TAKE ONE! Last free issue. For subscription information, see page 32. TAKE ONE!

Augusta Country

Summer 1995
Vol. 2, Issue 8

Expanded summer edition!
Special pull-out section
Augusta County Fair heats up August, Pages 13-20

"Friendly news for friendly people"

P.O. Box 51 Middlebrook, Va. 24459

100% pure country music

Middlebrook family makes music the old-fashioned way

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BETTY JO HAMILTON

It is evening. The humidity of a sweltering summer day, stiff and thick at midday, now droops in a lazy haze at tree level. A full moon bobs above the tree tops as night creatures begin their twilight chorus. But soon, these creatures fall silent. Perhaps even they are willing to defer to another serenade. The steely twang of a pick on strings cuts through the haze of dusk. A bow slides as another stringed instrument joins in, softly at first, adjusting carefully to hit the pitch. As fingers begin to move up and down the neck of a guitar, the bow is pulled back and forth across a fiddle. A cool breeze stirs an audience of pine trees into motion as stringed melodies rise into the night air. It is the music of the mountains — passed down from generation to generation, played not from sheets of music, but played from the head and the heart — it is classic country, no artificial flavorings or colorings. It is 100 percent pure.

But take it even one step further. Music from the hills played on musical instruments handmade by the very musicians who play them — instruments crafted from trees of the mountains -- cedar, oak, walnut, maple, poplar. Homemade music played on homemade instruments. A tradition of music combined with a tradition of craftsmanship. It is a rare form of music preserved only by a few talented individuals who, with wood and wire, pluck music out of nowhere.

*****

George Jarvis' sister had an old Sears guitar.

"She wouldn't let me play it," the Middlebrook native recalls. "When I was about 14 I swiped her guitar and learned to play, but I didn't fool with it anymore until I was about 20.

"'Home, Sweet Home' was the first tune I learned. From then on I just learned to pick out tunes. I play some Dolly Parton, Porter Waggoner, the Carter family — all those good ones."

J.C. Jarvis, George's son, began his musical career in a similar way, although he

See COVER STORY, page 4

Letters to the editor

I just received my July issue of Augusta Country and golly gee on the front page was an article of Bill Shuey who is a distant (3rd or 4th cousin) of my family.

His picture has appeared in other local papers, but they never did an article as your paper, and I loved reading every word.

My husband and I are new subscribers to the Augusta Country and we really look forward to the next issues. We love your paper!

Keep up the good work!
Judy Shuey Cross
Grottoes

We're always looking for interesting folks like your cousin — 3rd, 4th, or otherwise — to interview for stories. We rely on information from readers to help us locate these people. Often stories such as the one we did in our July 1995 edition about Bill Shuey of Trimble's Mill are the result of tips to AC staff members. Thank you for your letter. We have relayed your comments to Staff Writer Nancy Sorrells who wrote the article on Mr. Shuey.

Hi!

Surely don't want to miss a single issue of "Augusta Country," so am sending in our renewal check early. Please add this on to our present subscription. Really enjoy your paper, and it was nice meeting Rev. Howard and Betty Jo at the Bethel Jubilee — which we learned about from Augusta Country.

Thanks so much,
Paul & Lucille Phillippe
Rt. 5, Staunton

We were pleased to make your acquaintance too, Mrs. Phillippe. Roy Howard, minister of Bethel Presbyterian Church near Middlebrook, writes the "Saying Grace" column in AC's Country Crossroads section. Betty Jo Hamilton is publisher and editor of AC. We're glad you made it to the Jubilee. Be sure to watch for information in AC when next summer rolls around and Bethel, along with four other area Presbyterian churches and one Episcopal church, celebrate their sesquibicentennials — that's 250 years of Sunday school and church. Bethel's 1996 jubilee should be a doozy.

I am renewing my subscription for another year starting from October 1995 to October 1996. I am paid up until October 1995. Hoping this is O.K.

I am enjoying the magazine of Augusta Country. I love to read of the old times and the places and stories of different people as I am 87 years old myself, and I remember lots of the things of the past and how things have changed.

Yours truly,
Nannie G. Peters
Deerfield

Sure it's O.K. Thank you for your renewal — and we didn't even have to ask you for it. Folks wanting to renew may do so anytime. It helps AC staff to process renewals if folks will include a mailing label from a past issue of the newspaper with their check for renewal. If you'd rather not cut up your newspaper, simply copy the information off of a mailing label and attach it to your check.

Dear Betty Jo,

We look forward to receiving each issue of Augusta Country and we read it with great interest. Your coverage of the events and happenings at Riverheads High School during the past year have been outstanding. The articles, often with accompanying photographs, are informative and capture the spirit of our school activities.

The Principal's Advisory Committee wishes to express our thanks to you for including Riverheads High School in your newspaper, and further more, we wish to commend you for your outstanding publication.

Thank you for being an advocate for Riverheads High School.

Sincerely,
Nancy Swisher
Jane Law
RHS Principal's
Advisory Committee

Thank you for your kind remarks. Much of the news published from Riverheads High School is made possible through the work of the school's journalism class under the direction of Cherie Taylor. We are pleased to report that this will continue in the year ahead. We appreciate the opportunity to include news of Riverheads and other area schools in AC.

Enclosed is $12 for a 1 year subscription to your newspaper.

We quit taking [a local daily newspaper] because it kept getting smaller and smaller and the cost of it kept rising. I hope yours will be different.

Herman Wing
Bridgewater

We hope so too, Mr. Wing. Thank you for demonstrating your confidence in us by becoming an AC subscriber.

Dear Betty Jo,

Thank you for including the pictures of the Middlebrook High School Class of 1945 in your newspaper. These are the only group pictures taken, and they will be treasured.

We enjoy Augusta Country to the fullest. The articles take me back to my "roots," especially the ones that mention Middlebrook and Arbor Hill. The faces and names are still familiar even though it has been 47 years since I lived there in Arbor Hill. It is still home!

Enclosed is a check for our subscription. We have enjoyed a free ride long enough.

Sincerely,
Sue Lindamood
Waynesboro

We're glad you have subscribed Mrs. Lindamood and appreciate your comments about AC. Here's hoping other folks will follow your lead. This edition concludes the free issue offerings of Augusta Country. Future issues will be available only by subscription and at local news stands. Did we mention that a paid subscription to AC represents a 50 percent savings over the news stand cost? —

Society publishes '96 calendar

The Augusta County Historical Society announces the printing of an historical calendar for 1996. The calendar includes 13 historic sturctures in Augusta County, all a part of the rich heritage of the county.

The drawings are by Joe Nutt, who is well known in the Shenandoah Valley for his drawings of historical structures. Depicted in the 1996 calendar, the third which the society has published, are Riverside near Grottoes, the Cabell Log House, Merrifield, Flowing Spring Farm, Stone Ridge, Turtle Lane, The Plumb House, Old Virginia, Allendale, Intervale, Stony Point, and Locust Isle.

The administration building at Mary Baldwin College is featured on the calendar's cover.

A brief history of each structure is part of the calendar which measures 11 x 17 inches when opened and is printed on acid free off-white textured paper. Each 8 1/2 x 11 drawing is suitable for framing.

A limited number of calendars are available. Copies may be ordered from the Augusta County Historical Society, Box 686, Staunton, Virginia 24402-0686 for $7 plus $2 for postage and handling. They may be purchased locally at The Bookstack, Terry Court Drug Store, and the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton; People's Pharmacy in Waynesboro; The Candy Shop, and People's Pharmacy in Stuarts Draft; and Greenville Grocery and Weyers Cave Pharmacy. —

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Please recycle

Rockbridge teacher travels 'down under' on Rotary exchange

By NANCY SORRELLS

FAIRFIELD -- When Julie Lipscomb's principal stuck his head into her seventh-grade science class and asked her if she would like to go to Australia, she thought he was joking.

"I said, 'Sure!'" she recalls, playing along with what she thought was some lighthearted humor.

But she quickly realized that Glen Stark, principal of Maury River Middle School where Julie teaches, was very serious. He wanted her to apply for a Rotary exchange trip that sends people from one country to another to learn more about each other's cultures.

Stark thought that Julie, who was the 1994 teacher of the year in Rockbridge County, would make a good representative from the Shenandoah Valley.

At the principal's urging, Julie applied for the sponsorship and won a place on a five-person team to Australia. Late in March the team boarded a plane in Roanoke and embarked on a trip halfway around the world. For five weeks they traveled around the Australian state of Queensland, getting an insider's look at the culture and telling the Aussies about life in Virginia.

Although the Valley team put in a lot of pre-trip planning and then maintained a breakneck pace while in Australia, the trip was worth it according to Julie.

"The trip took a lot of preliminary work," she recalled. "Before the trip our team would have planning days and get together all day. Before we went we were all assigned reports on certain aspects of the country. I did geography and topography. Others did things like government or the money system. We each gave our report to the group. That way we had an idea of things before we went over."

Another aspect of the planning was putting together a 30-minute slide show and talk about Virginia and each team member's family. While in Australia, they spoke to numerous Rotary clubs giving them a glimpse into American culture. The slide show and talk turned out to be an eye-opener for many of the Aussies whose only impression of America came from visiting California or seeing movies and television.

The Australian Rotary clubs welcomed the Virginia team with open arms and shuttled them all over the countryside, all the while rolling out the red carpet.

"We stayed in 15 different homes, so we were on the move a lot," Julie recalls of the Rotary families which opened their houses and lives to the visitors.

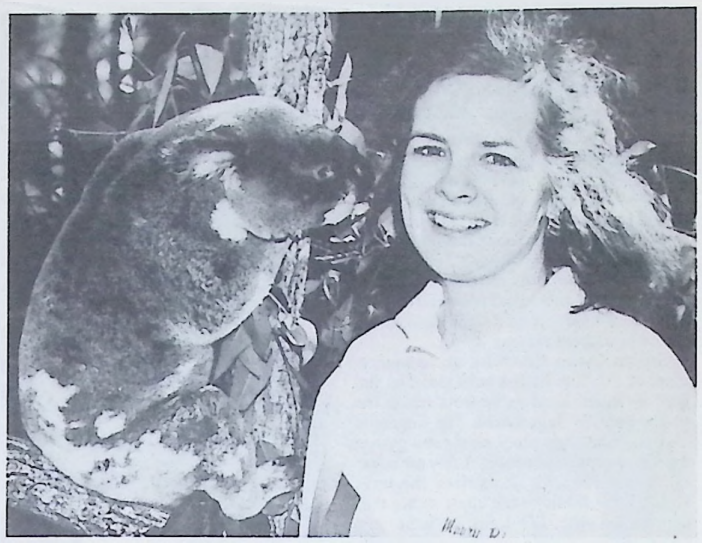
However, one of Julie's biggest impressions is how welcome they were made to feel at every stop. "Everywhere we went people opened their homes and took us in. We had the best food, entertainment, gifts. They let us use their telephones to call home. Imagine getting off an airplane in a country where you have never been and going through customs and then people come up and start hugging you. That makes you feel special," she said.

Although the five-week itinerary had two rest days built in every two weeks, the schedule was, at times, hectic. Included in the tour were visits to parliament houses, meetings with city councilmen, trips to schools and universities and even jails and prisons. Parks and rain forests high in the mountains, a trip on a riverboat and a visit into an opal mine were also included.

Two aspects of the trip which particularly interested Julie were visits to educational facilities and to farms, because her husband, Joe, is a Rockbridge County dairy farmer. Although they never left the state of Queensland, the group was still able to see quite a range of agriculture. In the Darling Downs, the rich farms have the benefit of some of the most fertile pasture in the world, while farther west in the outback near St. George, the hot, dry region is better for grazing.

"It was strange terrain near St. George," she said. "We think we own a lot of property here in the Valley if we have several hundred acres. I stayed with a family that had 20,000 acres, and it was considered small. Out there the farms are mostly unfenced. The livestock just walks across the road and anywhere."

Artwork and a kangaroo skin were among the souvenirs Julie brought back with her. 'Roos are as common a sight in Australia's outback as squirrels are in the United States. Photo by Nancy Sorrells



Julie Henry of Fairfield and a seventh grade science teacher at Maury River School, traveled to Australia during March on a Rotary exchange trip. The 1994 Rockbridge County teacher of the year met many inhabitants of the continent "down under" including this friendly Koala bear.

Because these types of farms, or stations as they are called in Australia, are so different from the Shenandoah Valley, Julie and her host families engaged in many hours of conversation involving comparison and contrast of their two agricultural lifestyles.

"I said to them, 'You don't have milk cows, you don't make crops, what do you do?' They said that a lot of their time is spent maintaining a fence line between stations and if you have 20,000 acres that is a lot of fence. They also spend a lot of time clearing land. They all have bulldozers," she explained.

It was one such farmer and Rotary host who gave Julie a real shock during her trip. The Virginia team had been in the metropolitan city of Brisbane for 10 days and because all were eager to get out of the city and see some real Aussies, a flight to a tiny airport near St. George on the edge of the outback was a welcome change. On the way the group speculated on who their host families would be, with each person hoping that they would wind up with a "real Aussie." When they arrived at the long building of the airport, there were six men waiting to pick up the group.

"Five of the men looked like anybody you would see in Fairfield," Julie related with a smile. "But the sixth man looked like a real Aussie. He had on jeans, work boots, was tanned and had a hat pulled down across his face." The weather-beaten Aussie turned out to be Julie's host, and she eagerly put her gear into his truck so they could head back to the farm and meet the rest of the family. On the way to the farm, as they bumped and rattled on the dusty dirty roads at 120 kilometers (75 miles) per hour, Julie sought to make conversation with her Aussie host.

"So what part of Australia are you from originally?" she asked him as she bounced up and down in the cab. The man's answer became legend for the American visitors during the rest of the trip.

"Honey," he said as he turned to her with a grin. "I'm from Colorado!"

It was in the outback that the group also saw their first wild "'roos." "We had been in Brisbane and hadn't seen any kangaroos except in a park. But out west, there were mobs of them. There would be two or three of them standing in the yards and on the porches of our host families. They are like squirrels are here," Julie said.

'Roos are so numerous that the vehicles need special protection -- heavy duty steel plates underneath and 'roo bars across the bumper and grill in case the driver hits a kangaroo.

"They call their trucks 'utes' which I think is short for 'utility vehicles.' The utes all seem to be beat-up Toyota four-wheel drive trucks with 'roo bars," Julie said in describing the main transportation of many of the host families.

Although there were a lot of similarities to be shared between Julie and the farm families in the outback, there were many contrasts to be made as well. "I was a teacher and working mother and the only one on our team with a family and young children. They were real interested in my background in farming, and in the families that had children, we had a lot of common ground."

Time and place in the outback, however, were quite different from what she is used to in the Shenandoah Valley. "They would say, 'We are just going down the road apiece,' and then we would drive for 300 kilometers (180 miles) and see nothing. Not a mailbox, not a cow, not a car, nothing."

The hot, dry climate was different as well, and the cotton farms were unlike any Shenandoah Valley farm. "I took a picture of a golf course for my husband, because the greens were all made of sand. There was a rake at each green, and after you finish putting, you have to rake the greens," she said while pointing to a picture in her album.

Although she had crossed the international dateline and was tens of thousands of miles from home, she always remembered the students she left behind in Rockbridge County. And as a seventh grade science teacher, she was particularly aware of the flora and fauna of the continent down under.

Pictures of strange animals and plants fill her photo album, and through the help of her

See DOWN UNDER, page 11

100% pure

COVER STORY

Continued from page 1

had the benefit of instruction by his father who helped J.C. learn to play the mandolin.

"My uncle had an old fiddle. We bought it for $15, and we put it back together," J.C. says. "I haven't found one yet I like any better." Seeing the two with their stringed instruments, it's impossible to resist asking them to play a tune. And it's nearly as impossible for George or J.C. to hold an instrument without playing it.

George begins first with no announcement of the tune he has selected. The fingers of his left hand move from fret to fret on the guitar's fingerboard. The fingers of his right hand begin plucking the strings over the instrument's soundbox. A few measures into the piece J.C. recognizes the tune. Holding the fiddle at his chest rather than beneath his chin, J.C. joins his father in a home-grown rendition of "Chinese Breakdown." As many times as the two have played together, it is noted that this is a special occasion.

"You're the first one outside of the family to hear it," J.C. says referring to the fiddle he is playing.

If the fiddle looks different from others seen before, it's because it is different — very different. The fiddle is made of maple and retains the wood's light color, its only finish being canuba wax. On either side of the strings and cut out of the fiddle's soundbox are the trademark of its maker. Doves fly side by side on the instrument, *swept along by its music. Hold the fiddle sideways so light falls into the soundbox' interior, and there is the maker's name* — James C. Jarvis. Beneath that are three sets of initials, all of which share the common last initial of J. These are the initials of J.C.'s father, brother, and mother.

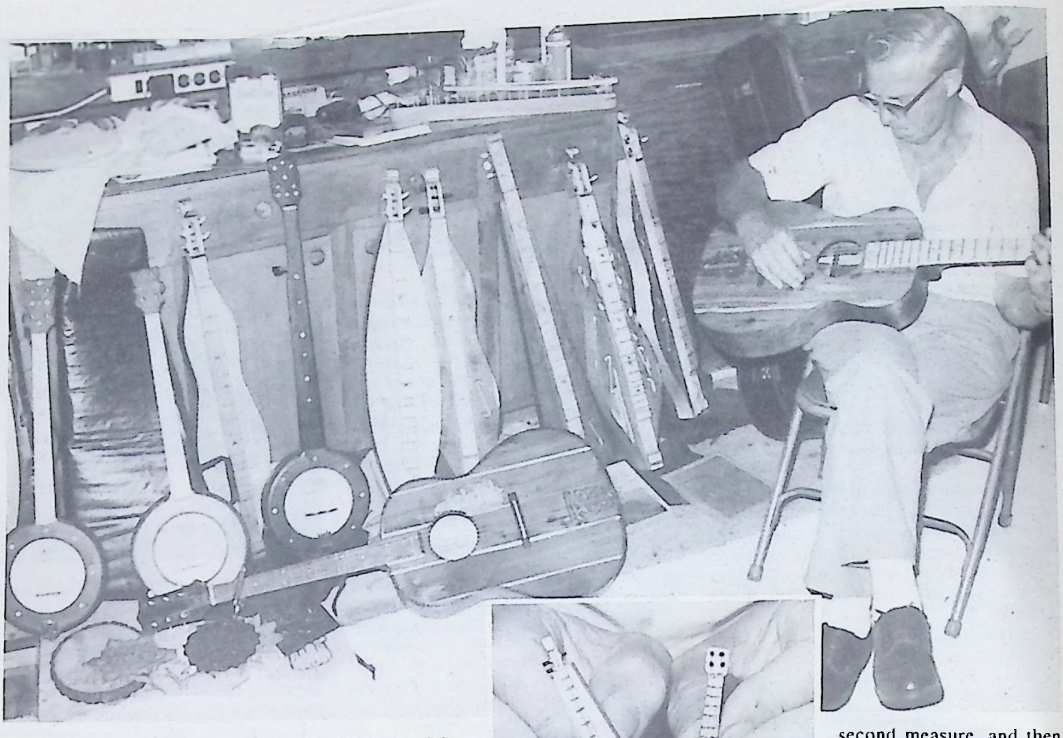
"They all helped me," J.C. says of the fiddle's construction which took four months. "I wanted to give them credit."

However most of the credit for the fiddle's crafting goes to J.C. Using a pattern which he made from his original $15 fiddle, J.C. began the process with a maple board 2 1/2 inches thick and 10 inches wide. With the pattern and the wood ready, all it took was the courage to begin the project.

"I just started cutting and carving until it began to look like a fiddle," J.C. said. Possibly it was the encouragement from his father which prompted J.C. to embark on the fiddle project. J.C.'s recent creation is his first effort in making a musical instrument, but it is a craft which George has been practicing for more than two years.

Most folks remember March 13, 1993 as the day the "Blizzard of the Century" blew through the Shenandoah Valley. George remembers that day well, not because of the snow, but because he was in the intensive care unit of a local hospital fighting to survive two heart attacks. So dire was his condition that the local volunteer fire company attempted to take George's wife, Pauline, to the hospital to be at his side. George pulled through and was told he would need surgery as soon as his heart was strong enough to withstand the procedure. The quadruple bypass heart surgery which George had in April of that year forced him to "reassess his priorities."

George's employment history included working at a local hosiery mill for 16 years and as a tool and diemaker for 26 years.



In the photo above, George Jarvis of Middlebrook picks out a tune on one of his handmade cedar guitars. The musician and craftsman also makes banjos and dulcimers – some for playing and others, like the ones shown in the photo at right, for wearing.

With a lifetime of precision work to his credit, it's not surprising George would excel in a "retirement occupation" which requires strict attention to precision. Having played musical instruments most of his life, George decided to take up the craft of making musical instruments. Two guitars, three banjos, and 12 dulcimers later, it appears George may only be tuning up for even bigger projects.

The first thing which must be said about the handcrafted Jarvis instruments is that they are beautiful. In fact, it's difficult to decide which is more beautiful — the music which the instruments make or the instruments themselves. Guitars with cedar fronts, poplar necks, rosewood fingerboards and mahogany backs, are decorated with etchings carved freehand by George. His banjos — whether of the four-string tenor variety or five-string fretless "mountain-style" — are of George's own design. Banjos were the first instruments in which he incorporated the use of walnut which was made possible when a carpenter neighbor gave George some scrap walnut. Like J.C., George admits it was some time before he was prepared to attempt to begin cutting on the prized walnut.

"I was afraid to cut it," he said. "I thought about it for about two weeks, and then I came out here and just started.

"You measure, then you measure again, then you measure a third time to check the second measure, and then you measure again if you still have any doubts," George says describing the precision necessary to craft a musical *instrument. A* minute flaw at any point in the process may prevent the piece from ever sounding a single note.

Time and patience are required to make musical instruments. In this photo, George shapes the neck of a banjo out of a piece of walnut.

In his dulcimers, George has created another trademark instrument. The necks of Jarvis dulcimers are hollow and have holes bored in them. George says this gives the instruments more sound. Other trademarks include double-J holes cut into the soundboxes and necks etched with birds and flowers. The red cedar fronts of some dulcimers are inlaid with white maple. One dulcimer even features maple inlays in the shape of dogwood blooms.

George began his instrument crafting the hard way. In much the same way as he learned to play the instruments, he has also learned to build them. Cardboard patterns have been made from existing instruments. A mirror was inserted into the soundbox of a guitar to see how it was put together. Wood less than 1/8-inch thick is steamed and clamped in a press to form the guitar's hourglass shape.

And just as makers of homemade instruments have done for generations, George has adapted whatever materials he could find to the construction of his musical creations: metal — which George says must be a stainless steel alloy — taken from a refrigerator left at the local recycling center becomes the pick guard on a cedar front guitar; poplar runners off a wooden pallet become the neck of a banjo.

When George has finished building an instrument he gathers up the scrap wood and begins making more instruments. These aren't for playing though. These instruments are pins which may be worn as jewelry. Less than two inches long, these tiny guitars, banjos, and dulcimers — complete with strings no less — are the perfect fashion accessory for any music lover. When questioned about the tedium involved with such deli-

Continued at top of page 5

Continued from page 4

cate and precise work, George laughs.

"I'm having a ball," he says. "I don't have but one boss, and she asks me a question every now and then."

George is of course referring to wife Pauline who probably has cause to interrupt her husband very infrequently since she is occupied with a craft of her own.

"I've been making quilts since I was 17," she says holding up one of her needle and thread creations. "I learned from my grandmother."

Pauline's quilting passion circles back to son J.C. who, as it turns out, is quite an accomplished artist. A design which J.C. created when he was in his early teens was turned into a quilt by Pauline. J.C.'s artwork now falls into the oil painting variety depicting mostly landscapes and wildlife.

J.C. Jarvis shows off some of his brush and canvas talent and the maple fiddle which he made by hand using a pattern from an old family fiddle.

Wooden toys are Henry Jarvis' craft. Here he holds a miniature rocking horse which actually gallops. Henry has built rockers of this variety large enough for children to ride.

"If I knew what I was doing, I'd probably mess it up," he says of his brush and canvas talent which, like his musical accomplishment, is largely self-taught. J.C. and his father also have teamed up in the canvas creation domain. Combining George's woodworking skills with J.C.'s artistic abilities, the two have created three-dimensional artwork. The 3-D effect sustains the illusion of deer leaping through a clearing and out of their framed boundaries.

And yet another Jarvis comes into the picture when any type of woodworking project — whether it be a musical instrument or framed wall hanging — is attempted. George and Pauline's other son, Henry, affords the use of his workshop to his father and brother for their projects. That is if Henry is not using his tools to make wooden toys — trucks, cars, a clown that tumbles along parallel bars, even a rocking horse that actually gallops.

With all this creativity in a single family one might think the Jarvises — all of whom live just north of Middlebrook — would take an occasional break from their hand-crafted projects. But Pauline says she's got another quilt in the works. George has on the drawing board a 16-sided, five-string banjo with four woods — walnut, maple, cedar, and oak — interwoven around the drumhead. Now that J.C. knows how to make a fiddle, he says he wants to make another one. And Henry's next project?

"I have a funny feeling it's gonna' be a fiddle case," he says.

*****

Pauline Jarvis holds up a quilt which she made using a pattern called "Starlight" which was designed by J.C. Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

The Jarvises are gathered in George and Pauline's open front garage on this particular evening. A visitor has spent more than two hours — and could have spent longer — looking at the family's crafts and hearing about their creations. The moon has reached the height of its arc when the Jarvises are commanded to perform with their instruments. Pauline thumbs through a notebook for song lyrics as George tunes up his handmade cedar guitar. J.C. rosins up his bow.

The Jarvises say they classify this music as "country, old country, folk or blue grass." Questioned further they agree it is "mountain" music. George and J.C. play through two songs then they are joined by Pauline who sings the lyrics to "Family Bible" and "Bringing Mary Home." Like many of the songs which they perform, these two are ballads — stories set to music.

The latter song tells the tale of a child ghost — a little girl — who haunts a lonely stretch of highway. A stranger passing through offers the girl a ride. In the song's third verse the child vanishes into thin air. The song concludes with the stranger learning of the girl's untimely fate on the stretch of road where he had encountered her.

These are the stories and songs of mountain folks most of whom, like some of the characters portrayed in the lyrics of their songs, have vanished. It is mountain music and like the mountains, it reaches up to the sky. The music that seems to come out of nowhere, the music of wood and wire, sweetens the night air and floats away on the evening wind. —

Mission team brings message of hope from Haiti

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

Along every street in Port-au-Prince are images of Haiti's character. Sights and sounds portray the country's history.

United Nations' peacekeepers stand on street corners helping a country — which has suffered at the hands of dictators and the whims of a military regime — achieve political stability.

People bathe in the street in the same water that carries waste into streams which are little more than open channels of black scum. Haiti has no infrastructure for its 6.3 million inhabitants — foreign aid sent in earlier years to build the country's sewer systems and roads was pocketed by corrupt political leaders.

Haitian street market vendors barter with customers to make a few dollars to feed their families. Farmers bring to the markets what corn and cabbage they can raise -- crops which are grown in soil devoid of nutrients. Much of the country's rich topsoil has eroded due to deforestation. Mountains and hills, once thick with mahogany trees, now lay bare and barren.

Although Haiti has been stripped of its natural resources, political stability, and economic viability, the Haitian people have, somehow, managed to retain a sense of hope and personal dignity. According to members of a Presbyterian mission team which recently traveled to Haiti, the country's people are optimistic.

"They're surprisingly hopeful people," says Rob Sherrard, minister of Windy Cove Presbyterian Church in Millboro and leader of the mission trip. "I would judge that to be one of the more amazing features of Haiti. They still have a lot of hope. Although we might see those circumstances and see desperation, the Haitians see hope."

> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

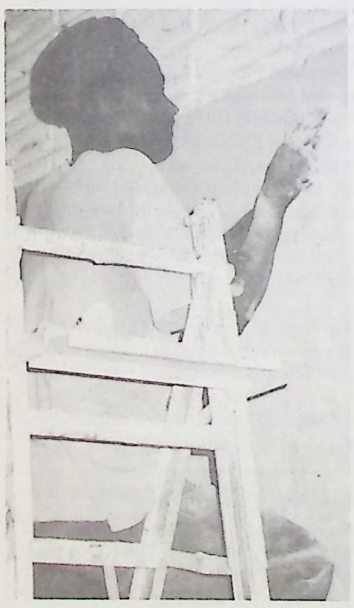
Mary Louise Fisher of Rt. 1, Staunton and one of nine Presbyterians who made the trip, agreed with Rev. Sherrard. Although struck by the living conditions which the average Haitian endures, Mrs. Fisher also sensed an element of hope in the people of the country.

"There is pollution on such a grand scale. I was just overwhelmed by it," Mrs. Fisher said. "On the other hand, there is great hope."

Rev. Sherrard credits this attribute of the Haitian people to their faith in God.

"It's part of the Haitian character. The Gospel has penetrated there in some ways that it hasn't here," he said.

If there is a reason for Haitians to hope, it may be prompted by the work of group's like the Windy Cove mission team. The group spent two weeks in Haiti in July working as volunteers at a hospital and school. Much of the work done by the group at the hospital in Leogane involved repairing damage caused by Hurricane Gordon when it swept over the Caribbean nation in November 1994.



A Haitian laborer scrapes paint off a wall at the hospital in Leogane. Members of a Presbyterian mission team helped paint after the scraping was completed.

Photos by Mary Louise Fisher

"I think the painting we did at the hospital has fairly symbolic value in the sense that the hospital has opened under new management," Rev. Sherrard said. "In and of itself it was no big deal," he remarked of the 50-60 gallons of paint which the group applied to corridors at the hospital. "But the fresh coat of paint got more momentum going in the right direction," he concluded.

The "new management" to which Rev. Sherrard referred was the hospital's administrator, himself a Haitian. Having native-born people filling positions of responsibility is a new feature of the country which is trying to establish itself as a democracy.

Paul Lancaster of Millboro gives a stuffed animal to a child at the hospital in Leogane, Haiti.

"They've had 200 years of terrible government," explained Mrs. Fisher. "There has been no democracy. They've been told what to do. Nothing in their background has prepared them to be democratic."

> "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

"Most (Haitians) want change and are waiting for change to come," Rev. Sherrard said. "They certainly would like a better life, and they're hopeful democracy can give them a better life."

In the meantime though, the country and its people have very basic needs which must be addressed.

"Most of the people want food," said Mrs. Fisher. "You have to understand that a person of the (Haitian) middle class might eat once a day."

"Work is very important to them," noted Rev. Sherrard. He told of several Haitian laborers who were hired to scrape paint from walls at the hospital in Leogane. The workers, who had few traditional tools to do the job, used whatever they could find to scrape paint. One man used a machete.

"One reason they worked so hard at it is because it is a job," he said. "When they get work, they work hard to keep the job."

The recent trip was the 10th in 12 years which Rev. Sherrard has made to Haiti. He explained that he can see both regression and progress in the country.

"In some ways there is deterioration in the country as a whole owing to the political (in)stability and the embargo. There has been deterioration in the infrastructure," he said. "At the same time, many places where we have worked and visited there has been tremendous progress. Schools and churches have opened in the last two or three years where there were no schools before. That's a lot of progress for those particular people."

One such area is in Grand Colline where the mission team traveled to visit Father Jean Wilfrid Albert who has established mountain schools for thousands of children. While there, the group traveled 30 miles — a three-hour trip over treacherous mountain roads — to Bainet where two new Episcopal churches were being dedicated.

"The church service lasted 2 1/2 hours," said Mrs. Fisher. "They baptized 270 people and received many more on confirmation of faith. They took communion, and the church was dedicated. There were four or five hundred people in the church. The people sat on narrow boards placed on top of cinderblocks. Those were the pews. The music was absolutely beautiful. There were a few hymnbooks, but most people sang the hymns by heart."

Though pollution in the country is rampant, Haitians strive to maintain good personal hygiene.

"The reason for that (pollution) is the terrible infrastructure," Rev. Sherrard said. "The distinction is that people take great pride in personal cleanliness."

"The people stay very clean," noted Mrs. Fisher. "Everywhere we went, along the rivers and streams, we saw women washing clothes."

While in Bainet, mission team members painted the interior of one of the newly dedicated churches and helped to make benches. Some team members stayed behind in Grand Colline to help restock the medical dispensary there. Along with elbow grease, the team delivered to Haiti 18 trunks filled with thousands of dollars worth of donated supplies including medicines, automotive parts, crayons, pencils, pens, note paper, and bill caps.

"I could have given away 500 more (caps)," noted Mrs. Fisher. Haitians are plagued with eye problems due to exposure to the sun's rays which are very intense near the equator. Mrs. Fisher remarked that she saw a teen-age boy whose eyesight was extremely impaired by cataracts caused by intense sunlight.

Everyday life in Haiti is much different than what team members were accustomed to at home. There is no electricity in Haitian homes. Most cooking is done outdoors over charcoal fires. Women and children carry "brown" water in five-gallon buckets from a public cistern to their homes. Many must travel a great distance to fetch water. Houses are 9 x 12-foot block buildings with corru-

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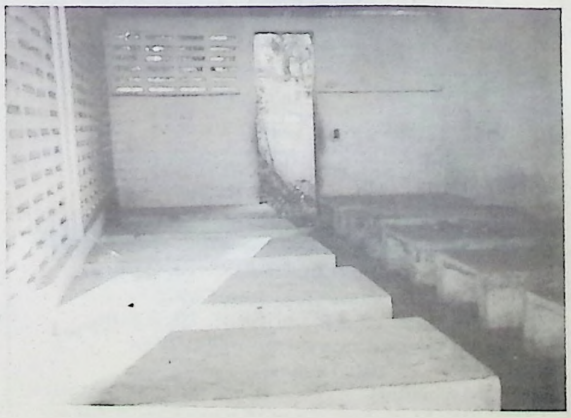
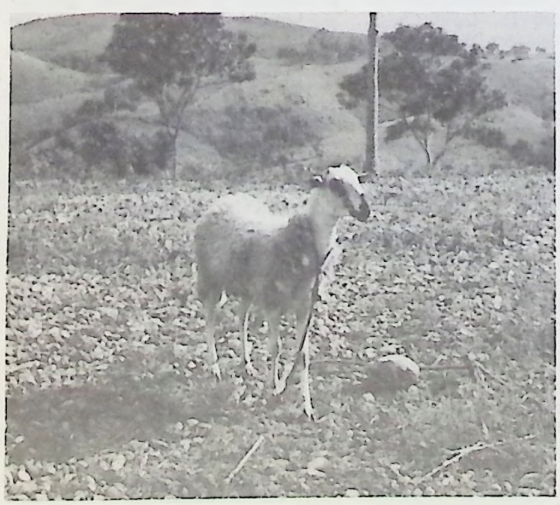


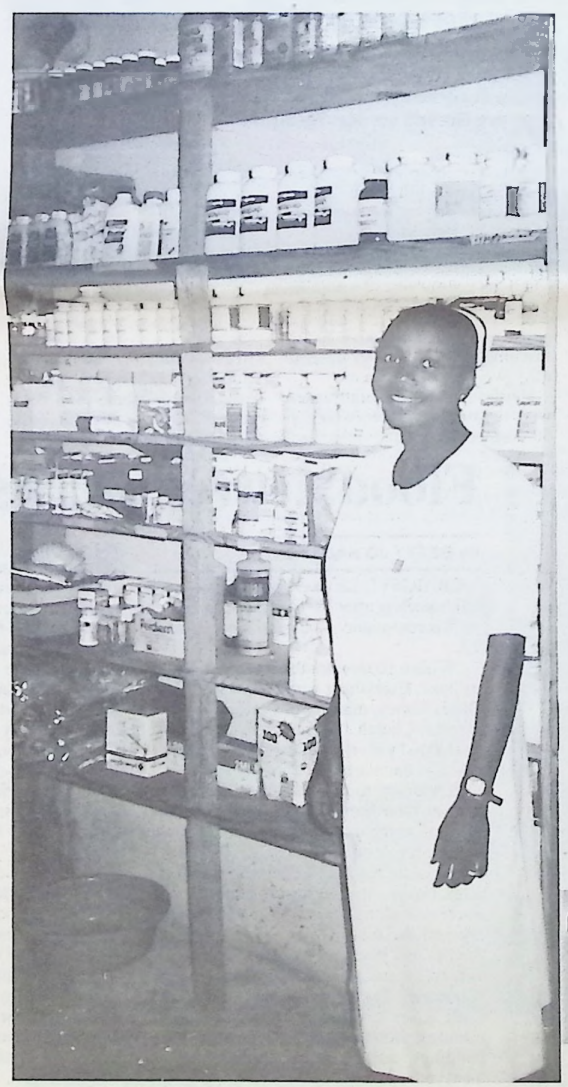
Guest quarters at the hospital in Leogane are equipped with concrete slabs for beds. Family members of patients stay at the hospital to help care for sick relatives.

Team members, from left, Bob Miles of Lexington, Stephen and Gary McGrew of Fort Defiance, and Rob and Katy Sherrard, Fran Hobbs, and Paul Lancaster, all of Millboro, take a break from their work in Haiti.

A typical home in Haiti is a 9 x 12-foot block building split into two room, with only small windows. Crops, in this case corn and cabbage, are grown wherever the soil will support them.



An ordinary sight in Haiti are goats which are tied along roads to graze for the day.



A nurse at the medical dispensary in Grand Colline stands in front of shelves filled with medical supplies which the mission team delivered to Haiti.

Continued from page 6

gated metal roofs. Most have two rooms and only small windows.

Because there is no way to prepare food at the hospitals, families who have relatives in the hospital must provide food. The family of a hospitalized person stays at the hospital in a room equipped with concrete slabs for beds.

In rural areas, corn is grown in soil which is mostly rock. Goats may be seen tied out along roadsides for a day's grazing. Many people travel great distances by foot and are lucky if they can catch a ride on anything motorized to speed the trip. While many Haitians struggle to provide for their families, there is a sector of the population which prospers.

"The richest people in Haiti are the people who make coffins and the undertakers," Mrs. Fisher said. Although their earthly existence is one of deprivation, Haitians pay great attention to the burial of loved ones and care of cemeteries.

Regardless of a person's view on foreign policy and the political situation in Haiti, Mrs. Fisher said the Haitians represent a lesson in global understanding.

"Be aware that there are people in the world who are suffering desperately. Maybe we should appreciate more what we have — to have our focus changed. We need to be aware people need help so our focus isn't entirely on ourselves," she said.

Rev. Sherrard explained that Windy Cove maintains a year-round relationship with their Haitian neighbors. Church members travel to Haiti at other times during the year, and Windy Cove's weekly newsletter is mailed to contacts in Haiti. For those who have made the trip, it is a "life-changing experience," according to the minister.

"They are taken out of their own safe world. It forces you to re-evaluate your own life and brings you back different and better," he said.

Plans for next year's mission trip are already on the drawing board. The opportunity to see and get to know the Haitian people is as good a reason as any to make the trip, according to Rev. Sherrard.

"They are wonderful friends," he says of his Haitian neighbors. "Anyone who is willing to take a little adventure and go there will be greatly encouraged by the friendships that person makes." —

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Virginia hit hard by floods

Madison farmers dig out from worst flood in history

MADISON — Agricultural flood damage in Madison County is estimated at $29 million, according to Extension agent Brad Jarvis.

The county sustained by far the most damage in Virginia during floods which plagued the state from June 22 through June 27.

The highest floodwaters in nearly a century battered many farm operations just east of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia's Piedmont when torrential rains fell on Madison June 26 and 27.

"I've talked to farmers who've been here 60 to 70 years, and they say areas have flooded that have never flooded before," Jarvis said. "Anything in the drainage basins of the county's two watersheds into the Rapidan and Robinson rivers was pretty much destroyed by the flood."

"Some producers lost whole fields of hay," said William Hale, president of the Madison County Farm Bureau.

Large, round hay bales weighing between a half-ton and three-quarters of a ton "went floating right down the river," Hale said.

"Any corn in the river bottoms may be lost. I'm not sure whether some will come back, the corn is laying right over," he said. "Some fields are completely washed out... no crops left at all." Most crop losses are on the west side of U.S. 29, Hale said.

Fertile bottom land in Madison and Greene counties was devastated by flooding in June which left crops and pasture covered by sediment. This photo was taken at Hood, where Greene borders Madison.

Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

Flooding in Rockbridge County washed out roads and bridges. In this photo, VDOT officials work with a private contractor to make temporary repairs to a bridge near Walkers Creek.

One farmer was about to lose all her new calves to the floodwaters when the county rescue squad arrived to help move them. But the producer still lost all the milking parlor equipment and other heavy machinery when the river flooded the lower half of her barn.

Hardest hit by the high water were livestock producers who lost 50 percent of corn and other feed crops, an entire season's worth of hay and hundreds of livestock, Jarvis noted.

More than half , 252, of the 442 farms in the county were damaged. Between 500 and 1,000 miles of fencing was washed away, creating a severe shortage of fence posts for replacement, he said.

In addition to the short-term effects of flooding, farmers face a long-term recovery. It may be decades before some farm fields recover from the loss of fertile topsoil and the tons of river silt and rock deposited on them.

"My estimate is it will be five to 10 years to get these bottom lands back into the condition they were in" before the floods, Jarvis said.

"These sediments have to be blended with the existing soils that were here. They have no fertility, they're very sandy — so we have to build up the soil fertility and structure so they can produce the (crop) yields they did before."

Soil fertility experts from Virginia Tech were to visit the county to offer advice to producers, Jarvis said.

Getting into some regions of the county has been difficult due to washouts, according to Madison County Administrator Stephen L. Utz. Mud and rock slides have changed the course of rivers and creeks within the county, in many cases covering up cropland or taking out roads. Madison officials are seeking help from state and federal agencies in "stream channelization," Utz said.

"A lot of streams and rivers are not in the channel banks, so we've been putting in temporary roads that may be washed out the next time we have another thunderstorm," he said.

Continued at top of page 9

Flood leaves Craigsville families homeless

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

CRAIGSVILLE — Four families were left homeless after 12-14 inches of rain fell on this community on the afternoon of June 22.

"Within 10 minutes the creek was out of its bank. Everything was underwater," said Olivia Haney, minister of Craigsville Presbyterian Church. "This is the third or fourth flash flood we've had since (19)'85, but this one was the worst."

In addition to their homes, the families lost all their household and personal belongings in the most recent flood. The town of Craigsville is located in the valley between Little North and Great North mountains in western Augusta County. Little River runs along the town's eastern boundary and the runoff from Stuples Hollow, Staples Hollow, and Wallace Draft converges on the river within Craigsville's boundaries. The torrential downpour caused Little River to overflow its banks. Within minutes, floodwaters were pouring into buildings, and streets had become part of the river's channel.

"We were extremely lucky that no lives were lost," Mrs. Haney said. She noted that one apartment had 53 inches of water flood into it within 10 minutes. Fortunately the resident was not home at the time.

The Presbyterian Church as well as the Baptist and Methodist churches sustained damage in the flood. The Baptist Church suffered the most damage of the three when water from the Little River, which flows less than 20 yards from the church's front door, overflowed its banks.

The sanctuary of the church had 11 inches of water standing in it. Members recalled that in previous floods the water had come no closer than the church's front step. The June flooding was the first time in memory in which water had come into the sanctuary.

A house, which is owned by the church and is adjacent to it, was also heavily damaged by the flooding. Both the house and the church had been renovated in 1994. The flood caused an estimated $10,000 damage to the church and $20,000 damage to the house owned by the church, according to John Gettier, the church's minister. Gettier said church members were stunned when they first viewed the flood damage to the two buildings.

"We saw it and said forget it," Gettier said. "After we got over it, we started cleaning up."

Carpet which just last year had been installed in the church sanctuary had to be taken up and placed outdoors to dry. Padding beneath the carpeting was destroyed and had to be replaced. Water damage to pews was so extensive that they were written off as a total loss.

"Manassas Baptist Church very graciously donated pews from a sanctuary which they are redesigning," Gettier said of pews which were found to replace those destroyed in the flood.

Once the sanctuary carpet had dried and was reinstalled, professional cleaners came to the church and performed a thorough cleaning of the carpet. Clean up of the church took nearly three weeks, according to Gettier.

"We've been working for 18 days," Gettier said of members' efforts to reclaim the church property from the flood damage. Just three Sundays after the sanctuary was under water, Baptist church members were preparing to hold services there once again.

The Baptist church's organ was also destroyed by flood waters, and insulation in crawl space beneath the church was washed away.

Continued at bottom of page 9

John Gettier, minister of Craigsville Baptist Church, points to the stain on the wall made by water which flooded a house owned by the church. It took church members three days to shovel debris out of the house which had just been renovated in 1994.

Continued from page 8

Those roads are the only access to food and water for many people, and it doesn't take much rain to move unstable dirt around again and upset the road surface, according to Utz. Only three bridges in the county were not damaged by recent flooding there.

South and west of Madison, Rockbridge County farmers will be mending fences for months to come.

County officials estimate that June floods caused a staggering $9 million worth of agricultural damage, the great majority of which was lost fencing.

"About 200 miles worth of fencing is gone... there's no fencing left along any rivers or creeks," said Jon Repair, Rockbridge Extension agent.

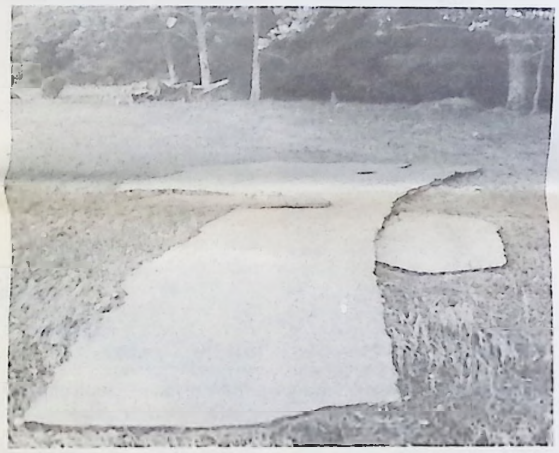
Other counties reporting agricultural damage included Halifax, $11 million; Orange, $1.7 million; Albemarle, $1 million; Campbell, $717,000; Rappahannock, $373,000; Culpeper, $352,000; Greene, $250,000; and Augusta, $124,000.

According to Frank Sweet, Greene County Extension agent, the estimate for his county is preliminary. Greene borders Madison County to the south.

"We haven't been able to get to a lot of places that have damage, and many factors aren't considered in that number," Sweet said. Many people don't consider nurseries and greenhouses among agricultural damage, but one such business valued at around $350,000 was washed away into the Middle River, according to Sweet.

Other counties reporting flash flooding included Amherst, Fluvanna, Goochland, Louisa, Nelson, Rappahannock, Rockingham, and Warren. Virginia was drenched by rain over a 10-day period in June when low pressure fronts moving out of the east stalled when they were met by westerly moving weather fronts. The unusual occurrence is similar to weather patterns which caused massive flooding in Midwestern states during the spring and summer of 1993. —

Information for this article was provided by the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation.



Floodwaters destroyed roadbeds in many areas of Virginia by tearing up sheets of asphalt as if they were tissue paper. This photo was taken near Walkers Creek in Rockbridge County.

Continued from page 8

Damage in the house owned by the church was even more extensive than that evident in the church itself. It took almost three days to shovel debris from the house. Flood waters. broke windows, destroyed carpet, and soaked wallboards. Although no one was living in the house prior to the flood, the house had been furnished to accommodate out-of-town church guests. Gettier said the church has been receiving donations to help with repairs to the church's property.

"The State Baptist Convention came through with a very large gift," he said. "Other area Baptist churches collected money and sent it. It's amazing. You think nobody knows you're here until something like this happens."

Gettier said the recent adversity which the Baptist congregation faced brought the best out of church members.

"Actually we're stronger for it," he said. "We aren't going to quit."

Mrs. Haney said Craigsville residents who lost their homes and belongings are still in need of some items. Furniture and carpet in usable condition as well as appliances in working condition are being sought for these individuals. Also needed are kitchen utensils.

"The only insurance these people had was renters or homeowners," she said. "None of them had flood insurance."

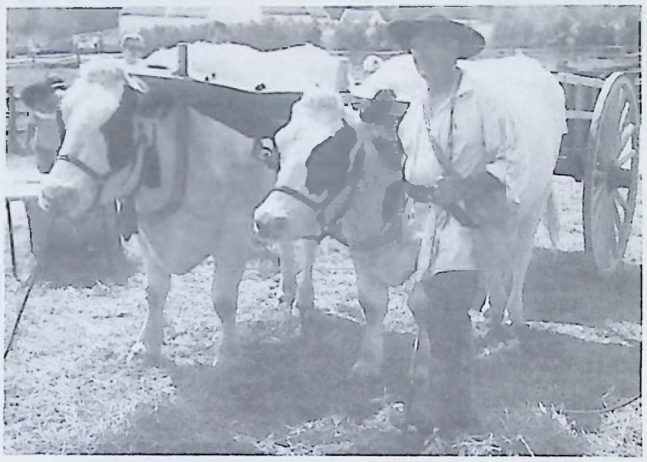
Anyone wishing to donate household items to flood victims may contact Mrs. Haney at 997-9135. Monetary donations to assist with flood relief may be sent to Craigsville Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 178, Craigsville, Va. 24430. —

Bovine behemoths are gentle giants

By NANCY SORRELLS

SOMERSET -- By any standards, "Loin" is big. A bovine behemoth as it were. The black and white Holstein ox weighs in at 2,600 pounds, and yet he is a slow, steady, gentle giant.

With a few words of command from his trainer, Bill Speiden, Loin and his teammate, a 2,400-pound ox named "Sir," will pull a cart, turn left, right, and stop on command. The two will also kneel down and pray and, amazingly, will balance themselves on a small upturned wooden box not more than 15 inches wide.



Bill Speiden of Somerset appeared with his yoke of Holstein oxen, Sir and Loin, at the Museum of American Frontier Culture's annual festival in 1994.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

Hoof by hoof the bovine giants step up on the box until finally more than a ton of beefsteak is balanced delicately on the fragile looking stand.

Although the bovine balancing act is more for show than work, it says a great deal about the intelligence and trust of the animals with which Speiden works. In contrast, there probably aren't many horse lovers in the crowds that watch Speiden who would dare ask their horses to perform such a feat.

Ironically, it was a conversation with a "horsey" crowd which spurred Speiden into training cattle in the first place. Although he had always worked on a cattle farm, he never gave much thought to training the animals as draft teams until he attended a cocktail party on his home turf of Orange County.

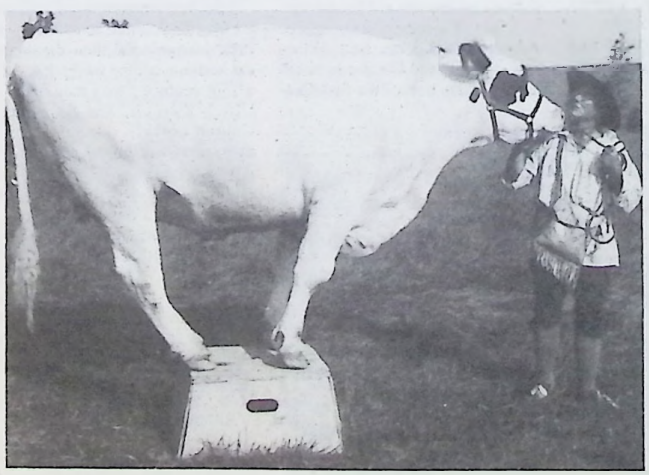
"The crowd was mostly horsey people," he remembered of the party in 1977. "Just to change the subject I said something about how intelligent cows were. That definitely changed the subject, and I ended up betting that I could saddle break a cow faster than they could saddle break a horse," he said.

It was a bet he won hands-down. "It took me about five minutes he said," of his Brown Swiss-Holstein cross named Ringworm. Once Ringworm was broke, Speiden started riding his animal in parades and let children ride him.

"It was a real educational tool," he recalled.

The next logical transition was to train oxen as draft animals. Today he has three teams that range in age from 11 years to four months, and he notes that he has learned more from each team that he trains.

The veteran team is a pair of red and white shorthorns named Salt and Pepper. The 11-year-olds weigh in at 2,100 pounds each. Sir and Loin are 9-year-olds. Speiden has just recently started a team of Brown Swiss, named Peanut and Butter. They are now four months old.



Ox on a box – Bill Speiden has trained his oxen to perform a number of antics including climbing up on top of a box. Bill got into ox training due to a bet he made with some "horsey" people in his home county of Orange.

Working with the newest yoke of oxen began when they were a week old. "They learn a whole lot quicker when they are younger," he explained. The first ox that he taught to kneel down and pray, for instance, started learning at 6 months, and it took a year for the trick to be mastered. By contrast, Salt and Pepper started learning to pray at 2 weeks of age and by 4 weeks were experts.

Although he says he feels bovines are a whole lot smarter than equines, Speiden admits that neither of the species is blessed with superior intelligence. "Bovines are easier to train than horses. Horses are really dumb, and cows are just dumb," he says with a

See **OXEN**, page 25

Yesterday once more

St. John's celebrates 215th homecoming

By NANCY SORRELLS

MIDDLEBROOK -- The past and present came together and looked toward the future recently at St. John's Reformed United Church of Christ near Middlebrook.

The July 9 Homecoming at the church this year was marked not only by the gathering of family and friends, but by the 215th anniversary of the church's founding. A special historical reenactment celebrating important moments in the congregation's history was staged on the church steps in front of a crowd of about 100 people.

The day's activities, including the reenactment and several displays of church memorabilia and historical artifacts on exhibit in the church social hall, were the result of planning by the Homecoming committee of Catherine Rosen, Ronda Reames, Ann Shultz, and Sue Gochenour.

The script for the historical play was written by Ms. Gochenour who drew from the history of the church which was written in 1975 and revised in 1985. The "actors" in the play were members, young and old, from the congregation and even included a horse which played at least two parts.

"Today this historical reenactment celebrates the 215th year of this congregation and honors these inspiring pioneers, their descendants, and all of those who over the last two centuries have been a part of St. John's Reformed United Church of Christ," said the narrator at the start of the play.

The history that the group was reliving is an important one to the people of southern Augusta County. Many in the audience were descendants of the original settlers to the area. Names like Rosen, Palmer, Almarode, Argenbright, Cason, Bell, Wiseman, Hemp, and Fix are here today and were part of the first German and Swiss settlers who came to the area in the 1760s and 1770s.

St. John's Reformed United Church of Christ members participating in the historic reenactment held in celebration of the church's 215th anniversary included, clockwise from bottom left, Russell Potter, Ruth Gwin, Bill Hughes, Katherine Shover, and Peggy Palmer.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

The German Reformed settlers were often referred to as German Presbyterians, and their theological heritage can be traced back to a 16th century Swiss man named Ulrich Zwingli. The Reformed Church quickly spread to Germany, France, Holland, and then to America via German-speaking immigrants who sailed to the New World in the 1600s and 1700s.

Many of these new settlers migrated southward into the Shenandoah Valley from Pennsylvania. It was a group of these pioneers who began St. John's in 1780. Its continuous history since then makes St. John's the oldest Reformed congregation in Augusta County.

Although the church was officially launched in 1780, the opening scene in the reenactment portrayed an informal outdoor prayer service about 1770. Prior to the founding of the church, the first German settlers often met informally and used their German Bibles, Catechisms, and hymnbooks which had been brought from Europe for these services.

When it was founded, St. John's was a union church, the result of a combination with the area's German-speaking Lutherans. The meeting house that the two groups built was a crude log structure located about 100 yards from the present-day St. John's. The union was dissolved in 1839 when the Lutherans built Mt. Tabor about four miles to the west of St. John's. This was also about the time when English began creeping into St. John's services and began appearing in the church's records. The earliest records of the church are entirely in German.

Scene two of the play depicted the early years of the church, just after the American Revolution. In this reenactment, the people of the congregation eagerly awaited the arrival of a circuit rider who appeared on a horse (played by itself).

The first regular pastor at St. John's, and the one who has served the longest in the congregation's history, was the Rev. Mr. John Brown who was born in Germany and came to America in 1797. He came to St. John's in 1798 and served 36 years. There is no record of when the name St. John's came to be used, but it was while Brown served the church. The earliest mention of the name, in 1809, comes from the records of other area denominations who were referring to their Reformed neighbors.

In the 19th century, the Rev. Mr. John C. Hensell was called to minister a trio of Reformed congregations which included St. John's. It was during his 23 years of service that the old log church was torn down and a brick, Greek Revival structure was built. The third scene of the reenactment shows Hensell discussing the new church with members of the congregation who remark on the tremendous cost of the church — $1,500. In this scene, a number of women also reenacted a part of the church's folklore which says that the women of the church hauled sand used in the mortar for the new church. The sand, according to legend, was hauled a great distance and was slung in bags over horses' backs and carried to the site.

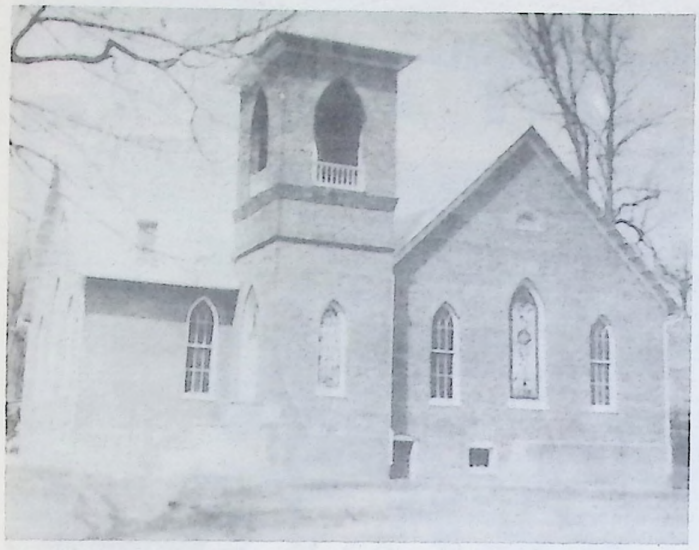
The fourth scene depicted the church at the end of the Civil War, a time when the entire community of the Upper Valley suffered much hardship. The years after the war were hard on the congregation with one pastor, at times, forced to serve four area congregations.

The tide turned in 1892, however, when the Rev. Mr. John T. Balliet accepted a call to the Charge. A missionary society was formed and the congregation grew to well over 100. The spiritual growth of the church continued under the direction of the Rev. Mr. R. Raymond Jones who took over in 1897. The physical growth of the church continued as well. In 1900 the old parsonage at Middlebrook was sold for $600 and a new site was purchased. It was here that "a commodious and beautiful Parsonage, splendidly equipped" was built.

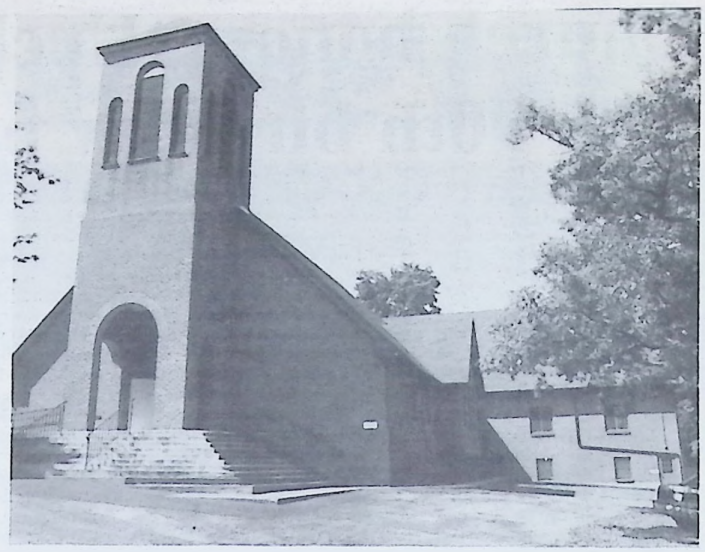
A bit of folklore concerning the construction of the parsonage was the storyline of the next scene in the reenactment. The story passed down through the church is that the pastor was helping Howard Ellinger, Jim Rose, and Dave Weaver work on his new house

Continued on page 11

The building in this photo is the brick Greek revival structure which served as St. John's Reformed Church during the 19th century. It replaced a log structure used by the church for services. Photo courtesy St. John's Reformed U.C.C.



This building, the cornerstone of which was laid July 4, 1912, was constructed at a cost of $9,000. It was destroyed in a fire set by arsonists' in 1978. Photo courtesy Gertrude Hawkins



A little more than a year after fire destroyed the 1912 structure and left its congregation devastated, St. John's membership held services in its newly built sanctuary for the first time. Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Continued from page 10

when a young couple drove up in a carriage and asked for the preacher so they could be married. Jones removed his coveralls, dusted off his hands, donned a frock coat, located his Book of Worship, and, using the three workers as witnesses, married the young lovers without them ever getting out of the carriage.

There was even more building on the horizon for the congregation in 1912 with the construction of a new church. When the old brick building was deemed unsafe, it was decided to build a new structure, and the cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1912. The cost of the Gothic-style building was $9,000.

During the early years of the 20th century, the Ladies Aid Society was especially active in raising money for the church and performing community service. Also active were the "Busy Bees," a youth group which helped raise money for the new church.

The new brick church that the Ladies Aid Society and the Busy Bees worked so hard to build was tragically burned to the ground in 1978, the work of arsonists. The fire department was able to save the fellowship hall, where just five days after the fire, the congregation gathered for worship and listened to a sermon entitled, "A Faith for Dark Days."

The final scene of the play gave the 1995 congregation and friends a reminder of just what faith can do. A little more than a year after the arsonists' fire destroyed the church sanctuary and left the St. John's membership devastated, newly called minister the Rev. Kenneth D. Cherry conducted the first worship service in a new building raised from the ashes by donations and faith of the community.

At the close of the reenactment, the audience was invited to go inside the newest St. John's and listen to an organ recital by Marie Shultz Masincup, who grew up in the church.

As people dispersed after the recital, the final words of the play presented on the steps of the historic church must have been particularly meaningful:

"Over 200 years ago, some of our ancestors founded St. John's. It has been through wars, the Depression, and even the fire. And it has always managed to survive. I guess it will survive the 90s, too. I believe there will always be a St. John's." ---

Moscow church observes 30th anniversary

MOSCOW — Moscow Church of the Brethren observed its 30th homecoming and anniversary June 25.

The occasion celebrated 30 years in the church's current facility located at Rt. 1, Mt. Solon. Special guest speaker for the occasion was Rev. Beverly Good, a former pastor of the church.

Following Sunday school and morning worship services, the congregation and visitors enjoyed a covered dish luncheon. Time was set aside for various members of the congregation to share their memories of the church's history.

The celebration was concluded with a musical presentation by the Everette Gardner family. —

•Down under

Continued from page 3

principal she was able to carry along a video camera and bring back footage of an ostrich farm, koalas in their natural habitat, and kangaroos hopping across the outback. She also brought back books, tapes, artwork, and an Aboriginal musical instrument called a Didgeridoo for the school.

As a result of her trip, the Maury River students were able to do projects on Australia. When they did math problems, they worked on things like U.S.-Australian money exchange, or time zone changes or even converting kilometers to miles. In science class, they studied the different biomes of Australia.

It's easy to see where Julie's mind was when reading over her final report to the Rotary Club which sponsored her. "I was impressed by the flora and fauna. My report is the only one that talked of the animals and plants," she says even as she points out bread fruit trees, ring-tailed opossums and papaya trees in her pictures.

The exchanges with Australian educators proved to be a valuable experience as well, noted Julie. She met with one teacher who has developed a new approach to teaching. That teacher gave her a book and some ideas which will be tried in Rockbridge schools next year.

"The people in Australia couldn't believe I was able to leave in the middle of the school year, they were impressed by that," she said, adding that the support of her school administration made it all possible.

In the long run, though, her students were the winners. "I came back in May, and I was ready to teach. Most of the time in May, teachers and students are burned out, but I was ready to go, and the kids got involved. It made the spring a whole lot better."

The impressions Julie received of another culture will stay with her a lifetime. Some things are funny and other experiences were on a very personal level like keeping in contact with all the host families who opened their homes to her.

There are things about Australia that you just can't experience from a book, just little everyday things. "Like the fact that they eat pumpkin all the time, just like we eat potatoes. I never quite got used to eating so much pumpkin," she said. "And I got to see a koala in the wild," she added, listing another one of the trip's highlights.

For Julie, the trip is not over. Perhaps it never will be as she incorporates her knowledge into classroom activities that will take her middle school students on a trip Down Under. She has also prepared a slide show about her trip which will be given to Rotary Clubs as well as other civic organizations, and she presented a report to the Rockbridge School Board. She has also written to all of her host families and hopes that they can all visit again someday on one side of the world or the other.

"I had a wonderful time. I would encourage anyone to apply for a Rotary trip. I have so many good impressions of Australia," she said as she closed an album full of memories. ---

Church honors 'Uncle Alfred' with 90th birthday party

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

FISHERSVILLE — Say the name "Uncle Alfred" anywhere in the Fishersville area, and there are few people who won't immediately know who you're talking about.

Alfred Grove, or "Uncle Alfred" as he is called by almost everyone who knows him, celebrated his 90th birthday June 30. The lifelong Fishersville resident and farmer was honored by his family and neighbors at a party held June 26 at St. James Lutheran Church.

Alfred's farm is just a stone's throw from the church, and it is on the farm and at the church that Alfred spends the majority of his time. He is a member of St. James — its oldest member in fact — and it was his fellow church members who conspired to surprise Alfred at a covered dish luncheon following church services. A startled Alfred chastised his friends and family for their surprise conspiracy and might well have preferred to spend the afternoon out of the limelight in a front porch rocking chair.

"What would you have done if you had known they were throwing this party for you?" a visitor asked Uncle Alfred during the party.

"If I'd known it, I swear I wouldn't have come to church," he said adamantly.

Many St. James church members by family right can call Alfred "Uncle." Born June 30, 1905, Alfred was the baby of a family which included two brothers and two sisters. Ten nieces and nephews are his closest relations, and these families have branched out to produce a number of great nieces and nephews and great-great nieces and nephews, many of them affiliated with St. James Church. Among the 100 or so guests at Alfred's party, any number were part of the Grove family — either by blood or marriage.

"Uncle Alfred wants some orange drink and lemonade mixed," said a "nephew" fetching some refreshment for Alfred. "He wants a mixed drink."

So it was with a mixed orange and lemonade drink that Alfred settled in to open gifts which friends had brought him for his birthday. And later, to calm his frayed nerves from all the commotion of his birthday party, Alfred sipped a glass of wine as great niece Beth Grove showed slides of the Grove family and told about Alfred's 90 years of farm life.

Alfred lives in the same house which was built by his parents George and Ida in 1887. The frame two-story dwelling is situated on the family's 210-acre farm which Alfred continues to operate. Growing up with brothers, Alfred's birthday celebrants were tickled to learn how the teen-age Grove boys traded girlfriends depending on one another's romantic interests.

In September 1944 Alfred married Mary Trimble and the couple settled into a life of farming.

"I swear by Angus cattle," Alfred says. "My daddy had the first Angus cattle in Augusta County." Alfred went on to say that he has never crossbred the black cattle, a practice which has become common on many area farms.

"I've never crossed 'em. They have no sense. They're wild when they're crossed," he explained.

"I've got 40 cows and 40 baby calves," Alfred says proudly to report a 100 percent calf crop for 1995.

Alfred continues to tend to the day-to-day operation of the farm, but admits he's not up to the workload he once carried.

"I'm running out of gas," he said.

To help Alfred keep the farm going, family and neighbors pitch in.

Assisting with the bookkeeping and some of the farm work is friend and companion Linda Collins who has helped Alfred in the Grove household since 1989. Alfred's sister, Mary Sue, came to live at the Fishersville farm following the death of Alfred's wife. When Mary Sue was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Linda came to the Grove home to help care for Mary Sue. Following the death of his sister a number of years ago, Alfred solicited Linda's help in continuing to operate the farm.

"He said, 'Do you think you could help me around here?'" Ms. Collins recalls. "He taught me everything. I've pulled calves with him. We've had a ball."

As slides depicting Grove family life flicked past, Alfred and his birthday well wishers were transported back through time. The presentation began with photos from recent times then regressed to earlier days — Alfred holding a baby niece, Alfred with his wife at the farmhouse, Alfred as a young man standing next to three mammoth draft horses ready to head to the field, Alfred at his high school graduation standing next to his grandfather's first car.

Alfred's expertise with animals is legendary in the Fishersville community. He was one of the last farmers in the area to use horses for field work. In his lifetime of farming, Alfred has seen more changes than just the four-legged to four-wheeled variety.

"I thought when we had a hay loader I was as near heaven as I could be," he said. Of the most modern conveniences on the farm — which Alfred calls "these new fandangled things" — he says, "I can't keep up with 'em."

In addition to his cattle, Alfred also raised Suffolk sheep for many years. In a number of the photos shown at his birthday celebration, Alfred is seen with yet another animal, one of which has been at the man's side almost continuously during his life.

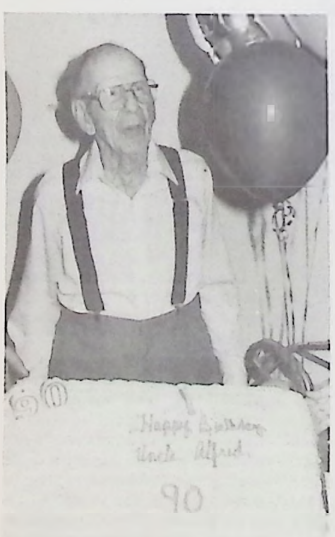
"Uncle Alfred has always had a dog around the house," the narrator supplied.

"I've always been a great lover of dogs," Alfred says.

But of all the photos shown, the ones which drew the greatest responses were of the child Alfred. Applause rippled through the room as the movie screen was filled with an image of a three-year-old Alfred in kneepants. Attired in a christening gown at four months of age, "Baby Alfred" drew "ooos" and "awwws" from his admirers.

The party was more than a celebration of Alfred's birthday, though. It was a chance for his family and friends to thank him for enriching their lives and for his contributions to the community as a whole. Throughout the party, well wishers presented items which were put in a scrapbook and then presented to Alfred as a memento of his 90th birthday party.

Ultimately the sentiment of the gathering was summed up in an inscription on a small plaque which was given to Alfred as the party was winding down. "Alfred Grove — A friend to everyone," the inscription read. And so he is. —

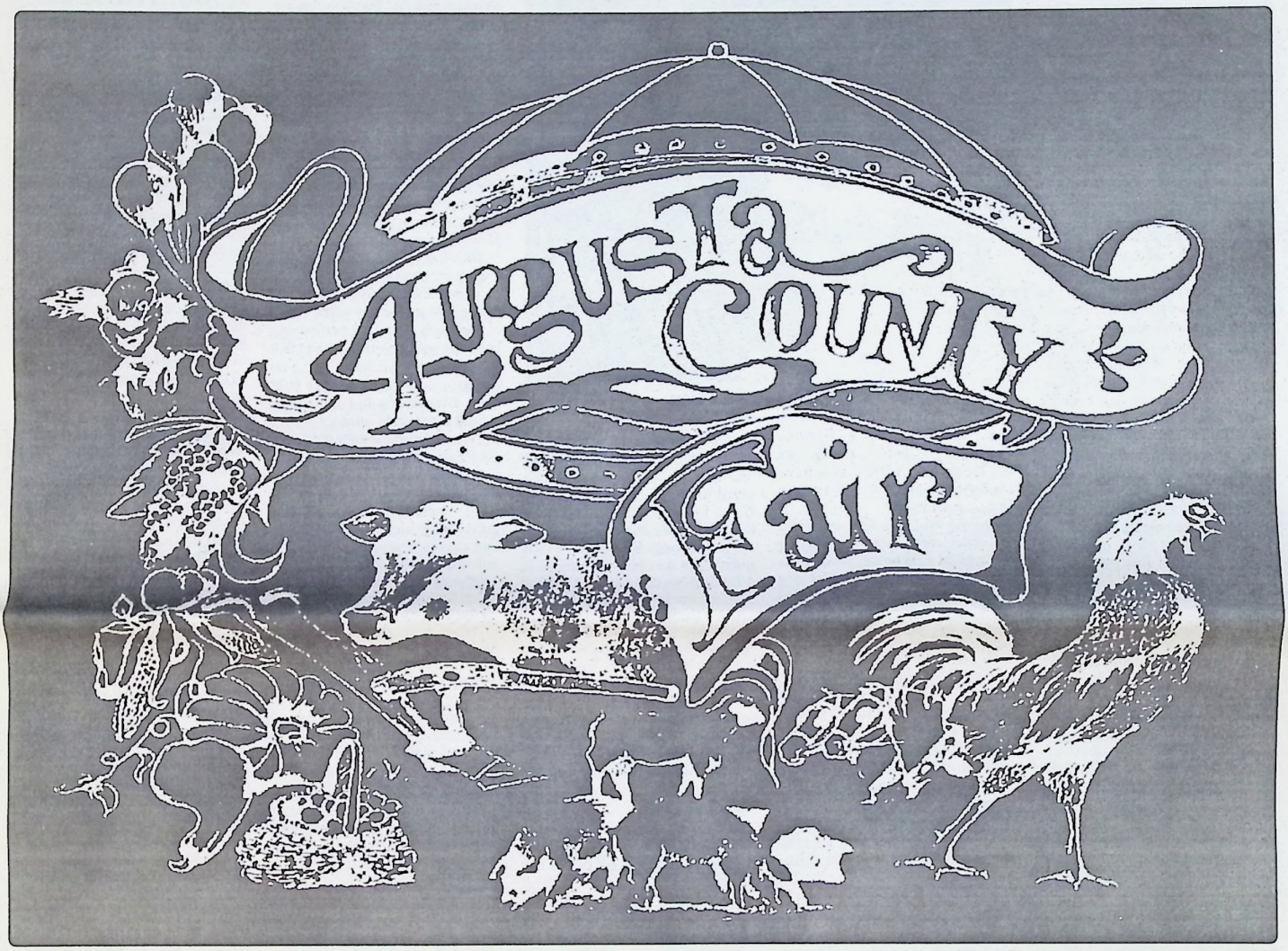


Alfred Grove, 90, of Fishersville was honored June 26 with a birthday party given by his friends and family at St. James' Lutheran Church.
Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

"Uncle Alfred" as a boy on the Grove family farm near Fishersville. Dogs are among the many animals for which the man has spent his life caring.
Photo courtesy Beth Grove

Alfred has farmed most of his life using draft horses. He is pictured here with some of the horses once used on the Grove family farm.
Photo courtesy Beth Grove

"Meet me at the fair"



"We hope to see at the Fair the greatest turn out of the people of Augusta county that has ever been known. If the men and women and children of Old Augusta meet together in mass, it will be a sight which of itself will attract thousands from abroad, who wish to see the sturdy yeomanry, who in war or in peace are earnest in purpose, and steady in action."

Staunton Spectator, Oct. 6, 1868 in anticipation of the first Augusta County Agricultural Fair

1995 Fair loaded with entertainment, thrills

Entertainment and thrills galore await fair goers at the 1995 Augusta County Fair to be held Aug. 23-26 at Augusta Expo in Fishersville.

Fair organizers are billing the event as the "first Augusta County fair in almost 32 years," and have built the fair around a "Homecoming" theme. Organizers are calling the fair "old-fashioned," complete with agricultural exhibits, draft horse and tractor pulls, midway rides, blue ribbons, and special nightly entertainment. Making the fair an even more attractive entertainment option is the affordable gate admission of $3 for adults and $2 for youth ages 6-15 — fees which cover the cost of all fair events once inside the gate with the exception of midway rides and concessions.

Around a centerpiece of livestock shows and exhibits, agricultural and home arts displays, the fair has been filled with events meant to delight and entertain folks from all walks of life. Musical acts headlining at the fair include Robin & Linda Williams, Mac Wiseman, Bob Campbell and the Coachmen, and The Lewis Family.

Local folks will recognize Robin & Linda Williams as the folk singing duo who gained notoriety appearing with Garrison Keillor on his National Public Radio program "A Prairie Home Companion." The Williams have performed together for over 20 years and in 1993 opened 16 concert dates across the country for two-time Grammy Award Winner and Country Music Association Female Vocalist of the year, Mary Chapin Carpenter.

The Williams' music stands on its own, however, as the country music artists have

See FAIR, page 20

Robin and Linda Williams

It takes 20 years to be an overnight sensation

By NANCY SORRELLS

MIDDLEBROOK -- The first song on their 11th album probably sums up Robin and Linda Williams' lives as well as any. The lyrics talk of driving down the road, shifting through the gears, a love that keeps moving on. "On and on, this old road lasts forever, on and on." The song's symbolism reflects their own life together, spiritually as well as physically logging thousands of miles a year on the road. In fact, they deliberately wrote the song with just that intent in mind.

The more one listens to the song, the more meaning it has for this Middlebrook couple who have been making a name for themselves in the country music industry for more than 20 years. Making it at all in the music world is a risky business, but making it to the top is even harder. This year, however, marks 24 years on the road together for Robin and Linda. Their harmonies and skills on the banjo, guitar, and harmonica create a delightful blend of old time country music, gospel, bluegrass, and just plain old folk ballads.

They have produced 12 albums, with each one drawing more and more recognition. "Turn Toward Tomorrow," which features "On and On," was chosen by some critics to be among the top 10 country/folk picks for 1993, while their new gospel album, "Good News," has received rave reviews since its release in February.

But there have been other successes along the road. Anyone who listens to Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion" will recognize Robin and Linda who have performed with their friend Keillor for 20 years, taking that partnership back to the days before he went national. Together

Linda and Robin Williams

AC staff photo

with Kate MacKenzie, Keillor, Robin and Linda form the "Hopeful Gospel Quartet," and have toured throughout the United States and Europe.

For the Williams duo, who have put down some pretty convincing roots in Middlebrook, music has been a way of life for almost as long as they can they remember. But catching them at home long enough to talk about their success was a bit harder than writing about it.

"Sometimes people ask us what our 'real' job is," they note with laughter. "But we have been able to make a living at it for 22 years."

Although Robin was a history major in college, he claims to have never considered any profession besides music. "I picked up a guitar when I was 15 or 16, and as soon as I got old enough to sing and carry a tune and play a guitar at the same time, I started forming groups."

The path was not so clearly blazed for Linda. "I had always played on the side in high school and college. I loved music and loved to play, but although music was a big part of my life, it was the gravy," she said.

Fate brought Robin and Linda together at an open mike night in 1971 at Myrtle Beach, S.C. "That was when love reared its ugly head," Robin says of the chance encounter. The two hit if off, kept in touch, and eventually wound up performing together. They married in 1973.

Hitting the road as part of a singing duo was easy for Robin, who had been performing solo for three years, but Linda -- who was working as a sixth-grade teacher when she first met Robin -- had some trepidations.

"It was a real scary thing," she recalled. "I had always worked. It took a few years to get out of the day-to-day job mode."

Now, more than two decades later, Robin and Linda are still going on and on. The 9-to-5 work mentality is so far in the past it must seem like a dream. These days, work is divided into seasons. Either they are on the road performing, or they are hunkered down in their farmhouse writing.

"Half the time we are on the road," they say even as they rush around to get back on the road before dawn the next morning. "We love going out, and we look forward to coming home," Linda says of their hectic schedule.

Their travel van has four bunks, a seating area and has logged 90,000 miles in just 2 1/2 years on the road. During the last seven years, much of their traveling and performing has been with Kevin Maul and Jim Watson -- known as "Their Fine Group" -- and the four have built quite a reputation throughout the United States and Canada.

"We are having a really great time playing with this band. It's been evolving over the last seven years. Getting to play for people are the good times. Making people feel good, seeing friends, and neighbors, and people you see on the street enjoying your music. All the other stuff is work -- the driving, phone calls, business -- but getting to play is the best," said Robin.

When they are traveling, they sink into a routine, the two noted. Pit stops back in Middlebrook mean just enough time to haul carpets out of the van and wash them -- Linda's job -- and do vehicle maintenance -- Robin's job, along with being minister of morale. A few days to recharge, and they are back out on the road again.

It is a routine they maintain through much of the spring, summer, and fall, but things change in the winter. "When you are in the traveling mode, it is hard to shift gears and settle in, you really need

See **DUO**, page 15

You live where?

By NANCY SORRELLS

MIDDLEBROOK -- You would think that musicians who make their living writing and singing old time country music would want to live in Nashville, Tenn. Or at the very least, Branson, Mo. But Robin and Linda Williams have chosen to live in Middlebrook, Va. Population: Not many.

Located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley, it's a place most people have never heard of. And that's just fine with the Williamses.

After living here for two decades, they can think of no other place that they'd rather call home, but how they wound up here is a story in itself.

Actually, Robin's earliest memories go back to Augusta County and the Middlebrook area. For three years his family lived here while his father, Murphy Williams, pastored the flock at Bethel Presbyterian Church.

"My mother never forgot this place, and my dad didn't either," Robin says of his ties to Middlebrook. "When we moved my mother left quite a lot of good friends, and we kept coming back to visit. We kept close ties and consequently as the years went by, I had fond memories of this place," he explained.

Without a moment's hesitation, Linda chimes in: "When we first met, Robin was always talking about the Valley of Virginia this and the Valley of Virginia that," she said.

Despite the talk, it was really sheer serendipity that brought them back for good.

"One time we were driving down the highway," Linda remembers of the event which took place in the early 70s. It happened to be a trip when we had a little spare time and when we went by Riverheads High School, Robin said, 'My father's church used to be up this way.' We wound up going to visit it and talking to Bill Francisco and his wife who live nearby. They encouraged us to stay here."

And so it was that the Williamses reestablished their roots in Augusta County. The chance stop was in January, and by June they had a place in the country.

"We were living in Nashville and needed a quiet place to come back to off the road. Robin loved this place, and I was taken by it, so..." said Linda with her voice trailing off in thought.

Their first house in the country was truly country and lacked many modern amenities, such as a bathroom.

"We just camped out in it really," Robin said of the log house. "We worked on it for three summers and improved it and then bought this place," he said, glancing around at the rambling white clapboard house they now call home.

They moved into their present house in 1977 and have no intentions of ever again pulling up stakes. "This is where we are going to stay," Robin said. "Yeah, we have too much junk to move," Linda added.

"You just have to sacrifice so much to go to Nashville (and live)," Robin added. "At this point in our lives, I can't imagine going anywhere else. We look out the windows and see the Alleghenies and think there isn't anywhere else we'd rather be." ---

Robin Williams: Son of a preacher man

By NANCY SORRELLS

"We've known for most of our career that at some point in time we would do a gospel recording," write Robin and Linda Williams in the cover notes of their newly released gospel album, "Good News."

Although they have always included gospel in their shows and on their earlier albums, this is their first attempt at a full-menu of gospel melodies. Together with "Their Fine Group" (Kevin Maul and Jim Watson) the Williamses offer 15 tunes that range from Appalachian to African-American and include a few originals. Loyal listeners will also recognize "Let us cross over the river," a song the Middlebrook duo composed for theater to tell the story of the death of Gen. "Stonewall" Jackson. The words of the song's title were the last spoken by Jackson before he died from a Civil War battle wound.

It was the right time to produce the album, say the Williamses.

"We feel at home with gospel," said Linda. "It suits us. We have always had gospel in our shows. We have had a lot of requests to do it and had a nice repetoire to choose from."

Part of the album's success has also been in finding a good studio and engineer just a few miles away in Crozet so they could head over the mountain on days between performances and put in time at recording. "It came out well. We didn't have to rush through it and were able to work on it on and off for two to three months," Robin added. "We have done other albums with fine material, but song for song, we are most happy with this one," he said of the album which has been available since February.

By all accounts, reviewers seem wowed by the album as well, citing the "fun-loving exuberance and robust harmonies" of the music. "It's not that the Williamses are ever irreverent; it's just that they emphasize the joyful agitation of working-class religion over the somber propriety of middle-class religion," noted *The Washington Post*.

The Williamses credit their church-going southern gospel roots -- Robin is a native of the Carolinas and Linda hails from Alabama -- for bringing music into their lives in the first place. They say they enjoy giving back a full measure of what they found. The

See **GOSPEL**, page 15

•Duo

Continued from page 14

a week. It makes it impossible sometimes to get order in your life. But from Thanksgiving until February, we don't perform much. Winter months are hard months to travel," Robin explained.

Not performing does not mean that they laze around the house and do nothing. The winter months mean time for writing, something that is made easier when snowdrifts isolate them in the Augusta countryside.

"We spend bulks of time trying to write so we have material. We keep journals on the road with ideas, but the time at home is when the real writing gets done. In the last 10 years or so, we have found that if you put in the time, you are going to come up with something. Writing is one of the most important things we do as musicians. Original writing gives us a voice and an originality," Linda said.

When they are home, both said they like keeping a number of ideas bouncing around, but they also have to work in practice time on the instruments.

The originality they speak of is gaining quite a reputation in the music world. The lyrics and music they wrote for Stonewall Country at Lime Kiln in Lexington have won audiences over every summer, and they continue to dabble in the playwright's world. Song writing, though, is part of their bread and butter. Their song, "The Other Side of Town," was included on the Seldom Scene's Grammy-nominated album, "Like We Used to Be."

Through a great deal of hard work coupled with some genuine talent, they have moved up to the "almost, nearly famous category," where they continue to rub elbows and be working partners with some of the "really famous." Their harmonies were featured on Mary Chapin Carpenter's Grammy winning album, "Stones in the Road," and in the summer of 1993 they opened 16 concert dates for the three-time Grammy winner.

Robin and Linda remain modest about their fame, although they admit to having built up "pockets of places all over the country where people know us."

"And you know," Robin joked, "we got recognized by a waiter in Staunton the other night." "And on a plane once we got recognized," Linda added.

But their music has taken them to places where they never would have dreamed of entering, they quickly added. "We have seen the whole country, including Alaska. We have gone to Canada, Holland, Germany, Austria, France, Scotland, England, and Denmark. It's been an amazing life we've had," Robin said with a shake of his head. "Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall, the Grand Ole Opry, and the restored Ryman."

Ryman Auditorium in Nashville ranks as one of their greatest playing experiences, they say. "There's something about the Ryman," Linda noted. "It was built in the late 1800s for singing. It's a spectacular place. There is really good energy there. I think that stuff goes in the wood. You know how you play a guitar, and the more you play it the better it sounds because of the vibrations and the wood -- the Ryman is like that.

See **ROBIN & LINDA**, page 18

•Gospel

Continued from page 14

album is, in fact, dedicated to Rev. R. Murphy Williams Jr., Robin's father, who spent 50 years of his life as a Presbyterian minister.

To folks around southern Augusta County, the preacher's name will sound more than familiar. Murphy did some preaching and singing here from 1948-1951 when he was minister at Bethel Church, just a few miles from Robin and Linda's present day home. Murphy was also in charge of Bethel's mission church, Pines Chapel, just east of Greenville.

He is particularly remembered at Pines where he stirred up the Holy Spirit and helped the congregation build a new church.

In March of 1950, Murphy reported to the Presbyterian Session that "a great spiritual revival had been experienced," at Pines where the membership was rapidly expanding. One native of Greenville remembers the revival that spring with particular fondness, for her father, Robert C. Thompson, was among the saved.

"My father had been a Christian and then he backslid," recalls Alene Sorrells. "Then they had a revival on Sunday morning, and Murphy issued the invitation to come on up, and my father went up. I bet there wasn't a dry eye in the place. The people kept coming up and coming up. The old chapel probably held 75 or 80 people, and there wasn't many left back in the pews. The great part of the congregation went up and rededicated their lives. Murphy sent word to Bethel that he was going to be late to the service there, that the Holy Spirit was working right here. That was a day I will never forget."

Although the Rev. Williams and his family would soon be called to a pastorate in Myrtle Beach, S.C., they kept their ties to the Shenandoah Valley intact and often visited there with friends they had made during Murphy's affiliation with Bethel and Pines. In 1954 when the energized group at Pines Chapel dedicated the newly built church which Murphy had helped start, the minister was invited back to preach the dedication sermon.

Forty years later, another Williams is making memories in the community. Perhaps it is through his childhood years as the son of a minister that Robin Williams is able to bring so much life out of the music of "working-class" religion. ---

Augusta fair has long history

Event celebrates 'unquestionable' importance of agriculture

By NANCY SORRELLS

For a number of years the fair in Augusta County was held at Gypsy Hill Park in the area adjacent to Lake Tams. In those days the event was called the Staunton Fair and featured horse races and other events to entertain and educate.

Photos courtesy Richard Hamrick

Imagine if you will, the political "fathers" of Staunton and Augusta County gathering on the steps of the courthouse on a balmy fall day. There is a nervous excitement in the air as they don badges, rosettes, and scarves of either red, white, blue or green. After climbing into carriages they parade through the streets to a destination half a mile away all the while accompanied by music from a band following them in a wagon. Included in the procession are flags and standard bearers, people on horseback and even the citizens in general who bring up the rear of the parade. When the cheering crowds halt, they are standing in a field bordering the grounds of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind.

The parade marked a real historic event in the history of the county — on Tuesday, October 27, 1868 the first Augusta County Fair was held and the event which was the culmination of months of planning and investment was kicked off with the parade described above.

The accounts in the newspaper termed it a "Grand Success!" noting with just a slight bias that it was "In many respects, the most entertaining Fair which has ever been held in this State."

The success of the fair was due, in no small part, to Col. John B. Baldwin, the president of the Augusta County Fair. Baldwin had formed the Augusta Agricultural Society earlier in 1868 and the people of the area had subscribed in $100 allotments in order to raise $15,000 and purchase the 21-acre tract of land where the fair was being held. With the purchase, the land lying on Lewis Creek and behind VSDB was to be set aside for all time as an agricultural fairground because, as Baldwin noted in his welcoming speech the first day of the fair, "Agriculture is, unquestionably, the most important interest in Virginia."

The first fair that Baldwin and his group dreamed up drew thousands according to the newspaper. The famous "Pathfinder of the Seas," Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury, traveled from nearby Lexington to give a speech, but the most famous visitor of all was Gen. Robert E. Lee who also traveled from Lexington to visit the Augusta Fair. Lee was greeted by waves of cheers when he entered the fairgrounds according to the local accounts.

The newspaper reporters waxed quite eloquently about the nature of the crowds who thronged the fairgrounds. "On the first day, it seemed that 'all the world and the rest of mankind' were present, and on the second day there was a marked improvement both in kind and degree, and it seemed that all the world and the rest of womankind were present, and on the third day there were nearly as many present as on the second day."

Being an agricultural fair, the booths and tents featured all types of livestock, farm implements, and machinery. Household tools and domestic manufactures were also on display as were "fruits and fruit trees, flowers, vegetables, wines, liquors, butter, grain, Waddell's patent churn, cave specimens, minerals, embroidery, oil paintings, and the thousand and one specimens of art and nature."

Agriculture was not the only thing on the minds of visitors to the fairgrounds, and the newspaper was quick to note that sporting events on the green were conducted every day because the fair was "for the promotion of the social as well as the agricultural characteristics of the county."

At the conclusion of the speeches on the second day, the women held an archery contest to get the athletic events under way. Draft horse contests and horseracing were also featured on that day. During the fair, women also competed in croquet. Men and boys played baseball, wrestled, had foot-races, and wheelbarrow races while blindfolded. The final day of competition featured plowing contests and a jousting tournament. The premium list of prize winners in everything from buggies to baking and painting to poultry filled more than a page of the newspaper the next week.

Agriculture has been the centerpiece of Augusta County fairs from the event's inception. This photo depicts an early livestock exhibition.

Every October the people from Augusta and beyond would flock to the fairgrounds for the festivities. The fair of 1870 was held despite the "great freshet" which occurred and turned area farms and roads into a muddy, impassable mess. Three thousand people showed up for the fair's opening day which featured livestock and farm machinery, horse races and 7-year-old Eva Benedict and her younger sister who drove around the track in a miniature carriage pulled by goats.

The second day, which drew six thousand people, featured a balloon ascension. To the amazement of the crowd the aeronaut rose 800 feet and then suddenly descended "more and more rapidly till it landed the aeronaut on terra firma." Fortunately, the balloonist "was not much hurt by re-union with mother earth."

The 1872 fair opened with upgraded facilities that included more cattle stalls and an improved racetrack. The newest machinery was on display for all to see, including a sweet potato dryer and a portable sawmill.

In 1873, Col. Baldwin passed away, and the fair became known as the Baldwin-Augusta Fair in his honor. The 21-acre tract of land was known as the Baldwin fairgrounds. Horseracing continued unabated during all the years of the fair. In 1879 for instance, there were "Trials of Speed" by trotters, racers and even mules. Exhibits earned farmers and farm wives nice premiums. The

Continued on page 17

Continued from page 16

best rag carpet in 1879 was awarded a year's subscription to the *Staunton Spectator*, while the best country cured ham boiled with the skin left on earned $5 in gold. The best fruit cake was awarded 25 pounds of granulated sugar and the best collection of jellies received 25 pounds of coffee. Horses, wheat, agricultural essays, flowers, and sewing all drew premiums as well.

By the late 19th century, the Baldwin District Fair as it had come to be called, had been moved to September, but was still a huge draw for area residents. The 1891 exhibition was, however, hampered by rain. "The exhibition in its various departments was very good, but could not be seen and enjoyed because of the mud caused by several days' rain," noted the newspaper. The chief attraction for the fair that year was Pawnee Bill's Wild West show.

The fair's name changed to the Baldwin District Fair in 1889 and was then called the Augusta Indoor Fair in 1911 when it was moved to the city markethouse near the Staunton firehouse. Two years later, when the market building was torn down, Staunton City Council voted to allow the fair to move again, this time to Gypsy Hill Park. The fairgrounds were moved across town to what is the present site of John *Moxie Memorial Stadium.*

Still called the Baldwin Fair, the new site featured a round barn, a long hog barn, two tracks around Lake Tams, a grandstand with an overhanging roof and eventually a huge exhibition hall, called the *Billy* Sunday Tabernacle. The tabernacle was a cavernous structure with an earthen floor erected by the townspeople in just days in order to host the famous evangelist, Billy Sunday in 1926. Many of the fair's agricultural and business exhibits were displayed in the building during fair days.

By the 20th century, the Staunton Fair, as it came to be called, had expanded to six days and nights of fun. Although the agricultural focus was still present, the thrills and chills of the midway were beefed up as well. In 1925 the fair touted a "quadruple parachute drop" by the Jewell Brothers, famous aeronauts who also were going up in balloons. One of the highlights of the fair was "Pain's Marvelous Pyrotechnic Spectacle," —a fireworks display beyond compare.

A record attendance was predicted at the 1925 fair which was held the last day of August and the first five days of September. It was expected, said fair organizers, that the attendance mark of 70,000 from 1924 would tumble.

One of the more popular livestock exhibits was the "baby beeves shown by boys and girls." "This year they are being not only taught how to select good baby beeves and get them ready for the show ring, but to feed them cheaply so a profit can be made from them," noted the local newspaper. The draft horse competition and the poultry displays were also expected to draw large numbers.

The Staunton fair continued to grow from the 30s through the 50s. For eight years, from 1946-1953, the Virginia State Fair was even held in Staunton. Longtime area Realtor John A. Clem IV has been drawn to *fairs all his life*, and he remembers those days of the state fair.

"When I was 11-years-old I wandered onto the state fairgrounds in Staunton, and I never lost interest," he said of his fascination with fairs. During that year he talked himself into a job as an errand boy at the fair and received free midway passes. When he grew up, he and his brother, C.D. Clem, invented and manufactured a midway ride called The Gyro. He has since amassed a large collection of fair memorabilia, including stacks of fair catalogs from this area.

The midways and exhibits at the state fair must have been a sight for the local people of Staunton and Augusta County to see. In 1949 there were 15 rides and a dozen shows, including "America's most modern truck show." But the highlight of the midway had to be Emanuel Zacchini, the "human cannonball" who was shot over two ferris wheels. In 1950, the midway shows and rides had increased in numbert to 40.

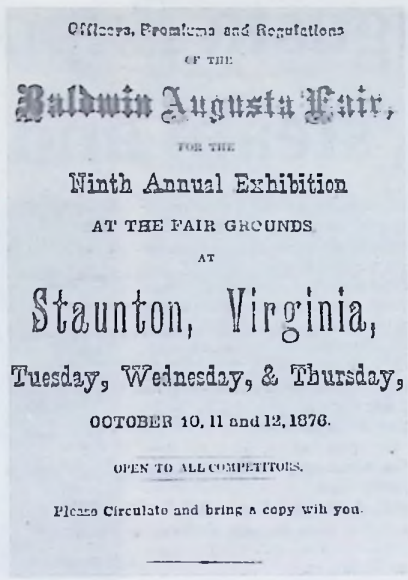
"The nightly fireworks were just sensational," Clem remembers of the pyrotechnics at the state fairs. "There were many ground displays as well as a tremendous array of high ones."

Clem's father, John A. Clem III, was president of the Staunton-Augusta Agricultural Fair from 1954 to 1960. The last fair held at the fairgrounds beside Gypsy Hill Park was in 1963. The descendant of that fair eventually moved to Eastside Speedway near Waynesboro and became known as the Greater Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Fair. The change came in 1970 when the assets and charter of the old Augusta County Fair were purchased by a group of five area investors. The group changed the name of the fair in 1971 and moved the exhibition to Eastside Speedway where it continues to be held each year.

At the same time, an Augusta County fair with more emphasis on agriculture was created and the first exhibition was held under tents on the grounds of Fishersville Elementary School in 1969. Three years later Augusta Expo moved to its present 200-acre site just off Interstate 64 in Fishersville. John Clem IV brought his interest in fairs to the chairmanship of Augusta Expo for three years from 1979 to 1981. The annual agricultural fair at Expoland ceased to exist after 1992 when the board of directors decided to no longer hold the fair.

Three years later, of course, the Augusta County fair is back with an emphasis on old-fashioned fairs focusing on agriculture and entertainment. Perhaps a bit of editorializing done in 1925 about the future of fairs in the area would be appropriate to think about again in 1995.

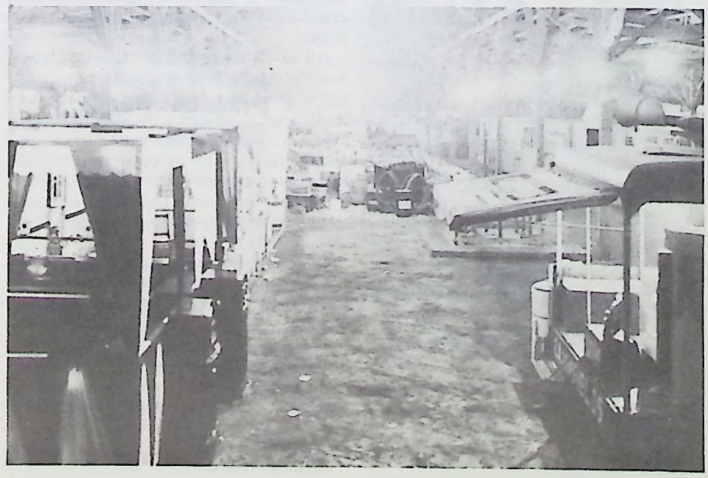
"The fair no longer appeals exclusively to the farmer. It attracts those of all other pursuits as well. It is rapidly approaching the point where it mirrors the development of all lines of human achievement, and as there is no limit to that development, there is an ever-widening field of usefulness for these exhibitions. That is why the fair, no matter how old, is always new." ---


Officers, Premiums and Regulations
OF THE
Baldwin Augusta Fair,
FOR THE
Ninth Annual Exhibition
AT THE FAIR GROUNDS
AT
Staunton, Virginia,
Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday,
OCTOBER 10, 11 and 12, 1876.
OPEN TO ALL COMPETITORS.
Please Circulate and bring a copy with you.

Catalogs from early fairs tell part of the event's history. What began as a county-wide exhibition evolved into one of statewide significance.

Fair catalogs courtesy John A. Clem IV

Early fairs included all the trappings of modern fairs. This photo shows the large midway and numerous concession stands which were featured at the fair when it occupied the area on the south end of Gypsy Hill Park.



No fair would be complete without an exhibit hall filled with educational exhibits for the public at large to view. In this photo, booths await crowds in the Billy Sunday Tabernacle which once stood in the area near the present Thomas D. Howie Armory.

Western Augusta Expo Co. to host fair tractor pull, steam and gas exhibition

By SUE SIMMONS

CHURCHVILLE — The Western Augusta Steam and Gas Exposition Co., Inc. started in 1993 when a handful of people who shared an interest in steam and gas engines got together to talk. Club members will have a chance to talk about their machines as well as show them off when they host an exhibition and antique tractor pull at the Augusta County Fair slated for Aug. 23-26 at Expo in Fishersville.

"Steam and gas includes tractors, gas engines, draft horses, antique cars and trucks, hit-and-miss engines, and steam traction engines," Raymond Grogg, club president, explained. In the club's first year, it grew to 80 members.

"We made contacts with people at shows, word got around," Raymond said. Teresa Grogg, Raymond's wife, said, "This club has a lot of wives and children in it which is unusual." The club is open to men, women, and teenagers 16 or older. Ownership of a steam or gas engine is not a requirement for membership. "Some members don't own anything. They are just interested or like to help work on engines," Raymond said.

The club's goal is to provide an educational experience about the past. It hopes one day to acquire some land which could serve as a site for a permanent exposition.

"But mostly we just have fun," Teresa said. "There are always good refreshments, and sometimes we eat more than we meet."

The Churchville-based club holds annual expositions, the first of which drew 200 exhibits. The club is collaborating with the Augusta County Fair to organize a steam and gas exhibition at the upcoming fair. In addition to four days of display, a pedal tractor pull and antique tractor pull are planned for Wednesday and Friday evening, respectively. Working exhibits are planned for Saturday.

"If you're willing to travel, you could go to a steam and gas show every week," Teresa said. "The Bridgewater show (held in July) is the biggest in the area."

To prove their point, the Groggs referred to a book that features steam and gas shows held throughout the United States and Canada. The Western Augusta Steam and Gas Exposition will host its annual show Sept. 22-24 in West Augusta. A wide variety of machines will be featured in addition to antique tractors. A lot of parts swapping goes on at shows as well.

"Parts are harder to get for early machines," Raymond says. "Often they have to be specially made."

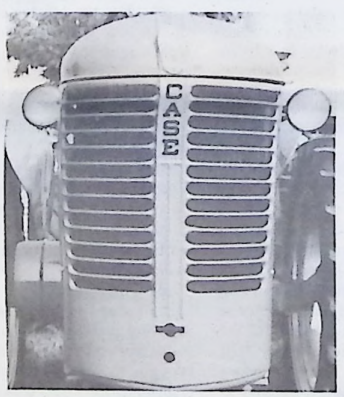
Shows like the Augusta County Fair exhibition and the West Augusta show are good places to swap or locate parts or learn how others fashion parts.

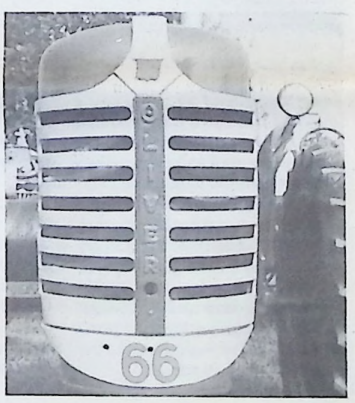
The Western Augusta Steam and Gas Exposition welcomes new members. The club meets the third Tuesday of every month at St. James Methodist Church in Churchville. For information about the club or its upcoming exhibitions, call 337-6839. —

See related story, page 19

David Callison, a member of the Western Augusta Steam and Gas Expostion Co., Inc., pulls with his antique Oliver tractor at the recent Bridgewater Steam and Gas show. The Western Augusta group is collaborating with Augusta County Fair organizers and will host an Antique Tractor Pull at 6:30 p.m., Friday, Aug. 25 at the fairgrounds in Fishersville.

AC staff photo





•Robin & Linda

Continued from page 15

It is probably the most spectacular place we have played."

In addition to playing in the city known as the heart of country music, Robin and Linda take their show out to the hearts of their audiences everywhere.

"We have an ever-expanding circuit of festivals, clubs, and concerts," Robin said, adding that they have probably achieved the pinnacle of their career by coming home to the Augusta County Agricultural Fair. "We have shared billing with the pig act," they joked of swine fair headliners, Robinson's Racing Pigs.

In the years since love "reared its ugly head" and brought Robin and Linda together, they certainly have moved on and on. They noted that working so closely as a couple has been a very positive experience.

"We are so intertwined," Linda said. "Really, the only burning question in the Williams' household right now is do we replace our 15-year-old dog, Jake? We miss him. How do we deal with not having a dog?" she added, still grieving the recent loss of their longtime traveling companion.

All in all though, it's a lifestyle they wouldn't trade. "Old time country music is just what we like. That's kind of one of the reasons we moved here (to Middlebrook). We play music that has some roots to it, and our roots are in old time music which has its roots around here," they explained.

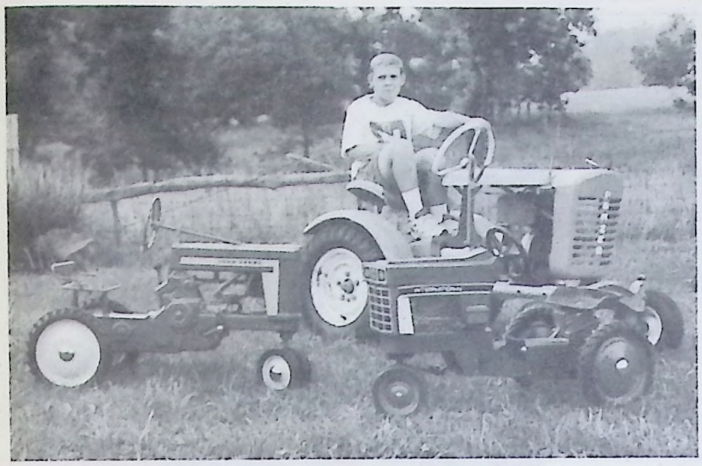
The talent and hard work will bring the breaks and the fame if they are meant to come their way, they add.

"If you keep sharp, you put yourself in a position for something nice to happen," Robin explained. "You can never predict in this business. It's like you have got a little ball rolling, and you work hard at keeping it rolling, and it gets bigger and bigger every year. In order to keep it rolling, we do good shows, write good songs, and make good records." Or as the words to one of their most recent original songs say:

"After all that we've been through,
This old love is good as new.
It keeps driving me and you,
On and on." ---

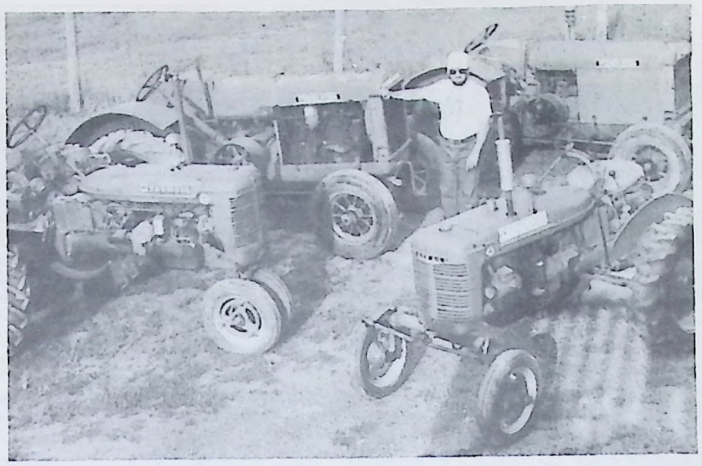
Megan Kyger of McGaheysville competes in the pedal tractor pull for children held recently at the Bridgewater Steam and Gas show. A Pedal Power Children's Tractor Pull will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 23 at the Augusta County Fair.

AC staff photo



Robert Grogg, son of Raymond and Teresa Grogg of Churchville, shows off his antique Panzer lawn tractor and his pedal powered tractors. Panzer tractors are rare and were once manufactured in Waynesboro.

Photos by Sue Simmons



Raymond Grogg stands among his antique International tractors. Raymond is president of the Western Augusta Steam and Gas Exposition Co., Inc. which will host a steam and gas exhibition at the Augusta County Fair to be held Aug. 23-26 at Expo in Fishersville.

Antique tractors:

A hobby for the whole family to enjoy

By SUE SIMMONS

CHURCHVILLE — Raymond Grogg was never particularly interested in old tractors until he bought his first one in 1974 when he was a junior in high school.

"I was raised on a farm that had Internationals," Raymond explains.

Pointing to a 1929 McCormick-Deering 2238 — fondly called "Little C" — sitting in his yard he continues. "A man brought it in for repair to my grandfather's farm over in the Blue Grass Valley, and I ended up buying it for $25."

Raymond added that the tractor had been used on his grandfather's farm "when they still threshed."

The McCormick-Deering had to be repaired before it could be moved. Raymond hastened to add that tractors from this time period are not difficult to rebuild.

Early tractors like the 1929 McCormick were THE machine on the farm. Built to work, "Little C" has 22 horses on the drawbar and 36 on the belt. The tractors ran threshing machines, sawmills, burr mills, silo fillers, and cut-off saws in addition to pulling plows, discs, and other implements. Raymond is quick to say that he has not used any of his old tractors in farm work.

"Too much strong arm steering," he said, noting that he prefers power steering available on modern machinery.

"These tractors were very slow. They were geared so slow that a man can walk beside them in the field," he said.

Modern tractors are a great deal safer than their antique counterparts. "They were built big and heavy and they could hurt, especially if the belt snapped," Raymond said.

But the downside of antique tractors hasn't dampened his enthusiasm for the old machines.

There is no national antique tractor organization which sets standards for the machines. As a consequence there are no rules for restoration beyond remaining true to the mechanical and structural integrity of the tractor.

While most people consider anything over 25 years old an antique, a tractor must have been manufactured in 1954 or earlier in order to compete in an antique tractor pull like the one which will be held at the upcoming Augusta County Fair to be held at Expo in Fishersville. A tractor pull, a popular event at many gas and steam expositions in which tractors pull a weighted sled on a dirt track, is a friendly competition. A full pull runs 200 to 250 feet, although this distance may differ from show to show. The power of tractors is measured by pulling the sled, the weight of which increases the further it is pulled. The tractor which pulls the greatest distance wins the competition.

"But there are no losers," Raymond says. No grand prizes are awarded and everyone walks away with a plaque. "It's friendly competition," according to this collector. In fact, antique tractor pulls are more exhibition than contest, giving owners a chance to show off their "classics" and the general public an opportunity to see tractors like "granddad" used.

"This is not a rich man's hobby," Raymond commented. "The guy who puts $10,000 into his tractor is the same as the guy who puts $500 into his."

This is a friendly hobby. And a family hobby.

Raymond's wife Teresa and their son Robert are as enthusiastic as the chief collector in the Grogg household. Robert has two antique pedal tractors and two antique toy tractors to keep him interested until he is old enough for the real thing. Pointing to the red International pedal tractor, Teresa said, "That was in a box in the attic even before Robert was born."

Pedal tractor pulls for children are now part of steam and gas shows. An area man designed a mechanical weighted sled for pedal tractors to pull which works on the same principle as the sled pulled by the large, motorized counterparts.

Son Robert also owns an antique lawn tractor -- a Panzer -- a model which was manufactured in Waynesboro during the 40s and 50s.

"These are rare," Raymond said, adding that he has only seen two others.

Robert, eyes shining as he climbs up on the purring machine, is perhaps not as impressed by his tractor's rarity as his father. But clearly, the interest and love of antique tractors has been passed on to the next generation. —

Jack True of Staunton sounds the whistle on his 1924 Frick portable steam engine. Jack is a member of the Western Augusta Steam and Gas club. Steam operated machinery will be on display at the Augusta County Fair.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

Roscoe Botkin of Staunton fires up his 1 1/2 horsepower Fairbanks-Morse hit-and-miss gas-powered engine. The machines were once used to operate equipment such as corn shellers, feed mills or cut-off saws.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

•Fair

Continued from page 13

11 albums to their credit. They continue to tour throughout the United States and have also appeared in concert in Europe. They will perform at the fair at 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 24.

Crimora-born Mac Wiseman will celebrate his 70th birthday at the Augusta County Fair with a performance Friday, Aug. 25 at 8 p.m. Wiseman began his Bluegrass music career playing with Buddy Starcher at Harrisonburg radio station WSVA. Today Wiseman is still much in demand for concerts and festivals, performing over 40 concerts a year. Wiseman will appear at the Augusta fair with Jim Orange and the Orange Blossoms.

Bob Campbell and the Coachmen sang together for more than 25 years and now, after years apart, are performing together once again. Their repertoire ranges from traditional country to gospel to contemporary rock. The Coachmen reunited to perform at last year's final "Happy Birthday U.S.A." celebration in Staunton and returned this year to "America's Birthday Celebration" to open for Ricky Van Shelton. The Coachmen were invited to headline at Clifton Forge's Stonewall Theatre in October 1994 and played before a sold-out crowd. Their Augusta County Fair appearance will be at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 23.

The Lewis Family, "America's First Family of Bluegrass Gospel Music," will close out four days of fair entertainment when they perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 26. One of the most popular and in-demand acts in the music business, The Lewis Family makes some 200 appearances each year. They have performed at The Grand Ole Opry, and their television appearances include NBC's Weekend Special and TNN's Nashville Now and Gospel Jubilee.

For 38 years, The Lewis Family hosted its own weekly television show in Augusta, Ga. The Lewises have received numerous honors and awards including induction into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame. The Lewis Family is perhaps an appropriate finale to the Augusta County Fair as the group has been called "an American original, a self contained wellspring of family entertainment for all ages."

Not to be outdone by their human counterparts, animals will play a central role in entertainment at the Augusta fair. Robinson's Racing Pigs will perform daily — twice Thursday through Saturday — and are guaranteed to be real crowd pleasers. The pigs, attired in racing silks, race around a six-foot wide, 100-foot long oval track — their reward, an Oreo cookie. And if it's brawn you want to see, then it's brawn you'll get — either of the animal or mechanical variety. A draft horse pull will be featured at 6 p.m. Saturday and an antique tractor pull will be held at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

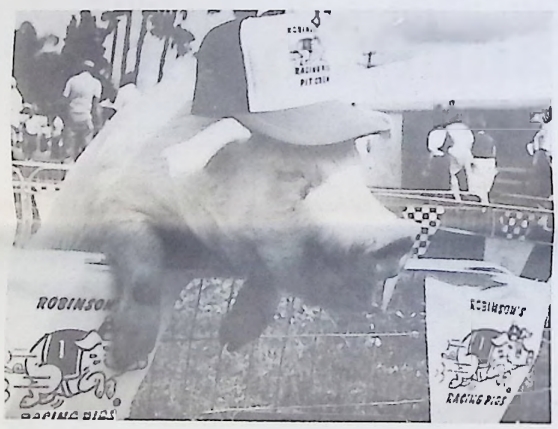
Events at the fair are not limited to the evening hours, however. Thursday morning's events include Youth Beef Showmanship and Flower Show judging. The Junior and Open Beef shows will be held Friday morning, and afternoon events will include the Market Hog Show and Dairy Fitting and Showing.

Saturday morning's events begin with a Horse Show at 9 a.m. The Dairy Breed Show will be held at 10 a.m. At 1 p.m. Saturday the Sheep Show will begin. Classes will include sheep lead line, costume, showmanship, and market lambs. Supreme Showmanship competition will follow the sheep exhibition.

And no fair would be complete without a midway full of rides for children and adults. Cole Shows will bring 12 rides to the fair including a merry-go-round, trains, and canoes for children and a roller coaster, Ferris wheel, Scrambler, Scat, and Swinger for adults.

Augusta County Fair activities will culminate at 10:30 p.m. Saturday with a 1,200-shell fireworks salute to the 1995 fair. This year's fair is dedicated to the memory of J.W. Riley for his life and talents in helping the agricultural industry of Augusta County. Augusta County Fair Board President Jim Ashby summed up the board's efforts saying: "We are bringing you a fair that will be both interesting and fun for you and all members of your family." —

Mac Wiseman will celebrate his 70th birthday with an 8 p.m. concert Friday, Aug. 25 at the Augusta County Fair.



Robinson's Racing Pigs will perform daily at the Augusta County Fair.

Young Farmers glimpse future at 'KlugeLand'

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

KEENE — Northern Virginia Area Young Farmers got a glimpse of the future when they held their annual field day July 10.

It might well have been a trip to Walt Disney's Epcot, where innovative technologies are seen for the first time by the public at large. But it was not Florida's Disney World which the farmers visited. Rather it was Morven Farms, the 8,000-acre Albemarle County estate of multimillionaire philanthropist John Kluge whose Virginia agriculture operation includes a purebred cowherd numbering 1,000.

For the 80 Young Farmers who made the trip, it was an opportunity to see Morven's fully operational cattle feeder terminal. Located a few miles east of Keene, Morven's feeder terminal is situated in an isolated section of woodland. It is a site which was chosen specifically for its remoteness.

"Morven is known to be environmentally conscious," noted Albemarle Extension agent Charley Goodman in his introductory remarks. He explained that the feeder terminal was conceptualized in May 1993 when Morven's operators made the decision to build the facility "right in the middle of the woods," according to Goodman. The nearest neighbors of the feedlot through which 7,000 cattle pass annually are no closer than a mile in any direction.

Morven's feeder terminal is a multi-phase, high-tech facility. Cattle arriving at the terminal are processed through a series of pens and chutes which are state-of-the-art. A hydraulic powered catch chute with digital electronic scales allows workers to simultaneously treat cattle and sort them according to weight. Automation throughout the feeder terminal enables its operation to be carried out by three individuals.

Once cattle have been treated and sorted, they are moved to weaning pens where they are started on forage and a light feed ration. When the cattle reach 650 pounds they enter one of two 408-foot covered feedlots. Allowing six inches per calf at the feed bunk, these lots can accommodate up to 1,600 cattle at a time. The facility at Morven was designed by Bill Collins, agricultural engineering Extension specialist.

"What are you trying to do and what do you have to do it with?" are questions which Collins said producers must ask themselves before building any facility. He noted that animals' performances will be influenced by the types of facilities through which they are handled.

Morven Farms feeder terminal at Keene includes two 408-foot covered feedlots where steers and heifers are fed out to 850 pounds. The feedlots feature covered eating and resting areas. Waste disposal is completely automated. Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

Morven's feedlots are 36 feet wide with a southeast exposure and feature covered eating and resting areas. The centers are open and an overhang and roof vent provide ventilation. Collins said the design insures that the lots will be cool in summer and warm in winter.

Waste disposal from the feedlots is fully automated. Countersloping and a slatted center channel allow manure to drop into four-foot deep pits beneath the feedlots. The manure then flows by gravity to a collection area 600 feet from the furthermost feedlot. Gordon Yeager, district soil conservationist, said the process relies on gravity to be successful.

Yeager said manure is carried away from the feedlots through 30-inch pipeline which dumps into an all concrete tank which is 12 feet deep and 140 feet in diameter. The tank's capacity is 1.5 million gallons which is equivalent to six months' worth of waste from the two feedlots, Yeager said. This allows the operators to store manure through the winter months to be spread on fields in the spring.

As with most facilities of this type, the odor from the waste facility was a problem for Morven, according to Yeager. Although the feeder terminal is far enough from neighbors to prevent problems, there were some complaints when the retained manure was first spread on fields. Not to be outdone by an age-old problem though, Morven is attempting to minimize the odor from the stored manure.

Yeager said Morven has attacked the problem on two fronts. Yucca plant is included in the cattle's feed ration to help cut down on the odor, and a bacteria introduced to the manure tank prevents a crust from forming on top of the stored waste. This permits odor to escape while the waste is stored. When the manure in the tank crusts over, the odor is trapped within and is not vented until the manure is spread.

Bucky Hill, operations manager at Morven, told the visiting farmers that the feeder terminal took six months to build. Five acres of woodland were cleared to accommodate the facility which includes a bull feedlot for Morven's registered herd. Two hundred bulls are moved through the lot annually.

Feed rations for the cattle are weighed and mixed on site at the terminal. The facility includes six 20 x 60-foot Harvestores, two of which are used solely to store high-moisture corn. The Harvestores were bought in Ohio, according to Hill, dismantled, moved to Virginia, and reassembled at the Morven facility.

Once the Morven cattle reach 850 pounds, they are shipped to Midwestern feedlots and finished to slaughter in a retained ownership program. Morven's operation is affiliated with the Ukrops gro-

See MORVEN, page 26

Facilities at Morven's feeder terminal include a feedlot where the farm raises purebred bulls. In the background are the six Harvestores which are used to store feed at the terminal.

Gordon Yeager, district soil conservationist, explains the waste collection and containment facility at the feeder terminal. The concrete tank in the background holds 1.5 million gallons of waste which flows by gravity through 30-inch underground pipes from two feedlots.

The bridges of Madison County

Down on the farm

By Betty Jo Hamilton

Down on the farm we're thinking about what happens to us when we don't stay down on the farm.

Late in June I had the occasion to travel to Richmond — yes, I was finally allowed to return to the city after the AgriCelebration debacle in January; give the city fathers and mothers six months, and they can forget almost anything — for a Farm Bureau committee meeting. It happened to be a two-day meeting, and the FB folks took care of my lodging and dining for the most part. This was probably arranged in advance with the city of Richmond, a measure taken to keep me off the streets.

I like to travel, but I don't like anything about the process of getting ready to go on a trip. If traveling away from the farm were as simple as packing a suitcase and walking out the door, it probably wouldn't be so bad. But there are always countless chores which must be tended before one can actually flee the farm scene. And these are just the routine chores which don't include those last minute, unexpected occurrences that throw even the best laid plans off kilter.

In my preparations to leave the farm, I usually leave packing for *the trip until last — last being the final 20 minutes of my time at* home before walking out the door to depart. I leave it until last because on any occasion I make plans to go somewhere something might happen at the last minute to prevent my departure. With travel plans hanging in the balance, there's nothing sadder than a packed suitcase which has to be unpacked even before it's been anywhere.

Overnight trips are the easiest for which to pack since they require little more to be taken other than a change of clothes and the necessary toiletries. In preparing for these sorts of trips, as the Farm Bureau committee meeting was, I pack as I get myself ready to travel, moving things I use on a daily basis from the bathroom to the suitcase I'm taking. A change of clothes is carried on a hanger to avoid folding and the resulting wrinkles once the clothes are unpacked.

The morning I was to leave for the meeting was as harried as any typical morning. My belongings gathered, I raced out the door to the meeting which was to begin at midday.

Following a full afternoon of meetings and a dinner which followed, I was glad to reach my hotel room and looked forward to a good night's rest. I began to sort through my belongings to get things in order for an early morning departure from the hotel. I found myself turning around in circles searching for the change of clothes I had carried on a hanger for the next day.

"Where are my clothes?" I asked myself outloud. Hotel rooms are not usually too large so it seemed impossible that I had lost the clothes since I had walked in the door with them.

"I must have forgotten to bring them out of the car," I told myself as I picked up my car keys and went to look for the clothes I needed to wear the next day to the meeting.

Of course, the clothes weren't in the car, and they weren't in my hotel room and for a very good reason. My clothes were still at home on the hanger dangling from the top edge of the bathroom door where I had left them.

"I have no clothes to wear tomorrow," I informed myself and acknowledged the immediate need to go and buy some. Fit to be tied with my absent-minded packing process, I found clothes and bought them in short order.

Although the meeting went well the next day, I never felt completely in sync. I couldn't get used to my new clothes. Every time I looked down at the blouse and slacks I was wearing I would ask myself, "Whose clothes are these?" Each time I would walk into a bathroom or see my reflection in a plate glass door, I found myself asking, "Whose clothes are those?"

During the course of the meeting, I learned from some of my fellow committee members who had driven in that morning, that Orange County had gotten six inches of rain the preceding night. Since Augusta County had suffered a similar deluge only the week before, I commiserated with them in their losses. The folks said that while Orange County was pretty much cut off, travel north through Culpeper was possible since most of the rain had been concentrated in and around Orange.

My trip to the Tidewater area put me close enough to Fredericksburg and a friend who lives there that I intended to travel north out of Richmond for a visit. The committee meeting concluded about 4 p.m. I had decided in advance I would make the trip to Fredericksburg only if I wasn't worn out from the meeting. After being cooped up indoors for two days, I found myself looking forward to the drive north.

"I feel like driving," I said as I revved up my machine and headed north on I-95.

> **I wasn't going in the direction I was supposed to be going. I wasn't where I was supposed to be. And I was wearing somebody else's clothes. It's a wonder I ever made it home.**

After an enjoyable visit in Fredericksburg, I set out for home. Recalling that Orange County was flooded and that committee members had mentioned there was some flooding in Stanardsville, I turned on the radio to check for weather information. I was pleased to almost immediately hear the announcer read the weather forecast.

"A chance of thunderstorms tonight, tomorrow, continued chance of storms," he said. With no warning of bad weather or impaired road conditions, I switched off the radio. Traveling west out of Fredericksburg, I chose the Culpeper-to-U.S. 29 route to make my way back to I-64 at Charlottesville. At the outskirts of Fredericksburg I stopped to buy a soft drink and noted that it was 9 p.m. when I got back on the highway.

As I approached Culpeper, I ran into a drizzle which at times became intermittent showers. Heading south on U.S. 29, it wasn't long before I began encountering signs telling of road closings to the east and west of 29. Knowing something of the terrain of those areas, the signs didn't alarm me, particularly since I had been told of the heavy rains which had drenched those areas the day before.

I assured myself that 29 was the route of choice. A modern highway, I asserted, wouldn't be affected by flooding like some of the roads in low lying areas at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. At 10:30 p.m. and 20 miles north of Charlottesville, I slowed my vehicle when I saw flares lit in the road. I assumed someone had had a wreck. Expecting to see a State Trooper's blue flashing lights, I was surprised instead to encounter the yellow flashing light of a VDOT truck. A highwayman flagged me to a stop.

"This road is closed," he said.

"Closed?" I asked. Surely this was not possible. "What's wrong?"

"It's flooded," he said.

"Flooded?" was my response. In a conversation that was going nowhere fast I learned that U.S. 29 was flooded at the Rapidan River. I was being instructed to turn around and go in any direction but south, east, or west.

"I need to get to Staunton," I told the man. "How can I get there from here?"

"You'll have to go to Warrenton then take 66 over to 81," he instructed.

"Warrenton!" I exclaimed, stunned by the possibility of what could be a four-hour drive. "Is that the only way out?" I was assured it was.

Heading north, I reminded myself that earlier in the day I had looked forward to a long drive.

"I guess it's a good thing I feel like driving, because it looks like that's what I'm going to be doing for the rest of the night," I said outloud. A glance at the instrument panel alerted me that I would not be traveling anywhere for long if I didn't get some gas. I pulled into a last-chance gas station at Shelby which is located in Madison County on U.S. 29. As I got out of my car a woman was leaving the station. Without even pausing, she began to quiz me.

"Do you have a place to stay?" she asked, probably recognizing me as a traveler.

"I'm trying to get to Staunton," I told her. "I guess I'll be driving up to Warrenton then over to 66."

"Have you had anything to eat?" she asked.

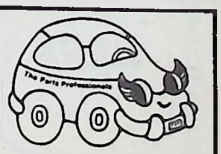
"I'm fine," I said. If I was puzzled by 29 being flooded out, I was even more puzzled by this woman's apparent interest in my well being.

"I'm with the rescue squad," she said. "We've got a shelter set up down at the high school. You can stop in there and get something to eat and take a break from driving." With that the woman jumped in her four-wheel drive station wagon and drove off into the night.

In a daze, I walked into the station to pay for the gas. A clerk and two other people were in the station. Until one of them spoke, it hadn't occurred to me what time it was.

"What time are you going to

Continued on page 23



The Rapidan River overflowed its banks in late June when a 42-foot wall of water swept through Madison County. The damage shown in this photo was caused by that wall of water which closed the U.S. 29 bridge at Shelby, about 20 miles north of Charlottesville. Only three of the bridges of Madison County were not damaged by the flooding which is being referred to as the worst in the county's history. Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

— *Continued from page 22*

close?" the clerk was asked. Checking my watch I noticed it was past 11 p.m. I began to ask a few questions — questions which caused these folks to immediately realize I had no concept of what I had driven into.

Twelve inches of rain had fallen on Madison and Greene counties that day. Practically every road in any direction of 29 and including 29 was under water. People had been evacuated from their homes throughout the day. Power outages were widespread. There was only one way out of Madison County, that being north on 29.

"You looking for a place to stay?" I was asked. Without waiting for my reply the store clerk handed me the telephone. I made a few calls to Culpeper and learned that hotels there were full. Giving the phone back to the clerk, she — without being asked — began to call nearby inns to find a space for me.

"You can stay at the high school," she told me finally when all her calls netted no results.

"I'll probably just keep driving," I said as I thanked her for her assistance and left the convenience store.

The thought occurred to me that I should probably call the folks at home to let them know where I was and counted myself lucky to be traveling with a cellular phone. I dialed my sister's telephone number. The static and crackling of a bad connection made her voice barely audible.

"I'm in Madison Cou——," was all I got out before the connection was broken. At that moment Madison County High School came into view, and I pulled into the parking lot. I was greeted by the eerie sight of satellite dishes atop television stations' remote broadcasting vans. Folks were milling in and out of the high school. A Red Cross van was set up at the entrance and was attempting to get messages to loved ones of those stranded by the flood.

I waited for a few minutes to use a pay phone and was successful in getting through to tell my family where I was, that I was O.K., and that I was driving north away from the flood — a concept which to me was no more than a word at that point in time.

On the road again, I headed north back to Culpeper. Convinced that Warrenton-to-66 couldn't possibly be the only route out of Madison, I stopped at the State Police Headquarters just north of Culpeper for some travel advice. Two dispatchers on duty answered my questions about what was going on in Madison, and we spent some time poring over maps to determine which would be my best avenue of retreat from the flooding there.

"Go back to Culpeper and head toward Fredericksburg. Take 522 south off of Rt. 3 and that will take you back down to 64," I was told. Looking at the map I noticed 522 went through Orange County.

"But 522 goes through Orange. I thought everything there was under water," I said.

"It is, but 522 is open all the way," I was assured. As I headed toward the door, one of the women asked, "Are you by yourself?" I nodded in the affirmative. The woman picked up a piece of paper, wrote something down, then handed the paper to me.

"This is our phone number. That road is pretty deserted. I travel it all the time when I go to Powhatan, but if you have any trouble you can call us."

With a new direction and a phone number for insurance, I headed south again, through Culpeper — for the third time in two hours — then down 522 toward Louisa. After I'd been on the road for a few minutes I determined that calling it "pretty deserted" was right much of an understatement. In fact, there is nothing out there — no mailboxes, no nightlights, no traffic, nothing. I felt as if I must have traveled the road before, though, probably on a previous trip to Fredericksburg and recalled that it bridged the North Anna River — which feeds into Lake Anna — at some point along the way. As my car rolled around a sweeping curve, its headlights shone on a broad expanse of water seemingly in all directions. I swallowed hard and was glad seconds later to see a bridge spanning the water — a bridge that appeared unscathed by the rising water beneath it. I wasted no time in crossing the bridge (in other words, I floored it) and some minutes later began seeing signs steering me in the direction of I-64.

I found my way to Mineral then did a kind of crazy loop in Louisa which swirled me around toward I-64. I'd made so many loops and backtracks by that time I was beginning to become pretty disoriented. The fact that I was wearing clothes that didn't seem to be mine didn't help matters any. I wasn't going in the direction I was supposed to be going. I wasn't where I was supposed to be. And I was wearing somebody else's clothes. It's a wonder I ever made it home.

Finally I found myself safely headed west on the interstate and called back to the State Police Headquarters in Culpeper.

"I was there about an hour ago, and you all sent me down 522 to 64," I told the woman who answered the phone.

"Yes," she said, a little hesitantly I thought.

"I just thought I'd let you know that 522 is open all the way from Culpeper back to the interstate," I said.

"It is?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, recalling that earlier I had been assured that the road was open by people who I thought should know. "I made it back to 64," I continued.

"You did?" the voice queried. I have to assume that there weren't many success stories in Madison that night so hearing about someone who had actually succeeded in getting around the flooded out bridges of Madison County was probably a shock to the State Police dispatcher.

"I'm headed back west now," I continued. "You might want to get word to the highway department people to send people down this way instead of up to Warrenton. This is probably shorter for people trying to go west." The woman thanked me for calling and said she would pass the information along.

Five hours after I had left Fredericksburg and at the end of a 500-mile winding odyssey through central Virginia, I walked through my back door at home. The rush of adrenaline which carried me away from the flooding in Madison County made me feel as if my eyelids had been peeled off my eyeballs like the skin of a fresh onion. At 5 a.m. I finally went to bed for a few hours of less-than-restful sleep.

Two weeks to the day later, I returned to Madison County. I returned to Shelby and again filled my car with gas. The folks in the convenience store where I had stopped the night of the flood weren't there, but some of their counterparts provided me with information about what had happened during the course of the flood — what has turned out to be one of the most destructive floods in Virginia's history.

Eight people died. It is miraculous that more lives weren't lost. All but three of the bridges of Madison County were damaged or washed out. The Rapidan River, which flows 30 feet beneath the bridge spanning U.S. 29, rose 12 feet above the bridge. A river which normally runs through a 30-foot wide channel overflowed its banks, expanded to 400 feet in some places, and became a 42-foot wall of water which destroyed homes and livelihoods. Looking west and east from the bridge over the Rapidan River on U.S. 29 there is total devastation. As far as the eye can see, fields are stripped of vegetation, trees are uprooted and limbless. What was once fertile farm land is now a wasteland.

The night I passed through Madison County was one I won't soon forget. Not necessarily because of the flood which ravaged the countryside, but because of the people of Madison County whom I encountered during the brief time I was there. I'll remember them because they were acting the way human beings are supposed to act, because they were asking the really important questions.

Do you have shelter? Do you have food?

Their expressions of concern were for the preservation of human lives.

Be careful. Stay safe.

The flood may have created extreme monetary hardships, but the people of Madison County recognized the value of irreplaceable human lives and worked to keep people safe and alive.

Sometimes when we go traveling away from the farm we find ourselves wishing we'd just stayed at home. I suppose we would have preferred it if we had avoided the flood that hit Madison County June 27. Down on the farm, though, we're remembering the people who got me home safely and helped other people survive that night. —

Host of farmers learn benefits of rotational grazing at Mid-Atlantic Dairy Field Day

By LOIS SKEEN

A large crowd of producers, Extension representatives, forage specialists, and other interested folks from all over the mid-Atlantic region, and even as far away as Wisconsin and South Dakota, met at two Augusta County farms recently to learn more about how area farmers can make the most of a basic fact of nature, that is that cows eat grass.

Why is something every 3-year-old learns suddenly getting all this attention? Simple economics. In the 1970s and through most of the 80s, milk prices were good. Many producers expanded their herds and fed more expensive high-protein feeds in order to maximize production.

But times change. Major changes in Federal Dairy Policy have led to a national dairy program that is "market oriented" and depends less on government subsidies. As more milk was produced, milk prices dropped. Dairymen are now getting about the same price for their milk that they got 10 years ago.

Meanwhile the cost of producing milk has soared. Land, machinery, labor, fertilizer, and just about *everything else* costs a lot more than it did 10 years ago. Feed costs are the biggest single expense to the dairy farmer. In order to improve their net farm income, many dairymen are finding they are better off to reduce their costs as much as possible, even if it means they sell less milk.

One way that dairymen have cut costs is to let their pasture grasses become the main forage for their cattle. This reduces the labor and machinery costs involved in harvesting forages such as corn silage or haylage, as well as the labor cost of feeding it to the cow two or three times a day. When cows are out on pasture, the need for expensive housing facilities is reduced. Problems from confinement set-ups such as foot deterioration and injuries from slipping on concrete are eliminated, so the cull rate is reduced.

A rotational grazing system makes the best use of pasture. In this system, the field is divided into paddocks by electric fencing, and the cattle are rotated as the grass is consumed. But it's not just as simple as opening the gate to the field. The questions remain of what grasses to seed, how to seed, how short or long should grass be grazed, when to move the cattle, how big should the paddocks be, how to tell how much the cow has eaten, and what else, if anything, do you have to feed the cow to meet energy and protein requirements?

Enter the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Grazing Field Day, sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Services of Virginia and North Carolina, as well as many private industry sponsors. The program featured Extension specialists from Virginia Tech and N.C. State University, as well as a panel of dairy producers who are using a rotational grazing system. The seminar was held on two of those producer's farms in Augusta County.

Dr. Carl Polan, professor of dairy nutrition at Virginia Tech, claimed: "I was grazing when grazing wasn't cool," as he shared results of grazing experiments he began in 1975 and which continued through 1986. The energy value of good quality immature grass and clover are comparable to, and sometimes slightly higher than, the energy provided by corn silage, which is surprising to most dairymen. However, with high milk yields, corn silage proved to be a better energy source in his project animals.

Dr. Polan measured milk production and composition response to various feeds added as a supplement to the grazed pastures. His results show that while supplemental feed is recommended, only a small amount is required. In his study, bypass protein supplements such as brewers grains were most effective in enhancing milk yield.

Dr. Polan reported other observations from his study: Milk production did increase when the cows were fed supplemental corn, but the actual amount was not very large. There was no advantage to feeding a TMR as supplement instead of just corn supplementation. Milk fat tests have been less in grazing cows than desirable. He observed (unscientifically, he admitted, with the "eyeball method") that cows on pasture consistently have less body fat than comparable cows on conventional feeding systems. He noted nutritional concerns such as the cows getting a varying dry matter intake on pasture due to varying growing conditions, and the difficulty in measuring the amount of extra energy required by cattle that do more walking while grazing.

Dr. James Green Jr., N.C. State forage specialist spoke about managing the pasture in a rotational system. "You have to understand a little bit about plant physiology and know where the plant stores its extra carbohydrate reserves in order to know how to graze it efficiently," he explained.

He recommended a combination of orchardgrass and Alfagraze to be used locally, or, if soil type is not well-suited for alfalfa, substitute red and white clover. He recommended starting to graze when the plant is 6-10 inches tall and grazing until a three inch stubble is left.

Their subject matter at their feet -- grass, that is -- Jerry Swisher, Area Dairy Extension specialist, and Dr. James Green Jr., N.C. State University forage specialist, take a break during the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Grazing Field Day held recently in Mt. Solon and Crimora. The event drew almost 400 producers who learned how rotational grazing and pasture management can cut production costs.

Photo by Lois Skeen

"Orchardgrass stores its energy for regrowth in that lower three-inches, and you have to compromise between the plant's needs and the animal's needs to establish a quality pasture that has a continuous supply of young immature plants," he said.

He pointed out that the grass canopy must be clipped or grazed short so it does not shade out the Alfagraze or clover. When animals are removed, the grass should have a period of 20-25 days for regrowth before re-grazing that paddock. Since one type of grass does not grow year-round, a combination of grasses must be used to graze from March through November.

Dr. Harlan White, retired Extension agronomist, told producers the best methods to kill the fescue or other existing grass and reseed the pasture in the recommended plants. He cautioned farmers not to "get too excited about what other people are doing in other parts of the country, or what you've read they're using in Australia. You should plant what works well in your area and is well-suited to your farm."

The practical applications of what the researchers recommended was of special interest to those in attendance. The evening meeting on July 11 was held at Delta Springs Farms in Mt. Solon, where Charles and Chuck Horn have three major enterprises: raising dairy heifer replacements, three turkey houses, and two greenhouses. The farm consists of 410 acres, with 255 acres of grass used for pasture or hay. Heifers graze in 13 paddocks varying from seven to 30 acres with water and mineral mix in each paddock. Paddocks are sowed in Alfagraze and orchardgrass or bluegrass. The heifers are moved when the grass has been grazed down to three or four inches, and then the paddock is not re-grazed for about three weeks.

"We started rotational grazing three years ago to make the cattle easier to take care of so we could give more time to the turkey enterprise," said Charles. "Our plan was to run less cattle when we added the third turkey house. On the contrary, we are feeding more heifers than we were before, but we are better able to feed and take care of the livestock when they are on pasture."

The second day of the seminar was held at Red Mill Farm in Crimora, where Bill and Crawford Patterson have used a rotational grazing system to provide the main source of forage for their dairy herd since 1990.

Bill explained the reason for the change. "We were one of the high herds in the state when we changed. We were just not making enough money for the amount of work we were doing," he said. This was one situation when pride didn't overpower the pocketbook, and the Pattersons sacrificed pounds produced per cow to gain profit per cow.

After implementing a rotational grazing system, their pounds of milk shipped per cow fell from 19,396 annually in 1990 to 15,750 in 1994. However, they were able to increase the herd size from about 60 cows to 95 cows using less labor. Their total pounds of milk shipped dropped only from 1,433,2501 to 1,178,280. On a per cow basis, their gross income dropped from $2,378 to $2,077, but virtually all their expenses were significantly reduced. Total cash farm expenses dropped from $2,154 to $1,437 per cow, for a gain in net cash farm income of $469 per cow.

The Pattersons' facilities were set up to feed 65 cows at the feed bunk. They were able to increase herd size without expanding their facility by turning 35 to 40 percent of their cows dry during the winter months when they had to be fed corn silage in the conventional method because there was no grazing available.

The Pattersons started by grazing their hayfields, then converted most of their cornfield to orchardgrass and Alfagraze, which is overseeded with clover each year. They grow barley in some fields, then after it is harvested, they re-seed with rye for fall grazing.

"We can graze here from mid-March to mid-October or November," says Bill.

Bill said irrigation is important to their pasture management.

"In this area, you either need to irrigate or have to feed stored feed during the summer drought months," he said.

The Pattersons previously grew 165 acres of corn. They have cut that down to 65 acres and, according to Bill, "We have more feed than we know what to do with."

The only feed the cows get other than pasture is what is fed in the parlor, which is 16-18 pounds of pelleted supplement. "We haven't quite figured out exactly how to supplement the cows with this system; I don't think anybody has," admits Bill. The Pattersons changed to a high-fiber, low-starch feed this year, and have experienced an increase in butterfat percentage and fewer twisted stomach problems with the cows.

Jerry Swisher, Area Dairy Extension agent, has worked closely with the Pattersons, and presented a financial analysis of their profit picture as their grazing program evolved, as well as comparisons to average producing herds and high producing herds in Virginia. He summarized that his data "certainly shows that the utilization of pasture managed rotationally can provide an opportunity for some dairy

See **GRAZING**, page 25

Area cattle producers learn market secrets

By JEFF ISHEE

STAUNTON — O.K. Virginia cattle producers, just who are your customers? That's right. Just who is going to end up consuming the beef that you raise and send to market?

That is what 45 Shenandoah Valley cattle producers wanted to know when they gathered recently at Staunton Union Stockyard. There to assist them in determining the answer to that question was Sally Dunham, a spokesperson for the Virginia Cattle Industry Board in Richmond. Sally works in many areas of Virginia's beef industry, including meeting consumers at the grocery store both to promote local beef and to learn more about the desires of the average consumer.

Sally, formerly with Betty Crocker Test Kitchens, has a lot of experience in the area of consumer research. She has noticed four distinct categories of shoppers, which consist of convenience, the new traditionalist, the affluent and health conscious, and health-constrained shoppers. Each category of consumer has known traits when they select beef from the display at grocery stores, according to Sally.

"Most consumers just put the word 'meat' on their grocery list. Breed is meaningless to the average consumer," she said.

Sally went on to tell the assembled audience that "there are an average of 129 meat items in the display case at the grocery store. Visibility is the key. Consumers sometimes buy based on the most recent sign they have seen, hence our 'Beef - It's What's For Dinner' ad campaign."

Sally said a study was conducted asking "What is the most important thing you consider when you buy meat?" About 70 percent of those questioned responded that taste was the most important criteria, while 59 percent of respondents also listed nutrition. "Surprisingly," Sally reported, the study showed that "a lot of people do not care immensely about cholesterol. Only 29 percent bought meat items based on cholesterol content."

"What the consumer really wants to know," said Sally, "is how to prepare the product. They want to spend about 30 minutes in preparation time. This is why we now have recipes in the grocery store available to the consumer. We even suggest complete meals based around beef which tell the homemaker step by step how to prepare a delicious dinner.

"Regretedly, customers think that beef is unexciting, while poultry is fun," Sally said. "We are trying to discover ways to overcome this attitude now. There is a whole population out there who doesn't know how to cook. Marginal cooks need one thing to become a steady customer of ours, and that is consistency. They want the same cut of beef available to them every time they go to the store, and if it doesn't look exactly like the cut they got last week, they will not buy it. They want packages labeled with suggestions like 'STIR FRY', or 'STEW MEAT'. Consistency is crucial in both beef quality and cuts. With so many breeds and varieties of cuts, consistency is something that we are trying to establish in the Virginia beef industry, and together, we can do it."

The next speaker at the beef seminar was Fred Williams, a native of Oklahoma and currently with USDA Livestock Certification in Washington, D.C. The first thing Fred asked the audience was what sector of the beef industry they represented. Enumerating several categories, Williams summed up his point by saying: "Listen closely. We are all beef producers. A steer has the potential to feed 562 individual (servings of) steaks and roasts, not including ground beef. One bad steer can negatively influence a lot of people." Repeating the philosophy that consistency is crucial, Fred said, "Poultry producers are way ahead of us. You know, and I know, that a drumstick is a drumstick is a drumstick, whether you buy it in Ocean City, Md., or Des Moines, Iowa. That's because the consumer is telling 'em what to do... and poultrymen are listening! Cowboys don't like that, but they have got to realize that the consumer is their boss."

Fred continued by relating to the audience, "We have a lot of problems in the beef industry with lack of uniformity. To the consumer, it's either too fat, too thick, too lean, or too thin. Now cowboys get upset about this, but there are a lot of consumers out there who think they can buy a totally defatted lean cut of beef and cook it every time successfully. They really don't understand that fat is where taste comes from. Without fat within the beef muscling, it's going to taste like cardboard. But just because you cook it with the fat on does not mean that you have to consume the fatty portions. Mr. and Mrs. Consumer don't understand that, and we have to enlighten them."

Fred said "consumers want nutrition, but they want good taste also. Five to seven years ago, we were telling the cattlemen to get the fat off the beef. Now, we are telling you to get the excess fat off the beef. You have to become a state fair judge, and evaluate the end product as well as your livestock. The balance of fat is a tightrope walk between taste and waste.

"We have at least 82 registered breeds of cattle in the U.S. What has happened is we end up with variability. We have every size and thickness imaginable. We have every color cow in the rainbow. Variation is not what the consumer wants, so what do we do with it?

"Crossbreeding is something we have been doing a lot with in the cattle industry for years and years, but it has caused one thing, which is a lot of inconsistency. So do we 'settle' with huge variations in frame size, or do we strive for better management to achieve what the consumer wants, which is consistency? A lot of you cowboys are not going to like this, but the boss is telling you something. And we Virginia cattlemen have got to listen."

Fred urged cattle producers to strive for consistency in their choice of breeding programs. He explained that by producing a consistent product, beef producers increase their chances of attracting customers at the grocery store meat case.

For information about beef cattle production, call the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-5750. —

•Grazing

Continued from page 24

producers to reduce cost as well as increase their net cash farm income."

"It is important to stay flexible," Bill noted. "We have made our share of mistakes. But we've lived through them, and have learned a few things from our mistakes and a good deal from other grazers. We appreciate all the help we have gotten from them, as well as from the academic community. We believe it is essential for success to learn as much as possible about grazing before you start, to have enough good grass available before you start, to always keep an open mind, to learn from your mistakes, and to keep looking for a better way to manage your operation."

As a footnote, it was most impressive to see a seminar that presented research facts and figures as well as an on-farm look at the practical application in use by producers. With over 100 in attendance at the evening meeting, and 375 there the next (very hot) day, this program was obviously of great interest to the agricultural community.

Rotational grazing is certain to have an influence on the profit picture for many producers, and perhaps will affect future milk market trends in a significant way, which in turn affects all consumers. Extension service dollars provide the research in this and other areas vital to the agricultural producer, and also provide the means to get important management information to the producer. With state budget restraints constantly posing a threat to the very existence of the Extension service, perhaps it would be an enlightening experience for the state's politicians to attend seminars such as this one in order to recognize the economic value of agriculture research to Virginia's economy. —

•Oxen

Continued from page 9

chuckle. But, he was quick to add that cattle are a whole lot more intelligent than people give them credit for.

He has even continued to saddle up his cattle and take them for rides, although this is one instance where he prefers horses because of their speed. "For trail rides, I'd just as soon have a horse. I do have a Holstein that I have taken on trail rides, it's just that he is kinda slow. He's scared of horses, though, so if I keep him in front of the horses, he'li move along pretty fast."

One of the advantages of training oxen, Speiden explained, is that they are a lot like elephants in that they never forget. "You can leave them out in a field for six months, bring them in, and put a yoke on them, and they get right to work," he explained.

One of the first things he does when he starts training is to get the animals to bond to him, and then he gets the matched pair to bond to each other. The bonding is long-term, but not irreversible. Nonetheless, the teams stick together even when they are turned loose in the fields with other cattle.

Training the teams is fairly easy, he admits, although there are differences from animal to animal. "It depends on the individual oxen. Like some people, some are there to please, and some are there to resist. Their treats are praise. They feel good when you feel good. They like a pat on the head or the rump."

Speiden's teams react to reins or voice and are yoked together so they can respond in unison. The heavy wooden yokes, which Speiden makes himself, get larger as the team grows. Youngsters who are just three or four weeks old start off with a 15-pound yoke. Five or six yokes and several years later, the full-grown animals carry a yoke of 100 pounds. "That's really not that much," Speiden explains. "They (the oxen) weigh about a ton each and they are only carrying 50 pounds each with a 100-pound yoke. I carry more than that when I go backpacking."

As he has learned more about oxen and the part they played in agricultural history, Speiden has started dressing in 18th century-costume during appearances which he makes with his teams at historic sites around Virginia.

"I have really started enjoying the history and the reenactment," he said. And his teams have educated crowds at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton, the Virginia State Fair, Ash Lawn, and Poplar Forest among others. "At one place a whole Girl Scout troop fell in love with the oxen," he said of the charm his gentle giants have on young and old alike.

Speiden sees his teams as a good educational tool not just for their work as draft animals, but because many people are not exactly sure what an ox really is.

"I like to tell them that an ox is a steer that they don't eat," Speiden says. "If you eat it, then it's a steer. Technically any male bovine that is used for utilitarian purposes and is over 4 years old can be called an ox," he added. In most cases, oxen are castrated male bovines and can be of any breed. He prefers Holstein, Brown Swiss, Shorthorn, and Texas Longhorn because of their docile nature around large crowds of people. Other breeds, like Devon for instance, make good work animals, but can be a bit high strung for working around large crowds.

If anybody knows bovines, it has to be Speiden who has spent 52 of his 58 years on the payroll of his family's dairy farm. But with his retirement during the past winter, his focus will shift from the lady bovines to the fellows pulling the carts. He has recently returned from an ox training school in Missouri where he learned more about agricultural activities like plowing and harrowing.

"I was able to hone my skills and get a few more commands in my head, so maybe I can teach my oxen. I learned things like how to keep an ox in a straight line when operating a plow and how to get one to walk in a furrow and the other to walk on the uphill side. I'm looking forward to trying all the new things I learned." ---

Bill Speiden and his oxen will be participating in the 10th annual Traditional Frontier Festival to be held Sept. 9-10 at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton. The festival features traditional arts and crafts, non-stop heritage entertainment, and foods of Germany, Ireland, England, and America. This year's event will include the 350th anniversary reenactment of the 1645 Battle of Naseby, the culminating battle of England's Civil War. Call 332-7850 for information about the festival.

Small grain becoming big business in Valley

By JEFF ISHEE

STUARTS DRAFT — Small grain producers gathered recently near Stuarts Draft for a presentation sponsored by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Augusta Cooperative Farm Bureau, and several major seed companies. This assembly of men and women was brought together by one tiny little grain that is beginning to make a noticeable impact on Valley agriculture: wheat.

The farm of the Garland Martin family was selected for an on-farm test plot. Martin put in a tremendous amount of time and effort to make the project possible, and his efforts were plainly visible in the amber waves of grain stretching out in the distance. As the sun eased downward in the western sky, Mr. Martin welcomed the crowd who had assembled in the field. Shirley Kaufman, representing the Augusta Cooperative Farm Bureau, and David Fiske of the Extension Office also made opening comments about how they had helped Martin achieve success in the test plots.

Bob Ruth and John Howell, both of Rt. 1, Staunton, look at a stand of wheat during the Small Grain Workshop held recently at the Garland Martin farm in Stuarts Draft.
Photo by Jeff Ishee

After initial commentary, seed company representatives from Southern States, Pioneer, Hoffman, and Northrup King Seeds led the group through the test plots discussing the different characteristics and merits of several varieties of wheat.

Southern States variety FFR 555 was used as a check crop, due to the fact that it has been a proven high yielder on the East Coast, has good standability, medium height, and has been the yield champion in both Virginia and Kentucky. Several other varieties were planted utilizing various application methods, including the amounts and timing of commercial nitrogen fertilization, and the use of turkey litter as a source of nitrogen.

The virtues of turkey litter as an organic fertilizer were discussed at length by Winston Phillips, representing the Division of Soil and Water Conservation. Area farmers have found that an application of three tons of turkey litter prior to planting with no additional spring nitrogen application has been successful on their farms.

The variety Pioneer 25-80 was noted as being bearded, the oldest of many varieties, tall and producing the most straw. Hoffman 89, an exceptional seller, was compared alongside Wakefield, Coker 9803, FFR 568, Pioneer 26-84, and several other wheat varieties. Each had its own merits, based on crop expectations.

Several tips on producing high wheat yields were offered by Extension Agent Fiske, including:

1. Variety selection for your specific use (grain or straw)
2. Time of planting ("15 days can make a world of difference")
3. Seeding rate ("drill calibration is crucial")
4. Adequate nutrition and timeliness of application
5. Weed control is important
6. Soil testing to determine available nutrients
7. Scouting in late winter/early spring for disease and pest control
8. Timeliness in harvesting the crop

After the field comparisons were reviewed, the crowd of small grain farmers assembled on the Martin lawn for a delicious picnic prepared by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Greenmont Mennonite Church. It was here, under cool shade trees that small talk of small grains continued, and it was certain that all who participated in the field day learned a great deal.

For information on small grain production, call the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-5750. —

•Morven

Continued from page 21

cery store chain which operates stores throughout Virginia. According to Goodman, the company holds quality control as a top priority. Cattle in the Morven operation are handled, processed, and fed according to the strict quality control measures established by Ukrops. This program guarantees Ukrops' customers will have access to the highest quality cuts of meat.

Among projects under study at Morven's feeder terminal is the use of waste produce from Ukrops for feed. The store's policy of discarding any produce which has been on display for more than 12 hours provides Morven with yet another feed source for cattle at the terminal. The waste produce is hauled to the feeder terminal, chopped, ensiled, and mixed into the cattle's daily feed ration.

Although the total cost of the Morven feeder terminal was not available, it became obvious the dollar figure attached to the project was certainly staggering. The waste storage tank alone cost $90,000 and the Harvestores rang up at $30,000 apiece. Virginia Frame Builders of Mt. Solon was the primary contractor on the job. Goodman noted that as many as seven contractors played a part in the feeder terminal's construction.

With the relationship between the cattle producer and the grocery story established, Morven and Ukrops have joined forces to build an agricultural facility which is futuristic in its intent to control the production process as much as possible. And as Young Farmers touring the feeder terminal learned, the future is today at Morven Farms. —

Sheep producers to vote on check-off fee

RICHMOND -- A fee of 50 cents per head is being collected on all sheep or lambs sold in Virginia. A new state law authorizes this assessment until sufficient funds are collected to pay for a referendum to determine if Virginia sheep producers favor the creation of a Virginia Sheep Industry Board and continuation of an assessment to generate funds for market development, predator control, education, research, and promotion of Virginia's sheep industry.

By law, the Virginia Sheep Federation must petition the Virginia Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services to request a referendum. Once the Board receives the petition, it will determine whether sufficient interest exists to justify a referendum, and if there is, will adopt guidelines and a schedule for the statewide vote. VDACS will conduct the referendum.

Those eligible to vote include sheep producers who sold one or more sheep or 50 or more pounds of wool in Virginia from July 1, 1993 to June 30, 1994. If approved by a majority vote, the assessment would be set at 50 cents a head, with the Sheep Board having the authority to increase the fee by no more than 10 cents a year up to a maximum of $1 a head. Should the referendum fail to pass, any funds not used to pay for it will be paid to the predator control department of the U.S.D.A.

In addition to the Virginia referendum, a national referendum is slated for this fall to consider establishing a check-off fee to support national research and promotional activities. ---

Jones hosting 'Farm Bill 95' broadcast

WAYNESBORO — A live satellite broadcast titled "Farm Bill '95" will be held Aug. 21 at the offices of Edward D. Jones & Co. in Waynesboro.

"Few people realize how much impact the Farm Bill has on our everyday lives, from the price of a loaf of bread to the effects on our local economy," says Scott McDevitt, Jones & Co.'s Waynesboro investment representative.

"Farm Bill '95" is being produced in conjunction with the St. Louis Agri-Business Club. Members of Congress and state officials have been invited to address a gathering of the group at Jones' St. Louis headquarters. Topics of discussion will include a description of the legislative process the bill will follow, specific items included in the bill, and an outlook for the future of the farm industry.

The program, which is free of charge, will be broadcast live via satellite. Audience members will have an opportunity to call in and ask questions of the speakers following prepared remarks.

"We're looking forward to hearing directly from members of Congress on this important piece of legislation, and we're glad to be able to offer the program to our community," says McDevitt.

The St. Louis Agri-Business Club includes leaders of agri-business companies, farmers, agricultural manufacturers, marketers, and transporters. Edward D. Jones & Co. is an investment firm with more than 3,100 offices in 49 states serving more than 1.8 million investors.

For information about "Farm Bill '95" or to reserve a seat for the Aug. 21 showing, call 943-7848. —

Schoolhouse News

Fort students, faculty coping with construction mayhem

AC staff report

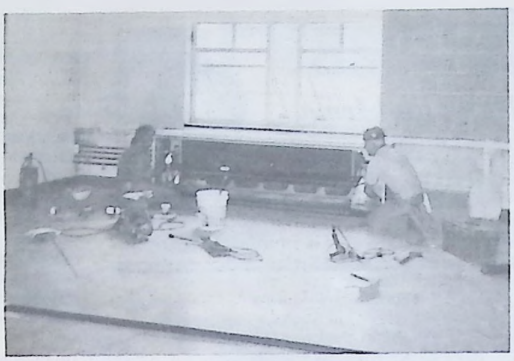
FORT DEFIANCE -- "No more pencils, no more books, no more teacher's dirty looks" goes the familiar chant of students out of school for the summer.

For Fort Defiance High School students whiling away their vacation days, the chant might well be: "No more jackhammers, no more drilling, no more utility lights strung from the ceiling."

Fort is in the process of a substantial renovation and building project that will add a new gym facility, several classrooms, more library space, a renovated and redesigned cafeteria, and an upgraded heating and cooling system. New windows will ready the school for the installation of air conditioning.

The entire project will take two years and is expected to be completed in the fall of 1996. The gym, the cafeteria, and new math and science classrooms, however, will be ready when school opens in August this year.

The students, faculty, and administration have endured a corps of construction workers in their midst, layers of dust blanketing everything, halls illuminated with utility lights, the constant warning beep of heavy equipment backing up -- the list is endless -- with good humor and great expectations of a showcase school.



Construction workers are turning an old school into a new school at Fort Defiance High School. In addition to structural expansion going on at the school, the existing structure is being modernized to include air conditioning. In the photos above, at left, workers make the necessary changes to accommodate central cooling. At right, the effect of the change can be seen with windows being removed and replaced.

Photos by Sue Simmons

The following poem was written by Fort student Mary Beth Walker, a participant in a poetry workshop led by Fort English teacher Bill Vonseldeneck.

CONSTRUCTION

The constant pound of a hammer,
The sound of an electric drill,
The workers have bad grammar,
The dust gets to me still.

I hope this noise is worthwhile,
I hope this doesn't last,
I hope they change Fort's style,
And I wish they'd do it FAST!

Construction has been evident on the outside of Fort as well. In addition to the structural alterations being made to the high school, a new elementary school is being built across the road. It will be ready to accept students when school opens this year. ---

FFA members win state honors

BLACKSBURG -- Area FFA members traveled to Virginia Tech in June for the annual state convention, and Augusta Federation members were among individuals who won honors at the event.

Fort Defiance High School FFA members Mary Hylton, Amanda Shreckhise, and Kristie Avoli placed first in the state Agriculture Sales Team contest. The Junior Livestock Team from Beverley Manor Middle School and made up of Rosalea Riley, Matthew Hickey, and Scott Talley won first in the state's junior livestock judging contest.

Also from BMMS was the state winning junior Agri-Science Technology and Mechanics team of Neal Buchanan, Philip Myrtle, and Jeremy Hunter. Buchanan and Myrtle, placed as second and third-high individuals, respectively, in the state.

Placing as the high individual in the Senior Livestock Judging Contest was Scott Buchanan of Riverheads High School.

State Proficiency award winners were Jason Shiflett, FDHS, poultry production; Ashley Craun, FDHS, sheep production; R. Scott Buchanan, FDHS, swine production; and Brian Garber, FDHS, soil & water management.

State Degree recipients were Atley Armstrong, David B. Cole, Dee Elwell, Seneca C. Graham, Joseph C. Medley, Lisa Ratcliffe, and Joshua Simmers, all of Buffalo Gap; R. Scott Buchanan, Ashley Craun, Brian Garber, Jennifer Hawk, Jeffrey Michael, Kimberly Powell, Misty Shifflett, Kevin Shull, Andrew Tutwiler, Wesley Weaver, and Nathan Wenger, all of Fort Defiance; Greg Buchanan and Scott Buchanan, both of Riverheads; Dustin Henderson, Jason Hulvey, David Strawderman, and Tim Sturdivant, all of Stuarts Draft; and Laurie Davis, Joey Hensley, James Sprouse, and Lynn Wease II, all of Wilson Memorial. ---

Country Crossroads

The good, the bad and the ugly

Hank and Irma

By

Lee Ann Heizer

Irma thinks it's good every now and again to take a break from the hurly burly of agricultural endeavors and get away — for a week ("Are you out of your mind?"), for a weekend ("Look, somebody's got to look after things around here."), a day ("That hay has just got to be done today!") or maybe an evening ("I'm not making any promises!"). It's good every now and again to just drop everything and go. This may be "good," but the trauma it creates for Hank is "bad."

"It'll be fun," says Irma. "The kids will love a day at Twirl-Your-Insides-Out-World!"

Thinks Hank, "Sure, lots of fun to pay 30 bucks a head to get in some place I don't even want to be and hang upside down with a bunch of people who make chickens look smart."

"It will be relaxing," assures Irma.

"I can't think of a better way to relax," fumes Hank silently, "than to spend a day driving to some beach, twisting and squirming in the sand and frying in the sun, wandering like a zombie through every shopping mall within an hour of the water, and climbing in the car and driving another day to get home."

What's good for Irma is sometimes bad for Hank. And it really gets ugly when they try to find some way to meet in the middle.

Occasionally, spurred by her infrequent perusals of *Southern Living Magazine*, Irma proposes a family trip. With a destination in mind, Irma begins to talk with Hank about when the proposed trip might occur. As Hank's excuses — spreading manure, baling hay, vaccinating *cattle, fixing fence, building fence, checking the fence, and last of all, keeping the bulls away from the fence* — begin to pile up, Irma's face falls, and her dream of a week of fun in the sun fizzles like a dud firework on the Fourth of July.

Determined that there is more to life than watching that fence (she's pretty sure fence just happens to be a handy excuse for homebody Hank) Irma renegotiates and settles for a day trip. (Irma knows that a day trip is not too *good*, but Hank thinks it might not be too *bad*.)

"So," queries Irma, "What day will we go?"

"Not a Monday!" Hank proclaims emphatically. "There's always a lot to do on Monday and I can't be gone. And Tuesday and Friday are bad because those are stockyard days, and I might have to take a load of cattle to town."

"What about a Wednesday or a Thursday then?" suggests Irma helpfully.

"If I have to go to the stockyard on Tuesday and Friday, I need to get the work done on Wednesday and Thursday that I missed on Tuesday and Friday," Hank counters with not a little bit of irritation.

"Well-what-about-Sat-ur-day-or-Sun-day?" Irma enunciates with marked sarcasm. (It *is* getting ugly now.) "Can you foresee any problems on a Saturday or Sunday?"

"You know Saturday is busy because I have to do extra work so I won't have quite so much to do on Sunday," responds Hank earnestly. "And I hate to remind you of this, but you always say that if a cow is going to get out she's gonna do it on a Sunday morning. You know the condition of these fences (back to the fences again!). I just don't think it would be *safe* to be gone on a Sunday," reasons Hank.

Irma is not sure how *safe* it is to even continue the discussion. It is apparent that the day has not yet been created when Hank can leave the farm so she cries, "Uncle," and shouts, "Well, what about going out for dinner and a movie? Do you think the broken-down fences will hold up for three hours so that we could do that?" (ugly, ugly, ugly).

"Well, I can't think of any reason why not," Hank answers quickly.

"What time can you be ready to go?" Irma asks weakly. She has been down this road before. Time is meaningless to Hank, and particularly so if he is just about 45 minutes short of finishing up whatever job he is working on. In Irma's married memory there is not a birthday party, family reunion, wedding or picnic to which she and Hank have arrived on time. The chances of a timely arrival at a movie, before the end of the first hour, are slim.

"Well, it's hard to say," responds Hank. "Let me think about it."

Hank seems to spend the better part of 20 minutes thinking about something — probably the fence again — when Irma finally interrupts, "What time are we going?"

"I don't know," says Hank. "Just be ready. We'll go when I get here."

Despite the difficult and protracted planning period both Hank and Irma enjoy their evening out.

"We should do that again sometime, honey," Hank says sleepily as he drifts off to his sweet dreams of rods and rods of stout, bull-proof fence.

Irma agrees and realizes that it's good to get away for a while. Maybe she'll be ready to face the challenge again sometime in the next century. —

Habitat for Humanity planning 'Blitz Build'

Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Habitat for Humanity will join affiliates all over the world in a "Blitz Build" the week of September 9-17. This week has been designated as "Building on Faith" week by Habitat for Humanity International.

The house to be built at 1321 Ashby Street in Staunton will be the seventh for the local affiliate. Construction of House No. 6 at 901 Western Road in Waynesboro is on schedule, according to Habitat organizers. The dedication is set for Aug. 27 at 2 p.m.

Although prospective homeowners for the Waynesboro house have yet to be selected, the Ashby Street "Blitz" house will be purchased by Loretta Stuart and her five-year-old son Zachary. Loretta is employed as a licensed practical nurse at Augusta Medical Center. She will work as chief site clerk of the "Blitz House" and has accumulated her 200 hours of sweat equity in other Habitat activities.

"I love flowers and am looking forward to planting them in a yard of my own. My dream is to make the whole yard a safe and fun place for Zachary to play -- away from traffic and other dangers," Loretta says.

A "Blitz Build" is an accelerated construction effort involving churches, businesses, civic organizations, individuals and groups of carpenters, plumbers, drywallers, roofers, painters, electricians, and other willing workers, both skilled and unskilled.

The complete house will be dedicated Sept. 17 which has been designated an International Day of Prayer and Action for Habitat for Humanity.

The "Blitz" schedule is now being formulated, according to John Zinn Jr., executive director. Experienced construction crews are being recruited. Churches, businesses, organizations or individuals desiring to help with labor, money, materials or food for work crews should call the Habitat office, 886-1944.

Joe Riley is the project manager for the "Blitz Build." He is a self-employed contractor who served for more than a year on Habitat's building committee. He was project manager for the second house built on Wythe Street in Staunton which was built in 15 Saturdays from September to December 1994.

Work days at the "Blitz House" will be from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Anna Lee Pullin, fundraising chair, is seeking underwriters for the house. An underwriter provides financial support of $1,000 or materials and labor equaling that amount in value or a combination thereof.

Chairs of other committees are Bo Beasley, public relations; Donna Panko, site facilitator; Wade Weeks, procurement; Mary Alice Henkel, food and refreshments; Roy Howard, dedication service; and Jack Wilkers, president of SAWHFH, blitz chaplain.

Construction of the Habitat House at 901 Western Road in Waynesboro is on schedule. The Dedication Service is scheduled for 2 p.m. Aug. 27.

Photo by Terry Terrell

Marney Gibbs, volunteer coordinator for the "Blitz Build" says, "It is so exciting that our affiliate is ready to accept the challenge to blitz-build a house during the 'Building on Faith' week when houses will be built all over the world." ---

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin

July, 1995

Dear Maude,

What a busy place Washington is!! I'm sorry I did not get a chance to write to you last month, but I have never had to work so many hours in my life. No matter how early I come into work or how late I stay, I never seem to be able to catch up. Now I certainly know the meaning of long and strenuous days!

All of our clients have interests in little bits of legislation, special wordings, etc. that they want added as amendments or that are already part of some bill that is currently being picked apart by Congress. It keeps us hopping, just trying to keep up with things. Several weeks ago, there had already been over 200 items requested as changes in the tax code. There is almost no way that the House members could ever consider that many, but everyone has that one little special thing they want special treatment on. I'll tell you it's crazy!

What all this means for us is that everyone in the office has to be up on the Hill trying to cover as many of the hearings as possible. One day last week I had to go straight from home to represent the boss at a breakfast fundraiser, then directly to one committee hearing on the House side which was not over until an hour after one I had to get to on the Senate side. I never got lunch and did not get into the office until almost six o'clock and then had to fill the boss in on everything. It was almost 9 when I got home and had to be back on the hill the next morning at 10. *I'm not so sure this is what I had in mind when I wanted a glamorous job in Washington!*

Gone are the days when I could spend my lunch hour checking the sales along Connecticut Avenue. I saw a sale sign in the window at Talbots the other day as I rode by in a cab headed to the Hill. It entered my mind to tell the driver to stop right there, but then I couldn't think of any way to explain my way out of it when I returned to the office with shopping bags in my hands and nothing in my brain to report on. I'll never know what wonderful clothes I could have bought!

I know everyone at home is interested in what will happen with the agricultural programs as they proceed with the budget cuts. As it stands now, agriculture has a disproportionate amount of proposed cuts, and in order to save many of our programs all sectors of the agricultural business really need to work together. Not just those directly involved in agriculture, but the warehouses and nutritional people as well. How well everyone sticks together will have a lot to do with the outcome. My boss is working hard to do all he can to keep the producers from having to take an unfair share of the cuts.

Poor Dylan is still among the unemployed. He is not alone, however, for there are many, many more former Hill employes who still can't find work. Each time there is a move to streamline some branch of the government, more people find themselves out there looking and jobs simply do not exist. There is a large group of former employees who keep in touch with each other and spread any news they hear. So many of those who are now without jobs were career people who had been with a committee or agency for 20 or 30 years and are in their late 40s and 50s. They are the ones who are really having a hard time finding anything. Dylan is not as young as many of the new staffers, and neither is he quite in the older group yet, but he still can find nothing. His mother had him looking for an apartment in Atlanta when he was home last week, but he managed not to find anything suitable. If something doesn't happen soon, he may have to go home. He says that if that happens, he may just run for Congress himself, and then no one but the people at home can fire him!

What I wish is that I could give him some of this extra work I suddenly have!

One night this week my boss was invited to a dinner which was being given by one of his friends who is a lobbyist. He was having the dinner for some of the House members with whom both he and the boss have issues pending. The boss called the office just as I was finishing work that had to be done by morning and asked me to bring some papers he needed by there on my way home. So off I went to this wonderful townhouse within a few blocks of the Capitol, hair hanging down in a limp mess, feet killing me, and a messy bundle of papers under my arm. To put it mildly, I was not my most glamorous or in the most social of moods. And what do I find when I get there? Not my boss and a couple of guys pouring over details of some legislation, but a house full of members of Congress and some of their wives! And me looking about as unkempt as an orphan. I wanted to find a place to hide.

The dinner had been set for seven o'clock, and a few people showed up about 7:30. At quarter of eight the House called for a vote at eight, so they all rushed back to the Capitol to vote, got caught by another vote 10 minutes later, then returned for their dinner. There they all sat chatting about the amendments they had just voted on as well as about their fellow members and munching some of the most delicious looking food I ever saw (and all I got to do was look at it, for there was not much left when they got it all on their plates!) when all of a sudden this awful racket went off everywhere. All House members wear these beepers which go off like little radios, turned up loud, and a voice comes on to tell them about votes, etc. I'll tell you what, I never would be able to stand having those things talking to me all of the time. In that dining room it was awesome — nine of those things going off at once! And then nine members all jumped up, wiped their mouths with their napkins, thanked the host quickly and took off back to the Capitol. I was still standing there holding those papers the boss wanted. He says that is about par for the course with trying to catch one of them and discuss anything. I was mad that they ate up all that great looking food!

There are so many crazy things that have been happening which I could tell you about, but the pile of work on my desk has to be finished before I can go home, so I had better get busy with it. We are all looking forward, with more enthusiasm than in the past, to the August break. Congress is scheduled to recess at the end of the first week of August and not come back until after Labor Day. After I once get caught up with my work, I think I will take off a week to sleep!

Tell Mama, who, as usual is never home when I call, that I may even get a chance to come home for a visit.

Love to everyone,
LuLu

Raw onions, sardines and baseball

Saying grace
By
Roy Howard

When I was growing up with my three brothers, baseball was the glue that held our family together. Baseball and summer were the same thing. Most every Saturday one of us was playing while my mother was selling popcorn at the concession stand, and my father was behind the plate enduring the taunts of fans. At the top of every list of thankless jobs in this world must be the umpire at little league games! Split-second judgments are made over inches this way or that, and on that judgment some parents rest their sons' and daughters' future. "Hey, it's only a game," never makes much impact upon a parent intent upon winning at all costs. So the umpire endures it all; and whenever my father was off work, he was wearing the big blue chest protector and the tiny face mask leaning over the catcher, trying his best to judge a baseball within inches of its target.

When we were not playing baseball, we were watching it. The game of the week on Saturday afternoon was a weekly ritual in our home. When the game came on all six of us and any friends who happened to be there, gathered in the living room around our black and white TV. (I don't remember when we finally went color.) Arguments were dropped, family disputes put aside, sometimes even forgotten. If there were any chores, they were excused for a few hours. Saturday baseball was to our family as Sunday Church was for others. It's not that we didn't go to church in those days, we did. Rev. Scoggins, our kindhearted, soft spoken Presbyterian minister who served the flock faithfully for over 20 years, just couldn't compete with our great heroes on the field -- Roger Maris and Stan Musial, Micky Mantle and Willie Mays, Juan Marichal, Eddie Matthews, Hank Aaron, Bob Gibson, Warren Spahn, Sandy Koufax and all the other larger-than-life players. They never went on strike, and I don't recall their personal foibles overshadowing their ability to play. I wonder now if wise Rev. Scoggins somehow knew that when winter came, we would listen more carefully to him, and maybe to God, because our heroes were resting for a while. While some theologians speak of dual allegiances to the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God, our pastor knew it was the church of baseball that tugged at our hearts.

There were certain rituals that went with our Saturday baseball. Besides the chores and conflicts being put aside, the telephone was not answered. Each of us had our assigned seats in the living room, not unlike those who sit in the same pew week after week. No one declared seat ownership, you just knew where to sit.

My mother was in the big chair, and my father was on the floor in front of the table where the food would be placed. When the snacks were finished he would move to the couch. In the early years, my place was on his shoulders. No one had the audacity to talk about things other than baseball while the game was being played. So we shared players' statistics and team standings; we made predictions about pennant winners and second-guessed the umpires. During the commercials we judged the managers performance and made numerous suggestions for approval or removal. (Not unlike parishioners on Sunday afternoon!)

By the third inning, the ritual food would be placed on the table. This food never varied: popcorn, saltine crackers, sardines and raw onions. Kool Aid for the kids to wash it all down. What I remember most was the care my father took in placing the sardine and raw onion slice on that saltine spread with mayonnaise. The room filled with the smell of onions; as our eyes watered we cheered our team with intense delight. It was a communion of love and family as real and joyful as any other I know.

Today when I think of baseball, it is not the present state of the game that comes to mind. It's the Little League ball park where my father leaned behind the plate, and my mother cheered for me from the concession stand. It's the hot summer evenings at the park where families and neighbors would come to support their children, shout at one another, and hope for a winning team. They do the same thing today in neighborhood parks all over the land. Baseball is about a young girl or boy getting his first hit and standing on base with a smile as wide as a river, listening to all those shouts of affirmation. Baseball is about putting things aside for a moment and enjoying a game that brings small pleasures.

I am not fooled by gold chains and double earrings, million dollar salaries and empty seats. This is not baseball. Baseball is a slice of raw onion on a sardine sitting on top of a saltine cracker. I know because I've tasted it with my family watching Sandy Koufax strike out more batters with more style than anyone dreamed possible. This is baseball and it's delicious. ---

Here, there, everywhere

Local Farmer's Market growth exciting

Vendors, customers comment on delightful Saturday mornings in Downtown Staunton

By JEFF ISHEE

It was barely past sunrise on a recent Saturday morning when Robert Brown eased into the Wharf Parking Lot in Downtown Staunton. The produce he was bringing to market was absolutely fresh. In this, his second season as a vendor at the Staunton/Augusta Farmer's Market, "Farmer Brown" had arrived on this particular morning with sweet corn, vine-ripened tomatoes, green beans, rhubarb, zucchini, patty pan squash, home-made jellies and jams, and fresh muffins from his home near Mt. Sidney.

The Staunton Augusta Farmer's market is now halfway through it's third season of exciting growth. From an eager handful of original farmers, the market has grown to a roster of over 30 local vendors.

Regular customer Peter Olsen says "Everything is so fresh and keeps so much longer than what I can get at the store. Also, it's become almost a social occasion, where I see all my friends at the market on Saturday mornings. Lots of times, I come even when I don't need anything." Clearly, Saturday mornings at the market are an enjoyable experience.

According to Market Master Marilyn Young, "At this point in the season, we are way ahead of last year. We are really excited about the financial outlook of the Market." This is the peak of the fresh produce season, and every Saturday morning is a "beehive of activity" around the vendors' booths.

There always seems to be a commotion in front of Sam and Sarah Ann Yoder's market stall. All the bustle is caused by customers ogling the fresh apple dumplings, sticky buns, German chocolate cake, rhubarb pie, shoo-fly pie, dietetic applesauce cookies, zucchini bread, wholesome harvest bread, white bread, salt-rising bread, braided bread, and peanut butter cookies. Most of the Yoders' customers are regulars, and if you taste any of Sarah Ann's baked goods, you'll be a regular too!

The Staunton/Augusta Farmer's Market is a "Producer's Only" market. Producer is defined as the "person that grows or makes the product and may include the producer's immediate family members, partners, or employees or local cooperatives upon review. Selling of items purchased from, or provided by, another market is not permitted." The reason behind this market rule is that customer's have repeatedly asked for "local produce grown by local farmers." If you want grapefruit, you are going to have to try someplace other than the Wharf Parking Lot.

However, if it's organically grown salad greens you want, you'll need to see Mark Van Lear's booth. Almost every Saturday he brings fresh and chemical-free lettuce, Italian parsley, sprouts, endive, and chard. And if you need something to spruce up the dining room table while enjoying Mark's salad crops, pick up a fresh bouquet of colorful, cut flowers.

Ms. Young is also excited about the increase in the number of vendors from the region coming to downtown Staunton on Saturday mornings to sell their fresh farm goods. "We now have folks coming in from Fishersville, Swoope, Burnsville, Waynesboro, West Augusta, Afton, Mt. Sidney, Middlebrook, Fort Defiance, Stuarts Draft, Bolar, and Lexington." It is obvious to customers that there is a wealth of fresh fruit and vegetables grown in the Shenandoah Valley, and on Saturday mornings, it all seems to head for downtown Staunton.

Steady patron Joan Rice of Mt. Sidney said: "I've been coming to the market regularly for about a year now. The one reason I come is simple... fresh produce. I love to see a variety of food, and you can surely see it here. I lean towards organic grower's produce. One thing I'd like to see is crafts and art work by local artists also. It might help attract more customers to downtown. But it would have to involve local people only."

Each vendor at the market is required to complete a "Producer's Certificate" before selling at the market. New vendors can request forms from the Market Master location at the Wharf Parking Lot, or by stopping by the Staunton City Treasurer's Office in Staunton City Hall, the Augusta County Farm Bureau, or the Augusta County Extension Service Office in Verona.

Merritt and Linda Liptrap have become anchors of the shaded sidewalk on Saturday mornings. The Liptrap family produces local honey products, including flavored and regular honeys. Linda also sells homemade apple butter, rose geranium jelly, cinnamon basil jelly, Queen Anne's Lace jelly, and a wide variety of fruit and herbal vinegars. The Liptraps were joined on a recent Saturday morning by granddaughter Heather Hewitt, 10, who was displaying with pride her carrots, beets, and fresh homemade muffins.

Farmer Robert Brown of Mt. Sidney shows some of his home-grown produce to a young customer at the Staunton-Augusta Farmer's Market.

Photo by Jeff Ishee

Market rules, drawn up by the Market Committee and vendors, state that "Children under the age of 14 shall not be a vendor unless accompanied by an adult responsible for the child's conduct and safety."

This rule is well known to two-year veteran of the market, Ellie Frazier, who just turned 8 years old in June. "Be sure to say that Helen Keller and I have the same birthday" Ellie said exuberantly. Ellie lives in Staunton, and grows Queen Anne's Lace, oregano, and mint for the market. "I plant the seeds in the spring, and Mom helps a little. This week I have a homemade herb mask that I want to sell, but nobody seems interested yet." When asked if perhaps the herbal mask could be used to help in revitalizing facial skin, Ellie thought for a minute and proclaimed "Noooo. You wear it just for fun." Oh. You learn something new every day, and this vivacious 8-year-old had just reminded a shopper that the Farmer's Market has everything to do with fun.

This year, the market opened earlier than in past years. April 22 was the "opening day," with business as usual continuing through the year until the last Saturday in October. Marilyn Young advises that "traditionally, we have seen the lowest sales figures at the beginning and end of the season; however, our operating expenses remain the same during these periods." This year, market vendors are hoping to see the summer rush carry over right into the fall. Many have planted specific crops for the autumn market.

Matt and Linda Cauley drive in nearly 50 miles every Saturday morning from Millboro Springs in Bath County. In their third year of market farming, the Cauleys can be counted on to have fresh seasonal produce, such as salad greens, spinach, cabbage, pickling and slicing cucumbers, snow peas, green beans, sweet peppers, hot banana peppers, dill and other herbs, endive, eggplant and beets. The Cauleys say they have planted a full crop of salad greens for the fall in anticipation of the market's longer season this year.

There are two rows for vendors at the Wharf Parking Lot every Saturday morning. The first row along the brick sidewalk is reserved by farmers who paid a fee at the beginning of the year. Other spaces are assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis each Saturday morning. Vendors open for business at 7, rain or shine.

Perhaps the best reason to visit the Staunton. Augusta Farmer's Market was stated by steady customer Jennifer Bradford who said, "There are always a lot of good little things to eat." —

Among the many vendors on a recent Saturday morning, here is a sampling of items available at the Staunton/Augusta Farmer's Market:

-- Fritz Flower brought in *from Churchville* a variety of indoor plants, including ferns, ivy, dieffenbachia, chocolate soldier episcia, blood plants, chicken gizzard, bromeliad, and bird's nest ferns.

-- Jim Chaffin from Staunton sold an array of fresh local garlic, including varieties such as elephant, silverskin, and roja garlic. Jim is in his third year at the Staunton/Augusta Farmer's Market, and also sells seasonal vegetables.

-- Kristen Rogers of Buffalo Creek, near Lexington, had a gorgeous collection of homemade vinegars, including tarragon, sage, rosemary, and country Italian vinegar. She also had for the customers a table full of appealing fresh baked goods, such as whole wheat rye braided bread, pumpernickel bread, blueberry muffins, and banana-chocolate chip muffins. Kristen is a member of the "Virginia's Finest" program, and sells regularly at the Wharf Parking Lot on Saturday mornings.

-- Brothers-in-law Mark Hanger, a volunteer firefighter from Summerdean, and Robbie Cline, a greenhouse operator from Middlebrook, had enough summer produce -- cucumbers, yellow squash, broccoli, green beans, beets, and tomatoes -- to satisfy anyone's desire for fresh summer vegetables. —

Coming Events

Hospice classes

FISHERSVILLE — AHC Hospice of the Shenandoah (formerly Hospice Support of the Shenandoah), a non-profit, volunteer service of Augusta Hospital Corporation, will offer education classes on consecutive Thursday evenings, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m., beginning Sept. 7 and running through Oct. 19. The class, titled "Sensitivity to Death and Dying," will be held at Third Presbyterian Church in Staunton.

Anyone wishing to learn more about class content or enrollment, is invited to call Hospice at 332-4193, 932-4193, or 800/932-0262. —

Augusta BPW

The Augusta County Business & Professional Women's group meets monthly and is open to new members. BPW serves its member by assisting in the development of business and professional pursuits as well as personal growth and achievement. The members of BPW work together to pursue legislative changes for the benefit of all working women.

The August meeting will be held on the 9th at noon at Western Sizzlin' in Waynesboro. Cost is $6 and includes a buffet lunch. Dr. Laura van Assendelft will speak.

For more information, contact Vera Hailey at 337-4021. —

Food service conference

A Home-Based Food Service & Products Business Conference will be held 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Sept. 27 at Ingleside Resort in Staunton. Sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, the conference is designed to help participants work smarter for more profit. Information about liability insurance, record keeping and taxes, and health regulations will be presented.

The program costs $25 and enrollment is limited. Call the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-5750 for information. Registration deadline is Sept. 13. ---

Mailbox of the month

This month's mailbox was spotted by AC subscriber Gladys Harris of Greenville. The pink Flamingo mailbox can be seen in the Lofton area of Augusta County near Mt. Joy Presbyterian Church. This pretty pink bird receives mail at the home of Yvonne and Donald Harvey. The box construction was a team effort. Yvonne saw a photo of one in a magazine, her sister Sandra Debowski drew it, and Donald cut it out.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Dollars and Sense

Long-term care insurance:

One less thing to worry about

A lot of people have already heard or read about the "aging of America." Whether you've heard about it or not, the fact is that people are living longer today than ever before. In 1980, there were roughly 50 million Americans over the age of 55. Today, there are 60 million, and it's estimated that by 2000 about 90 million people will be over 55 years old. As this age group grows, so will the number of people who require nursing-home care. Placing a family member in a nursing home is a difficult, heart-rending ordeal, and it's an ordeal that not only affects the individuals but the entire family.

Take, for example, the Hudson family. A year ago, they faced a situation many families encounter today: their 78-year-old mother, Betty, had suffered a debilitating stroke and required around-the-clock attention.

For weeks, Betty's two sons, Mark and Dan, and her daughter, Cathy, discussed their mother's need for nursing-home care. Mark and Dan disagreed about whether a nursing home was really necessary. Cathy was tired of trying to keep the peace and had withdrawn from the situation altogether.

What none of the three siblings had been able to admit was that they were uncertain about how they would manage the additional costs of a nursing home for their mother. Their father, who had died 10 years earlier, had left enough money for Betty to live comfortably but not enough to cover an extended nursing home stay.

The Hudsons are just one example of the ever-growing number of families who face this situation every day. Fortunately, a visit to their family's attorney revealed that a life insurance policy, taken out by their father for himself and Betty a few years before he died, would pay all nursing home costs and some home-care expenses for Betty as long as she needed them.

No one likes to think about a potential nursing-home stay, but few can afford not to. One recent study showed that nearly one out of every two people who reach age 65 will require long-term care at some point in their lives. In addition to the emotional toll such a situation can wreak on a family, the cost of this type of care poses a threat to a family's financial security.

What complicates matters further is that many people believe Medicare or Medicaid will cover the cost of long-term care. The reality is that Medicare covers less than 2 percent of such costs, and Medicaid covers them only if you have virtually exhausted your life savings.

Long-term care insurance is an affordable way to protect your life savings from being depleted by the potentially exorbitant costs of a long-term illness. It covers the cost of a nursing home stay, as well as home care and other types of long-term care for as long as you may need them. Long-term care insurance can also protect your savings and keep you from becoming dependent on other family members. And for most people, that's the real benefit. —

The information in this article was provided by Scott McDevitt, a Waynesboro investment broker.

Cyclists and authors Randy Porter, left, and Nancy Sorrells, center, pause for a few moments with Mike Ford, brother of *Southern Living* writer Gary Ford, at the old Lutheran church on Middlebrook's main street. The photo of the threesome appears in the July 1995 issue of Southern Living.

Southern Living features local authors, Middlebrook

Southern Living magazine featured local authors Randy Porter and Nancy Sorrells with a review of their book, "A Cyclist's Guide to the Shenandoah Valley," in its July 1995 edition. Included with the article was a photo of the two authors with *Southern Living* staff writer Gary Ford on bicycles near the old Lutheran church on Middlebrook's main street.

Ford and his brother, Mike, came to the area in July 1994 to travel some of the 28 bike routes detailed in the cycling book. Randy, an Augusta County special education teacher, and Nancy, a research historian at the Museum of American Frontier Culture, collaborated on the book. Randy designed the routes, and Nancy, who is also a staff writer for Augusta Country, provided historical narratives which accompany the bike routes.

While traveling in the area, the cyclists biked to McKinley to visit with Irvin Rosen at his clock shop. A few more miles past McKinley and "Dividing Ridge," the cyclists took a break at The Olde Country Store in Rockbridge Baths.

"A Cyclist Guide" was self-published by Randy and is in its second printing. The book is available at local bookstores or by writing to Shenandoah Odysseys, P.O. Box 1968, Staunton, Va. 24402. —