

THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

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MONDAY PROFILE

William 'Jack' Smith celebrates 103rd birthday amid second major pandemic of his lifetime

Brooksville native is a veteran, retired machinist, lifelong MSU fan

BY SLIM SMITH
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Wayne Smith isn't sure how aware his dad is aware of COVID-19.

It wouldn't be the first time William "Jack" Smith was unaware of a global pandemic.

Born in 1917, Jack Smith was a year old when the Spanish Flu devastated the United States and Europe, claiming an estimated 50 million lives.

On Friday, Smith turned 103, which means he's seen two of the greatest pandemics in history. Staff at Windsor Place in Columbus, where Smith has resided since 2014, marked the occasion with a party including a birthday cake in Mississippi State colors, whose sports teams Smith has followed with enthusiasm for decades.

Smith wasn't quite up to an interview, but his son said he has a pretty good idea of how his dad would respond to questions about the pandemic.

"I don't think he would be worried about it," said Wayne Smith, 78. "I never remember him ever being worried about anything. He is a Christian man. He had his trials and tribulations like everybody else. But he would just turn it over the Lord and not worry about. I think that's part of why he's lived so long."

Jack Smith grew up near Brooksville and lived there all his life except for his years in the military during World War II.

"He was a welder and machinist," Wayne said. "He helped build the Babcock & Wilcox building in West Point. They finished the job at noon, and after lunch they offered him a job."

Jack worked at the plant, which made industrial boilers until its closure in 2016, for 40 years, retiring at age 63.

"He carpoled from Noxubee County to West Point for 40 years," Wayne said. "Then, he and my mother started some greenhouses in Brooksville and had a very successful business."



Courtesy photo

William "Jack" Smith, a resident at Windsor Place in Columbus, celebrated his 103rd birthday Friday. He was 1-year-old when the Spanish Flu pandemic swept through the United States and Europe, which makes him one of the few people to live through the two of the greatest pandemics in modern history.

Jack and his wife, Lottie, were married for 81 years until she passed away in November 2018. She moved into Windsor Place in 2013. Jack followed a year later.

"They would eventually end up in the same room together where he would lovingly dote on his precious Lottie until her passing," said Misty Holder, the admission coordinator at Windsor Place.

Wayne, and his older sister, Faye Morgan, 81, both live in New Hope and visit their dad regularly.

He's still the same happy, gentle person they have known since childhood.

"He's always been a happy, jolly man," Wayne said. "He never was one to let things get him down. He persevered."

Today, Jack enjoys watching TV in his room, most notably MSU football games.

"He's been a State fan forever," Wayne said. "As a matter of fact, I think he got one of the first cowbells that ever came along."

See SMITH, 6A

UNDER THE CAPITOL DOME

Analysis: Same names, some new dynamics in Senate contest

Two items on ballot could increase voter turnout — the presidential race and a decision about a new Mississippi flag

BY EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS
The Associated Press

JACKSON — Mississippi's 2020 U.S. Senate race has the same top candidates as in 2018 — Republican incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith and challenger Mike Espy.



Hyde-Smith

The world is different because of the coronavirus pandemic, which puts new emphasis on the candidates' differences over health care policies.



Espy

The election dynamics are also different because this year's ballot has two items that could increase voter turnout — a presidential race and a yes-or-no decision about a new Mississippi flag.

Hyde-Smith defeated Espy in a November 2018 special election runoff to fill the final two years of a term started by longtime Republican Sen. Thad Cochran. She received about 54 percent to Espy's 46 percent.

At the time, Hyde-Smith had been in the Senate a few months. She is a former state lawmaker and was in her second term as Mississippi agriculture commissioner when then-Gov. Phil Bryant appointed her to temporarily serve when Cochran retired in early 2018 because of poor health.

Espy assembled a 2018 campaign on short notice, but he was already well known in Mississippi politics. He had been elected to the U.S. House in a Delta district in 1986, becoming the state's first Black congressman since Reconstruction. In 1993, then-President Bill Clinton chose Espy as U.S. secretary of agriculture. After

See ANALYSIS, 3A

Possible Starkville-MSU recycling partnership starting to take shape

Discussions include monitored drop-off site; curbside pickup not an option

BY TESS VRBIN
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Starkville is considering a partnership with Mississippi State University's recycling program after the city halted its own program, which operated at a financial loss.

City and MSU officials have come up with an idea of what that partnership would look like, but much is still to be decided, and it has to be both structured and financially feasible for the city, Ward 2 Alderman Sandra Sistrunk said.

"We don't know yet



Sistrunk

Spruill

what the hauling fees would be, but we've got more meetings (with MSU) next week," she said Friday.

Aldermen voted to indefinitely suspend the city's recycling program as of this month and did not include it in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget. The city had a contract with Waste Management to haul the collected recyclables to Tupelo, and the cost went up from about \$40,000 to about \$60,000 this year while revenues totaled only about

\$24,000, Sistrunk said. Sistrunk chairs an ad hoc committee that formed last year with the goal of improving the recycling program, and she first mentioned the potential partnership with MSU at the Sept. 15 board of aldermen meeting. MSU acknowledged the discussions in a press release Thursday. "The university has a

long history of effective collaboration with the city, but a recycling partnership would require some structure to make the proposal financially feasible," the release states.

Saunders Ramsey, MSU's executive director of Campus Services, did not respond to a request for comment.

See RECYCLING, 6A

WEATHER



Elijah Turner
Fourth grade, Heritage

High 83 Low 60

Mostly sunny
Full forecast on page 3A.

FIVE QUESTIONS

- 1 Weighing in at approximately three pounds, what is the most complex object in the known universe?
- 2 In 1891 Dr. James Naismith invented which indoor sports as a way for kids to exercise during a long, cold winter?
- 3 Which restaurant chain, founded by Mark, Donnie and Paul Wahlberg, is the subject of an A&E television series?
- 4 Which forward-thinking Russian ruler taxed any citizen with a beard, because being clean-shaven was all the rage in Europe in 1698?
- 5 What is the artistic term for the radiant light or halo that surrounds sacred or mythological figures in classical art?

Answers, 6B

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CALENDAR

Thursday through Saturday

■ **Welty Writers' Symposium:** Former U.S. poet laureate Natasha Trethewey and many more writers are featured in The W's virtual symposium. visit muw.edu/welty for details and link for live-streamed events.

Saturday

■ **Book signing:** Carolyn Haines and Miranda James sign copies of their new books, 2 p.m., Columbus Arts Council, 501 Main St.

LOCAL FOLKS



Ben Shannon is from Fort Walton Beach, Florida, goes to Mississippi State University and loves Jesus.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Oct. 20: Columbus City Council, 5 p.m., Municipal Complex, facebook.com/Cityof-ColumbusMS/
- Nov. 2: Lowndes County Board of Supervisors meeting, 9 a.m., Lowndes County Courthouse, facebook.com/LowndesCounty-Mississippi/
- Nov. 16: Lowndes County Board of Supervisors meeting, 9 a.m., Lowndes County Courthouse, facebook.com/LowndesCounty-Mississippi/



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