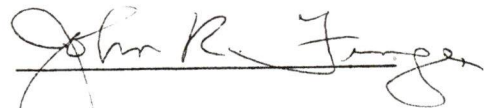


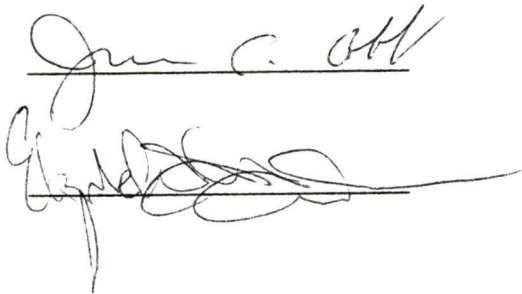
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Bradley Ellis Austin entitled "'A Dead Old Dump Without It:' East Tennessee Intercollegiate Athletics during the Depression." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in history.



John Finger, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

**'College would be a Dead Old Dump Without It:'
East Tennessee Intercollegiate Athletics
During the Depression**

**A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Bradley Ellis Austin
August 1997**

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Abstract

In the late 1920s and early 1930s Carson-Newman College, Maryville College, East Tennessee State Teacher's College, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and the University of Chattanooga all followed national trends and abolished their women's intercollegiate programs, replacing them with extensive intramural programs designed to deter competitiveness and promote feminine virtues. The University of the South had no women's programs to discontinue.

Similarly, these six East Tennessee schools maintained their men's intercollegiate athletic programs despite facing staggering financial stresses throughout the 1930s. Influenced by a culture celebrating sports heroes, these six schools' leaders expected similar benefits from their athletic offerings and used the same general justifications for keeping them. The administrators expected the men's intercollegiate programs to attract, entertain, and inspire students, generate true student athletes, and link alumni and townspeople more directly with the schools, all the while paying for themselves. The administrators set themselves up for disappointment, and several of them felt it.

The intramural programs did not curb the women's competitive urges, and while the men's intercollegiate programs did help in all of the designated areas, they did not solve the many problems facing the colleges and universities during the Depression. Despite their expensive and recognizably modern athletic programs, these six colleges still had problems with unstable enrollments, athletes underachieving academically, and alumni interested only in the athletic programs.

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Chapter One: Context

"We are handicapped to the extent that we cannot purchase even necessities for the maintenance of the school."--Charles Sherrod, 1934

"If it were not for the increasing demand of the sports-loving public, I should not attempt to cause our teams to play," wrote Milligan College president Clement Eyler to a colleague in 1933. During the depths of the Great Depression residents of Johnson City, Tennessee, clamored for athletic competitions between their city's two colleges, demanding contests that had not occurred for many years. The simple fact that colleges continued athletic programs at all during the Depression, much less considered expanding them, might surprise some, but a close examination reveals that almost all colleges and universities did indeed maintain most of their intercollegiate athletic teams and that some actually created additional teams. The unique financial distresses engendered by the Depression notwithstanding, these institutions of higher education offered many of the same justifications for athletics that resound across the countryside today. Not surprisingly, the testimonials more often resonated from the administration buildings and oversight committee rooms than from the faculty's ivory towers, as administrators hoped and expected specific benefits from their athletic programs. And as is the case today, alumni, students and people beyond the immediate

college community proclaimed allegiances to the schools, living vicariously through "their" college athletic teams, finding something positive in a literally depressed world.¹

East Tennessee's college administrators had grown accustomed during the early twentieth century to having recognizably modern intercollegiate athletic programs for their male and female students. More than ever before, American society embraced and idolized sporting heroes and heroines during the 1920s, and this fascination with athletic accomplishment also manifested itself on the nation's many college campuses. In the late 1920s, however, another national movement, one spearheaded by female physical educators, labored to end all intercollegiate athletic opportunities for women because they believed the female athletes could not stand the competition and the physical strain related to these contests. East Tennessee's colleges and universities followed this trend and had abolished all intercollegiate women's sports by 1932, often replacing the intercollegiate teams with intramural programs designed to mold the female students into what society considered "proper" women.

In contrast, the colleges' decision-makers continued to fund and emphasize their men's intercollegiate athletic programs despite the debilitating effects the

¹ Clement M. Eyler to Charles C. Sherrod, 30 September 1933, Charles C. Sherrod Papers, Folder 8, Box 23, ACC 59, Archives and Special Collections, Sherrod Library, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Depression was having on their college's overall budgets. These administrators and oversight committees expected their men's athletic teams, especially football, to serve as effective advertisements for their schools, attracting students to their campuses. They also believed that the teams provided much-needed diversions for their students while also fostering school spirit among the spectators and creating a class of knightly scholar-athletes. Finally, the administrators expected that the sports teams would remain largely self-supporting and would maintain the alumni's interest in their respective alma maters, thereby leading to more significant measures of moral and financial support from them.

In almost every case during the Depression, the East Tennessee college administrators got less than they had expected from their men's athletic programs. Their progressive goals of shaping female athletes into noncompetitive women went just as unrealized as their plans to generate legions of scholar-athletes qualified for Rhodes scholarships. While the teams attracted some students, entertained many while they were in school, and kept alumni interest levels high after graduation, they also prepared the students and alumni, not to mention the local populations, to support one auxiliary part of the colleges while virtually ignoring the other, more important academic component during its hour of greatest need.

The Colleges:

Six East Tennessee colleges and universities provide the evidence for these conclusions: Carson-Newman College, East Tennessee State Teachers College (later East Tennessee State University), Maryville College, the University of the South (also known as "Sewanee"), the University of Chattanooga (later the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga), and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. These schools, selected for their East Tennessee homes that could provide the foundation for legitimate conclusions and for their diversity of sizes and sources of funding, followed somewhat parallel paths during the Depression and their leaders made very similar decisions concerning intercollegiate athletics, keeping most of their men's but none of their women's intercollegiate programs throughout the 1930s. The University of Tennessee and East Tennessee State were state schools and received a significant portion of their funding from the state legislature. In contrast, Carson-Newman, Maryville, and the University of the South have always been church-affiliated institutions (Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian respectively), and they have always relied on the sponsoring churches, private gifts and student-related revenue for financial survival. The University of Chattanooga was a privately-funded, independent university during this period.

Though a state school like the University of Tennessee, East Tennessee State did not share many other similarities with the state's flagship university in the 1930s. Instead, it more closely resembled Maryville College, the University of the South, and Carson-Newman in terms of student enrollment, small-town setting and, as a teacher's college, overall institutional mission.

Because these small private colleges relied heavily on tuition for operating expenses, varying enrollments could play havoc with their budgets. Including "summer school students not enrolled elsewhere" and "specials," Carson-Newman educated 606 students in the 1927-28 academic year, fifty more than two years earlier. In contrast, during the 1929-30 academic year only 449 students attended Carson-Newman, and the school did not witness a dramatic increase in enrollment until 1936 when there were 571 students. From 1936 through the end of the decade Carson-Newman enjoyed a relatively stable student population fluctuating between 556 and 606 students. The 1941 college catalog estimated that attending Carson-Newman cost between \$281 and \$340, depending on the residence hall, an estimated cost that was actually \$10 lower than the 1930 catalog's estimated cost. With the money generated by each student remaining more or less constant, the actual number of students Carson-Newman attracted and retained greatly influenced its financial situation.²

² *Bulletin of Carson-Newman College*, 1928, 1930-31, 1933-1940.

Maryville College was likewise dependent on students for its financial support, and it annually attracted hundreds more students than did Carson-Newman. Maryville College officials identified its ideal number of students as 800, and for the first half of the 1930s the school stayed close to that number, hovering within twenty-seven students on either side of 800 until 1935-36. Over the next two years, Maryville accepted many more students than officials deemed desirable, admitting 859 and 889 students, respectively, in order to meet its financial obligations. The college reduced enrollment to a more tolerable 829 the next year. Maryville's comparatively low cost, estimated in one source between \$232 and \$252, and its supposedly superior and prominently advertised athletic facilities were doubtlessly intended to entice students to apply and continue their education there.³

Much as Maryville did, the privately-funded University of Chattanooga (now the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga) increased its enrollment after 1935, but it did so even more dramatically, the regular student population growing over 50 percent during the 1930s from 413 to 631 students. Drawing students largely from the Chattanooga area in what appears to have been a rough 7:10 male

³ *Maryville College Bulletin*, 1929-1939; Ralph Waldo Lloyd "What Maryville College Aims to Be," , November 19, 1939. Presidents-Ralph Waldo Lloyd Addresses folder, President Ralph Waldo Lloyd, 1930-1961 Box, Special Collections and Archives, Maryville College; "Summary of College Expenses for Year of Nine Months in Tennessee Colleges," Folder 3, Box 26, Sherrod Papers, East Tennessee State University.

to female ratio, the University of Chattanooga's student population remained in the low to mid 400s from 1929-1930 until 1934-1935. Beginning in 1935-36, increasingly larger freshman and sophomore classes boosted enrollment until the University had its largest freshman fall enrollment ever in 1939-1940, registering 240 new students.⁴

Reacting to the Depression

Due in part to this stable college population and aided by the revenue generated annually by over 300 additional students enrolled in University-sponsored auxiliary educational programs, the University of Chattanooga entered the Depression with a stable financial foundation. In 1928-1929, the college closed the academic year with a positive balance for the first time in its history, and it continued its sound money management during the 1929-1930 academic year, ending it also without a deficit. Even the next year, with the country fully into the Depression, did not create the extraordinary financial strain one would expect, and the University came within \$500 of staying under budget. Ominously, however, the shortfall arose because numerous donors did not fulfill their pledges to the University.⁵

⁴ University of Chattanooga Bulletin, 1929-1940, *passim*, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Library, Special Collections.

⁵ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee of the University of Chattanooga, 1907-1942*, 5 June 1929, 4 June 1930, 9 June 1931,

This was only the harbinger of more bad times to follow. During the 1931-1932 academic year, and despite his expectation that the school would finish the year in the black, University President Alexander Guerry foresaw the financial troubles awaiting his institution in the near future. The future arrived much more quickly than President Guerry would have liked. In January, 1932, Guerry announced that the University of Chattanooga would offer no professors contracts until the school could accurately estimate the next year's student enrollment. Even then, those professors still employed would have to accept a five to ten percent pay cut. Furthermore, to raise additional revenue and to close all loopholes in his listing ship, Guerry made a revolutionary recommendation: "in the future all athletes must pay tuition," a suggestion which the Executive Committee of the university eagerly endorsed. Later in that same year, the Executive Committee saw fit to establish firmer boundaries for the reductions in teachers' pay, deciding that the school could not reduce salaries by more than ten percent in the fall semester and not by more than twenty-five percent in the spring. Unfortunately, these measures did not balance the university's budget as evidenced by Guerry's June 1933 declaration that it was "absolutely necessary" for the school to borrow \$15,000 to close its books. He further stated that the University would have to withdraw over \$36,000 from its endowment fund for 1933-34 expenses. The Depression had caught up with the University of Chattanooga in a hurry.⁶

The year 1934-1935 did not produce any financial miracles for the University of Chattanooga, and conditions compelled the administration to lower salaries yet again. Fortunately for all associated with the university, this marked the lowest point of the decade for the university. The increased student population in 1935-35 perhaps sparked the University's return towards solvency, because despite a general debt of over \$130,000, the university ended the year under its operating budget. This positive trend continued in 1936-37, a year President Guerry labeled "the best and most satisfactory college year in six years." In fact, Guerry felt confident enough in the University's situation to try to limit enrollment to around 525 students. Despite the Depression-related hardships seemingly shared by every large institution, educational or not, the University of Chattanooga navigated the troubled waters fairly well.⁷

In spite of a lesser dependence on tuition than the private schools, neither East Tennessee State nor the University of Tennessee remained insulated from the financial difficulties caused by the Depression. Indeed, just the opposite was true. Depending on the state for virtually all funding rendered these two schools subject to the cash flow problems that all governments and institutions suffered during the 1930s. The state legislature had to cut budgets across the board, and it did not spare the education system from the ax. Compounding the problem, the state could

⁶ Ibid., 28 January 1932, 1 June 1933.

⁷ Ibid., 15 May 1936, 6 May 1937.

not always deliver what little it actually allocated to the schools. Both East Tennessee State and the University of Tennessee struggled greatly during the Depression due to inadequate funding and unkept promises.

At a 1933 University of Tennessee Board of Trustees meeting, Acting President James D. Hoskins lamented, "During the past year due to financial conditions the State was unable to transmit the money appropriated by the Legislature. . . . Of the total appropriation for the two years [1931-1933] of \$1,449,250 only \$695,000 was received prior to June, 1933." Hoskins further reported that the University was operating on a budget of approximately 50 percent of the 1929 budget while serving the same number of students. He also noted the 20 percent salary cut and declared that the resulting "consolidations of departments, elimination of members of the faculty and employees, and reductions of activities . . . necessarily mean[t] an inadequate operation of the institution." A report of December 3, 1938, showed that, although the University was finally returning faculty salaries to pre-Depression levels, it still lacked \$350,000 in appropriations to fulfill the obligations of its \$1,000,000 budget. President Hoskins declared that the University had to "limit the number of students, raise fees, or obtain an increased appropriation" to prevent it from losing its "A" accreditation; in short, the financial problems threatened the university's very legitimacy. Throughout the 1930s all University of Tennessee academic programs and

departments felt the financial crunch of the Depression, yet, as we shall see, the university's men's athletic programs flourished and prospered.⁸

In the 1930s, East Tennessee State Teachers College maintained roughly a seven to three female to male ratio among its students. Not enough records have survived to allow precise conclusions about East Tennessee State's enrollment trends and how they affected the school's budgeting and decision-making processes, but it is clear that enrollment plunged a full 24 percent between 1930-31 and 1932-33 from 1,420 to 1,079, before apparently rebounding and stabilizing at around 1,250 for the rest of the decade. East Tennessee State received funding from the Tennessee legislature, so it was much less dependent on tuition revenue. Still, these enrollment figures help to place East Tennessee State in context with the other schools in this study.⁹

East Tennessee State Teachers College shared the troubles caused by insufficient state funding and suffered similar problems as the University of Tennessee. East Tennessee State president Charles Sherrod wrote in 1934:

The last legislature in its program of financial curtailment reduced the annual appropriation to the school for operation and maintenance from \$175,000 to \$56,000. This reduction necessitated the dropping of three faculty members from our teaching staff, two employees from our campus force, and the drastic reduction of salaries of our faculty and other employees . . . We are handicapped to the extent that we cannot purchase

⁸ Minutes of the Annual Meeting, Board of Trustees, the University of Tennessee, July 31, 1933, 280-281; Board of Trustee Minutes, December 3, 1938.

⁹ *East Tennessee State Teachers College Bulletin*, 1929-1934, 1938.

even necessities for the operation and maintenance of the school. . . Next year we will have less money on which to operate than we have had during the present year.

By June 1934, East Tennessee State could not afford to pay salaries, maintain its buildings, provide for its laboratories, or retain its staff. But just two years earlier, when these budgetary woes were taking shape and when the University of Tennessee was facing a tremendous and hardly secret financial crisis, East Tennessee State proudly announced the Board of Education's purchase of eighteen acres on which to build three new tennis courts and a new football stadium. It appears that the Depression had not affected athletic funding and construction as adversely as it had teachers' salaries and laboratory supplies.¹⁰

Despite its oversubscribed courses, Maryville College experienced budgetary difficulties during the Depression. Two historians of Maryville College have explained that the Depression prevented large contributions to the college's endowment, that the endowment was losing money on its investments anyway, and that tuition and fees "offered little or no relief." The college was forced to foreclose on many Maryville properties, which engendered hostility among the community towards the college. For the first time in the twentieth century the small college incurred operating debts, as reflected in the June 1933 report showing that despite the largest enrollment ever income fell 36 percent. Carson-Newman also felt the

¹⁰ Charles C. Sherrod to Hon. C.W. Creekbaum, 20 June 1934, Sherrod Papers, ACC, Box 35, Folder 6, East Tennessee State University Archives; *The Chalk Line* (Johnson City, TN) 16 Jan. 1932, 1.

strain, having to cut faculty salaries and even dismiss avowedly well-respected and well-liked professors because of the budgetary problems, while keeping most of its men's athletic programs.¹¹

In November, 1857, the Southern dioceses of the Episcopalian Church decided to establish the all-male University of the South on a 10,000 acre tract near the remote town of Sewanee in rural Franklin County, Tennessee rather than in the more urban alternatives of Atlanta, Chattanooga, Huntsville, and McMinnville.¹² This isolated setting proved to be both a blessing and a curse for the University. It certainly did provide a most pastoral and pleasant learning environment, but it also prevented the University of the South from relying, like the other institutions discussed, on its host area for many potential students. Therefore, Sewanee depended heavily on its own Military Academy for students and even more heavily on its far-reaching network of alumni and Episcopalian friends. Although it could attract students from as far away as Connecticut and from all the Southern states, the University attracted them in small numbers only and certainly not in droves. Perhaps it was the difficulty of finding the campus or perhaps it was Sewanee's more selective admissions policy coupled with its higher

¹¹ Carolyn C. Blair and Arda S. Walker, *By Faith Endowed: The Story of Maryville College, 1819-1994* (Maryville, TN: Maryville College Press, 1994), 222-23; Board of Trustee Minutes, Carson-Newman College, 16 March 1934, President's office's vault, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee.

¹² Reginald H. Helvenston, "A Common Heritage: Franklin County, Tennessee and the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee," 1970.

price tag, (almost three times as high as most of the other examined schools) but Sewanee consistently reported the lowest student population of these six schools. In 1928-29, Sewanee boasted an abnormally high, by its own standards, 345 students attending its theological school and its college, and throughout most of the 1930s the size of Sewanee's student population closely resembled the small classes of the early 1920s. From 1934-1938, for example, Sewanee's enrollment hovered between 221 and 239.¹³

As a private liberal-arts college, Sewanee's Depression-era financial situation was considerably affected by the size and pocketbooks of its student population, and the battle against Depression-era deficits was complicated by the diverse array of separate entities all working under one general budget, auxiliaries including among other projects a hospital, the military academy, a golf course, and a hotel. By fiscal year 1931 the University had a total operating deficit exceeding \$166,000, and the deficit grew another \$42,000 in 1932. The rate at which the debt ballooned slowed briefly from 1933-1935, but in 1936 the University ran a deficit of almost \$58,000, caused by a "general increase in operating expenses, mainly however, in the cost of athletics, library expense, and interest expense."¹⁴

¹³ *Bulletin of the University of the South: Abstract Proceedings of the Board of Trustees*, Vol. 33, Number 2, August 1938, 72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1932-1936, *passim*.

Sewanee's financial standing was growing less stable every year. University

Treasurer Telfair Hodgson reported in August 1936:

The outlook for the year 1936-37 is no more favorable than for the year just past, unless a much greater amount of gifts for operating expenses can be secured. There seems to be no immediate prospect of balancing the budget except by gifts for operating expenses and an increase in the number of students paying full charges. While some savings could be effected by curtailing activities, the budget can not be balanced by such means without seriously affecting the standing of the University as an education institution.¹⁵

The next year's deficit was just over \$4,000, some \$52,000 less than 1936's, largely because of an infusion of the type of gifts Mr. Hodgson's reports deemed necessary to Sewanee's survival. Although special projects caused substantial operating deficits over the next two years, by 1939, a year after the college launched a five-year \$500,000 fundraising project and a full decade since the last time it had happened, the University finished the year under budget. Still, one year's marginal profit cannot erase a full decade of deficit spending and an accumulated indebtedness totaling nearly \$600,000¹⁶

In 1939 Sewanee's new Vice-Chancellor Alexander Guerry, the former president of the University of Chattanooga, echoed Treasurer Hodgson's earlier statements when he reported to the Board of Trustees that the University's financial problems rested not with the number of students but with the ability of

¹⁵ Ibid., "Annual Report of Treasurer" 30 November 1937, 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.; "Annual Report of Treasurer," 1936-1939; "Indebtedness of the University of the South" Budget 1938-39 folder, University of the South archives.

these students to pay Sewanee's high costs for themselves. In August 1939, Guerry reported, 160 out of 251 Sewanee students received financial aid averaging \$335 each. Guerry explained that if Sewanee could attract more applications, then the University could become more selective, exercising a selectivity not based on academic qualifications. Dr. Guerry wrote to the trustees:

Our need is not a great increase in numbers, but an increase in the capacity to draw students. We should have 300 applications for admission each year. From this we could select those qualified to do college work and those able to pay the cost of a college education except for that proportion that ought to receive a scholarship. Here again is an opportunity, as well as a responsibility, for those who believe in Sewanee and love Sewanee to help Sewanee. Let them influence young men to come to Sewanee and the fathers and mothers of young men to send their sons to this institution. . . . Sewanee has had two problems since the beginning, finances and enrollment. . . both are intertwined and interwoven. They are related and inseparable.¹⁷

Dr. Guerry must have been pleased with the next year's enrollment figure, as the University itself had a "capacity enrollment" of 319, including students from 31 states and Panama and also, presumably, including more who were able to pay their own way.¹⁸

The administrators at these six institutions struggled greatly during the Depression to keep the doors of their respective schools open, if not paid for. This experience they shared. Despite their differences in religious affiliation, sources of

¹⁷ *Bulletin of Proceedings*, Volume 34, Number 2, August 1939, 29.

¹⁸ "Enrollment Nears High Point of 1925," *Sewanee Alumni News*, November 1940.

primary funding, size and make-up of student population, and host communities, all six schools shared at least one more thing: a commitment to intercollegiate athletics. Each one boasted numerous intercollegiate teams, men's and women's (except the all-male Sewanee), ranging from baseball, to wrestling, to golf, to tennis, to track and field, to football. They also displayed several similarities in their reactions to the Depression. All cut faculty salaries if not faculty numbers; all struggled to balance their budgets; all tried to attract more students and especially those more able to pay their own way. In the 1930s, moreover, each one had to reevaluate its dedication to intercollegiate sports in light of the financial duress the Depression caused.

Chapter Two: Expectations

"Football stimulates college spirit. It affords an outlet for loyalty and gives campus color. All of this is invaluable."-- Arkansas College summary of college administrators' beliefs, 1946.

The fact that six East Tennessee colleges and universities endured financial hardships during the 1930s should surprise no one; the real news would be if they had not. Yet it is important to understand the specific situations and problems that confronted the administrators, faculties, governing boards and students of these institutions in order to evaluate the expectations these people had and the decisions they made. Living in an economically stagnant area of a depressed country in a decade of growing world-wide tension and the rising threat of war, these people wanted to make the best out of a bad situation and to continue the education process as normally and as fruitfully as possible. Along with some other decisions referred to earlier--cutting faculty size and salary, boosting enrollment, and others--these leaders chose to continue most of their intercollegiate athletic programs. They made this choice for a variety of reasons. The American sporting culture, with roots tracing back to colonial horse racing and cockfighting and a lineage extending through the rise of prizefighting, the bicycling craze around the turn of the century and the gradual growth of baseball into "America's game," experienced an explosive resurgence in the 1920s, fueled by female icons such as Gertrude

Ederle and Helen Wills and by male sporting heroes like Babe Ruth and Red Grange. This fad lent considerable credibility to this decision, as did the more selfish aims of administrators trying to prevent their schools from going bankrupt and maintain people's interest in them.

A diverse array of ideologies, financial necessities, and hopes factored into their decisions and helped shape the intercollegiate athletic programs they offered. Before examining these different influences and attitudes, it is important to understand first exactly whose attitudes mattered, whose ideas and voices made a difference and created the intercollegiate athletic agendas of the 1930s.

Determining exactly who, if not the college presidents alone, made the important athletic decisions becomes more difficult when one realizes that, as sports sociologist James Frey puts it, "there is no empirical tradition when it comes to analyzing the role of the relevant actors in athletic governance." In his analysis of institutional control of athletics, Frey notes that since the beginning of this century people have wondered why colleges and universities could not keep their athletic departments under control. He argues that a natural "push and pull" occurs within universities, institutions housing autonomous departments and decision-makers with diverging agendas, instructors teaching and valuing independence, and faculties considering themselves "above" athletics. Frey sees in both the present and the past universities "pushing" athletic departments away

from the universities' core, rejecting them as not part of the academic enterprise. That is and was perfectly fine, Frey contends, with the general community of "citizens and leaders" that "pulls" the athletic component of the school away, seeing the university in general and the athletic program specifically as a tool to "boost their community and to legitimize its existence."¹⁹ As community interests intertwine with institutional concerns, the control of intercollegiate athletics becomes a very complicated matter.

Although Frey holds that there are no clear ways to determine who made decisions about athletic programs, historian Benjamin Rader has discovered three systems of athletic control existing by 1900. Rader identifies virtually autonomous student bodies with considerable alumni input as one form of intercollegiate athletic governance; the Harvard model of students, faculty, and alumni cooperating as another form. Strict faculty control with paid coaches, the third form, was the one most prevalent in Southern and Midwestern colleges and universities.²⁰

At each of these schools the college president had great influence over the budgeting process. The presidents of the state institutions corresponded with the

¹⁹ James H. Frey, "Institutional Control of Athletics: An Analysis of the Role Played by Presidents, Faculty, Trustees, Alumni, and the NCAA," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 11 (Fall/Winter 1987-88): 50.

²⁰ Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports, From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 117.

Tennessee Board of Education and tried to wrangle more money from it and the legislature. They also sat on the governing boards of the individual schools, guiding the budgeting process from there as well. Likewise, at both Maryville and Carson-Newman the presidents had important roles in the financial decision-making processes, often participating in every decision no matter how small.²¹ Still, these college presidents did not make all financial decisions by themselves, especially those concerning athletics.

At least as important as the presidents themselves were the various boards of athletic control and the less focused, but not necessarily less interested, Boards of Trustees found on each campus. Historian Ronald Smith has argued that this characteristic presidential lack of complete authority stems from fundamental problems outside of the presidents' control. Smith contends that college presidents could not act alone; they needed the help of other colleges, especially within their own athletic conference, to contain athletic abuses and misbehavior. Furthermore, the presidents had to respond to opposing constituencies, the faculty and the governing boards, as well as to the institutions' host communities. Smith asserts that, "The boards have been far more interested in financial concerns and in the institutional image than they have been about learning and academic considerations." The governing boards, heavily populated by alumni by the 1930s,

²¹ Blair and Walker, *By Faith Endowed*, 223.

often saw issues "from the undergraduate's point of view" and thus wanted to have a say about the most popular and visible part of the university: its athletic program. Nathan Dougherty, a Depression-era University of Tennessee engineering professor, explained the alumni preoccupation with athletics this way: "When an interested alumnus puts his money into a football player, he gets dividends almost immediately, while a similar sum placed in a scholar may not bear fruit during the donor's lifetime." Evidence of Smith's point can be found in the dozens of alumni requests for tickets and parking spaces received by the college presidents before each game during the 1930s.²²

Rader's observation that most Southern colleges and universities featured faculty and administration control over intercollegiate athletics and paid coaches certainly holds true for Maryville College during the Great Depression. As the 1931 college catalog reported, the College Directors had granted control of athletics to the faculty, which in turn had formed its own Athletic Committee. This committee consulted with the student body's Athletic Association Advisory Board, which--as if to confuse further later researchers-- included the college treasurer and three professors. The Maryville College Director of Athletics was a full faculty member and served on the faculty committee. Perhaps this arrangement was too

²² Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 215-216; Nathan Dougherty, "The Place of Football in Education," 20, MS 1376, Folder 5, Box XXI.

confusing for even the participants to understand, for in May 1938, the Maryville College Athletic Association adopted new by-laws. Article one, section two, more clearly delineated authorities and responsibilities:

The By-Laws and other actions of the THE DIRECTORS OF MARYVILLE COLLEGE vest control in the Faculty. This control is exercised by the Faculty in three ways: directly, through the Faculty Committee on Athletics, and through the Athletic Director and his assistants. Financial matters connected with athletics are managed by the Faculty and Directors of the College. The Athletic Association cooperates in such ways as the Faculty and these By-Laws may prescribe.²³

By paying the student activity fee that funded the athletic program the students automatically gained membership in the Athletic Association, but this body held little power. As the by-laws explain, Maryville's faculty had control over athletics, and the students' Athletic Association wielded only the powers of choosing the team managers and awarding athletic letters according to already established criteria.

Even this explanation of duties is not comprehensive. An article in the Maryville student newspaper in October 1932 described a crowd of students electing the Board of Control's officers and members with their cheers, selecting a panel composed of the most popular students, a virtual "Who's Who at Maryville." They elected two male students, two female students, two faculty members, and

²³ *Maryville College Bulletin*, May 1931, 19; Maryville College Athletic Association By-Laws, May 7, 1938, 1, Athletics-Maryville College Athletic Association Folder, Athletics Box 2.

lastly two townspeople unaffiliated with the college. Nowhere is it clear what function this Athletic Board of Control served or even on what issues it was consulted. This inclusion of townspeople provides an excellent example of the mutual interest of community and college in intercollegiate athletics and perhaps an instance of Frey's "push and pull" phenomenon. What is clear, however, is that the faculty had a voice on every body that had a voice in athletic governance at Maryville College.²⁴

Available records shed even less light on the controlling bodies at Carson-Newman and East Tennessee State. In the 1920s, Carson-Newman ran its athletic program under the auspices of the Athletic Cabinet and in accordance with the Smokey Mountain Athletic Conference rules, a conference that also included both East Tennessee State and Maryville College. East Tennessee State's presidential correspondence reveals a great deal of direct intervention and decision-making in athletic affairs by its president. Still, when East Tennessee State decided to resume athletic competition with its intracity neighbor Milligan College, the Student Activities Committee made the decision and set the parameters for the contests.²⁵

²⁴ *The Highland Echo* (Maryville, TN), 3 October 1, 1932.

²⁵ Chris Jones, *It Gets Foggy at Mossy Creek: The Origins and Development of Intercollegiate Athletics at Carson-Newman College*. (Standard Publishing Co., 1974), 49; Charles C. Sherrod to C. M. Eyler, 6 November 1933, Sherrod Collection, Folder 8, Box 23, ACC 59, East Tennessee State University Archives.

The decision-making process followed at the University of Tennessee is somewhat clearer. Students controlled all university athletic activities until 1907 when a local sporting goods distributor sued the faculty advisor for unpaid balances accrued under his supervision. At that time the University assumed more responsibility and formed a corporation open to anyone willing to pay five dollars to the athletic treasury. Faculty, alumni, and all students participating in intercollegiate athletics joined this Athletic Association. An athletic council composed of two faculty members, two alumni, and two students oversaw the University's intercollegiate athletic programs.²⁶

The University of Tennessee used this apparatus of athletic control during the first half of the Depression years, but by 1935 the Board of Trustees perceived a need for a change. It therefore created an Athletic Board which functioned until 1940 when the Athletic Board's chairman wrote about the 1935 system, "Since that time control of intercollegiate athletics has been in the hands of the Board of Trustees through the President of the University, who has veto power on all actions of the Athletic Board." Although most still referred to this new Board as the "Athletic Association," its membership differed greatly from the students' Athletic Association. The University President and Dean were *ex officio* members and were

²⁶ Nathan W. Dougherty, "Control of Athletics in the University of Tennessee," 1, Nathan Washington Dougherty Collection, University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections, Folder 12, Box XXI.

joined by seven faculty members, five alumni evenly dispersed across the state, and only two students. Importantly, the University President appointed all members of the Athletic Board. Clearly the president and the Board had collectively usurped what remaining control over athletics the students had possessed.²⁷

The Athletic Board's large membership made it difficult to convene as a whole, so an Executive Committee handled most of the day-to-day details, reserving only the athletic budgets and general operating policies for the entire Board to discuss in its two annual meetings. According to the new "Athletic Association" by-laws, "The Board of Directors shall have full practical charge of inter-collegiate athletics at the University of Tennessee. They shall employ an Athletic Director or Business Manager and all Coaches, . . . and shall fix their duties and compensation." This Board of Directors, or Executive Committee, also had the responsibility of keeping all financial records and of reporting on finances to the Athletic Board/Association, which in turn had the duty of reporting to the full Board of Trustees.²⁸

As is often the case, relationships that appear confusing on paper become even more bewildering when put into practice. With student athletic associations, joint athletic boards, executive committees of athletic boards, high profile and

²⁷ Ibid., 2; Board of Trustees Minutes, May 15, 1935, Vol. 15, 306-307, University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections.

²⁸ Board of Trustees Minutes, May 15, 1935, Vol. 15, 306-307.

powerful coaches, and the Board of Trustees all demanding a voice in the University's intercollegiate athletic programs, confusion reigned. The Board of Trustees theoretically had absolute control, but as the minutes of the February 15, 1940, Board meeting reveal, there was some uncertainty in practice:

Mr. Wassell Randolph raised the question as to just what the authority of the Board of Trustees has in regard to the management of athletics. After considerable discussion it was finally agreed that the full responsibility for all matters pertaining to athletics, in the final analysis, rested with the Board of Trustees, and consequently the Board had full authority over such matters. . . . The Board exercised absolute control over the Athletic Council through the President of the University, who is an exofficio member of this council and who . . . not only appointed the membership of the Athletic Association, but exercised the power of veto over its actions.²⁹

After the Board finished reassuring itself that it did indeed have power, it passed two interesting resolutions. The first demanded a meeting between the executive committees of the Board of Trustees and the Athletic Board during which the Athletic Board representatives "would be asked to present for a general discussion the athletic affairs of the University" and after which the Trustee representatives would make a recommendation to the full Board on the future of athletic control at the University. The second resolution concerning athletics passed that day is even more tantalizing, reading, "It is resolved by the Board of Trustees of the University of Tennessee that its Finance Committee has jurisdiction over the financial affairs of the Athletic Association, and has the right to audit the books of the Athletic

²⁹ Board of Trustees Minutes, February 15, 1940, 115.

Association by auditors of its own choosing." The Trustees were anxious to understand the operation of the programs that had developed into the university's most important link to the outside community.³⁰

The meeting between these two executive committees illuminated both the Athletic Association's operating mechanisms and some of the reasons the Board suddenly renewed its interest in and reasserted its authority over intercollegiate athletics. After a preliminary outline of the Association's general membership and structure the discussion quickly turned to finances. Professor Nathan Dougherty, the chair of the Athletic Council, explained that the Association commissioned audits of each team, each season, and each game. When questioned about the amounts of loans taken out by the Athletic Association, a figure in the hundreds of thousands of dollars during the 1930s, Professor Dougherty replied that the Council took action only with the Board's consent, thus reassuring the trustees that they did truly run the University's athletic programs. He explained that the Association had used the \$100,000 received from participating in the 1940 Rose Bowl to alleviate its debt, that the Association had funded \$350,000 of its \$400,000 athletic plant construction with its own revenue, and that the remaining \$50,000 had come from a friend of the University.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., 116.

³¹ Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees Minutes, April 10, 1940, 131-132.

Seemingly satisfied with the financial matters and with the Athletic Association's self-sufficiency, the Trustees turned to a more important matter: the football schedule. They, along with numerous alumni, wanted to know exactly why the University did not play a more demanding and entertaining schedule. President Hoskins answered that the players "*who, it must not be overlooked*, were university students, could not play hard games week after week without detriment to their health." He concluded with the observation that a successful (read: winning) schedule produced financial success in addition to victories and that the much-maligned schedules had certainly done that, alluding to the Rose Bowl's six-figure bounty.³² It appears that the practice of teams playing cupcake schedules to enhance their chances for a national championship, and the resulting huge payoff, existed well before bowl games were prefixed with the brand names of snack foods, weed eaters, and auto parts stores.

The Executive Committee's later report to the full Board of Trustees concluded that the Athletic Association was conducting the athletic affairs of the University "in a very careful and satisfactory manner" and that the Board of Trustees *did* actually control the University's athletic programs through the president and through his appointive powers. The Committee suggested only one change, that the Athletic Board start supplying the Trustees with copies of its

³²

Ibid. Italics mine.

audits.³³ Perhaps the Trustees merely wanted to see black ink on a financial report from time to time, for while the university's academic component was still struggling mightily, the athletic programs felt very few of the Depression's financial stresses.

The available evidence probably does not reveal the entire story; without knowledge of conversations, friendships, unspoken assumptions or even of written documents that might prove fruitful, no one can fully explain what happened in the past. That said, it still remains clear that the surviving records of the men (almost always men) making decisions about the role and future of intercollegiate athletics in East Tennessee display common attitudes and expectations. Packaged in their general concern for their respective schools, these leaders were also concerned about the proper roles and uses of athletics in college life.

Today many critics argue that numerous colleges and universities have prostituted themselves by placing more emphasis on athletics than on education, yet this Depression-era evidence reveals perhaps a greater malapportionment of moneys than almost any school could commit today. Several college administrators at this time protested the athletic expenditures. In July, 1932, H.J. Derthick, Milligan College's president, wrote a letter to Charles Sherrod that relates these concerns.

³³ Report of the Executive Committee to the Board of Trustees, 31 July 1940, University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections.

What would you think of taking a year's recess in inter Collegiate Foot Ball. I feel that we have but little right to take people's money during these tragic days and pay for football equipment, deficits on games, expensive charges of officials and doctors' bills.

All of our friends are making great sacrifices for us and but few of them would approve of using any money except for the necessary expenses of our academic program. . . .

While people are starving and millions are out of work I am sure it would be pleasing to all that have the burden of relieving the millions to sacrifice this game for one year. I feel that it would be wrong to go on with this expense in view of world conditions. Naturally I do not like to be the only college president giving up the game.

In his reply, Sherrod made it clear that he was "fully in sympathy with the spirit of [the] letter" but said East Tennessee State had already scheduled the next year's games and had provided the money for the team. His school could not, or would not, discontinue the program after doing that.³⁴

Despite Sherrod's somewhat ambivalent sentiments regarding athletics, East Tennessee State continued its intercollegiate athletic program during the Depression. Sherrod concluded his reply to Derthick by writing, "It is a shame the way money is spent on non-essentials in this country when we have so many people without employment and many of them going hungry." Nonetheless, Sherrod's school continued spending money on "non-essentials," and in the next year, Milligan College officials again contacted Sherrod about athletic programs, this time soliciting a renewal rather than a discontinuance. This letter is as

³⁴ H.J. Derthick to Charles C. Sherrod, 9 July 1932, Sherrod Papers, Folder 7, Box 19; Charles Sherrod to H.J. Derthick, 11 July 1932, Sherrod Papers, Folder 7, Box 19.

revealing as the earlier one; it reads, in part, "I realize that financial considerations are not the only things to think about, but we should put both athletic associations in the clear if we should play each other in football, basketball, and baseball. . . *It is financial suicide to both institutions to prevent our athletic relations.*" Was it? Or was it financial suicide to continue them? These schools were on the edge of a fiscal chasm and were watching other institutions fall into the abyss, and still they supported intercollegiate athletics. If American colleges and universities were ever going to de-emphasize collectively intercollegiate athletics, the Depression provided the most logical occasion.³⁵

True, some wondered if the schools and the country might be better served if they abolished intercollegiate athletic competitions, but the prevailing and eventually triumphant viewpoint was that athletics could help teach the students how to be "better" men and women, people ready to accept their gender-based roles in the American society. In the early 1900s, fueled by the desire of progressives to "fix" other people's lives, the environmentalist school of behavior began to gain some converts, and people began thinking about how to shape behavior. Sociologist Jay Coakley has asserted that this change had a dramatic impact on society's view of sports. People began arguing that sports were more than just idle games; they had pedagogical qualities. Coakley writes that, "sports

³⁵ Eyler to Sherrod, 30 Sept. 1933, emphasis mine.

were defined as sources for potential educational experiences. . . .For the first time in history, people saw sports as tools for changing behavior, shaping character, building unity and cohesion within a diversified population, and creating national loyalty." Coakley overstates the novelty of this attitude, but he correctly assesses the value of sporting events, especially baseball, in the Americanization of new immigrants.³⁶

Beyond raising the issue of what about intercollegiate athletics during the Depression actually constituted "financial suicide," this correspondence between East Tennessee State and Milligan College officials illustrates well two earlier articulated characteristics of athletic-related decision making. First, the pleas for simultaneous action clearly supports Ronald Smith's contention that college administrators rarely acted alone and that they sought collaborators when making what might prove unpopular decisions. Secondly, the letters between Eyler and Sherrod spell out in no uncertain terms their attitudes towards their schools' athletic programs: they probably waste too much money when the schools can not afford to waste any, but they can also offer benefits including the seemingly impossible, financial gain.

In his God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion in America, Robert J. Higgs attributes part of this administrative willingness to tolerate spending money on

³⁶ Jay J. Coakley, *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 5th ed., (St. Louis: Mosby Press, 1994), 69.

"non-essentials" to their subscription to the canonization of sports heroes in the 1920s and 1930s. Arguing that the structure of most colleges of this time period was derived from the military academies, Higgs describes the "knight" image that the male athletes supposedly embodied. Calling West Point "the soul and symbol of knighthood" and linking many successful sports programs to West Point, including Knute Rockne's Notre Dame and General Robert Neyland's University of Tennessee, Higgs argues in part that the image of self-sacrificing gentlemen literally fighting for honor and glory, both personal and for their schools, helped to fulfill society's need for heroes. Following this line of thought, one could conclude that the college presidents recognized that if they could help create knights, then investing in college athletics was not a mistake. This belief gained strength with American society's more general celebration of the "strenuous life" best embodied by Theodore Roosevelt, who towered over the country as a shining example of what a "real man" was. Even if the administrators of these institutions never consciously viewed their schools' male athletes as knights or heroes, they could not have escaped the early twentieth century American preoccupation with the manly ideal and the accompanying implication that a rough and tumble life could improve a man's character. Indeed, the Milligan College president noted in a letter to East Tennessee State administrators arguing for the cessation of intercollegiate football

that, "If at the end of the year we find that [football] is necessary to the building up of character to start the intercollegiate contests again we could easily do so."³⁷

This model importantly represented society's ideal lifestyle for men only. With Victorian gender roles still firmly entrenched in the public mindset, most who expressed opinions on the subject believed that women would be harmed by the stress, competition and hard work of the strenuous life. Contrary to what one might expect, women themselves led a movement to impose these gender-based standards on women athletes, and their attitudes and efforts certainly influenced decision-makers in East Tennessee.³⁸

In the early 1920s many if not most coeducational colleges and universities offered women's intercollegiate athletic programs, and the nationally-established Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) supported women's sports, even sponsoring a women's track and field squad to compete in Paris. These permissive attitudes, however, soon came under attack. Historian Alan Guttman explains that, "The women who were firmly in charge of physical education for school girls and college students developed an ideology remarkably similar to the nineteenth century doctrine of 'separate spheres.' They abjured competition," favoring "moderation" instead. Ellen Gerber, another sports historian, agrees with

³⁷ Eyler to Sherrod, 30 Sept. 1933; Robert J. Higgs, *God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion in America* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 100, 268.

³⁸ Rader, *American Sports*, 123-126.

Guttman's conclusions and explains that women themselves, through associations of women physical educators, restricted their own athletic opportunities. Gerber focuses specifically on the resolutions passed by the Conference on Athletics and Physical Recreation for Women and Girls, held April 6-7, 1923, as evidence for her claims. The platform of this female-dominated conference pointed out the supposed ill effects that competitive athletics could have on females (due to "certain anatomical and physiological conditions"), and furthermore expressed a preference for activities that allowed all to participate and endorsed the idea that publicity gained through athletics could damage the individual females and should therefore be about the sport and not the participants themselves.³⁹

The Women's Division of the Amateur Athletic Union, founded in January 1923, supported the ideas behind these resolutions, especially the underlying desire for female modesty, and worked diligently to see them implemented across the nation and the world. One leader of the movement, Ethel Perrin, went so far as to write that a good woman should "never be seen by the opposite sex when she is likely to forget herself," a prescription with sexual undertones that certainly reflect conservative Victorian behavioral mores. After women participated in the 1928 Olympic Games the Women's Division badgered the International Olympic

³⁹ Allan Guttman, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 139-135; Ellen Gerber, "The Controlled Development of Collegiate Sport For Women, 1923-1936," *Journal of Sport History*, 2, 1975, 11.

Committee, pleading for it not to repeat that dangerous precedent. Moreover, the Women's Division and its messengers crusaded across the country seeking to eliminate all women's intercollegiate athletics, despite frequent opposition from the female students themselves as was the case in 1924 when Wellesley undergraduates voted 237-33 to keep intercollegiate competitions. About this conflict Guttman writes that "the demands of the students . . . were ineffective when they came into conflict with the dictates of an entrenched education bureaucracy."⁴⁰

The administrators of East Tennessee colleges and universities functioned within this climate of opinion, and their actions, discussed later, reflected the influence these prevailing attitudes had on them. In their unquestionably sincere desire to prepare their female students for life, the college decision-makers simply could not stomach the possibility of serving their students poorly. After all, despite the oft-overstated freedom of college-aged women in the 1920s, many still desired the more traditional married lives of husband and children. Even flappers, some have argued, shared this goal. Female physical educators convinced college administrators that the competitiveness of intercollegiate athletics, the dangers to female reproductive organs caused by the rigors of the games, and the immodest public display of female bodies before mixed audiences all endangered their female

40Guttman, *Women's Sports*, 137-141.

students' chances of winning what most considered the most important trophy of all: a husband.⁴¹

These educators used moralistic arguments coupled with the scientific theories of the day to justify their spending on men's intercollegiate athletics and not women's. Their desires to "shape" their female students do not, however, entirely explain why all of these schools followed the same general path concerning male athletes during the Depression. Instead, one must understand that the administrators and decision-makers expected many other tangible rewards from their athletic programs. They wholeheartedly expected that the publicity the athletic programs garnered would attract students to their campuses, that the contests would provide valuable entertainment while the students were there, that the sports would keep the alumni--who as students had been conditioned to associate their alma maters with athletic teams--interested and generous with gifts, and that the sports would bring the host communities closer to their institutions, all the while paying for themselves.

These hopes and expectations did not spring out of desperation induced by the financial troubles of these schools; they were, instead, deeply-rooted and long-held. During the 1920s these schools regarded intercollegiate athletics as a means of attracting positive publicity and recruiting students. As early as 1917 the

⁴¹ Ibid., 136.

Carson-Newman student newspaper noted, "There can be no doubt of the value of intercollegiate athletics as an advertisement for a school. . . . The college is often judged by the quality of its athletics. The school that puts out a winning football team year after year has an advertisement worth far more than it costs."

Carson-Newman's president during the 1920s, O.E. Sims, wholeheartedly believed in using athletics to attract positive attention and students; this belief caused one of his successors to lament the "undue importance [given] to athletics" that Sims fostered.⁴²

Maryville College's administrators saw many of the same benefits of intercollegiate athletics that Carson-Newman's leaders did. In the middle of a 1920s fundraising drive aimed at raising \$50,000 for the college's athletic facilities, they solicited funds by appealing to the alumni's self-interest: "Those who have, in the past, attended Maryville College will be benefited because it [the new physical plant for athletics] will raise the standard of Maryville among the colleges of the country and will therefore enhance their standing as Maryville men and women." A later letter from a faculty member more closely echoed Carson-Newman's claims, saying, "there is no attraction so great to the young men just ready for college as modern and adequate athletic equipment. . . . Maryville,

⁴² *The Orange and The Blue*, (Jefferson City, Tennessee), 1 Feb. 1917; Issac Newton Carr, *History of Carson-Newman College* (Jefferson City, Tennessee: Carson-Newman College Press, 1959), 271.

without athletic facilities, cannot hope to compete in the enlistment of men." These colleges, it seems, felt the pressure to stay current and to cater to the general public's infatuation with sports in the late 1910s and 1920s.⁴³

Even when arguing in 1938 that Sewanee had been overemphasizing intercollegiate football and that the university should stop playing an overly ambitious "big-time" football schedule, Vice-Chancellor Alexander Guerry admitted the allure of the "great football crowds" and the "brilliant bands." Still, and again in contrast to the prevailing attitudes at the other institutions examined here and perhaps reacting to a situation which the Memphis Commercial Appeal described by saying that "Sewanee has been judged not by its academic excellence, but by its football record of defeats," Guerry wrote that under his direction "Football at Sewanee will be carried on for the students, not for advertising the institution, for there is no value in football as advertising and no need of football as advertising for a reputable institution." Although Guerry's comments reveal Sewanee's late divergence from the common practice of using college sports, most prominently football, as an advertising tool, they also imply that up to and even during the Depression, Sewanee's previous administrations had seen and used athletics in the usual ways.⁴⁴

⁴³ *The Highland Echo* (Maryville, Tennessee) 16 June 1921; Kenneth D. Kribbs, *History of Athletics at Maryville College, 1866-1968*, (Maryville, TN: Mangrum Printers, 1969), 101.

⁴⁴ "Sewanee and Football" *Commercial Appeal* (Memphis) June 1938, "Football

In 1946, Arkansas College, a small, rural, Presbyterian-affiliated liberal arts college appropriately enough in Batesville, Arkansas, sent questionnaires about the effects of football on a college campus to several peer group colleges including Maryville College and the University of the South. While considering whether to revive its own intercollegiate football program, Arkansas College prepared an illuminating summary of the colleges' responses to its inquiries, and because it specifically outlines one college's expectations of what sports could bring to a campus, the Arkansas College "Data on Football" survey of administrators' attitudes provides useful insights into how the decision-makers at these colleges viewed the publicity value of intercollegiate football specifically and intercollegiate athletics generally. It also helps explain Dr. Guerry's attitudes about Sewanee's football program. It explains, "Football brings much publicity to a college. More than any other sport. The college needs all possible publicity. However, there is always the question of the value of publicity offered by a team unless it wins. Especially this is true of a team that loses by large scores." Certainly it is no coincidence that Guerry's Sewanee teams had been losing often and convincingly for a full decade before his pronouncement.⁴⁵

It appears that no doubt existed over the publicity potential intercollegiate athletics offered even if some questioned the value of this publicity to an

Policy" folder, Guerry Papers.

⁴⁵ "Data on Football," 1.

educational institution and whether a school should seek it at all. Nonetheless, as the previously mentioned Carson-Newman evidence suggests, administrators there expected that with this publicity would come increased enrollment. East Tennessee State also used its athletic programs as enticements for potential students, spending two full pages of some of its Depression-era recruiting literature to outline the accomplishments and virtues of both its men's and women's programs. The Arkansas College report once again sums up the expected effect of athletics on enrollment by stating plainly, "Football would increase enrollment. Some students other than the football players would be drawn. How great this would be is problematical. . . the administration believes some increase in enrollment can be expected with losing teams."⁴⁶

Not only did these East Tennessee college administrators believe that intercollegiate athletics could attract students and mold them into better people according to society's definitions, they also expected that the programs would help entertain the students and build school spirit. As seen earlier, East Tennessee State President Charles Sherrod defended the decision to keep his women's sports programs on the grounds that the college had "so few activities that we thought it best" to keep them. The administrators also hoped that sports could evoke in

students, alumni, and local residents a sort of nationalistic loyalty to their institutions.

A University of Tennessee administrator explaining "The Place of Football in Education" echoed this sentiment. He argued that "[Football] belongs not only to the players but the whole student body. No other student activity can get the whole hearted support of the whole student body in a measure that will compare to football." He continued by pointing out that the players "get training in team work, self-control, co-operation, and sportsmanship, but these are not the reasons for the game." Schools played the game, according to this man, "because it is a public spectacle worth seeing, because of the great public interest, because the benefits to the participant are at least equal to the harm he receives, and because the student body takes an active partisan interest."⁴⁷ In other words, colleges played football because it offered a good show that got students and the general public excited about the schools but did not "harm" the players too badly.

Maryville College president Ralph Lloyd offered another verse of the same song in a paper he read before the Tennessee College Association in 1937. He noted that "Football and in a measure basketball have never been so widely emphasized or as expensively promoted as they are in American universities and colleges. . . .But I am not one who wishes to eliminate intercollegiate athletics. It is

⁴⁷ Nathan Dougherty, "The Place of Football in Education," 20.

true that the privilege of playing on the varsity is available to a number too small to justify the effort of maintaining a varsity, but the 'blow-off' value and the interest value to a student body are considerable. And the interest developed in spectators may prove of worth in handling leisure of future years." The confidential responses to the questionnaires Arkansas College circulated reflected these same sentiments, ones summarized in the statement, "Football stimulates college spirit. It affords an outlet for loyalty and gives campus color. All of this is invaluable."⁴⁸

The administrators of these six colleges expected the intercollegiate athletic programs, in addition to uniting and occupying their student bodies, to unite also the greater college family of alumni and friends of the institution, hopefully eliciting from them not only sideline shouts of support but their financial support through ticket sales and gifts as well. During those desperate years, these colleges needed additional funds just to survive, much less to pay off debts, and the modern line of reasoning that alumni pleased with the university's athletic success will give money to the university as a whole can be seen throughout the 1930s. The Arkansas College document again communicates the expectations college administrators had for their college athletic programs, noting that "Another possible source of income is gifts exclusively for football or athletics," even while

⁴⁸ Ralph Waldo Lloyd, "The Utilization of Leisure Time as a Problem of Curriculum Revision," Presidents-Lloyd-Addresses Folder, Presidents-Ralph Waldo Lloyd, 1930-1961 Box, Maryville College Archives and Special Collections; "Data on Football," 1.

observing that attendance-related income would probably be almost directly proportional to the teams' success and that the number and size of gifts would probably be as well.⁴⁹

These six colleges and administrators, then offered multiple explanations for continuing men's intercollegiate athletic programs throughout the Depression that so decimated their bank accounts and their faculty ranks. They pointed to the pedagogical values of men's varsity sports and conversely the dangers of women's varsity programs. They also expected financial solvency from increased gifts and gate proceeds; they expected higher student enrollments and more occupied, satisfied, and energized student bodies; and they expected closer ties to alumni and the host communities. All of these were easily defended goals, but the questions remain: were they realistic ones and if not, or even if so, did the colleges misappropriate their precious resources in their quest to fulfill too high expectations?

⁴⁹ "Data on Football," 1.

Chapter Three: Reality

"If you mean to drop football and basketball entirely (intercollegiate) I do not believe you can keep the alumni's interest." ---Alex Nieiford to Alexander Guerry, 1939.

It is clear that the decision-makers at these six East Tennessee colleges and universities expected great things from their intercollegiate sports programs. Unfortunately for them, it also seems clear that their high hopes were largely unfounded and that their expectations, if not remaining completely unrealized, never really materialized either. In 1938, with some perspective on the decade, newly-appointed Sewanee Vice-Chancellor Alexander Guerry expressed his feelings about the expectations others had shared:

No great institution has been built on football victories or football prowess. Not a single distinguished American college or university can point to football as an important factor in its growth and prestige.

Sewanee's history gives testimony to the truth of this statement. Her greatest years did not result in growth in numbers, in income or in endowment, or in the construction of new buildings. As a matter of fact the manner in which Sewanee has expended her energy and her efforts upon her football program has retarded her growth and development, and is at least partly responsible for Sewanee's small enrollment, her limited resources and her fiscal difficulties. Sewanee must regain her sense of values.⁵⁰

⁵⁰

Guerry, "Sewanee's Future Football Policy," 4.

Guerry's disillusionment grew there most prominently, perhaps, because Sewanee's athletic budgets featured much more red ink than the rest of these studied schools' athletic budgets combined. With an intercollegiate athletic history dating from the late 1800s, Sewanee had developed multiple traditional rivalries with schools that had considerably outgrown it as the decades had progressed. When examining overall records against these now much larger institutions, one gets the impression that Sewanee had held its own against them. For example, the University of the South's football teams had defeated the University of Tennessee eleven times, the University of Alabama ten times, and they had won at least half their games against Mississippi, Louisiana State, Georgia, Georgia Tech and Auburn in addition to winning several skirmishes with, among others, Florida, Tulane, Texas, and Texas A&M. Under closer examination, this impression of sustained success fades. In fact, Sewanee's football team lost forty-four consecutive games against its traditional Southeastern Conference rivals before withdrawing from the conference in 1939 at Guerry's insistence. This ineptitude and the resulting lack of enthusiasm when coupled with the athletic department's operating losses that averaged over \$8,300 per year during the Depression, might have forced Guerry into his decision to schedule as opponents schools whose student bodies' size and athletic skills more closely mirrored Sewanee's.⁵¹

⁵¹ Sewanee Alumni News Feb. 1949, 13; Reports of the Athletic Board of Control, 1929-1940 *passim*, "Athletic Board of Control" folder, Vice-Chancellor Guerry papers."

Sewanee's Depression-era decisions regarding athletics were much more troublesome than the ones facing the other institutions, for only at Sewanee did the varsity football team fail to reap enough profits to finance, with other, lesser sources of revenue, the rest of the university's athletic programs. Despite cutting athletic salary budgets in half from 1929-30 to 1932-33, taking thousands of dollars from the golf, basketball, and football budgets, actually disbanding the intercollegiate golf team from 1932-1939 and track squad from 1932-1934, playing a reduced football schedule towards the decade's end, and instituting a student activity fee in 1934, Sewanee's athletics still lost money.⁵²

The University's profit from the varsity football team fell almost annually from a high of \$24,554 in 1929-1930 to a profit of \$3,625 in 1936-37. Unfortunately for the school, the declining football profits were not replaced elsewhere in the budget. Instead, its profits were the only ones subsidizing the rest of the athletic programs, including the extensive intramural program that served about eighty-five percent of the student body and about which the director of athletics crowed, "there is not a college in the United States in which a larger percentage of the student body is engaged than at Sewanee."⁵³

⁵² "Report of the Athletic Board of Control," Athletic Board of Control folder; "Financial Statement of the Athletic Board of Control," 1927-28 to 1936-37, *passim*, 1938-1939.

⁵³ *ibid.*; *Bulletin of the University of the South*, Aug. 1930, 83.

Sewanee's lack of financial success and its failure to produce victories on the field obviously dampened its leadership's desire to keep playing topnotch competition, but its experience is not without relevance to the other five institutions or to the situation many colleges and universities find themselves in today. If, in 1930, Sewanee's Athletic Director merely suggested that "intercollegiate athletics should be regarded as a business carried on by the athletic department of the University for the support of the activities of that department," other schools implemented that program and solidified a division that still exists across the nation's campuses today. The difference is that by the end of the Depression the University of the South's leadership decided that this was not the proper course for a quality educational institution and took steps to remedy the problem. Leaders at other universities reached different conclusions and continue to do so as reflected by the University of Tennessee's president's recent comments making it clear that "money is no object" when pursuing a men's basketball coach while at the same time the university's academic components cannot even guarantee the minimal stipends promised graduate assistants until the budget is finalized.⁵⁴

In other ways, Sewanee provides the exception rather than the rule. On most campuses the administrators could rationalize the substantial athletic spending by

⁵⁴ *Bulletin of the University of the South*, Aug. 1930, 82.

showing that the athletic programs were largely self-sufficient, which indeed they were. If the programs could pay for themselves, then keeping them did not seem to pose as great an ethical dilemma as one might expect, even though these schools' athletic expenditures were quite large, at least in relative terms. All the schools studied here relied heavily on student activities fees for a large portion of their athletic funding, activities fees initiated in 1918 at Carson-Newman, in 1921 at Maryville College, in 1927 at the University of Tennessee, and in 1934 at Sewanee. Students could not, however, completely finance the programs, so school officials had to find other sources of income if they wanted to keep their teams, which they most assuredly did. The relative sizes of Maryville College, Carson-Newman, Sewanee and Tennessee might lead some to conclude that Tennessee was far too powerful an athletic force for the smaller schools to compete against. They would be correct.⁵⁵

The Maryville College student newspaper certainly realized the futility of playing such high-level competition, yet play Tennessee Maryville did. One article at the beginning of the 1931-32 school year extolled the football team's many virtues, predicting that it should challenge for its conference's championship, yet it concluded, "True, they will not be able to stack up against Tennessee and Kentucky, but [against smaller schools], that's a different story." Maryville alumni

⁵⁵ *The Orange and Blue* 1 Feb. 1917; *The Highland Echo* 16 June 1921; Board of Trustees Minutes, University of Tennessee, 14 December, 1927.

still recall the futility of sending their forty-man teams on consecutive road trips to Knoxville and Lexington to face more talented eighty-man squads, but they also remember that the thousands of dollars in guarantees for the two inevitable losses financed the entire athletic program for rest of the year. This practice continues of course, with squads fielded by schools such as Pacific, Rider, and Tennessee-Martin serving as fodder for stronger teams in various sports in exchange for large payoffs.⁵⁶

By sacrificing their young male athletes to the Wildcats and the Volunteers, Maryville College's Depression-era intercollegiate athletic programs helped to sustain themselves. East Tennessee State did not enjoy the same windfalls each year; instead it based its entire student activities budget (which funded athletics, literary societies, student publications, and other activities) on the student activity fees, game admission fees, and monetary guarantees for playing away games. These guarantees that the smaller colleges gave to visiting schools were usually in the neighborhood of one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars, certainly not the multi-thousand dollar gifts the larger universities bestowed upon each other and upon their prey. The East Tennessee State Student Activities Committee estimated the upcoming year's revenue and then constructed a budget based on these estimates. As the Depression began, the Student Activities Committee estimated a

⁵⁶ *The Highland Echo*, 19 September 1931; Mary Gladys Brown Pieper and Lynn Ann Brown Best, interview by author, 20 February 1996, notes in possession of author.

total revenue of \$6,000 to spend on its programs, but by the 1934-35 academic year had lowered its projections to \$5,500. The same figure was estimated for 1935-36 and for 1936-37, but in 1937-38 the estimated income jumped to \$7,400. The Activities Committee lowered its expectations slightly in 1939-40 but raised them even higher in 1940-41 when the budget parceled out \$8,400. One would expect the decreasing enrollment in the earlier 1930s to have pulled the budgets downwards, but they do not appear to have done so. It appears that the college was trying to compensate for the absence of alternative affordable entertainment by providing more opportunities and options for its own students as the decade progressed.⁵⁷

The percentage of these budgets allotted to athletics also did not decrease during the Depression. In fact the percentage increased at East Tennessee State, as did the actual amounts appropriated. In the 1930-31 budget, the Student Activities Committee granted the individual men's athletic programs 41.8 percent of the budget and the women's 8.8 percent, with all of the women's money going to intercollegiate basketball. That year the athletic programs received a little over 50 percent of the total student activities budget. The athletic programs continued to receive a little more than 50 percent until the 1936-37 budget, but that figure is

⁵⁷ Charles C. Sherrod to Hon. J. E. Brading, 2 September 1931, Charles Sherrod collection; "Apportionment of the Student Activities Fund For 1930-31, 1931-32, 1933-34, 1934-35, 1936-37, 1937-38, 1939-40, 1940-41." Charles Sherrod Collection, Folder 7, Box 19; Folder 5, Box 39; Folder 18, Box 50; Folder 7, Box 56.

somewhat misleading because the percentages in several cases reflect the money distributed *after* the committee removed six and seven hundred dollar chunks to pay off athletic debts and to help pay for a football stadium. In fact, considering these expenses not actually accounted for in the budgets, the Student Activities Committee dramatically increased the percentage granted to the men's programs, especially football. East Tennessee State dropped women's intercollegiate athletics in 1932, after which women's intramural programs never received more than six percent of the activities budget. In contrast, football's share in the recorded years increased from 17.5 percent to 19 percent to 23 percent to 24 percent and finally to 33 percent, where it remained until the early forties, while from 1936 through 1940 athletic programs in general gobbled up over 60 percent of the entire student activities budget. Yet, unlike Sewanee, East Tennessee State and the other schools found ways to keep their athletic budgets in the black⁵⁸

East Tennessee State used some of its student activity fee revenue to help construct a football stadium, and it was not alone in building athletic facilities during the Depression. Maryville College also invested in its football stadium, spending \$3,500 on steel bleachers and three rows of seats to add to its existing nine rows. The University of Chattanooga found the money to install a 99,000 watt lighting system for its on-campus football stadium in time for the 1935 home

⁵⁸ "Apportionment of the Student Activities Fund," all years, Charles Sherrod Collection.

opener, providing facilities for night games considered "the best in the South." As with every other aspect of the athletic programs, the University of Tennessee's spending on its athletic plant dwarfed the other schools, but it was not altogether different. The differences were in degree, not in kind, and the University of Tennessee's athletic financing experience provides the best example of met expectations during this period.⁵⁹

From the very beginning, Ronald Smith has argued, intercollegiate athletics have been commercialized and expensive. The University of Tennessee's programs during the Depression were certainly both. While the other colleges studied undertook smaller, yet equally telling, athletic construction projects during the Depression, the University of Tennessee continued to expand its football stadium, obviously expecting the Athletic Association to make money in the coming years. These expectations, for once, were realized. In 1929 the University loaned the Athletic Association \$123,000 to refinance an existing debt and to add to the football stadium. The Athletic Association was supposed to pay off the debt in payments rising by \$1,000 increments annually from \$6,000 in 1929 to \$10,000 in 1933. However, "on account of the successful football season the Athletic Association" managed to pay back \$40,000 in 1929, and presumably for the same reason \$30,000 in 1930 and \$10,000 in 1931. As the Depression deepened the

⁵⁹ Kribbs, *History of Athletics at Maryville College*, 127; *The Echo* 18 Oct. 1935, 1.

ability to pay substantial installments diminished, but the Athletic Association could still pay thousands of dollars more than required. The school's athletic programs were reaping profits, and by August 1934 the Athletic Association had repaid over \$100,000 of the \$123,000 borrowed only five years earlier.⁶⁰

The University did not halt its construction dreams when the initial expansion was completed. On the contrary, in 1937 the University requested \$81,709.65 from the Works Project Administration to build a concrete grandstand that could seat an additional 10,000 spectators. An October 1938 article reported, however, that the Volunteers would play before only 6,000 new seats in the 1939 season. In contrast to the Vanderbilt stadium's capacity of 22,000, the Tennessee grandstand would then hold over 40,000 spectators. Still, despite the cavernous stadium, football coach General Bob Neyland expressed confidence that the home games against Alabama and Vanderbilt would both sell out.⁶¹

Not every trustee or administrator agreed with the University's apparent philosophy of "the more the merrier; the bigger the better," nor with Neyland's predictions of packed houses. Paul Kruesi, a trustee from Chattanooga, wrote to

⁶⁰ "Statement of the Obligation of the University of Tennessee Athletic Association to the University of Tennessee," 19 November 1932, Business Manager of the Board of Trustees collection, folder 12, University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections; Board of Trustees minutes, Volume 12, page 290. find Date; Board of Trustees Minutes, 7 August, 1934; Vol. 15, 171.

⁶¹ "Works Project Administration Project Proposal," 19 April 1937, Board of Trustees Business Manager Papers, Folder 12, Box 2, AR-8 University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections; *Knoxville New-Sentinel*, 23 October 1938.

University president J.P. Hess in October, 1938, about a conversation he had recently had with another trustee from Nashville. The two trustees, along with an unnamed third, agreed that the University should sell high school students tickets for the same price as University students because "we will have practically no use for the recent additions to the Stadium." Doing so would "stimulate" the youngsters' interest in the game and in the University and also put some much-needed bodies in the seats. These trustees worried about the negative effects of having a small audience "rattling around in this huge stadium," especially since they foresaw "no possibility of filling it under normal circumstances." Not only would the high school students strengthen community allegiances to the school, but they would also create less embarrassing backdrops for newspaper photos than endless rows of empty seats. Trustee Kruesi concluded with a phrase that many still see as reflective of University of Tennessee athletics: "Any artificial measures we can take to give the semblance of success will be well justified."⁶²

Despite Neyland's expectations, the University did not sell out every game or even most games, but it certainly made money off its football program, the glamour sport even then. In 1939 Kruesi requested that president Hess settle a little wager he had made on the University's take from a recent home game against the University of Alabama. Hess replied that the University had grossed

⁶² Paul J. Kruesi to J.P. Hess, 15 October 1938, Board of Trustees Business Manager Papers, Folder 12, Box 2, AR-8.

\$73,740.37 from the game, an astronomical sum for the first half of the century and especially for the Depression years. President Hess estimated the net profit from that afternoon to be about \$55,000, money which the University, if so inclined, could have used to hire over twenty professors or, if transferred, would have funded East Tennessee State's entire operations in 1935. Revealingly, Hess cautioned Kruesi, "Needless to say, we do not want to give too much publicity to these figures as the public thinks in terms of the gross without considering the expense, both immediate and general overhead." Hess neglected to mention that the public might be justifiably outraged at the amount of profit the Athletic Association was making from its shallow pockets during such hard times. In this one instance, it seems, the University wanted to avoid publicity of the athletic department's success.⁶³

The University, as the state's supposed citadel of academic integrity and scholarship, also had to justify the disproportionately high salaries it paid to its coaches, particularly football coach General Robert Neyland. As Benjamin Rader has pointed out, college football coaches became the stars of the programs in the 1920s and 1930s, and as such they grew to be synonymous with the schools they represented. Consequently, most big-time college football coaches were better paid than their faculty counterparts and a few even better than the college presidents.

⁶³ J.P. Hess to Paul J. Kruesi, 30 October 1939 and 1 November 1939, Board of Trustees Business Manager Papers, Folder 12, Box 2, AR-8.

This was one area where the University of Tennessee far surpassed the average and continues to do so. During the Depression, Tennessee's faculty had to endure 20 percent salary cuts, but Neyland never had his reduced, even though Sewanee, the University of Chattanooga and the other schools had to reduce coaching staffs and budgets, sometimes by over half. Neyland's replacement while the general was away on military duties, someone without Neyland's prestigious pedigree and reputation, earned \$6,000 a year, three times the best teacher's salary. But that paled in comparison to the salary that the Trustees voted for Neyland in the winter of 1938.⁶⁴

University president Hoskins and the trustees had become aware of other universities' interest in hiring General Neyland as a football coach, including perennial powers such as the University of Florida and the University of Southern California. Though they already had him under contract for the next two years, they decided to strike preemptively and extend his contract before he traveled to the Southeastern Conference meeting in Gainesville, Florida. While some trustees argued that Neyland deserved a raise as well as an extension, others pointed out that the public would surely object to paying a football coach such a tremendous salary as that proposed. Indeed, President Hoskins read to the trustees a letter he

⁶⁴ Rader, *The Rise of Intercollegiate Sports*, 184; James Riley Montgomery, *Threshold of a New Day: The University of Tennessee, 1919-1946*, U.T. Record, November 1971, 347; Board of Trustees Minutes, 11 Jan. 1935, vol 15, 286.

had received expressing that very viewpoint. Still, the trustees could not stand the thought of Neyland leaving and perhaps taking the team's successes and the University's front page headlines with him, so they proposed a compromise: they would give him a \$1,500 raise, thereby increasing his total salary to \$13,500, explaining the raise to the public as compensation for his duties as athletic director. A man working two such arduous jobs, they rationalized, deserved a high salary. While Hoskins obviously felt that the University needed to retain Neyland's services, the high salary may have ruffled his feathers. After all, he was leading the state's premier educational institution through its hour of greatest financial hardship, yet as late as 1940 he earned only \$8,400 and operated his entire office for only \$13,200. To further emphasize the point, that president's office budget was *larger* than it had been the previous year, and it was still hundreds of dollars less than Neyland's base salary which was, in fact, equivalent to one-ninth of the budget of the entire Liberal Arts College.⁶⁵

Faculty representative to the Athletic Association Nathan Dougherty disagreed with those who concluded that such disproportionate salaries necessarily meant disproportionate emphasis, as a Carnegie Foundation report on Intercollegiate Athletics had claimed. Dougherty responded:

⁶⁵ Board of Trustees Minutes, 3 December 1938 and 14 December 1938; Budget of the University of Tennessee: July 1, 1939 to June 30, 1940," 11, University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections

This [seeing an unwise imbalance between athletic and academic interests] is a natural conclusion for an American business man, but not a sound one for a College Professor. It might just as well be said that since the smoke of the locomotive can be seen farther than the locomotive that it is the important part of the railway train. The large salary budget means that there is much specialized activity, and specialized service is always expensive.

Dougherty, however, did not address why the University was willing to spend huge sums on the "smoke" while letting the "locomotive" grind to a virtual halt and almost rust beyond repair. Recognizing the price of specialized knowledge was one thing; hastening to pay it was another, even if the money was largely self-generated.⁶⁶

As his high salary implies, Neyland was a powerful man on campus. As athletic director and football coach intermittently throughout the Depression years and beyond, his word was often law if not holy writ. Most of the time, his words concerned football. Historian of the university James Montgomery has noted, "Aside from basketball and football, other intercollegiate teams received little encouragement from Neyland and, therefore, for the most part enjoyed little success." Actually the university did not even field a baseball team from 1931-1939, citing financial troubles of all things along with a paucity of available competition. A quick look at athletic budgets further demonstrates Montgomery's

⁶⁶ Nathan W. Dougherty, "Review of Carnegie Foundation's 'Report on American College Athletics,' Bulletin #23," "Carnegie Foundation-Reports on Sports on American Colleges" folder, Box XXI, MS-1376, Nathan W. Dougherty Collection, University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections.

point. In 1940, the budget allocated football \$131,161.25, basketball \$6,690, track \$1,821, and the other "minor sports"--golf, wrestling, tennis, swimming, cross country-- a total of \$1,975. The University expected to earn \$189,300 from football (yes, \$189,300) and only \$4,000 from the other sports combined. The roots of Tennessee's status as a "football school" were in the Depression era.⁶⁷

All of these schools passed the 1930s without women's intercollegiate athletics and with men's intercollegiate football and basketball programs, but the offerings of the "minor sports" were often rather sporadic. As earlier noted, Sewanee discontinued golf and track and field during the Depression, and the University of Tennessee dropped its baseball team for most of the decade. Additionally, in 1932 under President Alexander Guerry's watch, the University of Chattanooga made all spring sports except baseball intramural sports only. Yet, the dropping of one sport was often quickly followed by its reinstatement or by the addition of another. In 1933 and 1935, for example, the University of Chattanooga added intercollegiate sports teams, including the track team discontinued in 1932, just as Sewanee did in 1934. Other schools alternately added or dropped men's golf teams, tennis teams, and track and field teams throughout the Depression, but the available records show no real administrative concern about them either way. A

⁶⁷ Montgomery, *Threshold*, 344; University of Tennessee Athletic Association Board of Directors Minutes, 10 May 1940, folder 12, AR-8 University of Tennessee Archives and Special Collections.

possible explanation for this lack of interest could be that these "minor sports" were not the kind that attracted headlines or large crowds of students, alumni, or townspeople, nor were they the type judged likely to build "real men," and therefore they were inconsequential in the administrators' opinions to the schools' true athletic and academic missions. The women's Depression-era athletic programs, intramural ones only and on paper "minor" ones as well, garnered a little more attention, perhaps because of their potentially central role in shaping the young women of the 1930s.⁶⁸

In recent years the University of Tennessee's most consistently successful athletic program has been the women's basketball program, winners of five national championships, but in keeping with the national trends described earlier the University did not even have a women's intercollegiate athletic program during the Depression. It discontinued its women's intercollegiate basketball team in 1926, and Maryville College did likewise the following year.⁶⁹ Ralph Wellons, Dean of Tusculum College, alluded to common concerns about the physical and social dangers caused by women competing when he wrote East Tennessee State president Sherrod in 1928 proposing that the two colleges simultaneously drop their women's basketball programs. Wellons cryptically wrote, "I need not go into

⁶⁸ Govan and Livingood, *The University of Chattanooga*, 200; *Sewanee Alumni News*, "A Sports History of the University of the South," 34.

⁶⁹ Charles Sherrod to R.D. Wellons, 19 January 1928, Sherrod Collection.

detail at this time in the statement of reasons for this action, but I take it that you have also been thinking in the same direction." Sherrod replied that, although he had "often questioned whether or not the loss in the strenuous games was not more than could possibly be gained," East Tennessee would keep its women's basketball program through the following year. Later that same year, in response to yet another entreaty by Wellons, Sherrod gave a more specific explanation for keeping women's intercollegiate basketball despite his reservations about the "advisability of doing so under the strenuous reactions which accompany the game," explaining that, "It seems that we have so few activities that we thought it best," thus placing his students' social well-being above his concerns for female athletes' health.⁷⁰

Once the Depression hit, Sherrod reevaluated his stance, perhaps persuading himself that the games truly were too damaging to the fragile women athletes and that the college community could survive with fewer activities after all. Thus, East Tennessee State discontinued women's intercollegiate basketball. Carson-Newman's administrators made the same decision, concluding in 1931 that the competition was simply too strenuous for women. By 1932, Maryville College, the University of Chattanooga, Carson-Newman College, East Tennessee State Teachers College, and the University of Tennessee offered no intercollegiate sports

⁷⁰ Ralph Wellons to Charles Sherrod, 10 January 1928; Charles Sherrod to Ralph Wellons, 19 January 1928; Charles Sherrod to Ralph Wellons, 27 September 1928, Sherrod Collection.

for women at all. Each emphasized the egalitarianism of the intramural systems that replaced the intercollegiate programs, yet none suggested that similar systems would best benefit male students, even though Sewanee's intramural system did in fact serve most students. For example, Maryville's Women's Athletic Director wrote that the new system "will give every girl a chance to try for a letter, instead of a fortunate few." East Tennessee State's student recruiting literature explained that women's intramural sports stirred as much excitement as intercollegiate sports, and had additional benefits as well: "The strain is gone, the value remains; no over-exertion which taxes too heavily the vital organs, but plenty of wholesome exercise and healthy, friendly rivalry."⁷¹ Some of the participants accepted the explanations and rationales at face value. One Depression-era Carson-Newman female student explained, "Athletics among the girls is needed for a well-rounded education. It is a rest from the studies and strenuous exercises of the day. One of the main things [the intramural program] teaches is co-operation with others." Two Maryville alumni recall that the women's intramural program existed there "to instill the need and the pleasure of rigorous exercise" and noted that "we were not expected to be very competitive."⁷²

⁷¹ *The Appalachian*, (Jefferson City, Tennessee: by the senior class of Carson and Newman College, 1932), 78-79; *East Tennessee State Teachers College Bulletin*, March 1936; Kribbs, *History of Athletics at Maryville College*, 150.

⁷² *The Orange and Blue* 25 Feb. 1936; interview with Pieper and Best.

A brief glance at the Maryville College "Point System of Athletic Awards" for women may indicate why one could view the college's intramural system more as a social control mechanism, along the lines earlier suggested by Coakley, than a system for increasing athletic prowess. In order to earn an athletic letter (which was incidentally "much smaller" than a man's letter), women could earn points by captaining a team, by participating in various sports, or accomplishing certain athletic feats, but they could also earn one-sixth of the necessary points by simply observing certain health rules. To earn maximum health points, Maryville women had to sleep "from time lights cut out until 6 a.m., during any 23 days out of 30 consecutive days" with the windows "open top to bottom." They also had to bathe daily in water not "too hot or too cold." Moreover, they had to follow strict dietary guidelines that established permissible eating times and contained the admonition that "no coco cola is allowed at any time." These Maryville athletes were also expected to "evacuate" themselves once a day "at regular time, if possible preferably after breakfast" in addition to changing their underwear daily. This system's designers used "sports" programs as a tool for teaching "proper" living to women, making these programs even more valuable to the schools than the more narrowly defined, exclusionary and expensive women's varsity programs.⁷³

⁷³ Interview with Pieper and Best; "Point System of Athletic Awards," Athletics-Awards, Point System of, Folder, Athletics Box 1. Maryville College Archives and Special Collections.

Still, not all decisions to offer women some athletic opportunities grew from the purest motives or from concern for the students' development. The minutes of the executive committee of the University of Chattanooga illuminate a much different motivation behind that institution's attention to women athletes: self-preservation. The minutes record that one professor "mentioned that the University would be dropped from all Women's Associations and the institution's standing would be jeopardized if we do not do something in the way of athletics for women." Not coincidentally, one year later the minutes noted that the University employed a full-time Director of Athletics for Women, and the committee complimented her, in accord with national sentiments, for her efforts to bring a large number of girls into her intramural athletic program."⁷⁴

It would be difficult, nigh near impossible, to evaluate the success of these programs in molding the young women into what the programs' designers hoped they would be. This would require an extended and subjective examination of the participants' later lives and could never accurately gauge the effects of the intramural programs on the women's development. However, a mere thumbing through the schools' student newspapers reveals that women still received individual attention for their athletic exploits and that many of them replaced team

⁷⁴ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee of the University of Chattanooga, 1907-1942*, 22 June 1929; University of Chattanooga Board of Trustee Minutes, 4 June 1930.

oriented intercollegiate athletics with intersorority or interclub competition, thus voiding the intent of the administrators.

In his master's thesis on women's sports at the University of Tennessee Adam Hornbuckle argues that the intramural system established in the 1920s at UT allowed a limited number of female athletes to dominate every contest and to collect all of the end of the year honors. He explains that for several years in the 1920s every female participating in intramurals was also in a sorority; not until 1935-36 could "independents" compete against "Greeks" for university-wide team titles. More importantly Hornbuckle also asserts that "skilled and competitive athletics, and the recognition and prestige derived from them, were important factors in the development of women's sports and physical education at the University of Tennessee, and they remained significant throughout the 1920s and 1930s, despite the elimination of women's' varsity sports and the development of forms of universal participation." This assessment also holds true for the other examined East Tennessee schools where sororities, where they existed, featured prominently in intramural systems⁷⁵

If the administrators and women physical educators were unsuccessful in removing competition and recognition from women's athletics at these colleges,

⁷⁵ Adam Hornbuckle, "Women's Sports and Physical Education at the University of Tennessee: 1899-1939" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1983), 86-93-98, iv.

they were equally unsuccessful in preventing women from competing in front of men. In a 1939 summary of the University of Chattanooga's year in sports a student commentator explained frankly, "The event that attracted the most interest during the year was Mrs. Manson's highly successful Play Day [a type of intercollegiate gathering of women athletes that de-emphasized school identity and competition which was popular around the country and among these schools]. At times there were more football players on the field than could have been hunted down during the spring practice seasons. There must have been some real reason for all this attendance." There must have been indeed, and this was exactly what the administrators had hoped to prevent. In their attempts to stifle women's competitive instincts and prohibit mixed audiences, they failed.⁷⁶

Judging from this and other examples, sports obviously aroused some sort of student interest during the Depression, even if the arousal was not always of the variety administrators desired. In many instances, however, it was *exactly* what they had wanted. During the Depression, when entertainment was especially scarce on college campuses, students flocked to the games. Two Maryville College Depression-era alumni recalled that "everybody" went to the games and that they "had very exciting cheerleading sections" and a "good marching band" at all home football games. Sewanee recorded that over sixty-five percent of its college

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The University Echo (Chattanooga), 31 May 1939.

students traveled to Chattanooga in 1941 to see Sewanee play Davidson, that another sixty-two percent went to Nashville for a tilt with Vanderbilt, and that a full eighty percent of its students attended its home football games that year. The administrators could have hardly asked for more. Even while arguing that attending athletic contests was *not* the only way to show one's college spirit, the Maryville College newspaper editor felt forced to admit, "Of course we believe in intercollegiate athletics. We think college would be a dead old dump without it." Student newspapers regularly featured sports stories on the front page, often under the most prominent headline of the newspaper. Students did not go just to home games though. In 1931, a time when most students did not have cars, the Carson-Newman student newspaper anticipated up to 150 students making the trip to Maryville for a football game.⁷⁷ Earlier in that season students had disrupted Johnson City's quiet night with a "snake dance." *The Orange and Blue* reported:

The air was filled with a proud and exciting essence of victory. Every student was filled with pep, and it would have been a shame to have allowed it to be wasted without letting the people of this "villa" know about it. Immediately after supper the students gathered in front of the ladies domicile and joined hands for nothing else but a snake dance. Most everyone that was not suffering from some sort of "-osis", "-itus", or "-ism" was right there in that straight and crooked line. . . . The crowd started down the hill in such graceful curves that even the traffic dared not pass, but stopped to ask what it was all about.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Interview with Pieper and Best; "Athletics Folder," Vice Chancellor Guerry Papers; *The Highland Echo* 19 Jan. 1931; *The Orange and Blue* 24 November 1931.
⁷⁸ *The Orange and Blue* September 1931.

Like those at Maryville, many of the Carson-Newman students cared a great deal about their football team and rejoiced in the atmosphere that the games provided and that success created.

Not all of these East Tennessee students, however, walked to their classes with their books in one hand and their pompoms in the other. Early in the 1930s a Carson-Newman social club debated the resolution "That intercollegiate athletics should be abolished." No record exists of the arguments offered or of their persuasiveness, but the fact that the club selected this topic demonstrates that these students recognized the possibility of someone presenting a convincing case. The University of Chattanooga's student paper likewise reveals an underside to the student enthusiasm, a side that makes one recognize that intercollegiate athletics were not the panacea administrators had desired. Just as the Maryville College editor had noted that students had many non-athletic opportunities to express their college spirit, the *Echo* almost annually featured pleas for more support from one student or another. In 1935, one student exhorted his colleagues:

We've seen a New Deal given the American people, so why can't we the students of the University of Chattanooga, give those fightin' Moccasins a new deal in college spirit. Why? I'll tell you why--because some of us had rather be sophisticated and think it unbecoming a college student to get out and yell at a football game. Those football players, our team, don't think it beneath their dignity to risk their necks to bring glory to our school and us. The only thing we risk is the chance of being hoarse for a day or two, and that's mighty little if you ask me.⁷⁹

Later that same season that apathy momentarily disappeared as University of Chattanooga students decorated and paraded one hundred and fifty cars before the homecoming contest with Mercer, after which the newspaper congratulated and challenged the students, printing, "fellow students, let's keep that enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can build the University of Chattanooga into one of the greatest educational institutions in the South." ⁸⁰

Despite the fact that a portion of the student body remained uninterested in intercollegiate athletics or was too "cool" to demonstrate interest, most of these Depression-era college students enjoyed the opportunities to forget about their troubles and to cheer the athletes representing their schools. And they were not alone in the stadia. Instead, they shared these diversions with townspeople and alumni, and in their cases, the administrators and decision-makers often got much more than they had bargained for in their quest to create closer ties between these constituencies and the schools.

While Tennessee was averaging crowds greater than 20,000, some of the smaller schools attracted numbers proportionally as impressive. Maryville College entertained 3,500 spectators at its first night game in 1929, a number four times the college's enrollment. In general, college football weathered the Depression's storms

⁷⁹ *The Orange and Blue* 22 November 1930, 7; *The University Echo* (Chattanooga) 4 Oct. 1935, 2.

⁸⁰ *The Echo* 15 November 1935, 2.

remarkably well; as already noted, almost every college examined herein expanded its stadium during the 1930s. The troubles at the beginning of the Depression caused some other schools to drop football, but where it survived it thrived. By 1937 national attendance at college football games approached twenty million, a number twice that of 1930.⁸¹

With all of these bodies in the seats, the administrators soon realized, came an equal number of opinions and suggestions about the teams. By 1929, two historians of the University of Chattanooga argue, there existed "constant pressure for the relaxation of standards to provide a winning team." A 1936 Vanderbilt University chancellor's report reveals that schools' alumni shared a preoccupation with athletics, reading, "The alumni, who have been supporting football sub rosa, are wondering by what process they can assure themselves that the money they contribute will go directly as a payment for student services, and not be diverted by the faculty committee and divided with other students." All across the state, it seems, priorities were out of order.⁸²

Not only did many alumni push for lower academic standards and seek to separate further the academic and athletic components of the schools, they also directly affected the teams and athletic opportunities themselves; for example, in

⁸¹ *The Highland Echo* 30 September 1929; Rader, *American Sports*, 182.

⁸² Govan and Livingood, *The University of Chattanooga*, 147; "Extract from the Report of the Chancellor of the Vanderbilt University to the Board of Trust, June 1936," Football folder, Vice Chancellor Guerry Papers, 3.

1936, the Carson-Newman class of 1934 pledged to fund the construction of a new track on college grounds. Sewanee's athletic director reported that the "consistent and loud knocking on the part of certain alumni" had disheartened his teams and dampened the players' enthusiasm and fire to play. This, in turn, had translated into poor practice habits and then, naturally, into poor gameday performances and in even more results unsatisfactory to the alumni. This frustrated man told the Trustees, "Never have the injuries to Sewanee's athletic interests caused by alumni outbursts been more apparent than at the present time. Never has there been manifested anywhere a more determined effort on the part of the alumni to rule or to ruin." The athletic director next explained that he had appointed two new coaches of good moral stock and athletic experience, but he warned that they must receive complete support if they were to achieve success.⁸³

Total and unquestioned support the Sewanee Depression-era coach, Harry Clark, did not receive, especially from the alumni demanding victories against traditional rivals now drawing players from student bodies thousands larger than Sewanee's. In January 1939, a "friend and alumnus of Sewanee" wrote vice chancellor Guerry to inform him that "The foot-ball question at Sewanee has become a classic discussion among the alumni" and that "with all due respect to Coach Clark. . . it appears to all persons that there should be a change." Three

⁸³ *The Orange and The Blue* 28 Jan. 1936, 7; *Bulletin of the University of the South*, Aug. 1930, 79-80.

months later another alumnus' letter reached Guerry's desk, and this one expressed common alumni attitudes even more succinctly. After explaining that he wished he could give more money to the alumni gift campaign, the author established his sincere feelings, his good intentions, and his most serious concerns, writing, "Sewanee is very dear to me. Much more than I can express and it would be a big blow to me to see it fail." But, however much he felt for Sewanee, and despite his close personal friendship with his former coach and close personal friend coach Clark, and despite being fully cognizant that Sewanee needed all possible students and financial help, this man could not bring himself to ask his nephew "to go to Sewanee under the present athletic conditions." His nephew deserved a school with both a good academic program and successful sports teams. Sewanee could offer only one of these. Still, this alumnus cautioned Guerry that even a reduced football schedule devoid of traditional rivals would be better than nothing at all, warning "If you mean to drop football and basketball entirely (intercollegiate) I do not believe you can keep the alumni's interest." It appears that the attempts to link absolutely alma mater and athletics had been all too successful.⁸⁴

Despite the interference and meddling they caused, Depression-era intercollegiate athletics certainly did create closer bonds between town and gown.

⁸⁴ John W. Bass to Alexander Guerry, 20 January 1939, Football Policy Folder, Vice Chancellor Guerry Papers; Alex Nieiford to Alexander Guerry, 4 April 1939, Football Policy folder, Vice Chancellor Guerry Papers.

Again in Chattanooga, the Kiwanis Club raised the funds to expand the University's stadium capacity to 5,000, and the Rotary club sometimes hosted the entire football team for lunch. Looking back, one finds no mention of any college's chess club being toasted or even noticed by the town's business elite. As further evidence of townspeople support, the University of Chattanooga was able to fill an entire bus with townspeople for a trip to Memphis for a football game.⁸⁵

If one of the college administrators' more concrete and easily defensible expectations was that athletic programs would create rugged, gentlemen scholars, then, unfortunately for the schools, these hopes also seem to have been misplaced for intercollegiate athletics did not regularly produce "knights" of the round ball, or even the oblong ball for that matter. Yes, just as one can find easily today, many athletes did meet the lofty standards of these heroic descriptions of well-rounded leaders (including the only recipient ever of the University of Chattanooga's President's Award, three-sport star Bob Klein), but one can also see the antecedent of another contemporary phenomenon by examining the stories of 1930s athletes. A 1935 University of Florida student articulated what many must have been thinking, writing, "the fact remains that very few of the boys we hire to play football could pass a college entrance examination, much less qualify as 'scholars.'" A joke published in the Maryville college newspaper continues this same theme,

⁸⁵ Govan and Livingood, *The University of Chattanooga*, 197; *The University Echo*, 4 Oct. 1935, 1; *The University Echo*, 15 Nov. 1935, 1.

with one student asking, "Is that football player graduating this year?" and another replying "No, I understand he is renewing his contract." The 1930 Sewanee Vice-Chancellor's report to the Board of Trustees further illustrates the fact that many young men attended college just to play sports and not to become the sort of student-athlete that the Rhodes Scholarship program attracted. This report gives the reasons for student attrition and tells that eight students left Sewanee during the school year because of illness, one because he died, two to enroll elsewhere, four because of maladjustment, and five because the football season ended.⁸⁶

These leaders, then, had their culturally-influenced great aspirations confronted with the grim reality that not all athletes were scholar-athletes. They communicated this realization to others as well. The Arkansas College report contained this pithy summary of administrators' observations on the effects of football on the college's educational mission, "adverse scholarship effects are to be expected." As almost everyone at the time realized, the goal of producing new generations of Teddy Roosevelts or knights was not realized.⁸⁷

The Depression's early years and the years immediately preceding it witnessed the further subordination of women's sports to men's sports, something the relatively recent Title IX tries to remedy by pushing athletic departments

⁸⁶ Ed Danforth, "An Ear to the Ground," 19 Jan. 1935, Athletic Department Newsclippings Folder, University of the South archives; *The Highland Echo*, 28 Oct. 1929; *Bulletin of the University of the South*, Aug. 1930, 61.

⁸⁷ "Data on Football," 2.

towards gender equity. More than ever before, during the Depression college football played the role of provider for the other sports, making it essential for a financially viable athletic program and, consequently, virtually immune to reproach for its excesses. Depression-era collegiate sports spending seems inappropriate within the context of failing departments and falling academic budgets, but then, as now, as long as the athletic departments supported themselves no one effectively opposed their extravagances; only when they did not were they vulnerable to attack.

In a region described in a 1938 presidential report as the "nation's number one economic problem" the University of Tennessee, East Tennessee State Teachers College, Carson-Newman College, Maryville College, the University of the South, and the University of Chattanooga weathered the Depression's storms and continued to support recognizably modern and expensive men's intercollegiate athletic programs. The schools, private and public, large and small, followed this route because the people making the decisions, usually the college presidents and trustees, saw the attractions athletic programs held for potential students and the allegiances they fostered in alumni, because they believed sports programs helped teach both men and women the "proper" way to live, because the games provided essential diversions for the local community and for the students, and because the athletic budgets were largely self-sustaining. Many readers might recognize a bit of

themselves and of modern times in these descriptions of people reading the sports stories first, of fans identifying themselves wholeheartedly with the local college athletic program, of schools seemingly putting too much emphasis and money into athletic programs at the expense of academic programs. If the 1920s were the boom years of American sports, then the bust years of the Depression solidified and continued that boom and established the significant place that intercollegiate athletics have in American society today.

Not many of the administrators' expectations were fully realized, but that did not prevent the administrators from clinging to the hopes that they would be. Intercollegiate athletics brought much-needed enthusiasm for these East Tennessee schools, but that enthusiasm was tempered with a belief by some that the colleges were spending money on "non-essentials" while the essentials suffered irreparable harm. The sports teams doubtlessly forged stronger bonds between the schools and their alumni and host communities, but in doing so they created an opportunity for people to support one part of the institution while ignoring the other parts. Some might argue that the schools set this unfortunate precedent themselves.

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Vita

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