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People still believe city named after Chief Paduke

BY GENEVIEVE POSTLETHWAIT

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For generations, the prevailing story of how Paducah got its name was tied to a man of mythic stature: Chief Paduke.

Turn-of-the-century Paducah history books practically gush about the man, describing him as “towering Atlas-like above the common range,” a “picturesque and stately figure” whose benevolence inspired Gen. William Clark to name the town at the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee rivers “Paducah.”

Though a letter from Clark to his son Lewis dated April 27, 1827 — found by local historian John Robertson in the 1990s — debunks this story of how Paducah got its name, Chief Paduke remains. He’s on T-shirts, stickers and police officers’ cars and uniforms. He’s a statue at 19th and Jefferson. He’s been resurrected as the mascot of a baseball team that will play its first game in over 50 years this summer.

“He’s come back,” Robertson said of the chief. “I thought I killed that SOB, I

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A statue of Chief Paduke stands at the intersection of 19th and Jefferson streets.

JEFF LANGE | The Sun

Severe storms hit Texas, take numerous lives

BY SETH ROBBINS AND NOMAAN MERCHANT

Associated Press

DALLAS — Tornadoes swept through the Dallas area after dark on Saturday leaving substantial damage and at least four people dead from traffic accidents during the storm, the latest in a succession of freakish winter weather events across the country.

The Texas tornadoes followed days of tumultuous weather in the Southeast including unusual winter tornadoes that left 18 people dead there over the Christmas holiday period. The North Texas storms claimed at least 7 lives, according to USA Today.

National Weather Service Meteorologist Anthony Bain in Fort Worth said several tornadoes touched down in the Dallas area, although the full extent of damage would not be known until daylight Sunday.

Local TV showed homes with roofs blown away, vehicles mangled or turned upside down, a severely damaged church, fallen

More showers locally

Staff report

The rain just keeps on coming.

After receiving nearly an inch on Saturday, the Paducah area is expected to get another 2.5 to 3 inches today and Monday for a total of nearly 4 inches since Christmas, said Christine Wieglos, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Paducah.

Today’s high is expected to be 65 with temperatures falling throughout the day. Monday will see a high of 58 with rain clearing out that evening.

trees and debris strewn across neighborhoods. The damage stretched over about a 40-mile-long area from 20 miles south of Dallas to northeast of the city.

Joe Harn, police spokesman for Garland, about 20 miles northeast of Dallas, said the four people were killed in vehicle accidents during the massive storm, but it’s un-

Please see **STORM** | 10A

Some local voters switch parties to take part in Republican caucus

BY MALLORY PANUSKA

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Kentucky’s first presidential caucus in more than three decades has been a catalyst for a number of voters to switch to the Grand Old Party over the past few weeks.

An election tailored to Republicans with just one race on the ballot, the caucus is set for Saturday, March 5, at select county polling locations across the state. The deadline for voters to switch party affiliations and participate is Thursday, Dec. 31, but since

Kentucky county clerks’ offices are not open that day, changes need to be made by Wednesday.

McCracken County Clerk Julie Griggs said many voters have changed their party affiliations, mostly from Democrat to Republican, since the GOP won big in the November primary. Staff members estimate between 10 and 15 people a day have come in and switched, and Griggs does not expect the trend to slow down before the this week’s deadline.

While Griggs said it is not unusual for more people to change their parties going into a presidential election year, she said the numbers seem a little higher this year. A desire to vote in the caucus is part of the reason why, she said, along with dissatisfaction with current economic conditions.

“We have had a lot of people coming in changing their parties, more than normal on a regular year,” Griggs said. “It

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Chicago police officer fatally shoots 2 people

BY CARYN ROUSSEAU

Associated Press

Chicago — A Chicago police officer responding to a domestic disturbance call Saturday accidentally shot and killed a 55-year-old woman, who was among two people fatally wounded, police said late Saturday.

Relatives said Bet-

tie Jones lived downstairs from Quintonio LeGrier, the 19-year-old subject of the initial call to police, who also was killed by the officer.

Officers who responded to the call “were confronted by a combative subject resulting in the discharging of the officer’s

Please see **CHICAGO** | 7A

Long-lost brothers get reunited by heart transplants

BY LAURA UNGAR

The Courier-Journal

LEXINGTON — Aaron Arnold lay in a hospital bed, tethered to machines and gripped by fear, waiting for a new heart.

Heart Transplant Coordinator Donna Dennis hoped to allay his concerns by having a former patient talk to him, and heart recipient Kenneth Arnold Catlett was happy to oblige.

But as soon as Catlett opened the door, the recognition on Arnold’s face was immediate, and everyone realized this was no ordinary

meeting between patients.

“Hey, I know this guy,” Arnold exclaimed. “It’s my brother!”

The two men hadn’t seen each other in about 20 years, having grown up apart, met as young adults and lost touch.

But they soon learned that they not only shared a father but also the same medical condition — heart failure caused by dilated cardiomyopathy, which affects the lower and upper chambers of the heart and is more likely to strike men than women.

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Brothers Kenneth Catlett (left) and Aaron Arnold had heart transplants at the University of Kentucky one year apart and were reunited after not seeing each other for 20 years when a nurse unknowingly brought one to see the other to allay fears regarding surgery.

Associated Press

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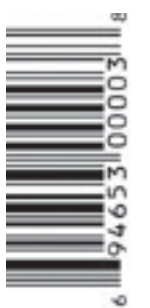
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BROTHERS

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And that chance meeting at the University of Kentucky Albert B. Chandler Hospital — where both got new hearts a year apart — led to a renewed bond, a deeper spirituality for both of them and a bigger sense of family.

“Not only did we give them new hearts,” Dennis said. “We gave them each other.”

“It was destiny, as they say in the movies,” added Catlett.

Both men grew up in Lexington, sons of different mothers.

Neither of their moms was married to their father, although Catlett said his mother came close. Family members said their dad is now in his 80s, and they don’t have current contact information for him.

Neither brother knew

of the other while growing up.

Over time, each brother said they saw subtle clues of each other’s existence. Arnold’s grandmother on his father’s side hinted to him that her son may have had other children. And acquaintances sometimes asked Catlett if he was related to members of the Arnold family because they looked similar, and because Catlett’s middle name is Arnold.

Catlett put it all together after meeting Arnold’s sister at a Christmas parade around the mid-1990s. When he told her his dad’s name, he said, “She had this recognition on her face.”

The brothers met just after that and kept in touch until life pulled them in different directions.

So when Catlett became the first of the

brothers to get sick, Arnold never knew.

UK cardiologist Dr. Navin Rajagopalan first began caring for Catlett after shortness of breath brought him to another hospital’s ER, and a chest X-ray showed his heart was enlarged. Rajagopalan said he did pretty well for a few years, but eventually came to UK in shock and needed ventricular assist devices for both his left and right ventricles — and a long hospitalization. “That was a world shaker,” Catlett said. “I’d never had major surgery... It was a devastating blow, mentally as well as physically. It was just a mind-blowing experience to know your life hangs in the balance.”

But he came through the eight-plus-hour operation in September 2014.

Arnold came to Rajagopalan through his nurse practitioner. He’d been diagnosed with heart failure years earlier and began slowly getting worse in December 2014t. Like Catlett, he was reluctant about the idea of a new heart, but eventually came around and went on the transplant list in late winter.

His condition worsened this summer, landing him in the hospital in August.

Catlett visited Arnold throughout his recovery, which Dennis said helped immensely, since “the only thing that can help you through (this) is a strong support system.”

“You couldn’t have anyone better than your own brother,” Arnold said.

CHICAGO

CONTINUED FROM 1A

weapon,” the Chicago Police Department said in a brief statement.

The shooting happened around 4:25 a.m., police said. The Cook County medical examiner’s office and family members said LeGrier, a 19-year-old college student, was pronounced dead at a hospital at 4:51 a.m. and Jones, a 55-year-old mother of five, died at a different hospital a short time later.

Both LeGrier and Jones were black, the medical examiner’s office said. Police did not immediately disclose the race of the officer, nor how long the officer has been with the department or the officer’s current work status.

LeGrier’s father told the Chicago Sun-Times he had invited his son to

a family holiday gathering before the shooting but the younger man chose not to go.

The elder LeGrier said he heard loud banging on his locked bedroom door around 4:15 a.m. and that his son said, “You’re not going to scare me.” He said his son tried to bust the door open, but he kept him from doing so and called police.

The father said he called Jones, who lived a floor below, and warned her that his son was a “little irate” and not to open the door unless police arrived.

When police arrived, Antonio LeGrier said he heard Jones yell, “Whoa, Whoa Whoa!” He said he heard gunshots as he made his way down from the second floor and then saw his son and Jones lying in the foyer.

PADUKE

CONTINUED FROM 1A

put him away. Drove a stake in his heart. And still, he comes back. It’s fascinating. Because people believe what they want to.”

And people do want to believe in the chief. Even the folks in the Local and Family History Department at the McCracken County Library, who know the legend of Chief Paduke, fact and fiction, want to believe.

“I do think you can separate the (city’s) name from the man,” said Nathan Lynn, special collections librarian. “There’s a difference in the naming of Paducah and Chief Paduke. Maybe the term isn’t ‘debunking the legend of Chief Paduke,’ but continuing or understanding it.”

“Yeah. There was a tribe here, and they probably had a chief, and he very well may be buried down on Third Street somewhere, as the story goes,” added Matt Jaeger, Lynn’s fellow special collections librarian. “The legends date back to almost the time period when it happened. I don’t think you can debunk it at this point. The letter doesn’t debunk the chief. Just the name is debunked.”

In 1827, shortly after acquiring the government title to the tract of land known today as Paducah, Gen. Clark wrote to his son Lewis, “I expect to go to the

mouth of the Tennessee the 26th of next month ... I have laid out a town there and intend to sell some lots in it, the name is Pa-du-cah once the largest nation of Indians known in this country, and now almost forgotten.”

When Robertson spotted those lines in Clark’s handwritten letter, saved all these years by the Missouri Historical Society, he felt he’d found the magic bullet that would lay Chief Paduke to rest. A historian by training, railroad man by trade and prolific history writer, Robertson had long believed the chief was a myth, as was this idea of Clark naming Paducah after him.

“I really got fussed at,” Robertson said. “Because people had their story of Paducah. He was an Indian. He was 6-foot-7 inches tall. If you look at about 1900, every time somebody in Paducah wrote about the chief he got bigger. He walked on water. He’d become this mythological character.”

He experienced all kinds of confrontations after writing that Paducah, in fact, wasn’t named after this beloved, 7-foot-tall Indian chief. “Well who is he?” some would say about Robertson. “He’s not even from here, what does he know about Paducah?” Robertson still gets the “he’s not even from

here” jab on occasion, he said, even after living in Paducah for more than 60 years.

He was just doing his due diligence as a historian, he said. In his eyes there’s nothing wrong with enjoying the story, the myth of the chief, but to him the truth is much more interesting.

The myth mystery still live on

One of the things that keeps Lynn and Jaeger open to the idea of Chief Paduke is just how far back the legend goes.

By many accounts, the man known as Chief Paduke died in 1819, only a few years before Clark acquired and named Paducah. As early as the 1850s, Paducah city directories mention the man. The first pages of the 1859 directory, for example, say, “The name of Paducah is derived from that of an Indian chief who died in about the year 1819.”

“How do you explain this? This was written in 1859,” Jaeger said. “It’s only 40 years after the fact. That’d be like people telling tall tales from 1975, you know? How could something be skewed that much in 40 years? The legends date back to almost the time period when this guy supposedly lived.”

The two librarians remain dubious about the name “Paduke,” however. At this point most historians, including

Robertson, agree that Clark named Paducah after the French term “padouca” for the tribe of which he was thinking, most likely the Chickasaw. “Padoucas” can be found all over the United States on French maps from that time period, they said.

Also, “Paducah” sounds nothing like anything from the Chickasaw language. Chickasaw signatures on the 1818 Jackson Purchase treaty by which the Chickasaws ceded their holdings in western Kentucky and Tennessee to the United States included names like An-

passantubby, Immauk-lusharhopoyea and Il-lachiuwarhopoyea. No Paduke.

“And if the chief’s name was Paduke, why would you have to add an ‘ah’ on the end?” Jaeger asked. “It should be Padukeville or Paduke Town.”

“We would all just be Padukes instead of Paducahans then, which would be nice,” Lynn imagined. “Paducahans is such a horrible word.”

Even Robertson, a stickler for historical accuracy, readily admits that the legend of Chief Paduke is fun. It’s part of Paducah’s identity, a

point of pride, and that’s a great thing for a city to have, he said.

“It’s fun. It’s understandable. It could have happened. Who knows, it may have,” Robertson said. “Paducah is fortunate to have such luxury in talking about its past. But as a historian I have to defend what seems the most logical version of what actually did happen. And you know, that’s the truth. It may not be what you want it to be, but it’s what was.”

Contact Genevieve Postlethwait, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8651.



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