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## HAMILTON

"We had never asked," said Deputy Supt. Irving Hamer. "We'd find out at the end of the school year or the end of June, and then start staffing. By then, Tipton, Shelby and other surrounding counties had hired up the teachers, and we were left scurrying," he said, still filling some jobs in October.

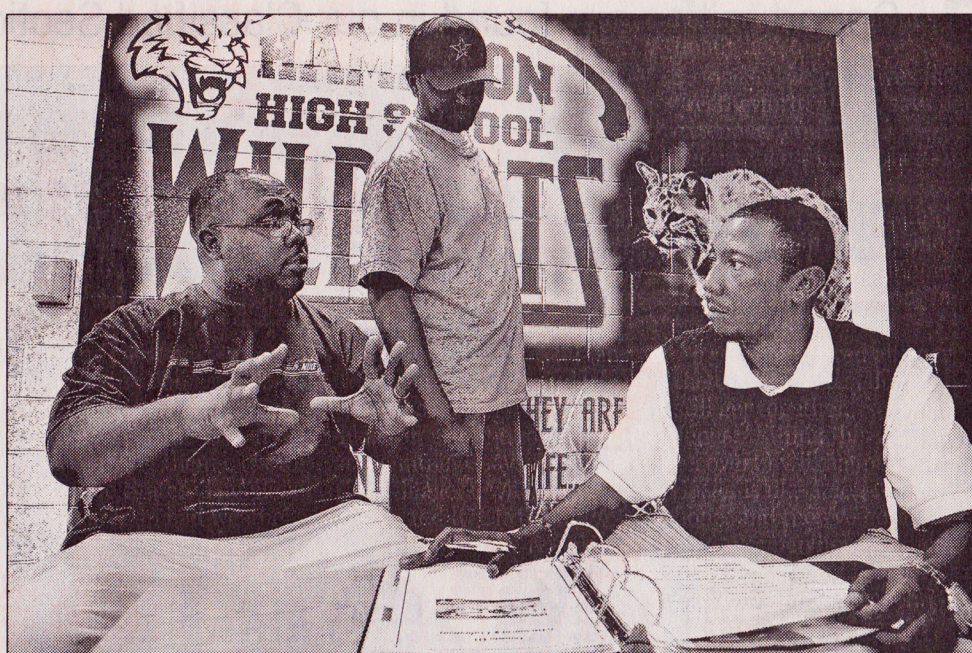
Through its partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Memphis City Schools turned teacher hiring over to The New Teacher Project, a New York nonprofit organization that believes in hiring earlier and smarter.

In January, the 16-member team moved into district offices on Avery, creating the office of Strategic Teacher Recruitment and Staffing — STARS.

The goal: Staff the 29 lowest-performing high schools and middle schools by April 15.

School budget changes and other hard-to-predict plans delayed the timeline, said Sheila Redick, STARS spokeswoman.

But by Thursday, 100 percent (86) of teacher openings in the hardest-to-staff schools were filled, including six at Lester School in Binghamton, where the average eighth-grade teacher last year had six months' experience.



Mark Weber/The Commercial Appeal

**Hamilton High principal Michael Bates (right) talks with teacher and coach Fredric Stringer (left) as school administrator Erron Henderson looks on. Hamilton filled all 13 teacher vacancies for fall before school was out this year.**

This fall, that average moves to 10 years.

"It's like good real estate. We have built a house on prime real estate," said principal Cedric Gray, who is leaving Lester to be superintendent of Fayette County Schools this summer.

The new hires have an average GPA of 3.67, where MCS just requires a 2.50.

"These principals had choices like they'd never had before," Redick said.

"When the schools can start their school years focused on learning and not on staffing, it's a huge win for

the kids."

The district has no record of new-hire GPAs or how many teachers it had hired by this time last year, Hamer said.

"We didn't collect the data; it was not an accountability. It is absolutely going to be an accountability going forward."

Now, the focus shifts to the 500-plus openings in the remaining city schools.

STARS has 60 current or former teachers called "selectors" reading résumés out of their homes, zeroing in on people who have track

records of meeting ambitious goals, succeeding with students and who want to teach in a high-poverty city.

By focusing on how teachers are recruited and supported, the district hopes to improve both the quality of its teachers and the way it bonds with them.

"Hard-to-staff" Hamilton is the "exemplar of what is possible," Hamer says.

"The principal and staff now have an opportunity to work and train with the new staff before school starts."

— Jane Roberts: 529-2512

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## KANE

"Well, yeah."

"So why would you pay it again if it's already been prepaid?"

"Well," the man answered, pausing. He's having trouble following Kane's logic, which is this: The loan was paid for once, so why pay it twice?

"Maybe you need to explain that a little better, Jerry," Stark said.

"Here's the thing about the mortgage thing, the mortgage note, OK?"

Kane followed, bumbling. "You give them permission to sell the note... All you have to do is say, 'Take the collateral and apply it to the debt.'"

The caller still didn't understand Kane's answer.

"You know, it's a little over my head," the caller said.

JJ MacNab, a financial and insurance analyst who has spent years tracking tax- and mortgage-eliminate pitchmen like Schiff and Kane, remembered that exchange clearly, since it summed up Kane's teachings.

"The guy's absolutely right," MacNab said of the caller. "He totally understood the basic economics of the mortgage."

Yet MacNab said the caller had fallen for Kane's verbal game of hide-the-ball.

"It's about as sophisticated as a shell game."

But Kane believed in that shell game. He'd explain it for free as an act of benevolence.

This dichotomy has its roots in a 12-page document Kane filed with an Ohio court on April 8, 2003. In that document, Kane, a former long-haul trucker, declared himself a sovereign man who was not bound by the laws of what he viewed an illegitimate government.

Kane ascribed to a conspiracy theory known as redemption, which is a subset of beliefs held by many members of the sovereign citizen movement. Its adherents believe commercial law secretly replaced constitutional law in 1933, when the United States abandoned the gold standard and purportedly pledged each of its citizens as collateral to borrow money from international banks.

As a result, redemption theorists consider the U.S. government a corporation that disguises commercial contracts as laws. By filing the appropriate paperwork with a county register — as Kane did on April 8, 2003 — they think they can opt out of these supposed contracts.

They base their beliefs on interpretations of various laws and arcane legal writings.

"It's like a fringe religious group trying to reinterpret the Bible to suit themselves," said Mark Pitcavage, director of investigative research for the Anti-Defamation League. "These guys do the same things only with legal writings and laws."

Variations of the movement can be found in communities throughout the United States. "Traditionally these beliefs were held by middle-aged white men," MacNab said. "Now it's post-racial, which is really interesting."

Indeed, nothing indicates Kane was a racist. Those who knew him personally or met him through the seminars describe him as a man who felt he'd found a solution to the foreclosure crisis and wanted to help others. Race was never a factor.

In one case, Kane inspired a disciple. George Tran, of Eugene, Ore., used Kane's techniques on three properties. He filed new deeds for those properties in May, as Kane instructed. He'd like to think that means his mortgages are canceled out, but he conceded he might hear protests from his lenders soon.

Nevertheless, Tran now distributes an electronic book on his website that explains Kane's teachings. Since the deadly shootout, Tran has dedicated the document to Kane. "He is a great man," the dedication reads.

"He operated purely on a donation basis, and I'm operating on those principles myself," Tran said. "You know what, people in foreclosure are

not rolling in the dough. They're just trying to find help, and that's the spirit that really, really impressed the hell out of me with Jerry. He

said, 'My work is ministry. I do it because I want to help the people.'

Kane was one of about 20 operators MacNab monitors. They all travel the country doing seminars, telling homeowners who are upside down on their loans that they can file certain paperwork in a certain order to zero out the mortgage balance.

"At some level, they know it doesn't work," MacNab said of these operators. "They know no one gets away with it. But they want so desperately for it to work, they think it can work. It's like magic language — they just have to put the right words together. There's also mythology out there that says someone was able to do it somewhere."

While similar debt-elimination pitchmen such as Sam Kennedy and Tim Turner are successful, Kane lacked their charisma and struggled as a result. He at times would drive across the country with his 16-year-old son, Joseph, and their dogs only to find a couple of people interested in hearing him speak.

"I think he was frustrated because he wasn't doing well," MacNab said.

"For him, it was as much in order to make money as to be a hero for all these people who were losing their homes. He wanted to be a hero."

Kane was convinced he had discovered secret information that would free the average person from a kind of enslavement by bankers.

On April 1 — less than two months before the West Memphis shooting in which he, his son and two police officers were killed — Kane questioned during the call-in show whether his information might be so powerful that authorities would try to bring him down.

"Maybe they'll still prosecute you if you teach someone else how to do it?" Kane asked rhetorically.

"Yeah," Stark replied. "They don't want the word getting out, you know."

"Right. Right," Kane answered. "This information is — you know, the remedy has always been right there (in the documents), and I'm sure they've been laughing all the way to the bank all these years because they've known the remedy is right there and you can see it. And now we can see it."

Trevor Aaronson, a Florida-based freelancer, is a former staff member of *The Commercial Appeal*.

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## WAR

window of their home to honor her uncle, John C. Kelley. He was missing in action after a dogfight with the Japanese during the Burma invasion.

It set in motion one of the most frustrating recovery efforts imaginable, with Kelley always just beyond reach of a family looking for closure for one of their own. A grave site with his name awaits him at Shiloh Cemetery near Garland, Tenn., in Tipton County. The recovery and a formal burial finally looks like a possibility, but it would be through a military process

that could take two to three more years, the family says.

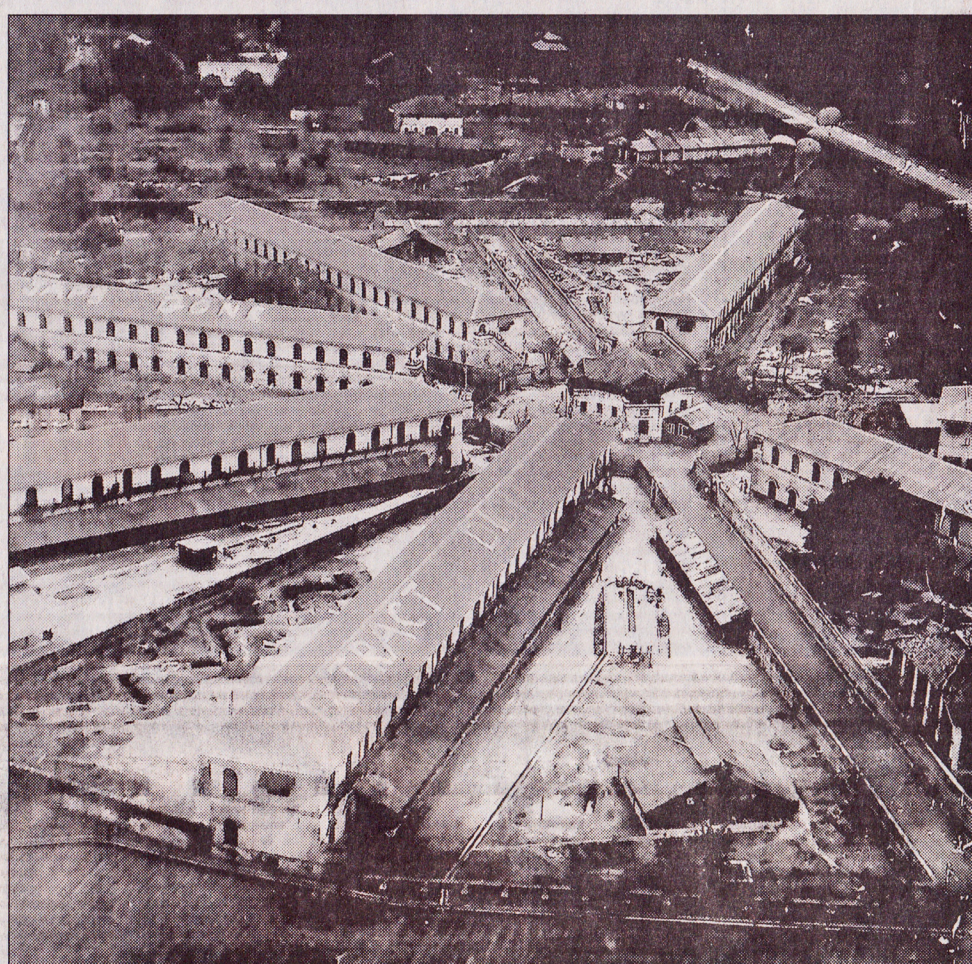
Kelley, a first lieutenant in the Army Air Forces, was the ninth of 11 children in a farm family, says another niece, Leslie Kelley Roane of Garland, who helps run her family's farm and cotton gin. At 34, she is also

a genealogist, piecing together the life of an uncle, a war hero, she never knew. For her, he was a "grand uncle," the genealogical term for a great uncle from her father's side of the family.

From computer searches, family reunions, photographs and letters, she describes her uncle like a living relative who might have lived just down the street: "He had this amazing smile. It was infectious. He was very handsome, very outgoing, never met a stranger. He was very kind, very personable. I think it's important that we remember him as a person, not just for his service."

The details of Kelley's death and disappearance are like a series of bizarre coincidences. Kelley was 25 when he set out on the mission to bomb occupied targets in Burma on Nov. 14, 1943. He was a bombardier on one of six B-24 planes stranded during a bombing run when they were separated from their fighter-plane escorts.

A swarm of Japanese fighter planes attacked, battling the American fliers for more than an hour. Two of the crippled B-24s tried to



**After Kelley's plane went down Nov. 14, 1943, he was captured and taken to the Rangoon Central Jail, where he died a month later. After the war, his remains were exhumed from a cemetery nearby, but vanished when the plane carrying them crashed on the way home.**

**"He had this amazing smile. It was infectious. ... I think it's important that we remember him as a person, not just for his service."**

LESLIE KELLEY ROANE, *John Kelley's grandniece*



Leslie Roane



Susan Krall

make crash landings, but burst into flames as they hit the ground. The Japanese then struck a gas tank on Kelley's plane. An engine went out. Pilots of the other B-24s said the stricken plane had only one of four engines left when it tried to set down in a dry river bed.

One of its wings clipped a tree. Part of the fuselage was ripped open, and the plane cart-wheeled before bursting into flames, says Roane.

Kelley and another crewman survived with serious burns, while their captain survived with a head injury and minor burns. The Japanese soon took them prisoner and put them in the Rangoon Central Jail where Kelley survived for a month before dying of infection from his burns.

After the war, Roane says, the American Graves Registration Service exhumed the bodies of 39 American prisoners from a cemetery near the prison and was flying them back to the United States. The plane disappeared in bad weather, and its whereabouts remained a mystery for 63 years.



**First Lieutenant John C. Kelley served in the 10th Air Force, 7th Bombardment Group, 493rd Bombardment Squadron in the China-India-Burma Theater of World War II.**

It was Nov. 5, 2009, when an American salvage expert found the remains of the plane based on numbers on an aircraft panel near the site. Villagers in the Indian town near the Bangladesh border said the plane "hit head-on into the rock face of a mountain," says Roane. The villagers, who had converted to Christianity, chose to bury the remains at the crash site rather than cremate them. It was "like

divine intervention" that kept Kelley's homecoming in play, says Roane.

At the Indian burial site, the remains are planted over with ginger plants and surrounded by a bamboo fence, she says. What remains is for the United States to positively identify the remains through DNA matches. Roane says her family provided a DNA sample through her uncle's only living sister, an invalid whom Roane hopes will still be alive when her brother is finally laid to rest.

Jones, who now lives in Weatherford, Texas, says her extended family is determined to bring her uncle home.

Other nieces, including Susan Krall in Avon, Ohio, also are keeping the memory alive by telling the story in their own towns.

"We're scattered all over the United States, but we still get together," says Jones. "I think this (the recovery) will happen. Susan is like a dog with a bone, and they've got two congressmen helping them. I'm just hoping I'll still be around to see it happen."

least 30 minutes early to avoid anticipated traffic. The ceremony is hosted by the West Tennessee Veterans Cemetery Support Group and the Boy Scouts of America, Chickasaw Council, Eastern District.

Twin Oaks Memorial Gardens and Funeral Home, 290 Goodman Road E. in Southaven, will hold its 16th annual Memorial Day Service starting at 10 a.m. Don Wilkinson, former Horn Lake Chamber of Commerce director and a decorated veteran, is the keynote speaker.

Tate County's 20th annual Memorial Day observance will be held on the Town Square in Coldwater, Miss., beginning at 11 a.m. Michael Lawrence Crockett, a retired U.S. Navy commander, is the keynote speaker.

## MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS

### TODAY

Memphis Mayor A C Wharton will speak during a 2 p.m. ceremony at the Memphis National Cemetery, 3568 Townes Ave. The Shelby County Veterans Council and Memphis National Cemetery sponsor the ceremony. Call (901) 386-8311, ext. 223, for more information.

### MONDAY

Bartlett Mayor Keith McDonald will present a wreath at a ceremony in Veterans Park, on the corner of Bartlett Boulevard and Bartlett Road, at 10 a.m.

The West Tennessee Veterans Cemetery hosts a Memorial Day ceremony at 11 a.m. Guests should arrive at

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