

GENE S. MEDLEY  
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By Kathy Naylor  
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‘Getting beat doesn’t bother me but I’d hate to be a loser.’

Occupation? Director of the University of Tennessee Extension Service in Overton County.

Where were you born? Pikeville, TN.

What do you like best about Cookeville? The location and the people. As the ‘Hub of the Upper Cumberland.’ Cookeville will always be the shopping, meeting and gathering place for this area. Like everyone else in Overton County, we shop and eat in Cookeville. Cookeville’s location between two major cities (Nashville and Knoxville) will only enhance its ability to grow.

What contributions have you made to your community? I have received two degrees from Tennessee Tech, a BS in Animal Science and an MS in Education. In 1978, I received the first Vocational Agriculture teaching certificate to be given by Tennessee Tech.

I have affiliations with the following: past president of the Livingston Rotary Club, past president of the 4-H Agent State Association, past PTO president, advisory board of the Overton County Fair Association, co-founder of the Overton County Youth Leadership Program, Leadership Overton Alumni, Member of Leadership Upper Cumberland, past chairman of the American Heart Association of Overton County, past board member of the Overton Chamber of Commerce, helped start the Dale Hollow Soccer Association, 2001 4-H Golf Classic Chairman (17 counties involved, very successful results) – these are just to name a few.

Define success? Reaching a goal – either personal or professional – and it is not measured in money, position or recognition but is measured by the individual through time. Success is doing your very best and not worrying about the final score. My favorite saying is, “It never bothers me to get beat but I hate to lose!” There is a big difference between the two – and it is called preparation.

What is your greatest achievement? My family, my belief in God, my longtime friends and the community where I live.

A goal you have yet to achieve? Retirement. I know this sounds like a joke, but I look forward to the day when I can do more for myself and my community without worrying about a time set.

Most important lesson you have learned? In life treat every minute as if it were your last and remember that you do make a difference even if you don't realize it until years later.

One thing that makes you smile? Seeing those around me happy and cheerful. Our world needs to laugh more and loosen up. It has taken me a long time to realize that life is very short and the time we have left on Earth needs to be fun.

A person you are most interested in meeting? I would like to meet President Bush. I have always admired the Bush family for their values in life. Even more since the attacks on New York and Washington, I feel that our President is using his faith for the groundwork of his decision making. Everyone is now looking at him for guidance and strength. I would like to ask him how he sees our country and world now.

A word of advice you give to others? Life sometimes does not seem fair but we need to keep pushing for perfection in our daily lives.

One thing that would improve the quality of life here? More community pride. Cookeville and Putnam County are wonderful places to live, learn and work. We need to stand proud for what we have. Tennessee Tech is a wonderful university – we need to tell its story. We have many things others do not.

What are your hobbies? I like all types of sports, especially UT football games. My kids, yard work, working on projects in my shop, being on Dale Hollow Lake, traveling, working at my church and just being lazy with my friends and family – they're all my hobbies.

Last movie you saw at the theater? Pearl Harbor.

Favorite movie? Top Gun.

Favorite store in Cookeville? Not Walmart, even though sometime we must go there for convenience, I really like to shop at smaller-type discount stores. My favorite store is Lowe's. I know it is a big, but I can get lost in there for hours and dream about the projects I could do if I only had the money and time.

Favorite book? The Bible and The Tennessee Blue Book. I love Tennessee history. In my job working with 1,300 kids each month, I have the opportunity to ask questions about Tennessee history. Sometimes we do not do a very good job here about telling the story of Tennessee. For example: where was the first state capital? What is the oldest city? Etc.

Favorite band/musician: Charlie Daniels' Band and Billy Joel.

Favorite vacation spot? The North Carolina beach area, Williamsburg, VA, and anywhere I have not been before.

Favorite Website? ESPN.com being a sports buff, I read the up-to-date college football news and then I go to the SEC football report.

Favorite restaurant? Regas's in Knoxville; Nicks and Spankies in Cookeville.

First choice for a second career? Besides a bum, I'd like to be a high school teacher in the area of agriculture or biology. For two years I taught vocational agriculture in Carthage. I have always had an urge to go into the catering and restaurant business. We do a little catering on the side and our specialty is barbecue. Who know, one of these days it might be a reality. I love to share recipes with cooking friends. Believe me, the Medleys like to eat.

What is the best gift you have ever received? My two kids. What a wonderful gift from God!

If you had one wish, what would it be? For my family to remain healthy and have a long, prosperous life.

What person has had the most influence in your life? My father. I can think back to all the times he was in the background. I never remember him pushing me to play sports or pushing me in school or other activities, but when I did get involved in an activity, he was always there to support me. I guess the most influence he had on me was the teaching of right and wrong. I knew there was no middle line – it either was or was not. I knew up front what the word “no” meant. I also knew that when I messed up, to just get ready to face what was going to happen. It try to teach my own kids to respect and obey just like I was taught. I was also taught that saying “I'm sorry” is okay too.

What's in your pocket? 35 cents, a pocket knife from my son, a cross and memories.

What makes you feel special? Someone acknowledging that I have helped them in some way or a gentle ‘thank you’ for a small task completed.

Tell me about your family? My family roots go back to Putnam County. Our family came to Putnam County originally in the Buffalo Valley area. My grandfather was E. E. (“Doc) Medley (*Eugene Eschol “Dock” Medley*) who had a feed mill there before leaving to work in Old Hickory, TN, at Dupont.

My father and stepmother are Bill and Gertha Medley who live on the Hilham Road in Cookeville. My father is retired from the Soil and Conservation Service where he worked in Gainesboro until 1971. We moved to Jackson County in the spring of 1960 and I graduated high school there in 1973.

We still have a farm in Jackson County. My mother passed away in 1987 from a lengthy battle with heart failure. I have been married for 24 years to Maura Little (from Cookeville.) Maura's mother, Alice, was the legal secretary for Barnes & Acuff law firm.

Maura's father, Bob, was the plant manager for many years at Cookeville Industries. Maura is a first-grade teacher in Livingston at A. H. Roberts Elementary School.

We have two children, Rob, 16, and Allison, 14. They both attend Livingston Academy and are both very active in school sports and church. We have a dog, "Brady," and a cat, "Smoky" – for UT.

In 1980, I began working with the Extension Service in Morristown, TN. We still have many friends there. I became the Extension Leader here working with the 4-H program in 1987. I am an only child, and my wife is an only child. I know you are thinking, "They are both rotten," but we're not.

Our parents worked hard, saw some tough times, and passed life's family lessons and values down to us. Our family loves Dale Hollow Lake, camping, the great outdoors and spending time together.

If you had the chance to do it all again, what would you do differently? If I could change most things, I probably would not. I would have told family members that have passed on that I love them, and now it is too late. I hate it that I was too proud to say those "big words."

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be and why? I would be more patient and more forgiving to my fellow man and my family.

Describe your talents? I can work with all types of people and sometimes get the most out of them; good organization and leadership abilities. I have coached T-Ball, Little League, soccer and soft ball for several years. The real thing with any talent is getting the best out of every situation.

What is your favorite daydream? Being independent, wealthy and not having to report to anyone.

What are your best childhood memories? Country living, family get-togethers, school activities, getting to visit my family at Christmas in Florida. I traveled with my parents to these ungodly places to see relatives who I have never seen again, but I guess it was kinda fun as well.

Holidays. My mother loved to cook and decorate for the different holidays. I have carried this tradition over to my kids. We make every holiday a big deal. I remember being interested in learning about old tools and equipment used on the farm. I enjoyed listening to old folks tell about the old times and the lives they lived.

If you day had 25 hours in it how would you spend that extra hour? I would spend it planning for the next 24 hours. I guess I normally am a detail person; everything needs to be laid out. I can't start things unorganized.

After your death, what do your want to be remembered for? Gene Medley was: "A servant to other people."

*Kathy Naylor works in charitable and civic projects in the Cookeville area and was named one of the 'Outstanding Women of 2000-2001' by the Business & Professional Women.*

\*See Chapter 5: Eugene Eschol "Dock" Medley md Buena Vista Denny, d/o John Rankin Denny & Ada Scruggs.

\*See Where Buffalo Roamed Now Sleeping Valley – Buffalo Valley History.

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