

Escaping the cheap seats

BY JEFF MARTINDALE

Special to The Collierville Herald

A colleague recently offered me four tickets and a parking pass to a Memphis Grizzlies basketball game. Being a card-carrying fiscal conservative (some might say "tightwad," but what's in a name?), I naturally responded by asking how much she wanted for the tickets.

When told I could have them for free, I graciously accepted them, somehow suppressing the urge to snatch the tickets from her hand in my excitement.

Speaking of excitement, sons Will and Jack could barely contain theirs when told of our plans. Unfortunately, their excitement carried over into the 40-minute ride downtown, for nearly the entire trip the boys annoyed us with boisterous song and giddy silliness.

"I wish we had a soundproof partition," grumbled my wife, Lana.

Sometime after Will's rendition of "Anchors Aweigh" and Jack's singing of "God Bless My Underwear" (a Cub Scout campfire classic sung to the tune of "God Bless America"), we finally arrived at the FedEx Forum.

Our tickets afforded us arena access via a private entrance inside the adjacent parking garage, and we soon found ourselves inside the exclusive First Tennessee Club, its carpeted halls and swanky atmosphere a far stretch from the arena's upper reaches where I'm used to sitting. Our \$90 seats were pleasantly roomy and suitably padded, not the usual rigid, hip-pinching chairs found in the \$10 cheap seats.

"This is nice!" Lana declared. To her credit, she diplomatically omitted, "It's much nicer than where we usually sit."

Game time soon arrived and I noticed that perhaps 75 percent of the arena's seats remained vacant. Will, who inherited an attention-to-detail from me, noticed it, too.

"Where is everybody?" he yelled with furrowed brow. Struggling to hear him over the throaty P.A. announcer bellowing the starting lineups to a bass-heavy, heart-thumping beat, I could only offer him shrugged shoulders in response.

"It was full during the Monster Truck rally," he added, referring to an event we attended months earlier. It struck me later how his comment astutely described the support Memphians lend to monster truck rallies over major professional sports. (The following day's newspaper reported that 13,271 people attended the game. If the FedEx Forum was 70 percent full, then I'm the next American Idol.)

I conveyed Will's observation to Lana, adding that players must find it dejecting to play before such small crowds. She responded that their multi-million-dollar salaries probably softened the blow.

The game began, and I took it upon myself to educate the boys about basketball basics. They seemed attentive early as the Grizzlies dug themselves a double-digit deficit, not that communication was aided by the hip-hop soundtrack continually playing over the action. At least I know Jack was listening, perhaps too closely, for his barrage of questions never ceased, particularly when the whistle blew.

"What was that for, Daddy?" he'd ask. "The player was traveling, Jack," I replied.

Two minutes later... "Who was that foul on, Daddy?" "Rudy Gay, Jack." You get the picture.

Anyway, as the game progressed and the Grizzlies clawed back into the lead, the boys tuned out my instruction the way a student tunes out a teacher on the last day of school. More important things begged their attention, namely the frantic action on the court.

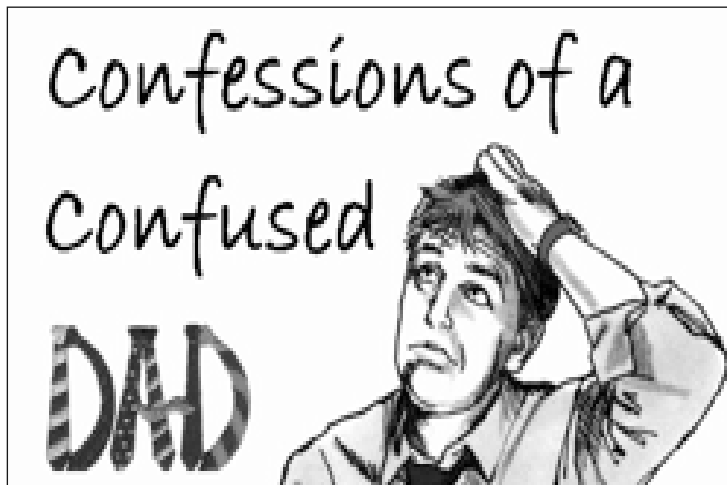
The tension was palpable as the lead changed hands repeatedly down the stretch. When Rudy Gay sank a long distance, game-tying, fourth-quarter three-pointer with one second on the clock, Jack thrust his hands in the air while Will had nearly lost his voice from yelling. Even I – not the biggest basketball fan in the world – jumped from my seat and cheered at the top of my voice, concerns from having earlier forked over half my paycheck at the concession stand a distant memory.

The Grizzlies eventually lost in overtime, not that it detracted much from the evening's fun. What detracted most was that Jack couldn't let go of my inability to catch a T-shirt – launched from mid-court by the Grizzlies' mascot – that bounced off the railing in front of us.

"You could've had that!" Jack huffed, his face contorted in frustration. "I'm sorry, Jack," I replied, putting my arm around his diminutive shoulders as we exited the arena. "I'll get it next time."

I then cast a wary glance upward, silently hoping that the T-shirt cannon can reach the cheap seats.

Jeff Martindale is a Collierville resident, FedEx employee and proud father of two boys. His 'Confessions of a Confused Dad' blog can be found at confessionsofconfuseddad.wordpress.com.



Possession of a Controlled Substance (2.17-21; two): Poplar Avenue – MARCUS DESHAUN INGRAM, 23, of 5087 Bowie Road in Memphis, was stopped after an officer observed the vehicle's registration had expired in January. After receiving consent, the officer searched the vehicle and found a small plastic baggy containing a green, leafy substance under the driver's seat. Ingram was issued a misdemeanor citation and given processing and court dates. **Poplar Avenue – ALEXANDER MITCHUM JR.**, 27, of 2023 Pine Hill in Macon, Ga., was stopped for following an officer too closely, and the officer observed the vehicle's occupants acting suspiciously. Mitchum gave the officer another name and a social security number with too many numbers before giving a proper number on the third attempt. A search of the vehicle uncovered a plastic bag containing marijuana. The driver also had a suspended license. He was taken to CPD jail. Charges also included Criminal Impersonation, Driving While License Canceled/Suspended/Revoked and Following Too Close.

Aggravated Burglary (2.14-17; two): Frank Road – Victim reported returning home from a movie to find his interior garage and back doors open. Officers cleared the home and saw footprints through the backyard of the residence. Additionally, a chain link fence belonging to Ridgeway Country Club, at the back of the home, had been cut. Suspects gained entrance to the home after prying a rear window. Two TVs, two laptop computers, \$400 in cash, a pair of diamond earrings, a digital camera, a video camera and a Sony PlayStation were stolen. The estimated loss was \$12,201. **Legacy Farm Place** – Victim reported returning home to find her apartment door had been forced open. A laptop computer with an estimated value of \$1,560 was stolen. Damage to the door was estimated at \$150.

Burglary (2.17; one): Don Shaw Inc. – Complainant reported an unknown suspect broke a window and entered the building, taking business and personal checks and tools. The estimated loss was \$110 and damage was estimated at \$125.

Burglary of an Auto (2.13-18; four): Pepsi – Victim reported someone broke into his vehicle through a passenger rear window. Two amplifiers, a radio and a rear-view camera were stolen. The estimated loss was \$2,850. **Frank Road** – Victim reported the passenger-side front window was broken out and an iPod was taken from the vehicle. The estimated loss was \$200. Damage was estimated at \$300. **Legacy Lake Lane** – Victim reported someone attempted to enter his locked vehicle. Damage was estimated at \$200. **Buckland Bluff Cove** – Victim reported returning to his vehicle to find the interior lights on and glove box open. He later noticed his BlackBerry phone was missing. The estimated loss was \$300.

Driving Under the Influence (2.15-2.22; eight): Byhalia/Winchester – MEGAN CHRISTINE DOWD, 21, of 8234 Sturbridge Way in Cordova, was stopped after an officer observed her disregard a red light at Winchester and Byhalia, nearly hit the barrier at a railroad crossing and run onto the sidewalk. Dowd performed poorly on field sobriety tests and agreed to a breathalyzer test. Charges also included Disregarding a Red Light and Improper Lane Use/Change. **Highway 72/Commerce – RICHARD KIRKLIN III**, 28, of 5321 West Sixth in Pine Bluff, Ark., was stopped after an officer observed the vehicle's registration had expired in December. Kirklin performed poorly on field sobriety tests and his driving history showed two prior DUI convictions in the past 10 years. Two minors in the vehicle were released to the custody of their grandmother. Charges also included Reckless Driving-State, Refusal to Submit and Violation of Regis-

tration Law. **Braddeck/Autumn Winds** – Officer responded to a possible DUI call and observed a vehicle parked on the side of the road with the driver, identified as **PETER WILLIAM PETENES**, 46, of 668 Autumn Winds in Collierville, asleep at the wheel. Petenes agreed to field sobriety tests, but officers determined the tests would be a risk to his safety. Petenes consented to a blood test, and a search of his jacket uncovered a half-empty bottle of vodka. **Main/Poplar – ADRIAN HULL JR.**, 54, of 146 Duncan Trail in Longwood, Fla., was stopped after an officer saw him driving erratically, nearly striking another vehicle. Hull performed poorly on field sobriety tests and consented to a blood test. Charges also included Reckless Driving-State. **Byhalia** – Officers were dispatched to a 911 hang-up. The officers were told of a verbal disturbance that occurred at the residence and that an intoxicated male had left the residence in a vehicle. The officers spotted the vehicle at the Shell gas station at 398 Byhalia and approached the driver, identified as **HAROLD EUGENE RHOADES**, 59, of 542 Jeffrey Lane in Collierville, who was pumping gas. Rhoades performed poorly on field sobriety tests and consented to a blood sample. **Houston Levee/Poplar – SUZANNE LEAH HIGGINS**, 22, of 963 Autumn Oaks Circle in Collierville, was stopped after an officer saw her vehicle cross the center line three times. Higgins performed poorly on field sobriety tests and agreed to a breath test. Charges also included Reckless Driving-State. **Highway 385/Byhalia – KIMBERLY DIANE WILKINSON**, 25, of 445 Ashton Woods Court in Collierville, was stopped after an officer saw her vehicle traveling 77 mph in a 66 mph zone. Wilkinson performed poorly on field sobriety tests and, after being read implied consent, refused. Charges also included Violation of Registration – Improper Display, Refusal to Submit, Reckless Driving-State, Speeding, Public Intoxication and TV Visible to Driver. **Poplar/Shea – JEFF STOKES**, 59, of 810 White Clover Lane in Memphis, was stopped after an officer saw his vehicle traveling 60 mph in a 40 mph zone. Stokes performed poorly on field sobriety tests and agreed to a breath test.

Simple Possession/Casual Exchange Marijuana (2.21; two): Poplar/Maynard – BONNER MCCALL SECREST, 19, of 999 Valleyview Lane in Collierville, was stopped after an officer determined his vehicle appeared to have a window-tint violation. After giving McCall a citation for the tint, the officer recovered a plastic bottle containing marijuana from the vehicle. A passenger, **ERIK BRENNAN HENKELMAN**, 22, of 5307 Glen More Drive in Lakeland, Fla., also produced a plastic bottle containing marijuana. McCall and Henkelman were placed into custody.

Theft of Property Under \$500 (2.20-23; two): Wal-Mart – Complainant reported seeing a suspect, identified as **LAKESHA LASHUN LUELLEN**, 20, of 13 Ruth Cove in Byhalia, Miss., order a bag of chicken strips and sauce from the deli. Luellen proceeded through the store, consuming the chicken strips and then hid the package in the crafts department before being stopped as she headed toward the exit. The total value for the stolen property was \$2.10. Charges also included Disorderly Conduct. **Wal-Mart** – Loss prevention manager reported observing the suspect, identified as **JANE WAGNER GURKIN**, 46, of 394 Hound Hill Place in Collierville, bagging unpaid merchandise into Wal-Mart bags. She passed all points of sale without paying. When the loss prevention manager asked her to stop, Gurkin said she had an emergency and did not stop. The amount of recovered merchandise totaled \$293.81.

Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (2.17; one): Center/Keough – OSCAR LEE SHORTER, 47, of 580 North Rowlett in Collierville, was stopped by police on an investigative stop after officers were dispatched to the area on a burglary call. A search of Shorter uncovered a 4-inch glass pipe used for smoking crack and marijuana in his coat pocket.

Vandalism Over \$500 (2.15; one): North Duncan Woods Lane – Complainant reported unknown person(s) broke out the rear window of a bulldozer parked on the lot of a construction site. Damage was estimated at \$800.

Vandalism Under \$500 (2.21; two) Travelers/Gable/Harpers Ferry – Complainant reported unknown individual(s) removed a Travelers Cove/Harpers Ferry sign, broke the Gable Lane exit sign to the greenbelt trail and damaged another sign. Damage was estimated at \$300. **Pecan Valley** – The victim reported someone broke a rear taillight on his truck. Damage was estimated at \$40.

In Brief



L. Krueger

Celebrating Collierville's designation as a Tree City USA community on Town Square Friday are Alderman Maureen Fraser (front, from left), Mayor Stan Joyner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture Regional Urban Forester Shawn Posey, Sheila Bentley, Caroline Young and Carol Tsagarakis.

Collierville again receives Tree City USA designation

Collierville has been named a Tree City USA community by the Arbor Day Foundation. This year is the fourth year the town has received this national recognition.

The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the nonprofit Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service.

To become a Tree City USA community, according to arbor-day.org/TreeCityUSA, four standards must be met. The community must have a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, a comprehensive community forestry program and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

On Friday, town officials planted a ginkgo tree in the square's Confederate Park in observance of Arbor Day, which is recognized nationally on April 24 this year.

The Arbor Day Foundation's website, arbor-day.org, lists many benefits trees provide, including: filtering the air by removing dust and other particles; moderating climate; conserving water; providing wildlife habitat; reducing the heat-island effect produced by pavement and buildings; and increasing property values. The organization points to buildings in wooded areas renting more quickly with tenants staying longer.

More information about trees, including care and planting, and the Arbor Day Foundation and its programs can be found at arbor-day.org.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Collierville Herald welcomes letters to the editor on topics of interest to residents of Collierville. This newspaper reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity. Letters of no more than 300 words are suggested. Only one letter per writer per month will be considered for publication.

All letters must include the writer's name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Only the name and city of residence will be published. Anonymous letters will not be published.

Letters may be emailed to editor@colliervilleherald.net; faxed to 853.8507; mailed to The Collierville Herald, 148 N. Main Street, Collierville, TN 38017; or dropped by the office.