

# ADVOCATE

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Inn — off Exit 38 (now the site of Baymont Inn) and operated The Charcoal House, a popular meeting spot for many years. They then built a motel off Exit 41 with an attached restaurant, The Haymarket, the site of the new GoTime complex.

In later years, Handy was also instrumental in the development of the Sheppard Family Basketball Court at the London-Laurel Wellness Park, which recognizes former UK basketball standouts, Jeff Sheppard and wife Staci, as well as their daughter Madison and son, Reed Sheppard.

Reed Sheppard played for the University of Kentucky for one season before being a #3 draft pick currently playing for the Houston Rockets. The park sign recognizes all regional and state team members from Laurel County.

Danny Evans, who worked with Handy as a prosecutor for 25 years, described Handy as not only a co-worker but a mentor and close friend.

“Tom hired me as Assistant

Commonwealth’s Attorney in 1978 and I worked with him until his retirement in 2003. He was outstanding in the legal field, in jury trials, an excellent public speaker and a great friend,” Evans said.

Handy’s dedication to serving justice and serving victims was an impactful role as Commonwealth’s Attorney. He prosecuted many high profile cases including murders.

“Tom would take on difficult tasks that he didn’t have to, such as several capital murder cases,” Evans continued. “He was a mentor to me. Every young attorney needs a Tom Handy in their life.”

That sentiment was seconded by members of the London-Laurel Tourist Commission. Executive Director Kim Collier praised Handy’s contributions to the commission and tourism in general.

“Tom was a great leader and mentor. He always made thoughtful decisions about the business of the tourist commission. He was a wealth of knowledge about the tourism industry and after 47 years with the commission, I would call him an expert on the sub-

ject. Tom never backed down from a good debate and man, those debates could be long,” she said. “I learned a lot working with Tom over the last 14 years and I am thankful to have had that opportunity. I know I can speak for the entire commission when I say we will all miss his guidance and friendship. Our prayers are with his family at this time.”

London-Laurel County Tourist Commission Chair Jamie Harrison also commended Handy for his dedication to the community.

“Tom Handy’s passing is a profound loss for the community. He was deeply passionate about growing London and Laurel County into a true tourist destination. His leadership, insight and dedication left a lasting mark and his guidance and wisdom will be greatly missed by all knew him.

“Besides his volunteer work in tourism, Tom was someone who cared about people and the future of this community,” Harrison continued. “His vision and commitment will continue to inspire those who carry his



Tom Handy stands with his wife Bonnie. | PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

efforts forward. His legacy will live on in the progress he helped create and the lives he touched.”

Commonwealth’s Attorney Jackie Steele volunteered to work under Handy, coming on board in 2002, just prior to Handy’s retirement.

“I came in and worked under Danny Evans as Commonwealth’s Attorney. Growing up, I heard of Tom Handy — he was known as a skilled prosecutor and he set a bar

that others all over the state followed,” Steele said. “He gave back to the community in many ways — through Operation UNITE, Leadership Tri-County, child advocacy, victims rights, and tourism. It was an honor to work with him. He was always looking to do good for the community and for other people. He has left some large footprints that will never be filled.”

“A dedicated public servant and Christian man who

lived his faith, Mr. Handy was at the helm during Operation UNITE’s transformative years,” stated UNITE President & CEO Tom Vicini. “He witnessed its creation and growth to be the most effective and comprehensive anti-drug program in Kentucky — if not the nation. He put aside political and socio-economic differences to bring positive change for all citizens of our great Commonwealth.”

In expressing their condolences, Leadership Tri-County stated in a Facebook post, “His legacy lives on in the nearly 600 alumni who continue to lead, serve and work toward a more unified Southeastern Kentucky. He also is the namesake for our Laurel County student scholarship given each year. Thank you, Tom!”

Handy is survived by his wife, Bonnie; his son, Starr Handy and wife Amy; daughter Dennie Beth Mills and husband Matt; brother, Jim Handy and wife Kathy; and two nephews, Jason Handy and Jimmie Handy.

No memorial arrangements were available at press time Tuesday.

# WEDDLE

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arraignment at 9 a.m. Wednesday.

Weddle was indicted March 31 by a Laurel County grand jury on four counts related to alleged campaign finance violations. As previously reported, the charges stem from accusations that Weddle made unlawful campaign contributions in December 2022 to the Andy Beshear gubernatorial campaign and the Kentucky Democratic Party, exceeding state limits.

In the newly filed memorandum supporting the request, Weddle’s attorney argues that Laurel County is not the proper location for the case to be prosecuted because Weddle was out of the country at the time the donations are reported to have occurred.

The filing includes as an exhibit a MYBA charter agreement for a yacht indicating Weddle’s party was cruising the Bahamas from Dec. 22 through Dec. 31.

“Venue for this case is clearly improper in Laurel County,” the motion states, asserting that Kentucky law

requires such cases to be handled either in Franklin County or in the county where the contributions were “solicited, made, or accepted.”

According to the filing, none of those actions occurred in Laurel County.

“It is beyond dispute that the contributions at issue were not ‘solicited, made, or accepted’ in Laurel County,” the motion states, further claiming the contributions were made from outside the United States and processed through an out-of-state financial service.

The defense also argues that both the Beshear campaign and the Kentucky Democratic Party are based in Franklin County, reinforcing its claim that the case should be transferred there.

“Thus, the only statutorily permitted venue for this prosecution is indisputably somewhere other than Laurel County,” the filing states.

The motion goes on to request that the court formally transfer the case, stating that “the Court should transfer the case to the appropriate venue,” and concluding that “Franklin County appears to be the appropriate venue for this case all the way around.”

The filing also references the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance, noting that while the agency investigated the matter, it “has not made any referral of this matter for criminal prosecution,” and that its general counsel previously found Weddle’s conduct to be “unknowing.”

As previously reported, the indictment alleges Wed-

dle made more than 20 contributions using his personal credit card while listing other individuals as donors — a practice commonly referred to as “straw donations.” The reported totals included approximately \$18,000 to Beshear’s campaign and \$75,000 to the Kentucky Democratic Party, both above legal limits.

In a prior statement, Weddle’s attorney said the contributions were identified and refunded, and described the charges as politically motivated.

When reached for comment, Lauren Adams, communications director for Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman, said the office could not comment at

this time.

“The Kentucky Supreme Court’s rule on trial publicity limits information the office can provide publicly and at this point, we are unable to comment further,” Adams said.

As of press time, Weddle is still scheduled to appear in Laurel Circuit Court Wednesday morning for arraignment.

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