

# Nationally recognized journalist from Irvine died August 27, 2020

Bill Neikirk, who grew up in Estill County and went on to become a nationally recognized journalist and author, died Thursday, August 27, 2020 after a long illness. He was 82 [born January 6, 1938].

Born in Irvine to a family of nine brothers and two sisters, Bill Bob, as he was known to his childhood friends and classmates, graduated from Irvine High School in 1956 and earned a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Kentucky in 1960.

Over a 48-year career that he began as a part-time sports reporter for the Lexington Herald-Leader, he worked as a state news reporter for the Associated Press in Lexington, Louisville, and Frankfort and in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Washington, D.C., and later as a Washington correspondent for the Chicago Tribune, covering the rapidly changing global economy and later serving as the paper's chief White House correspondent and assistant managing editor for financial news.

Besides his newspaper articles, he also wrote three books—Volcker: Portrait of the Money Man, about the inflation-battling former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker; The Work Revolution (written with Gail Garfield Schwartz), which described the impact of the technological revolution on jobs held by low-skilled workers; and The Copperhead Club, a fictional thriller set partly in the Kentucky mountains. His website is at [www.williamneikirk.com](http://www.williamneikirk.com).

For the past 50 years, Bill and his wife, the former Ruth Ann Clary of Lexington, lived in Arlington County, Virginia, a suburb of the nation's capital. Besides his wife, he is survived by three children, John (Lisa), Greg (Jeannette), and Christa (Kevin Chang), and two grandchildren, (John) Matthew and Isabella.

But Bill always considered Irvine his home. He returned there to visit family members and friends, and

he split The Copperhead Club's plot between Washington and the central Kentucky mountains. "My boyhood years never left me, and are an integral part of the landscapes and people" there, he wrote on his website when the volume was published.

He also attributed his decisions to go to college and to become a journalist to two faculty members at Irvine High School—Walter Tevis, the school's English teacher and a successful novelist, who first recognized Bill's writing abilities and urged him to go into journalism; and Leslie Jones, Irvine's principal when Bill was a student there, who encouraged him to enroll in the University of Kentucky.

Bill and Ruth met in Lexington, when both were students; he was working his way through college as a part-time busboy at Purcell's cafeteria, and she—a freshman at Transylvania University—worked in the store's cosmetics department and ate in the cafeteria frequently. As Ruth Neikirk recalls it, they soon found themselves engaged. "I fell in love with this guy immediately, even before I knew his name," she says wryly.

Next to Ruth, sports helped launch Bill on his new career. An avid football, basketball, and baseball player in high school, Bill signed on as a sports reporter for the Lexington Herald-Leader, and his first assignment was to cover legendary coach Adolph Rupp's son Herky in a high school basketball game. By the end of Bill's freshman year, he had changed his major from electrical engineering to journalism. The die was cast.

Bill joined the AP after graduating from college, working first in its Lexington and Frankfort bureaus and covering the capital and civil rights issues in Baton Rouge. In 1969, he was transferred to Washington to cover national economic policy. Five years after that, he moved to the Chicago Tribune's Washington bureau.



Bill Neikirk with President Bill Clinton on Air Force One

Bill's long stint on the Chicago Tribune gave him a window on major developments of the time—from the 1976 presidential campaign and congressional action on the impeachment of President Clinton to several recessions and the transformation of the global economy. He also served in Chicago as an assistant managing editor for financial news. During that period he was a syndicated columnist, and a frequent guest on CNN and other TV outlets.

He retired in 2008 after being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. During the seven years before his death, he suffered from debilitating dementia.

Bill received numerous awards and honors for his work. He won the prestigious Merriman Smith Award for his presidential reporting in 1995 and the Loeb Award for business writing in 1979, and was a runner-up for a Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for a newspaper series that he wrote on the impact of world trade. In 2007, he was elected president of the Gridiron Club, a select group of Washington journalists. The University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media recognized him

as a Distinguished Alumnus in 2018.

Bill Neikirk was regarded by his colleagues as a consummate journalist—a dogged, thorough reporter and a clear and careful writer who took pains to explain what he was covering and strove to put each story in a larger context. Doyle McManus, former chief of the Los Angeles Times Washington bureau, called him "one of the finest White House reporters of modern times."

Bill's family has established a scholarship at the University of Kentucky to help deserving high school students, particularly those from Estill County, obtain a college education. The grant, intended for communication majors, is based on three factors—scholarship, financial need, and location. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to the William R. Neikirk Scholarship Fund, University of Kentucky, at the Gift Receiving Office, 210 Malabu Drive, Suite 200, Lexington, KY 40502, or at <https://bit.ly/2xwienB>.

Further information and condolences can be found at the website of Advent Funeral Services at <https://adventfuneral.com>.

## OBITUARIES

Printed free as a public service. Contact the funeral home to have an obituary included. Photos included at no charge. Local obituary Lines – Lewis (723-8558) & Toler (723-4242) Contact the Estill County Tribune at (606) 723-5012 to have any out-of-county obituaries placed in this newspaper.

### Monday, August 24, 2020

#### Danny Dwaine Bledsoe, 54

Danny Dwaine Bledsoe, age 54, of Irvine, Kentucky, passed away at the University Of Kentucky Hospital in Lexington on Monday, August 24, 2020.

He was born in Richmond June 26, 1966 to Ernest Sr. and Glenda Bledsoe.

He is survived by his mother, Glenda Cole of Richmond; three daughters: Hillary Bledsoe of Irvine, Shyann Bledsoe and Sierra Bledsoe, both of White Oak; two grandchildren;

five brothers: Scott Bledsoe, Ernest Bledsoe Jr., both of Irvine; Robert Bledsoe of Lexington, John Bledsoe of Richmond, and Jackie Bledsoe of Bessemer, Alabama; and a sister, Leona Dickerson of Richmond.

He was preceded in death by his father, Ernest Bledsoe Sr.

No services are planned at this time.

Grayson Funeral Home of Irvine is in charge of arrangements.

<GraysonFuneral.net>

### Friday, August 21, 2020

#### Barbara Ann McTeer, 36

Barbara Ann McTeer, age 36, of Irvine, Kentucky, passed away Friday, August 21, 2020.

She was born September 13, 1983 in Dayton, Ohio to William and Theresa Brinegar. She was a homemaker.

Mrs. McTeer is survived by her father, William Brinegar of Irvine; her mother, Theresa Scott of Daytona Beach, Florida; her husband, John McTeer of Irvine; four sons: Johnathan Short, William Short, John McTeer Jr., and Nolan McTeer, all of Irvine; two daughters: Shynna McTeer and Amabella McTeer, both of Irvine; three brothers: Olan Brinegar of Dayton, Ohio; Kenny Thurber of Florida; and Nathineal Taylor of Dayton, Ohio; and a sister, Ann Walters of



Barbara McTeer

Indiana.

Funeral services were held at 11:00 a.m., Thursday, August 27, 2020 at the Grayson Funeral Home Chapel in Irvine. Friends visited Thursday from 9:00 a.m. until time of the service at the funeral home.

<GraysonFuneral.net>

### Thursday, August 27, 2020

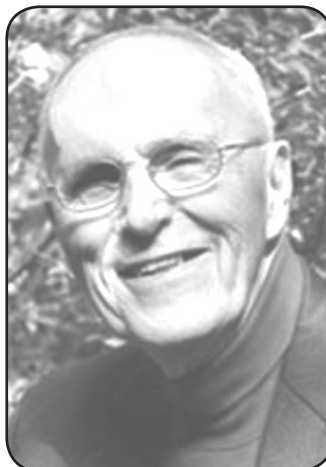
#### William R. Neikirk, 82

Bill Neikirk of Arlington, Virginia, a longtime Washington-based journalist who covered the White House and the economy for the Associated Press and the Chicago Tribune, died Thursday, August 27 after a long illness. He was 82.

Born in rural Irvine, Kentucky, he joined the AP's Washington Bureau in 1969 after having worked for the wire service in Louisville, Lexington, and Frankfort, Kentucky, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He moved to the Tribune's Washington bureau in 1974. He also served as the newspaper's Washington news editor, and later worked in Chicago as assistant managing editor for financial news. He was a syndicated columnist, and became a frequent guest on CNN and other TV outlets.

He also wrote three books—Volcker: Portrait of the Money Man, about the inflation-battling former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker; The Work Revolution (written with Gail Garfield Schwartz), which described the impact of the technological revolution on jobs held by low-skilled workers; and The Copperhead Club, a fictional thriller based in Washington and in the Kentucky mountains, where he grew up.

Bill received numerous awards and honors during his 48-year journalistic career. He won the prestigious Merriman Smith Award for his presidential reporting in 1995, and the Gerald Loeb Award for business writing in 1979, and was a runner-up for a Pulitzer Prize that year for a newspaper series on the impact of world trade. In 2007, he was elected president of the Gridiron Club, a select group of Washington



Bill Neikirk

journalists.

He is survived by the former Ruth Ann Clary, his wife of 59 years; two sons, John (Lisa) and Greg (Jeannette), and a daughter, Christa (Kevin Chang); and two grandchildren, Matthew and Isabella (John).

A memorial service will be held as soon as it is feasible at the Rock Springs Congregational Church at 5010 Little Falls Road in Arlington, Virginia.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to the William Robert Neikirk Scholarship Fund, University of Kentucky, at the Gift Receiving Office, 210 Malabu Drive, Suite 200, Lexington, KY 40502.

Additional information from Ancestry.com:

William Robert Neikirk was born January 6, 1938 in Estill County to Lewis Byron and Elizabeth Green Neikirk. He was the ninth of eleven children. He is preceded in death by seven brothers, Fred Byron, James Virgil "Jim", Lewis Byron Jr., Boyd Wesley, Raymond O., Donald Layne, Marshall Norman, and Ralph Edward; and two sisters, Dorothy Warren and Mildred Ann Tuttle. He is survived by one brother, Danny Neikirk (Brenda) of Irvine.

<AdventFuneral.com>

### Friday, August 28, 2020

#### Teresa Ann Woolery, 62

Teresa Mae Woolery, age 62, of Wagers Mountain in Ravenna, Kentucky, passed away Friday, August 28, 2020, at the Marcum & Wallace Memorial Hospital following a short illness.

She was born March 29, 1958 in Estill County and was the daughter of Christine Griggs Tipton and the late Cornelious Tipton. She was a retired teacher's aide with the Estill County School System and a member of the Mt. Carmel Christian Church. She had lived in Estill County all her life.

Survivors in addition to her mother, include her husband, Henry Douglas Wool-

ery; a sister, Barbara Tipton (Louie), Fayette County; two brothers: Steve Tipton (Rebecca) and Jeff Tipton (Becky), both of Estill County; and several nieces and nephews.

Friends called Monday, August 31, 2020, between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. at the Warren F. Toler Funeral Home. Private funeral services were held afterwards at the funeral home by Bro. Mark Pearson. Burial was at the Gray Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Dalton Shanken, Greg Adams, Noah Riddell, Dave Irvin, Jeff Tipton and Stevie Tipton.

<TolerFuneralHome.com>

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