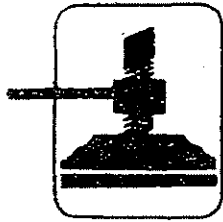


INSIDE: Leaders' aims set for Sevier County's Road 67

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1992



THE MOUNTAIN PRESS

35¢

Sevier County, Tennessee

Vol. 2-92, No. 170 • 10 Pages

Attachment A

GOOD MORNING



Today's weather

Thursday forecast
Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of thunderstorms. High in the mid 80s.

Thursday night
Low in the upper 60s to lower 70s.

Friday
Very warm and humid with scattered thundershowers. High between 85 and 90.

News short

Town meeting to be on TV

GATLINBURG — Residents will have another chance to see what happened during last week's town meeting.

Blount can't seek execution for brother's death

By LESLIE WILSON
Staff Writer

The district attorney general in Maryville said he will work with Sevier County's district attorney general to try to get two Sevier County men sent to the electric chair.

Blount County District Attorney General Mike Flynn said Wednesday he will not seek the death penalty against Gary Wayne Sutton, 28, of Kodak and his uncle, James A. Dellinger, 41, of Seymour in connection with the February slaying of Tommy Griffin, 24. Griffin was shot in the

back of a head with a shotgun.

"Unfortunately, we don't have any of the enhancing factors that apply," Blount County District Attorney General Mike Flynn said. "Al [Sevier County District Attorney General Al Schmutzer Jr.] and I are just going to have to work together and try to get the same results in Sevier County."

Griffin, formerly of Bluff Heights Road in Sevier County, was found dead Feb. 24 near Little River off U.S. 321 in Walland.

Sutton and Dellinger were charged with first-degree murder in connection with the slaying and are also charged with murder in the slaying of Griffin's sister, Connie

Branam, 34, whose badly burned body was discovered in the burned-out shell of her car in Wears Valley Feb. 28.

Schmutzer said in May he will seek the death penalty in the Sevier County case. Authorities said they believe the two killed Branam as part of an attempt to hide Griffin's death.

The pair also faces two counts of arson each in Sevier County in connection with the blaze that destroyed Griffin's trailer Feb. 21 and the burning of Branam's car.

There are 12 enhancing factors the state takes into consideration when a murder case is presented. If none of the 12 factors are present, prosecutors cannot ask for

the death penalty.

"If any of (the enhancing factors) were present, we would be seeking the death penalty," Flynn said.

The death penalty was an automatic penalty in murder convictions in this state until the late 1970s, when that law was ruled unconstitutional. First-degree murder convictions are now punishable by life in prison or the death penalty. The sentence must now be determined by a jury in a separate hearing.

Sutton and Dellinger are scheduled for arraignment in Blount County Criminal Court Aug. 11 and have a Sept. 21 trial date.



Limit may go to 25 mph on back roads