

Nelson Bennett  
1954

Napoleon Bonaparte once stated that “*Great ambition is the passion of a great character.*” To know Nelson Bennett is to know a great man, an ambitious man with many great passions.

Nelson grew up on Soddy Lake near O’Sage Drive. He loved playing sports, and he never missed a ball practice. His favorite Coach was Frank Cofer, long-time coach at Soddy-Daisy. He says that Coach Cofer mentored his American Legion baseball team, but also nurtured Nelson in his Christian faith and it has been the foundation for his life. Teachers have always had great influence on students.

Nelson also loves the outdoors. If you happen to be in the woods or hay fields with Nelson, he doesn’t hear a songbird he can’t name or see a tree he can’t identify. His 50-year career in teaching others to love the outdoors has earned him a spot on this platform today.

In high school, he had a passion for farming, and at Soddy-Daisy he was president of the Future Farmers of America where his senior year he was awarded the F.F.A. State Farmer of the Year by Governor Frank Clements. While at Soddy-Daisy High, Nelson lettered in basketball for three years, in baseball for four years, and was All City in baseball in 1954.

In March of his senior year he joined the United States Naval Reserves and served his country for eight years. After high school he worked in six or seven different jobs from pipe-fitting to hardware sales to the hosiery mill. But Nelson had a passion for learning. It became obvious to him that college should be his next stop. So he attended Tennessee Tech University where he earned a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Teacher Education in just two years and eight months! While there he lettered in baseball three years and was captain in 1963. Later, he became a basketball referee and, to this date, has officiated 2,024 basketball games.

His passion for learning soon translated into a passion to teach others. In 1963 he began a teaching career with the Hamilton County Schools where he shared his

gifts, passions, and knowledge for 33 years. Nelson was an outstanding classroom teacher and coach. But he is known by many for his passionate teaching outside the classroom. In the summertime, he worked for the YMCA at Camp Ocoee. There he designed rope courses and taught students teamwork and confidence for 14 summers. He would later return to volunteer his skills at Camp Ocoee and was awarded the Volunteer of the Year in 1992.

He also taught as an adjunct faculty at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga. In 1987 Nelson was recognized by the UTC Student Government Association as Professor of the Year. Nelson is an accomplished artist and has sketched each of his five grandchildren. Out of his love for the arts, the Savannah College of Art and Design awarded him an honorary Doctor's Degree in Humanities for Art and Design in 1988. As a director with the Hamilton County Department of Education, he was able to promote the love of art and recruit students for art scholarships.

Physical Education is another great love of Nelson's. He established the Developmental Phys Ed program for Hamilton County Elementary students in 1984. He also co-authored and developed the Masters Degree in Outdoor Leadership at Southern Adventist University where he was adjunct faculty for 18 years. He has served on the following boards of director: Chattanooga YMCA Camp Ocoee, Chattanooga Nature Center, and Sister Cities of Chattanooga. He is also a member of the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Team and is trained in chainsaw, recovery, childcare, feeding and laundry services.

Nelson's current passion is building wheelchair ramps for the needy with a local ministry called Neighborhood Helpers. This group has constructed 151 ramps free of charge. One of our own students, **Michael Evans**, has volunteered his time to help work with Nelson in building these needed wheelchair ramps (**Michael, would you please stand?**).

Nelson has also worked with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention where he and his wife traveled to Rezero, Italy for nine days to teach 95 missionary children while their parents attended a conference.

Perhaps Nelson's most passionate endeavor has been guiding students on canoe trips through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in upper Minnesota. 2014 marked his 50<sup>th</sup> year of showing the wilderness to young learners. He was awarded a homemade canoe paddle to commemorate this milestone. In his spare time he began the hobby of refinishing the wooden canoes from Boundary Waters, a unique art in its self. These canoes, when refinished, are valued at around \$6,000 each.

When asked his greatest accomplishment in life, Nelson named three: the first one is being married to his high school sweetheart, Geraldine Rogers, for 56 years. He calls her the love of his life. And the second is raising their three daughters, Lisa, Melissa and Susie. The third one is having the privilege to teach over 4,000 students during the past 50 years. **(Would Nelson's family and friends please stand)**

Nelson, you have packed more activities into your 78 years than is humanly possible! We admire you for your selfless service to others. You're a hero in education, in faith and in serving mankind. For your passion, you are forever acknowledged as a member of the Soddy-Daisy High School Hall of Fame.

DON LASLEY  
1955

For 18 years he was considered the “Pastor of a Town” by many Soddy-Daisy folks. Don Lasley grew up on Ducktown Road in “Big Soddy” with five brothers and sisters. His dad worked in the coal mines and bought the Lasley home for \$280 from the Durham Coal Co. He says there was no crime back then and people left their doors unlocked all the time. The family didn’t own a car and Don’s wife taught him to drive after they were married. As a boy, Don remembers getting one toy each Christmas...but how special that toy was. And boys loved to play marbles in the day, and you could keep the marbles you won...if your momma didn’t find it out.

In Daisy and in Soddy, teenagers swam at the blue hole much like today. Don loved sports and played football at Soddy-Daisy for Coach Harland Burnett. Don would one day preach at Coach Burnett’s funeral. As a player Don was a tough guy, trash-talking was kept clean but was none-the-less a weapon of the game. Soddy-Daisy/Hixson games were always violent. Years later a Hixson player saw Don and reminded him that Don broke his nose in the rivalry.

Don was president of his senior class in 1955. He was also football captain and was honored as Mr. Soddy-Daisy. He remembers that while practicing for senior day, all the court candidates tried on the crown and it fit each one until it came his turn to wear it. When it was a little too small for his head, Ms Rose Smith said, “We’ll have to adjust the crown for Don,” letting the secret out of the bag as to who would be crowned Mr. Soddy-Daisy the next day.

Don felt the call to preach the gospel of Christ at the age of 16. He says the urgency to share about eternity and God’s hope was always on his heart. He attended Bob Jones University and then Southwestern Seminary in Dallas, Texas where he earned the Master of Divinity Degree. Times were hard for a young preacher in Seminary with a growing family. Some weeks the food budget ran out before the urge to eat did. At one low point the only heat for the family dwelling came from the electric cook stove. Living on faith sometimes means not knowing how or when things will be provided. One day in particular, Don prayed for a way to feed his family. As he stopped by to see a friend, the friend asked if he could use some groceries. They just happened to be cleaning out the freezer and sent Don home with t-bone steaks. Don looks back on those times with great appreciation.

He has pastored churches in Tennessee, Hurst, Texas and Damascus, Virginia. He has also preached revivals all across America: California, Maine, New Hampshire, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Indiana, and North and South Carolina. During one stint he traveled with his good friends: singer John McKay and evangelist James Robertson. At the time Robertson was billed as the next Billy Graham.

This July Don will complete his 62<sup>nd</sup> year in the ministry. His longest stint as pastor was in the Oak Street Baptist Church in Soddy. He served the community in many ways. Pastors get many calls in the night to counsel others, save marriages, pray for the sick, and comfort the hurting. It's a relentless job at times. Don has served his congregations faithfully. His calling has always been out of a heartfelt concern for where people will spend eternity.

While in the Soddy-Daisy area, Don coached little league teams, helping start the Soddy-Daisy KIDS Club. He has served on the board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and even taught History for a while at Soddy-Daisy High School. Don and his first wife, Ilene Harrison, raised three sons, Marty, Paul and Barry. You may recognize their names, Colonel Paul Lasley is a U.S. Army Ranger and a 2013 SDHS Hall of Fame inductee, and Marty Lasley is currently serving as city judge for the city of Soddy-Daisy. **(Will the Lasley family please stand)**

Today Don is actively teaching and preaching. He is featured on a daily radio program in Sunbright, Tennessee. Once while speaking in the local prison there, some prisoners said, "We recognize you, we hear you on the radio every day!"

Don considers his family to be his greatest accomplishment in life. The family suffered the loss of their mom, his first wife, Ilene, to cancer. In 1985, the Lasley's were recognized as the Greater Chattanooga Family of the Year. It marked the only time this award was given to a single parent family. He says his first responsibility has always been his family and that duties never conflict when you put God first.

Don estimates to have married over 400 couples, some of whom are present today. There were countless funerals to perform as well. A pastor's job is never finished. Don keeps a sense of humor always close by. Once, a feisty church member told him, "If I was your wife I would poison your food!" Don quickly retorted, "If you were my wife, I would eat it!" But Don is loved by so many people across this land. He often runs into those who say, "I remember when you helped me...", or "you married us in 1900 and something,", or "Thanks for caring for my family."

Don has been married to his bride, Irene, for 26 years. The shelves of their home are lined with hundreds of books. Don studies the scriptures daily. On a typical morning if you pass through Panera Bread in Hixson around 6:30a.m., you will see Don there with his Bible and a couple of his favorite commentaries taking time to digest God's word. He says Ms Ruth Swingle was the best teacher he ever had; she made learning enjoyable and no doubt taught him how to study.

It is for investing your life in the lives of so many others, and for cherishing the destiny of people, that we induct the "Pastor of a Town", Don Lasley, into the Soddy-Daisy High School Hall of Fame.

Dr. Sam Gill  
1959

Brain and brawn...our next inductee had plenty of both. He attended the University of the South at Sewanee where he earned a full academic and football scholarship. He was the class valedictorian at Soddy-Daisy in 1959. He was a member of BETA Club and performed in the school plays. Sammy Gill was a member of the 1958 Trojan football team that finished the season 10-1 with wins over Red Bank, South Pittsburg and Rhea Co. While the team is considered by many to be the best Trojan team ever, it was not allowed to advance in the playoffs because of a fight that broke out in the Rockwood game. Nevertheless, Sammy earned All-City and Honorable Mention All-State honors as running back. He was hard to tackle and known for his toughness in the game. He was also a great baseball player and was MVP of the American Legion.

In school some of Sammy's friends were Sid Parrott, Don Loftis, Huck Smith, Bobby Wilson, and a special friend to this day Eddie Brannon. And Sammy says he loved "all the girls." He says "My freshman years I fell in love five times every day!" He loved going to school with all his friends and, while there was no texting or Instagram, hanging out with friends was the favorite pastime. There are too many memories for him to name a favorite.

Naming his favorite teacher is just as difficult. The ones who come to his mind most often are Ms. Jenkins, Ms. Swingle, Gene Elliott, Coach Big Boy Eldridge, and his football coaches, Harland Burnette and Frank Cofer. Dr. Jess Lasley, Mrs Myra Millsaps and Ms Rose Smith were also special and taught him all he needed to do really well in school. He says he was very well prepared because they cared that he learned.

At the University of the South, Sammy Gill excelled on the field and in the classroom. He lettered in football four years and was co-captain on his senior team. He graduated Cum Laude and was a Rhode Scholarship Candidate but had to turn down that opportunity to follow his dream, attending Dental School at the University of Tennessee. He holds the Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Sewanee and the Doctor of Dental Surgery from UT Memphis where he graduated first in his class. He was elected into Omicron Kappa Upsilon (OKU) National Dental

Honor Society. In 1969 Sammy received his Masters of Science degree from UT Memphis in Pediatric Dentistry.

His first dental job was with the North Carolina Public Health Department. In 1969 he opened his Pediatric Dental Practice in Chattanooga which is still open today. Thousands of Chattanooga area children have received treatment from Dr. Sam Gill. His ice cream machine and video games in the office have calmed many children's fears and helped them get the dental care that they needed. All the kids look forward to return trips to see Dr. Gill.

Today he stays active in pediatric dental education through seminars and alumni meetings. He holds membership in the American Dental Association, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Chattanooga Area Dental Society.

Some of his hobbies are playing tennis, riding motorcycles, boating and he is an avid reader. He loves spending time with his seven grandchildren. **(Would the Gill family please stand)**

In our community he helped initiate the SD little league football in the early '70's which led to the start of the SD KIDS Club. He served on the committee that obtained property from TVA to place ball fields at Soddy Lake.

He considers his greatest accomplishment in life to be "setting a goal early in life, doing what he had to do to achieve his goal and doing it all the way. He says "I've had a very good life, doing just about everything I ever dreamed of doing."

When asked what he loves about Soddy-Daisy, he replied "I asked my dad one summer if we could go to Florida. He said, "Son, we live in paradise, with mountains, lakes and plenty of pretty girls. Why go elsewhere?" He has always loved Soddy-Daisy. He says he feels very lucky that his cousin Freddie Teague set him straight on things like smoking, no drinking and good training rules for athletes. He says "Coach Buck Johnson showed me how to dress and bragged on me when I needed it."



His good old dad was very special in giving Sammy every advantage, and was tough when he needed it. His seventh grade teacher, Ted Smith, actually gave him three licks with a paddle for not making a 100 on a spelling test. He knew Sammy was slacking because his friends were teasing him for making good grades. He thanks Ted Smith because from that day forward Sammy had a 100 average in his class.

Hard work pays off. Sammy now has three college degrees which only cost his parents six hundred dollars. To that Sammy says "Thanks Lord!"

For excellence in his life and for enhancing the smiles of thousands of young patients, we salute Dr. Sam Gill with his welcome into the Soddy-Daisy High School Hall of Fame.

GABBY WILLIAMSON  
1964

James G. Williamson, Jr. has always been called Gabby. He grew up in Soddy and attended Soddy Elementary School through eighth grade. His father, Jimmy Williamson, founded and opened Williamson & Son's Funeral Home in the Soddy area of Soddy-Daisy in 1950. The family residence was in the upstairs of the building, while the downstairs was the funeral home. So Gabby literally “grew up” in the funeral service business, and he says he was blessed to have a wonderful childhood and youth. In 1958, Mr. Williamson relocated Williamson & Son's Funeral Home to Dayton Pike, its current location.

At Soddy Elementary, Gabby met the most beautiful young lady in the world, Mary Lou Johnson. They were friends long before dating at Soddy-Daisy High School. Today, Mary Lou is Gabby's bride of 48 years! They have five children: Jimmy, Luanna, John, Jana and Julie. They also have nine grandchildren. **(Will the Williamson family please stand)**

In high school, Gabby loved football and basketball where he played for the legendary coaches, Harland Burnett and Ernest “Big Boy” Eldridge. He remembers a few times when he was called to the office of Mr. I.K. Snyder to have a “conversation.” He has never forgotten the lessons that he learned from those talks.

At Soddy-Daisy, he was a member of Future Business Leaders of America, the 4-H Club, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. His favorite teacher was Mr. Gene Elliott who taught Chemistry,

and Gabby says that the superior instruction he received here helped him make it through college when others were dropping out.

In November of Gabby's senior year, the news of a national tragedy hit Soddy-Daisy students with a jolt. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy was announced to the students on that fateful Friday. Gabby remembers there was chaos, sadness and fear in every student's eye. It was a day that no American will ever forget.

After graduating in 1964, Gabby attended the John A. Gupton School of Mortuary Science in Nashville. The school was a tough experience for many. It was directed by a former Army nurse who ran a tight ship. Students attended classes six days a week, ten hours per day, and they went all summer with no breaks. Many were sent home for the slightest misstep. But in 1966 Gabby earned his Associates Degree and began a 49-year career as Funeral Director and Embalmer at Williamson and Sons. He says he has never even considered working in any other profession.

Gabby has given to this community in many visible and invisible ways. He helped start the KIDS Club and worked to build the fields at Soddy Lake. And when Soddy-Daisy High School was constructed on this present spot, it had no football stadium or field. So Gabby and a group of volunteers sweated and labored day and night, week after week until the stadium became a reality. A labor of love like that doesn't go unnoticed.

In more private ways, Gabby has given to our town. He believes in giving back to his school and community with his

time, talents and resources. When a team needs a uniform, Gabby comes through. It is through our actions that people can see our heart. Gabby's heart is navy blue and solid gold.

Gabby has enjoyed watching the athletic teams perform here for many years. Recently he has followed the wrestling team and has been a part of its success. His grandson, Austin, is a senior wrestler on this year's team.

He is a past member of the Soddy Lions Club, the Soddy-Daisy Chamber of Commerce, and the Alhambra Shriners. When he finds free time, he loves to hunt and fish and has taught his kids and grandkids to love the outdoors.

Where Gabby has perhaps made his biggest impact has been in the service to families at their neediest moments. He says he's learned to be a listener and gets great satisfaction from helping families when a loved one passes on. Some days he feels like a counselor, or a lawyer, but every day he is a friend. He says his father taught him to treat people with dignity and respect. Something in the bottom of Gabby's heart calls him to serve others at their neediest time.

He is a member of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, the National Funeral Directors Association, and is a member and deacon at the Soddy Church of Christ. When asked his greatest achievement in life, he says that it is "having a good name in the Soddy-Daisy community."

His advice to the students today is this: "Get an education, do your best, and treat people with respect."

For living your life in service to others, and for helping a friend in time of need, we crown you, James G. “Gabby” Williamson, as the newest member of the Soddy-Daisy High School Hall of Fame.

Mitchell Chambers  
1966

Our next inductee will never, ever call our school “Soddy.” And he won’t let **you** get by with it either. So don’t ever let him hear you say it. Our school’s name will always be **“Soddy-Daisy”**.

How many students know where **Possum Creek** is? Mitch Chambers grew up on Lee Pike in the area called Possum Creek. His family’s home had no indoor plumbing, so one of his daily chores was carrying two five-gallon cans to a well each day for water. Mitch and his best friend, Jimmy Varner, would play all day around the lake, morning until night, without either parents knowing where they were. In those days there were still a few horse-drawn wagons, hay bales to stack in the barn, livestock to feed, and shucking corn until the family meals were prepared.

Mitch played any sport that had a **ball**. He was too full of energy for fishing, so afternoons found him playing knothole baseball and basketball for Soddy Elementary. He admits he was a **momma’s boy**. His mom taught him to be self-reliant. From Cleo Chambers he learned skills like cooking, sewing, washing clothes and ironing. Everyone knew his mom to be an angel and a great cook.

It was at Soddy-Daisy Junior High where Mitch first got the **bug to be a coach**. He watched how his coaches cared for their players, not just as athletes but as people. At SDHS he played on the **last team** for legendary coach Ernest “Big Boy” Eldridge, a 44-year basketball coach in our school. Learning from Coach Eldridge, as well as from other great coaches like Harland Burnett and Sid Levi, gave Mitch a **clear direction** in his life.

A crazy thing happened his senior year at Soddy-Daisy. The track team **disbanded** in mid-season but Mitch’s track coach, Bill Hinds, saw great ability in Mitch and encouraged him to run all by himself. And out of this encouragement from his coach and dedication to work hard on his own, Mitch became the first athlete in SDHS history to receive a **track scholarship**. He attended MTSU where he majored in Health, P.E. and Recreation with a minor in History.

Mitch loved History as did every student who sat in the class of Ms. Ruth Swingle. But it was from his track coach and science teacher, Bill Hinds, that he **learned how to teach**. And teaching became Mitch’s calling from the Lord. Mitch says that he learned he could teach and help students find their way in life.

In 1966, America was **embroiled in war** in Viet Nam. It was indeed a very uncertain time for high school seniors. Every 18-year old male was required to register for military service. 1965 SDHS graduate, **Randall Hixson**, had been reported as killed in action. And the mood at graduation was very somber.

Lots of Mitch's classmates joined the military right out of high school:

**Billy Wilson, Bill Vincent, Jimmy Varner, Bill Ables, Don Crawley, David Luttrell, Richard Craig, and Joe McAfee** to name some.

One friend, Jimmy Benton from Springfield Road in Daisy, shared the same birthday as Mitch. Jimmy **lost his life** in the war during the fall of 1966. Mitch says there was a "riot of confusion with young men who were about to leave home and not know if they would return." Because of attending college, Mitch received a deferment from the war until graduation.

In the Spring of 1970, Mitch Chambers became **the second** SDJH graduate to return there to teach (Regina Bowen Smith was the first). Many alumni have followed to teach there. He loved teaching math at his alma mater. But the military would soon call him. So at the end of the 1971 school year, Coach Mitch Chambers traded his **whistle for a rifle** and joined the United States Navy at the age of 24. He served five years, nine months and 29 days. Numbers that he says will always be etched in his mind.

Mitch Chambers received the BS and MS degrees from MTSU and the Ed.S. in Education from Tennessee Tech. He taught two stints at SDJH, and one at Altha High School in Altha, Florida. He has served as Director of Intramurals and as Dorm Director at MTSU. And in **the coaching circles** he has mentored in basketball, baseball, softball, soccer and football. He worked



as guidance counselor at Sequoyah Vocational School before being named by Hamilton County Schools as Assistant Principal at Soddy-Daisy High, a position he held for **11 years**. He considers the greatest honors in his life to be teaching at his alma mater as well as serving as an administrator.

At SDHS he oversaw the growth of our school in both enrollment and curriculum. He would later see his **family graduate** from Soddy-Daisy. Both of his sons, Alex and Jody, as well as his daughter-in-law Tracy, and two stepdaughters are graduates from our school. **(Would the Chambers family please stand)** Before retirement, Mitch also served with Hamilton County Schools in Student Data Management. Mitch is married to his high school classmate, Nancye Hughes Wilson Chambers.

Mitch was a founding member of the Soddy-Daisy Kiwanis Club, and is a member of Gideon International. When asked what he loves about SD, he says “ It’s my home, the place where I grew up...of all the places on earth that I have lived...Soddy-Daisy is **far greater to me** than all the rest.”

And if next Fall at a football game you hear a familiar voice on the loudspeaker, look up in the John Rawlston Press Box and wave at Mitch who will take his place as only the second “Voice of the Trojans” in the past 50 years.

Today we salute Sailor, Educator, Coach and Administrator Mitchell Eddy Chambers with your induction into the Soddy-Daisy High School Hall of Fame.



Gloria Smith Cox

1967

To crown today's ceremony we have a surprise induction. We believe the next inductee has no idea she's coming up on this stage! When she was a little girl her family moved from the Bartlebaugh community in Harrison to Soddy Daisy where they bought a home on Thrasher Pike. Even though the house was small for a family of five, a great neighborhood made up for any inconveniences. She attended Falling Water Elementary School, one of the oldest schools in Chattanooga, which is located on Roberts Mill Road at the foot of Signal Mountain. As a child, Gloria Smith was certain the mountains that stood above the school would one day come crashing down on her but in time she became accustomed to her new school. Gloria's family lived across North Chickamauga Creek, where the banks would overflow and flood her property quite often. She and her family waded out to safety during those floods. Neighbors often took them in for a night or longer if they needed.

For entertainment, Gloria and her brother, Rick, would spend time at the movie theatre together. Dr. Zhivago was their favorite flick. Gloria also spent time with her best friend, Mary Anne Grant, whom she still visits today. At Soddy-Daisy High School, Gloria received many awards for her academic excellence. She was selected for "Who's Who among American High School Students". She was the faculty representative at graduation and voted "Most Likely to Succeed" by the senior class. Gloria always had an appetite for learning. But it was one teacher in particular, Mrs. Clara Bond, who opened Gloria's eyes to literature and writing. Mrs. Bond had a passion for teaching, and Gloria soon caught that passion.

After graduation, Gloria received a scholarship to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. She lived on a tight budget, walked to class every day, and worked extremely hard in school. However, Gloria missed her family back home so, on the weekends, her brother and soon-to-be fiancé would drive to Knoxville to visit. It wasn't long after their visits that Gloria realized she

was homesick. She returned home, married her high school sweetheart, Johnny Cox, and began raising a family.

Gloria never questioned *if* she would return to college and fulfill her education goals, but she was unclear as to *when* it would happen. While Gloria raised three children and worked on the side as a Customer Representative for her husband's business, the thought of her completing a bachelor degree lingered in the back of her mind. In time, Gloria discovered her passion for folk art painting. Gloria taught painting classes at a craft store near Northgate Mall, called Craft Castle. Once Gloria's youngest child entered high school, she enrolled at Chattanooga State, where she pursued an Associate's Degree in Secondary English Literature. She graduated with Honors and transferred to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga to complete a bachelor's degree in Secondary English Literature, also graduating with Honors. The work was long and tedious. Her daughter, Nichole, remembers fondly coming home late at night to find Gloria at the kitchen table studying for a test or on the computer typing papers. Nevertheless, she completed her degree with a 4.0 GPA and never looked back.

Gloria began teaching at Soddy Daisy High School in 1998 (the year our current juniors were born), where she taught Freshman English, and later, Yearbook, Senior English and Dual Enrollment through Chattanooga State. Over the years Gloria has inspired and touched the lives of many students. If anyone has ever visited her classroom, the first thing they notice is the bulletin board behind her desk that is covered with pictures of students she has taught. Among the faces are students who have been inspired in some way by Mrs. Cox's kindness and dedication to her profession.

When asked to comment on Mrs. Cox's demeanor in class, a former student replied, "People always say you meet and build the best relationships in high school which you will carry into your adult life...Mrs. Cox is the first person who comes to mind for me. She inspired you, engaged you, and helped mold the trajectory of our lives. The greatest teachers are not great only because they deliver information. They are great because they create lasting connections.

They are not about the words they say; they are about the way they make you feel. Mrs. Cox always made me feel welcome in her classroom...her home.”

With her profession comes highs and lows, but despite the challenges, Gloria has never imagined herself teaching anywhere other than her alma mater, Soddy Daisy High School. She will always remain dedicated to her community.

Gloria, Soddy-Daisy commends you for successfully meeting your goals. By coming full circle with your journey in life, the contributions you have made to your community and the lives you have touched will never be forgotten. Gloria Smith Cox, your alma mater loves you and we welcome you with open arms to the Soddy Daisy High School Hall of Fame.

Johnny M. Cox  
1967

“Without labor nothing prospers.” This could be the creed that has guided the life of Johnny Cox. From his early years of mowing yards in his neighborhood and washing cars at Longmire’s Service Station to insurance executive and entrepreneur, an incomparable work ethic has remained his driving force. Johnny started his insurance career at National Trust Life in 1971, but then started his own independent, multi-line agency – North River Insurance – in 1974, merging with Alder & Associates in 1981 to form Alder & Cox, Inc. John is currently President of Alder & Cox, Inc., a local independent agency in Hixson, and managing partner of Iroquois of Tennessee, a facilitator of insurance markets to independent agents in Tennessee, currently with over seventy-five member agencies. A strong believer in professional development, he has earned several professional designations throughout his career, including: the Life Underwriter Training Course, Certified Professional Service Representative, Certified Insurance Counselor, and Certified Professional Insurance Agent.

Early in his insurance endeavors, John joined the Professional Insurance Agents of Chattanooga, serving as President and as a Board Member for many years before becoming active in the State of Tennessee’s Professional Insurance Agents organization, where he was elected President in 1995 and was also named Tennessee Agent of the Year that same year.

PIA also named him Tennessee Committee Chairman of the Year in 1996. Since his tenure as President, Johnny has served on PIA’s Board of Directors several years.

In addition, he has served on numerous Agents' Advisory Councils for various insurance companies.

Aside from his professional life, Johnny has been active in his community, serving as President of the North River Kiwanis Club, where he facilitated the first "Coat & Cap Fund," which serves school children in North Hamilton County. He is a member of the Daisy Masonic Lodge #706 F&AM, the Scottish Rite, and the Alhambra Temple. He and his agency also actively support the Soddy Daisy Food Bank as well as Wally's Friends Animal Clinic, and he is currently a member of Hixson United Methodist Church.

Johnny is an avid sportsman as most are who grow up in Soddy Daisy. He loves fishing – freshwater and saltwater - golf, and shooting sporting clays. He was the Tennessee Sporting Clays Champion in various categories in 2009, 2011, and 2012. If you look around this campus, you will see the Alder & Cox logo because he loves nothing better than supporting the endeavors of the students here. He was raised to believe, however, that true humanitarianism is not for the public eye and would rather do what he can from behind the scenes. Since true generosity means doing something nice for someone who will never find out, Johnny didn't say much when asked about his involvement in the lives of Soddy Daisy students, but those who know him say that whenever Johnny learns that a child needs lunch money, clothes, shoes, or anything else, he acts quickly and quietly to fulfill that need. Over the years, he has supported various Soddy Daisy athletic teams, the Leadership Class, several scholarships, the yearbook, and he even provides the newspapers for our classes.

When reflecting on his years at Soddy Daisy High, Johnny says he was blessed with many great teachers: Mr. Maxi Green, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. Smithson, and Mr. Morgan to name a few; however, it was Mr. Davis Dew, accounting and business math teacher, who encouraged him to join the Future Business Leaders of America organization. Not focused on college at that time, John actually found his niche in Mr. Dew's classes and still uses the accounting skills he learned as a high school student. Basketball and football games and hanging out with his friends – Donnie Clift, James Card, Kenny Cox, Robert Vincent, and Jim Longmire – make up some of his memories from high school.

His favorite memory, he adds, is the prom his senior year, when he had his first date with the girl who would later become his wife. Johnny speaks fondly of this community, saying that he loves the people of Soddy Daisy and that this is still a great place to raise a family. He adds that he is proud to be from Soddy Daisy and keeps up with any and all events the school takes part in.

He's also proud that his three children – Preston, Adam, and Nichole – are all graduates of SDHS and could not be more pleased that both his wife and his daughter are teachers at his alma mater. When asked what his life's greatest accomplishment was, he answered that he got to see his wife and all three of his children graduate from college. With no real plans of retirement in view, Johnny admits that although his profession has provided unbelievable possibilities, he hopes to slow down soon and enjoy life more with his grandchildren: Ellie, Emerson, Rose, Raleigh, and Jackson. **(Would the Cox family please stand)**

Learning the value of a sound work ethic from his dad, John, and his humanitarianism from his mother, Odessa, Johnny has built his life in the shadow



of their example. His legacy to his children, his grandchildren, his friends, and his community is, in turn, that they strive to do the same. When commenting on his own life, Johnny's favorite saying has always been: "Learn from the past, but always keep moving forward in life." Thus, for his dedication and generosity to Soddy Daisy High School, this community, and to his profession, we welcome Johnny M. Cox into the Soddy Daisy High School Hall of Fame.

BECKY ASLINGER GARLAND  
1971

Becky Aslinger Garland has not lived in Soddy-Daisy in over forty years, but she says whenever she meets someone new, that person never forgets the name of her hometown! And those acquaintances love to come back to her and say, "I drove through Soddy-Daisy!" or "I found Soddy-Daisy on the map!" She says she's glad to hail from such a memorable place.

Her favorite memories of Soddy-Daisy High School in 1971 are graduation, senior day, a basketball team that finished 25 and 0, and getting with friends before school to study or just talk. She also remembers that spur-of-the-moment contest when the class banded together and threw paper wads at that big fish in Miss Jenkins' Biology class aquarium, and getting in big trouble for it the next day.

She also remembers going to the diner next door to the school and buying "suicide" sodas and eating cream horns. And in her one track meet in Knoxville, the runners of the 440 yard race were passing out from the 105 degree heat that day, but Becky finished the race and was met by paramedics who wanted to know if she was okay.

Becky was a member of the Spanish Club, BETA Club, and served on the school newspaper staff. She was elected president of Future Teachers of America. She was also a Junior Miss contestant. On senior day, she won many awards including the DAR and Future Teachers of America award. But her most prestigious recognition that day was when she and her twin brother, Wayne Aslinger, won the I.K. Snyder Lady and Gentleman Awards. Principal Snyder is still remembered today for his one rule: Be a lady or a gentleman.

Some of her close friends were Diane Johnson Seals, Etta Parks Turpin and Tanya Monday Holloman. And yes, Becky lives far away today but keeps in touch with her friends by Facebook.

Her favorite teacher was Coach Jim Harrison. She loved his Math and Physics classes and, from the foundation she received here, went on to get two college degrees in Physics and built a career around those degrees.

Coach Harrison kept up with Becky's successes and last April nominated her for the Hall of Fame. Sadly, before seeing her recognized on this stage, Coach Harrison passed away on January 4<sup>th</sup> of this year.

When Becky left high school, she knew she was headed to college as her parents insisted. She attended the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and majored in Physics and Education. With some help from the UTC Physics Department, she was awarded a teaching assistantship at Memphis State University and became one of the first two females to graduate from Memphis State University with a Masters degree in Physics. She earned the Master of Science in Physics as well as the Master of Business Administration.

Sometimes you just end up in the right place at the right time. And landing in Memphis gave her the opportunity to be at the forefront of innovation in the energy and utility industry. The following are some of her accomplishments:

- She helped design a Compressed Natural Gas Station and tested natural gas forklifts, 50 postal vehicles and utility vehicles;
- She tested fuel cells and their interconnection on the electric grid;
- She helped develop the first gas pipeline open to deregulation and spot gas marketing for large commercial and industrial customers;
- And she developed advanced wastewater treatment facilities that use ultra-violet lighting in the disinfection process.

Becky has worked for TVA in solar energy research. She held management positions with Memphis Gas, Light and Water, TVA's largest customer with revenues in excess of \$1 billion. As Lead Energy Engineer, she led an \$80 million solar water heating program.

From *2003 until 2012* she served as Director of Utilities, Operations Division, Public Utilities Department, in Tampa, Florida. Her job there was managing 760 staff and the responsibilities of treating and distributing clean water as well as collection, treatment and disposition of wastewater. She also managed the maintenance of 18 industrial plants and 700 pump stations, including a Resource Recovery facility that burns waste into electricity.

She represented the U.S. utility industry at conferences in London in 1992 and 1996. She was twice awarded the American Public Power Energy Innovator Award. For launching the development of **Pure Memphis** Bottled Water, Becky won the 1991 Aqua Award from the International Bottled Water Association for design and packaging. This bottled water won taste tests, garnered national and international fame, was ordered by the White House, and is second only to Elvis for tourist souvenir purchases in Memphis. Becky was able to leap the barriers in an industry in which mostly men were successful.

She considers her greatest accomplishment to be marrying her husband, Mick, and celebrating 37 years of marriage last June. He just happens to have a PHD in Physics from Clemson and retired as Chairman of the Physics Department from the University of Memphis. **(Would Becky's family and friends please stand)**

In 2012, Becky retired from public service. Her major job duties today are reclining by the pool or beach and going on an occasional cruise. And the one thing Becky still misses from Tennessee are, you guessed it, those Cream Horns which today we brought some for you to take back home!

Students, the next time you see buses, cars or trucks run by natural gas, or think of lights and clean water, you will remember a Soddy-Daisy graduate helped improve these things. And Soddy-Daisy welcomes you, Becky Aslinger Garland, into your alma mater's Hall of Fame!



GEORGE WRIGHT  
1973

George Wright has been in construction all his life. His industrial arts teacher at Soddy-Daisy High, Coach Jim Steele, taught him the creed that hard work is a trait that no one can take from you. Coach Steele's open and honest demeanor has helped George in communicating with customers. He also says that "Coach Steele taught me to be a man. He was like a father to me and gave good advice." He says Coach Buck Johnson guided him along the way as well.

George won the mechanical drawing award his senior year. His curiosity to build things grew out of his relative's construction business. As a teenager George went to work framing houses, remodeling homes and doing other odd jobs with his brother-in-law Jimmy Varner. He would work afternoons, weekends and summers while in high school. This hard work set the tone for a career in home building that has spanned 30 years.

In case you think George Wright inherited a silver spoon, you need to know that he grew up in a 24 feet by 24 feet house in Soddy. His family got plumbing when he was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and air conditioning when he was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Every morning before school, George fed farm animals. Hard work is all he's ever known.

George Wright never meets a stranger. Some of his high school friends were Rick Hamrick, Geno Shipley and Hardy Stulce. Today it is one of his greatest joys to meet someone new. His natural curiosity to know people is an asset.

After graduation, George worked for his brother-in-law for 11 years. In 1985, he started his own contracting company, George Wright Construction. Beginning with only a few employees, GWC took on small projects like additions to houses, foundations, and general repair. Today GWC employs 21 people. George says that thanks to the hard work and loyalty of those employees, his company has grown to a diverse construction business. George Wright Construction builds everything from complete homes to custom homes, remodeling, and commercial projects. The landscape of southeast Tennessee and especially Hamilton County

is dotted with developments and subdivisions by George Wright. Mansions and remodels alike carry the GWC trademark.

Pebble Brook, Autumn Oak, Autumn Rain & Wake Robin subdivisions are examples of the company's residential work. Ichiban Steak House Restaurants, Champion Cleaners, Victory Lane Quick Oil Change, Eye Care and Associates, and Huddle House Restaurants are commercial projects that we are all familiar with.

In George's estimation, he is just a hardworking man that has experienced a little success. He loves the people of Soddy-Daisy and says they have always supported his business. He says they have given him more than he has ever given them. He says the only thing he would do differently is to be more aggressive in building his business. Fear of the unknown can momentarily hold us back from finding our calling. In the early days there was plenty of work, but the vision to go big took a few years to catch on. George says that hindsight is great but we live in the present.

George married his high school sweetheart, Patti Beene. He says his greatest accomplishment in life is being married to her for 40 years. She is his helpmate in life as well as in his business. His conviction is that, with Patti by his side, they have accomplished much more than he would ever have alone. **(Would the Wright family please stand)**

What does George do for fun? How about flying to the Alaskan wilderness to fish for pike and vacation with grizzly bears? He and Patti have traveled to all 50 states. He is also an avid supporter of Chattanooga Mocs football and loves having the team over for a cookout. And in the hot days of summer football practice, he can be found dropping off a truckload of cold watermelons at the end of a Mocs practice. He loves to ride his motorcycle with his friends or host a pool party for just about any occasion.

When time allows he follows the NFL, not on television but by flying to a game now and then. He made a friend who coached for the Detroit Lions and loves to go watch the game. And he thoroughly enjoys playing a little golf with a new acquaintance or a carload of friends.

In our community he has generously helped with many projects. When our school needed ticket booths for the stadium, GWC was there. Whether it is a church needing a wheelchair ramp or a friend in need, George has a huge heart for others. He is generous with school needs in other neighborhoods as well.

He is a member of the Home Builders Association of Southern Tennessee where he has served as President. He was named Home Builder of the year 2005, 2006, and 2007 and given the President's Award 2006.

George sums it up by saying "being successful means you become an asset to society." He believes in treating people right. So the next time you pass a George Wright Construction sign, think of a Soddy-Daisy graduate who pulled himself up by his bootstraps and made something big; and what a journey...from feeding farm animals to building dreams. We honor you, George Wright, with your induction into the 2015 class of the Soddy-Daisy High School Hall of Fame.