

West Side Story

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The Colquitts

The unique family that holds a special place in sports history

ALAN SLOAN

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About his family's unique place in professional team sports history in the United States and Canada, Dustin Colquitt said, "My mind's blown right now. ... That's a very interesting point. I've never been

asked that question."

Colquitt, punter and kick-holder for the Super Bowl LIV champion Kansas City Chiefs and a recent Walter Payton "NFL Man of the Year" nominee, completed a unique trifecta after what his younger brother, Britton Colquitt, and their father, Craig Colquitt, already accomplished: it put this family in a rare — if not unprecedented — place in history as three immediate family members each

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Cavernous sound is closer than you think

TAMMY CHEEK

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For a nonpareil music experience, The Caverns brings performances underground to feature artists including Ricky Skaggs and Alison Krouse.

Located at 555 Charlie Roberts Road in Pellham, past

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The legend of THUNDER ROAD

MICHELLE HOLLENHEAD

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"Now let me tell the story, I can tell it all

About the mountain boy who ran illegal alcohol

His daddy made the whiskey, son, he drove the load

When his engine roared, They called the highway Thunder Road.

Sometimes into Ashville, sometimes Memphis town

The revenoors chased him but they couldn't run him Down

Each time they thought they had him,

His engine would explode He'd go by like they were standin' still on Thunder Road.

(Chorus);

"And there was thunder, thunder over Thunder Road

Thunder was his engine, and white lightning was his Load

There was moonshine, moonshine to quench the devil's thirst The law they swore they'd get him, but the devil got Him first.

On the first of April, nineteen

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Amazing



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The Colquitts came together as a family during pre-game activities. From left are Dustin Colquitt, KC Chiefs punter/kick holder; mother, Anne Colquitt; Britton Colquitt, Minnesota punter/kick holder; and their father, Craig Colquitt.

Colquitts

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winning at least one Super Bowl, World Series, NBA Finals or Stanley Cup (National Hockey League) championship.

With a 21-0 fourth quarter rally last February in Miami, beating San Francisco 31-20, “Much later in the night, before we got going with some of the Super Bowl parties — I put the little kids down (to bed), they were exhausted about being up all day and watching the game — outside of the room I got to talk to Britton and my dad, and just kind of be in that inner circle,” Dustin said.

“I finally got to tell a Super Bowl experience, as opposed to just listening to theirs, which I enjoyed,” he added about the trio, all honing their NFL skills as First-Team All-SEC punters for the Tennessee Volunteers.

“Just seeing my dad and just how excited he was.”

“I was so excited,” said Craig, a two-time First Team All-SEC punter at UT groomed by legends Johnny Majors, head coach, and special teams guru George Cafego before

being part of an all-time great NFL team. He earned back-to-back Super Bowl rings (XIII and XIV) as a rookie and second-year punter for the “Steel Curtain” Pittsburgh Steelers in the 1978 and 1979 seasons.

Doubting Colquitts

However, judging by fourth quarter nerves, there was lots of doubting Colquitts in Miami.

Described as “digging his nails into his legs” in terms of intensity whenever his dad’s Chiefs are playing, then 11-year-old Colston Colquitt was quite upset while witnessing a late-game turnover in Super Bowl LIV.

Already tied in knots emotionally with his dad’s Chiefs trailing the 49ers 20-10 early in the fourth quarter, a Patrick Mahomes interception killing a promising Kansas City drive sent Colston racing out of his stadium seat.

“He literally stood up and started walking out ... he went straight to the concourse and threw up in a trash can,” Dustin said. “He was absolutely sick about it. He was devastated.”

Perhaps taking after his grandfather — Craig admitted leaving

his stadium seat to nervously walk around the concourse when things looked bad early in the fourth quarter — Colston couldn’t bear to go back to his seat and watch.

Hearing a crowd roar without seeing what happened, he thought San Francisco scored “and it was 27-10, and it might as well be over,” the two-time Pro Bowler said. “When he talked himself to walking back down the (stadium) stairs, Colston realized they punted back to us, and we had the ball back and we were about to score” and cut the 49ers’ lead to 20-17.

As for the senior Colquitt, “I was a nervous wreck in Super Bowl 50 for Britton, but more so for Dustin in Super Bowl LIV because he was further along in his career,” Craig said.

After Mahomes’ fourth-quarter interception with the Chief trailing by 10, “I got up and started walking around the perimeter of the indoor of the stadium,” Craig said, adding he followed the game on concourse TV monitors “while I was walking.”

However, when the comeback was complete, “We went nuts. We were like little children,” he added.

On field with family

With Dustin and wife, Christia Colquitt, gathered with Colston and the couple’s other four children in celebration on the field after the game, “I think we almost broke each other’s teeth out kissing,” said Dustin, finishing his 15th season in Kansas City after earning 2003 All-American and Ray Guy Award finalist (top college punter in the nation) honors for the Vols. His sports notoriety began as a football and soccer star at Bearden High School (Class of 2000).

“Brinkley almost tackled me,” he added about the reaction of his oldest child, 13.

Britton, his advice

Also at Super Bowl LIV was Britton — who helped UT fan favorite Peyton Manning end his NFL Hall of Fame career by going out on top (see photo) — as punter and kick-holder for the Super Bowl 50 champion Denver Broncos. A First-Team All-SEC punter at UT in 2006, he also was a soccer and football star at BHS (Class of 2003).

Seeking family advice on what to expect when playing in Super Bowl

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Thunder Road

From page 1

fifty-four

*A federal man sent word he'd better
make his run no*

More

*He said two hundred agents were
coverin' the state*

*Whichever road he tried to take,
they'd get him sure as*

Fate.

*Son, his daddy told him, make
this run your last*

*Your tank is filled with hundred-
proof,*

*You're all tuned up and gassed
Now, don't take any chances, if
you can't get through*

*I'd rather have you back again
than all that mountain*

Dew

(Chorus);

*"Roarin' out of Harlan, revving'
up his mill*

*He shot the gap at Cumberland,
And screamed by Maynordsville
With G-men on his taillights,*

*roadblocks up ahead
The mountain boy took roads
that even angels feared
To tread.*

*"Blazing' right through Knox-
ville, out on Kingston Pike
Then right outside of Bearden,
there they made the fatal
Strike*

*He left the road at ninety, that's
all there is to say*

*The devil got the moonshine and
the mountain boy
That day,"*

— "Thunder Road" song lyrics

More than 60 years ago, a Hollywood movie and chart-topping song highlighted the dangers of moonshining up close for the world to see.

"Thunder Road," starring legendary actor Robert Mitchum — who also wrote the 1958 movie and helped craft the song — told a tale of bootleggers who tangled with the law, with one horrifically losing his life in the process while

running "white lightening."

While Mitchum fictionalized his own character's backstory, "Thunder Road" was a well-known moonshine route that ran from Kentucky, through Maynardville, then into Knoxville on what is now Kingston Pike, and he incorporated a legendary car crash that disputably occurred either in Bearden, near Asheville Highway or in Concord (now Farragut), depending on who is talking.

While no newspaper accounts have been found to verify the story, several members of the community have gone on record with their accounts.

Knoxville-area writers Laura Tedesco and Brooks Smith both conducted extensive research about the infamous incident, publishing lengthy articles on their findings. They also relied on "Return to Thunder Road," a book written by Alex Gabbard, who interviewed a young eye-witness, John Fitzgerald, among others.

The teen recalled encountering

suit-and-tie governmental officials at a local service station early one April morning in the early 1950's, overhearing whispered mentions of "Thunder Road."

The following is Tedesco's account, reprinted with permission:

"That cool spring morning, John and his friends had inadvertently stumbled upon a federal operation to capture a notorious Kentucky moonshiner known only as "Tweedle-o-twill," Tedesco wrote.

"In the early morning hours, just down the Pike from Galyon's (gas station), Tweedle-o-twill, the son of an elusive mountain moonshiner, was racing against time," Tedesco wrote. "As the sun peeked through the trees, he rocketed down the highway, sweeping across the last leg of his journey down Route 33 from Kentucky through Maynardville and into Bearden.

"Federal agents devised a make-shift roadblock, two cars nudged nose-to-nose across the two-lane

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Foster's has what you desire

Clear, clean and crisp. Pronounced and professional. Smooth and sultry. No matter what your desire, it can be found or custom designed at Foster's Fine Jewelry.

Foster's Fine Jewelry was an authentic family venture and is still owned and operated by Pamela Hanna, who has been there since the business started in 1974. "It's a way of life for me," Hanna explained, "I've always been in the jewelry business."

Hanna's extensive experience in the jewelry business, and her appreciation of each customer's nuanced preferences guarantees a special experience. "Jewelry is incredibly personal. Everyone's tastes are different," Hanna elaborated on how shopping for jewelry is unique.

As the third generation of jewelry experts, Hanna's passions for both jewelry and people are in her blood. She has adopted her father's motto, "If you don't know what you're buying, you should know who you're buying it from." The customer-sales relationship is founded on trust and bolstered with sincerity. There are even instances where Hanna sold engagement rings to couples, and then, years later, designed rings for their children.

With a relationship-based business model, Foster's generates much of its business by recommendation and subsequently serves people from all over East Tennessee. Their wide selection of diamonds and engagement rings are just the beginning. Foster's in-house jeweler and watchmaker each have over 40 years of experience. Their watchmaker services all brands of watches, including Rolex. As the sole supplier of Jack Daniel's Whiskey Barrel jewelry in Knoxville, and one of a select few stores that sell the Southern Gates collection, Foster's Fine Jewelry provides an exquisite selection of rare pieces. But of course, to get the full scope of their wide selection and provided services, you'll just have to go shopping.



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Cavernous

From page 1

Crossville, it is a two-hour drive west from Farragut.

"The Caverns is both a world-renowned destination for live music and cave adventures, which can be experienced and explored daily," Joe Lurgio, general manager of The Caverns, stated in an e-mail. He added it is located down twisting country roads in a "geographical sweet spot."

Lurgio stated the doors to The Caverns are "inscribed with these words in the Sequoyah script of the Cherokee, 'Welcome to The Caverns where the Great Spirit brings all people together through music.'"

"We began producing concerts underground over 10 years ago and have grown into a year-round, daily tourist attraction," Lurgio stated. He explained The Caverns is a large, connected underground cave system covering more than 8,000 linear feet of known surreal cave passages.

"Shows are hosted in a section of The Caverns historically known to locals and cavers as the Big Mouth Cave because of its impressive, large archway entrance," he added. "Experts believe humans have been using the cave to escape the heat, take refuge from rain and enjoy each other's company for up to 25,000 years."

"Today, The Caverns is a modern music venue with padded chair seating for 850 (seated), or up to 1,200 for standing-room-only shows. What's more, the cave is equipped with state-of-the-art sound and lights, well-appointed restrooms and delicious food and beverage concessions, including craft beer and canned wine."

Pointing out "the gentle slope of the room and its smooth concrete floor, the venue is accessible to music fans with mobility concerns or physical disabilities," Lurgio stated.

"Daily guided tours include a journey through Big Room Cave, an awe-inspiring underground room, which gets its name from its massive size," he added. "During the tour, you'll learn a little bit about geology, cave lore and the

unique history of Grundy County.

"Adventure cave tours take guests even deeper inside The Caverns' cave system and include the daunting 'Tombstone Pass.'"

Additionally, he pointed out visitors have much to explore in the surrounding Southeast Tennessee area, such as South Cumberland State Park, Tennessee's largest state park that includes hiking trails, majestic waterfalls, world-class rock climbing and stunning overlooks.

"The surrounding communities of Monteagle, Tracy City and Sewanee offer local dining, shopping and historic sites surrounded by nature's beauty," Lurgio added.

Along with the daily cave tours, it also includes "a very special 'behind-the-scenes' look at our world-famous music venue and home of the PBS TV series, Bluegrass Underground," he stated.

"For our concerts, we feature full concessions with great, locally sourced food options, drinks, snacks, merchandise plus beer and wine," Lurgio added, also pointing out the venue features a gift shop offering items not found anywhere else.

As a music venue, The Caverns features a diverse and broad spectrum of performing artists.

"We have something for everyone, from artists like Alison Krauss, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Brandi Carlile & Crowder to The Flaming Lips, Wyclef Jean and STS9," Lurgio stated.

More examples of performers can be found at: <https://thecaverns.com/press>

"For performers, the cave is a way for them to connect to fans like very few other spaces," Lurgio stated. "The uniqueness of the space allows the artist to experience the show with their fans in a whole other dimension, experiencing the cave."

"The cave backdrop provides a musical experience that you cannot find anywhere else," he added. "The acoustics are sublime, and the energy between artist and performer cannot be recreated. Shows underground are never forgotten."

"It is a magical place to visit on any day, and people are often left



Photos submitted

(Top) Thousands flock to The Caverns, located in Pellham, for a one-of-a-kind concert experience in its Big Mouth Cave section of the cave passages. The venue is world-renowned for its live music and cave adventures. **(Above)** Amanda Shires, country music singer, songwriter and fiddle player.

enchanted by their time spent at The Caverns, with many making repeat visits for the unique experience."

For music fans planning a trip underground, Lurgio stated The Caverns stays 59 degrees year-round with 91 percent humidity.

"The cave feels cool when it's hot outside and can feel warm on cold weather days," he added. "Be sure to bring a light jacket, and comfortable footwear is recommended."

He noted creatures within The

Caverns are at home with visitors.

"Bats are not a problem at all, and we happily co-habitate with the cave flora and fauna," he stated. "Most bats that live in our cave system are found much deeper in the cave, and we never see them."

"Once in a great while a bat that lives outside of the cave will make a brief appearance and give the audience a show within the show," Lurgio added. "They are

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THUNDER ROAD

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highway. They parked their fleet of vehicles in the cedar-lined driveway of a roadside farm and waited.

"But as Tweedle-o-twill raced toward them at 90 miles an hour, it became apparent that he had no intention of stopping. He flew off the road, crashing over fences and infant trees, evading the roadblock and barreling past the agents unhampered.

"After clearing the first roadblock, Tweedle-o-twill roared down Kingston Pike, unaware that a second roadblock, a row of cars bumper to bumper, was aligned at the intersection of Morrell Road and Kingston Pike. John and his friends watched from a nearby farmhouse, located on the present-

day site of West Town Mall.

"Rocketing around the bend, he lost control, sending the car into a dirt bank bordering what is today the parking lot of where Cat's Music was once located," Tedasco wrote. "The high-speed collision whipped up a cloud of red clay dust visible from the second roadblock. As the federal agents raced to the scene, John pedaled down Kingston Pike to catch a glimpse of the accident that would become legendary.

"As the car launched through the fence of a roadside utilities substation, its trunk sprung open, shattered jars of whiskey seeping their contents amidst the electrical equipment. John watched as the substation burst into flames, the smell of whiskey strong and biting.

"I remember looking at the driv-

mas Day, New Years Day, Thanksgiving and Easter Sunday.

"We are constantly monitoring the CDC and Tennessee State Pledge for guidance," Lurgio added. "Our cave tours are still happening, but we are limited them to 10 people on a tour and are asking guests from different households to keep a safe distance if they are on the same tour.

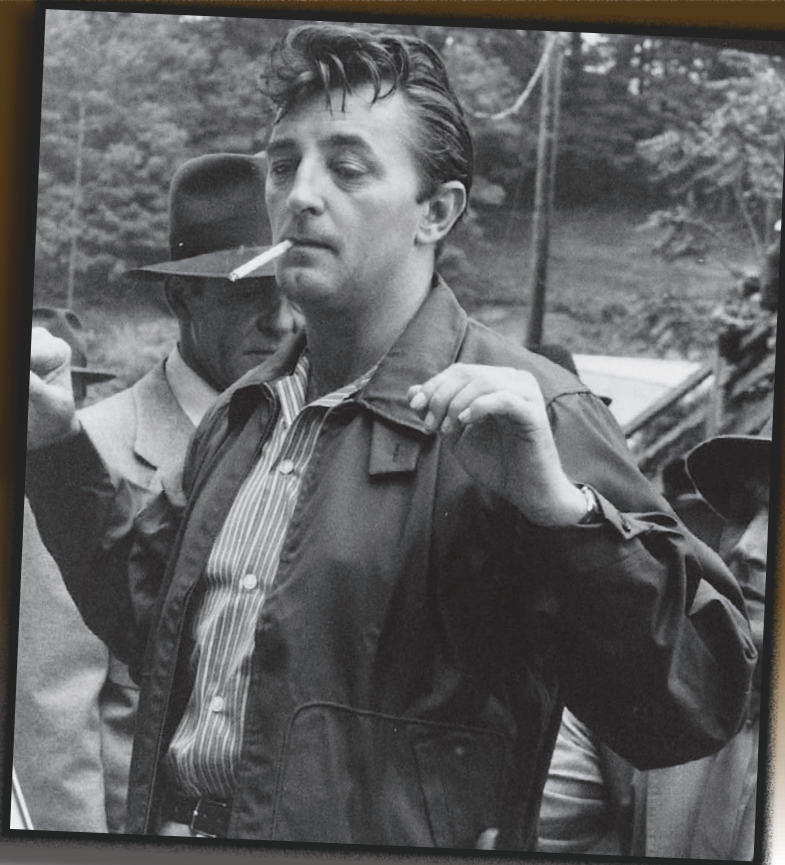
"We also have enhanced our cleaning procedures and our staff

will be wearing masks," he added.

"Stay-and-Cave" packages are available with lodging and transportation to and from the venue.

However, because of the pandemic, The Caverns currently is unable to host concerts.

"We are working with every artist and trying to reschedule all of our shows that we can for a time when it is safe to host large gatherings," Lurgio stated.



Robert Mitchum not only starred in the 1958 film "Thunder Road," he also wrote it and co-wrote the theme song.

Photo submitted

er and thinking, 'What a waste,'" John told Gabbard. "He gave his life for a trunk of whiskey."

Others had similar stories, including Edward "Eddie" Harvey, a former race car driver, whisky car mechanic and owner of Eddie's Body Shop in North Knoxville, who shared the tragic ending of Rufe Gunter with Tedasco.

"Rufe ... was coming from Newport to Knoxville," Harvey told her.

"Somebody had ratted on him.

"When Rufe found out, he bought an old car, an old Studebaker, and loaded it down. He thought the law wouldn't know him."

But as the moonshine runner neared Knoxville, "just outside the city limits at Swann Bridge on Highway 70, the police began tailing him, determined to catch the

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not a nuisance at all."

The Caverns also is home to a special salamander, called the "big mouth salamander," with Lurgio adding, "We're proud to call it our mascot."

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, The Caverns continues to give tours of its caves every day of the week, year-round, except Christ-

Normally, "We host shows almost every weekend of the year, as current listing of shows can be seen (on the website) and we are always adding new shows," he stated.

For more information, including updates on revised concert schedules, The Caverns's website is <https://thecaverns.com/>. It can be contacted by e-mail, info@thecaverns.com, or by phone at 931-516-9724.

Ingles Markets offers floral solutions for last-minute events

The Ingles Markets floral department can provide the perfect flower arrangements for any occasion even at the last minute.

With an array of fresh bouquets constantly available in store, Cheryl Sloan, the company's floral director, said that customers can easily customize different floral arrangements with what's currently in stock.

"We have hand-tied bouquets that we have in stock all the time that we can easily wrap and make them into a bridal bouquet," she said.

Certain colors, however, may not be available.

"Any bride that gets in a situation where she needs flowers at the last minute can pick out flowers we have in stock," Sloan said. "It may not be the colors she has chosen originally, but we can do a last minute bouquet with flowers we have in stock at that moment."

According to Sloan, the company typically needs about a four-week notice for events that require spe-

cific colors. Customers can choose from color sheets right in the store, making the process extremely convenient and hassle-free.

"We have about 44 different bouquets that they can choose from in any color schemes that they want for any event that they want, as long as we have enough notice to order it for them," she said.

Sloan said that some Ingles locations, including the Morristown store, are even specially trained to deal with floral arrangements for weddings. All of the company's flower department associates undergo extensive training in which they learn how to make various arrangements like bouquets, boutineers and corsages.

Because what sets Ingles apart from other floral shops, Sloan said, is the store's variety.

"We customize everything we do," she added. "Everything that we choose, we handpick."

In fact, Sloan said that Ingles pur-

chases their flowers directly from a farm in South America, which is not only unusual in the floral business, but it also allows for an even wider variety of floral options and keeps prices low.

"A lot of your retail chains buy from a broker that gets it from a farm," she explained. "Because we do this, we customize our bouquets."

Each year, for example, Sloan handpicks every arrangement the company will carry for the upcoming months.

"I sit down with our vendors and I pick out the recipes," she said. "Every stem that goes in every bouquet, everything for any event and for holidays. We do that all a year in advance."

Sloan noted that the company's arrangements also vary by season.

In the fall, for example, the store will be stocked with oranges, reds and other autumnal hues.

"But you're also going to see some pastels in there because not every-



body wants fall flowers for whatever they're doing during a specific season," she said.

Ingles Markets is located at 11847 Kingston Pike. For more information about its floral department, call the store at 865-966-4360 or visit [ingles-markets.com/departments/floral](https://www.ingles-markets.com/departments/floral).

David's Abbey Carpet and Floors found its home in the heart of Farragut



After first opening David's Abbey Carpet and Floors off Asheville Highway in 1973, owner David Hayes said it didn't take long to realize an additional location was needed further out west.

"As the business grew and as the town grew and as the county grew, it was obvious that the direction that I needed to come to was West Knoxville," said Hayes.

So in the early 80s, when the World's Fair was being held in Knoxville, Hayes rented a small store next to Frontier Package on Kingston Pike.

"And then as we grew and the community grew, we moved in 1990 to where we are now," he said of the business' current location at 10853 Kingston Pike.

Although the new location was initially opened as only a temporary store, Hayes said he quickly discovered that David's Abbey Carpet and Floors needed to have a permanent location in the heart of Farragut.

"We always did a lot of business in West Knoxville, but as it grew, we realized it wasn't wise to close the West Knoxville store," he said.

Hayes, whose father was raised on a farm off Lovell Road, said he then moved his own family from East Knoxville to the Cedar Bluff area and enlisted the help of his children at the Farragut store.

Son Mike Hayes, store manager, and daughter Barbie

Moore, bookkeeper and credit manager, are still a part of the business to this day.

"I always have surrounded myself with good people and let them do their job -- that's a big key to our success," noted David Hayes. "You're only as good as the people you surround yourself with."

In the decades since first opening, Hayes said the business has changed "tremendously."

"The products we sell are much more diverse," he said, adding that the store started out focusing on carpet and vinyl flooring, but has now shifted to hardwood and ceramic. "We now have people who actually design showers and backsplashes and help with color selections and everything, so it's grown into a much more diverse and full service store."

The aim, however, remains the same -- take care of customers.

"When we leave we want their home to be beautiful and for them to have exactly what they thought they were going to get, and that's been our goal since we started and that's still our goal," he said.

For more information about David's Abbey Carpet and Floors, call 865-777-0661 or visit [davidsabbeycarpet.com](https://www.davidsabbeycarpet.com).

State Farm agent Cindy Doyle provides specialized service

In 1988, Cindy Doyle was approached about a job working as a State Farm agent in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

"The company was looking to hire a female agent," said Doyle. "I was the token female and the rest is kind of history."

Only a few years later, in 1995, Doyle was offered a leadership position with State Farm. Although hesitant to accept the role, Doyle took the plunge, moving from Florida to Illinois to Ohio before deciding to return to her previous job as an insurance agent.

"I never wanted to be on a fast-track corporate ladder and I was constantly traveling," she explained. "I wanted to go back to what I really love, and that's helping customers right there in the community."

After searching all over the South

for the perfect location to plant her office, Doyle settled on Knoxville, taking over the agency of long-time insurance agent Tom "Buck" Breazeale, who retired from the industry in 2004.

In 2009, Doyle moved the office from Perimeter Park Road to a building she purchased and renovated at 248 N. Peters Road.

Doubling the size of the agency, Doyle noted that her team of 15 employees consists of specialists in a variety of areas, including life insurance, health insurance, banking and claims, which allows for a more personalized experience.

"My greatest satisfaction is when I've been able to help customers get to the point where they can retire or get to the point where they are financially secure," she said.

For more information, call 865-690-6300 or visit cindydoyle.com.

From one small business to another

Congratulations to The farragutpress for over Thirty Years in Business! The team at Rick Terry Jewelry Designs would like to commend you for that monumental accomplishment. As a fellow small business in West Knoxville, we know the work that it took to get there.

Our little community has surely come a long way from when we first opened our doors. Just as our business has. We never would have imagined we would be using 3d Printers and robotic Milling machines to create custom jewelry in-house on our little corner of Kingston Pike and Cambell Station. We would have been floored if you would have told us we would be repairing 400 items per month, and 20 custom from scratch items for our community. This year has certainly been complicated for small businesses but we would like to thank our community and customers for working through this with us and continuing to support us. We are open regular hours 10-6 Monday through Friday and 10-3 on Saturdays. Stop by and have your rings checked and cleaned at no charge, we are still casting, repairing, and creating jewelry on site. We are dedicated to helping you continue to celebrate, create, and care for your specials moments. We want to be your Jeweler.

- Submitted by the Rick Terry Jewelry Team

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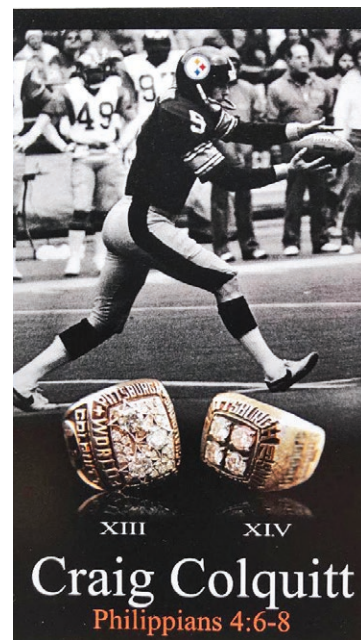
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Colquitts

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LIV, Dustin said Britton shared valuable advice when recalling his own experience.

Britton was so wound up about being part of the biggest TV event in the world, with more than a billion estimated viewers, “He said, like, ‘I blacked out during and after every punt. ... There was a couple of times I didn’t know what happened,’” Dustin said. “He said it was a so surreal feeling.”

With Super Bowl 50 foe Carolina having one of the league’s top punt returners in Ted Ginn Jr., Dustin said Britton told him, “‘I have to play an almost perfect game. I can’t mis-hit any balls. They’re asking me to (punt) the ball out of bounds’ on at least four of five of his eight or nine punts” to avoid Ginn.

But Britton’s successful punting, big brother added, “Hardly allowed any return yards” from Ginn, with Britton attributing his success, despite the blackouts, “‘probably to muscle memory.’”

As a result of Britton’s experience, “I just made sure I was really focusing,” Dustin said about his two punts for a whopping 50-yard



average. “I wanted to be very much in the moment.”

Steelers Super Bowls

Recalling “so much media” coverage for his two Super Bowl experiences, Craig added, “It was constant, but it was fun, high energy.”

Now in his mid-60s, helping improve the punting and kicking skills of a select number of high

school top talents in Nashville, Craig described his gameday as “an out-of-body experience because it is The Super Bowl.

“It was an adrenalin rush the whole time.”

(Repeated attempts to contact Britton Colquitt for this story were unsuccessful).

(Above left) Punter/kick-holder Dustin Colquitt proudly elevates the Super Bowl LIV Lombardi Trophy, which was earned by his Kansas City Chiefs just days before, for thousands of fans to see during the team’s championship celebration parade in downtown Kansas City.

(Above right) A poster capturing then Pittsburgh Steelers punter Craig Colquitt in action with accompanying photos of the two Super Bowl rings he earned (SB XIII and SB XIV) along with one of his favorite Bible verses.

(Left) Punter/kick holder Britton Colquitt, right, and future Hall of Fame quarterback Peyton Manning display their matching Super Bowl 50 rings earned after their Denver Broncos defeated the Carolina Panthers 24-10 Feb. 7, 2016.

Thunder Road

From page 6

Newport outlaw.”

In his mission to outrun the law, Gunter reportedly lost control of his car, struck a tree stump and the vehicle ended up in the Holston River, along with 20 cases of whiskey.

“The law never did stop,” Harvey said. “I went up there and I found him hanging on a limb in the creek, drowned.”

Smith’s interviews and investigations into the legend took him down very similar roads. In his own writings, he mentioned Fitzgerald, describing him as “a Farragut farmer” who “went to his grave swearing, absolutely believing, and persuading many others that he saw with his own eyes that car swerve off Kingston Pike and into a Lenoir City Utilities Board switching station.”

Smith also detailed exhaustive research fellow freelance writer Kate Clabough made, investigating the “true story” on which the movie was ultimately based.

“Clabough checked newspaper microfilms, police reports and funeral home records,” Smith wrote. “From the very beginning, Grant McGarity, longtime head of the Knoxville office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, told Clabough he had always heard the real subject of Mitchum’s movie was from Cocke County.

“This was logical, since Newport had for many years been the nation’s capital of moonshining,” Smith added.

“Following that lead, Clabough sent a letter to the editor of The Newport Plain Talk. It was a short note, saying she was looking for the identity of the person in the movie Thunder Road.

“Within days, Clabough received an unsigned letter, written on two

sides of lined notebook paper in a neat script, probably that of an elderly woman. It was postmarked Knoxville. It said the facts, “as told by my mother,” were that “the person in Thunder Road was from Mountain Rest in Upper Cosby, now in the National Park. Pinkney Gunter was a maker of moonshine. His son, Rufus, was the ‘runner’ and delivery man.

“After Rufus’ death,” the letter continued, “The family was approached by Mitchum’s people about signing a release to make a movie based on their son’s exploits. At first, his father refused, but eventually his mother did sign the release.”

Then Clabough got a call from Cocke County Circuit Court Judge Ben Hooper. “Thunder Road was based on a man named Rufus Gunter,” Hooper further confirmed to Clabough. “He didn’t die like Mitchum’s character, but he certainly lived like him.”

Hooper said in January 1953, Gunter was being chased on the Asheville Highway, heading toward Knoxville, when he got to the J. Will Taylor Bridge.

Harvey, who also was interviewed by Fred Brown of the Knoxville News Sentinel, reiterated the details for that journalist.

“It was ice cold and Rufe was red hot from driving that car,” he told Brown. “He jumped for it. When he hit the water, he took a cramp and went under. It took me a week to find him.”

“The words of Mitchum’s song are so vivid — and tied to the roads we drive every day — that in our minds many of us have seen that Ford Coupe leave the Kingston Pike at 90 and flip into that switching station a hundred times,” Smith wrote.

Site still questioned

However, Larry Bowers, staff writer and former editor for the



Cleveland Banner, wrote a column in 2016 in which he challenged the long-standing legend of the alleged crash site.

“My memories, and information and I have received since (the purported crash), contradict the location of the actual crash ... if there was a crash. Many think the story is fictional, but others who lived in West Knoxville and surrounding communities claim it is real.

“I worked and spent considerable time in West Knoxville in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More than one person told me there was an actual crash, but they say it wasn’t on Bearden Hill. They say it happened at a power line sub-



Bowers

station at the intersection of Watt Road and Kingston Pike — about 2 miles beyond the Willow Creek and Fox Den golf courses in Farragut.

“It is an inconvenient truth that there is no record of a crash involving a moonshiner on or around April 1, 1954. That would have been too easy. Still, old-time residents of Farragut remember such a crash. This could be wishful thinking on their part, but all of the stories I’ve been told are very similar,” Bowers wrote.

“Regardless of which story is true, or not true, the ‘Thunder Road’ film, and its accompanying ballad, have become legends since they were released in the 1950s.

“The sad thing about the whole scenario is, if the story is true, no one knows the identity of “the mountain boy” who died in the tragic crash,” Bowers added.

“With that in mind, it would be best to think the story is all fiction.”

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