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OBITUARIES

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RECOGNITION

Hoppy Kercheval: Honorary degree recipient

BY JIM BISSETT JBissett@DominionPost.com

Hoppy Kercheval, the West Virginia broadcaster who has delivered the news to radio listeners across the Mountain State since 1976, is finding himself in different (for him) circumstances these days.

That's because he's now the news himself.

Here's what happened.

Two weeks ago, his alma mater of WVU announced it was awarding him an honorary degree, which will happen Saturday during December Commencement at the Coliseum.

And Wednesday, Kercheval, who turns 70 in February, announced his retirement from the West Virginia Radio Corp., thus ending a tenure behind the microphone that began when he was a student at the university - and really before that.

He'll still be on the air with commentary and other projects, including his current "3 Guys Before the Game" podcast. He's just scaling it back a bit. On Jan. 6, WAJR's current host of "Talk of the Town," Dave Wilson, will take over as the Morgantown co-anchor of his daily statewide phone-in show, along with T.J. Meadows, who will co-host from Charleston.

"I couldn't have asked for a better job or employer," he said of his career that began at Morgantown's WAJR and evolved over the years as the medium of radio has evolved.

He had been working there part-time while still in school.

SEE HOPPY, A-2

MON COUNTY

'Major highway' power line coming through

BY BEN CONLEY BConley@DominionPost.com

While the exact route remains a work in progress, Monongalia County appears to be in the path of a major power transmission project.

On Wednesday, representatives of NextEra Energy Transmission sat down with members of the Monongalia County Commission to discuss

the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL), a 105-mile transmission line that's going to run from Greene County, Pa., to Frederick County, Va.

"That's going to be a 500-kV line, which is one of the big, major transmission lines. Think about it as if it's a major highway for energy and electrons," NextEra Energy Transmission Senior Director Kait-

lin McCormick said, adding, "We have a small component in Pennsylvania, then we'll be crossing through West Virginia, into Maryland, back into West Virginia and then ending in Virginia."

When pressed for any specifics in terms of potential location, McCormick explained NextEra was looking at the northern part of the county,

stating, "I think we're primarily looking at areas that don't have zoning districts within them."

PJM Interconnection manages the electrical transmission system for a 13-state region that runs from Michigan to Tennessee and from Illinois to Delaware. West Virginia is included in that region. So is the

SEE MAJOR, A-2

WHO WANTS A TREAT?



Photos by Ron Rittenhouse

Animal Friends of North Central West Virginia receives \$10,000 from WVU Medicine's Healing Hounds on Wednesday. The donation was made in support of the new, 6,700 square foot animal shelter the nonprofit plans to build in Morgantown. Front, left to right: Kimberly Hartsell, Irene Muffly (with Maverick), Joanna Frankel-Collins (with Atlas) and Sally Hazard (with Vinnie). Back, left to right: Kathy Orosz, Katie Short, Kelley Owen (with Stormy), Anthony Condia, Pam Hagedorn (with Guinness), Nancy Beckner and Jennifer Johnson.

WVU's 'Healing Hounds' give \$10K to Animal Friends of North Central West Virginia

BY JIM BISSETT JBissett@DominionPost.com

Everything went to the dogs Wednesday afternoon at WVU Medicine Children's.

It couldn't have been better. Maverick, a spirited Labrador Retriever, kept showing his backside to the camera - just because he could.

Stormy, the not-so-shy Beagle, charmed everyone she met with her nuzzles and wagging tail.

Atlas, another Gold Lab, was his usual laconic, laidback self, plopping down on his side in the middle of the proceedings.

Vinnie the Labradoodle was a good sport, wearing the Santa hat as he did for (almost) the whole time.

And Guinness? Well, the English spaniel lived up to his breed, with a British air of bearing.

The canine quintet is among the hospital's hardest-working staffers, on two legs or four, said Anthony Condia, WVU Health's chief marketing and communications officer.

All are therapy dogs in the hospital's Healing Hounds division - and all had their best paws forward for a very special event at Children's, that afternoon.

The two-legged contingent of the group presented a \$10,000 check to Animal Friends of North Central West Virginia, which is building a new 6,700 square foot, no-kill animal shelter next to its current one on Brewer Road.

Coming in at a cost of \$2 million, every dog dollar and every cat coin helps, shelter director Katie Cook said.

SEE TREAT, A-2



Getting acquainted before the big event - Joanna Frankel-Collins (with Atlas, from left), Pam Hagedorn (with Maverick), Kimberly Hartsell and Irene Muffly (with Guinness).



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UPDATE

# Palmer: Law firm standoff resolution was 'best case scenario'

DPNews@DominionPost.com  
 Monongalia County Sheriff Perry Palmer is crediting his deputies and other first responders who were on the scene during a nearly six-hour standoff with a man who walked into the Cranston & Edwards law firm with a gun Monday afternoon. "It was a joint effort," he said. "Everybody did a great job to diffuse a serious situation." According to a statement made by the law firm, the man, Jeremy Harp, entered the building at 1200 Dorsey Ave. at 12:30 p.m. to confess to a charge of receiving child pornography – a case for which his brother, Christopher Harp, had been tried and convicted this past April. In a statement that next day, U.S. Attorney

William Ihlenfeld, whose office prosecuted the case against Christopher Harp, discounted the confession. Meanwhile, Monday's incident remains under investigation and no charges have been filed to date, the sheriff said. Jeremy Harp was led out the building and taken to the hospital by ambulance, but Palmer didn't know Wednesday if the man was still a patient. He's glad to know that the situation "was resolved in the best way possible," he said. "The negotiators and everybody involved were right on point," he said. "No one was hurt and the suspect was taken to the hospital. This is how you want these things to end. This was a best-case scenario."

## JEREMY HARP WAS LED OUT THE BUILDING AND TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL BY AMBULANCE ...

TREAT

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 he said. "This is a generous community," the director said. "We're so very grateful and appreciative." The hospital, in turn, is grateful to Cook and the volunteers who staff the shelter. Many of those healing hounds were rescues through Brewer Road, in fact, which isn't lost on Condia. "Our therapy dogs are indispensable members of our care team,"

CLARIFY

The Dominion Post strives to publish accurate information. If a factual error does occur, notify Managing Editor Katie McDowell by emailing editor@dominionpost.com

Dominion Post.com

A headline in Wednesday's print edition incorrectly stated a man was arrested following Monday's standoff with sheriff's deputies at a Morgantown law firm. The man involved surrendered to police, and no charges have been filed.

"The unconditional love they show our patients every day compelled us to make this gift – knowing that there are so many abused, unwanted and abandoned animals in need." And this therapy dog business, as it turns out, never stops. Vinnie was in the process of trying to decide if he wanted to actually wear that Santa hat after all when a young patient, there with her mom for an appointment, spied him from across the lobby. "Oooh, doggie! Can I pet him?" Vinnie abandoned the hat, to lock on with matters of heart. He wagged his tail and put his paw on her arm. He was working, you see.

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MAJOR

FROM PAGE A-1

Washington D.C., area, for which PJM is predicting a dramatic increase in the number of power-hungry data centers coming online. "PJM is working through a lot of stuff and a lot of changes as demand for electricity changes, the uses change, particularly there are some major industrial users that are looking for things. It's a total change in landscape and we're just a piece of that," McCormick said.

NextEra's MARL project was one of several selected by PJM to help meet the region's shifting power demands. NextEra Energy Transmission MidAtlantic will finance, develop, own, construct, operate and maintain the transmission line, which is expected to take two years to construct. "The way those work, it's not affiliated with any one generation source or any one power source. It's just working to help provide a backbone to move electricity across the grid and through the region,"

McCormick said. "That's a major capital investment here in the region and in the state and in Mon County as well." In January, postcards will go out to anyone living within a miles-wide swath identified for the potential route. That study area will be centered around existing transmission corridors. McCormick said the company wants to run the line parallel to existing infrastructure, if possible. "We recognize some of those transmission lines have been there for decades and where we can't

parallel, we're looking to go around some of the human environment that's built up around that," she said. The company will ultimately need a 200-foot wide right of way. Interactive online maps and a survey will be part of the public feedback process, as will a public comment period and open meetings tentatively planned for the March/April 2025 timeframe. For more information, check out midatlanticrosilienylink.com.

HOPPY

FROM PAGE A-1

The Coop, Kermit and Woody

It didn't take long for Kercheval, class of 1977 from the then Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism, to be named news director. For a kid who grew up on a dairy farm in outlying Jefferson County, crouched in front of his family's console radio, that was a big deal – because Mr. Marconi's wondrous invention was a big deal.

TV then in pre-cable, pre-dish, pre-streaming West Virginia, was a black-and-white exercise in snowy, static-filled angst. Tin foil on rabbit ears only got you so far. But radio?

Radio was vibrant with rock 'n' roll, and all those voices, from all those personalities, male and female, alike. Radio was the farm report, which was required listening for those who worked the fertile soil of the Eastern Panhandle, including the Kercheval family, and their kid with his ears attuned elsewhere.

Radio was the goofy-but-smooth Woody O'Hara, who was on the air at WXVA in Charles Town and on his way to Morgantown – where he would soon pair up with radio legend Jack Fleming for three decades of WVU football and basketball broadcasts.

Radio was Chicago's WCFL (the "Super CFL") and all the other 50,000-watt, standalone AM powerhouses that Kercheval could dial in at night on that console. Heck, with each twirl of the dial, Hoppy remembered, his professional desire to do what they did would glow, just like the vacuum tubes in the back of the imagination machine.

Radio was ... Steve Cooper.

A microphone in Morgantown

Hoppy's buddy was one year ahead – make that, light-years ahead – of him in school. All the Jefferson County kids thought The Coop was the coolest, because his after-school job was at WXVA. "Steve's voice had already changed. Just a big, mature-sounding voice. I went up to him at lunch



Submitted photo

Hoppy Kercheval poses for a photo.

one day and just asked him. I said, 'Hey, Steve. How do I get on the radio?'"

Pretty easily, as it turned out.

You just show up during The Coop's on-air shift, and he rips the weather report off the teletype and hands it to you to read.

Even if your voice hadn't changed.

"It was like" – Kercheval said, affecting a Kermit the Frog-sounding, nasally timbre – "Look for partly sunny skies tomorrow ..."

He read the weather every day. His voice changed. He got hired.

And when he came to Morgantown to study journalism at WVU, the first thing he did was look up Woody at WAJR, who helped get him hired there, too.

The radio-crazy kid from Jefferson County was 19 and right where he wanted to be.

He was part of the conversation, emanating from the console.

Giving a respectful listen

That's the thing, he said. The conversation.

Conversation has long been a staple of "MetroNews Talkline," his phone-in show that is carried along the 60 stations of the news network he helped found in Morgantown. On any given day, Sens.

Joe Manchin and Shelly Moore Capito will call.

Outgoing Gov. Jim Justice and Gov.-Elect Patrick Morrisey ring up Hoppy from time to time.

More importantly, Ann from Parkersburg might check in with an opinion or observation, along with John from Blacksburg, Pat from Lavalette – and all the other regulars who are part of the cast of voices that make the show, well, go.

The talk may range from tariffs to Babydog to the fortunes of WVU football, and sometimes all at once, in that same call, the host marvels.

Not pontificating. Conversing.

"Well, we are having a conversation," he said. "I'm interested in what people have to say."

Which is what makes him good on the air; said Dale Miller, the former president of the West Virginia Radio Corp., who initially hired him.

"Hoppy's a great communicator because he's a great listener," Miller told The Dominion Post previously.

"He's a journalist more than anything, and that's what journalists do," Miller continued.

"They listen. Hoppy gives you that courtesy and respect."

Hail to the other voices, from on high

The subject of this story initially didn't know what to make of the recent conversation he had off-air with Gordon Gee.

The president of WVU personally called to inform him of the honorary degree.

The radio guy's response? "I was stunned, to tell you the truth."

Kercheval has never stopped appreciating the journalism school, which has now morphed into a multidisciplinary endeavor known as the Reed School of Media and Communications, in the WVU College of Creative Arts and Media.

Branding and delivery systems change, the alumnus and broadcaster said, but caring, committed professors remain the same – no matter what.

In his time, there was Frank Kearns, who covered the world for CBS before coming back home to Morgantown and his alma mater, to teach the craft to budding broadcasters in Martin Hall.

And Paul Atkins, the wily, former cops and general assignment newspaper reporter known as "The Flying A," for his signature red pen that would force and cajole Journalism 101 students into making those facts and quotes work together the way they're supposed to.

Guy Stewart, also. Stewart, the dean of the school, knew how to cover city hall – and craft effective advertising copy – all in the same clack of the keyboard on his Underwood typewriter.

"Just solid professionals to learn from," Kercheval said.

The conferring of Doc Hoppy

In case you're wondering, the name on that honorary diploma won't be his given one, which is Harvey Holbert Kercheval III.

Nope, he'll be Dr. Hoppy Kercheval, instead, in family respect of the forever-nickname bestowed by his big brother, who loved Hopalong Cassidy reruns on that snowy back-and-white back on the farm.

"That is pretty much who I am," he said.

Besides, he also has a craft beer named after him. A brewery in Charleston did the honors.

And, fitting for Saturday's academic ceremonies, he's also, of course, a dean himself.

Kercheval literally is known from the hills and hollows as "West Virginia's Dean of Broadcasters," even if he politely and modestly declines to ascribe to it.

"Some people might call me that, and it is flattering, but I don't call me that," he said.

"What I really am is just a guy who worked hard and got lucky. I've been blessed with this job and career."

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