

**By SAM HATCHER**

Learning of the death of Col. J.B. Leftwich has caused I'm sure many former students, as I, to stop and reflect on days long gone by that were spent on "The Hill" under his guidance.

"The Hill" at Castle Heights Military Academy was not only the highest point in the city of Lebanon (there's a bronze marker there that speaks to this), it was also the center of all operations for this private school that opened in 1902 and closed some 84 years later.

It was on "The Hill" that students gathered in military formation to march to meals, chapel assemblies, Sunday parades, athletic events and for other reasons.

It was also on "The Hill" that Col. Leftwich taught math classes and coached his sport — journalism. He was in charge of all publications at Heights and assumed the role of public relations director for the school.

Cadets who worked on *The Cavalier* staff, the school newspaper, or *The Adjutant*, the yearbook, were his students. Journalism was his passion and he made it theirs. So much was this the case that his students called him coach.

He taught news writing, photography, layout and design and other topics associated with journalism that sometimes are overlooked in a classroom like ethics, truth in reporting, getting the other side of the story and such. And no one ever stressed deadlines more. Deadlines weren't made to be missed was his rule.

He was a stickler for cropping photos. He wanted the eye drawn directly to the photo's primary subject matter. I always thought he was probably the first to say "a picture's worth a thousand words."

Col. Leftwich made journalism and publishing a school newspaper as much like the real thing as anyone ever. The Cavalier repeatedly won highest honors in high school newspaper

## **Col. Leftwich will be missed**

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competitions. His work became the bar for others.

While many of his students, and there were literally hundreds, chose not to enter the field of journalism, others did. Among his students are listed journalists who have gained national and regional recognition, a Pulitzer prize winner and others who have registered successful careers in the media.

I'm sure Col. Leftwich liked teaching math, but his heart was always in journalism. And for good reason. He was an accomplished journalist himself. He at one time was a regular columnist for The Tennessean and most recently The Lebanon Democrat. He was also an excellent photographer and often toured around campus with a camera in hand capturing the life of cadets as it may appear in the classroom, day dreaming under a shade tree, or competing on the athletic field.

Col. Leftwich never lost interest in his students. Long after they graduated he managed to stay in touch, and they with him as well.

He was a longtime friend and mentor.

And he will be dearly missed.

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