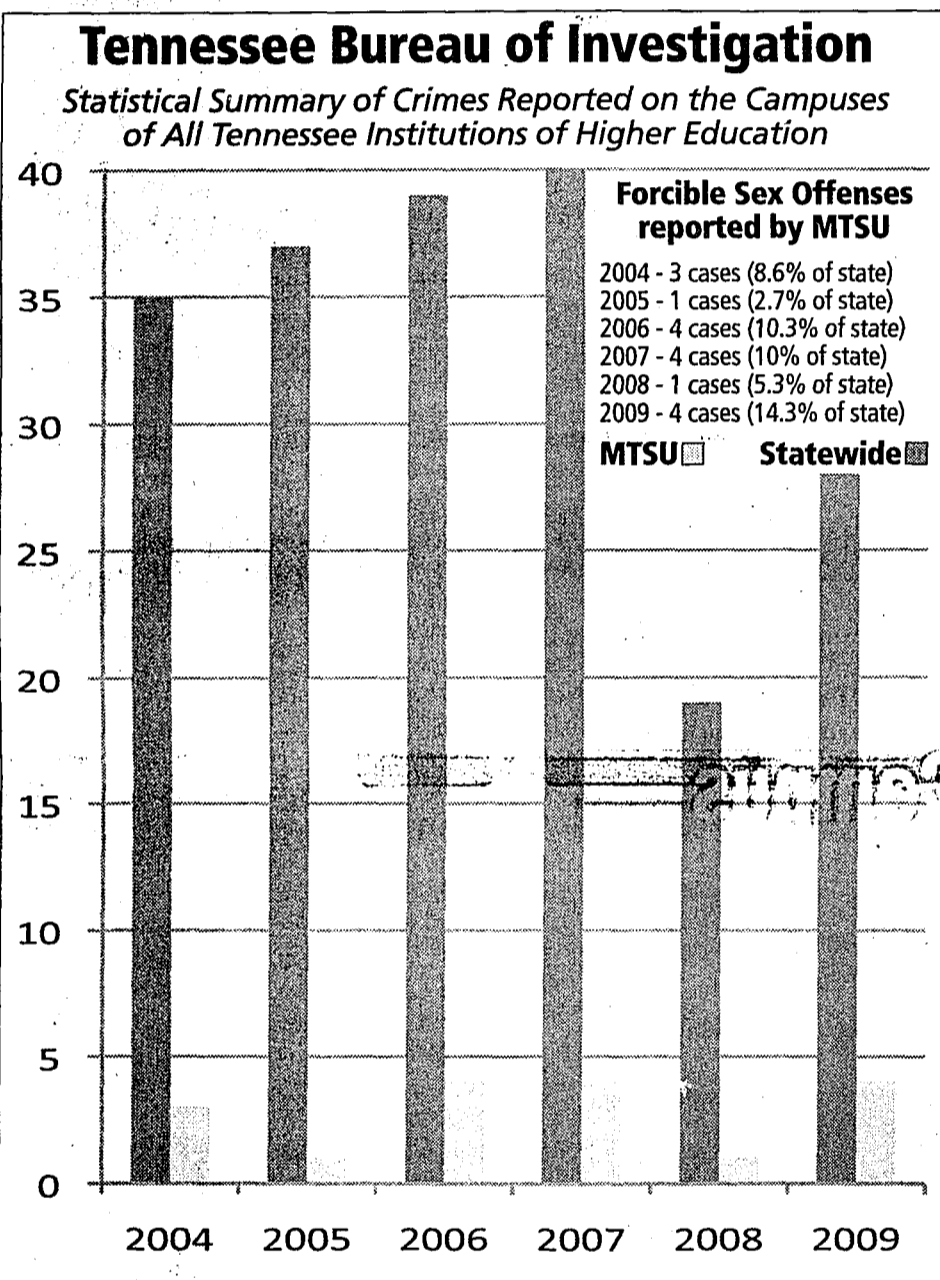
In an article published in the Robert-

son County Times, Roberts said many people approached him asking if he would run for Black's seat if she won the congressional race.

"My answer then was that I needed time to focus on my family and business before making that decision," Roberts said. "After much thought and discussion, I'm now ready to say 'yes' to this opportunity

and challenge."

Roberts is a small-business owner who graduated from Lipscomb University with a degree in accounting. Roberts said he supports American's 2nd Amendment rights. He describes himself as a 100 percent "pro-life" candidate. He also said he supports strong border control.



On-campus awareness aids in lowering sexual assault cases

ASSAULT
FROM PAGE 1

Holding events that raise sexual assault awareness throughout the academic year is important to make sure students always have information fresh in their minds, said Terri Johnson, the director of the June Anderson Center for Women and Nontraditional Students.

Usually, though, the beginning and end of the semester are when acts of sexual violence usually occur, Johnson said, because students are either acclimating to a new environment or worried about grades and final exams, Johnson said.

"We know that with more stress, there is more likelihood for sexual assault and violence in general," Johnson said, adding that pressure during the holiday season often correlates to more acts of sexual violence.

In addition to training people to be safe, more information about rape and harassment leads people to be more willing to report sexual assault, Johnson said.

"That happens when students realize they are in an environment where they can do something about [being assaulted]," Sells said.

When individuals go to the Women's Center for information and referrals for counseling, they are directed to the Division of Student Affairs, Enrollment and Academic Services and the Office of Public Safety, she said.

Individuals who talk to officials with Student Affairs are encouraged to report the assault to police but are not

required to.

"Our No. 1 job is to hear what students need and to help them get that," Sells said. "If they are able to make a report to the police, the decision belongs to the student. As administrators of the institution, we have the responsibility to collect data, even if students do not make a report to the police."

If students decide not to make a report to the police, Sells said, Student Affairs makes an anonymous report to the Office of Public Safety so that the statistics will be sent to the TBI for the annual campus crime report are accurate. To insure that the numbers given to the police are accurate, the last four digits of the person's Social Security Number are noted in the report, so that individuals who choose to talk to the police at a later time do not make a duplicate report about the same incident.

The rise in sexual violence at campuses across the state can be contributed to a variety of factors, including larger student populations and a struggling economy, Sells said, adding that people are also more likely to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol when stressed.

Students should be careful when using substances that lower their inhibitions and could increase their risk of being harmed, Sells said.

"As stress rises, violence rises," Sells said.

Even though alcohol is prohibited on campus, students should not refrain from reporting sexual violence if alcohol was a factor, Sells said.

A 'Consider This' Christmas

STAFF REPORT

Consider This, Inc., will hold its first ever Christmas variety show in honor of local U.S. military veterans at the Swan Performing Arts Center next week.

The show, called "Christmas Blessings" will feature holiday skits and stories, as well as live Christmas music and a visit from Santa. The show will also pay a special tribute to local veterans.

The veterans in attendance will be the guests of honor. Anyone who wishes to purchase a ticket will also

be given the option of buying a tribute ticket. A tribute ticket is \$25 and pays for the purchaser's admission as well as that of a veteran and a guest. Individual tickets can be bought for \$10.

Showings will be Dec. 16-18 at 7:30 p.m. in the performing arts center's temporary location on Park Street.

Concessions will be available and proceeds from the show will go toward restoring the old ribbon factory as the new Swan Performing Arts Center for Consider This, Inc. to use.

Thanksgiving fatalities increase

STAFF REPORT

During the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, 12 people were reported killed in traffic accidents across Tennessee.

The crashes occurred in Campbell, Davidson, Grainger, Hamilton, Lawrence, Marshall, McNairy, Rutherford, Shelby and Union counties.

Three of the fatalities were alcohol-related, and seven of the victims were not wearing seat belts at the time of the accident.

The crash that occurred in Lawrence County was a double fatality that claimed the lives of two teenagers, ages 15 and 17, neither of which were wearing a safety restraint.

This number is compared to the 10 deaths of last Thanksgiving. The state

saw a rise in fatalities, despite the Tennessee Highway Patrol's public relations campaign warning people to be extra cautious during the holidays.

One such measure was C.A.R.E., which stands for Combined Accident Reduction Enforcement, that had state troopers stationed every 10 miles on Interstate 40. The purpose of the program was to encourage safe driving habits for holiday travelers. In addition to the C.A.R.E. program, the THP conducted more than 80 sobriety and drivers license checkpoints.

Statistics as of Dec. 1 have indicated that 967 people have died on Tennessee roadways this year. This is a 55-death increase compared to the 912 fatalities that were recorded for 2009.

Unique Cuban excursion planned

STAFF REPORT

After a six-year hiatus, the department of Foreign Languages and Literatures has reinstated its study abroad program in Cuba, according to an MTSU press release.

"Cuba is the final frontier," said Ric Morris, a professor of Spanish and linguistics, who is serving as the director of the project. "After graduating college, most Americans will never have the opportunity to visit Cuba again legally. If Cuba intrigues you, there won't be a better time to go than now."

Morris said he believes much of what Americans hear about Cuba is from a highly politicized perspective, which leads to "grossly inaccurate perceptions" of what the country is really like, according to the press release.

"We have no excuse for being ignorant about Cuba," Morris said. "Cuba is closer to our borders than Chattanooga is to Murfreesboro, but what do we really know about Cuba beside the fact that it's Marxist and exports cigars? How many Americans know, for example, that Cuba has virtually eradicated several lethal

diseases that still kill thousands of Americans each year?"

Project Cuba has been restructured to comply with newly implemented travel regulations, according to the press release. Because of the trade embargo, visiting Cuba without permission from the United States government could result in criminal charges, leading to fines of hundreds of thousands of dollars and up to 10 years in prison.

However, because this program is under academic license, it is completely

political History of the Cuban People."

The course will equate to three hours of credit within the departments of anthropology and global studies, and undergraduates can earn nine hours of Spanish credit through classes at the University of Havana, according to the press release. Faculty and graduate students will also stay two weeks and will conduct independent research projects.

"A lot of what you've believed about Cuba turns out to be correct, but even more turns out

"After graduating college, most Americans will never have the opportunity to visit Cuba again legally. If Cuba intrigues you, there won't be a better time to go than now."

RIC MORRIS
MTSU PROFESSOR OF SPANISH AND LINGUISTICS

legal for students and participating faculty to sign up for the trip, according to the press release.

Undergraduates will stay for 10 weeks and will be able to take a custom-designed course, to be taught in English at the Montané Anthropological Museum in Havana, entitled "Anthro-

to be wrong," said Morris, who has been to Cuba for educational and humanitarian missions multiple times.

For more information about Project Cuba, interested students and faculty should contact Morris as soon as possible at 615-898-2284 or rmmorris@mtsu.edu.

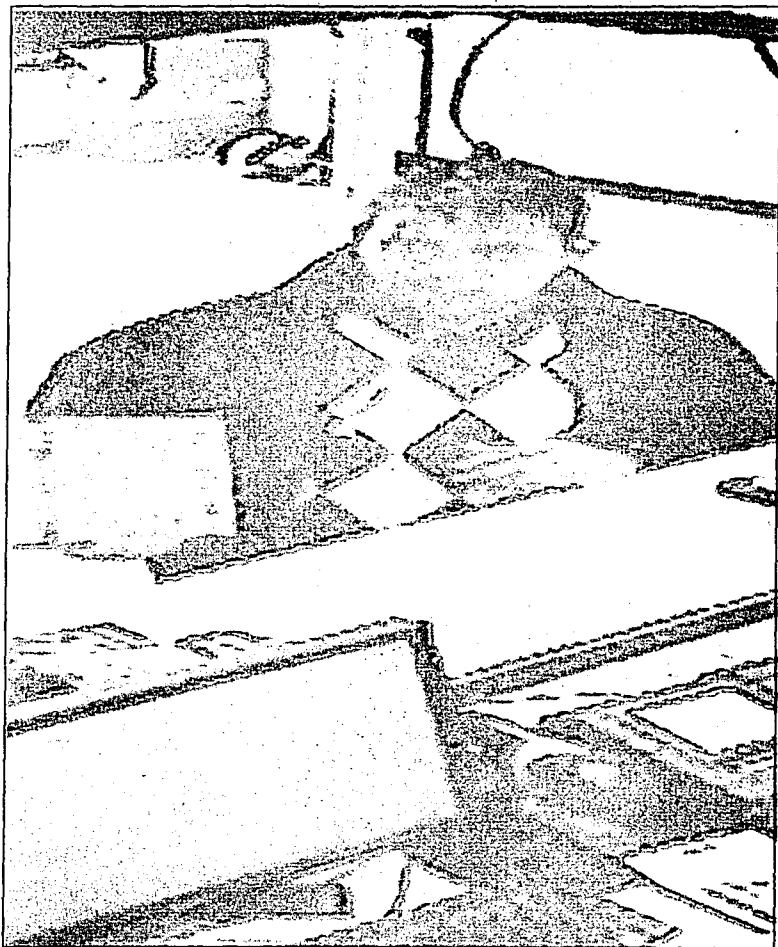


Photo courtesy of the MTSU Office of Public Safety
Law enforcement is looking for the unidentified male suspect (Left) videotaped selling stolen textbooks on Oct. 28 to the Blue Raider Bookstore, and they have issued an arrest warrant for Sean E. Anderson (Right), who was filmed doing the same at Textbook Brokers in February, in connection with a string of burglaries and textbook thefts on campus.

Police investigate string of thefts

TEXTBOOKS FROM PAGE 1

On Oct. 29, a female student reported to campus police that three textbooks had been stolen from her car the day prior. "Upon arrival, I made contact with the complainant, who stated that on Oct. 28 at approximately 12:58 p.m., she parked her vehicle in the parking lot east of the library," according to the incident report. "She stated she left three textbooks in the backseat of her vehicle and went to class. She stated that upon returning to her vehicle at ap-

proximately 6 p.m., she discovered the books she had left in her vehicle were gone." The incident report lists the "Principles of Taxation for Business and Investment Planning 2001," "Intermediate Accounting" and "Fundamental Cost of Ac-

counting" as the textbooks that were stolen from the student's car, and the total lost for that theft amounted to more than \$600. On Oct. 28, the same day of the automobile burglary, a se-

curity camera inside of the Blue Raider Bookstore captured video of an unidentified white male reselling the same textbooks listed in the incident report, moments after he was recorded speaking with Anderson inside of the store. Additional information regarding the two remaining suspects has not been released to the public, but campus police are investigating several leads. "I want to solve this case and stop these suspects from causing any more trouble on campus," Wortman said. If anyone has information regarding this case, contact the Office of Public Safety at 615-898-2424.

"I want to solve this case and stop these suspects from causing any more trouble on campus."

ADAM WORTMAN
MTSU POLICE OFFICER

Stores give shoppers incentives

RETAIL FROM PAGE 1

Kohl's associate Aaron Bain said he has witnessed some change in retail. "Long-term customers tend to spend more money – and get more discounts – than those who come in for the first time," Bain said. "Companies have realized this and changed their policies accordingly." Today, a shopper can walk into a store knowing he or she can purchase items comfortably, because the store is flexible with the return and adjustment policies. Many establishments that once refused returns now go out of their way to please customers.

Also, avid shoppers are attempting to get more bang for their buck. "In recent years, the company has changed from trying to sell as much product as they can to selling a customer on a particular brand," Bain said. "The companies have realized this and not put such a focus on profit margins – they have realized they will make more money in the long run if they build customer satisfaction." Christine King, the store manager of Coldwater Creek, said she agrees with Bain. "A customer will never make a purchase until she is completely sure that it's what she wants," King said. "A great homey-feel lets her know that no matter what, we'll take care of her needs."

However, there are several steps shoppers can take to cut down on time and money, while keeping the sought-after stores in business. Store surveys are generally reviewed and play a big role in how a local store is run. Customer feedback contributes to the amount of a certain product, payroll allowances and ratings against other stores. Individual input on a store's performance allows the company to gain a little insight.

To read more, visit us online.

online
www.mtsusidelines.com

LOCAL EVENTS

On Campus

- Performing Arts:**
Handel's "Messiah"
Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m.
Hinton Hall
Wright Music Building
Tickets: \$10
- Symphonic Band/ Brass Ensemble/ Chamber Winds**
Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m.
Hinton Hall
Wright Music Building
FREE
- Commercial Music Ensemble**
Dec. 8, 7:30 p.m.
Hinton Hall
Wright Music Building
FREE
- String Studio Recital**
Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Hinton Hall
Wright Music Building
FREE
- Sports:**
Women's Basketball v. Xavier
Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Murphy Center
- FREE**
- Women's Basketball v. James Madison**
Dec. 12, 12:30 p.m.
Murphy Center
FREE
- Men's Basketball v. Furman**
Dec. 12, 3 p.m.
Murphy Center
FREE
- Men's Basketball v. Vanderbilt**
Dec. 21, 8 p.m.
Murphy Center
FREE
- Student Life:**
The Nightmare Before Christmas
Dec. 6-10, 7 p.m.
Keathley University Center
Tickets: \$2
- Workshops:**
Mic to Master
Dec. 10-11
John Bragg Mass
Communication Building
Lab B, Comm 101, Studio B

Off Campus

- Concerts:**
The World We Knew, Goodbye Anaphy, Sirens Fall Silent, Anathesia
Dec. 6, 7 p.m.
The Muse
Tickets: \$10
- A Fireside Christmas**
Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.
First United Methodist Church
Tickets: \$40
- Point of Grace with Chris August**
Dec. 10, 7 p.m.
World Outreach Church
Tickets: \$13
- Trans-Siberian Orchestra**
Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m.
Bridgestone Arena
Tickets: \$27.50-\$59
- Performing Arts:**
Scrooge
Dec. 11, 7:30
The Center for the Arts
Tickets: \$10-\$14
- Nashville's Nutcracker**
Dec. 10, 7 p.m.
- Tennessee Performing Arts Center
Tickets: \$82
- A Consider This Christmas**
Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m.
Swan Performing Arts Center
Tickets: \$10-\$25
- Sports:**
Nashville Predators vs. Florida Panthers
Dec. 11, 7 p.m.
Bridgestone Arena
Tickets: \$10 Day of Game
- Holiday:**
Santa on the Square
Dec. 7, 6 p.m.
Downtown Murfreesboro Square
FREE
- Events Policy**
Sidelines welcomes current campus and community events submitted by all readers. Please e-mail events to slcampus@mtsu.edu or slnews@mtsu.edu, and include the name, date, time and location of the event, as well as your name and a phone number for verification. We reserve the right to refuse events at our discretion as our space is limited.
- Sidelines is the editorially independent, non-profit, student-produced newspaper of Middle Tennessee State University. Sidelines publishes Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters and online during June and July. The events listed are not necessarily associated with Sidelines or MTSU.

CRIME BRIEFS

- Assault**
Nov. 30, 6:34 p.m.
Corlew Hall
A complainant reported an assault occurred on Nov. 29 outside of McCallie Dining Hall.
- Vagrancy**
Nov. 30, 9:51 p.m.
Woodmore Cafeteria
A suspect reportedly trespassed at Cyber Café.
- Traffic**
Dec. 1, 9:01 a.m.
Greenland Drive Parking Lot
A complainant reported that her vehicle had been struck while she was in class.
- Theft**
Dec. 1, 3:04 p.m.
Murphy Center
A complainant reported that her bicycle was stolen from the rack.
- Traffic**
- Dec. 1, 3:15 p.m.
MTSU Office of Public Safety
A complainant reported that his vehicle had been struck while parked in the Corral Parking Lot.
- Theft**
Dec. 1, 3:38 p.m.
Health, Wellness, and Recreation Center
A complainant reported that his gym bag was stolen out of a locker.
- Alarm**
Dec. 1, 5:53 p.m.
James Union Building
A fire alarm was activated by special effects at an event. No fire was discovered.
- Vagrancy**
Dec. 1, 11:10 p.m.
Wood Hall
A subject was issued a criminal trespass warning.
- Theft**
Dec. 2, 8:03 a.m.
Alma Mater Drive
A complainant reported that her license plate had been stolen.
- Theft**
Dec. 2, 12:43 p.m.
Health, Wellness, and Recreation Center
A complainant reported that his backpack had been stolen from a locker.
- Harassment**
Dec. 2, 4:29 p.m.
Campus
A complainant reported that she had received harassing text messages.
- Harassment**
Dec. 2, 6:04 p.m.
Clement Hall
A complainant reported that a woman he knew was harassing him.

GILLIGAN'S

Eat DRINK Party

527 West Main Street • Murfreesboro
615-439-6090

TUES., DEC. 7
Blues Jam
bring your instrument and jam out with members of *The Last Straw*
NO COVER

THURS., DEC. 9
Ladies' Night DANCE PARTY
Free Flowing Miller Lite till 1 am and \$1 Wells till 10 pm

Now 18 and Up
Book Your Parties With Us!
FULL MENU
SAT., DEC. 11
Hanzell
I Became The Sky
Prophet Nation... Schtomp! \$2.50 Budweiser Family Bottles

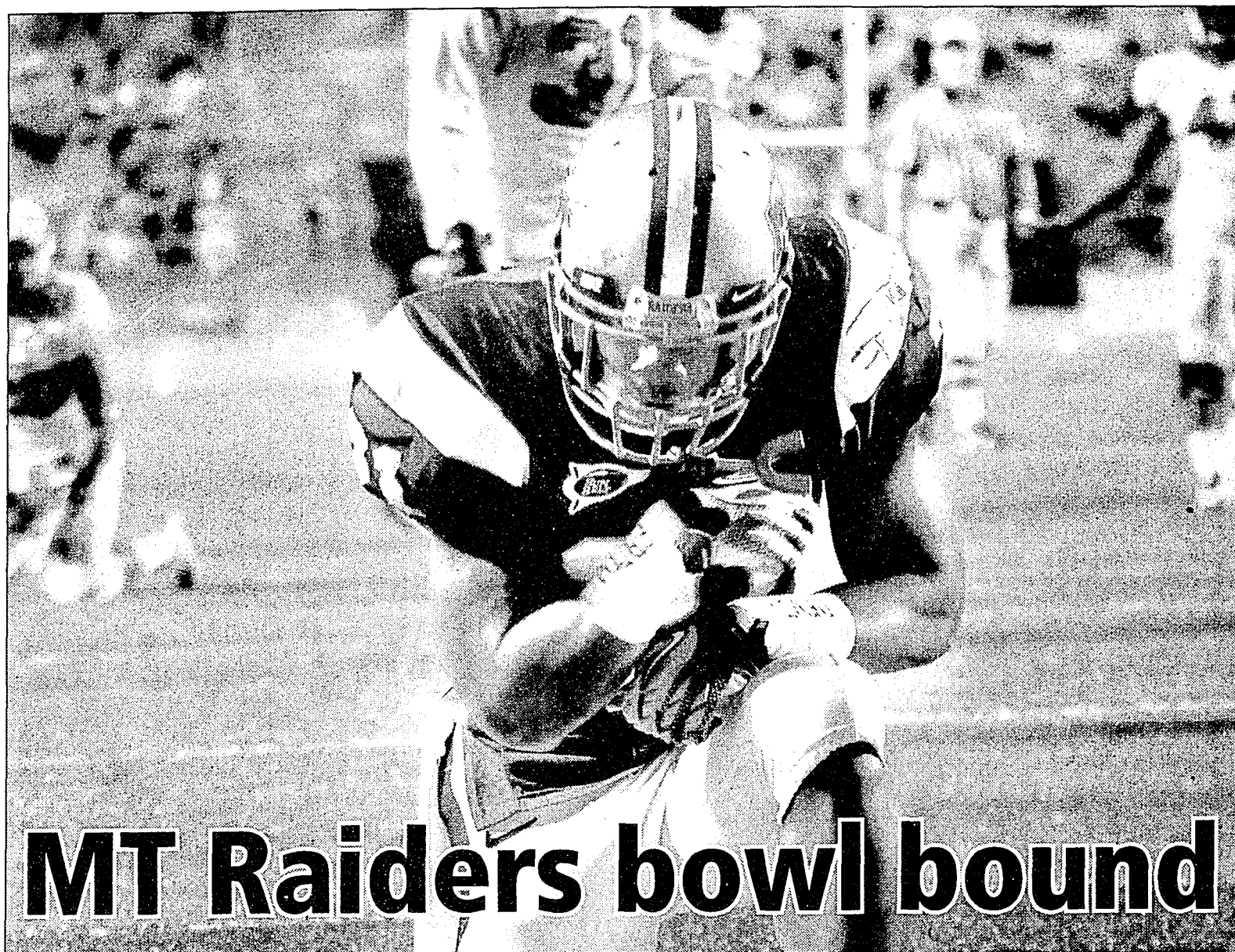
SUN., DEC. 12
\$25 Cornhole Tournament
50¢ Miller Lite
NO COVER

WED., DEC. 8
Freak Out
with DJ Brandon Wahl and DJ Coach
ANIMAL HOUR 8 to 11
NO COVER

FRI., DEC. 10
Tim Bogle ACOUSTIC UPSTAIRS
Marshall Creek Band MAIN FLOOR
\$2.50 Killian's Draft All Night

JOIN US FOR A ROCKIN' NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH THE LAST STRAW & DEEP MACHINE

SPORTS



MT Raiders bowl bound

By KRIS SAGE
Contributing Writer

Middle Tennessee earned its third bowl game in five years Saturday with an invitation to the GoDaddy.com Bowl against Miami University (OH) in Mobile, Ala.

It will be the first time in MT history the Blue Raiders play Mid-American Champion Miami. The game will be nationally televised on ESPN on Jan. 6 at 7:00 p.m.

MT (6-6, 5-3 Sun Belt) had a roller-coaster season that got off to a shocking start when senior quarterback Dwight Dasher was suspended after accepting a \$1,500 loan from a Murfreesboro resident, which violated the NCAA's amateurism legislation rules.

The Blue Raiders hosted the Minnesota Golden Gophers, a Big Ten conference opponent in the first game of the season, which was televised live on ESPN. MT got off to a slow start with sophomore quarterback Logan Kilgore but rallied late to hold a 17-14 lead going into the fourth quarter. Minnesota regained the lead when senior fullback Jon Hoese scored a touchdown with 3:09 left to give the Golden Gophers a 24-17 win.

MT got back on track the following week when it hosted Austin Peay State University. The Blue Raiders put up a season high 56 points and 654 yards of offense. They were led by senior running back Phillip Tanner who ran for 127 yards and three touchdowns.

The Blue Raiders traveled to Memphis to take on the Tigers in their first road game of the sea-

son. MT could never overcome four turnovers, resulting in a 24-17 loss to Memphis. This put the Blue Raiders 1-2 heading into conference play.

MT won its first conference game the following week against the Ragin' Cajuns of Louisiana-Lafayette. The Blue Raiders were led by a combination of Tanner who had 104 rushing yards and junior running back D.D. Kyle who had 2 rushing touchdowns. MT won the game 34-14 and looked to take the momentum back home to face rival Troy.

The Blue Raiders wore their special black uniforms to get the students fired up for a Tuesday night game against Troy. But the Trojans proved once again that they have MT's number by defeating them for a fifth straight year, this time 42-13. The Blue Raiders had no answer for the Trojans passing game, which put up 281 yards and four touchdowns. MT quarterback Dasher made his season debut with two rushing touchdowns, but overall was very ineffective as he was still getting accustomed to playing again.

Still recovering from a poor performance against Troy, MT had a shot at defeating a known ACC school in Georgia Tech. The Yellow Jackets a team that was nationally ranked earlier in the year proved to be too much for the Blue Raiders resulting in a 42-14 loss. MT had six turnovers, including a career high four interceptions by Dasher. This allowed the Yellow Jackets to control the game by rushing for 329 yards and five touchdowns.

In MT's third conference game the Blue Raiders soared over Louisiana-Monroe 38-10. Dasher had his best game throwing the ball since coming off his suspension by passing for 219 yards and two touchdowns. The defense for the Blue Raiders played outstanding against the Warhawks who were held to -4 yards rushing on 28 carries.

The ups and downs continued when the Blue Raiders traveled to face Sun Belt foe Arkansas State University. The Red Wolves benefited from a season high seven turnovers by MT and won 51-24. The Blue Raiders trailed only 23-17 at halftime, but MT turned the ball over on five straight possessions in the second half. Dasher for the second time this season threw four interceptions to tie a career high.

MT lost four of its past five games when the team got beat at home 23-17 against North Texas. The Blue Raiders previously had a four game win streak against the Mean Green. MT was led by Tanner who ran for 87 yards and two scores but was outperformed by North Texas junior running back Lance Dunbar who had 226 yards and one touchdown.

Needing a win badly to have any shot at post-season play, the Blue Raiders went on the road against Western Kentucky. They got behind early in the game because of poor special teams play, but they sparked late when senior cornerback Rod Isaac returned a 99-yard fumble recovery for a touchdown to get MT back into the game. The Blue Raiders offense woke up late to score their only offensive touch-

down with 4:38 remaining in the game, which proved to be the game winner as MT rallied to a 27-26 victory.

MT used the momentum to win back-to-back games for the first time all season. The Blue Raiders hosted Florida Atlantic University for the final home game of the 2010 season. Dasher had one of his best performances of the year, throwing for 158 yards and two touchdowns. He also rushed for 62 yards and two touchdowns. Tanner had his best rushing results of the year posting 150 yards and one touchdown. The win for the Blue Raiders put the team in position to have a shot at a bowl game if they could beat Sun Belt conference leader Florida International.

The Blue Raiders got behind early in a must win game for both teams. Florida International was looking to win the Sun Belt conference outright and MT was looking to earn its sixth win of the year, making the Blue Raiders bowl eligible. In a game that mirrored the roller-coaster season by MT, the Blue Raiders found away to win 28-27 by getting a Tanner touchdown with 7:26 remaining.

MT finished the season with some impressive individual and team statistics. The Blue Raiders averaged 178.5 yards rushing per game, which was 33rd overall in the nation. Tanner had 841 yards and 11 touchdowns to lead the team in rushing. MT junior kicker Alan Gendreau made 10 of 12 field goals on the season, including a 55 yard kick, which was second-longest in MT and conference history.

Football league starts local team

By MELANIE MILLIGAN
Contributing Writer

The Middle Tennessee Football League, better known as the MFTL, began in 2003 in Nashville. There are eight local teams here in Murfreesboro, and the Vipers are the newest addition to MFTL. Beginning in September of this year, the Vipers started off with 10 players. With the help of MTSU and other young men around this area, the semi-professional team has expanded to more than 60 players in less than two months.

Offensive Coach Dustin Griswold, a previous player of the MFTL, alongside Defensive Coach Todd Miller have been working together for about three years, and these two make a great team.

"We work well with each other," Miller said. "We both know how each other works."

Coach Don Berninger, head coach for the Vipers, is a role model that the whole team looks up to, including the other coaches. He is a former defensive coach of Minnesota State where Miller played for him. He has started numerous MFTL teams and has coached in many high schools. He led the Cannon County High School football team to a state championship in 2009.

"I look up to him and he's a really strong guy," Miller said.

"He has definitely made an impact in my life, [and] he will definitely tell you if you do something wrong," Griswold jokingly explains.

Randy Toombs, a player for the Vipers, said he is looking forward to next season.

"I'm very excited for this season," Toombs said. "I haven't seen the competition yet but from what I've heard, we look pretty good. There's no reason why we shouldn't win the championship."

The coach said the Vipers and the MFTL provides players a "second shot" at playing football again.

To read more, visit us online.



www.mtsusidelines.com

Photo by Jay Bailey

Running back Phillip Tanner (21) kneels in the end zone during a home game after a touchdown against the University of North Texas on Nov. 12, 2010.

NBA: where rivalry used to happen

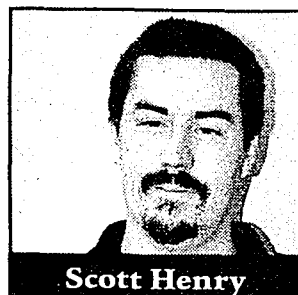
"LeBron-ageddon" has come and gone. A Cleveland fan base that had spurred the Cavaliers to a surprising second place in NBA attendance has to feel like they've been sold out yet again. This time, though, instead of a player taking his talents to South Beach, the fans got the shaft from the players who'll keep flaunting a lack of talent on the shore of Lake Erie.

I grew up a child of the 1980s, cutting my basketball teeth on the NBA Finals' battles between the Lakers and Celtics. Magic Johnson and Larry Bird shared a perceptible mutual respect, but each would rather set the other on fire than crack jokes or discuss what club they were headed to after the game. For that matter, the two teams didn't get along all that well on the whole. Check YouTube and search "Kevin McHale Kurt Rambis" if you need any more proof.

As an Indiana kid in the 1990s, I was able to enjoy the long-bombing, swashbuckling, trash-talking style of Reggie Miller. Anyone who was watching basketball in 1995, or anyone who's watched ESPN's entire "30 for 30" series, has seen how much Reggie was able to tick off the entire city of New York. Miller talked noise so the rest of the Indiana Pacers could do their jobs in peace.

That brings me to last Thursday night. The fans were heated up, ready to welcome LeBron with barely bridled rage and hostility. Security was heightened in fear of anyone making a move on the court after having too much liquid courage and not enough brains.

And as for the players? Anderson Varejao walked up and gave LeBron a pre-game hug. At that moment, the Miami Heat clinched victory.



Scott Henry

Overtime

For all the countless hype about their mediocre start to the NBA season and their ridiculously top-heavy roster, the Miami Heat still have a lot more talent than the Cleveland Cavaliers. The only hope for the Cavs to win that game was to establish a psychological edge, especially over LeBron.

Freeze him out during pre-game introductions. Leave him hanging if he goes for a high five or a handshake. Hammer him McHale-styl-

when he drives to the basket. Do anything but shake his hand, hug him, and make him feel at home.

When he feels at home, he does things like score 24 points in a quarter and 38 for the game. The Cleveland players knew that, since they'd borne witness to it plenty of times over the years. They chose instead to laugh, slap fives, and do everything but pose for the pregame air pictures, just like the old days of seven months ago.

The Cavs needed LeBron to shoot something like 2-for-17 from the floor. To do that, they needed to rattle him and remind him that Quicken Loans Arena is no longer his comfort zone. They did none of that, and therefore they never had much chance to win.

NBA Commissioner David Stern won't want to read this, but here goes. Reason number 311 that the NBA is losing visibility

is that the rivalries are gone. Lakers/Celtics, Pistons/Bulls, Pacers/Knicks: those were the reasons the NBA got hot to begin with in the '80s and '90s. Now, free agency and salary-dumping trades mean that everyone will play with everyone else at some point, so there's little to gain from on-court hostility.

Miami/Cleveland had a little potential to be the next huge basketball battle, but the players chose instead to embrace the enemy. Winning a game is your job, and the opponent's goal is to stop you from doing said job. Varejao embracing LeBron was like a guy sending flowers to a girl who stole his wallet after a one-night stand. The fans were ready to be angry, but the players sold them out again.

Consolation for Cleveland fans: there's always the Indians and Browns.

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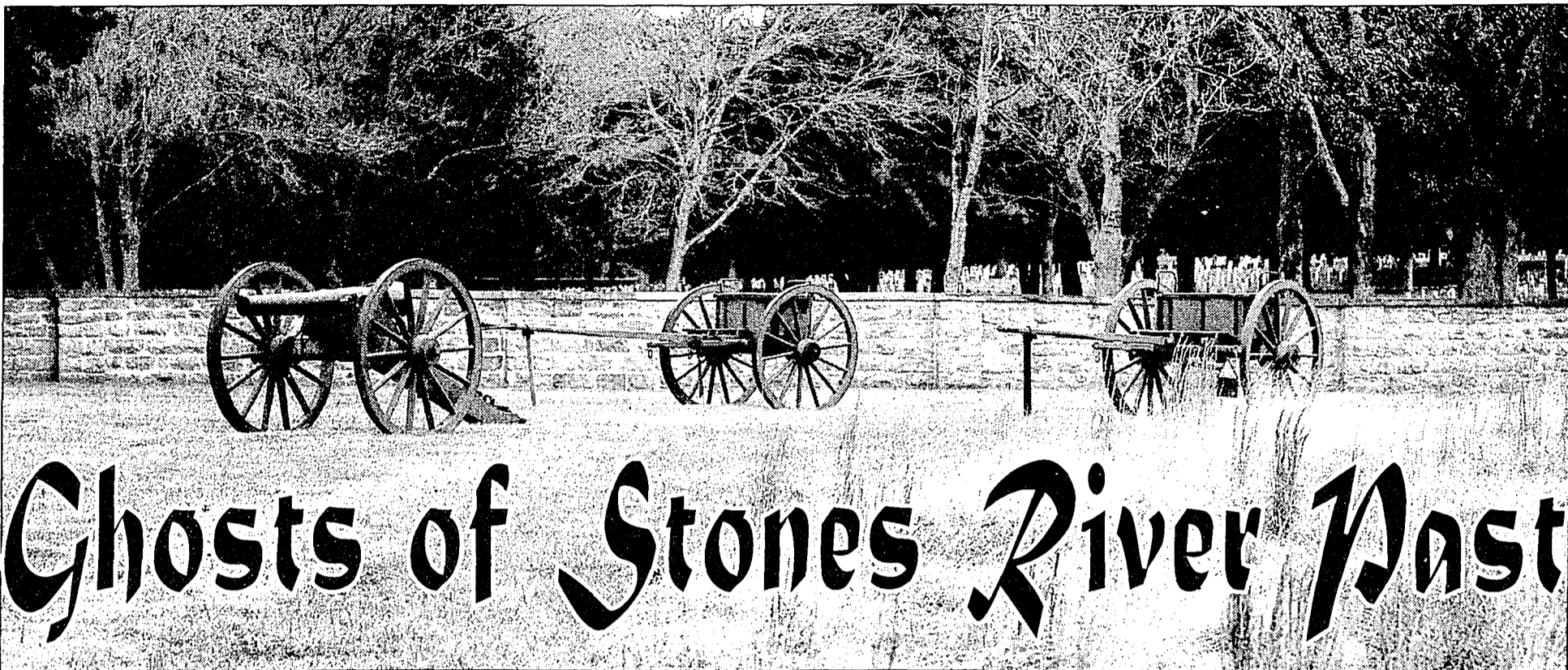


Photo by Jay Bailey, photo editor

Cannons stand strong against falling snow Sunday at the Stones River National Battlefield in Murfreesboro. The cannons are kept on the site as monuments to the battle fought during the Civil War.

Murfreesboro national battlefield hosts tales of bloody history, lingering entities

By **JESSICA PACE**
Staff Writer

Though the sun claws through the trees and reaches the ground below, it's cold in Stones River National Cemetery off Old Nashville Highway. A chilly wind whips through the leaves of garnet and gold and rustles across the historic battlefield across the street like the ghost of a Civil War soldier who fought on those very grounds.

On Dec. 30, 1862, Union Army Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans' troops traipsed into Murfreesboro. That night, the men endured miserable, freezing weather without campfires in order to conceal their position, knowing that a battle lay ahead in the first days of the New Year. They didn't know that the Battle of Stones River would be one of the bloodiest of the war, second in casualties only to Gettysburg.

Today, the field in which Rosecrans' men gathered to spend one last dismal night before fighting is barren save for the tall, dried grass shuddering in the breeze. The soldiers' graves lie across the street and just beyond is train tracks that twist like a snake through the landscape, which, in addition to the closeness of the river, is part of the reason Murfreesboro is an ideal location for battle.

Woods line the field's other side, and at the edge rests an old cannon and a plaque declaring this seemingly unremarkable field as "Tour Stop One" of Stones River National Battlefield.

The first five tour stops of the battle site, located at 3501 Old Nashville Highway, loop around the fields and ancient cedars. The sixth and last stop, which is known as McFadden's Ford, located off Thompson Lane, marks the site where the last shot of the battle rang through the January air over a bloodbath of 1,800 slain Confederate soldiers.

Such brutality and violence inevitably leaves its mark, and sure enough, one can find remains of the battle throughout the park, from preserved artillery on the battlefield to bayonets and knives displayed in the visitor's center, which houses a small museum of Civil War artifacts.

These artifacts are the tangible evidence left of the bloody battle in Middle Tennessee. The certainty of what else might be lingering is more debatable. That's why, on a clear and cold November morning, I visited some of the most horrific sites of warfare during the Battle of Stones River in the hopes of experiencing something a little extraordinary.

Reports of unexplainable activity around the battlefields of Murfreesboro include numerous sightings of mysterious orbs, as if from a lantern's glow, appearing at night and in photographs as well as alleged sightings of soldiers emerging from the trees on the battlefield in the daytime, sometimes even falling as if shot.

Whether or not these entities have shown themselves or even exist remains a questionable matter. It's possible that unsettled spirits prowl their own graves, but a more interesting question is why.

Perhaps the gruesome nature of these soldiers' deaths inhibits a peaceful rest. Supposing that's the case, ghostly activity is understandable as there was no shortage of blood and gore in the Battle of Stones River, which brings us to Tour Stop Two, also known as the Slaughter Pen.

Most reported paranormal happenings around the battlefield occur here, a horrific battle site for both sides.

The Union, until it could assemble additional troops, fended off the Confederates in this rocky, wooded terrain strewn with logs and sinkholes. Large slabs of rock worked to the Union army's advantage at first, as soldiers huddled behind the rock formations as if they were shields. But, as Confederates approached from behind, this shield strategy turned fatal, as John George, the battlefield curatorial and archivist technician informs me.

"There was a point in battle when the Confederates surprised the Union soldiers and made a V-shape around them, backing them up against the rocks," he explains. "They were trying to run, but it was a death trap."

The Slaughter Pen got its name because the severely blood-spattered grounds were reminiscent of Chicago meat-packing plants. Though the facts of the battle have long since been recorded, it's chilling to hear the tale recounted in person.

Individuals who encounter anything outside the norm commonly see a quiet, reserved soldier keeping their company, often leaning against a tree and only disap-

pearing when spoken to. Others assert that the Slaughter Pen area is 10 to 20 degrees cooler than other parts of the battlefield.

Terry Mayo, the founder and director of the Society of Paranormal Investigations and Research in Tennessee vouches for these reports. He has studied the battlefield extensively in the five-and-a-half years he has directed the team and has experiences of his own.

"We have taken a number of very good 'ectoplasmic' photographs there, as well as electronic voice phenomena in that area during our paranormal investigations and have had small rocks and pebbles tossed and thrown at us from that area when investigating late at night," he claims.

Skeptics can rationalize such claims away, and as I stepped among the unsteady rocks in the Slaughter Pen woods, I noticed the temperature was, in fact, colder. However, the area is shaded by trees rather than exposed to open sunlight as the fields are accounts for the cooler temperature. What I can't explain are the quiet but distinct footsteps I heard trailing me, which I at first dismissed as those of another visitor until I turned to find no one behind me.

This discovery was surprising, but not unnerving. Hearing footsteps, I learned after my visit to the battlefield, is another common experience at the Slaughter Pen.

Mayo says he's never encountered a hostile entity in his research of the area, but says, "They wonder, if they see us, about us just as much as we wonder about them."

Admittedly, the notion of a curious ghost seems entirely plausible after hearing humanlike footsteps of no visible origin, but there are alternate explanations as one Murfreesboro resident offers.

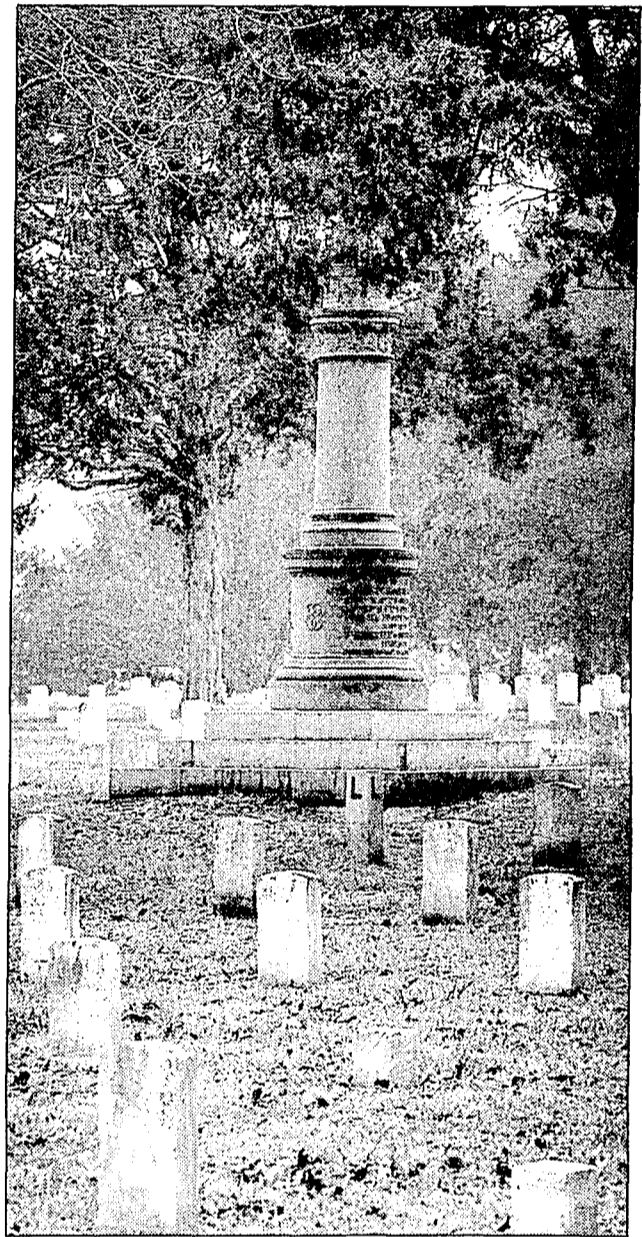


Photo by Jay Bailey, photo editor

Snow flurries softly land Sunday on weathered Union Army graves in a cemetery located across the street from the Stones River National Battlefield in Murfreesboro. More than 23,000 soldiers died during the three-day campaign during the Civil War.

GHOSTS, PAGE 6



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Photo by Casey Warren, staff photographer
U.S. Marine Cpl. Matt Travis, his wife, Ashley, and daughter, Alyssa, (Center) pose with fellow Marine families at Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C., after returning home from active duty.



Military wives form strong bonds with each other

FEATURES
FROM PAGE 1

"When you become a military wife, you can take everything you know about life, love, and even your own beliefs, and throw them out the window," Ashley said. "It will change you in ways you had no idea possible."

Wishing she could have enrolled in "Military Wife 101," she learned the ropes quickly when her husband received his second activation orders. Ashley was three months pregnant when he deployed. He returned seven months later to a 1-month-old bundle of joy.

"Having to live life as a single parent for months on end, time after time, doesn't even compare to having to go through an entire pregnancy and birth of our first child by myself," Ashley said. "This is a very hard and emotional thing to ask any woman to go through on her own, as well as being hard on my husband because he missed out on all of it."

Brandy Wrubel, a former MTSU student whose husband is in the same unit as Ashley's husband, remembers this hardship.

"I don't know how she stayed

so strong," Wrubel said. "I get depressed when my husband leaves as it is—I couldn't imagine having to go through a pregnancy without him."

Embracing this as one of the hardest things she has ever been through, Travis said she always remembers that in a time of war there are two fronts: one where troops face the enemy in battle and one where loved ones wait, worry and pray.

With the mission starting at home, she devotes her life to supporting those who defend our country, and she is always prepared to support the home front while her husband is away.

In just four years of marriage, she's already been through three deployments: one to Iraq, one on a Marine Expeditionary Unit and one to Afghanistan. Her husband's unit is currently deployed, yet he was unable to deploy on what would have been his fourth deployment due to a medical injury he received in Afghanistan.

"You have to be very emotionally strong, independent, responsible and supportive," Ashley explained. "It's a 'make you or break you' kind of lifestyle that can either make you a stronger couple or it can easily tear you apart."

Duties on the home front include being supportive and positive, but sometimes the bad outweighs the good.

"It's very hard not to cry my eyes out when I finally get to talk to him," Ashley said. "I just want to tell him how much I need and want him home, but this is not an option. I have to remember that he has it a lot worse and I have to keep myself together for him and his men."

Unlike our parents and grandparents who waited patiently for letters from their sons letting them know they were all right, when Ashley hears the phone ring she starts to prepare both physically and mentally.

"Homecomings can cause a very unstable home life for all relationships involved, marriages, children, etc.," Ashley said.

While these men are doing their jobs, their spouses must step up to the plate and take on the burdens of everyday life.

"We are expected to enter into 'super woman' mode, as I call it, and it becomes just me against the world," Ashley said. "We have to create routines for ourselves to make things run as smoothly and consistently as possible."

Like Ashley, many military

wives struggle with the adjustment phase of having their spouse home and giving up some of the everyday responsibilities that they have become accustomed to.

"I have to remember all over again to include him in our family routines and sometimes even create new ones," Ashley said. "This can be extremely hard."

The adjustment phase can take a long time to overcome. When Ashley's husband left for his third deployment, he was gone for nine months. He didn't return home until their daughter was 18 months old. Naturally, the deployment negatively impacted the father-daughter relationship.

"My daughter was very excited to see him when he came home, but she didn't really know him so she was wondering why he was still around days later," Ashley said. "I did everything in my power to prevent her from not knowing who her father was."

After almost a year-and-a-half, Ashley said she finally experienced a sense of relief and satisfaction knowing that her daughter had started to come around to building a relationship with her father.

"This can be very stressful for the active duty parent who has missed out on such an important

time in their young child's life," Ashley said. "It can be very stressful on the marriage, too, because as a mother, I understand how my child felt, but I also felt helpless in the fact that I couldn't get the two of them to bond."

Just as her husband leans on his fellow Marines during active duty, Ashley said she leans on her family and friends when he's away.

"Military wives are lucky to have each other," Wrubel said. "It's a lot easier to talk to and cry with someone who knows exactly how you're feeling and what you're going through. While my husband is away now, Ashley knows I need her to lean on."

And when he returns, Travis said she realizes just how big her family really is.

"I'm thankful to have a large family," Ashley said. "These men have such a strong bond from training and living together and fighting together for their lives, [and] there is nothing that can come between them—they will always be brothers."

As her favorite time of year draws closer, her husband will not be standing on the front line this time. She'll spend the holidays with him as a very grateful Marine Corps wife.

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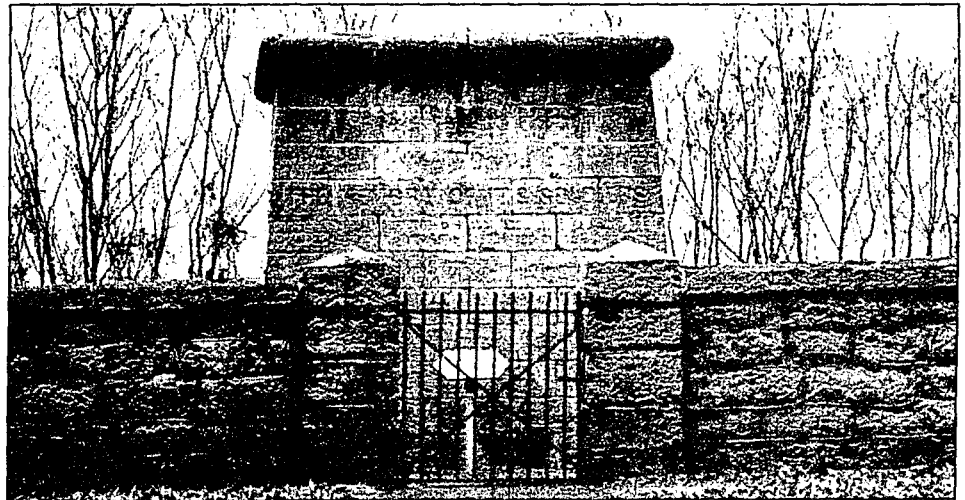


Photo by Jay Bailey, photo editor
Surrounded by bare trees Sunday, this monument is located near the Stones River National Battlefield in Murfreesboro, and it was built in honor of the unknown soldiers killed during the three-day battle in 1862.

Unidentified spirits emit tangible energies

GHOSTS
FROM PAGE 5

"I think when enough bad stuff happens in a place, it retains a certain energy, but it's just electromagnetism," says Ardis Redford emphatically, a 21-year-old who's lived in Murfreesboro his entire life. "It's negative energy—I think because the emotions left are inherently human, they take the form of humans and cause people to see things."

But, as Redford believes, the images of deceased soldiers are merely forms of a lingering energy.

"When people say the spirits are human, I think it's just wishful thinking rooted in fear of death," he says.

This thought brought to mind a passage in a Bible on display in the visitor's center. This tiny Bible was recovered on the battlefield and lay open in a display case.

If one examines the page closely, a faint scribble as from a pencil encircles Romans 12: 19-21 which reads as follows: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

It is possible that these words were the last pondered by a guilt-wrought soldier before his death. It is possible that he was

one of more than 6,100 Union soldiers interred in the Stones River National Cemetery. And it is possible that he was one of the 2,562 unidentified.

So much of the battle remains unidentified and undocumented; Mayo, who taught Tennessee and U.S. history, shares that Stones River was the only major battle of the Civil War in which no photographs were taken during or immediately after, making it that much more difficult to perceive the exact occurrences in the heat of the battle, or the vision of the field in the cold aftermath.

Though most fallen Confederates were shipped home and others buried in Murfreesboro's Evergreen Cemetery, there is an air of finality about the National Cemetery.

A two-lane road runs between the field where the Union lay low on the eve of battle and the gated cemetery. A main walkway, lined with plaques bearing four-line verses honoring the dead, slices through the manicured bone yard where all evidence of the execrable battle is grown over with grass and trees. Small, white blocks of stone, all unadorned and nameless, litter the patch of earth like cigarette butts.

Whether some part of the soldiers that lie beneath them still stalks the battlefield, the cemetery offers an undisturbed place of rest for the bones of the fallen, as one of the plaques suggests.

"Rest on embalmed and sainted dead, dear as the blood ye gave. No impious footstep here shall tread the herbage of your grave." it reads—a final wish of peace.

Letters Policy

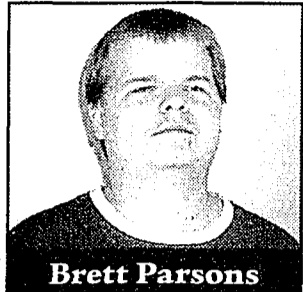
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OPINIONS

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Spitzer may have too much baggage

You might remember Eliot Spitzer, the former New York governor who resigned amid allegations of prostitution in March 2008. CNN picked him up in June to be the left-leaning component of a round table program, but is he carrying too much baggage with him to be a viable broadcaster?



Brett Parsons

Reasonably Irrational

sought clarification:

"Am I correct, then, that you've said... that the one place you don't want to cut is doctor reimbursement rates?"

Paul avoided giving a straight answer, instead he jokingly insisted that Spitzer reads to many liberal blogs, before going into a spiel about not balancing the budget on just doctors. Paul asserted that if reimbursement rates were cut, Medicare patients would not be able to find a doctor.

Spitzer asked again, and Paul

once more replied by talking about what should not be cut instead of what he wants to cut. At this point, Spitzer seemed to be getting a little annoyed at Paul's evasiveness. It became clear in his body language and his attempts to interrupt Paul.

So, Spitzer asked something he shouldn't have. "Senator, doctor, I'll call you both. I don't mean to be impertinent here, but what was your peak income over the past decade?"

Despite trying not to sound rude, Spitzer's question certainly came off as impertinent. Instead of addressing what Paul was actually saying, he opted to corner him and make him appear greedy and self-serving.

It was Paul's response that is interesting, however. Scoffing, the senator-elect said, "If you want to make this about me personally, you're not going to have a real intelligent discussion... do I want to go into your personal past and talk about your past?"

With that, Spitzer lost the

round. He attempted to recover by trying to reference his own finances, but it should be clear what Paul was alluding to. The former governor did not resign over embezzlement, after all. Paul claimed the interview's momentum for himself, perched on the high road – just a moment after threatening to knock the entire thing into the ditch.

For the rest of the interview, Paul remained as slippery and nebulous as he could. Spitzer barely got in another word on the side. So, maybe this was simply an exercise in Paul being as agile as a greased rabbit.

Or, is this telling of Spitzer? Of the whole interview, he tried one all-or-nothing question that was torn down like tissue paper. He spent the rest of the time trying to get Paul to respond to a list of possible cuts, a game the senator-elect was not willing to play.

I understand why CNN thought Spitzer would be a good choice. He's a political insider, a legal

insider, and he needed a job. It makes me wonder if they considered Rob Blagojevich to replace Larry King.

But, how can we expect Spitzer to lay it on heavy to politicians when anyone who comes on the show is pre-loaded with an ace up his sleeve? If this becomes common practice, he will have less journalistic usefulness than Jon Stewart.

I'm all for CNN giving the guy a job – it won't do to have disgraced politicians filling our unemployment lines – but the new host might have been offered too high a starting place. Until the heat of his extremely well-publicized fall cools to room temperature, Spitzer should stick to being a correspondent or a resident expert. Leave the journalism to journalists.

Brett Parsons is a senior majoring in journalism in the College of Mass Communication. He can be reached at bep2y@mtmail.mtsu.edu.

Turning down the volume COMIC

Every TV viewer has experienced it. You're putting your feet up at the end of the day, quietly watching your favorite television program, maybe with your spouse napping next to you. Suddenly, the quiet TV show cuts to a loud, blaring commercial, startling you, and waking up your spouse.



Bart Gordon

Guest Columnist

Television commercials often try to grab attention by cranking up the decibels. They blast viewers with loud content in the middle of soft television programming to get their interest, but often they just get them irritated instead. It's a nuisance for everyone. It can especially affect parents with young children and the elderly, who often have the volume set higher.

That's why this week I supported a bill to address this problem. The Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation, or CALM Act will prevent television advertisements from playing at a volume noticeably above the programs during which they air.

It goes without saying that loud television commercials are not the most profound challenge we face as a country. However, the Federal Communications Commission has been receiving complaints for years about commercials being excessively noisy compared to the programs they interrupt. In fact, too loud commercials have been the No. 1

source of consumer complaints made to the FCC. Even as the U.S. Congress works to address grand issues of domestic and foreign policy, it can still help consumers by addressing smaller-scale nuisance like these.

The technology already exists to solve this problem. The broadcasting industry has already established standards on the volume of programming, but those standards haven't been law, and they haven't been used consistently. In spite of the consensus among viewers, until now there has not been an official law regarding the consistent volume on TV programming and ads.

On Friday, my bipartisan colleagues and I sent the bill to President Barack Obama's desk. When the law takes effect, the FCC will be required to adopt broadcast loudness standards. Television commercials will have to come in at about the same volume of the show they accompany.

The law we passed [last week] is a simple fix to a simple nuisance. I look forward to watching my favorite programs with my family in peace and quiet at the end of the day.

Congressman Bart Gordon represents the 6th District in the U.S. House of Representatives. For more information, visit his official website gordon.house.gov.

wittenberg.jacob@gmail.com "This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things" Jacob Wittenberg

Food: A love story made for the holidays.

By JOHN THOMAS
Contributing Columnist

With the upcoming holidays, I tend to be philosophical. It is a time of reflection and family. Holidays bring out the best and the worst in people. These are just my experiences, but I hope they make you contemplate yours and smile.

I met my wife, Darlene, when I was 17 years old. I didn't know she would be my wife. She was just a cute blonde. She weighed 86 pounds soaking wet. We met in November, and my first meal with her family was on Christmas Eve. I had been a wrestler in high school, and food held little allure to me. In fact, it was the

enemy. Christmas at her house changed my life forever.

My family tradition for Christmas dinner was the same as for every other meal of the year. We were poor and food cost money. We always ate whatever was on sale at the grocery store. The majority of our meals consisted of tuna or some variation thereof. We ate: tuna casserole, tuna noodle, derivations of tuna and the old standby, the tuna sandwich. I'm sure that college students can identify. Sometimes, splurged on chicken – baked chicken with no salt or seasoning because my mother, who was always ill and sensitive to spicy foods, could not eat any spice. My new girlfriend's family tradition was a little different.

Let me set the stage:

I enter the room and I am greeted with the piquant smell of ambrosia. I have no idea what I am experiencing because I have never encountered anything like it in my life. My senses are overloaded as I walk through the galley kitchen on my way back to the "family room." Every burner on the stove has some boiling, bubbling or simmering concoction of unknown depth. I see dark browns and light browns and shades of brown, and opaque whites. I see thick golden gravy percolating nicely with a turkey neck sticking out the top of the pot.

The smell... Oh, the sweet smell! The ambrosia stimulates olfactory orgasms, which creates a surreal sense of the heav-

en into which I have stumbled. I do not want to leave, but I am "in the way," and I am commanded to leave by Darlene's mother, a 4-foot-11-inch gnome named Jenny, who is wearing a royal blue shirt and royal blue polyester pants. The effect of all this blue and her rotund shape makes her look like a blueberry. Frightened and spent, I wander downstairs, hoping to sneak a beer or a shot of whisky.

I arrive at the bar and a man, best described as a tree trunk, greets me. He is 5 feet 6 inches tall and about 4-feet wide with the

thickest, blackest moustache that I've ever seen. He is the first Armenian I've ever met.

"Hey, kid," he said. "My name is Bjoren. I'm Darlene's brother-in-law. Welcome to the family. You need a drink!" Without missing a beat, he pours me a double Jack Daniel's, neat. "Welcome to the family?" I ask plaintively. "I'm just Darlene's boyfriend." Bjoren laughed and said, "Sure, you are." More prophetic words were never spoken.

John Thomas senior in the College of Mass Communication. He can be reached at jlt3p@mtmail.mtsu.edu

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
SIDELINES
Middle Tennessee State University
1301 East Main Street P.O. Box 8
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Editorial: 615-904-8357
Fax: 615-494-7648

Advertising: 615-898-5240
Fax: 615-904-8193

www.mtsusidelines.com

Editor-in-Chief
Alex Moorman*
sleditor@mtsu.edu

Managing Editor
Marie Kempf*
smanage@mtsu.edu

Production Manager
Andy Harper
sldesign@mtsu.edu

News
Marie Kempf*
slnews@mtsu.edu

Asst. News
Christopher Merchant
sicampus@mtsu.edu

Asst. News
Becca Andrews
sicampus@mtsu.edu

Sports
Will Trusler
slsports@mtsu.edu

Features
Laura Aiken*
slfeatur@mtsu.edu

A&E
Rozalind Ruth
slflash@mtsu.edu

Opinions
Aimee Schmittendorf*
slopinio@mtsu.edu

Photography
Jay Bailey
slphoto@mtsu.edu

Multimedia
Larry Sterling
slonline@mtsu.edu

Copy Editor
Courtney Polivka
slcopy@mtsu.edu

Campus Advertising
Chelsea LeMay
sl4ads@mtsu.edu

Adviser
Leon Alligood
alligood@mtsu.edu

Business
Eveon Corl
ecorl@mtsu.edu

Media Convergence Director
Tiffany Gibson
sifidlinesmanager@gmail.com

Off-Campus Advertising

Shelbyville
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