

*THE FORREST
ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION
JANUARY 2015
NEWSLETTER*

**THE MAURY COUNTY JAIL
FIRE AND THE FORREST
CONNECTION**

The Maury County Jail fire is widely recognized as one of Tennessee's worst disasters. The incident occurred on June 26, 1977 when an emotionally disturbed teenager, a runaway from Wisconsin with a history of arson, was arrested by Columbia police and placed in custody. He subsequently ignited the mattress of his jail bunk. A thick cloud of lethal smoke engulfed the cells and hallways, and within minutes, forty-two persons had perished: thirty-three inmates and nine visitors.

Sadly, the Maury County Jail fire took the life of a Forrest High alumnus, former teacher and coach, Monte Baxter. We would like to report that only "good" happens to the lives of those who walked the hallowed halls of Forrest, but that isn't always the case.

Monte was raised on a farm on River Road so strenuous labor had toughened him. He was a serious, conscientious, and determined young man who found success in playing football for the Rockets. Monte was strong and powerfully built which served him well as a bruising fullback on the team.

After graduating from Forrest in 1954, he worked his way through Peabody University, earning a diploma and teaching certificate. He came back to his alma mater Forrest where he taught eighth grade civics and history and coached middle school football.

Teaching is not for everyone and Monte struggled to relate to the students.

He was not a "sociable" person by nature. In fact, he was a "loner" which kept him somewhat out of step with parents and faculty members. It was apparent he was not suited for the task, and after a couple of years, his teaching career ended.

After teaching, Monte became even more the "loner" and his behavior more extreme. Who knows what was going through his mind? For whatever his mental state, Monte began having brushes with the law. When he was arrested in Columbia for loitering, the officers didn't know him, and he refused to give his name. When asked, he simply replied, "My name is John Doe."

After the jail fire, the victims were laid outside, covered with a sheet. The Lewisburg Fire Department had been called to assist Columbia fire fighters and it was a fireman from Marshall County who identified "John Doe" as Monte Baxter. It was such a sad conclusion to a life that once held so much promise.

Years ago I wrote a song about the jail fire that Jimmy, Phil and I sang in many of our shows. In 1960-61 Mr. Baxter had been my eighth grade teacher and coach, so I was inspired to write about the event.

THE MAURY COUNTY JAIL FIRE

*Church had just turned out in
Columbia, Tennessee
Just your usual sleepy, summer day
in June
Family and close friends started
slowly pouring in
To the jailhouse on that tragic
afternoon.*

*A young, wild-eye kid, a run-away
had been jailed the day before
And like a brewing storm he lay
there behind the jail cell door
He took a lighted match to his jail
bunk, as if Satan had it planned
The smoke and cries quickly arose as
the jailhouse fire began.*

*The jailor took his ring of keys and
down the hall he ran
But the frightened people visiting
knocked the jail keys from his hand
The prisoners' only hope for freedom
lay somewhere down on the ground
But the fire had done its damage by
the time that they were found.*

*I don't know just what the prisoners
did to be there on that day
But no matter what, it seems unfair
that they should die that way
The Maury County Jail fire still
haunts my memory
It was the darkest day recorded in
our county's history.*

*CHORUS: Forty-two died that day in
the Maury County Jail fire
Thirty-three inmates died that
tragic day
Little did the prisoners know, that
before the day was o'er
Death was the price they all would
pay.*

By John Rickman
Past Alumni President

**FORREST ALUMNI
SIXTH ANNUAL TRIVIA NIGHT**

When: Saturday – JANUARY 31, 2015

Where: Forrest School

Time: Event opens at 6:00 P.M.

Light meal before game

Game starts at 7:00 P.M.

What: There will be ten rounds of ten questions. There is no minimum number on a team but there is a maximum of six on each team. A ticket will be given for each dollar donated to the scholarship fund and drawings for door prizes will take place between rounds.

Why: Scholarship Fund

Call Marion Joyce, Brenda Brown, David Ghee, or Stacey Cothran if you would like to donate a door prize or sponsor a team. PLEASE encourage friends and family to participate. You can access an entry form at the following site:

<http://www.forrestalumni.com/upcoming-events.html>

Or you can fill out the following form and mail it to Marion.

Team # _____

Team Number will be filled in by committee.

**January 31, 2015 Forrest School
Game begins at 7:00 P.M.
Team Members: Maximum of six (6)**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Team Contact: Please include phone number.

The cost for each team is sixty dollars. There is a maximum of six members per team, but there is no minimum number per team.

Please mail entry form to: Marion Joyce
506 Depot St. Chapel Hill, TN 37034

The following is an excerpt from the December 1938 copy of The Wizard. The headline reads

FORREST HIGH IS THIRTEEN YEARS OLD

The History of Forrest High School

The beginning of the school system at Chapel Hill, as learned from a number of people and official records:

The Cumberland church and original school building were built in the late '50's. The brick were made on the ground, leaving a pond, signs of which may still be seen.

The first teacher was Billy Price, who married Miss Sallie Ogilvie. The war came up and the building was used a commissary or some purpose for the army. Mr. Price was assisted by Miss Nannie Miller, sister of Mr. Edd Miller of Lewisburg.

During the war, 1861, Mrs. Melinda Wilson appropriate a log house, the north room in the house now owned by Mrs. Maggie Rogers for a school, and Miss Sue Thompson was the teacher.

Mag, Will, and Tom Forrest, whose father was Elisha Forrest, brother of Gen. Forrest were in school here. When Forrest's Cavalry came through Chapel Hill, the "scholars" were lined up outside to see them go by.

After the war, the school was back at the old building - it is said the Masons had this building made - with Mr. Carey as principal, and Miss Sue Thompson as assistant.

Later Mr. Josiah Floyd was co-principal with Mr. Carey. This from 1867-76.

In 1876, Prof. Simeon Venable Wall came here from Holt's Corner school. He began in 1876 with Miss Jennie... taught his daughter, and the children of the neighborhood.

Miss Jennie wore a split bonnet to school to preserve her lily white skin. Miss Ella Venable was music teacher.

In 1878, Miss Ella Wilkinson from Winchester taught. Miss Lonie Burgess from Cornersville taught music, and wore hoop skirts, as did the others.

From the beginning, Mr. Wall would march the boys in the girls' room, read the Bible and pray. Often give a good lecture. In protracted meetings every child went to church. He never missed a sermon, was Bible teacher. His assistants were not supposed to have "dates" (bad example), and everybody had great respect for him. His influence went far. He would go away to summer school and always progressive. Mr. Britt Ezell was chairman of the Board.

In 1880 his assistant was Miss Annie Swanson, with Miss M.B. Ezell as music teacher.

There was a fireplace in each room and the boys cut the wood. One day, Mr. Wall told Weams Walton -6 ft. 3 in) to do his part. He told Mr. Wall, "No, I am a boarder from Arkansas, I do not cut wood at home." Mr. Wall just said "Cut wood." He left the room indignantly. In a very few minutes came back with his arms full of wood. (This from Dr. White.)

Well, the girls did the sweeping, the boys brought water from the old public well at the Forrest place, and drawn with a sweep. By the time they got to the big oak tree, a little to the left of the direct path near the Cumberland church, the water was all gone, and as the girls were not allowed to pass the east corner of the building - did without water unless the boys took pity on them and went back. They were not supposed to make but one trip and did this while Mr. Wall went home to his lunch where Mrs. Lee Swaim's brick house is.

In 1882, Miss Tommie Buchanan was assistant, and Miss Alice Bailey was music teacher. They organized a literary society. Had expression

classes—and the school was second to none.

Mr. Wall went to Battle Ground. In 1885, Miss Ella Cowley was teacher; Mrs. Will Smith of College Grove, was assistant, and Mrs. Laura White Womack started teaching music.

(To be continued in the summer edition: THE FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL)

KNOWN FHS DEATHS SINCE AUGUST

- Danielle Thacker
- Amy Jones
- Gaylon Richardson
- Steve Yell
- Martha Troop
- Amy McCulloch
- Glen Trout
- Harold Gene Smith
- Gene Shires

Anyone wishing to publish an article in the summer edition, please send it to Brenda at 3721 Mahaley Road, Chapel Hill or email ronbrown@united.net. Any contributions about Forrest School or alumni are appreciated. There are some great memories out there! Write them down and send them to me so we can all enjoy them.

2014-2015 Forrest Alumni Association

President – David Ghee, 841 E. Benjamin Drive, Franklin, TN 37067
615-642-2034, ddghee@comcast.net

Vice-President – Jimmy Henson, 505 Logue Street, Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-364-2439 /931-580-4371,
jimmy.henson@yahoo.com

Recording Secretary – Patricia Trout, 411 Spring Creek Road, Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-652-8401, ptroutk@yahoo.com

Treasurer – Jim Rickman, 2703 Waywood Drive, Murfreesboro, TN 37129
931-619-0889,
rickman@davidjentrealty.com

Corresponding Secretary – Mary Etta Pratt, 6726 Flat Creek Rd., College Grove, TN 37046
615-794-8335 / 615-406-8335

Historian – Beth Chunn, 403 S. Horton Pkwy., Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-364-2604, bethchunn@hotmail.com

Scholarship Chair – Jennifer Lynch, 506 Logue St., Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-364-7444 / 931-224-3190,
lynch@united.net

Council Members

Scholarship Treasurer – Jimmie Lou Lee, 103 Crosby Drive, Hendersonville, TN 37075
615-400-4796, jlhlee2@yahoo.com

Webmasters – Casey Dowler, 1986 Young Lane, Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-703-8118, cdowler@k12tn.net

Kaitlyn Moses, 4038 Caney Creek Lane, Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-580-0958, kmoses@k12tn.net

Newsletter & PP – Brenda Brown, 3721 Mahaley Rd., Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-364-7688, ronbrown@united.net

Newsletter Contributor & PP - John Rickman, 394 Cascade Hollow Road, Normandy, TN 37360
931-857-3649 / 931-273-8616,
jandbrickman@aol.com

Social Committee Chair – Dona
Fulton Anderson, 1420 Azalee Lane,
Chapel Hill, TN 37034 931-580-5804,
donaanderson@hotmail.com

Publicity Chair – Becky Delk, 210
Maple Street, Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-364-7074 / 931-703-7074,
delkdb@united.net

Service Chair – Sheila Harber, 1863
Caney Spring Rd., Chapel Hill, TN
37034
931-364-2207 / 931-637-2853,
sharber@k12tn.net

Alumni Trivia Chair – Marion Joyce,
506 Depot St., Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-364-2212, mjoyce@united.net

**Membership Records Coordinator &
PP** - Katie Harris, 2981 Beasley Rd,
Chapel Hill, TN 37034
931-364-7330 / 931-367-1778,
kh14@united.net

Golf Tourney Chair – Stacey Cothran,
3577 Coble Rd., Lewisburg, TN 37091
931-364-7227 / 615-202-3585,
scothran@wm.com

Membership Recruitment - Betsy
Bishop, 1754 McBride Road,
Lewisburg, TN 37091
931-212-3617,
tankchicagojuanita@yahoo.com

Scholarship Committee

Members

Emily Gordon, 780 Yell Road,
Lewisburg, TN 37091
931-270-7153, 931-359-7074,
largoelj@charter.net

Elliott Garrett,
615-428-0239,
elliottgarrett54@gmail.com

Brenda Brown (see above)

CHANGES AT FORREST

When students returned to Forrest in August, they found some changes had occurred during the summer. Danny Morgan, who had served as Forrest principal, accepted the position of assistant at Chapel Hill Elementary School so that he could have more time to spend with his young family. Two assistant principals had served with Mr. Morgan: Davy McClaran and Robbie Reasonover. To fill the position, Jackie Abernathy, Director of Schools, promoted both men. Davy McClaran is now the principal of Forrest High School (9-12) and Robbie Reasonover is principal of Forrest Middle School (6-8).

CONGRATULATIONS TO FORREST ALUMNI

The August election was a proud day for Forrest School. Three Forrest graduates were elected to Marshall County positions:

Sheriff.....Billy Lamb

Commissioner.....Joseph Warner

School Board MemberJohn D. Allen

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Since you have received this newsletter, you are a member of the Forrest Alumni Association. If you are a person who makes New Year's resolutions, please include a resolution to be more active with the association in the coming year. This would be a great time to invite a classmate who is not a member of the association to join! If you have not been to the August banquet in the past few years, send in that registration! Come and play trivia with us in February or tee up for golf in August. You'll be surprised how much fun you can have! Hopefully, you are already involved, but if not, we want to see you soon! Forrest High, All Hail!!