

LIVING

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STANLEY STEEMER.



675-9988

TOUGH ON DIRT.
GENTLE ON CARPET™

Tuesday, May 22, 2001

www.knoxnews.com/homefamily

Section B

A few lengths from Churchill Downs

LAFAYETTE, La. — I bet \$2 to show on the horse It's Me Margaret in the sixth race at Evangeline Downs.

It was a cool night, the crowd was light, and a giant thunderhead in the distance dominated the sky like the painted backdrop on an old movie set. You could hear the frogs from two ponds in the infield, and the high shrieks of barefoot children let loose to run wild.

This is no fancy Kentucky Derby crowd, understand, where the women all wear their Easter bonnets and everybody stands to sing and sway reverentially to "My Old Kentucky Home."

I was at the Derby. Once. My father finagled box seats, and my unlikely family sat with the swells right down next to the track. Willie Shoemaker's dirt flew right into our box, I swear.

I remember the hundreds of potted petunias on the manicured grounds, and truckloads of other flowers freshly screwed into the perfect black dirt.

We were all drinking juleps, just as if we did it every day of our lives. Everyone — except for the hippies in the infield — pretended to be rich.

That was way back in the 1970s. I'll never forget it, though I'll probably never go back. Among the things I remember is losing. I lost my only Derby bet on a horse named Media.

Evangeline Downs, understand, is nothing like that. It isn't even as fancy as the horse track at Hot Springs, Ark., where a few years ago, by chance, I saw the races on opening day. The Hot Springs pageantry was several notches down from the scene at Louisville, of course, but still it was a pretty, regal thing, the sport of kings.

This is nothing like Hot Springs, either. In a way, this is better.

The recent night I was at Evangeline Downs, it was strictly a blue-collar crowd, all of us there against our better judgment, on a weeknight. We were mostly low-rollers who paid \$1 admission, there for a quick supper of hot dogs and draft beer.

The announcer was so low-key you could hardly keep track. But I stood at the fence beside the finish line, and the funky crowd's enthusiasm made the races exciting. I placed a bet on It's Me Margaret for the sixth.

They were off. It's Me Margaret ran third. My horse had shown, and I had won. I was a little confused about what to do next. The few times I've been to a horse track, I've used the same system, which always results in losing.

I bet on the most interesting names. That's my system. That and losing. I'm convinced that judging a book by its cover is as good a system as a once-a-decade gambler can devise.

I tell myself that any animal owner with the imagination to pick a good name should also be smart enough to buy a fast horse.

Doesn't follow. Anointing a pony with a devilishly clever name is one talent; raising or buying a winner, another. Apparently.

There are all kinds of scientific systems. I have a friend who picks a gray horse whenever she bets. She had luck once with that color.

I love the anonymity of betting on a horse. Nobody else knows but what you've got the talent, the know-how, the luck. Everybody else looks like he knows what he's doing, so maybe I do, too.

Once I walked down to the paddocks and pretended to be studying confirmation — or whatever it is you're supposed to study. But one of the horses got frightened, reared in a stall, hurt its leg. That horse was a scratch, and I didn't want to ramble back stage anymore.

I quickly went back to my name game. Kant Dance, Rusty Scupper, To Jive To Walk, Conway Kitty and Duck Deal were all losers. I hadn't won a penny betting names.

Then, in the sixth race with a seven-horse field, It's Me Margaret came in third. I pocketed my \$120 in winnings and headed to the truck, feeling virtuous about leaving on a streak. Nothing compulsive about that.

If I had stuck around — and there wasn't a chance — I might have wagered a few bucks on Nap for Sycamore in the 10th. Just to perfect the

IF IT'S MORNING, AND IT'S KRystal...

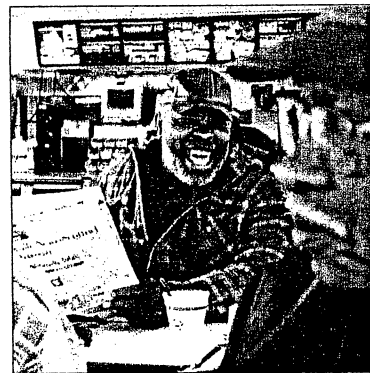


Tony Williams, second from right, delivers the punchline to a story during a regular meeting of the Krystal Club. From left the men are Millard Weaver, James Clinkscales, Fay White, Jimmy Woodruff, Williams and P.J. DuBose, in camouflage cap.



RHETA GRIMSLEY JOHNSON

The Club is in session



Clarence Cash claims to be the only Republican in the group of men who meet regularly at the Krystal on Magnolia Avenue.

By Jeannine F. Hunter
News-Sentinel staff writer

Two dollars and 15 cents.

Two dollars and 15 cents.

Between 6 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. most mornings, cashiers at the Magnolia Avenue Krystal restaurant constantly key in the cost of a country breakfast with senior citizen's discount plus free coffee to a group of men.

Each morning — excluding Sundays — the

East Knoxville restaurant is

home to a club where

membership dues and

initiation are not required.

The club, affectionately

called the Krystal Club or

the Breakfast Club, consists

mostly of older black men.

Many are retired educators,

law enforcers, clergy and

entrepreneurs. Others may

not have attended college

but were trained in the

school of hard knocks.

Like in church, they sit

in unofficial assigned seats.

Younger members who still

work tend to eat earlier

and leave as the retirees

arrive. KAT buses running

intermittently carry some

members. Others arrive in sedans, minivans

and luxury cars.

Loud-talking youths lower their tones upon

crossing the restaurant's threshold and spying

the men.

Women receive greetings and tips from their

hat-clad and hatless heads.

Late arrivals to the gathering get mouthfuls

of good-natured put-downs.

Though not vulgar, the conversations can

cause eyebrows to rise since they range from

analysis of political happenings to Viagra. Hence they are toned down depending upon the number of minors and women in the dining area.

Didn't read the day's paper? Engage in a conversation with any one of the men, and walk away with info the local media didn't catch. "They cheer you up," said 36-year-old Robert Minor, assistant director of the East Knoxville Basketball League. "I hope when I get that age, I'm that lively.... You got to have morning

breakfast every day to get your motor running, but they boost it up even more."

If patrons are not in much of a hurry, they will find conversations with the men reflect their knowledge of Knoxville's past and present, particularly its black communities. They frequently invoke the names of former student athletes such as the McKenzie brothers and J.J. McCleskey. They reminisce about razed businesses where the Old City stands today and colorful community

stalwarts. They speak with pride about seeing former Baby Road Runners grow into positive adults.

"Have I learned anything from them? Knowledge," Minor said. "My dad passed away in '97, and they're like fathers to me. Me and my father came in quite often. They give me advice. They've experienced some stuff I probably won't ever go through. They teach a whole lot. Yeah, they're laid back and relaxed, but they earned that because of what they experienced."

The Rev. Larry Brinson, 48, associate pastor of nearby Edgewood Chapel AME Zion Church, recalls as a child seeing people gather at the Krystal before it was renovated, when a person could buy 10 hamburgers for a buck. Depending upon who one speaks to, you're told differing years as to when this group started gathering.

Members, who refer to each other as "brother," include but are not limited to 93-year-old Herb Miller; former Austin High School band director Cleophus Fulton; associate member Thomas Strickland Sr.; Tony Williams; Richard "Moon" Mullins; Willie Blake; Tom Hairston; Melvin Arnett; 70-year-old George "Mike" Tate; 71-year-old Millard Weaver; James Clinkscales, tall and mid-mannered Harvey Goolby; Lafayette "Buddy" Watson; Leonard "Lucky" Muhammad; Vandrew "Boe Wee" Clark; 89-year-old Jimmy Woodruff; flirtatious checker-plying 80-year-old P.J. DuBose; and 88-year-old retired Knoxville Police Department Capt. James



Ira Yarbrough checks the obituaries in the morning paper. "If I ain't in here, I'll have to go work," he jokes.

News-Sentinel photos
by Michael Patrick

James Clinkscales jokes with Lynn Maples as she leaves the Krystal on Magnolia Avenue. Clinkscales and Millard Weaver, left, don't let anyone leave



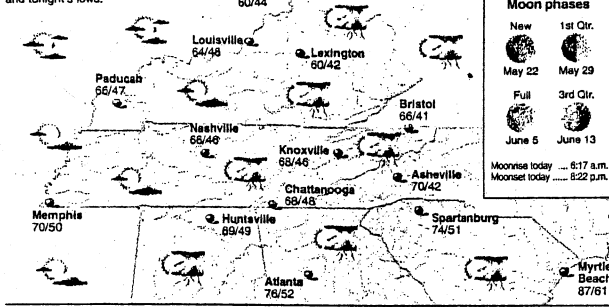
Weather Call Weatherline® forecast service at 521-6300

Knoxville's five-day forecast

Table with 7 columns: TODAY, TONIGHT, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY. Includes weather icons and temperature forecasts.

Today's weather

Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



Lake stages

Table listing lake stages for various locations including Station, S. Houston, and Watauga.

East Tennessee

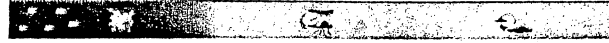
Table listing weather forecasts for cities in East Tennessee like Knoxville and Chattanooga.

Air quality

Table showing air quality index and pollutant levels for Knoxville.

Knoxville skyline

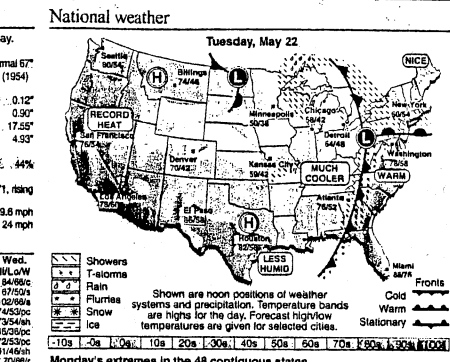
Sunrise: 6:25 a.m. Sunset: 8:40 p.m.



AccuWeather.com

Almanac table with weather statistics for Knoxville through 5 p.m. yesterday.

National weather



Monday's extremes in the 48 contiguous states

World cities

Table listing weather forecasts for various world cities like Athens, Berlin, and London.

National cities

Large table listing weather forecasts for numerous national cities across the US.

Club

Continued from page B1

"Everybody we know is here," Tate said. "We'd rather come here and eat than to cook at home."

penchant for sending out condolence cards, even before people die, to a few members during a recent weekday morning.

Food, folks and fellowship

Eating, greeting and meeting at Krystal is not limited to the East Knoxville branch.

strive for are community contacts. "With the example of the breakfast club, some restaurants run them off but we thrive on it."

in the community"

"Eight-year employee and shift leader Tracy Russell joked that some days 'I wish they'd go to Hardee's. Really, many are kind. A few can be a handful. But like family, you take it all in.'"

She burst out laughing.

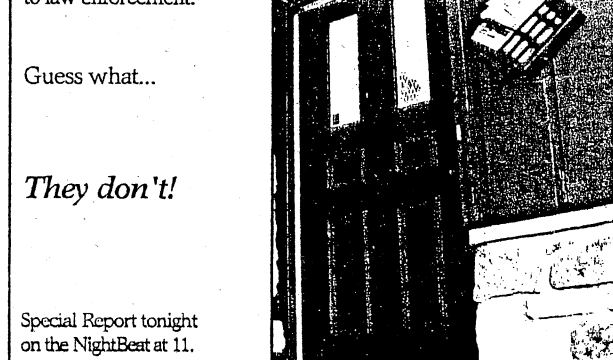
Ernest "Ernie" McChie, retired from S.E. Service in Knoxville, said, "I believe they will be here when they build Krystal."

Methodist Medical Center's community program will address osteoporosis awareness, education

Methodist Medical Center will have a community education program on osteoporosis from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, May 25, in recognition of Osteoporosis Awareness Day.

Gone without a trace.

Convicted sex offenders are supposed to report where they live to law enforcement.



Liquid Siding advertisement with text: 'An Evolution In Home Improvement' and 'They don't! Special Report tonight on the NightBeat at 11.'

ORECK VACUUMS OF KNOXVILLE advertisement with text: 'HURRY, Limited Time! 17 PT. VACUUM TUNE-UP SPECIAL! \$1495'