



Richard Krieg and his midnight raid

LAW DOGS | Betty Bean

Richard Krieg was a 22-year-old law student when he became the youngest member ever elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives.

"I was elected in the fall of 1968 when the voting age was still 21, and I do hold the distinction that the first time I was eligible to vote, I voted for myself," he said. Krieg served two terms before deciding to retire from politics and devote his full attention to his fledgling law practice. Today he is a shareholder in Lewis King Krieg and Waldrop. He served for 21 years on the Knoxville Airport Authority, which he also chaired.

His most public action as a state legislator came early in his second term, when he led what the News Sentinel archive labels "a post-midnight visit to overcrowded wards" at what was then called Eastern State Psychiatric Hospital, finding "too little staff, too little training, and unsanitary and inhumane conditions in aging buildings."

Krieg, who is no longer active in politics (and says he likes it that way), chuckles at the description of his "post-mid-

night" raid and says it really wasn't that dramatic.

"Back then there were two newspapers in town — the Knoxville Journal, which was a Republican paper, and the News-Sentinel, which was an eve-

Richard W. Krieg

Richard Krieg grew up in Morristown. His dad, Dick Krieg, is deceased. His mother, Mary, now 101, lives at LakeBrook in Knoxville.

Richard and wife Karen live in Westmoreland Hills. Their family includes: daughter Ashley Krieg, with the Atlanta March of Dimes; son Justin Krieg, with the Historic Columbus Foundation in Columbus, Ga.; daughter-in-law Katie Krieg and grandson George.

Krieg received his undergraduate and law degrees at the University of Tennessee in 1968 and 1971, respectively. He has held a variety of positions with the American Cancer Society including service on the national board, is the former chair of the Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority and is former board chair of the East Tennessee Discovery Center.

ning paper. If one newspaper took a position, the other would take the opposite position.

"So I'm a freshman legislator in a House of Representatives that has 49 Democrats, 49 Republicans and one Independent, and during my first term in office, I received several calls from a person who lived in my district who was a nurse at Eastern State, telling me how bad the conditions were there. But being new, and learning the ropes, I put her off.

"Fortunately, she was persistent, and she finally got me to agree to come and see what she was complaining about. This was in the days before there were laws protecting whistle-

blowers, and as a state employee, she was terrified. I promised I would not give up my source.

"I was horrified by what I saw — cell-like rooms, unsanitary conditions, rats and mice ... Although there were good employees there, they had limited resources and support from the

state. After my unofficial visit, I met with a number of people I trusted and said 'You won't believe it ...'

"I made the decision that without the media reporting it, it would be very difficult for me to get anything done. Being a Republican, my best contacts were with the Journal, and one of the most intimidating things I had to do was to go talk to editor Guy L. Smith.

"I also had some contacts at WBIR-TV, and they teamed up with the Journal to break this sto-



Richard Krieg Photo submitted

ry," Krieg said. "We went at night because my source went to work at 11 p.m., and I didn't want to take the kind of orchestrated tour the administration would have arranged.

"In my unsophisticated way, I was surprised at the way the Sentinel reacted — calling it an after-midnight raid. That was what made the whole thing such a controversy. And I was there after midnight, that is correct."

The result was a week-long series of investigative stories by both the Journal and WBIR that shocked the establishment into action.

Krieg made sure to give just-elected Republican Gov. Winfield Dunn a courtesy heads-up before the story broke, and he recalls Dunn being surprised, concerned and grateful for the advance notice.

"Naturally, I think he was cautious because he was new to office. He appointed a commission of people within his administration to look into it, and he was thankful that the abuses didn't occur on his watch. They made

wholesale changes in leadership, cleaned the place up, and put a greater emphasis on mental health care facilities and improving the program.

"My tenure in the legislature ended in 1972 when I did not run for reelection. I'll take credit for talking my campaign supporter Ben Atchley into running. And at that point, at 25, I was becoming a has-been."

Despite leaving office, Krieg has stayed keenly interested in mental

health issues, and says he is following the aftermath of Gov. Bill Haslam's closing Lakeshore.

"I personally know several dedicated professionals who spent a career working out there whose jobs ended, and they have great concerns over whether the needs of the patients are being met," he said. "And I can see why, from the numbers of homeless people and the numbers of people who need services and are not getting them."

The firm

Located at One Centre Square, 620 Market Street, the firm was founded by brothers George W. Morton Jr. and L. Clure Morton in 1960. L. Clure Morton was later appointed a U.S. District Judge for Middle Tennessee.

Charles B. Lewis joined the firm in 1960, and John K. King joined in 1965. King later headed the Department of Revenue for Gov. Lamar Alexander.

In 1993, Deborah Stevens was elected president/managing shareholder, becoming the first female managing partner of a large firm in Tennessee. The firm now includes 56 attorneys with offices in Knoxville and Nashville.

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