



BACK 2 SCHOOL PICNIC

Time to focus

Good Samaritan Ministries helps kids prep for school. A3

LIVING

Daisy Duke takes on Boone Lake. E1



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EL PASO MASS SHOOTING

Texas death toll at 20

26 also injured in packed shopping area; chief says police found 'manifesto'

The Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — A young gunman opened fire in an El Paso, Texas, shopping area packed with as many as 3,000 people during the busy back-to-school season Saturday, leaving 20 dead and more than two dozen injured.

Gov. Greg Abbott called the incident in the Texas border city "one of the most deadly days in the history of Texas." Police said authorities were investigating if it was a crime.



STITCHES IN TIME

Using a replica of the glove New York Giants legend Willie Mays wore when he made his famous World Series catch, Don Droke created this baseball with an embossing of Mays' name. It's the only baseball he's made he keeps in his collection. Below left, Droke poses wearing his grandfather's Thomas Bridge

JONATHAN ROBERTS/JOHNSON CITY PRESS

'Farm boy' turns discarded gloves into salutes to baseball

By Jonathan Roberts
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Don Droke's baseball story began nearly 100 years ago, when his grandfather suited up for a team in Sullivan County back in the 1930s. It continued as his father played for East Tennessee State

University in the early 1950s. Professionally, the Droke baseball story ended in the early 2000s, when Don left his position as coach of the Sullivan East baseball team — at least in a conventional sense.

He may not be a coach or a player, but he's found a new hobby that still revolves around the game he loves, and it's one that has him blazing his own trail in a field that, to his knowledge, doesn't exist — making 1890s-era baseballs with old baseball gloves.

"This all came about by a fluke," Droke said. "My wife and I are Civil War reenactors, and all of the sudden out



Droke's collection includes an old baseball glove, Civil War-era baseball gear and several of the baseballs he's made

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BASEBALL: Old gloves 'can live again'

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in the middle of a field, (other reenactors) were playing baseball, so I walked over, looked at their baseball and thought, 'I can make that.'"

From there, Droke began researching how baseballs from the mid- to late 1800s, and the rest, similar to his collection, is history.

"They're interested in something a farm boy from the hills of East Tennessee is making," Droke said with a laugh. "It's humbling, and it feels good when you do something and it's appreciated."

Droke's handmade baseball and baseball glove hybrids have been shipped all over the country, from Washington to New York and all the way to Puerto Rico.

Though the process of making the baseballs can be tedious, and takes some finesse, Droke is able to complete a new ball in about six to eight hours — granted, he does so while enjoying Cincinnati Reds games, as sitting down and making ball after ball would "suck the fun out of it."

"I would encourage anyone to make one," Droke said when discussing the difficulty of creating the ball. "You know where my first two or three went? They went (on my) farm, I threw them into the 'deep



JONATHAN ROBERTS/JOHNSON CITY PRESS

Don Droke throws a baseball into his glove outside his home.

woods'."

While Droke was sure not to give away all of his "trade secrets," he told the Press a little bit about his process and the tools he uses.

Droke, of course, starts with a standard baseball and removes the cover.

Then, he takes a dilapidated baseball glove and preserves as many of the stampings as possible before rewrapping the coverless baseball in the leather from the glove. While it sounds simple, Droke notes that getting the leather from the glove to lie flat on a ball is the real trick; that's what he spends the most time doing during the process.

As for tools, he keeps things simple.

All he uses is an X-Acto knife, some wax thread, brown shoe polish to give

the balls a weathered look and a pair of Civil War-era tweezers.

Still, the aura of craftsmanship that surrounds Droke's work only strengthens his desire to continue making them, that and the satisfaction he gets from bringing new life to objects once thought to be "lost" or "trashed" by their owners.

"You can save an old baseball glove that's destroyed. 'It can live again,' Droke said. "The glove now becomes the object of its desire."

While Droke doesn't have a website, he is working on creating a Facebook page to advertise his creations. In the meantime, anyone interested in buying one of his baseballs can email him at theglovester2000@yahoo.com