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# Southern



# Standard

## Expert plans to solve cold-case murder

Lela Mae Adcock's killer remains at large

BY **DUANE SHERRILL**  
Reporter for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Local law enforcement officials have called a mechanic to help fix an unsolved murder with the renowned criminal profiler setting his eyes on clearing a homicide over 20 years old.

"My advice to the killer is he should not plan any long trips or buy any green bananas," warned Richard Walter, a murder case consultant who has been brought in by District Attorney General Lisa Zavogiannis to help solve the December 1996 murder of Lela Mae Adcock, 74. "I anticipate success."

Adcock was found murdered

inside her apartment on Rebel Hill Street just before Christmas in 1996. Her throat had been cut. While several promising leads were followed after the murder, none panned out, leaving the case in the cold case file for two decades. However, Zavogiannis said she



WALTER

has not given up bringing the killer to justice.

"We are working to give our community and the victim's family closure," Zavogiannis said. "And, I think we're closing in."

Walter, who works with the Sherry Black Foundation for Peace Officers, helps local agencies in solving cold cases. He has 22 years of experience inter-

viewing thousands of convicted felons around the world.

"I guess you could call me a mechanic of murder," Walter said of his affinity for solving cold cases, noting there is a "keen person of interest" who has been developed in the Adcock case. The veteran sleuth believes investigators are on the brink of breaking the case wide open.

Continued on **3A**

## Prepared to plow



A McMinnville Public Works truck plows snow and slush from Main Street in this file photo.

## Road crews ready for winter

BY **LISA HOBBS**  
Reporter for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

With winter weather gripping the area, Warren County's Highway Department and McMinnville's Public Works Department are prepared for the worst.

"I have salt spreaders mounted and snowplows mounted on five trucks and they are ready to go," said county Road Superintendent Levie Glenn. "Our salt bin is full. I probably have 150 to 200 tons of salt and I've got 300 more on contract."

McMinnville Public Works assistant director Brad Hennessee says he has 90 pallets of bagged salt equaling roughly 109 tons, which is enough for three winters.

"The city usually spreads 25-35 tons per winter, if it is used," he said.

Preparedness is key when residents depend on you to clear the streets.

"You have to think ahead with your salt supply," Glenn said. "It gets difficult to find salt when you aren't contracted in. Having a contract for 300 tons means we are guaranteed that much, if needed. We contract our



Levie Glenn says the county salt bin is full.

salt supplier in August or September. You can't wait until you need it. If you do, you might not find any."

The Highway Department, said Glenn, first targets areas known to be troublesome for motorists during snow and ice.

Continued on **3A**

## Man talked from edge of 60-foot cliff

BY **DUANE SHERRILL**  
Reporter for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

A man was talked off a cliff Wednesday evening after he fled deputies and stood poised atop a 60-foot drop into the frigid waters of the Collins River.

Authorities say the man, Christopher L. Johnson, 35, had to be taken seriously as he stood atop the cliff since he had leapt from the same cliff into the river several years ago when he also ran from lawmen.

However, temperatures Wednesday lingered around the teens meaning a death-defying leap from the withering heights may have proven fatal, not due to the fall but due to hypothermia.

Johnson ran from deputies when they arrived at a residence on Bickford Lane to take him into custody on outstanding warrants arising from an earlier domestic situation involving his girlfriend.

He faces charges of false imprisonment, kidnapping and domestic assault from that incident.

Johnson bolted on foot when officers arrived, prompting a chase from the house to the bluff that overlooks the Collins River. Giving chase was deputy



**While survival rates vary by individual, Johnson likely would have only made it a few minutes in the frigid water.**

Bristol Davis who, along with others, cornered Johnson atop the bluff.

However, Johnson was not going peacefully.

"He told them he was going to jump," said Sheriff Jackie Matheny, noting officers were aware he had jumped before in an attempt to avoid arrest.

Given the standoff, deputies called in Lt. Bill Davis of the McMinnville Police Department who also happens to be the father of Deputy Davis, the officer who had cornered Johnson on the bluff.

"It took about four hours but eventually they talked him down," Matheny said of the long negotiations. "Everybody was frozen stiff by the time it was over."



JOHNSON

## Hickory Creek rooms flood for second year

BY **JAMES CLARK**  
Editor of the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

School officials probably didn't intend Hickory Creek Elementary to resemble an actual waterway.

But for the second January in a row, sprinkler system pipes have burst at Hickory Creek and flooded the classrooms of first-grade teachers Marianne Elliott and Toree Craven. Since the sprinkler pipes are located above the drop ceiling, water damage can be extensive.

"It's hard to believe I have to go through this again," said Craven while surveying her soggy room Thursday morning. "Last year I spent about \$700 of my own money replacing everything. I didn't get any help from the school."

Even though the exact same thing happened last year, Director of Schools Bobby

Cox said he believes the problem was fixed properly at that time. He said school maintenance workers are still trying to evaluate what happened.

"It's a dry sprinkler system so water is not supposed to be in those pipes unless there's a fire and the system activates," said Cox. "But something's wrong for it to happen again around the same spot."

Hickory Creek principal Mike Mansfield said the two teachers had to hold class in the library and multi-purpose room last year while their classrooms were repaired. He said Thursday he anticipates a similar situation this year.

Cox said all schools in the Warren County system will be closed Friday. He said water issues at WCHS and Hickory Creek, along with a high rate of flu cases reported from our local Health Department, led to the decision. He hopes to reopen school on time Monday, Jan. 8.



Hickory Creek teacher Slayden Rogers removes a desk from a first-grade classroom after it suffered heavy water damage Thursday.

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