



MONTEAGLE SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

· A CHAUTAUQUA EST. 1882 ·

PO Box 307
Monteagle, TN
931-924-2286

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From Our Board President

Happy New Year!

It's 2025: A new year, refreshed visions, newfound commitments, and hopefully all are staying warm! I have been tickled seeing several children in Dallas so proudly displaying their mighty 5-inch-tall snowmen and "sledding" on the tops of garbage cans —where there is a will there is a way! May we all find that winter joy with family, friends and a mug of hot chocolate close by.



Of course, nothing stands still on the mountain! Our ad hoc pickleball committee chaired by Albert Ambrose (also chair of the property committee) and including the chairs and some members of the pickleball, long range planning, property and trails committees, is hard at work gathering information and considering commentary received from the membership and Friends of the Assembly.

I am extremely impressed with the talent represented in—and the cohesive approach adopted by—the ad hoc pickleball committee.

Asking representatives from several committees—including Anne Byrn Floyd, Lane Price, David Peacock, Clark Tate, Albert Ambrose, Joel McAlister, Mary Anna Malone and David Malone—to serve on this committee and to be stewards of the Monteagle Assembly Master Plan guarantees us a wealth of knowledge, insights and critical thinking along with a love of the game and the fun and fellowship it provides. I hope the membership will rest assured that all interests are represented and will be taken into consideration as this project moves forward. A progress report was shared at the board of trustees meeting held on February 8th. During the meeting, the Pickleball ad hoc committee shared preliminary findings for three potential sites. Investigation into the advantages, disadvantages and costs of those three sites remains on-going. The option of identifying other potential sites also remains available. We have continued the email address at pickleball@mssa1882.org should any member or other interested party have additional feedback to share with the pickleball ad hoc committee, and the board of trustees.

In closing, I wish to express my continued gratitude for each of you. The gift of Monteagle Assembly and each of you has been

a true blessing to me and my children (and to Peyton too, of course!). I hope that I continue to make you all proud and serve you well.

See you on the Mountain!
Hays Haney
President

Dancing in the Street!

Check out the new fundraiser on page 2.

Contact a Board Member if you have ideas and/or suggestions.

A list of Board Members may be found in the Member Resources section of the website.



www.mssa1882.org

2025 Annual Fundraiser

Seeking silent and live
auction items for the
2025 Annual Fundraiser
benefitting
Outreach on the Mountain

The outreach committee is busy making plans for the 2025 fundraiser on July 5, and we hope you are making plans to attend. To kick off this effort with some momentum, we have started gathering items for both the silent and live auctions. Give it some thought...we bet you have items you can donate—think tickets, experiences, packages (art, wine, bourbon, pickleball, etc.) Get creative and put together a bid-worthy bundle or just make a donation and let us handle the rest.

Benefitting *Outreach on the Mountain*, the event will have a new and different look this year. Picture a street dance in front of the dining hall, delicious food

and drinks and an auction in the Dining Hall! Music will be provided by the highly acclaimed Nashville Band, 3rd Generation.

Please reach out to maryallyn@gmail.com or call/text at 662-931-4333 if you want to talk auction items.

Thank you for your support!
Mary Allyn Hedges
Chair, 2025 Fundraiser



QUICK BITES

The possession or use of alcohol or controlled substances on public grounds, in public places, or at public functions on the Assembly grounds is prohibited and subjects the offender to disciplinary action by the Board of Trustees.

ALL golf carts must be registered or re-registered every year. Only licensed drivers are legally allowed to drive carts.

Lawn trimmings are collected on Wednesdays.

Dogs must be registered, including proof of rabies vaccination. Pick up after your pets.

LEASEHOLD AVAILABLE

#23 Edgeworth Inn \$1,923,000

To arrange a tour or for more information contact:
Steve Williams, Executive Director
Steve.williams@mssa1882.org, (931) 924-2286



ARC PROJECT SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Planning a renovation project? The Architectural Review Committee will accept projects for review and recommendation to the Board of Trustees for approval four times per year. Questions about possible projects, the process, and necessary requirements should be referred to the Executive Director. Projects submitted by the following dates will be reviewed and presented at the board meeting following the submission.

February 28 June 10 July 31 September 30 January 15

The ARC is available throughout the year to advise members on their project planning prior to submission of a request. Not sure if you need ARC approval? Check with the Executive Director first.

Housing Questions? Ask Rhonda!

Interested in possibly being in the rental program? Has your cottage rented to your satisfaction? Do you want to offer your cottage for 3-night rentals or discuss rates?

Contact Rhonda to discuss options or concerns, 931-924-9000

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julia.robinson@mssa1882.org
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rick.duncan@mssa1882.org

Have you Ordered Something to be Delivered to the Assembly on the Weekend?

We realize that many deliveries need to be made on the weekends when owners can be present. MSSA does not staff for weekend gate openings.

If you must have a delivery over the weekend, please contact the office by 3 p.m. Friday so we can make arrangements to have a gate open.

SAFETY FIRST

The MSSA security team is at your service. If you have any emergency—medical or otherwise—call 911, but our seasoned team is here to help for non-emergency situations.

If you have a safety issue or see suspicious activity anywhere on the grounds or out Sunset Rock Road, please call the security phone, (931) 607-8615, between 5:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. or call the office during business hours between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

There are no silly concerns—it's better to call and quell your fears than to let something go because you are afraid of a false alarm.

Consider putting the security number by your home phone and/or plugging it into your cell phones.

Kids got cell phones? Plug the security number in those too.

SUMMER NEEDS

Looking for a choir director & one more lifeguard.
If you know someone that might be interested in either of these positions please contact the office.

The Monteagle Sunday School Assembly was organized by Charter issued by the State of Tennessee on October 4, 1882 for the purpose of: "... the advancement of science, literary attainment, Sunday School interests, and the promotion of the broadest popular culture in the interest of Christianity without regard to sect or denomination."

The Mission of the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly is to be a welcoming community of Christian faith where people gather to engage in spiritual growth and renewal, lifelong inquiry and learning, recreational and cultural enrichment, while being good stewards of our natural resources and our Assembly heritage.

In Our Prayers

Frances “Laddie” Harton Neil (Mrs. A. B. Neil, Jr), passed away January 11, 2025. Laddie was born August 15, 1928, in Tullahoma, Tennessee to John W. and Frances Lewis Harton. Laddie began her Christian journey at First Baptist Church where she became a member at the age of 11.

She attended South Jackson Street School and graduated from Tullahoma High School in 1946. She was Homecoming Queen at Castle Heights Military Academy in 1945. After high school, she attended Ward Belmont Junior College in Nashville, and afterwards graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1950. At Ole Miss, Laddie was a member of Delta Delta Delta and served as president.

Upon returning to Tennessee she married a young lawyer, A. B. Neil Jr., on November 1, 1952, at First Baptist Church in Tullahoma. God, church, family, and friends meant everything to Laddie. She was a faithful member of Immanuel Baptist Church for 72 years. She was a 50 year member of the Campbell Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, where she served as State Regent, Organizing Secretary, Historian, Chaplain, and National VC Membership Chair.

Laddie was an active community volunteer as a member of Singing Hills Garden Club, Centennial Club, Current Events, Cheekwood, Ladies Hermitage Association, Opera Guild, Girl Scouts and Fannie Battle Day Home. She served on the Harding Academy Board of Trustees, Ward Belmont Alumnae Advisory Committee and was Auxiliary President of Belmont

University. She was a dedicated member of Monteagle Sunday School Assembly where she served on the board.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, A. B. Neil Jr.; brother, John Harton Jr.; and sisters Alice Harton Ratcliffe, and Nancy Harton Washburn. She is survived by sons A. B. Neil “Bram” III (Beth) of Maryville, TN and John Harton Neil (Ruth) of Greenville, SC, and daughter Nancy Neil Adcock (Dennis) of Lebanon, TN; grandsons Albert Bramlett Neil IV and James Benton “J.B.” Neil; granddaughters Laddie Neil Smith (Benji), Lyndon Neil Merritt (Clark), Nancy Ballentine Neil and step-granddaughters Amber Adcock Haskin (Ben) and Allison Adcock Ortiz (Jazz); four great-grandchildren, James Mercer Merritt, Sara Boone Merritt, Nona Pierce Merritt, and Murray Ruth Smith. She is also survived by her beloved nieces and their families. Special love to Laddie’s dear friend Alice Ann Barge, her church family, loving neighbors and the many friends she cherished during her 96 years. The family is also grateful to Jo Ann Bunch, Caregivers’ Bridgett, Rachel, Lendora, Monique, Ebony and Greta for their care.

Memorial donations may be made to Immanuel Baptist Church, 222 Belle Meade Boulevard, Nashville, TN, 37205 or Orange Grove Center, 615 Derby Street, Chattanooga, TN, 37404.

Mary Mellen Payne Jarrett, affectionately known as “Honey,” passed away peacefully on January 11, 2025, at the age of 97. Born on February 22, 1927, in Knoxville, Tennessee, she was the daughter of

Cornelia Daniel Mellen Payne and Reuben Saunders Payne.

Mary Mellen was a proud graduate of the University of Tennessee, where she cultivated a lifelong passion for learning and teaching. She cherished her time at old Knoxville High School and remained an ardent supporter of UT football throughout her life. Her career as a dedicated teacher was marked by her genuine love for her students, leaving a lasting impact on all who had the privilege of being in her classroom.

A devoted Christian, Mary Mellen’s faith guided her life and influenced her relationships. She was deeply involved in community organizations, including the Chi Omega sorority, the Junior League, and the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly (MSSA), where she shared her warmth and acceptance with all.

Mary Mellen found joy in her hobbies, particularly playing tennis and enjoying conversations with friends on the porch of her beloved mountain home in Monteagle, Tennessee. It was there that she created treasured memories with her family, especially her daughters, Mary Mellen Clark and Catherine Clark Ariail, and her beloved grandchildren, Max Butenas and Zoë Stringer Higgins.

She is survived by her daughters and grandchildren, along with her brother, Reuben Saunders Payne, Jr. Mary Mellen will be remembered for her loving spirit, unwavering kindness, and her ability to make everyone feel accepted and valued. Her legacy lives on in

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the hearts of those she touched, and she will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

William Ridley Wills II, noted local historian, civic leader, and philanthropist, died at home on January 16 after a long and fruitful life. A 7th generation Nashvillian, he was born on June 19th, 1934, to Ellen Buckner and Jesse E. Wills. Ridley graduated from Parmer School in 1948 and Montgomery Bell Academy (MBA) in 1952. At Vanderbilt University, he was captain of the swim team. After seeing the world as an officer in the U.S. Navy for two years of peacetime service, Ridley joined the National Life and Accident Insurance Company that his grandfather, Ridley Wills, Sr., co-founded in 1901. After working as a field agent and staff manager for two years, Ridley returned to the home office in 1962 as a supervisor, where he met and married Irene Weaver Jackson. In 1976, he was elected to the board of National Life and was promoted to Senior Vice-President in 1981. In 1983 National Life was acquired by American General Life Insurance Company in a hostile takeover, and he eventually resigned, reinventing himself in the process.

Building on a lifelong interest in historic Tennessee postcards, Ridley started teaching night school classes on local history at Belmont and MBA, eventually putting his research skills and encyclopedic memory to work in the form of a first book, *Belle Meade: Mansion, Plantation, and Stud*. He wrote on average nearly a book or booklet a year for the next 40 years. His articles

have appeared in state and local historical quarterlies and as a regular feature in "The Contributor" street newspaper. Eventually, he told his own story in *My Life with Irene: An Autobiography*. In 2016, he received an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of the South.

As a community leader, he served as: President of Samaritans' Inc.; National Chairman of the Vanderbilt University Living Endowment Campaign; Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Vanderbilt Divinity School's endowment campaign; President of the Cumberland Museum and Science Center; General Chairman of the Nashville Area United Way Campaign; President of the YMCA of Metropolitan Nashville; President of the Tennessee Historical Society; Chairman of the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly Endowment Corporation and the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly Board; Chairman of the Montgomery Bell Academy Board of Trust; and served on the boards of Vanderbilt University and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Ridley was an effective and persistent fundraiser for causes he loved. He led significant development drives for Belle Meade Plantation, Montgomery Bell Academy and Glen Leven Mansion. He was acknowledged for his charitable work by the YMCA Service to Youth Award, the YMCA Red Triangle Award, the YMCA's President's Award, the Alex De Tocqueville Award from the United Way, and the Distinguished Alumnus award from MBA. He was honored by the Land Trust with the Forever Tennessee Conservation Legacy

Award and by the YMCA as a member of the Southeast Region Hall of Fame.

Ridley was perhaps most proud of his longtime service as both a deacon, elder and energetic ambassador for The Downtown Presbyterian Church. His final gift to the city this past Christmas season was to illuminate the church's unique, Egyptian-themed stained-glass windows so that they are visible at night.

Ridley was preceded in death by his wife, Irene, and their son, Jesse Ely Wills III. He is survived by his brother and sister-in law, Matt & Judy Wills of Colorado Springs; by his sister Ellen Wills Martin of Washington, D.C.; by his three sons and two daughters-in-law – Betsy and Ridley Wills III, Heather and Morgan Wills, Sr., and Tom Wills, all of Nashville; and by six grandchildren & their spouses.

Memorial gifts may be made to Montgomery Bell Academy, 4001 Harding Road, Nashville, TN 37205

<https://www.givecampus.com/campaigns/30511/donations/new?a=5802060>;

The Land Trust for Tennessee P.O. Box #41027, Nashville, TN 37204

<https://www.landtrusttn.org/get-involved/donate/>

The Downtown Presbyterian Church, 154 Fifth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37219

<https://onrealm.org/DowntownPresbyt/-/form/give/default>

