

M.A.P. Charting the road to success for Staunton students

STAUNTON—“Amazing Grace” is the story of a young girl named Grace who wants to play the part of Peter Pan in a school play.

“You can’t be Peter Pan,” one of her classmates tells her. “You’re too young.”

“You can’t be Peter Pan,” another classmate says. “You’re black.”

Grace goes home disappointed and discouraged. When her grandmother learns about the school play and the role Grace thinks she can play, the woman takes her granddaughter to see Shakespeare’s *Romance and Julius* in which a young African-American girl plays the female lead.

“You can be anything you want, if you put your mind to it,” Grace’s grandmother tells her.

Grace auditioned for the part of Peter Pan and is selected from among her classmates to play the leader of the lost boys of Never Land.

“You can be anything you want, if you put your mind to it,” a group of second and third grade students at Besse Weller Elementary School says, repeating the phrase from the story of “Amazing Grace.”

“What can you be?” their guidance counselor asks.

“Anything,” the students cheer.

“If what?” they are asked.

“If you put your mind to it,” the students respond.

“You can be anything you want, if you put your mind to it,” the students repeat over and over again, with encouragement from their teachers.

The fourth time through the students speak firmly and with conviction.

“You can be anything you want, if you put your mind to it,” they say, smiling across the table at each other and their teachers.

The “you can be anything” mood from “Amazing Grace” is a simple but powerful explanation of the philosophy of a new program, being conducted in Staunton’s four elementary schools.

The Motivation + Achievement + Pride program, at M.A.P., as it is more often referred to, is a program created and designed to help students build their educational potential. It probably started “Amazing Achievement Project,” a July-Cox, assistant superintendent for instruction, says the program was dropped to address the needs of minority students within the city school system.

“With minority students in particular, the achievement gap was wider than it should be,” she said. “We had few minorities in the gifted and talented programs and that shouldn’t be. We want more minorities in those programs.”

The students when the school system was attempting to come with the program. Ms. Cox says, “We want those students who are academically at risk to have a high potential for achievement. We want some students, who are placed, who are receiving high marks on standardized tests, who are performing well in class.”

These students “fall further and further behind,” according to Ms. Cox. “They get into the rut of working that hard and many times end up in the regular track and probably will not go to college.”

M.A.P. Ms. Cox says, “It will guide them into more academic and rigorous programs and give them some options.”

Staunton’s M.A.P. program was launched last year following a \$4,000 allocation by the Staunton School Board to establish the program. It was outlined after 24 similar programs being used in Charlotteville schools. After visiting



Tarsha Crawford, a M.A.P. student at Besse Weller Elementary School, works on a word game during a Monday afternoon M.A.P. club meeting. Guidance counselor Kim Crocker helps Tarsha think of a word which begins with the letter “E.”

Stories and photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

ing schools there, instructors and administrators in Staunton formulated the minority achievement program to begin during the 1993-94 school year with second grade students. Candidates for the program were students with college potential who appeared to be having difficulty with school work.

Kindergarten and first grade teachers in each elementary school made recommendations of students who they thought would benefit from the program. Before a student was accepted into the program, it was necessary to make

sure the student’s parents would want to be involved in the program.

“Parents have to participate,” Ms. Cox says. “The more parental support you have, the more likely you are to succeed.” She notes that parents have been a key factor in the program since the very beginning.

“I don’t know of any parent that doesn’t want the best for their child,” she said, “but sometimes they just don’t know what the best is. That’s why it’s so important to have parents involved in convincing some parents that their child can go to college.”

Continued at top of page 5

Parents see children progressing along M.A.P. path

When Larne Bryant arrives home from school, he starts working on his homework, says his son, Paddy Walter.

Erika Kier is a three-year-old child who likes to help others, according to her mother Sandra Coulbourn.

Larner and Erika, both 7-year-old students at Besse Weller Elementary School in Staunton, are two of the first students

participating in M.A.P. at Besse Weller. Larner’s mom recalls that his attention to his school work when he was in first grade was lacking in some ways.

“He was doing a decent job, but not doing it like he should,” she said.

Larner, his mom, and M.A.P. instructors share homework and do it together in a room in his grade to work toward doing it at school. Ms. Walter says she has noticed changes in Larner’s study habits since he began M.A.P.

“He’s coming home later and really going to work on his homework,” says Ms. Walter. “He used to come in and say he did his homework at school, then find out he wasn’t doing it and showing it to me now.”

Ms. Walter says this is also causing Larner to make progress in mathematics. When her nephew completed first grade, he had

fallen behind in his reading skills, Ms. Walter says.

He started summer school and began to show improvement. He has earned this summer into the second grade.

“Larner likes reading,” she said. “He made it all by himself.”

Erika, too, has made progress since she was selected for M.A.P., according to her

mother Erika’s goal is to improve her handwriting.

“It was so messy you couldn’t read it,” Ms. Coulbourn remembers of her daughter’s handwriting in first grade. “Her goal in the club is her handwriting and I have seen some improvement.”

Erika’s overall performance in school has shown marked improvement since she began M.A.P. activities, according to Ms. Coulbourn.

“I’ve noticed a big difference in her reading. She’s sounding out words and spelling,” she said. “She really likes reading, more so than last year. She was afraid last year of not making it. She has more confidence now.”

Both kids, Walter and Kier, Coulbourn said they hope their children will be able to attend college.

“I think it would be wonderful,” said Ms. Coulbourn.

“I’m hoping they’ll go to go,” said Ms. Walter, including Alphonso.

Larner’s older brother, a sixth-grade student at Besse Weller. Because Alphonso excels in his school work, he was chosen by M.A.P. instructors to assist with the program at Besse Weller.

Ms. Walter says Larner “really

enjoys the program” and Alphonso “likes staying after school and helping.”

“I think it’s going to be very helpful for them in the future,” Ms. Walter said of her nephew’s participation in M.A.P.

“She loves it,” Ms. Coulbourn said describing Erika’s attitude about M.A.P. “I’m thrilled and proud to have Erika in the program.”

To Erika, Ms. Coulbourn says, M.A.P. has become an important part of her school experience.

“Right, this is her new little activity that she can do,” she said. “She’s really excited about it.”

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Paddy Walter, center, and Larner Bryant, left, and Erika Kier, right, are two of the first students participating in M.A.P. at Besse Weller Elementary School.



Sandra Coulbourn and her daughter, Erika Kier, are two of the first students participating in M.A.P. at Besse Weller Elementary School.

TB, rabies topics of 4-H, Ruritan program

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

SPRING HILL, "She's young" and "Woody" were the characters presented by two area veterinarians at the 41st annual Spring Hill 4-H Clubhouse Open House. Spring Hill Health Club community adviser presided last Nov. 30 at Spring Hill Presbyterian Church. Fred K. Boush, a veterinarian with Ashby Hill Health on Rockingham Road, and Rebecca Smith, a veterinarian with a practice in cattle health said that a dairy is at risk with predators while Bruce Bowman, a Washington veterinarian, warned of the dangers of venereal infection with rabies. The vets told the 40 4-H and Ruritan club members and community volunteers under the program about the diseases and how to avoid them.

"TB is in the area right now," said Bowman. Due to the identification of one infected cattle herd in Floyd County, the veterinarian said Virginia has lost its TB-free status.

"TB is a disease we don't see anymore," he said. "Historically, it has pretty much been eradicated." A steer diagnosed in Pennsylvania had all kinds of lesions to the presence of TB in Virginia cattle. The infectious agent was traced back to a sale in Floyd County. Random testing of herds in the county was conducted and the first infected herd was identified. Further testing was done in neighboring herds and a second infected herd was found.

"It looks like it is limited just to Floyd County," said Hamilton. He explained that it will take two years for Virginia's TB-free status to be restored.

According to Hamilton, there are three types of TB - human, cattle, and avian. The diseases are specific to each species and generally do not spread across species, he said.

The veterinarian explained that TB is transmitted from one individual through saliva. Once an infected TB and also signs of the disease can be spread from deer to cattle. In an animal which contracts TB, the lungs are affected, the liver, spleen, and intestines, Hamilton said. When these abscesses occur, the animal's "cheating phase" begins during which TB is spread to other animals.

Cattle infected with TB are identified by skin testing an injection in the side under the skin. Cattle are rechecked three days following the test. Swelling at the injection site indicates a positive test for TB, according to Hamilton. He noted that there is no vaccine or treatment for TB in cattle.

Identification of TB in Virginia cattle will make it difficult to move cattle to other states, Hamilton said. Federal cattle will be affected in some instances, he noted. However, agreements with some states may be made which will allow cattle to move across state lines without being tested.

"Most states that have facilities are going to work out agreements



FRED K. BOUSH

with Virginia to accept border cattle," Hamilton said but he noted that all livestock stock sold out of state will have to be tested before being moved.

Although the incidence of TB in Floyd County herds is small the loss of TB-free status. How long it will take to bring the county back to an acceptance to area producers.

"I wouldn't worry about it," he said. "Cattle are at a much risk now than they were last week or last year. We're not going to start TB testing cattle and I'm not going to get my farmers to do it." There's "such a small chance" that cattle will contract TB, he said. "It's not nearly as likely as getting struck by lightning," he concluded.

Bowman, on the other hand, urged those in attendance to be much more cautious about another contagious and dangerous disease. Rabies was the subject of his presentation for all participants and he told children and parents to avoid contact with strange or wild animals.

"Rabies is not a rare disease,"

Bowman said. He explained that there is no treatment for rabies and that once an animal develops the disease, death is certain.

To the young people in the group, Bowman issued the following rules:

Rule No. 1 - Don't pet or play with any dog or cat without parent's permission.

Rule No. 2 - If you break Rule No. 1 and are scratched or bitten by a dog or cat, immediately go and tell an adult.

"Little girls got to the United States last year pet rabbits and died," he said. He noted that the child had not told her parents about being bitten by an unknown animal. Had this been detected immediately, he said, the girl could have been treated for rabies before the disease established itself in the child's nervous system.

Bowman explained that if someone is scratched or scratched by an animal which has not been vaccinated for rabies, the animal must be destroyed in order to perform the test to identify rabies. A person of the animal's owner is required to determine if rabies is present.

Symptoms to look for in animals are: loss of fear, unprovoked aggression, abnormal behavior, drooping of the mouth, and "staring" with "fixed" eyes. If the animal is not practical, or in most cases, necessary, for cattle or sheep to be vaccinated.

them, he said. "They just explode." He reminded those present that all cats and dogs in the state of Virginia are required by law to be vaccinated for rabies.

Controlling rabies in wild animals is more difficult, he said.

"More sharks and crocodiles have bitten humans than dogs ever," he noted. Wild animals which are seen during day hours should be reported to the nearest law enforcement, Bowman said.

"All birds," he said, are suspect animals. "If there's no reason for them to be there they're not there."

He outlined a few precautions when disposing of the carcass of an animal suspect for rabies.

First, "Bury it with gloves on. Disinfect the area where the animal died with bleach."

Anyone having contact with an animal suspect for rabies should immediately report the incident to the local health department. Shots can be administered in individuals who have been exposed to rabid animals. The rabies virus is found in saliva, blood, and other body fluids. Rabies virus can be transmitted by biting or scratching. However, it is not spread by contact with blood, urine, or feces. In most cases, necessary, for cattle or sheep to be vaccinated.

4-H club formed to emphasize field sports, outdoor skills

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

VERMILION - Field sports and outdoor skills will be the focus of a new 4-H club forming in Augusta County.

The club will hold an organizational meeting Thursday, December 8 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the public meeting room at Augusta County Community Center. Individuals living 9 to 18 years of age are eligible to join the club which is sponsored by the Virginia Extension Service. The club's activities will include a variety of activities centered around field sports and outdoor skills, according to Jennifer Mercer, Augusta County 4-H Extension agent.

Outdoor skills including wildlife and tree identification, survival skills, and the proper handling and use of firearms will be taught in the new 4-H club, said Mr. Mercer. At a recent leaders' meeting held in the Extension office, among those present were Loretta Wood of Washington and she volunteered to help organize the club.

"Our first concern is that everyone will be safety," Wood said. The club will begin its instruction with handling of guns with a basic fire-

arm instruction. Club members will most likely be using air rifles for their initial instruction in the proper handling of firearms, Wood said. He described an rifle as "a very accurate peer rifle."

Wood, who owned and maintained a shotgun's supply store for 15 years, has a special interest in teaching young people how to handle firearms correctly and safely.

"My father was killed by a hunter in 1970," Wood said in explaining his desire to teach safety. "If we can save one life by an education by teaching kids safety, then it will have been worth it."

Wood announced that though his former business he decided to need for some form of firearms instruction for youngsters.

"Shooting education can be an asset," he said. "The better educated you are, the more safe you are."

He also pointed out that parents who are not involved in teaching their children will be asked to teach their children what they should do if they encounter a gun.

"Young people need to be in a more informed and knowledgeable situation," Wood said. "While

a child encounters a firearm, you don't play with it. Adults need to set an example. My personal feeling is that a youngster should be prepared to deal with the situation (the rifle) in a responsible manner."

Wood, whose eight-year-old son has been shooting since he was five, has taught his own children guns and safety.

"It's been taught proper gun safety: never handle a gun alone, never touch a gun without an adult present, only shoot with an adult present, and always be sure of your target, make sure the proper person is used in the proper firearm, make sure you're taken out of the gun, when not in use, guns are locked away," Wood said.

Wood said emphasizing firearms safety instructions which he has taught his son.

Joining Wood in teaching club members about handling firearms will be Donald Strick and Fred Powell, both of Washington, Mass. and living in nearby to Wood's home in Augusta County. In addition to Wood's expertise, the group of leaders boasts a wealth of experience and knowledge in handling and using firearms.

Strick is a former military firearms instructor and has taught some instruction at the former Augusta Military Academy in Fort Defiance, Pulaski in the Hunter River valley in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Powell is a deputy with the Augusta County Sheriff's Department and is a volunteer of the Virginia Extension Service. Gary Magagnoli was a volunteer rifle instructor with the Hunter River Club in Harrison, Va.

"We're very fortunate to have this group of people," said Wood. "We're a willingness to volunteer through sharing community. These people will be the need and are willing to back it up with their time and effort."

Following the club's organizational meeting, regular club meetings will begin in January. The first club meeting will be on January 15, every other week. The first club meeting will be on January 15.

Wood is teaching air rifle safety and gun safety to the club members. Wood said in discussing the club's plans, having equipment in use will be the determining factor in when the club will begin its instruction at a shooting range. Wood

pointed out, however, that "shooters" will be the only focus of the club's activities.

"It's more than just pulling triggers. It's more than just a weapon. It's a way of life. It's a way of life and learn from what they do," he said. Mr. Mercer agreed, saying the club activities would give youngsters the opportunity to get acquainted with their peers.

In addition to firearms skills, Mr. Mercer said club members will also learn about safety, outdoor survival skills, and outdoor recreation, wildlife identification, and how to manage them. Included in activities will be field trips and competition with other field sports clubs from around the state. Depending on the amount of interest, club members may have the opportunity to gain experience in archery and black powder as well as the use of air pistols, air bolts, and other guns. Instruction in handling these weapons, shooting safety and safety shooting structure will be offered.

Individuals interested in the 4-H club should contact Mr. Mercer at the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-3750.

Dancing a jig with a cow

During all the fun we're talking about chasing cows and dancing jig. At the you might think the two things couldn't possibly have a common link. But if you'll bear with me for a while, I'll try to explain how the two events do mix.

We chase cattle on a farm some nine miles from home. There is no leading chase or halting point in this farm. When the time comes to move the cattle home, we walk down to the gate at the road end, if they will enter on, they exit the field and then we walk them home. We have been following this practice for many years, and the gate at my lifetime and for the most part have had reasonable success with the overall operation of the cow-cattle drive. That is, up until this year.

In the spring, we take yearling steers and spring heifers to the farm. Usually near the end of July, we want to sort through these cattle and put some of them on a trailer. This requires that we get the cattle into an area where we can sort them. In this case a neighbor's holding pen, about one mile up the road. In order to do this, however, we have to get the cattle out of the pasture and drive them up the road.

In previous years, this has never proved too difficult. We just cut back with either two subfields, for the cattle. This is usually done about once a week. If we're pasturing to cut the cattle away from the pasture, we'll subdivide the field for a few days longer than they are accustomed to having access to it. When the pasture goes into the field, the cattle come running

Down on the farm

By Betty Jo Hamilton

for their milk, will follow the milk over the gate and sort up the road toward the neighbor's holding pen. But not this year.

I took three weeks and so few that I story myself before we managed to get even some of the 62 cattle out the gate and into the road. And this was not even accomplished until a rough week later to the farm, placed near the gate where we wanted the cattle to go, and then I did regularly with several cows and steers. Why this particular group of cattle was so slow to our obvious system, we will never know. But they certainly had no right to sort them the beginning.

This falls into the category of "If you didn't want the cattle to go out the gate and you let it open, they'd be out in a real hot second." If you don't want the cattle to go out the gate, you could have a standing open for two weeks and they'd never go near it. Then, it seems, early work in the order we would wish them.

I'll have to add a note since we are probably already asking the question in your mind, "Why didn't they just stand up the cattle and let them out the gate?" That it's not really possible to

round up the cattle and chase them out the gate at this particular farm. This is 80 years of open pasture.

You can't chase cattle and then sort them where you want them to go.

We had just sorted all the yearling cattle out of the field. However, some of them still managed to get away from us, no matter how close they seemed as they could go, then we tried, turned and looked at us, and had a great big old drinking trough over our heads as we tried to get them from the pasture. I saw them standing there laughing at us and said to myself, "Oh hell, you haven't had the last laugh yet. We've still got a few tricks up

our sleeves."

"We're taking some cows with calves down the road," I told my father a few days later. "We'll get some of these cows that always come to feed, put them in with their yearlings, and they'll be there when we need to get them." I was moving ahead to the time when we would be ready to make the yearlings to market. It would not be a time when we would be able to leave any behind.

Everybody, I think, has cows they can't lose. If you farm, you

Continued on top of page 9



INVITATION TO THE DANCE—Looking very cool and collected in the photo above, this cow displayed an entirely different attitude when we were attempting to herd her out of a pasture field. She and I ended up dancing a jig during a cow chasing session when the cow decided to chase instead of be chased. Who would have thought it of a cow with a heart-shaped marking on her face?

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

Fair board moving ahead with plans for event

AC still report

VERONA — Board members were selected and officers elected at the annual meeting of the Augusta County Fair Board held Nov. 9.

Selected to serve three-year terms of office on the board were Larry Staples, Larry Winkles, Charles Wondlerley, Ann Ashby, and Ray T. Stephenson.

Officers for the coming year will be Ashby, president; Shirley Kaufman, vice president; Rick Shiflet, secretary; and Staples, treasurer.

The board has approved the publication of a fair catalogue for the event which is being planned for Aug. 23-26, 1995. The fair catalogue will include a schedule of events and exhibitors. Plans for ads in the catalogue have been set. Businesses wishing to advertise in the catalogue should contact Mrs.



ASHBY



KAUFMAN



SHIFLET



STAPLES



WINKLES



WONDERLEY



STEPHENSON

Kaufman at 686-4274.

The board also approved a logo, created and designed by Duane Bailey, to be used to promote the fair.

Davey Fiske, Augusta County Extension agent said the fair will include "the week" livestock, home economics exhibit, and a midway of rides and attractions. Mrs. Kaufman said that events planned for the fair include a horse

pull and an unique tractor pull. Local entertainers will also perform at the fair.

"Everything is rapidly coming together," said Ashby. "We're moving right along."

Livestock exhibits will include sheep, goats, and beef and dairy cattle. Cows will be offered in junior and open competitions. 4-H, FFA, and hired associates members will be eligible for junior

classes. All other individuals will compete in open classes although 4-H, FFA, and hired associates members may also exhibit in the open classes. Both livestock and commercial livestock competition will be held. The Market Lamb Show planned for the fair will be open only to individuals in the junior age category who are Augusta County residents.

In the coming months the fair

board will be working to determine a location for the fair, Ashby said.

The fair board is seeking the assistance of individuals who may be interested in volunteering to work in the fair office answering the telephone. Anyone interested in helping in this manner should call the Augusta County Extension Office at 243-5330 or Mrs. Kaufman at 686-4274.

Earl Downs: Santa's Staunton helper

BY NANCY SCORLEAS

STAUNTON It's a fairly well known fact that maps and directions aren't my strong point. But even I know it wasn't close to the North Pole one evening recently.

And yet, I would have sworn I saw Santa slipping into a red brick house in Staunton. Granted he was dressed in clothes and I didn't see any reindeer making noise, but the silver hair and beard were dead giveaways for the jolly old elf himself.

The person I had seen turned out to be Earl Downs, one of Santa Claus' leading helpers in the Shenandoah Valley. For the past half dozen years or so, Earl has been spreading the spirit of Christmas in a variety of ways to both the young and the young at heart.

As a kindergarten, the 52-year-old Staunton native is a third grader for the North Pole's most famous resident right down to the light-hearted laugh and twinkling blue eyes to the silver hair and beard. But it was really a sense of fun that carried him to the door and set him loose in fun.

"It was about six years ago when one of the churches where I work called me and asked me to be Santa at a Christmas party for the staff families. I said, laugh and said, 'No way, no way,' Earl began.

With a chuckle, Mrs. Downs—Joni—said Downs picked up the story about her husband's evolution to Santa.

"We went down on Christmas Eve that year at Thanksgiving. Earl had already said that he was not going to play Santa. Well, we went by a window shop and there was a sign on a mannequin and it was absolutely gorgeous. It made a long story short, he went home with the suit," she said.

The first outing at this Christmas party turned out to be more fun than he thought and Earl took to the job like a pro, he said.



Earl also plays the part of St. Nicholas during Old World Christmas at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton.

one reindeer. Even after the party he donated the suit and traveled around to area homes visiting and spreading Christmas cheer. Behind the scenes, Earl picks candy and small presents for the children and drives Old St. Nick from house to house, but also never accompanies Santa inside the house but sits safe away from the spirit of the moment.

After a few well wishes for the season and a chat with the kids, Santa leaves for the next house. That first year, "I guess we were hearing all over Staunton to try and find out who Santa was," Earl recalled. During December, the Downs usually visit the homes of 20 or so friends and neighbors.

"Once I got in my Santa suit, the fun is to do all the work," Earl says to Mrs. Claus. "I can't see, my peripheral vision is gone because of the glasses and the beard and my hair's so thick," he added, gesturing with his hands for emphasis.

Joni's behind-the-scenes work also involves an occasional pick-up job on overzealous Santa. One year he stopped by the house of an elderly lady with cancer and his visit produced such wonderfully happy results that the lady felt some prancing out to the house played with what he'd done.

"We just came slipping around the house, but you can't let him go any which way," Joni remembered. "I said, 'Earl, you can't do more like this in this town. I had to get him out of here together!'"

Although the outfit began with that Thanksgiving visit to the candy shop, the Downs have improved upon Santa's appearance in the years since then. From a taller build to the high-topped boots, Santa looks like a North Pole helper should look.

"I looked for the right boots for close to a year," Earl confessed. "I ended up finding that I would find a pair of boots that were just right because I said to myself that kids are smart and they figure out if something isn't right. I found the right boots, high topped black leathers, it's close to my Christmas. When I brought them, I said, 'I had you to make said Santa Claus appear to be better.' As an extra touch, Earl has added his as the top of his boots.

In addition to visiting private homes, Earl also leads a band at a few local church gatherings. Perhaps the most enjoyable time spent at Santa's helper, however, occurs in Lamp when he visits with area children during a special "Breakfast with Santa" at the Maryland Inn. Santa arrives at the inn by firetruck and there he is greeted by adoring children of all ages.

"When Earl Downs stands on the side of the firetruck and those kids jump up and down and say 'How comes Santa Claus,' I get tears in my eyes," Joni said in describing the moment. Unlike some of Santa's helpers who lead his elf, his, being one often be interacting to small kids, Earl is a quiet, gentle Santa according to Joni.

"He takes all the time in the world with the kids. When they come out after having breakfast, they'll walk up and just touch him, she added.

For two, Earl loves kids and sharing confidences with them. The only thing he

tries to give is his heart which he leaves just a bit for Santa.

"They ask me how I work my heart and said it and they talk with me about all the things that Santa is supposed to know and that makes it special. There are some packs, too," he says with a chuckle. "I had a lady close to 70 come through the door, come over and sit on my lap. I also once had a girl in her 20s get her picture taken on Santa's lap. She said she was a book at home and in the book is a picture of her on Santa's lap for every year since she was born."

The joy that he spreads to others makes it all worthwhile, Earl notes. Last year he visited a woman in her 90s and a woman on her last Christmas. "Her family still talks about the happiness Earl brought her on her last Christmas," Joni said.

"I once visited a family that had a house full of kids, sleepers in every room. I arrived right at half nine and when I went in someone said that Santa was here. Well, I heard what they said and a lot of splashing and here come five kids and took down the steps to see Santa. It's those random moments like that when you can make a difference in a kid's eyes," Earl explained.

In the last few years, Earl has also added another role to his Christmas repertoire. During lessons here at the Museum of American Frontier Culture, he portrays an Old World version of Santa when he dresses like St. Nicholas. This time there is no wig or false-nibbled red suit. His natural beard, however, fits the part perfectly and when he dons the dark red hooded cloak rimmed in gold braid and picks up a wooden staff, he looks like he could be leading through an Old World village on a long winter's night.

"I made a deal with the folks at the museum. I said, 'If I give five hours of you have the costume made.' I started giving the lesson January 1 (several years ago) and I haven't changed since then. I want to keep my job and to be to give all year," he said.

So, when I saw that friendly gentleman slip into the red thick leathers, I knew that I wasn't lost. In a way I was at the North Pole.



Earl Downs as Santa - The jolly old elf gets some help from Staunton resident Earl Downs during the holidays when Downs dons the trademark red suit and beard.

or at least in a place where the spirit of Christmas is alive and well. Although December is a busy month for the Downs, the holiday duties at their home all year round. They even collect Santa, some carved in wood, others decked out in elegant velvet and fur.

"December is always merry, but it is a lot of fun and it brings some cheer to people," Joni said.

And of course, this Santa business has been going along the same a few years here Earl said and Joni picked up the spirit. "I like to refer to the three women at the best Santa Clauses," Earl explained. "That's when gift giving began so far as I'm concerned."

Over the years there have been a few questions, but Earl does his best to put any questions to rest. "Sometimes people will say to me that there is no Santa Claus and I just say, 'Do you want to be?' I say with a smile in his eye and a chuckle emanating from his merry beard.

"When you give up on something, Santa Claus then you give up something. Something in the way you were raised and in the spirit of giving."



Earl and Joni Downs with some of the Old World Santa Clauses they collect. These were all made locally.

Photo by Nancy Scorsas

"We gather together..."

Friendship, Thanksgiving feast prove to be 'perfect blendship'

By **SHARL HENNINGSEN**

STUARTS DRAFT— "Friendship, friendship, it's the perfect blendship," go the lyrics to a song popular song. A group of friends and neighbors have blended a Thanksgiving meal with the occasion to gather together with very special friends to create a unique holiday celebration.

The Friendship Sisters in Stuart Draft prepared their 12th annual Thanksgiving dinner November 12 with wishes of the community in their special invited guests. Each year the dinner has been served family style, complete with turkey, ham, stuffing, cranberry salad, side dishes, and people in for dessert.

The Friendship Sisters is a group of single ladies - members of Asahi Mountain churches in Stuart Draft - who started meeting together for fellowship. They began meeting in a group of five: Fannie Miller, Fannie Miller, Mary Miller, Martha Miller, and Marian Miller. Since then, other single ladies have joined the group.

The Thanksgiving dinner has become a tradition longer when, "Marian got a notion to do something for the widows in our church," said Martha Miller. "The first few years we had it on our own in the evening, but it kept growing."

The dinner is now held on a Saturday, it seems, in the old Mt. Zion Church Mountain school house to accommodate the crowd. The dinner is longer longer only the widows in Asahi area churches, but include widows they hear of in the community.

"We used to invite them in person," said Marian Miller. "They are getting to be so many. This year we can't even come in person."

Mary Thompson, who attends the dinner annually said, "I think it is such a lovely thing these girls are doing without expecting pay or anything. Usually churches invite only their own members, but I think 25% of the people at these dinners aren't even church at all."

"I truly think it is one of the best things that happens in Augusta County," she said. "So many things are done for youth and it's nice that something is done for the older people. I just have so much to say."

Last year she created a list for the visitors. They asked people to come in to assist with the cooking on the day of the dinner. With approximately 113 guests, they needed the help.

"We could not have handled all cooking and feeding the guests," said Martha Miller.

This year's dinner also provided for a list of music presentations. The ladies pooled their efforts to prepare six turkeys, three large trays of dressing, 3 1/2 gallons of gravy, six gallons of vegetables, 14 dozens of cranberry salad, 23 sweet rolls, and 28 pumpkin pies to feed 140

guests attending the feast. In addition, 17 plates were prepared and taken to individuals who were unable to come to the dinner.

Although the dinner was here people helping with the cooking, they still do the serving themselves. "If we were we get to see more of our guests," said Marian Miller. "If we were to sit down and eat with them, we could only talk with the few people seated around us."

"I wish there were more time for us to visit with them," said Fannie Mae Yoder. "My goal is to keep in touch with these people in between our meetings, but we don't seem to get it done."

"The people really look forward to the meetings," said Miss Yoder. "It's a big social event. They learn to know where and make or serve friendships."

"I think it is one of the ways to reach out and reach others in this way," said Mary Jane Miller. "Most of us have something in common and we enjoy the meeting once a year. We probably couldn't arrange it otherwise. The same Friendship Sisters do them exactly. They put in a lot of effort for two purposes."

Michael Baugh, another guest of the dinner said, "I think the dinner is an appropriate way to show caring to people who are often alone. It brings us together and gives us a nice time of fellowship. It started small, but was enjoyed so much by everyone that the Friendship Sisters extended it and now there are over 100 seated."



Fannie Miller of Stuart Draft serves some of the guests at the Friendship Sisters' dinner held November 12 at Mt. Zion School.

Martha Miller said this was her fourth year to attend the dinner. "It like it because I get to see all these neighbors that I haven't seen for a long time," she said.

"It is such a lovely meal and the Amish women are so nice and friendly. Who would have come up with such a wonderful gesture but them?"

They are good cooks too! The food is always in good."

Indeed, the size of the crowd grows the dinner is enjoyed.

Both for the fellowship and the food. As the crowd has grown, the sisters decided to invite someone to speak and serve as master of ceremonies. It has become a tradition to have Mary Jane Miller fill this capacity.

Ms. Yoder brings her wish along and says they both enjoy the fellowship and dinner very much.

"It is a time when the widows in the community can get together and enjoy each other. Many of these widows have gone through trials and can be an encouragement to each other. They look forward to the dinner from year to year and the Friendship Sisters get a lot of satisfaction seeing the guests enjoy themselves," said Ms. Yoder.

"I think it is a time when we can all think of how the Lord has blessed us," she said.

Following the meal, Ms. Yoder led the group in singing the hymn, "Praise to God" and asked the ladies to express their sentiments about particular things for which they wanted to give thanks.

"We thank God for good neighbors," one woman said. Another woman said she was thankful for good health.

"I'm thankful to the Lord for what I can't do my neighbors help me," another said.

"Bless these ladies," one woman said in expressing thanks to the Amish Mountain members of the Thanksgiving feast.

Thanksgiving is a time when many widows living in the Stuart Draft area appreciate 20 extra blessings of friendship and good food by invitation of the sisters. Friendship, they have found, is the appropriate "blendship" for the traditional feast of Thanksgiving. And it's also a good time to give thanks for the Friendship Sisters of Stuart Draft.



Amanda Summy of Stuart Draft serves up roast turkey at the Friendship Sisters' annual Thanksgiving dinner. Photos by Betty McManis

Made from scratch

Mexican Salad Dressing

Augusta County's said "Oh!" when we sampled this salad dressing. It was served on a mixed salad at Simon Koeniger's used car diner. Afterwards, people were starting around trying to find out who made the salad dressing and AC managed to uncover the secret in this recipe.

The recipe for Mexican Salad Dressing appeared in the 1978

Stuart Draft Asahi Cookbook. It is tangy but not spicy! Give this recipe a try and you'll see why people were wanting the recipe. Thanks go to Margaret Binkley, an AC neighbor in Stuart Draft, for helping us track down the recipe.

Mexican Salad Dressing
1 medium onion
1 cup sugar
1 cup vinegar
1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon paprika
2 teaspoon celery seed
3 teaspoons prepared mustard
1/2 cup white vinegar
2 cup vegetable oil
4 tablespoons salad dressing
They mean this combine with all ingredients in a blender. Blend well. Makes about 2 1/2 cups. Store in refrigerator.



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Christmas magic

By BETSY A. CAUSEY

Waynesboro

"Will you come and be with me again this year at Christmas party. Mom? Christmas party and Dad to be here?"

Looking up from the chair in my bed, I saw the heater exhale my wishes, knowing that were still years. It was hardly surprising with weather that was so cold and blue I wanted no of Christmas at all. But the excitement in Mom's face to tell me we was thinking about Christmas already. I started to myself, remembering what Christmas I had spent with him.

The first time I met Mom was through a Christmas card about seven years ago when he was incarcerated at a maximum security prison. Someone had asked me to send him a card, and I wrote him a letter for him to see. I had begun to correspond on a regular basis, and before long he was calling me "Mom" and writing "Sweetie."

We were Mom and Dad to many of the same he visited in the prison, but Mom was more of a favorite with me. He was always smiling and happy and had turned his life around after being locked up. Because the love of him was always showing in his eyes, Mom was a joy to be around for the moment—because he gave me hope.

A few years after we met him, he was transferred to a minimum security prison where Mom was also working for. I remember that Christmas party the first Christmas after Mom and Dad met and my husband

if we would like to come and be with her for this special occasion. I will never forget that night.

The party started at 6:30, but we were told to be there at least 45 minutes early so we could be seated quickly. The night air was bitterly cold with stars twinkling in a dark sky above us as we stood in a long line waiting to get to the door. The door was allowed inside until 11:15, and then only five guests at a time could go inside. Standing there in the freezing cold, I wondered if we'd ever get to the door with so many people ahead of us.

My family made it to the waiting room where we were given an initial pat-down search, then sent to our way to the visitors' room. The first person I saw was Mom with her smiling face. "Hello Christmas!" he exclaimed as he greeted me with a hug. He had learned to use a cane with some of the men we knew. It was for moving his fingers and using them all around in their Christmas. They.

Looking around the room at all the men in their prison blue jeans and blue denim shirts, their voices loud in the air at the words of the Christmas carols, I felt the story of the baby Jesus. I would not have known I was inside a prison wall except for the guards standing around. It would have been any other Christmas party with laughter and smiles on Mom's face as they remembered that first Christmas morning. I was so glad Mom had asked us to share this extremely exciting celebration.

My husband and I brought me back to the prison.

"It was well to call standing outside in the night air," I laughed as I realized he was there and not in the prison.

"Yes, Mom, you can come to visit this Christmas."

Daddy calls my bluff

By ANNE HARRIS

Sarasota

It was Christmas Eve, just two weeks after my 11th birthday. When Daddy came to tell me good night, he said, "I guess you'd better believe this Santa Claus business by now."

I didn't say anything, but I bowed my head. I had decided to keep my holiday wish. I had dreamed to be a ballerina.

A couple of generations ago, the great Santa Claus dance took place in my first or second grade. But in third or fourth grade, maybe even later, I was off to fourth grade because I had been half of the previous school year. This year my classmates and I had special discussions at Christmas assembly.

"Do you really still believe in Santa Claus?" Betty asked me.

"I'm confused with holiday. George looked me up. 'He's in the air,' he said. My mother and daddy say he's real."

That's how I felt exactly. If Mother and

Daddy said so, it was that, no matter what a bunch of new-year-olds said.

But if Daddy said he wasn't real, I had to believe him.

Christmas morning came and somehow the magic was still there. Maybe it was because my little sister really did still believe.

"Santa Claus" brought me a beautiful Santa Claus doll that Christmas. She had deep curls like the real Santa, and a fashionable shaggy costume, with lights and tiny, shiny on them. She even had a little bit of a bow in her hair. I was so pleased. But I began to really brought her.

The next fall I was double-promoted and caught up with getting my grades. Three weeks later, Santa Claus had long since visited the Santa Claus gymnasium. I guess, after all, it was a good thing Daddy called my bluff.

Before my Christmas, Mother told me help her new clothes for Sally's Christmas. It was fun to sneak around and keep the secret.

When Sally found her doll and its clothes under the Christmas tree, the look on her face told me all I needed. And I learned that playing Santa Claus was at least as much fun as believing in him.

harvest-gathering day at the insurance swamp. We all agreed that the Christmas season had especially gone on the side.

We needed to get some work done, not to mention the holiday at least, reminding us again that these old tricks cause for God's sake.

These gifts from nature were truly enjoyed and the "special story" remains in the heart of my sister's generation.

rubbed Chester Leaf under the cut on Joe's back and the bare was placed under the chain on his neck. He even fixed Joe's big hand full of water.

All the time Dad was working on Joe, he mumbled his mutter over my shoulder, saying to dog and starting him—how he was going to call him. He showed me and gave him a piece of his mind. By now, I was feeling around trying to catch him. He was so calm. He showed me his tongue but I could not see it.

Joe drew him, the phone rang. It was Mr. Hendricks. Before Joe had the chance to reply, Mr. Hendricks explained if the dog was with us, explaining he had been away from the farm and had just returned. Joe was listening. In questioning the farmer he discovered Joe had been given a pot with a silver foot fence. But I had immediately climbed out twice. Both times the farmer had recognized the dog and had put the chain around its neck.

He returned that Joe had refused to eat, had refused to bark, and that he had been waiting for Mr. Hendricks to return to see what he wanted done about the dog.

Mr. Hendricks was outraged at the farmer's behavior. He asked me if the dog was really willing to feed me if I had returned to see him, if he would let me give me the dog for a Christmas present.

He said the dog had been giving for me and he would not let me. The dog was willing to let me. He just wanted to see if I had had a good time. Dad offered to return the reward, but Mr. Hendricks refused to give me the dog's name.

Never have I known a Christmas present

Joe

By HANNEKE L. CHEN

Disunion

Early in November the year I was born, it was playing in the school hall and was fine. I was playing about five or six times a day, but had no other friends. Suddenly, something was wrong. My hand, it was a few inches long with small white spots scattered all over it. I had been through it.

Days had never happened me. I joined every day I saw and called it "Joe." When other children that I talked to, they like a magnet and pulled me. I was alone, alone and I played in the pocket, sharing the chicken I had to my pocket.

Finally, one day I came back to my friends. When we came to the bus, I told Joe, "You'd better stay here while I see if I can find you something else to eat." Quickly the sun came and everything was so empty and so cold.

No one was in the kitchen when I came so I walked around the kitchen to see if there was a shelf or a plate of food. I found the back to the back where Joe had been waiting for me.

That night at the dinner table, Mom mentioned something Joe had happened that day. She had played a game of sports in front to the children in the party, however, they were gone—again the party. Immediately I understood. "Mom, I took them and I took them. I found this afternoon in the school. I kept the plate, but it's in the back and I'll get it all night. And can I keep the dog? He's so much to play with and

to me. Please, can I?"

My dad answered Joe's question. He said, "I'll give you Joe."

"No, Dad. Not a dog, but a boy, and he never ever plays with me even when he's home."

"I said 'Yes,' and you know what that means. Also I said I want you to find that dog again so he will never leave me. No arguments. That's final."

In spite of the admonition, the first few days of my life, I would find him in my place and my game, and I would find him. We continued to play together, except when a family member became sick, or I disappeared.

One morning Dad told me he had seen an ad in the newspaper offering a \$100 reward for a dog lost in the area that Joe had disappeared. Dad also let me know he knew I had found the dog and had found him. I told him I would find him. He said he would find him. He said he would find him. He said he would find him.

The next day Mr. Hendricks came. It seemed that Joe was a valuable dog. He had won the Junior National Hunting Championship the year before. Joe had been lost on the first day of the hunt. He had been found by Mr. Hendricks who placed the ad in the newspaper. Mr. Hendricks would come to see Joe.

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*Berries

Continued from page 13

Christmas was a long time. When Christmas came, I found the children in the house, alongside the first one, and I found the first one. I was so happy to see them. I was so happy to see them. I was so happy to see them.

We shared and every with the family in Christmas Eve that year, with them all.

Hendricks drove away in his truck with Joe in a cage in the back.

How surprised and happy I was a couple of weeks later to find Joe sitting and waiting for me in the house. The happiness and when Dad came home from work that evening and found Joe. He had only to say, "Mr. Hendricks gave me \$100 for finding this dog to find. I was so happy to see him. He was so happy to see him. He was so happy to see him."

Thinking of the time and what I was to find the children. When I look back, I can see that the children were happy to see me. I was so happy to see them. I was so happy to see them. I was so happy to see them.

Joe was a valuable dog. He had won the Junior National Hunting Championship the year before. Joe had been lost on the first day of the hunt. He had been found by Mr. Hendricks who placed the ad in the newspaper. Mr. Hendricks would come to see Joe.

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Lessons from the playground of life

When I was a young boy the place to be was the playground next to the school. My friends and I would ride our bikes from all over the neighborhood to meet there. The playground itself was nothing special. It had the standard equipment of the day: swings, slide, sandbox, jungle gym—nothing out there in the conference and acquisition of children made for a wonderful afternoon.

Of all the possibilities for play, my favorite was the letter-exchange, otherwise known as a swap. (Don't ask me the origin of the name; I'd like to know myself.) It was the simplest of the swap options. For instance, you'd say, "I'd like to trade you, if you didn't want to trade, I'd like to trade you, if you didn't want to trade, would you trade?"

Up and down. Period.

Ab, but the inner-isoler was for me different.

First, it requires another person. This person could be a special friend (a girl?), a stranger (prospective friend?) or an enemy (the girl's other friend?). You can not play on the actor-tuner alone, it requires a relationship of one kind or another. What I didn't understand then, I do now: *the best play helps you create relationships in the process of playing.*

Meanwhile, the Internet offers resources you can personally consume (also to play with) now, if you are going to play at all. That mostly involves some kind of playground organization. If you do play now, then I'd play that 20 minutes or so there, then 20 minutes or so that is if it's not "If you can't solve a large problem, give up something to get something," just to get rid of the other conditions bound up with the object and higher in the air. The first play helps you to learn the skills of negotiation and the art of compromise. It's not like, you get things require the same art and other things too. You can have them, I'm partial to the acceptance.

*Saying
grace*
By
Roy
Howard

And now, about the most important thing you have a partner you must play together for it to work at all. Each of you will find the other by your every emotion. You can refuse to bounce your end up, leaving your partner dangling in the air, screaming, "What's going on here?" or you can be as reliable, particularly if you like examining partner over others. But if you cease to be one, and your partner will be unwilling to play again, if you don't let up. You, too, must dangle in the air at the mercy of your partner's emotions. If you refuse to be vulnerable, your partner's play is equally shared, each goes up and each goes down. You can slam your partner down, but that does it for a very long time, unless, of course, you both happen to be very agreeable and enjoy such expressions of anger. This is especially a man's thing to do, although you should not playpassive. The female role helps you to play your power equally with others who play it.

The best element on the water-skiing circuit after you and your partner get bored is the all the various varieties of going up and down. Power plays have lost their rewards. If the game is to continue, which is what you both want, then something else needs to be done. The up and down part is fun and easy.

What makes the locker-screen fun and gif-

Feet is the effort to hold the board in perfect balance. Unless you and your partner are the same weight, then some adjustments will have to be made. That's the fun part. You move a little this way, your partner moves a little that way; you plant you hit the ground. Try again. Your partner moves the way, you move that way. Plug again. Once there you move may be, your partner moves way in. You adjust your movements to the other person's movements and vice versa. Too close, too far away.

Back and forth you go together, until the moment comes when you find the precise point of balance. The leader enters battle on both in the air or on equal plane. Your body dangle, arms in the air. The moment of balance is sweet. It lasts for a very, very brief time. The first play helps you to discover the fleeting joy of perfect balance achieved through cooperation with others.

This reason of balance is what we all seek in life. It lies at the heart of wisdom and maturity. I have been thinking about the art of balance in relation to the season that drives someone around Thanksgiving and ends when the football games on New Year's Day. It may be the most out-of-balance time of the whole year. We usher-in winter between overeating and crash dieting [the modern answer to the ancient's advice on moderation].

More alcohol is consumed during these days than during any other time of the year and, not surprisingly, many people are battered, beaten, and depressed from any other time of the year.

At the same time, there is more singing, dancing, laughing, and genuine happiness. The new day shows the road, for a while, is worth it. It's a better future, all right. But one believes

What about children? They watch all these adults acting crasser than ever, and experience none of that catharsis themselves. The most conspicuous example of being out-

balance is the enormous overconsumption that occurs during this season. Not simply food, but things that we don't need.

There is an expectation placed long ago, especially within children, that this is the season to get more and more and more things. That's something beautiful in itself, that a child anticipates the possibility of receiving a gift. That wonderful pure joy exists when a person anticipates an offering to a deserving expectation. The other joy of receiving an unexpected, longed-for gift is our thing. That's not the same as receiving something that you demand and expect. We have become a country of people who have lost all balance. The stores abound of so many things for not many a thing to get more and more, while giving less and less.

What we desire for ourselves and our children, of course, is the precise balance of the material world. That requires all the things that are in the gift. If the happiness of receiving is to be sustained, then the gift itself is to be sustained by the gift. It is our self-will that is most to be sustained by the gift of giving.

You know the experience of balance, when the teacher-soldier holds you both in the air. It is sweet. It comes by paying attention to your partner and adjusting your position. No child (of any age) can achieve balance of the heart by over-consumption, getting as follows:

One gift we may give to ourselves and our children is a commitment to learn together the playful art of balance. We use body-mind to make the necessary adjustments in our relationships so that we create space to equality of sharing. We can help each other - young and old - know that when we combine first our passions for the planet, then something good from us and that our lives are a sweet mixture of balance for all of us.

Imagine what a day it will be in Argentina Country when we help each other in these ways:—

Reflecting pool reflections

Reflections from a muddy pool
November, 1994

Oh Maude, you just can't imagine the change in Washington since the last time I wrote home!

No one I know has ever been through any thing like it. Talk about gloom and doom! The restaurants at lunchtime are dim and filled with only a handful of people. The midway and streets are deserted. It is almost as if the place was populated by ghosts. The winners in the elections are all still in their home districts celebrating, and the Washington staffers of the incumbent winners are busy organizing things for the moving of offices. Those who had lost their seats in the election are also organizing for

My boss is not very upset, however, because he supported all of the candidates, both Republicans and Democrats. That is the standard procedure for lobbyists here — one can not take sides when business is at stake. We will begin the lunches and receptions as soon as the new people get in place, but that will take

a while. Also the daughter of my boss' best friend works for one of the rising Senate stars, and he will still have a good connection for any special favors he needs. I expect that soon we will begin to see a lot of new and more interesting

His victory at all, Dylan has lost his job. His boss lost the election by 120 percentage points. No one on the staff expects it, and now everyone is looking for another job. "I'm in a real bind, of course, and I don't think that the seriousness of the situation has sunk in yet. With literally thousands of people experiencing loss in the job market, things are going to be tough. His dad was a big supporter of his campaign and is the person who got the job for Dylan in the first place. I don't see that political connection will cut any good. His mother wants him to come home to Georgia and help her with the business there. But for her, his dad was in the White House. Not for her dad being the owner of a little Washington. I think that I am going to have my hands full trying to keep his spirits up and something comes out of it."

One of Dylan's friends is on the Capital Police force and his job certainly will be

good. Those political appointments are very quickly infilled. Says a lucky staffer at the left the Senate Finance Committee who she did or she, too, would be out there searching for a job just like everyone else. Almost all of the committee staff positions are going to change, even for people who have worked in the same job for 10 to 15 years. The Republicans may have a hard time, however, finding staffers who can come in and make the committee run smoothly, since there will not be many experienced people left in any of the offices. Those who are leaving are already packing up their desks. I guess everyone knew that it could happen one day, but just did not want to happen then. Now, there is no choice.

It is really hard to describe how drastically all of things change with the switch of power. Even small things that everyone always took for granted will change. For those Democrats who are staying, the prime office views and those parking spaces will no longer be theirs. They will, instead, go to the rising Republicans. Almost every segment of society, there is some somewhere, cannot

once the choice of office space is by seniority as well as majority party status. In many cases, however, members who have been in

I told Dylan that he should quickly organize a moving company and he might make a bundle of money. But he thought that was a crazy idea. He really does not like to move.

Of course, the absolutely worst part of it all is that none with as many of the former staff members sat here for the past session, and the new ones sat yet here, all of the parties have come to a smouldering halt. Those who give parties have no real incentive to entertain those who will no longer be in a position to help with approving legislation, and as yet the

See REFLECTING now to

Country Kid Stuff

Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa

'Tis the season to share traditions

By LEE ANN HEDDER

December is a month for celebrations. Christians observe December 25th as the birth of Jesus Christ. In addition there are many customs such as Santa Claus and snowflakes, decorating Christmas trees and lighting brightly colored lights which express cheerfulness, yet have no particular religious significance. Christmas is not the only cause for celebration during the final month of the year although it does share common elements with two other holidays that are observed. People who observe Hanukkah (HAN-uh-kuh), Kwanzaa (KWAN-zah), and Christmas express feelings of joy, thanksgiving, and faith which go beyond religious and religious differences.

Hanukkah commemorates rededication of Jerusalem Temple

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday which begins on the 25th day of the month of Kislev (usually occurring in late November or early December). Hanukkah means dedication and the holiday commemorates the Jews' rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 164 B.C.

For generations prior to 164 B.C. the Jews of Judea had been ruled by kings of other countries. Under the rule of some of the kings, the Jews had been allowed to continue in their traditional way of life. Some of the foreign kings, however, demanded greater signs of allegiance from the Jews. One king in particular, Antiochus IV (Ant-TIO-uh-kuhs), wanted the Jews to recognize his power only. Antiochus IV attempted to turn the Jews from worshipping the God of their ancestors to worshipping the god he selected. This Syrian king even called himself Antiochus Epiphanes (see PEE-fah-nay) translated Antiochus, the visible god. Using a play on words the Jews, primarily called him Antiochus Epiphanes (see PEE-fah-nay) meaning Antiochus, the madman.

Antiochus ordered the Temple in Jerusalem, the sacred Jewish house of worship into a shrine for Greek and Syrian gods. When many Jews still refused to worship as the king decreed, Antiochus outlawed the Jewish worship of God as a crime punishable by a gruesome death.

Some Jewish temples fled the city of Jerusalem hoping to find refuge for their religious customs in the hill towns of the countryside. However Antiochus soon began sending armies of soldiers and even the smaller villages to carry out sacrifices to Greek gods. The soldiers forced the villagers to participate in these rituals.

The people rebel

In 168 B.C. a small party of soldiers arrived in a village, both an altar and a sacrifice table. The soldiers demanded that the Jewish people meet in part of the ceremonial temple Antiochus demanded. The Jews were frightened and obedient. God's law had been perverted to suit the king's sin. Finally after capturing and putting down the soldiers, one Jew stepped forward to follow the royal command.

In the crowd of villagers was a

A hammer to the temple

During Antiochus' death the villagers, led by Mattathias and his sons, fled into the mountains a hide. For the three years that followed, this group of villagers was joined by other Jews who would obey Antiochus. The village's support was in fighting and with attacked the military people, destroyed royal communities, and, in general, caused a headache for King Antiochus. The sons of Mattathias were so persistent in their actions against the Syrian king that they were nicknamed "Maccabees" (MAC-uh-bees). Maccabee is the Jewish word which means "hammer." The sons of Mattathias were like hammers striking the head, fingers, and toes of the king's army.

After many months of gathering and training secretly, the Maccabees were so strong that they were able to recapture Jerusalem and reclaim the Temple as the house of God.

Reclaiming the tradition

The Temple they reclaimed was quite different from the one they remembered. The faithful Jewish food and tall grass growing in the courtyard and, inside, idols to Greek gods. The gold furnishings of the Temple had been sold to enrich the treasury of Antiochus.

After several months of work the Temple was ready for rededication. When the Temple lamp was lit it would signify the people's triumph and recognition to God. However it was discovered that there was only enough lamp oil to last for one day. It would take eight days to make more oil. The Jews were disappointed. The flame would be an outward sign of their inner devotion to God. They wanted the flame to last forever.

A great miracle was in store for them. When the lamp was lit the tiny amount of oil miraculously lasted eight days! To the Jews this signified God's acceptance of the rededicated Temple and his presence in their daily lives.

For the past 2000 years Jewish families have gathered together to

recall the story and remember their struggle to be God's people. Hanukkah celebrates the dedication of the Temple to many generations ago. Each day during Hanukkah a candle is lit to remind Jews of the eight days God's light burned in the Jerusalem Temple.



Today, a special celebration called a Mitzvah (meh-NOH-ah) supports the candle flames which remind Jews of their religious heritage. The next night of Hanukkah as a new candle is lit, Jewish families gather to give gifts, share special foods and games, and remember the many struggles in their history as people of God.

African-Americans celebrate ancestry

For centuries the celebration of Hanukkah has reminded Jews of their ancestral heritage. Kwanzaa reminds African-Americans of traditions of the African continent but it has only been observed formally for about 30 years.

Kwanzaa is a Swahili (Swahili-lee) word which means "the first" and relates to the first fruits of harvest for African farmers.

Many African ancestors of African-Americans were farmers. Planting and harvest time were cause for celebration and today's Kwanzaa celebration reminds the present generation how close to their ancestors had been with the land of Africa. Beginning on Dec. 26th, the seven days of Kwanzaa were as reminders of African tradition. Each day, a different life principle is presented.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa

On day one, celebration think about ancestry (see MWO-jah) or unity. Unity means staying together and understanding those things which make the family and the people strong.

Kwazungwa (kwan-jee-eh-ah-poo-LEE-ah), self-determination, is the focus of day two. Speaking and acting for one's self while standing up for what is right is the essence of self-determination for those observing Kwanzaa.

The celebration continues to the third day with emphasis on work and responsibility. Selfless work is among the standards of Kwanzaa. Working together so that all prosper is the message of day four.

Kwanzaa (kwan-jee-eh-ah-poo-LEE-ah) is closely related to justice and means cooperative economics. On the fourth day of Kwanzaa, African-Americans celebrate the idea of helping one another within the community of their culture.

Day five marks the focus on joy (JOY-ee) or respect. Each person has a purpose, no matter how small. Part of one's purpose is to honor ancestors by keeping commitments made to family and friends.

Kwanzaa (kwan-jee-eh-ah-poo-LEE-ah) is the gift of creativity.

Kwanzaa ends on New Year's Day with the principle of unity (see MWO-jah), I unite them with. African-Americans remember the faithful struggle of their ancestors. Faith will light the way for future goals and achievements.

Kwanzaa principles are goals for life

Respect for the past and hope for the future are reflected in the words that celebrate Kwanzaa: "The first day of Kwanzaa, 'New Year's Day.' 'We will live by the principles of Kwanzaa. We will walk through this year with laughter and in courage. When we come together to celebrate next year it will be in a better life.'"



Rockin', rollin' poet slam dunks Bessie Weller

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

STANTON • She's the class clown of poetry.

Ellen Johnston-Hale of Chapel Hill, N.C., brought her particular brand of poetry, humor, and joy to teaching to students at Bessie Weller Elementary School in Staunton. Part of the anti-investiture program you see by the Virginia Commission for the Arts, Ms. Johnston-Hale worked with students who were "not bad kids" who were.

Guessing, Rocking, Swirling, Twisting, Aggert, Twisting, Dipping, Thumping, Thumping. The 21 students in Sheila Kennedy's fifth grade class these last weeks to describe a white water raft ride as Ms. Johnston-Hale encouraged them to think about "words."

"Twain. That's the key word - twain," she published earlier told the students. As a tool to use, the students were instructed to make "twain twain" by forming their hands into a fist, opening it up just enough to be able to look through.

and then hold it in front of their eyes as if it were a microscope.

"Guess in," said Ms. Johnston-Hale. "Make a twain fist. You as an artist are selecting and emphasizing what you want to see. It takes more time and energy to bring up more details but that's what good writing is." The poet encouraged the students to capture people's joyousness with their writing.

"We need to get Grumpy out of that wheelchair!" she told the students. "Show, don't tell."

Ms. Johnston-Hale pushed students to find exactly the right words for what they want to describe.

"Robert Frost said, 'The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.'" the poet explained.

Ms. Johnston-Hale has worked with the anti-investiture program in Virginia since 1979. Having also been a teacher for 11 years, she said she had noticed the words were not coming to write.

"Kids could recite grammar rules but they couldn't apply them," she said. Looking up when teachers are doing is Ms. Johnston-Hale's gift. The anti-investiture program is designed to "enhance what's going on at school," she explained.

A native of Washington, D.C., Ms. Johnston-Hale is a graduate of the University of North Carolina. She published her first book in 1974 and her most recent effort came out in 1993. She is also the star of her own video, "Our 60 What Woman Rap." The video



Ellen Johnston-Hale, artist-in-residence with the Virginia Commission for the Arts, works with students in Sheila Kennedy's fifth grade class at Bessie Weller Elementary School in Staunton. Ms. Johnston-Hale, a poet, was at Bessie Weller for two weeks in November helping students learn how to write poetry.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

portrays other talents of the poet and another use of particular language in her.

Ms. Johnston-Hale, who is related (she has "herm of Mexican age"), travels around the country taking her message, "Make the Best of it" to retirement homes, senior centers, and conferences. Anyone expecting a stereotypical 60-year-old presentation out of Ms. Johnston-Hale will be surprised, and maybe even shocked.

"They said I couldn't Rockin', Rollin', so that's what I did!" Ms.

Johnston-Hale puts while Rockin', Rollin' in her video. Representing part of her rap for Bessie Weller students, the poet demonstrated what it means to write with excitement.

"To help make them want to experience it is writing!" she said. Encouraging her good writing elementary students, "I hope they will keep writing, but because they have to feel freedom they want to. I want them to see that making a poem with their writing is a poem thing."



Grandparents' Day

William Gray of Mr. Crawford eats lunch with grandaughter Danielle Gray during Grandparents' Day held November 18 at Bessie Weller Elementary School in Staunton. Danielle, a first-grader, is the daughter of Kelly and Tim Gray of Hill Street.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

Career chat

Managing toy store is rewarding and fun

By LYN ANNE HENNER

Name: Ann Keontz

Position: Manager of Kay-Bee Toys at Staunton Mall

Educational requirements: High school graduate, college degree is a plus. In reference to her educational background Mrs. Keontz commented, "I wish I had had computer classes in high school. Math is very important. You have to be able to add and subtract quickly," she explained. "At college I took a public speaking and communications course and this has been helpful in dealing with the public," stated Mrs. Keontz.

An manager she supervises the work of other employees. "It is an im-

portant subject as well" so that written instructions to her employees can be critically reviewed. Mrs. Keontz encouraged students to learn how to communicate well.

A Staunton resident, Mrs. Keontz has worked at Kay-Bee Toys for about five years. In January 1994 she was promoted to her current position. "I would handle over the responsibility of being manager," she explained.

Being around people of all ages is one of the most rewarding parts of the job. "I enjoy making new friends and the people part of the job is fun," said Mrs. Keontz. The store's merchandise adds to the fun of her job. "I love playing with toys and seeing the new prod-

ucts," she laughed. "Really there are the best. I love looking through Mrs. Keontz said.

The woman said she could find few drawbacks to her work as a toy store manager. Along with the fun and games of her management position, go the day-to-day activities of ensuring the products are unloaded from trucks, processed, and displayed. Understanding a toy such as a child's play set is not as much fun as a game of Monopoly but it is an important part of getting products to the public.

Mrs. Keontz anticipates a busy time between now and December 25. Serving as one of Santa's Staunton elves is part of the excitement of the holiday season. "Christmas is a magical time," she

commented. Mrs. Keontz often gets caught up in the magic and said that she is called on to pass messages from children to the featured part at the North Pole. Last December a particularly anxious seven-year-old customer questioned Mrs. Keontz, "You won't forget to tell him will you? I've just got to have that doll baby!"

"It's a wonderful job," enthused Mrs. Keontz, "with lots of room to grow and opportunity for advancement."

Seven adults might feel sad to give up to enjoy working in the children's world of toys. But Mrs. Keontz, "It's all fun at heart," she said smiling.



Ann Keontz, manager of Kay-Bee Toys at the Staunton Mall, and one of her favorite toys.

Photo by Lyn Anne Henner

Come into my parlor

A giant spider has taken up residence on the front lawn at Bonnie and Ken Stephenson's home near New Hope. The couple and their sons, Mark, 8, and Matthew, 10, built the oversized arachnid using a round bale of hay for the body, 4-inch corrugated drain pipe for the legs, and plywood ovals painted red for the eyes. They pulled some hay out of the center of the bale to form the mouth. Bonniesays the family project came about after seeing a similar one photographed in a Winchester newspaper. "The kids liked it so well we decided he make one," she said.

AC staff photo



Make It With Wool contest

Kim Brinkley, left, and Rosalea Riley competed in the Virginia Make It With Wool contest held November 12 at Ingleside in Staunton. Kim, a daughter of Debbie and George Brinkley of Charlottesville, competed in the junior division with a black, green, and fuchsia plaid skirt and matching green jacket. Rosalea, a daughter of Doug and Donna Riley of Rt. 1, Staunton, won the preteen division with her coordinating blouse and skirt ensemble. The turquoise, gray, and ivory abled material from which Rosalea constructed her garment was won by her in a previous Make It With Wool contest. Kim and Rosalea's outfits are both 100 percent wool. Yvonne Smith of Harrisonburg was chosen from 50 state contestants to represent Virginia in the national contest. Local sponsors of the Virginia contest included Country Craft Corner, Mt. Solney, Hensley Chaucer Co. and McKee Baking, Sherris Craft, Ingleside Gift Shop and Staunton Florist, Staunton, Bellwater Wooden Mills, Conigroffs, The Personal Touch, Monteros and Virginia Metalcrafters, Maymeboro.

AC staff photo



Steer weigh-in

David Fisher, left, Augusta County Extension agent, and Andy Sabell, Port Defiance High School FFA adviser, tag a steer at the weigh-in for the 1995 4-H and FFA Market Animal Show to be held May 3 and 4 at Shaver Union Showyard. Club members registered 129 steers for the event which will also include sheep and swine exhibitions.

AC staff photo



Aw, shucks!

"Aw, shucks, it's not really hard work," say Lucy and Gene Sennabaugh of McKinley as they harvest ears of corn the old-fashioned way. First, cornstalks were cut with a corn binder then the stalks were gathered up and tamped into corn shocks. The corn was allowed to dry for about three weeks then the shocks were pulled

over and the ears were removed from the stalks. The stalks were then gathered back up into fodder shocks. The ear corn will be ground into feed for steers and the stalks will be fed to cows. The Sennabaughs gathered about 250 bushels of corn from their three-acre plot.

AC staff photo

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Cover story

Bessie Gum's memories span 20th century

Continued from page 2

they took by horse and buggy was the day-long trip to Stoughton.

That was a big trip that we were going to the country to look about those lands. We'd go over to one day and arrive about dinner time. These were stories about Bessie especially the time and show," she remembered. Bessie were also a big hit in those days.

Monday, however, was spent on the farm. Despite the hard work, it was a good life according to Bessie. While her husband ran things in the fields and barn, she cooked and cleaned, took care of the household food, put up canned goods, and washed the red clothes. In the late winter, everybody in the area made maple syrup and the Gums were no exception.

"Along about February we would open the bees and gather the water, hot it down and make syrup, and sell it for about \$1 a gallon. It was money as far as I'm concerned. We didn't open the trees, but when higher days came we would open them. The syrup isn't good now because they didn't have winter maple syrup," she said.

Not only has Bessie lived through the 20th century and seen changes in a country of farming, but she also witnessed national

and world events that most people only read about in history books. She had two grandfathers in the Civil War and the great experience of those times of having so much. She's outside and inside in the woods.

In her lifetime she witnessed two presidential administrations — of William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson. "He was killed at the thought of it. It was terrible!" — she was from the Spanish-American War to the Persian Gulf Conflict, a Civil Depression —

"Oh yes, I'll never forget that. He didn't have a lot of things that we usually had. On the farm we always had plenty of food, but the things you had to buy were food to eat. — the beginning and ending of communism and the introduction of the radio, the TV and the computer.

Despite many of the events she has witnessed, Bessie says she has no regrets as she approaches her new century.

"I don't think back. I don't think of anything sad. Life has been pretty good to me," she explained. As a woman there have been plenty of changes in the last 100 years in well. Electricity, schools, and social life for many and women and that, for me, is a change that Bessie will never forget. "Oh yes, I remember that," she said of her

self-identification. "I used to have to take the chimney of the large, and I'll have with every Saturday before electricity."

Bessie was not spring chicken the first time women received the right to vote in this country — the year was 1920 and she was 32 years old — but she made sure she went to the polls and voted. "It was so difficult that I didn't know if I was going to do it right," she said with a smile in her eyes. She also volunteered her thoughts about the politics of the seasonal election just past.

and that would be in my necking," she remembered. "We would run a big dinner for Christmas days and then we would and look at our crops and looking. We didn't go to school that week."

As for the Christmas dinner, it was a feast of economy fare. "Turkey, ham, beef, pork, corn, peas, macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, everything you could think of, including fruitcake," she said, rattling off the list of dishes on the table.

It was also customary for the folks of the neighborhood to go

"We had colored eggs. We dyed them with onion bulbs which made a pretty brown color. It was common."

When she was still quite young, Bessie had been to a movie. At the exact, Bessie began a new chapter of her life. In 1951 a woman in Highland County taught her how to sew and she learned making skirts, dresses, shirts and tops for her four-children.

"I know to sew. It was something that she did and to use your hands and head," she said of her hobby that she only gave up the age of 104 after leaving her back. During the years that she was the best of people as well as giving a few her children for her prices.

When you reach 104, however, perhaps it is time to slow down a bit. "I do sit more," she said, showing off a red and white pin cushion that she is making as she sits in her favorite chair. In addition to sewing pin cushions and aprons, she spends a great deal of time reading. Gals are often a visitor to her house will find her sitting in a chair reading one of her favorite newspapers or a book. Two books and several newspapers are within arm's reach. Bessie says she isn't the wildest but "Highland Herald" although she attended to Chas. for more than 30 years ago after her husband's death.

"I read a lot, work puzzles and watch television. But I don't look at the news (long opera). I do watch frequently," she said of her days which start early and don't end until around 10 of which is right.

Twice a month her daughter takes her to the Senior Citizens' Center in Chillicothe where she has a chance to visit with the "youngsters" of all ages.

The folks at the senior center helped her celebrate her 104th birthday two weeks and the Bessie and club still plan to have home. "I couldn't fit my cards and get up to 84, but I don't think I've earned them all yet," she said of the big party for her "birthday" — 84 and 87 years old — even made the trip down from Pennsylvania to join in the celebration.

As for living to be 104, Bessie is thankful of no secret formula. She has never used alcohol or cigarettes, but more than anything, Bessie would point to good, honest work as the right road to live. "I just work," she said but not only added to today's youth. "That's what helped me to work. I started off in the farm and in the house. I was raised good, had a good life, a good home, good family and I worked and that helped. I was in front of the good days," she said and my good daughters, —



In this photograph taken in November 1951 when she was 83 years old, Bessie Gum works at her rug loom. She retired from rug making two years ago when she passed her 104th birthday.

Photo courtesy Mary Gail Selles

"I don't think it's right. I wouldn't have thought of putting things in the newspaper that they do now."

There are some things about being a modern woman that are just a bit hard for Bessie to accept. "I've never seen jobs," she said looking at a picture of herself as a young school nurse. In that photo she wore a long skirt, blouse and button-down. "I've always worn a dress. I don't agree pants, and yes, I just haven't ever seen them."

Perhaps as much as anything, the celebration of holidays has changed in the last 100 years. As a child she remembers the family having a Christmas tree that the only decorations were strings of pearls and candles. "We would just light them the night before Santa Claus came and we always had a bucket of water right next to the tree. Presents were also much simpler. The orange and stick of

behind, the practice of displaying yourself and going visiting during the week of Christmas. "We'd go several nights that week to different homes and they always served some candy. The dinners could be anything, but Santa was very popular according to Bessie."

New Year's Day was a bit more low key for her remembered, because you had to go back to school the next day. However, the people in the community did attend church and sometimes had a party.

There were other holidays as well. At Halloween the children would disguise themselves and go to a neighbor's house with a basket expecting a treat. Valentine's Day was a special day at school where the children would make where the children would make cards, but the occasion was not celebrated outside of school. The students also helped out with Easter by making egg hunts.

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