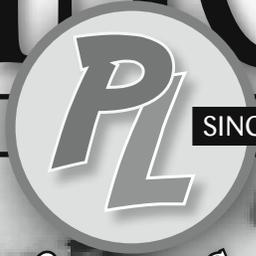


PLEASANT LIVING

A Magazine for the Chesapeake Bay and River Country



SINCE 1989

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WINTER 2016 - 2017

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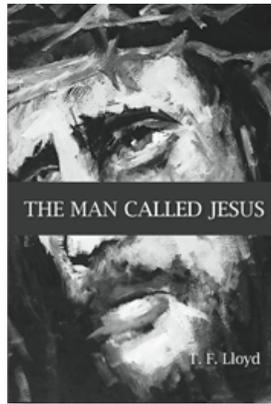
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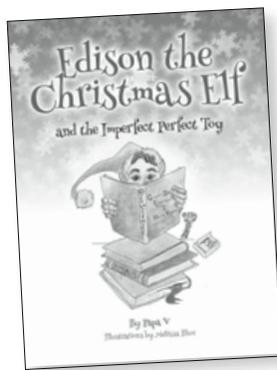
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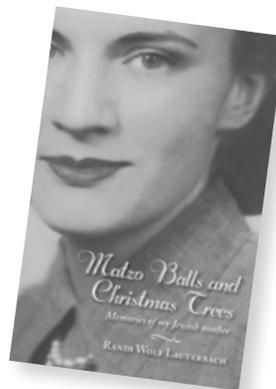
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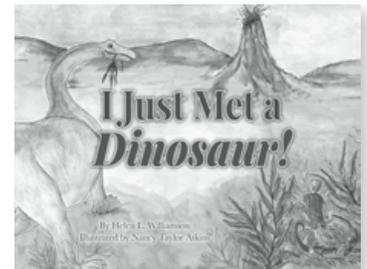
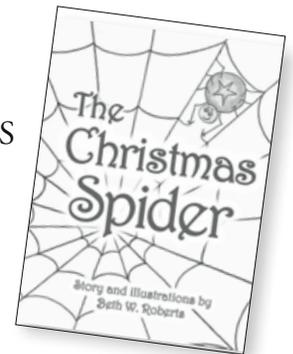
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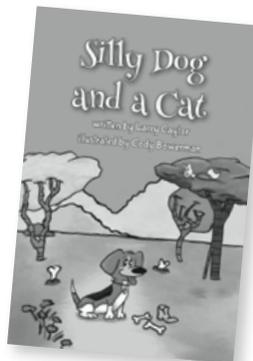


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SINCE 1989

Volume 31, Number 1

WINTER 2016 / 2017

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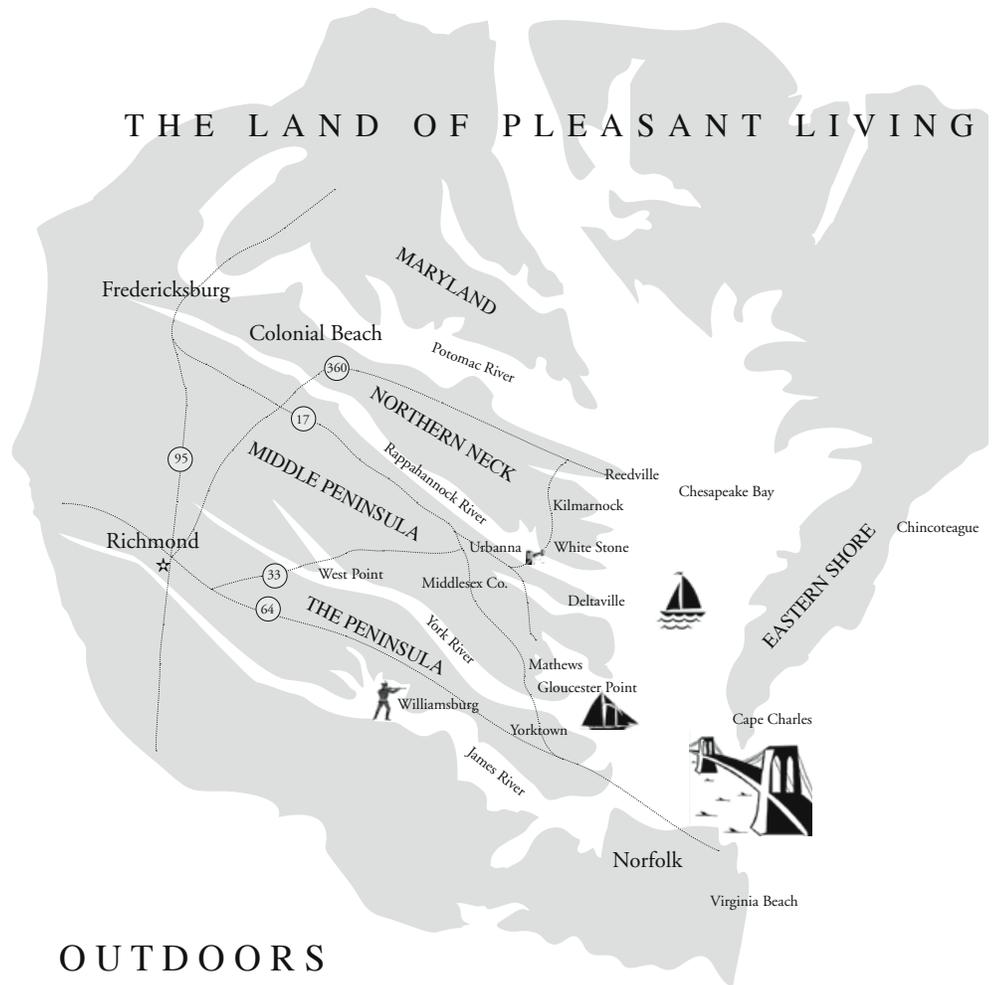
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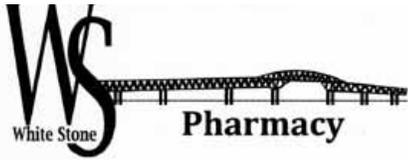
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WILDLIFE'S GREATEST CONNECTION

A MOTHER AND HER YOUNG

By KEN CONGER

Throughout his life, award-winning wildlife photographer Ken Conger has visited dozens of national parks and wildlife refuges, documenting the candid behaviors of wildlife in their natural habitats. Over the course of his long career in wildlife protection and conservation, he's witnessed thousands of interactions between animals of all species—but no type of interaction has been as memorable as that which occurs between mothers and their offspring. Now, he invites you to share in the experience of these fascinating moments from behind his camera lens.

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Being POLITE

For the past several years, my wife and I have been familiar faces at our local farmer's market in Richmond's Forest Hill Park—one of the most popular, most diverse and interesting markets in River Country. Stop by on a Saturday morning, spring through fall, and a sea of people, kids and dogs flows from end to end, along with live music from a local banjo or guitar player.

We buy fresh, free-range eggs from a particular local farmer there, and in an effort to contribute and recycle, we return the egg cartons when we've accumulated four or five. After returning the cartons to the same vendor over the last three years, we've never been thanked or shown any appreciation for this simple gesture on our part. We take our time to return the cartons that are of no value to us and give them to the farmer, for whom they *do* have value, so we figure a simple expression of appreciation is warranted.

Last Saturday, my wife decided it was time: she went alone to drop off the cartons, handed them to the older man, and waited. After a moment without any evidence of gratitude, she asked—"Does it help you when we bring these cartons back?"

"Oh, yes, definitely!" he said.

"Well, I just wondered—because you never say 'thank you,'" she replied.

Now my wife is one of the most polite people you'll ever meet, and she usually becomes extremely polite if there's even a hint of a clash—so in an effort to avoid being too confrontational, she didn't make eye contact and told him in a friendly way that she'd like a dozen eggs. Eggs in hand, she said, "Thank you so much!"

Was there a thank you, then, you ask?

Yes, there was. When she told me what happened, I thought. . .perhaps she taught this older man something his parents apparently never did.

When I think about it—and I've been thinking about it a lot for the last year or so since the political campaign has been raging—basic gestures of civility, respect and courtesy seem to be endangered behaviors these days. It prompted me to revisit an essay published in a collection titled, *A Better Man: True American Heroes Speak to Young Men On Love, Power, Pride and What It Really Means to Be a Man* (2009). The essay, "Civility", was written by Justice Harry Carrico, former Chief Justice of the Virginia Supreme Court, who recently passed away.

As editor Kelly Johnson wrote in her introduction to him, "According to Justice Carrico, this 'all but forgotten' term [civility], as he calls it, is the cornerstone of a good and just society. It is the thing without which we descend into an abyss

of vulgarity and self-satisfaction. Civility, which combines both grace and good manners, is an outward manifestation of the notion that, regardless of circumstance, we must continue to treat one another with respect."

In his essay, Justice Carrico includes a selection from *Rules of Civility*, which contains 110 precepts that George Washington copied into a notebook while still a teenager and kept with him all his life, guiding him in war and peace. They are as follows—

Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present.

Use no reproachful language against any one, neither curse nor revile.

Utter not base and frivolous things among grave and learn'd men, nor very difficult questions or subjects among the ignorant, or things hard to be believed.

Speak not injurious words neither in jest nor earnest; scoff at none although they give occasion.

Be not [obstinate] but friendly and courteous, the first to salute, hear, and answer. Be not pensive when it's time to converse.

All of us, including farmers and common men, but particularly politicians and statesmen, should take a cue from George Washington's words and remember that courtesy and good manners are simple concepts. Although sometimes difficult to maintain in challenging situations, we should always dig deep to recognize the humanity in our fellow man, and treat him or her with respect. . .And sometimes all it takes is a simple *thank you*.

We hope you have a blessed 2017 surrounded by your family and many very respectful people. *pl*



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Pete and Mary Lou Shepherd live in Hayes, Virginia. Pete has been a long time supporter and distributor of PL.

Stephen Southall graduated from the University of Virginia with a Ph.D. in psychology and has taught at Lynchburg College since 1974. He is past-president of the American Boxwood Society. When not teaching or working with his English boxwood, he and his wife Diane enjoy traveling in their fifth wheel RV with their black lab, River.

Paul L. Tsompanas returned to writing after a long career as a senior congressional staff member. Before entering the world of politics, he spent ten years as an award-winning reporter on California and New Mexico newspapers. He and his wife Mary Ann reside in Colonial Beach. They have five children and seven grandchildren.



MURALS LIGHT UP TWO SLEEPY TOWNS



Story and Photos by Paul Tsompanas

When Melanie Stimmell Van Latum arrived in historic Westmoreland County four years ago, the California muralist came on a mission to light up this pastoral land of soy beans and cornfields sandwiched between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers.

Since her arrival, the award-winning artist has painted seventeen stunning murals in the towns of Colonial Beach and Montross, creating a stir among locals and tourists often seen gathering in front of the public art to take “selfie” photos with their cell phones. The murals are a major part of ongoing efforts to revitalize both small

towns, and their spark appears to be working.

Van Latum was commissioned in 2012 to create her first murals in Montross. She was recruited by local artist Holly Harman, who operates *The Art of Coffee*, a unique café blending aromatic lattes and art into an appealing setting. Harman had met Van Latum several years earlier when the internationally known chalk artist was participating in a street painting festival in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Van Latum’s chalk art has won accolades across Europe and in Asia.

Since coming to Montross, Van Latum, forty-one, and her associate Lynesey Morel, thirty-four, have painted eleven murals spread throughout the small village of 350

people. Painted in a three-dimensional Renaissance style, their creations illustrate the county's history and agricultural fame.

Four of the murals grace the foyer of the old four-column courthouse and tell the story of a county saturated in colonial history. One piece is a striking likeness of Stratford Hall plantation and Great House. The Georgian-style brick mansion was the childhood home to four generations of the Lee family, including two signers of the Declaration of Independence—Richard Henry Lee and Francis Lightfoot Lee—and Confederate General Robert E. Lee, who always longed to retire to his birthplace before dying. A cameo scene above the mural illustrates Captain John Smith's passage through the county during his exploration of the Potomac River in 1608.

Another large mural shows a sailing ship laden with bales of tobacco bound for England to satisfy a British passion for smoking, a taste popularized by Sir Walter Raleigh after exploring Virginia as a potential English settlement in the late 1500s. At the edge of the painting stands Lady Justice with her balanced scales, and above is a cameo of the signing of the Leedstown Resolves. Among those signing the resolution were the two Lee brothers, three brothers of George Washington and James Monroe's father Spence. Westmoreland is the only county in America that has produced two presidents.

Oft forgotten in history, the Leedstown Resolves was the Virginia colony's first public act against the British Crown. It was a courageous protest against taxation without



Melanie Stimmell Van Latum on the right, and her associate, Lynesey (cq) Morel.

representation and planted the first seeds of revolution in the colonies. Crafted by Richard Henry Lee, the resolution was signed on February 27, 1766, by 115 Virginia farmers and merchants meeting in Leedstown, then a bustling deep-water port on the Rappahannock and now a sleepy little farming community. Ten years later, Thomas Jefferson is believed to have used the Resolves as a template in writing the Declaration of Independence.

The Resolves are etched into a marble tablet hung inside the old courthouse, a seat of justice for more than a century before it was closed several years ago. The building currently is undergoing renovation and is scheduled to open in 2017 as a visitors' center and repository for the county's genealogical archives.

Murals on the outside walls of

ten other Montross buildings offer a colorful tribute to the county's commercial past. One is a label of a Nomini Ferry brand tomato can so realistic it looks as if it could be peeled off the building. It reflects a time when the county was home to several busy vegetable canneries. Another mural is of an old fashioned flower seed packet offered long ago to home gardeners, and another painting shows a mermaid holding pearls spewed from a yawning oyster shell during a period when the tasty bivalve was the crown jewel of local waters.

One of the larger outdoor murals displays a cornucopia of food items produced in Westmoreland County today. The appetizing array includes a bottle of wine, a platter of oysters, a blue crab and fruit, all sitting before a feasting damsel. The mural reflects the bounty of area watermen and two



of the county's largest enterprises—Ingleside Winery, whose wines have been served in the White House, and Westmoreland Berry Farm, whose production today dwarfs its meager output thirty years ago when a Washington D.C. civil engineer established the farm so his wife could have an endless supply of raspberries.

In Colonial Beach, one of the largest murals Van Latum has ever painted covers nearly the entire end of a three-story condominium building along the town's beach front. It depicts

the arrival of the *St. John's Steamboat* in the early 1900s, when the mighty side-wheeler brought thousands of summertime visitors from Washington D.C. to enjoy the town's two miles of beaches. Colonial Beach's popularity as a summer resort soon earned the title of "Playground on the Potomac," and the town happily boasts that reputation today.

Colonial Beach has had other reputations in its 125-year history, and Van Latum and Morel have captured its checkered past colorfully in their

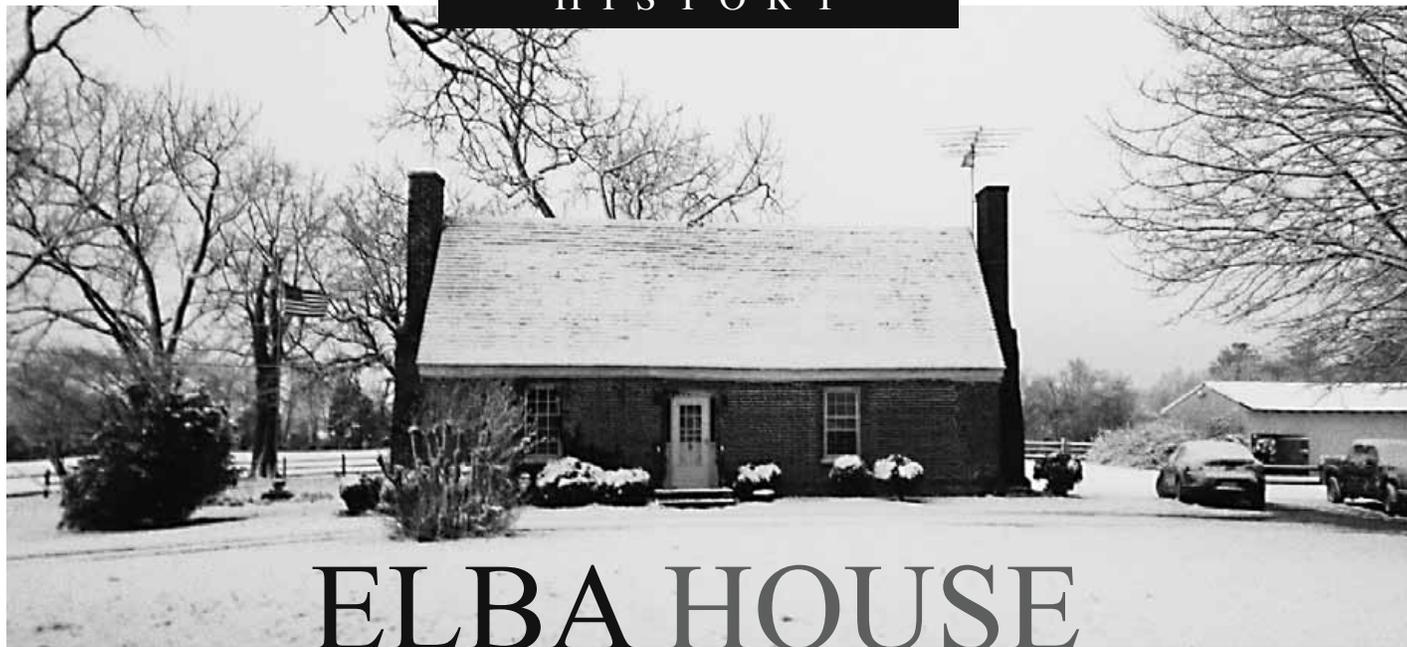
murals. One piece is a rendering of *Joyland*, one of six casinos that once operated on Colonial Beach piers jutting into the Potomac waters of Maryland, where gambling was legal in the 1950s. The town's notoriety as a gambling mecca once earned it a feature story in former *Look Magazine*, which crowned it "Little Reno on the Potomac."

Two other murals depict a time in the 1940s and 1950s when the beach town was known as the "Oyster Capital of the World." Offshore oyster beds then were so replete that thousands of oysters were shipped regularly to the finest restaurants in New York City. But the oyster picture was not always rosy. Maryland and Virginia watermen often engaged in the "Oyster Wars" dating back to 1800. The final skirmish occurred off Colonial Beach in 1959 when a Maryland police gunboat shot and killed a local oysterman found poaching on Maryland beds.

Plans for murals in other towns and villages in The Northern Neck already are in place in Hague and Warsaw. Could this quiet little peninsula one day become *the* destination for viewing unique public art in Virginia?
pl

* * * *





ELBA HOUSE

A Labor of Generations

Story and Photos by Scott Duprey

As I helped my friend Cletus Black, from Berryville, point-up the northwest wall of the historic Elba House recently, I paused. As I rubbed my hands over the soft bricks of the ancient wall, once joined by mortar, horse hair and oyster shell, now pocked by deep crevices, I pondered. . . *The hands that built this wall helped build a nation.*

Thus, I plunged into Edward J. White's *Lands and Lesser Gentry of Eastern Westmoreland County, Virginia 1650-1840s* (2014). Mr. White's book is an impressive compendium of the land surveys, deeds, patents, order books, and the collective narrative of colonial Lower Westmoreland County.

Vincent Cox (1633-1698) from Bedfordshire, England, a boy of seventeen, plunged from deck of the *Honor* to the Northumberland docks in 1653. For the next 248 years, "Old Vincent" (as he would become to be known) and his descendants would have land interests from Mundy Point in Northumberland to Acorn, Oldhams, Sandy Point, and up towards Bonum's Creek in Westmoreland—over 6,000 acres in all.

Old Vincent served as an indentured servant for four years before he was sold or assigned by John Pettitt to Richard Cole. Vincent then applied for his freedom with his sole possessions of one cloth coat, one pair of shoes and stockings, one shirt, one hat or cap and three barrels

of Indian corn. Old Vincent and his issue acquired land that rivaled that of the higher gentry at Stratford Hall and Pope's Creek. His son, Charnock, would build a house now known as the Elba House.

Old Vincent's will attests to the land and wealth he had acquired during his lifetime. To his daughter Anne Cox, he bequeathed six silver spoons, brass, a feathered bed, rugs, blankets, curtains from his own bed and 8,000 pounds of tobacco worth almost \$5,000 at the time. Old Vincent's sons, Vincent, Charnock, Thomas and his three daughters, Ann, Martha, and Elizabeth also received from his estate lands that, upon the death of Fleet Cox, amounted to 6,424 acres.

From all indications, Charnock Cox (c.1672-1751) built and was first to farm Elba. Charnock, perhaps the most colorful of the Cox clan, was often in the court for one dispute or another and was once summoned for "blocking the Queen's highway."

After Presley Cox (1699-1766) lived at Elba with his wife, Mary Fleet, his son, Fleet Cox (1730?-1791) lived at Elba with his wife, Mary Wright.

A vestry man at Cople Parish, Fleet expanded the Cox land holdings to about 2,000 acres. On October 9, 1771, he signed a petition to the General Assembly of Virginia in favor of continuing the established Church of Virginia. There is evidence that Fleet lived at Elba, and later, at

Locust Grove, which also came into the Cox family.

Fleet Cox Jr. (c.1747-1799) served as second lieutenant in the Revolutionary War. He inherited 1,000 acres from his father and the "Brick House Tract" where he lived with his wife, Elizabeth Downing.

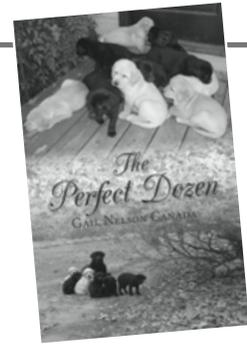
Fleet W. Cox (1824-1888) was a Civil War Confederate officer and served with the 40th Virginia Infantry. He married Mary E. Turner Cox (1838 - 1890). Both died at Elba and both are buried in the Yeocomico church cemetery. From his obituary in the Northern Neck News:

At his residence "Elba" March 17, 1888, at 7:30 p.m. Col. Fleet W. Cox, in the sixty-first year of his age. Without regret at parting from his beloved family, this gallant soldier was summoned, after a time of weakness and pain, to appear in new life at the throne of his Maker. In the dying hours, his mind was clear and he recognized his weeping wife and children. . . "I am at peace with the world and ready to leave it" were words often repeated by him during his illness. . . A brave soldier, a kind husband and father and an earnest Christian has joined the fast increasing majority. His end was calm, free from fear and full of hope.

from the *Baltimore Sun*: *The Death of Attorney Fleet Cox, an assistant State's Attorney, brought sincere sorrow to his large circle of relatives and friends here. He had been in failing health for a year or more, and left his home in Baltimore to spend Christmas with his sister and brother at Mrs. Downing Cox's home. He was unwell when he reached Washington and although he had the best doctors and trained loved ones to tenderly and lovingly nurse him he daily grew weaker and died on Jan. 8, 1927. Mr. Cox was the eldest son of our late Col. F. W. Cox and his wife, Mary. He was born in and grew to manhood in this county. Thrown on his resources early in life, he was untiring in his labors and self denial until he graduated in law at*

Maryland University. He made his home and practiced his profession in Baltimore. He never married and his remains were brought back to be buried in Old Yeocomico Cemetery.

Mr. Louis Matron from Preservation Virginia in Richmond paid Cletus and me a visit and complimented us on the restoration job that we had undertaken. He said all that was left was the white wash, which he referred to as "a lime bath." At this, I balked. Why would anyone want to cover up history? So, we applied three coats of sealer containing the latest advances in sealing bricks. But the wall still crumbles. Momma said, "Nothin' come to stay." And except for the chiming of church bells that peal over the countryside every Sunday morning, she was right. *pl*

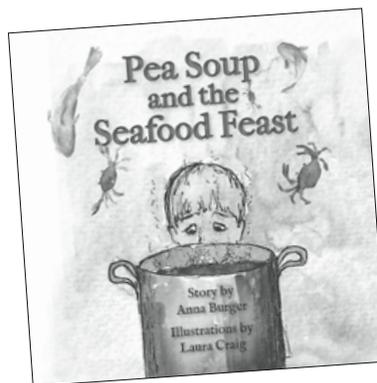


The Perfect Dozen

GAIL NELSON CANADA

In 1997, Gail Canada encountered an abandoned black Lab puppy running along the country road near her house. She took him in and named him Jake, having no idea of the journey she'd begun. Eight years later, she and her husband Randy would bring home a yellow Lab puppy named Hannah, and Hannah and Jake would become the parents to a litter of twelve tiny Labradors: six yellow, six black; six male, six female. A perfect dozen.

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Pea Soup and the Seafood Feast

By Anna Burger
Illustrations by Laura Craig

When his mother tells him they're having pea soup for dinner, Jack wonders how he'll survive. Then he comes up with a plan: he'll catch his own seafood feast instead! Relying on skills learned from his grandfather, the resourceful boy embarks on a seaside adventure, casting for fish, digging for clams, and setting traps for blue crabs. In the process he learns that the only thing better than a basket full of crabs or a bucket full of clams is a heart full of appreciation for the natural wonders of the bay.

"Anna Burger captures that sweet moment in life when we, like Jack, recognize our kinship to other creatures."

— Jackie Urbanovic, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Duck Soup*

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Dr. Boxwood Tells All

Winter Care and Christmas Decorations

Story and Photos by Stephen Southall

Mulching Provides Their Winter Coat

When it gets cold outside, you wouldn't think of going without your winter coat—and so it is with boxwood. When the bare soil is exposed to the atmosphere, cold is directly transferred into the ground, and the shallow roots of boxwood are directly affected. This condition is especially dangerous when the wind is blowing because wind dries out the leaves, and when the roots are frozen, they can't convey moisture up into the plant.

Mulching performs two functions: It helps to prevent the above issue by insulating the ground from the surrounding cold air. The area of the root ball will be considerably warmed by the soil below, which still has considerable heat to transfer upwards. However, that heat will be lost if the ground is bare. Mulching prevents this heat loss and keeps the roots warm and able to take up water. The second function of mulch is to enrich the soil with micro-nutrients in warmer weather. Whenever earthworms and

other organisms are active, they will be working and eating in the mulch and moving organic material down into the soil where the roots benefit.

Planting Time is Still Here

We've had a very moderate, but dry November, so if you are thinking of planting boxwood, it's still a great time to do so. As long as the ground is not hard frozen, planting can occur. I have often planted in January with the weather in the mid 30s and 40s.

Protecting Boxwood from Snow and Ice

I covered extensively the care of boxwood during the snow and ice season in the January/February 2016 issue of PL. One method that I discussed involves forming a lasso using baling twine and continually wrapping the boxwood into a tight, strong, upright pillar. As you can see from the photos above showing two identical plants during the snow of last winter, one plant was wrapped, the other was not. Although both plants survived the snow and are perfectly healthy,

it's obvious that the unwrapped plant experienced much more stress than the wrapped one. Snow could have easily broken the branches of the unwrapped plant had the temperatures been colder, since frozen branches snap more easily. Obviously, plants should only be kept wrapped shortly before or while it is snowing. Unwrapping them soon after the snowfall is very important.

Christmas Decorations

Everyone is familiar with using boxwood for decorations around the Christmas season. Picking cuttings from plants that are dark green, disease free and totally clean is important. The condition of the leaves tells the story. Leaves need to be consistently dark green in color across the entire leaf. Areas of yellow or blisters will detract from the overall appearance. The size of cuttings taken will depend on their use. A small advent type of wreath approximately 8-inches in diameter on a table will require smaller cuttings than a larger 16- or 20-inch wreath hung outside. When taking cuttings simply reach into the plant and break or cut stems the approximate length that you will need for your project.

Care of the cuttings is important to maximize their longevity. Immersing them in water for 12 hours or longer will hydrate them and increase their longevity. The dryness of most homes in the winter contributes greatly to boxwood drying out very quickly, so any application in the home is not going to last as long as one outside. Additionally, indoor decorations are seen from a much closer perspective and given more scrutiny than an outside wreath, which may only be seen from a distance. I have often found that inside boxwood need to be replaced about half way through the season in order to maintain a fresh appearance. Misting boxwood daily will also prolong the life of the decoration. An additional method to prolong the life of boxwood decorations inside is to spray them

with a mixture of liquid floor wax diluted with water before hanging. The mixture can vary from a heavy concentration (1-part liquid wax to 2-parts water) to a lighter one (1-part wax to 4-parts water). Simply spray the mixture on the finished decoration and allow to dry to create a barrier to hold moisture within the leaves.

Making boxwood wreaths can be a great group experience for a family or organization. The round straw forms come in various sizes. Nursery pins are used to hold the boxwood onto the wreath. Nursery pins are very similar to Bobby pins except that the top is about a quarter-inch wide. The technique is to lay the form down on a flat surface. Place a cutting on the form and pin it to the form by inserting the pin over the cutting about halfway up the stem. Halfway up tends to keep the cutting from "wiggling" at either the top or bottom. Sometimes two pins are required, one at each end of the

cutting. The top of the next cutting is then placed in a manner that covers up the stem of the previous one and pinned in a similar manner. It's important to put cuttings on all three sides of the form. As it is laying flat, you will want cuttings on the inside, top and outside of the form to give a full appearance. Of course, if the wreath is going to be mounted on a glass storm door and seen from both sides, the cuttings can be placed around the entire form. *pl*

Questions and Correspondence –
For more detailed information on various boxwood topics visit www.englishboxwoods.com
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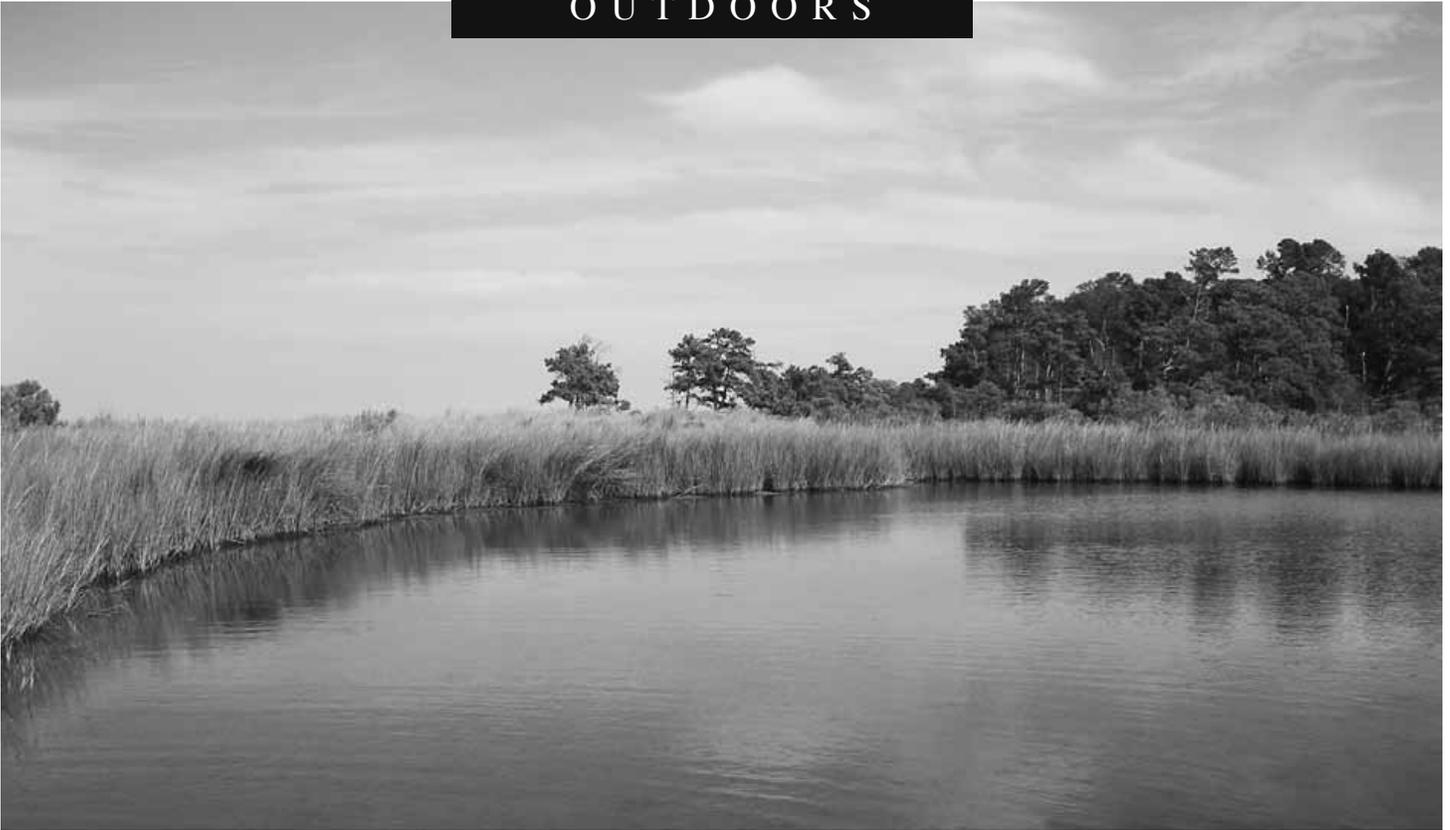
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SMALL FISH AND A PROMISING FUTURE

The Bay is showing signs of a comeback of striped bass

Story and Photo by Steve Scala

The striped bass rollercoaster ride of a near total species crash, multiple signs of recovery, and interceding adjustments by fisheries management continues. For some it has been a mix of frustration and a demand for patience and hope. Those with long memories that go back a half century to what was thought to be the high water mark of the striped bass fishery in the Chesapeake Bay region, may say we haven't returned

to that level of success...yet. We all have learned a lot over the past three decades, including the unique combination of fishery user group politics and the scientific approach that comes from decisions made by fisheries biologists and managers. It's human nature to be anxious and frustrated with a still-to-be-determined timeline for a stable striped bass stock. We can live with that, especially if we never forget how close the Chesapeake

Bay watershed was to completely losing this historic and valued striper fishery.

The most recent tweak made to the recreational striped bass fishery across Virginia, Maryland and the tidal Potomac River required a minimum possession size of 20 inches. I can remember during the two years prior to that change that fishing the summer and early fall times presented more of a challenge to catch an 18-inch striper. While

As for my own recent experiences and 55+ years of fishing for striped bass, I am full of hope and optimism for a continued recovery of this premiere fishery.

that required more fishing effort, it is important to note that the overall biomass of juvenile and sub-legal striped bass continues to show signs of being on the uptick. Something about this perceived convoluted process is working; yes, there are smaller fish, but there seems to be a lot more of them.

Like many who experienced fishing for striped bass in Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries during 2016, there was a lot of catch-and-release going on. The 20-inch minimum seemed more difficult to obtain during much of the summer season and early fall. Still, some persistent anglers were able to experience something that shows real progress in a consistent and upward improvement in the striped bass biomass of the Chesapeake Bay; there are measureable growth patterns taking place over the course of the summer months and early fall. What were 14-16-inch juvenile striped bass in mid-June had morphed into a biomass class of fish that by the late fall, were approaching 18-20 inches in length. The really good news about this perceived recovery is that all of the conditions to support a vibrant reproduction of striped bass and

other species were not in place during the previous season year. An almost history-making drought in terms of periods with little or no regional rainfall have caused salinity levels in Chesapeake Bay to be higher than those noted by fisheries biologists to be supportive of the striped bass biomass. With all the small stripers I have seen signs of this season, to that I say we will really have something once rainfall patterns return to a more normal pattern throughout the watershed.

As for my own recent experiences and 55+ years of fishing for striped bass, I am full of hope and optimism for a continued recovery of this premiere fishery. I remember as a six-year-old fishing with my dad, Buddy, and my Uncle John in the Chesapeake Bay and catching many striped bass in the 12-16-inch range. There seemed to be an endless number of them, and they were part of a healthy, thriving biomass of fish. For me to see so many of these small stripers once again thriving in our watershed is more than a nostalgic memory of my youth. It is solid evidence that something is working. *pl*

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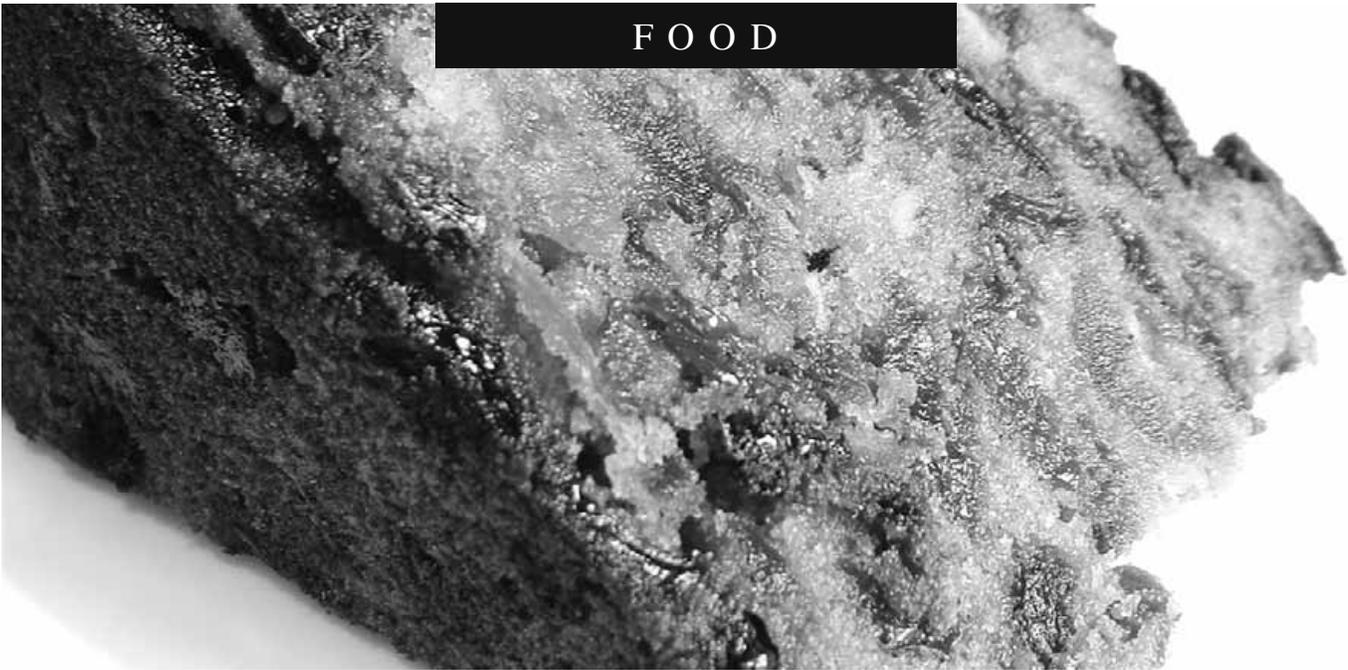
Dogs Do NOT Love Holiday Cards!

By Caley Cantrell

Illustrated by Sarah Berkheimer

Dogs Do NOT Love Holiday Cards! reunites readers with the family from *You're Bringing Me a Baby?!* for a humorous take on holiday card photo ops, from the dog's-eye view.

Children's, 6 x 9", \$19.95
Hardcover, 29 Pages
ISBN: 978-1-9399308-4-2
Distributors: Ingram and Belle Isle Books



Fruitcake Frenzy

A Special Holiday Memory

By Patricia Parsons

When I was a child during the 1940s, preparations for Christmas held more magic for me than the holiday itself. Starting in mid-November, there was a burst of excitement in the air, with rehearsals for the school's Christmas pageant, drawings for the student's gift exchange, practice of Christmas carols during weekly assembly. But one memory that returns most vividly at holiday time is the frenzy that attended my mother's yearly production of fruitcakes that she sent to relatives who lived away from our home in Cape Charles, Virginia.

On November, as soon as the display of candied fruit appeared at the grocery store, my mother started to amass ingredients for

four large fruitcakes. She bought dates, candied cherries, raisins and the almonds to decorate the cakes.

Mother liked to soak her fruits and raisins in brandy for a day or two before she added them to the cake batter. If she needed brandy, she walked over to the ABC store on our town's main street. As a respectable woman, she would never be seen entering the ABC store, but she could always find a needy-looking man loitering nearby. She would approach him, give him the money to purchase the brandy, and wait outside for her surrogate to emerge and hand her the precious package. Then she slipped him a tip and hurried off down the street.

Next she telephoned Mr. Kellam, the grocer with whom we had a charge account, and who delivered our groceries.

She ordered sugar and flour and lard for the Christmas baking. Mr. Kellam brought the flour in a great big cotton sack. With butter from the local dairy, she was ready—except for the nuts.

A huge black walnut tree dominated our back yard. In summer, the walnuts were covered with fragrant green outer casings. In autumn, they dropped to the ground and the casings darkened and fell away. The remaining nuts had hard thick shells, which required a heavy blow to crack them open. Mother assigned my younger sister, Jane, and me the task of shelling the walnuts for the Christmas cakes. Sitting on the ground, we cracked the nuts between two bricks and laboriously picked out the nutmeat. Because the taste of the black walnuts was such a treat, it took us a long time

to collect enough for the cakes. We had to revisit the task for several days. This annoyed Mother because she was anxious to get on with the cake baking. It was important to allow the fruitcakes a month to “ripen” so that their flavors would be well-blended by Christmas.

The big old-fashioned kitchen at our house had a coal stove to heat our water, a propane gas range, a rocking chair, and a kitchen table covered with a colorful oil cloth. I loved to watch as Mother mixed the fruitcake ingredients at the table. She poured the batter into a tube pan lined with greased brown paper that extended above the rim of the pan because she knew the cakes were going to rise beyond the pan’s capacity. Before placing the cakes in the oven, she decorated them with almonds she had blanched and then skinned by rubbing them vigorously with a tea towel. The whitened almonds radiated like the petals of a flower from a red candied cherry center. Since it took a long time for the cakes to bake, she made only one a day. Finally, there was a row of big beautiful cakes lined up on the kitchen counter.

She wrapped the cakes in cheesecloth and set each one in a cake tin. Three of the tins, she placed in boxes which she wrapped in brown paper and tied firmly with twine. Father took the packages to the post office and, at last, they were on their way to brighten the holiday of Mother’s elderly relatives. The remaining cake, “our cake,” sat for a few weeks, ripening on a shelf in the big unheated pantry off the kitchen. Every day or so, Mother went to the pantry, and poured brandy onto the cake, soaking the cheesecloth well in order to keep her treasured creation moist.

In due time, letters arrived thanking Mother for the delicious fruitcakes which her kin were grateful to have on hand to serve to their guests.

One year, a few days before Christmas,

Mandy Trower arrived to help Mother get the house ready for the holiday. Mandy was a pleasant-faced older woman of dark complexion with tiny pigtailed that stood up all over her head. She gave Mother a hand with the housework once a week, and, on Mondays, with the laundry. Mother was happy to see Mandy step across the doorway. She rushed to tell her how overwhelmed she felt as she prepared for Christmas—there was still so much left to do.

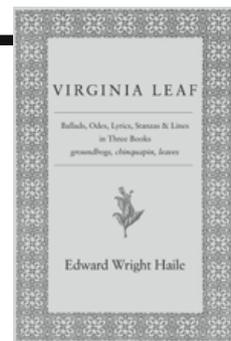
“Now don’t you worry, Miss Joyce,” Mandy said in her comforting way, “It ain’t the work’s so bad; it’s just the t’inking about it.” True words, indeed!

On this particular day, Mother went into the pantry to get flour from the large sack. She opened the sack and cried out in horror. “Oh, Mandy, look! This flour is full of bugs and I used it for the fruitcakes!”

Mandy started to laugh. Her laughter rose slowly from deep within her chest. Then, as her laughter increased, she had to sit down in the rocking chair. She started to rock back and forth in the rocker, laughing until tears ran down her cheeks. Still laughing, she pulled out the oversized white handkerchief she kept stuffed in the bosom of her blouse and pressed it to her face.

“What’s so funny?” Mother asked, perturbed by Mandy’s reaction.

“Oh, Miss Joyce,” Mandy said. “Just t’ink, whoever eats the mos’ fruitcake gets the mos’ bugs. *pl*



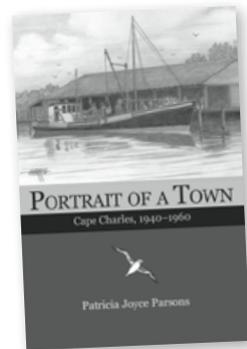
VIRGINIA LEAF

By Edward Wright Haile

The poet’s foreword says he began all this on one fine day. It must have been finer than morning in an adjacent state by the looks of the result. What a sweep! What a breadth! What a memory! Who’s left out here? Nobody I know. Virginia is 475 miles long but averages half that, which means here we have about one page per mile of her right across. He cautions that a reading voice with the proper pronunciation of “Hanover” and “Henrico” is advisable.

ORDERING INFORMATION

Virginia Leaf is available from the publisher at www.belleislebooks.com, from amazon.com, bn.com and from fine booksellers. \$16.95 plus shipping/handling.



Portrait of a Town takes the reader on a nostalgic, invigorating journey through Cape Charles from a child’s-eye-view—from playing in a swamp, to jumping off the railroad’s coal chute, to fishing the barrier islands that line Virginia’s oceanfront. In this collection of vignettes, Patricia Parsons portrays life in Cape Charles during World War II and beyond, from the 1940s to the 1950s.

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Order direct from the publisher at www.pleasantlivingmagazine.com/books, or call 804.644.3090. Also available at amazon.com, bn.com and from your local bookseller. \$15.95 plus shipping/handling.

Discovery Along the James

Story and Photos by Anne Poarch



What winter snow isn't cheered by the appearance of little birds? Snowballs of soft feathers, puffed out like Christmas ornaments, wait under the protective boughs of a boxwood bush for a turn at the feeder. Tiny feet tap across birdbaths laced with ice, pecking for a drop of melted water. These are the birds we watch from our windows. We wrap our shoulders in sweaters or sit bundled in a blanket, hands wrapped around warm mugs of honeyed tea or hot cocoa. Last January, juncos, chickadees, cardinals, sparrows, even a downy woodpecker and a couple of bluebirds graced my feeders and found refuge in my

trees. How they survive the cold is just another of God's winter miracles. These are the ones who stay, or perhaps they have flown in from the north, happy to weather a few snowy days for the promise of the early worm and softened ground this far south.

For the prothonotary warbler we are the north, and Virginia, a summer home. Once known as the golden swamp warbler, this neo-tropical songbird is the subject of intense study at the VCU Rice Rivers Center in Charles City County. Making their nests in tree cavities, this delicate yellow fairy migrates to breeding grounds in the the eastern US in the summer and looks for lowland forests close to the water

for nesting. Thanks to a project started in 1987 by VCU biology faculty Charles and Leann Blem, more than 600 nesting boxes have been installed in freshwater regions of the James River, raising more than 26,000 prothonotary warblers and helping make Virginia one of the few states with a growing number of this species. Efforts like these by VCU researchers and volunteers represent the kind of leadership that has turned the lower James River into a global network of areas noted for their outstanding value to bird conservation, designating this beautiful and historic area of Virginia as an "Important Bird Area" or IBA.

This designation is something I



touch on during bicycle excursions I lead along the newly completed Virginia Capital Trail, a multi-use, paved trail that spans fifty-two miles, connecting Jamestown and Richmond, parallel to the James River. Last winter I started BASKET & BIKE, a bicycle tour business with a unique goal of connecting people to each other and our natural world through handcrafted excursions and picnic rides. Founding this business after twenty-plus years in the financial services industry is as much about the beauty and healing powers of God's natural world as it is about cycling.

Starting a business rooted in story and possibility has given me the opportunity to think about discovery and exploration, and to share the story of Virginia's land and the James River on our Signature Tour: A Journey Along the James. During our two-and-a-half hours biking the Virginia Capital Trail, guests ride comfortable bicycles outfitted

with stylish baskets, holding our signature snack and hear stories of our collective history. Biking fourteen miles along the Virginia Capital Trail, riders learn how science is making a difference at the Rice Rivers Center, where we make a stop, listening for the sounds of nature, and learning how environmental science is being practiced right along the banks of the James River. We end with lunch and a wine tasting at the newly opened Upper Shirley Vineyards, relishing Chef Carlisle Bannister's elevated southern favorites on the expansive veranda fronting the James River. The view from the veranda is a rest for weary eyes, settling across the peaceful James on the Presquile National Wildlife Refuge, where in 2006 VCU Rice Rivers Center was recognized as an important entity within the newly formed IBA.

Many have asked how I came up with the idea for this new company

that is more lifestyle than bicycle tour, more about discovery than logging miles. This past October the liaison committee of the Science Museum of Virginia invited me to speak to their group about Basket & Bike—as a creator, an entrepreneur, and a business owner. As I thought about the best way to deliver my message I turned to my journal, and to that spark that so often finds place on my pages, for inspiration. Here follows some of what I shared with the committee.

Science, to me, is how we understand our world—all that's in it, how all the pieces fit together, our place in the wider cosmos. It's about asking questions, searching for answers and then sharing with each other what we've learned. It's a journey, really, because we'll always have more questions to answer, more knowledge to share. We'll always have more to learn.

My bike opened new worlds to me—new places to discover, so much to learn. And, as I pedaled my way across each little journey, there was so much I wanted to share. I believed others would want to come along for the ride. And, since it's all about discovery, the basket seemed somehow important to me. It's a symbol of the things we take with us—a snack, some cold water, a journal and pen, a scarf—as well as the things we might bring home—a pinecone from a roadside picnic stop at the edge of the forest on a summer's day, a clutch of colorful leaves in autumn, a book about life on a Virginia plantation four centuries ago on the James. A scallop shell, the Chesapecten Jeffersonius—our state fossil (did



you know we had one?), the size of a dinner plate, found by the shore.

Basket & Bike is a chance for recreation, exercise and good times with friends. It's also something more. It's a new way of looking at the beauty around us. A new way of looking at the history that shaped our Commonwealth and our nation, and a new way of looking at ourselves.

Rolling along quietly at twelve miles per hour, you see things you might miss from the car. The laughter of children playing in the schoolyard, a bevy of wild turkeys picking at a freshly cut field of corn, perhaps a great blue heron arcing across the sky with the grace of eternity beneath her wings. Our minds are made to ask questions, and to probe

for understanding and thought.

Our hearts, though, long to touch places that speak to us as people. To gain the insights of the soul, feel the rain on our parka, the wind in our hair and the sunshine across our face. We want to be out there, don't we? We want to glide deeper into beauty and awe. That, to me, is what Basket & Bike is all about.

It's about reaching a little deeper into the landscape, becoming a bit closer to this place we call home, traveling that great journey of discovery that has the power to enrich our lives, riding through our shared history, savoring the now and connecting us through a courage to build the future together.

As winter snows find me snuggled at home, watching the birds as they flicker in the snow, I'll be thinking about where their wings might take them come spring, and where yours will take you when you travel with me on our next, Journey Along the James.

For more information on Anne's bicycle tours, visit www.basketandbike.com or email her at info@basketandbike.com.

From Refugee to Master Baker

By Matthias Fuell



Christmas eve had finally arrived. The scent of baked apples with marzipan floated in the air, candles were burning brightly, the Christmas tree was elegantly decorated with beautiful glass ornaments, and the whole family gathered to celebrate. I was a very young boy, though I can clearly remember my grandfather and how he told us his life-story after we opened our presents. At the time, I didn't want to hear what he had to say because I was too young to understand.

Time has passed, and I am now finally able to understand, and share, the story he once told us.

During the 1930s, as a child, my grandfather, Heinrich Sehne, lived in Altker, Yugoslavia near the Danube River. He spent carefree summers playing in the town center with other kids. But everything changed with World War II.

Yugoslavia was annexed by Germany and divided, and grandfather remembered being confused. "In the beginning we didn't hear anything about the war. Actually, absolutely nothing." In the late summer of 1944, the Soviet Army seized Rumania, and finally, the hostile actions reached Altker. In October of 1944, my grandfather's family left Altker forever. "It was gruesome," he said. "As a twelve-year-old, you didn't know what was happening, and you went with the decision your family made because you had no other choice. The parents didn't know either, so the question was: Is it right or is it wrong to leave?" He remembered seeing

dead people lying in a roadside ditch, and he clearly heard his father's voice saying that they had made the right decision to leave home.

In Kula, my grandfather was loaded onto a cattle freight train that was bound for Czechoslovakia. Along the way, low flying fighter aircrafts repeatedly attacked his train. Once safely arrived at their destination, they had to flee again. They wanted to return to their home in Altker, but the war had changed political relations in Europe, and this was no longer an option. During the late summer of 1945, my grandfather and his family finally settled near the Austrian border on a farm in a small alpine village. Every morning when he woke up, he asked his mother if he could go back to school. His mother promised that as soon as it snowed he could go. Until then his job was to herd the cattle on the pasture. One morning his wish came true and snow fell during the night. Wearing his wooden shoes, he made his way to school through the packed snow.

One morning, my great-grandfather accompanied him on the way to school. This is where he overheard a conversation his father had with one of the villagers. "But here is it beautiful!" someone said, "Yes, it is very beautiful here," his father answered, "but if there is no inn, no restaurants and only agriculture, what wealth can a man find here?" And so in the late spring, my grandfather's family had made the decision to move once again.

My grandfather was now around the age of 14. This was typically the time when a young man would become an apprentice in a trade job. "Become a carpenter, become a plumber, become an electrician. Until Germany is rebuilt one or more generations are going to pass, and you will always find work," his father told him. But he had the dream of becoming something else. He had decided to become a baker.

My great-grandfather and grandfather set out one day to find a bakery where he could apprentice. They took the train from town to town and arrived at a bakery called "Bakery Wanner" in the town of Ehningen, about twelve miles from Stuttgart., Germany. There he started his apprenticeship—and also a relationship with the owner's niece, Ruth. Their parents didn't like this at all, so one day my great-grandfather quit his job. It was time for my grandfather to expand his horizons and so he took another job as a baker in Stuttgart. But he would always stop along the way to see Ruth! He worked there for a few more years until he took the final examination to become a master baker.

The morning of the practical master baker exam started very early. With sleep in his eyes, my grandfather prepared all the equipment and tools he needed in order to bake what the examiners asked of him. Besides baking rolls and bread, he also had to bake a braided yeast bun (challah). "They watched every movement and every step that you took," he said. The braided yeast bun didn't turn out well because the dough matured too much, so he made the decision to approach the examiner. Against the rules, my grandfather was allowed to start over again and this time it worked. Looking back, my grandfather said, "Finding the courage and approaching the examiner

was the right thing to do. I was still in his good books." He passed the master baker exam. Now he was able to marry Ruth and start his own baking business.

My grandfather drove around the countryside trying to find a place to rent and knocking on doors. His Danube Swabian accent was evident, so he was often asked, "Who are you, refugee?" and the conversation was typically over after the word *refugee*. Finding a place to rent turned out to be much harder than my grandfather expected. He had to make a new plan. But first, he married my grandmother, Ruth!

Two years passed before the next opportunity came into play. Meanwhile, my grandfather accompanied his father-in-law, Paul, to the life-stock market in Stuttgart. They made plans to enlarge the life-stock barn and build a wood-brick oven in it. After a few months my grandfather started to bake his first bread, but he had no customers. With loaves of bread under his arms, he approached small mom & pop stores, handed them the bread and said, "Within a few days I'm going to stop by again, then we will talk business." "Payment?" they asked. "No payment needed, it's a sample!" he replied. Soon he needed a delivery truck, then he had to hire his first employees. The business was booming and after a few years his profits rose. "We sat down and did some math," he said. "To build our own factory, yes, that would be possible."

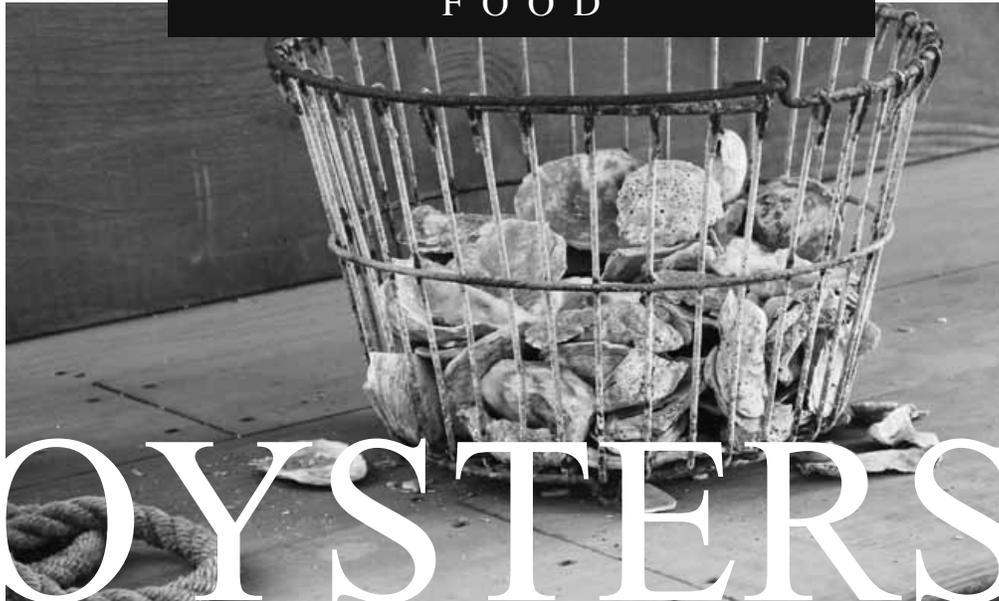
He went to the town office and asked to purchase fifty acres of land to build his factory. They all laughed and called him crazy. After a few years a new mayor was elected and his wish was granted. He didn't wait a minute and immediately started to build his factory. The business grew and grew, and he was able to hire more employees and buy more trucks.

Then one morning, his dream and hard work went up in flames. Overnight, the factory burned to the ground. Every dime and every cent was invested in the business. So again, my grandfather had nothing.

Now the question was whether they should rebuild the factory, or scrap the idea altogether. As a family, they decided to give it another try. This time my uncle, aunt and mother were heavily involved in the process of rebuilding the company. My grandfather always used to say to them, "I raised you like a phoenix out of ashes."

The business that my grandfather built and nurtured is now in its third generation and has grown to over 150 stores and 1,500 employees. Looking back at his time and his life's accomplishments, my grandfather always said that this would have never been possible without the help of my grandmother Ruth, who at times cared for both the family and business. He also said that he never meant to have a business this big. All he wanted to do was feed his family. Now he is not only able to feed his own family but also provide work and opportunities for others.

With tears in my grandfather's eyes he would finish his story in front of the brightly lit Christmas tree. All the presents I wished for had lost their value. Only now can I fully understand and imagine what hardship and the strenuous life my grandparents lived through. These challenges would have daunted one less committed to success. I did not realize it at that time, but he gave me the biggest gift I could ever receive: gratitude and thankfulness for my family. *pl*



OYSTERS

A Taste of the Chesapeake

By John L. Jones Jr.

The oyster is one of the few delicacies in the world that can be enjoyed entirely on its own, no accompaniment needed. It even comes in its own beautiful serving dish, the shell itself, sometimes with a pearl.

Those of us living around the Bay know, beyond a doubt, that the best oysters in the world just happen to come from our own backyard, the Chesapeake Bay. And there's a good chance that we just might be right. After all, seafood purveyors from around the world seek out the Chesapeake oyster, especially the Tangier and Chincoteague varieties.

For Bay folk, the oyster represents far more than just good eating. For us, the fall season begins when the watermen put away their crab pots and gear up for the oyster harvest. And we know how fortunate we are when we see these shellfish being unloaded from the workboats, heaped in bushel baskets with sea grasses clinging to the sides. Already, we can taste the oyster brine, the very taste of the Bay itself, rich and salty.

Grand cultural traditions have grown

up around the much-revered oyster. As fundraisers, many communities and fire departments hold annual oyster roasts each fall. Because these events have been “discovered,” they're not quite as raucous as they were at one time, when, for a nominal fixed price, you could eat oysters to your heart's content, served up fried, roasted, and raw. The fixed price also included all the draft beer you cared to drink. And each fire department had its own recipe for oyster stew. Some of these recipes were culinary masterpieces, though many were not preserved in writing, a great loss for lovers of Bay food.

But the centerpiece of any oyster roast was the oyster itself, raw on the half shell. You lined up at makeshift bars where a half dozen of these shellfish at a time were served up on paper plates. At each bar were bottles of Tabasco and Worcestershire sauces. There might be some oyster crackers around and, on rare occasions, a few lemon wedges. But the real oyster eaters simply slid them right off the shell and down the throat, no stops in between. It was even something of a rite of

passage to get up the nerve to eat your first raw oyster. These events went on all afternoon and into the evening—the beer flowing freely, oysters consumed in huge quantities, a great celebration of the Chesapeake's bounty.

The oyster house itself is a hallowed institution of the Bay, though, sadly, it is rapidly disappearing. These eateries can still be found if you look hard enough, but Chesapeake old-timers remember when they abounded. The oyster house is just what the name implies, a restaurant that specializes in oysters, often serving this shellfish only. At one time, for very little money, you could eat all the oysters you wanted, usually just served raw on the half shell. You could also guzzle an ocean of beer and still be socially acceptable. And in their glory days, the oyster houses were so basic that even fried potatoes were eschewed as affectations. Nothing stood in the way of oyster eating. The shells were simply thrown on the floor to be broomed out later.

The Church Dinner

Perhaps the Bay's most time-honored culinary tradition of all is the ham-and-oyster dinner. Held each fall, these dinners are often hosted by church groups. They seem to say that summer is over, the oyster is in season, it's harvest time. Attending a church dinner is a way to sample genuine Chesapeake cookery. Church members cook at these events with their home recipes, using fresh ingredients and shellfish straight from the Bay.

I have a mental list of my most memorable food experiences, and very near the top of the list is a church dinner I attended one fall at a Methodist Church in Davidsonville, Maryland. I was in elementary school at the time and spending a few days at my great grandmother's beach cottage, just south of Annapolis. My great grandmother, Ma, loved genuine home cooking, and she preferred church dinners to restaurants. At that time, these dinners were listed each day in the local paper.

In the gathering darkness, we left the shores of the Bay in Ma's old Chevy convertible and traveled to Davidsonville, making our way out into farming country on unlit two-lane roads, almost no traffic, passing deep woods and flat fields. Occasionally, we'd see a farmhouse with smoke rising from its chimney.

Ma parked under the trees that lined the dirt-and-gravel driveway of the church. In the church's brightly lit basement, tables and wooden folding chairs were lined up, real cloth on the tables, and the plates and silverware seemed to have been brought in from someone's home. I was about to experience a cooking like no other, the cooking of the Chesapeake farms, where land and sea meet.

As soon as we sat down at one of the tables, I felt welcome. The other diners greeted me as if I were an old friend. The food was being passed around family-style. And what fine food it was. The platters were piled high with cured ham and fresh turkey, home-baked dinner rolls, vegetables that tasted

as if they'd just been picked—string beans, tomatoes, corn on the cob. And there were bowls heaped with mashed potatoes, turkey dressing, along with pan gravy in gravy boats.

There was no skimping here. These church folk were truly filled with the spirit of generosity. In fact, they seemed to revel in it. Each time a platter looked as if it might become anything less than filled, a farmer's wife would come from the kitchen to replenish it. These good women, dressed in long, no-nonsense dresses and aprons, kept telling everyone to eat plenty. And all of us were glad to do just that.

This was a traditional fall dinner, and the oyster played a key role. Platters of oysters were being passed around, some oven-roasted, some in casserole form, some fried. Although I'd spent much time around the Chesapeake region, somehow I'd never gotten around to eating an oyster. But then a platter of deep-fried oysters came my way. They were breaded and golden, and I just had to try at least one.

That one oyster turned into many. It had just the right bite, and the batter was delicious. And the very taste of the oyster reminded me of the Bay itself, the taste of salt water in my mouth, the very essence of the mighty Chesapeake. I loved it. And I thought it made the perfect accompaniment to poultry. I later learned that this view is shared by many lovers of Bay food and that serving poultry and seafood together is a Chesapeake tradition.

I certainly had my share of both seafood and poultry that night. But I'd also experienced something far more important, something I'd remember for a lifetime. I'd had the good fortune to be on hand for harvest time on the Chesapeake.

Unfortunately, the Bay's oyster population has dwindled in recent years, but state governments are doing their part to reverse this trend by seeding the oysters and cleaning the waters of the Chesapeake. If all of us do what we can to "Save The Bay," it will be possible to have a bountiful supply of one of the world's most delicious shellfish for a long time to come. *pl*



Batter-Fried Oysters

For this recipe, you can just buy a pint of already-shucked oysters—Chesapeake oysters, of course!

Drain oysters, remove grit, and dry on paper towels.

Mix one cup of flour with one cup of breadcrumbs. In a shallow bowl, beat two eggs with two tablespoons of light cream. Toss the oysters in the flour mixture, then in the egg mixture, then in the flour mix again, coating the oysters thoroughly. When done, sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

In a heavy iron skillet, heat one stick of butter with one cup of vegetable oil until sizzling and then reduce heat.

Fry oysters a few at a time. Do not crowd the pan. Each batch will take two or three minutes. When oysters are a golden brown, remove from pan and drain on paper towels.

This dish goes well with tartar sauce and lemon wedges, and some oyster house veterans swear by ketchup mixed with horseradish as a "cocktail" sauce.

Eat hearty. Enjoy the taste of the Bay!



If You Love Chesapeake Waterfowl, You Love Chesapeake Waterfowlers

By Kate Livie, for the Bay Journal News Service

Thanksgiving morning, just at sunrise, is when people who live on the edges of the Chesapeake are loudly reminded that they live in the middle of a thriving seasonal harvest: waterfowling. Shotgun blasts shatter the dawn silence, sounding for all the world like the opening salvos of a Gettysburg re-enactment. Swiftly following is the roar of thousands of startled geese or ducks taking wing. Left behind on the water are the wounded birds, some still struggling against the inevitable arrival of the retriever.

For some folks who have pleurably watched the Bay's fall aerial tide of geese, this is more than a surprise—it's an outrage. Surely, this noisy, visible, gruesome killing—done for pleasure—must be violating some sort of law? Or at the very least, certainly it violates our environmental ethics in an estuary already imperiled by man's presence?

In fact, this prominent reaping of waterfowl is not a violation of the environment at all. Despite all appearances to the contrary, these hunters, the licenses they buy for the privilege of harvesting waterfowl, and the preservation organizations they support, represent arguably one of the best-managed, best-funded and oldest conservation programs in North America.

That wasn't always the case. Prior to 1918, hundreds of bird species, from geese and ducks to owls and egrets, were harvested without limit. Some were destined for ladies' hats, others eradicated as nuisances. Many were hunted for their flesh.

The Chesapeake, in particular, was known for its commercial waterfowl harvest. Each winter, thousands of hunters, armed to the teeth, would take to the Bay's quiet coves in the efficient and deadly pursuit of waterfowl, ducks in particular. Canvasbacks, blue bills, teals, black ducks—all were killed by the thousands, often on the water or while sleeping, to meet the insatiable East Coast demand for savory wildfowl.

This rampant plunder of birds was no different than other 19th-century Chesapeake harvests—oysters, shad and sturgeon were all pursued to the edge of collapse. Waterfowl, though, were different. Unlike aquatic species, their dwindling flocks were easily observed, something that caused great consternation, not only in emerging conservation clubs like the Audubon Society, but also among affluent private sportsmen. The response was the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act—establishing the unprecedented protection of U.S. and Canadian wildlife on an international scale. It immediately ceased the hunting of waterfowl for the commercial market, establishing in its place a system of restricted sport hunting, managed by states, enforced by wardens and supported by the sale of licenses.

Since then, the harvest of Chesapeake waterfowl has been closely managed by strict bag limits and restrictions on hunting tools, gear, blinds and boats. Some species, like swans in Maryland, have been removed from harvest altogether. Others, like Canada geese, have had long-term protective moratoriums over the years. But all are closely supervised by federal and state

When you see the great cyclones of geese descending over cornfields at dusk, remember, waterfowlers are partially to thank.

agencies that monitor the bird populations and dictate the number that can be taken annually.

This 20th-century transition from market hunting to sport hunting created a new kind of waterfowler—one who never knew a shoot without a bag limit. Reared on hunting for enjoyment rather than volume, these sportsmen found beauty in the challenges of shooting birds on the wing. They learned from older mentors how to how to compose a decoy rig and the glottal symphony of a duck call. They rose for the promise of a glorious hunt when the geese hover, silhouettes against a fiery sky. They ate the few birds they shot with gusto and appreciation.

These experiences inspired both passion and protectiveness. Conservation hunters knew the only way to ensure the joy of a great shoot for future generations was to ensure that waterfowl populations flourished. They established private organizations—most notably Ducks Unlimited—to promote the protection of waterfowl and the creation of wildlife habitat. From the waterfowl nurseries of Canadian prairie sloughs to the Chesapeake's overwintering marshes, DU used contributions to protect hundreds of thousands of acres and restore thousands more.

In the Chesapeake Bay, DU has joined forces with state and federal agencies. Both Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, near Cambridge, MD, and Deal Island Wildlife Management Area, near Dames Quarter, MD, for example, have partnered with DU on restoration initiatives for more than twenty years. As recently as 2013, both conservation areas completed major projects with DU's help: enhancing a fifty-seven-acre portion of the refuge at Blackwater and creating at 2,800-acre impoundment at Deal Island to foster the

growth of submerged aquatic vegetation—nature's perfect waterfowl food.

It seems a contrary notion to congratulate sportsmen for the preservation of the waterfowl they're shooting. But there isn't a more vocal or committed community of waterfowl conservationists out there. They know the only way their beloved tradition continues is by waterfowl not merely surviving, but thriving. When you see the great cyclones of geese descending over cornfields at dusk, remember, waterfowlers are partially to thank. For almost a hundred years, those conservation hunters have committed to a sustainable compromise, balancing their shotgun blasts with the clarion call of a

million geese, just arrived from Canada.

Kate Livie of Chesterton, MD, is the author of Chesapeake Oysters—The Bay's Foundation and Future (2015) and serves as education director of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels.

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Abington Ruritan Club

A Community Centerpiece and Champion

Story and Photos by Pete and Mary Lou Shepherd

The Abington Ruritan Club was chartered October 8, 1956, by twenty-nine community visionaries who had the foresight to establish an organization that is a beacon of fellowship, goodwill and community Service in the lower Gloucester Community. From those twenty-nine has grown a current membership of 130 men and women who give generously of their time and money. On February 27, 1993, a club building, with a seating capacity of 450, was dedicated and opened for business. This facility is used for rentals ranging from weddings, receptions, garden shows, special event parties and birthday celebrations, to hosting blood drives and voting in local, state, and national elections. It also hosts monthly membership dinner meetings, board of directors meetings, and members suppers. In addition to this facility, vast festival grounds accommodate special occasions, rain or shine. As a result, actual support to the community is extensive:

- ☛ Clam Chowder sales held at least three times a year
- ☛ Renewable college scholarships totaling \$6,000 awarded each year

- ☛ Rudy Bears distributed to children, senior adults, and through the sheriff's office for distribution to children in accidents or in other vulnerable situations
- ☛ Support of veterans is demonstrated through members participating in Memorial & Veterans Day wreath laying, saluting the military in special programs, and delivering care packages to VA hospitals
- ☛ Help for the homeless by participating with churches to provide meals and hands-on assistance while housing homeless individuals
- ☛ Christmas for Kids. Every December, Abington hosts a party for children, ages eight and under, followed by a special party for Foster Kids of all ages. Santa and Mrs. Claus preside over both parties with lots of food, entertainment, fun, and presents to include bikes, electronics, dolls, books, and much more! An Angel Tree is used to fulfill dreams of needy children.
- ☛ Importance of protecting the environment is demonstrated by club members who volunteer in County Clean Up and planting sea grass to save shorelines from erosion



Happy Crowd at 2016 Fall Seafood Festival

- ☛ Benevolence is expressed by funding Gloucester citizens with special financial needs
- ☛ Special Emphasis: The club works closely with the local sheriff's office; promotes and provides a Relay for Life Team; participates annually with the Guinea Jubilee; collects and delivers food to local churches to stock their food pantries; makes special deliveries to the Laurel Shelter; participates in Meals on Wheels; and donates pet food to the Humane Society.

Signature Fundraiser

The Signature Abingdon Ruritan Club Fund Raiser is the twice-a-year Seafood Festival, which allows the Club to donate \$70,000 back to the community. On the third Wednesday in May and in October, club members, their spouses, and other volunteers serve up all you can eat fried fish, clam fritters, clams on the half shell, clam chowder, fried oysters, oysters on the half shell, roasted oysters, steamed crabs, steamed shrimp, fried shrimp, fried scallops, barbeque, ice cream, cake, soft drinks, water, wine beer, & cocktails – PLUS a live band and free parking – ALL FOR A \$50 TICKET. All seafood is fresh and preparation and cooking is

First Class! 2,300 Tickets are sold out early because this is truly the best event you will ever attend. Nine members started the Seafood Festival in the 1980s, and today they are known as the Magnificent Nine—and eight are still cooking and serving: L. T. Wells, Jr.; Jon Beck; David Dea; David Bristow; Walter Priest; Rupert Thomas; Graham Blake; Gordon Smith; and Ben Garrett (deceased).

Tickets generally go on sale online 45-60 days prior to each festival. For complete information and specific times, go to www.abingdonruritanclub.com. Hope to see some Pleasant Living readers at the May 2017 Festival!!!

Pete Shepherd is past president and current board member and Mary Lou Shepherd, editor of national award Winning newsletter

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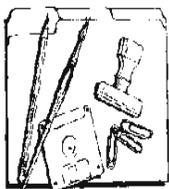


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By Sylvia Prince

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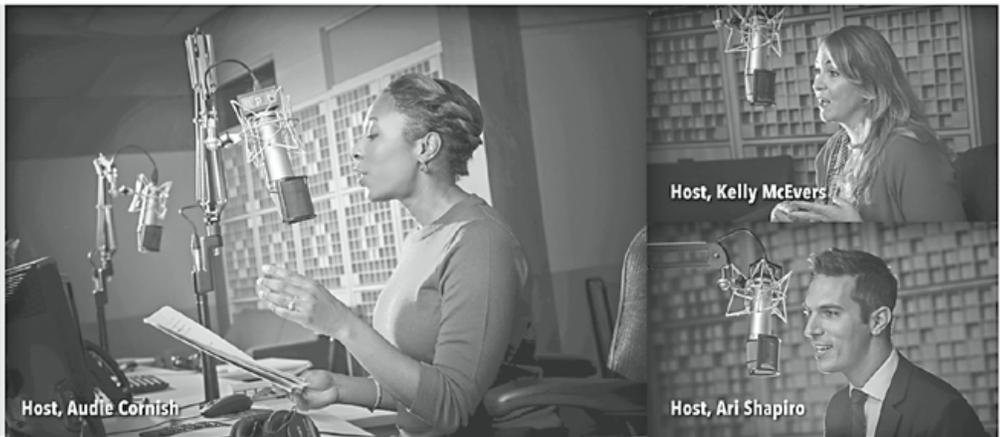
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