

"Friendly news for friendly people"

# Augusta Country

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## Caretaker of caretakers: Craigsville school custodian cares for more than the building

By SUE SIMMONS

CRAIGSVILLE — Retiring after 37 years as the custodian of Craigsville Elementary School, Mary Jane Nuffer — "B" to all who know her—gives meaning to the word "custodian."

Born in Fordwick and a lifelong Craigsville-area resident, Mrs. Nuffer's husband, Russ, originally hired-on as the school's janitor.

Having spent years recovering from tuberculosis contracted during World War II service in Fiji, Mr. Nuffer eventually became disabled due to complications resulting from rheumatoid arthritis.

"My husband started the job, and I helped," Mrs. Nuffer explained, "but before a half-year had gone by, I was doing all the work in his name."

Craigsville Elementary School was at that time located at the north end of Railroad Avenue, about a half-mile from the Nuffers' home.

"I walked down to the school every morning at 4 a.m. and filled the furnace's hopper with coal. I went back home and then returned to school at 6 and cleaned until 8:30 when the children arrived."

Mrs. Nuffer would then go home to take care of her own house, six children and her husband, who eventually became con-

**cus-to-di-an (kus-to'-di-en), n.:** one who has the custody of something, as of a museum or school; a caretaker

finied to a wheelchair. Mr. Nuffer died in 1984.

She returned to the school in the afternoon to clean out the 18 "soot catchers" in the furnace, empty the ashes, re-fill the hopper, bank the coals, and lock up.

When it snowed, Mrs. Nuffer shovelled snow, and when the sun shined she cut the grass with a push mower and hand clippers.

"There wasn't any snow-blower or riding lawn mower in those days," she recalled.

"The job was considered part-time," Mrs. Nuffer said. "I made \$75 a month. Eventually that went to \$150. But it's only been in the last 15 years that the job has been considered full-time with benefits."

Mrs. Henderson, the first principal Mrs. Nuffer worked for, and Bill Vandevander, who followed Henderson, soon discovered they had a custodian who could and would do more than shovel, mow, clean, stoke, mop, and dust.

"Whenever they needed a substitute, they would

just yell for B!" Mrs. Nuffer laughed. "I worked in the kitchen for eight years. I made the rolls and salad and helped serve and then cleaned up the kitchen afterward."

The one thing Mrs. Nuffer refused

to do when asked was drive the bus. "I'm a much better passenger than driver," Mrs. Nuffer laughed.

She also tutored Craigsville Elementary children who needed extra help with their reading or their math.

"Sometimes a child just needs a little one-on-one so I take them down to the cafeteria and help them with their studies," she said.

In addition to cleaning the school, she makes the school look nice in other ways. She creates and puts up bulletin boards in various places. While floors are drying and wax is setting, she draws and colors mini-masterpieces for classrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria.

Mrs. Nuffer estimates that she has made over a hundred. Her bulletin boards often go home with teachers as gifts to decorate their own homes at holidays and other times.

Some have found their way from Craigsville throughout the state of Virginia.

She also dresses up as Mrs. Claus, as a Thanksgiving turkey, and as the Easter Bunny during the appropriate season. And she makes sure each teacher gets a goodie basket on her birthday. And she makes sure something ap-

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MARY JANE NUFFER OF CRAIGSVILLE

Photo by Sue Simmons

## Mary Jane Nuffer: Craigsville's guardian angel

By SUE SIMMONS

CRAIGSVILLE — There are few people B Nuffer has met and not liked. As a matter-of-fact, if B doesn't like you, you may have a REALLY big problem.

Here is what some folks have to say about B Nuffer.

"It's been a unique situation to have B live so close to the school. If there was ever a problem, she'd fix it long before we at Central Office ever knew there was a problem."

Ernie Landes  
Augusta County Schools

Mary Jane Nuffer was born at Fordwick where her father worked for Lehigh-Portland cement. Her mother's early death left Mary Jane to assume responsibility for her

younger brothers and sisters. She added that her siblings made the job easier by mind-ing her and never giving her a bit of trouble. "My two sisters are the most wonderful people in the world," Mrs. Nuffer said.

"Mary Jane Nuffer taught me that you didn't just have to sit around and wring your hands and feel sorry for poor children. You could do something about it, even something as simple as giving them a bath."

Joan Sayers

Bessie Weller Elementary School

"People remember Mary Jane long after they leave Craigsville. She is friendly, outgoing and very creative. She even made bulletin boards for my mom's classroom. My mother retired

See MARY JANE, page 4





# Staunton Woodmen honor Mary Frances Houff



Mildred Hendricks, left, of Staunton Woodmen of the World, presents Mary Frances Houff of Staunton with the Woodmen's Outstanding Citizen award.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

## AC staff report

**STAUNTON** — Mary Frances Houff of Staunton has been selected by Staunton Woodmen of the World as Outstanding Citizen for 1995.

Mildred Hendricks, a representative of the Woodmen, recently presented the plaque to Mrs. Houff at her home honoring her for the achievement.

A native of Boston, Mass., Mrs. Houff came to Augusta County as a farmer's new bride. She became active in the Farm Bureau organization and has served the agriculture interest group on the local, state, and national levels. Of primary emphasis to Mrs. Houff throughout her Farm Bureau career has been issues affecting delivery of health care to rural areas.

She has served on the board of the Farmers' Home Administration and worked as a volunteer in a number of local agencies including

the American Cancer Society, the Augusta Free Clinic, and the Augusta County Library.

Mrs. Houff has played an active role in local politics as a member of the Augusta County Democrats. For many years she served as secretary of the Augusta County Electoral Board and has spent many hours working in the county's registrar's office to insure the implementation of smoothly run elections.

In addition to her many board capacities and volunteer activities, Mrs. Houff has managed to find time to attend many meetings of the Augusta County Board of Supervisors — "just to keep an eye on them," she says. Mrs. Houff earned the Woodmen's Outstanding Citizen award through the work

she has done over the years to promote the overall well being of the Augusta County community.

Mrs. Houff resides at 333 Sharon Lane with her son, Dennis, and daughter-in-law, Cindy.

*Apologies to the Woodmen and Mary Frances for omitting this award from the article about the Woodmen's annual awards presentation which appeared in the December 1995 issue. Since Mary Frances was unable to attend that ceremony, the Woodmen took the ceremony to her. Thanks to Mildred Hendricks of the Woodmen and Nancy Wheeler of Augusta County Farm Bureau for inviting us along for the official presentation to Mary Frances.* —

## We'd like you to meet...

Chris Marrs of Staunton has saddled up her mount and is hitting the trail for Augusta Country. During the past month, Chris began rounding up advertisers in her capacity as Augusta Country's newest sales associate. In this issue, her column "Horse Sense" debuts. Chris takes on the identity of everybody's favorite four-legged equine, I.B. Hoofinit, to answer questions about horse care and training. A native of the New England states, Chris has many years of experience with horses and holds a horse back riding instructor's license for teaching advanced students. She has worked with 4-H members in horse judging, care, grooming, and riding and has also served on the Board of Directors for Ride with Pride, a local therapeutic riding program for children with disabilities. We welcome Chris to Augusta Country and hope you will enjoy her unique approach to horse care and training. ---



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Publisher & editor  
Marketing director  
Sales associate  
RHS News advisor  
RHS News editor

Betty Jo Hamilton  
Jeff Ishee  
Chris Marrs  
Cherie Taylor  
Heather Caldwell

### Staff writers

Betty Jo Hamilton  
Roberta Hamlin  
Roy Howard  
Jeff Ishee

Sue Simmons  
Lois Skeen  
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Terry Terrell

### Contributing writers

Beth Greenawalt  
Vera Hailey

Lee Ann Heizer

### Student writers

Kristi Avoli  
Heather Caldwell  
Carrie Heizer

Christine Manley  
Lauren Plemmons  
Kim Wilson

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# Arbor Hill woman turns ordinary gourds into extraordinary art

By NANCY SORRELLS

ARBOR HILL — Traditionally artists use paint on canvas to express their creativity. But there have always been some who have used a different backdrop for their art. Michaelangelo found the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel for instance, while Arbor Hill's Demetra Turner uses gourds as her canvas.

Yes, those funny looking things that grow on vines and are close cousins to squash and pumpkins. But when Demetra is finished with a gourd it is transformed from a kitchen garden leftover to a work of art worthy of a special place in anyone's home.

Demetra takes an ordinary gourd, dries it, cleans it and coats it with a base paint. After that, the artist is unleashed. Layers and layers of paint later, a scene has emerged. Perhaps it is a raccoon peering from a stump or an elk standing in a mountain stream. Then again, it might be a Noah's ark or a family gathered around a Christmas tree. Some of the gourds are custom orders — a portrait of a family member or a beloved pet. Smaller gourds often turn into Christmas ornaments with the unique shape of the gourd dictating the round look of a snowman or Santa Claus.

Art has always been a part of Demetra's life. As a Riverheads High school student she took all the art classes she could and even spent five weeks in Kansas at an art camp. Gourds, however, have only been a recent project of the 37-year-old.

"I have been working with them about three years," she explained. "I kind of fell into it. A friend of mine and I were going to buy some gourds, and we went together and bought \$30 worth. Then she decided she wasn't interested, and I was stuck with \$30 worth of gourds. I thought, 'Great, what am I going to do?'" she explained.

That first batch of gourds sat on the porch for a year and got moldy, Demetra recalls, while she turned to other painting projects. Then one

day after she had been painting canvas bags and shirts, she ran out of things to paint. "After I was finished, I felt empty so I thought I would paint a gourd," she said.

The results were less than pleasing to Demetra. "I didn't like it. I didn't like how it felt or how it looked. I set it down for six months. For some reason I went back to it, and they have been selling like hotcakes ever since," she said incredulously.

The gourd business has taken off at such a fast pace that she has had to quit her job as a preschool teacher just to keep up. She tries to get started in her home studio by 9 in the morning and works straight through until 4 or 5 in the afternoon. "Right now I am six to eight months backlogged which is very stressful to me," she said.

Part of the reason it is hard to keep up with orders is that the gourds have to go through a year-long process before they are painted. Once finished, however, they are very durable and last for years. "They are so lightweight that people think they are fragile, but they aren't," Demetra explained. "They last for years and years, and the smaller ones actually bounce if you accidentally drop them."

Most of the gourds she uses come from an 88-acre gourd farm in Georgia. The Turner family heads south in the middle of the muggy summer to bring back a year's supply of gourds all stuffed into their car. This past year they handpicked 1,000 of the little gourds while fighting off heat, humidity and nagging gnats. Each of the gourds had to be tested for firmness before it was chosen.

After harvest, gourds are suspended in mesh bags for a year in order to properly cure. Then they have to be scrubbed clean of the mold that inevitably forms on them. A year later, they are ready for the artist's brush, but not before getting a base coat of paint.

Finally they stand ready to spark Demetra's imagination. The smaller, soft-shelled gourds become Christmas ornaments. In addition to the usual snowmen and Santas, she also paints historical scenes. Tinkling Spring and Bethel Presbyterian Church are two such examples for which she has produced limited editions. Another recent idea has been a Nativity scene with gourds representing Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, the Wise Men, an angel, a shepherd and some sheep.

The larger, hard-shelled gourds inspire other ideas. An added touch on some of these is woodburning which creates dimension and detail.

"Sometimes it takes layers and layers of paint to get what I want on the gourds," she explained noting that some of the larger pieces take 15 or 20 hours to complete. Once the scene is finished, the gourd is sealed with two layers of varnish.

Although she sometimes wonders at the amazing popularity of her artwork, Demetra thinks it might be because of their uniqueness and the fact that they are three dimensional. "People enjoy having something they can set down and turn around. Each one is unique, one of a kind. All of my pieces are titled and dated," she explained.

"People really like the wildlife and other animals are popular, also all of the ornaments; I never have any of those left," she said in listing her best sellers.

When she signs a finished piece, she always adds a tiny shamrock, a symbol of her business, called Shamrock Studios. Her trademark shamrock has an interesting history.

"When I first got into this, I knew I wanted to do something with this artistic ability I had, but I was scared to death. I knew I had this desire to paint, and I was really praying about it," she begins. She went on to explain that the farm where her family lives was historically called Shamrock Farms, but she never considered the idea of a shamrock until she was teaching preschool one day and telling the children about St. Patrick and how he used the shamrock to teach about Christianity. "It hit me like a ton of bricks," she said, "and now I use the shamrock on everything I paint."

Where Shamrock Studios and her gourds are leading her is still unknown, but Demetra admits to being pleased with the chance to turn her artistic talents into full-time employment.

"I've always drawn and used pencil, but painting is just something I picked up with no real formal training. I feel like I'm in the process of learning and this is how I'm learning. It has been good because I have learned by doing," she explained. —

A limited number of Demetra's gourds are on display and for sale at Gitchell's Camera Shop in downtown Staunton.



Demetra Turner of Arbor Hill paints a design on a gourd. The artist's subjects range from everyday images like the bloom on a sunflower to the very ornate like a Christmas Nativity.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

## Gourds: Traditional, useful, decorative

By VERA HAILEY

Native Americans in the Shenandoah Valley used dried gourds for carrying water and storing food. Today this low-profile ornamental climbing plant is being rediscovered by crafters, artists, and decorators.

Gourds, which are closely related to squash and pumpkin, can be grown on fences or grape arbors so the strong vines can attach and allow the fruits to hang down and grow straight and unrestricted. The most common local varieties are birdhouse and dipper — both aptly named because of their shapes.

After fall harvesting, the gourds can be stored in a cool place for the drying process to begin. Without any human effort, they transform themselves from a heavy green fruit to a brown, mold covered watertight shell. The "insides" shrivel up to leave only seeds to be used for next year's crop.

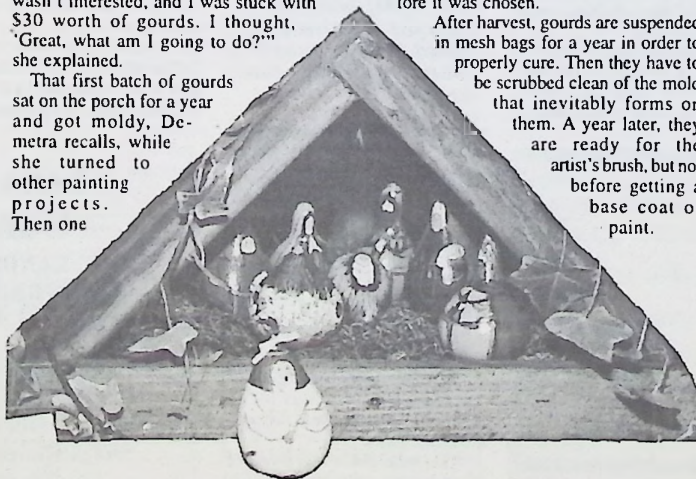
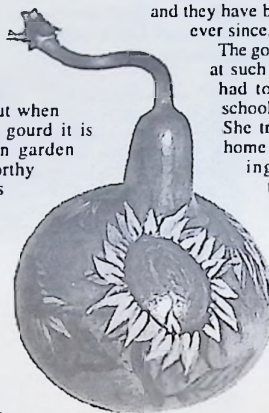
The gourd should be washed in hot soapy water and scrubbed thoroughly to remove the mold residue. The smooth surface can then be painted.

A birdhouse is an easy-to-make project. Simply cut a round hole on one side for bird access and add a twig for a perch, if desired. Grouping the houses together in rows provides a desirable motel for martins — birds which are coveted by gardeners.

A favorite way to decorate a gourd is to use craft paint to decorate it as a Santa. Variations of the Santa gourd can be found in art shops and at craft fairs, but are fun and easy to make at home as a holiday project.

Lisa McLain Hansberger, a folk artist from Harrisonburg, completed her first Santa this year at the suggestion of a friend. She designed a pattern and then drew an outline on the gourd. After filling in the sketch, she added details and some gold paint to give the jolly guy a gilded Russian look.

Try using a gourd as a unique canvas to create a Christmas decoration that will be enjoyed for many seasons to come. —



Demetra Turner made this Nativity scene, which includes an angel, a shepherd, sheep, Joseph, the babe in a manger, Mary, and the three wisemen, using her particular brand of gourd art.





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pears each morning in the stocking that the first graders hang on their door when Christmas approaches. And she is sure to act surprised when they come to her squealing their delight.

To say Mrs. Nuffer is a woman of boundless energy and optimism is an understatement.

Mrs. Nuffer's daughter, Sandy Volkstorf, an Augusta County teacher who helps her mother in the summers and on occasional Saturdays, explains.

"This job is hard. But what is sheer drudgery to others gives her pleasure. She literally bounces into that school every day," she said. Mrs. Volkstorf also offered in a whispered aside: "She's like a German workhorse; work is her recreation."

Born into the Keller family, Mrs. Nuffer's mother died when she was a child. "I was the oldest girl, and the responsibility of the family fell to me," the woman said. "I cooked and cleaned and took care of my father and five brothers and sisters."

When asked who taught her to clean, she just shrugs her shoulders. "It just came naturally."

If not next to godliness, cleanliness is definitely a virtue in Mrs. Nuffer's eyes.

"Cleanliness is the first thing you learn in life," Mrs. Nuffer maintains. "If the school isn't clean, teachers can't teach, and if a child isn't clean, he can't learn. When you're clean and you're in a clean place, you feel better, and you do better."

Mrs. Nuffer not only keeps Craigsville Elementary School clean, she has kept some of its students clean as well.

"There was a very needy family who lived near here," Mrs. Nuffer related. "The children never bathed, and their clothes were dirty and shabby." Determined to do what she could, Mrs. Nuffer



Mary Jane Nuffer with granddaughters Rachel, left, and Becky Nuffer, who are students at Craigsville, stand outside the school where Mary Jane has spent 37 years as its custodian.

visited the children's mother and got her permission to bathe the children at school. She brought a galvanized washtub into the basement of the school and heated water on the coal furnace.

"The teachers all pitched in and bought clothes and shoes for the children," Mrs. Nuffer explained. "When they arrived at school, I gave each of them a bath and dressed them for the day. We fed them breakfast and sent them to class. At the end of school, I put the clothes they came in back on them and sent them home."

Former Craigsville teacher Judy Showker recalled what a difference it made in the children's attitude. "After he had had a bath that little fellow would just strut into class with his head held high," she said.

Mrs. Nuffer commented that one of the children, now grown, stopped by to see her recently.

"He asked me if I recognized him? When I said no, he laughed and said 'After all you did for me?'"

Craigsville Elementary School children have known for years that there is a good samaritan in their midst.

Mrs. Volkstorf recalled a knock on the back door one snowy morning. Three children holding an infant stood outside.

"Their parents had abandoned them, and they had spent the night in a car. They knew my mother would give them something to

eat," Mrs. Volkstorf said. "My mother fried up bacon and eggs and made biscuits and poured what seemed like gallons of milk."

Mrs. Nuffer remembered that the infant was so weak it couldn't suck. She called the public health nurse who arrived to take the baby



"B" Nuffer takes some time out from her busy schedule at Craigsville Elementary to shoot some hoops.

to hospital. The Nuffers took in another child while he awaited placement in a foster home.

Recently, Mrs. Nuffer realized one of the students needed braces but learned the family simply could not afford the procedure.

Not one to let a simple matter like money stand in her way, Mrs. Nuffer got the child to an orthodontist, took up a collection among the Craigsville faculty and in the community, arranged for payments of \$103 dollars for 33 months, and makes sure the payments are made.

"That little girl is real proud of those braces, and the dentist is sure they will straighten her teeth permanently," Mrs. Nuffer said of the project's success.

In case you are wondering if all work and no play makes B a dull girl, it doesn't, and she isn't.

"I used to rollerskate around the classrooms, dusting, and wiping as I went," Mrs. Nuffer laughed. "Several of the teachers brought rollerskates, and we would race around the halls after school and have roller games in the gym," she said explaining how the idea got its start.

She also uses some of her down time to shoot baskets in the school gym. Her prowess with a basketball lends credence to her claim that she was "the best guard" Craigsville High School ever had. She even confesses to doing cartwheels down the hall when she is alone in the school.

"There's something about those long open spaces . . ." she giggled

as her words trailed off.

Mrs. Nuffer can be found at the school early and late, weekdays and weekends. She has cleaned, cooked, stoked, gardened, plowed, taught, tutored, created, nurtured, and rescued.

"When I walk in a room, and it's clean, and it smells good, I know the teacher and the children can sit down and enjoy it. It's the children," Mrs. Nuffer smiles, "they're the most important ones."

Mrs. Nuffer doesn't know what she'll do when she retires.

Chances are the folks at Craigsville Elementary School won't know what to do either.

There's going to be a presidential election in two years. The United States could use a custodian like Mary Jane Nuffer. —

## Mary Jane

Continued from page 1

from there 15 years ago and just last week she mentioned Mary Jane."

Ellen White  
Beverly Manor  
Middle School

"Mary Jane is always happy. If she was ever in a bad mood you would never know it. She worked so hard. Her husband had serious health problems that required her care, yet she never complained. If anyone one had the right to come to school with a frown on her face, it was her, but she never did. She is just a dear lady."

Debbie Landes  
Beverly Manor  
Elementary School  
"Mary Jane is almost like an angel. They don't make them like her anymore. She is the most loving, caring person

I've ever met. Material things meant nothing to her, yet she gives so many hours so lovingly to that school and to those kids. She is so important to the kids at Craigsville. Mary Jane is the

reason I stayed at Craigsville Elementary School for eight years."

Judy Showker  
Staunton

Mrs. Nuffer attended school in Craigsville, quitting briefly during the war to work in a Quantico munitions factory. She returned and graduated in 1945. A year after graduation, Mrs. Nuffer married and started her family which would eventually include six children.

"I've always had children around me," Mrs. Nuffer explained. "That's just what you did."

She has been known to say she always had one in her belly, one on her hip, and one on her skirts. She admits that the family's means were less than meager. The Nuffer family lived in a four-room house above Craigsville. Money was spent on keeping a roof over their head, food on the table, and "at the dentist or the doctor."

"Mary Jane is a super person. She always looks on the bright side of things. She has so much talent and ability and zest that she brings out the best in other people. And she helped the teachers and the students at Craigsville be better people."

Mary Erikson  
Fort Defiance High School  
"I always thought the janitor is the backbone of the school. B will do anything for  
See B Nuffer, page 5



Mary Jane Nuffer poses in front of one of the many bulletinboards which she has created at the elementary school.

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# Small-town America alive and well in Craigsville

By SUE SIMMONS

Jokes abound about Craigsville, Augusta County's out-post community. Some time spent in this small town located in southwestern Augusta County in the heart of the Estaline Valley reveals a com-

munity that is far more than a wide spot in the road on the way to somewhere else.

Craigsville is a community of modest means and lots of pride. Its architecture and its current residents reflect an interesting and important heritage.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, formerly the Virginia Central, put Craigsville on the map when the company extended its rail service to the Ohio River in the 1850s. The Panic of 1873 eventually bankrupted the railroad and reversed the fortunes of inves-

tors. However, the entrepreneurial spirit that created and promoted the railroad did not disappear.

It reappeared in Craigsville. After the Panic subsided, Augusta County experienced a land investment boom. Developers were looking for new towns to become new industrial centers. Craigsville, with its rail service and rich resources, fit the bill.

The Stratford Company reinvigorated the marble industry that had grown-up in Marbledale, a half-mile from Craigsville. It also opened up a second quarry on Black Oak Hill. That quarry failed to meet expectations when the marbled proved to be of inferior quality.

In 1899 a northern company bought the Marbledale property and developed the Virginia Portland Cement Company. A large plant and company town grew up and was known as Fordwick, taking its name from its European investors.

The Portland Company opened numerous limestone quarries in and around Craigsville and Fordwick. At one time this company was the largest cement plant in Virginia and employed as many

as 500 workers.

Lehigh-Portland and later Stillwater Mills, a textile production plant, provided most of Craigsville's population with jobs and made the town commercially self-sufficient. Downtown boasted a number of grocery and other retail stores, restaurants, a theater and drive-in on the outskirts of town, and a doctor. Even the teachers were hometown folks.

The closure of Lehigh-Portland Cement and the re-organization of Stillwater has cost Craigsville valuable jobs and changed the social structure of the town somewhat.

Many of the people who work in Craigsville's present day institutions — either the school or Augusta Correctional Facility, commute from Staunton. Downtown business has diminished, some buildings stand empty.

Regardless, a visitor can still get a good meal and have a friendly conversation in this humble, well-kept, proud little place.

Those who lament the passing of small-town America and old fashioned values need only look as far as Craigsville.

And that's no joke. —



Craigsville High School Class of 1945 shows Mary Jane Keller, third from the left on the first row, with her classmates. Mary Jane quit school for a while to work in a mun-

itions factory during World War II. She later returned to Craigsville and completed her high school education. Fifty years later, Mary Jane still wears bobby socks to school.

## •B Nuffer

you. She goes beyond what anybody would do for a child. If a child needs clothes, she goes out and gets them. It's real sad that she's leaving."

Cathy Youell  
Adult Education

"We never went on vacation or did things that other people did," Sandy Volkstorf, one of Mrs. Nuffer's daughters, commented. "We thought those things weren't available to us — that they were beyond our grasp."

Continued from page 4

Mrs. Volkstorf credits two of her Buffalo Gap High School teachers, Frances Showker and Mrs. Price, for encouraging her to go to college, a decision both her parents supported.

"Once Sandy went to college a fire raged through this house as all my other children realized that they could also do more with their lives," Mrs. Nuffer noted.

"B Jane is constant movement. She clearly cares about her job and about the kids.

Things are spotless in the elementary school, and she gives 110 percent. So much about the care of a school is taken for granted. I wish there were 19 of her."

Bill Youell

Augusta County School Board

"B is the only person I know who has two birthdays — so maybe she's old enough to retire and maybe she isn't! Really, B is one of a kind. If ever there was a kid who needed something at Craigsville Elementary school, she goes out and gets it for them. You can be down and talk to her for a few minutes and, shucks, things start looking up. B is definitely a people person."

Bill Vandevander

Adult Learning Center

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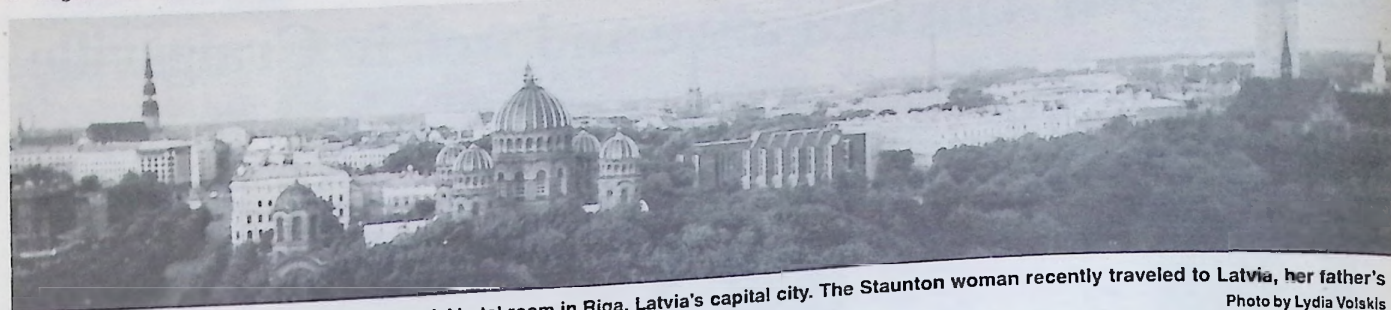
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The Latvian skyline as seen from Lydia Volskis' hotel room in Riga, Latvia's capital city. The Staunton woman recently traveled to Latvia, her father's birthplace, to learn more about her family's history. Photo by Lydia Volskis



Lydia Volskis of Staunton shows some of the textiles she brought back with her from her visit to Latvia. Photo by Nancy Sorrells

## Latvia: At a glance

An ancient culture reborn might be the best way to describe Latvia. The Latvian people have lived in the same Baltic region of northeastern Europe for at least 4,000 years. Their language is the second oldest European language and their capital city of Riga was founded in 1201.

Maintaining their independence, however, has not been easy with nearby bigger neighbors like Germany and Russia. In August 1991 Latvia, which is located between the other Baltic republics of Estonia and Lithuania, was again declared an independent democratic republic, thus ending a half century of rule by the Soviet Union.

Today Latvia has about 2.7 million people in its 25,000 square miles (about the size of Ireland). Seventy-one percent of the country's population lives in urban areas, the largest of which is the capital city of Riga. Agriculture, electronics, machinery, fishing, and forestry are important to the economy as is its growing tourism. Under Soviet rule, the country was the main provider of washing machines, telephones, mopeds, generators, railroad cars and streets cars to the USSR.

With its emergence from Soviet rule, tourism has become a growing factor in the Latvian economy. Because of its proximity to the Baltic Sea, both summers and winters are relatively moderate. A rich heritage of folk music and folk art also thrives there, and folk festivals draw people from around the world. A stable financial community, based on the Lat since 1993, has also given the national economy a boost.

This information was compiled by Nancy Sorrells. —

# Journey to Latvia helps Staunton woman learn about family's roots

RIGA HOTEL, Latvia — "Today will be the first full day I spend in Latvia, and I'm striking out on an all-day trip with two other members of the tour group. We have signed on for an organized tour of the Kurzeme region of Latvia with a hotel-run mini-bus company. Kurzeme is a region in western Latvia, a 2 to 3 hour drive from Riga. My father's mother and her family were native there, and had lived there for many generations. We three got onto the bus with a Latvian driver who has four gold teeth across the front, a Latvian guide who tells us she will conduct the whole tour in German, a young man and his Asian wife from Dusseldorf who were honeymooning in the Baltics. The tour bus had big windows, plenty of fresh air and no shock absorbers that I noticed. The driver puts his foot on the floor and points the bus and we're off!"

Lydia Volskis, journal entry

By NANCY SORRELLS

When Staunton's Lydia Volskis boarded a plane and took off on a week-long journey to the Baltic Republic of Latvia this past summer, she had only vague pictures in her mind of what she would find there.

She was journeying to Latvia in search of her own roots and to help the people of a country just emerging from the yoke of Communism celebrate the rebirth of their Methodist churches.

Although born and raised in America, Lydia, 30, has heard stories of Latvia since she was a small child. Her father, Wilhelm S. Volskis, is the minister at St. Johns United Methodist Church in Staunton. In 1944, when he was 12, he, his parents and other family members escaped from their Latvian homeland as World War II was coming to a close, and the iron curtain was crashing down in Eastern Europe.

"They spent five years in Germany, until 1949, in a displaced persons camp. Finally they came to America. My grand-

parents and father settled in Ashland, Va and the rest of the family went to Nebraska," Lydia explains of the family's migration to the United States. Lydia's grandfather had been a Methodist minister in Latvia, and the family was sponsored by a Methodist Church in Ashland.

It was only natural, then, that young Wilhelm Volskis who had learned English in the displaced persons camps, would also feel a pull to the Methodist ministry. He went to college at Randolph-Macon and then seminary at Duke University. He continued graduate work at the University of Virginia where he met Virginia Sue Baber, a student at the nursing school. They got married and started a family. For the last three years, Rev. Volskis has been leading the congregation at the Staunton church.

Lydia and her sister, Susannah, grew up hearing stories of their Latvian grandparents and of the "Old Country." "Latvia was always familiar to me," Lydia recalls. "We used to look at family documents. Especially valuable in my family were the papers that got the family into the U.S. These were kept in a little satchel."

So when the opportunity to visit Latvia arose earlier this year, Lydia knew she would be up for the adventure. The occasion was the Latvian Methodist Church's first annual conference since World War II. The United States Methodist Church decided to sponsor a trip of people who had connections to Latvia so that they might see the newly reopened churches and help the people with their celebration.

"Recently the Latvian church regained properties and titles to some

churches that hadn't been open since Communism," Lydia explains. "The churches were non-entities before last year. One of the churches was even used as a boxing ring."

Although her father was unable to make the return trip, Lydia decided that she would make the trip to his homeland for him. On August 29, 17 people, including several from the Methodist Board of Global Ministries, took off for Eastern Europe.

"I didn't know anybody on the trip, but I feel I'm pretty adaptable," Lydia said of the beginnings of her journey. "It was a mixed group and very nice. I met a woman in her 80s in the group who was a friend of my grandmother. She is going to translate my grandmother's notes in the margin of her cookbook."

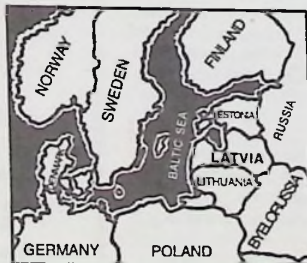
Before she set off on her trip, Lydia did a lot of reading and talking with her father about his memories. She also tried to master a few words and phrases in the Latvian language, which is a unique Scandinavian language, but found that many of the people there spoke English.

Much of the group's time was spent in Riga, the capital city of Latvia. "It is a beautiful old city with winding cobblestone streets, pastel buildings and a street car. Some parts of it date to the 13th century, but it is also a bustling city with around 1.5 million people," she says. The cars in the cities presented an interesting spectacle she adds, noting that there were vehicles of every make and model, but particularly ones from Russia and Scandinavia. The Russian cars, called Moskvich, looked like "little cracker boxes with wheels."

Visits were made to a number of other cities and towns as well, including the port city of Leipi, the last place her father saw when his family was fleeing the country in 1944. "The German front was moving quickly, and they had to get out. The last view my dad remembers as they were sailing away was of thousands of anti-aircraft guns pointed at the sky. It was a scary picture for a 12-year-old," she says. Although she didn't see any anti-aircraft guns, Lydia describes her visit to the port city as a step back in time.

Another step back in time was the town of Kuldige where her paternal grandmother lived and grew up. "My grandparents met there, and I saw areas where my father had described. I felt like

See LYDIA, page 7





# Children converge on Kmart for Christmas shopping spree

By NANCY SORRELLS

WAYNESBORO — Daylight might not have fully arrived, and the mercury may have been lodged in the single digits, but there was warmth and happiness shining from the front doors of Kmart Dec. 10 where hundreds of youngsters and their families had gathered for a Christmas shopathon of sorts.

Each child was there to spend \$50 so that he or she might experience Christmas. The project is the brainchild of Tim Spears who founded The Augusta County Country Music Opry in 1980. Through donations and local band benefits, money is raised for the children's shopping spree. Around mid-December, the children who are chosen through recommendations from a variety of community organizations, are brought into Kmart and given \$50 apiece to spend on themselves.

"I guess the biggest thing is seeing so many kids who have to do without get something. There are a whole lot of people out there who have a whole lot and getting everybody to share is my goal," Spears said.

His biggest thrill, though, is simply watching the children shop. When the doors opened, carts were immediately commandeered and the shopping began. Naturally the toy aisles were the most congested, but other youngsters headed to the clothing section to get the necessities of life first.

"Mostly they are getting clothes, because that's what they need," said one mother with two young children in her cart. "They are

each going to get a couple of toys, but we are getting a lot of clothes off the sale rack."

"See what I am getting," said 8-year-old Amanda who was holding up a pink and blue outfit that came complete with a necklace. "We are also getting shoes, mittens, gloves and coats," she said excitedly.

A father who was helping his 10- and 8-year-old daughters try on winter coats noted their selections would be the extent of their purchases on this day since the coats were \$50 apiece. But the blond-haired pair of girls seemed very excited at their pretty new coats.

"Tim Spears is great," said a mother who roused her three children at 4 a.m. so that they could make the drive from Craigsville. Their shopping complete, the children did exactly as they did last year — they walked up to Tim Spears, hugged him and thanked him for the opportunity to have a little something extra at Christmas.

Many of the children loaded up on toys as their carts soon overflowed with Barbies and toy trucks and cars. Some of the older youngsters wandered over to the hunting and fishing supplies, while the poster and stationary section was also a draw for the teens. From toddlers to high school age, all had the chance to look and buy.

"Once a child is old enough to realize what Christmas is and that other children get things that he or she didn't because of strained family finances, then that is old enough to come here," Spears explained of the flexible system. "It might instill caring

and love in them. Someday they will look back and remember a time when someone they didn't even know cared."

Perhaps the biggest hit of the day — Tim Spears notwithstanding — was the visit of a jolly man with a white beard and red suit. As he "Ho-ho-hoed" his way through the aisles, children left their baskets of toys to grab a hug from old Santa. One girl slipped away from her family for several hugs, while another girl "admitted" that she was being "good now," but left the door open to the possibility that she had not been perfect the whole year through!

For several hours, four check-out lines at Kmart were going full force, ringing up Christmas for each boy and girl that went through. "I got a Kelly doll named after me," said a shy 8-year-old named, of course, Kelly. Her older sister was able to purchase a Cut-and-Style Barbie. Six-year-old Justin had a basketball and crayons, but also slipped in a box of chocolate-covered cherries for his grandfather and socks for his dad.

"The last two years have been exceptionally big," Spears said as he glanced around



Two-year-old Robert Lee Bailey visits with Santa during the Country Music Opry Children's Shopping Spree held recently at Kmart in Waynesboro.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

the packed store. "The whole community has caught on to what we're doing and is really standing behind me." He added that The Augusta County Country Music Opry is now incorporated and donations can be made to the Christmas fund all year. Spears can be contacted at 540/949-7034. —

## •Lydia

Continued from page 6

I had stepped back a hundred years in time. There was a beautiful river, and the people were fishing for eels and had eel baskets in the river."

Kuldige was several hours drive from Riga, and the scenery was beautiful despite the bumpy, poorly maintained roads. "I saw groves of birch trees, and it was very green and lush. My dad has always had a particular fondness for birch trees, and now I know why."

Another stop on the tour was Jurmala, a beach resort on the Baltic. Formerly the vacation spot for communist bigwigs, the area "has the air of something about to happen," Lydia explains. "The woods come right up to the beach. The small community has wide gray stoned streets which are lined with huge trees touching across the top like a canopy. It is damp, cool and windy. The little vacation homes and small hotels on lots tucked back off the streets are painted various pastel shades with lots of white and contrasting trim. These former 'getaways' of Communist bigshots are mostly empty now, but a few sport clotheslines full of laundry," she wrote in her journal that night.

For the Americans, there was also ample opportunity to mingle with the Latvian people. "We were treated like celebrities. The Latvians couldn't have been nicer. We

went into several homes. All the homes struck me as being extremely well cared for. Some were very old structures, but well cared for. They also love flowers and all of the houses had flowers in vases."

As the country emerges from communism, the people are working hard to cultivate tourism, which is a top industry. Even in the bustling city of Riga, Lydia explained she never felt unsafe, and the people work hard to maintain their beautiful cities. "There are shops, restaurants, music, theater — something going on all the time. The Latvia National Opera House is a real showpiece. They are also very clean. They don't throw cigarette butts on the streets, and they pay people to come along and clean the streets. They even sweep up the leaves on the street. I was struck by the amount of color. A lot of buildings are being repainted and there are a lot of parks."

Music is also important to the people of Latvia, she noted, and nowhere was this more evident than in the newly rejuvenated churches. This love of music caught the Americans off guard at first, she added with a laugh, and then explained: "If they liked a hymn in church that they had just sung, then they would sing it again!"

For Lydia, the week-long visit into her family's history was over all too soon. She was able to purchase a number of woven and knitted textiles with traditional patterns. She also found some amber jewelry, a Latvian-English dictionary and some current maps for her father.

Latvia is the biggest of the Baltic Republics, and Lydia admits that her time there was not nearly enough to see the entire country. "There are a couple more places I would like to go. I hope to go back in a few years and maybe take my sister," she said.

When she returned, her father was excited to hear about her experiences. It was a new link between the memories of the father and the memories of his daughter. "You hear about some place, and it is hard to put the image on the map," Lydia explains. "It was delightful to put real pictures and real perceptions together with what I had been told." —

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## Our culinary heritage

# Sweet potatoes: Versatile, nutritious, and tasty

By ROBERTA HAMLIN

When the first explorers arrived in the New World, they found the natives of the Caribbean islands eating "cooked roots that had the flavor of chestnuts." This potato was reported by Columbus to exist in many varieties. What we call the sweet potato was by then widely eaten in the Americas. The name comes from a Caribbean Indian word "batata." Both sweet and white potatoes were imported into Western Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The potato is a member of the same plant family as the tomato, eggplant, red peppers, and tobacco, and was cultivated at least 4,000 years ago by the peoples of Central and South America. It is in Peru, where it was a staple food of the Incas, that we find the oldest archeological evidence concerning this root vegetable. Dried seeds have been found at Paracas, which dates to about 750 B.C. The sweet potato was not documented in North America until the mid-1600's, when there were reports that it was being cultivated in Virginia.

When the early writers wrote about the potato, they actually meant the "sweet potato." Early European botanist Gerard includes it in his *Herbal of 1597*, and potatoes show up in some of Shakespeare's plays. The word "sweet potato" did not officially enter the English language until 1775 when the Oxford English Dictionary used it to distinguish the sweet from the white potato. Gerard had referred to the white potato as the "potato of Virginia" even though it was a native of the Andes and not widely raised in North America at that time.

When Mrs. Beeton speaks of potatoes in her *Book of Household Management of 1861*, she refers to the white potato, which was the one preferred by the Europeans. The sweet potato, she says, "is but rarely eaten in Britain; but in America it is often served at table, and is there very highly esteemed." And highly esteemed it is, for what would holiday turkey or ham or roast beef be without a sweet potato casserole.

Here's a dish that's bound to start some arguments when taken to holiday buffets. Is it an accompani-

ment or a dessert? Indeed it appears it might be a dessert with its crumb topping of brown sugar and pecans. But anyone who loves sweet potatoes with turkey and ham will appreciate this casserole as the perfect accompaniment. The recipe as printed will serve 6 to 8, but it is easily adjusted to whatever size crowd you're serving. Add in a few extra potatoes and increase the other ingredients accordingly.

### Sweet potato casserole

3 cups cooked, mashed sweet potatoes  
1/2 cup butter  
2 eggs  
1 cup sugar  
1/3 cup milk  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
**Topping**  
3 tablespoons flour  
1/2 cup packed brown sugar  
3 tablespoons butter  
1/2 cup chopped pecans

Melt butter in mashed sweet potatoes. Add sugar and milk. Beat in eggs one at a time with an electric mixer. Beat in vanilla and pour mixture into a greased 2-quart casserole dish. Cut butter into flour, brown sugar and nuts until mixture is crumbly. Sprinkle over casserole and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until set.

The sweet potato, now cultivated in most subtropical areas of the world, contains many vitamins and minerals. There is considerable Vitamin A, some Vitamin C and a little calcium and iron. Its sugar content is between 3 and 6 percent and increases when it is stored in warm temperatures. It also contains pantothenic acid, which helps metabolize carbohydrates. With all of these qualities it can be used in very healthy dishes as well as those where one should not think about calories or fat. The following recipe which is wonderful with roast turkey, falls into the latter category:

### Brandied sweet potato fritters

4 medium sweet potatoes  
1/4 cup honey  
1/4 cup brandy  
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind  
1 cup flour  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 well beaten eggs  
2/3 cup cold milk  
1 tablespoon cooking oil  
Oil for deep frying

Blanch the potatoes in boiling water for about five minutes. Drain, peel and cut them into thin slices. Mix together the honey, brandy, nutmeg and lemon rind and marinate the potato slices in this mixture for about an hour. Prepare a fritter batter by sifting together the flour and salt. Mix the eggs and milk and gradually stir into the flour mixture until the batter is smooth. Stir in 1 tablespoon of oil. Dip the marinated slices in the fritter batter and deep fry in oil until golden brown. Serve very hot.

The following recipe is as healthy as the one above is fattening. It is taken from the American Heart Association cookbook, *Cooking Without Your Salt Shaker*.

### Scalloped sweet potatoes

3 raw medium sweet potatoes  
2 medium apples  
1/4 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
3 tablespoons butter

Combine sugar and cinnamon. Peel the potatoes and apples then slice to 1/4-inch thickness. In the bottom of a lightly greased 2-quart casserole place a layer of potatoes, then a layer of apples. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar and dot with butter. Repeat layers until all potato and apple slices have been used. Cover and bake for one hour at 350 degrees or until potatoes and apples test tender with a toothpick. To make this dish even healthier, eliminate the butter and substitute an equal amount of brown sugar. Pour in just enough apple juice to cover bottom of casserole dish.

One way to use up some of that leftover holiday turkey (if, by any chance there is some) is with the following recipe. If all of your turkey is gone, this is also very good with chicken breast. Serve this hash with eggs for a hearty and satisfying brunch.

### Turkey and sweet potato hash

1 large sweet potato  
2 large baking potatoes  
6 tablespoons vegetable oil  
4 cups diced, leftover turkey, or cooked, diced chicken breast  
2 medium red onions  
4 tablespoons butter  
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme

Cook the sweet and baking potatoes in lightly salted water until tender. Drain, cool, peel and cut into small cubes. Keep the two types of potatoes separate. In 2 tablespoons of the oil, brown the white potatoes until crisp. Transfer to a large ovenproof bowl. Next, brown the diced sweet potato in 3 tablespoons of the oil until they, too, are nicely browned and transfer them to the bowl. Add the remaining tablespoon of oil to the skillet and cook the turkey until it is brown. Transfer to the bowl with the potatoes.

Finely chop the red onions. Melt the butter in the skillet, add the red onions and thyme and cook, stirring frequently until onions are soft. Add to turkey and potatoes and combine well. Season to taste with a little salt and pepper. Keep warm in the oven while preparing the eggs.

Another way to use the sweet potato is in a soup. This one, with the addition of a salad, would be good for lunch. If you do not want to use the wine, additional water or chicken broth may be substituted.

### Sweet potato and leek soup

3/4 cup finely chopped onion  
1 cup finely chopped leek  
2 large cloves of garlic, minced  
3 large carrots, sliced thin (about 1 1/2 cups)  
1 bay leaf  
3 tablespoons butter or margarine  
3 large sweet potatoes  
1 large baking potato  
5 cups chicken broth  
3/4 cup dry white wine  
1 1/2 cups water  
Sour cream

Melt the butter in a large kettle and in it saute the onion, leek, garlic and carrots until they are soft. Peel, halve lengthwise, and thinly slice both the sweet and

baking potato. Add the potatoes, bay leaf, chicken broth, wine and water to the pot and simmer, covered for 15 to 20 minutes or until the vegetables are very tender. Remove the bay leaf and puree the mixture in a blender until it is very smooth. Season lightly with salt and pepper to taste. Top the soup with a dollop of sour cream when ready to serve.

A wonderful dessert is the following recipe incorporating the sweet potato into a cheesecake.

### Sweet potato cheesecake

2 large sweet potatoes  
1/4 cup pecans, chopped, lightly toasted  
1 tablespoon grated orange rind  
1 pound cream cheese, softened  
4 tablespoons butter, softened  
3/4 cup sugar  
1/4 cup dark brown sugar  
3 large eggs  
1 cup ricotta cheese  
1/2 cup sour cream  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon ginger  
1/2 teaspoon allspice  
1/4 teaspoon cloves  
1 tablespoon bourbon

Bake the sweet potatoes in a 400 degree oven until tender. Let cool for a few minutes, scoop the pulp from the skins and work through a food mill. Measure out 1 1/4 cups of the puree and set aside.

Beat the cream cheese and butter until smooth. Add the two sugars, the eggs and beat until light and fluffy. Next add the ricotta and sour cream and mix until blended. Sift together the flour, cinnamon, ginger, allspice and cloves and beat this into the cheese mixture until it is just incorporated. Fold in the sweet potato puree and the bourbon. Turn the mixture into a lightly buttered 10-inch springform pan and sprinkle with the pecans and orange rind.

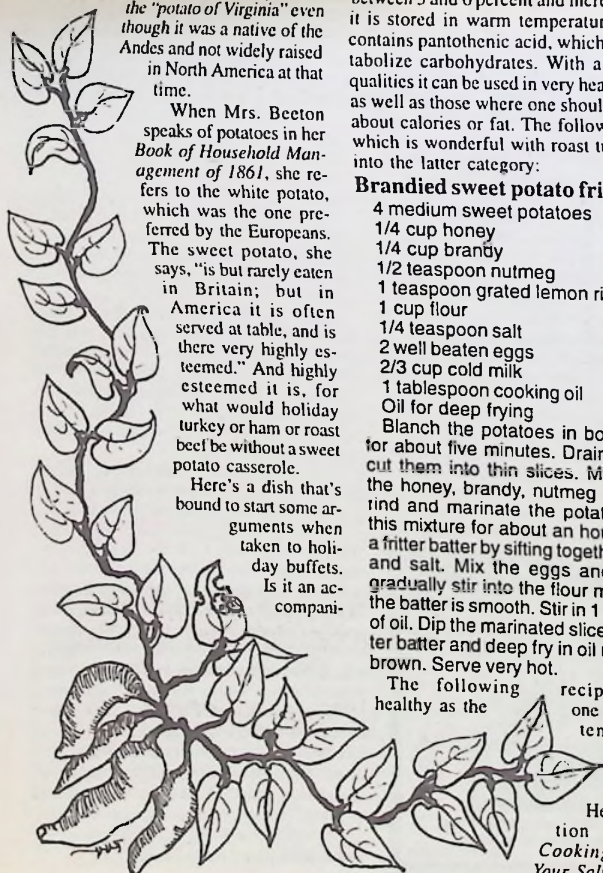
Lower the oven temperature to 200 degrees and cook the cheesecake for about 3 hours. Turn off the oven and leave the cake for one more hour. Remove from oven and let it finish cooling on a rack. Remove outside of pan, cover cheesecake with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

If you have some of the mashed sweet potatoes left from the cheesecake recipe above, they are a wonderful flavor addition to biscuits.

### Sweet potato biscuits

3/4 cup cooked, mashed sweet potatoes  
1/2 cup melted butter or margarine  
2 tablespoons brown sugar  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon soda  
3/4 cup buttermilk

Mix together the sweet potatoes, butter and brown sugar and beat until well blended. Sift together flour, baking powder and salt. Dissolve the soda in the buttermilk. Combine all ingredients and stir until dry ingredients are moistened. Turn dough onto a floured bread board and knead lightly 8 to 10 times. Roll dough to about 1/2-inch thickness, cut with a biscuit cutter and bake on an ungreased pan in a 400 degree oven for 18 to 20 minutes. ---





# HSF workshop offers tips on holiday decorating

By VERA HAILEY

**STAUNTON** -- In conjunction with the annual Christmas Open House Tour, Historic Staunton Foundation presented a decorating workshop Dec. 5. Held at Stuart Hall, the event was attended by nearly 100 eager students.

Cathy Coyle gave instructions for assembling a garland which can be used for a mantle centerpiece, a doorway decoration, or a staircase drape.

To make this popular piece, first collect materials and supplies. Go into the woods with pruning shears and a pail of warm water. Gather greenery such as pine trimmings and foliage. Put all cuttings into the water immediately to condition them.

Use wax string or heavy twine to tightly bind bunches of the clippings, using different colors and textures for variety, leaving a little extra string on each bundle. To link the bundles into a garland of the desired length, start with a long piece of string. Attach it securely to a single bundle. Lay the next bundle under it so the two overlap and weave the string through the underlying bundle. Bind the string around the base of the second bundle and continue the process until the desired length is achieved.

After assembling the bunches into one garland, add detail and color by weaving in items such as pine cones, pomegranates, herbs, and ribbons. These can be put onto



**Don Haynie of Buffalo Springs Herb Farm near Raphine shows off one of the centerpieces made at Historic Staunton Foundation's holiday decorations workshop held recently.**  
Photo by Vera Hailey

a floral pick for stability.

Cathy's next demonstration showed the group how to assemble a fresh wreath.

Begin by collecting a variety of materials. She suggests using trumpet vines, pine cones, and ribbon in addition to the usual pine trimmings. Soak sphagnum moss in a bucket of warm water overnight. Use two wreath forms, which can be purchased in retail floral shops or craft stores. Wring out the moss and stuff it into one of the forms. Place the second form on top and bind them together securely by using wreath wrap. Secure the end of the tape.

Start poking the stems of the greens through the wreath wrap and into the wet moss in the same di-

rection. Use clusters for focal points. Cathy suggests holly branches with red berries, pine cones, and ribbon material. Make sure the mold is covered entirely with branches, especially if the wreath will be hung on a glass door.

The finished product will last for months because the damp moss inside the mold will keep the clippings fresh. When the season is over, remove the salvageable adornments to use for next year's decorating.

Next on the program, Don Haynie took the spotlight with his centerpiece. He recommends using a galvanized steel chicken feeder pan as the bowl for his project. These may be obtained at the local farmer's co-op and are reasonably priced. Place 1/2 of a florist's foam

brick inside the feeder pan.

Begin assembling the centerpiece by pushing stems into the foam. A wire pick, florist wire, or sharp stems come in handy for this. Keep in mind where the decoration will be displayed. If it will be used on a mantle, put materials into the front side only. If it will accent a holiday table, make sure all visible areas of the brick and pan are covered.

It is important to do an outline first, strategically placing branches and stems to give a height and width

guideline. Don used boxwood, spiky juniper, and broad leaf foliage which had been sprayed with full strength acrylic floor wax. He then filled in the gaps with pomegranates and pine cones which had been brushed with gold acrylic paint. He also recommended using lotus pods, trumpet tree vines, spruce cones, white pine cones, herbs, and poppy pods.

Watering the foam in the center will keep the arrangement fresh for many months. Use a turkey baster for watering. ---

## Meet the workshop instructors

Cathy Coyle moved to Augusta County in 1991 from the Washington, D.C. area and began working with noted gardener and floral arranger Georgia Vance. She worked with Mrs. Vance for four years helping maintain and expand her extensive gardens and conducting lectures, tours, and workshops, creating custom dried flower arrangements, and exploring new methods of flower preservation. Cathy's background includes work and study in both horticulture and fine art. She has taught floral design, has designed private residential gardens, and is currently taking a class in landscape design.

Don Haynie opened Buffalo Springs Herb Farm in Raphine four years ago after an extensive restoration of the 18th century house and barn. Over the years he has added many theme gardens featuring everlasting flowers and herbs and, recently, heirloom varieties of vegetables. Special events are held at the farm throughout the season. Don, a former florist and floral arts teacher for 25 years in the Tidewater area of Virginia, is a member of the International Herb Association.

## Chamber seeks 200 by 2000 candidates

**STAUNTON** — The Staunton-Augusta Chamber of Commerce is seeking individuals to enroll in the seventh annual 200 by 2000 Leadership Institute.

The 200 by 2000 program was initiated in 1990 and has as its goal to identify and train a minimum of 200 well-informed and pro-active leaders in the Staunton-Augusta community by the year 2000. The long range goal of the Institute is to promote citizen activism and involvement in a wide range of opportunities of community service. The purpose of 200 by 2000 is to create a context for learning about community structure and problems, to offer resources and connections to help individuals focus their leadership skills, and to develop a growing body of individu-

als who are equipped to serve as community leaders.

The leadership program was redesigned in 1995, and the upcoming session will consist of five day sessions and four evening sessions. The day sessions will be 8 a.m. to noon on Feb. 14, 21, 28, March 13 and 20. The evening sessions will be from 7 to 9 p.m. on March 7, 14, 21 and 27. All sessions will be held at Valley Vocational-Technical Center in Fishersville.

Tuition for the program is \$125. Some scholarship assistance is available. Applications may be obtained from the Staunton-Augusta Chamber of Commerce. The deadline for applications is Jan. 15, 1996. For information about the 200 by 2000 Leadership Institute call the chamber at 886-2351. —

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# Yesterday once more



## Hawkins diaries to be preserved in Augusta archives

By NANCY SORRELLS

Recording the everyday history she saw going on around her was just always something Gertrude Holtz Hawkins did. Born in August 1901 on a farm between Middlebrook and Greenville, Gertrude somehow felt compelled to make note of what she saw and heard.

With a \$2.50 Kodak camera she snapped pictures of ordinary Augusta County life — children playing ball, men harvesting the crops, women working in the garden, youngsters posing in front of their one-room schools. At night, she took the time to jot a few sentences in a composition book telling of the day's events. Her daily diary entries were simple but informative — notations of the weather, how many quarts of vegetables were canned or how many eggs were collected. She also noted local community events like when someone was born, got married, or died. The burning of St. John's Church near Middlebrook appears as does Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

For more than 64 years, Gertrude managed to pen a few lines in her diary almost every day. After filling up two composition books, she turned to five-year di-

aries and filled up eight of those before the words finally stopped. The first diary entry, on Friday, January 1, 1932, was simply: "Rain, up home." Her final entry, on Friday, Aug. 4, 1995, was just as simple: "Home all day." In between was a lifetime of memories.

Gertrude passed away Sept. 26, 1995 at the age of 94, but through the generosity of her son, Ray Franklin Hawkins, the history that she recorded will be remembered and preserved. Gertrude was featured in the March 1995 issue of *Augusta Country*. At that time, she was kind enough to let copies be made of her photographs. Now, copies of her diaries will join the photographs in the archives of the Augusta County Historical Society.

Ray Franklin has lent the diaries to the historical society so that they might be copied and preserved for all to see and use. In that way, the local community life that his mother was recording will not be lost to history.

"I think the diaries should be available where they can do some good. I'm sure in the beginning my mother never really thought about the importance of what she was doing. But I think in the last few years she thought that they might do some good. She never expressed

this verbally, but I think she thought this," said Ray Franklin.

"My mother was like an institution in Augusta County. She was looked upon for a lot of information. The police department used her diaries as an official weather source. If there was a dispute in court (involving weather), they would go back to her diaries and look."

His mother's diaries were always a part of her life, noted Ray Franklin. In fact, the diaries are older, by a year, than Ray Franklin. "I remember her keeping a diary. To me it was a way for her to release her thoughts of the day," he said.

Gertrude's sister, Madeline Hanger, also remarked on her older sister's diaries. "It was just a routine with her. She kept it for so long that we all knew about it."

When you keep a diary for years, the word eventually gets out, Ray Franklin explained. "She was used as a source of information. People went to her when they needed to know when someone was married or died," he said.

The diaries are on temporary loan to the historical society. Once all 10 volumes are copied, the originals will be returned to the Hawkins family. As we draw closer and closer to the 21st century, the importance of Gertrude's



Ray Franklin Hawkins, left, and his wife, Phyllis, far right, look through some of Gertrude Hawkins' diaries with Gertrude's sister Madeline Hanger. The diaries are being loaned to the Augusta County Historical Society so they may be copied and the information in them preserved.

(Photo by Nancy Sorrells)

diaries becomes even greater. In just a few years, these volumes will be a record of a century past.

Augusta County Historical Society president Ann McCleary said she is pleased that the society will have the chance to borrow and copy Gertrude's diaries and photographs for its archives.

"While the 20th century doesn't

seem that far away, we will soon hit the 21st century," she said. "Before we realize it, 20th century items will have been thrown away, and that information will be lost. Gertrude Hawkins' diaries and photographs are important because they record the everyday things that are easily forgotten." —

## New year traditional time of celebration

By NANCY SORRELLS

For most of us in the Shenandoah Valley, January 1 marks the start of a new year. Exactly why we mark time in this manner, however, is anything but new. Part of the problem is that an earth year by celestial reckoning is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds — not exactly a nice round number with which to work.

Ancient cultures all had different ways of determining a year, and those years varied from about 300 days to 20 months. We actually have the Romans to thank for having January 1 as the new year.

Around 700 B.C. the Romans added the months of January and February to their 10-month calendar. In 46 B.C. Julius Caesar tinkered with the calendar again to make it more accurate. His big additions were leap year and a month named in his honor, July.

By the 1500s, the Julian calendar had gotten out of sync by about 10 days, so Pope Gregory axed 10 days from October 1582, thus creating our current calendar called the Gregorian calendar. Although the Pope's move gave us a calendar that will only be a day off every 3,323 years, it did not catch on immediately. England and the American colonies, for instance, didn't come around for 180 years — in 1752 to be exact.

No matter when the new year was, however, people always found a way to celebrate the new beginning. New year usually brought out old customs in the Shenandoah Valley of the past as both farmers and city folks ushered in the new calendar and bid farewell to the one just finished.

A glance back through the Staunton newspapers from 150 years ago shows that the new year was a time to reflect on the past, issue wishes for a prosperous future and visit

friends and neighbors. In the 1830s, 40s and 50s, the newspaper usually ran a shortened almanac with a calendar for the upcoming year.

The first issue in 1847 brought more than the usual amount of worry about the future. Most of the newspaper's space was devoted to the President of the United States who was writing about the new war with Mexico. As Augusta County's men were preparing to head off to war, the tension of the times showed in the annual New Year's message issued by the paper's editors: "The New Year: another year is gone, and, with all its important events, both public and private, is added to the irrevocable past...With such feelings we now greet our readers and our neighbors, and cordially wish them a happy and prosperous New Year."

All was not gloom and doom, however, the last issue of 1847 had a six-verse poem from the newspaper carrier soliciting gifts from the newspaper readers. The first verse set the stage:

"A merry Christmas to you all  
Another New-Year full of joy  
If you'll attend my early call  
And not neglect the Carrier Boy."

A bit of commercialism had crept into the season by the 1860s when, in 1867, one advertiser announced he had Christmas and New Year's presents for sale. Some of his suggestions were diaries, almanacs, books, Bibles and photograph albums. With a flair for the theatrical, the newspaper editors lined the columns of the last issue of 1867 with stripes of black to symbolize the death of the old year.

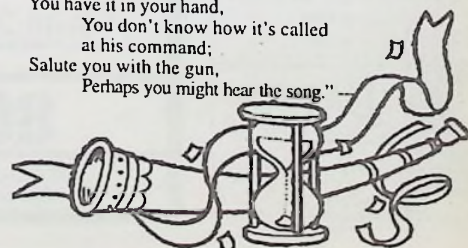
Visiting was another time-honored New Year's tradition in the Valley. In 1877, a snow on the first day of the year made the prospect of New Year's calls unfavorable, according to the newspaper, but many people went ahead and vis-

ited despite the weather.

Perhaps the most common New Year's celebration was that of "shooting in the New Year." Armed to the hilt with guns, firecrackers, cowbells and other noisemaking devices, revelers would visit a neighbor's house in the early morning hours and awaken the residents with their commotion.

In addition to the shooting, the captain of the noisy squad would recite a verse or series of verses as a wish and greeting. Often each verse was accompanied by a volley of gunshots. The farmhouse residents would then respond by inviting the visitors in for refreshments. One traditional New Year's verse, originally in German, is as follows:

"Awake, Awake my neighbors dear  
To the Christ day of the year.  
I wish to you a Happy New Year,  
To you and your family and all the rest,  
And to be content but ever blest.  
The old Year is gone and past  
and comes no more.  
The New Year is at your door,  
And you don't know you'll live  
to see it anymore  
You have it in your hand,  
You don't know how it's called  
at his command;  
Salute you with the gun,  
Perhaps you might hear the song."





## ACHS sponsors essay contest

The Augusta County Historical Society is sponsoring an essay contest in area high and middle schools.

The Society is inviting students to learn about Augusta County's heritage through the contest by researching an area of interest to them relating to county history. The essay topic — to be selected by the student — may be an historic person, place or event in the county and may pertain to frontier days or the 20th century.

This is the first year the contest will be open to middle school students. Cash prizes will be awarded in the contest with \$100 going to the top high school entry and \$50 going to the top middle school entry. Writers of winning entries will read their essays at the spring meeting of ACHS. The essays will also be published in the society's journal, the *Bulletin*.

Deadline for entry to the contest is February xx. Call 363-5608, 886-8210, or 885-3076 for information about how to submit an essay to the contest. —

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# Local history books are 'must haves'

By NANCY SORRELLS

When the new autumn releases rolled off the University Press of Virginia, collectors of Shenandoah Valley and Virginia history suddenly had a pair of "musts" to add to their collection of local history books. *Rockbridge County Artists and Artisans*, by Barbara Crawford and Royster Lyle Jr., and *Virginia's Historic Courthouses* by John O. and Margaret T. Peters are available at local bookstores.

The first book in the pair has been in the works for more than a decade and has had area historians waiting on the edge of their seats for years, while the second took the authors on a meandering 13,000-mile road trip back and forth across the Commonwealth. Both books are oversize treasure chests chock full of wonderful glossy pictures, contemporary photographs and artwork and exciting tidbits of history.

With an eye for detail that comes only after years of immersing themselves in the county's history and art, Ms. Crawford and Lyle have teamed up on a book that has a wide appeal to anyone interested in art, antiques, local history and social history. Ms. Crawford, a professional artist and teacher of art history,

is a natural link to the artisans in Rockbridge's past, while Lyle draws upon his long-term commitment to the history of the area. He was formerly the Associate Director and Curator of Collections at the George C. Marshall Library in Lexington.

This is not the first collaboration for the two authors, who co-edited an illustrated edition of *Stonewall Jackson at the Virginia Military Institute: The Lexington Years*. Lyle also co-authored *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* with architectural historian Pamela Simpson.

In the 1970s, the authors, along with other local historians began to suspect that the Rockbridge re-

gion of the Valley was rich, perhaps more so than most, in material culture. With one eye on an hourglass with its sands fast running out, a project was launched in an attempt to document that material culture before it no longer existed.

Their suspicions of a rich cultural heritage proved overwhelmingly correct, and this book is one spinoff in a project that turned out to be a massive undertaking. Literally hundreds of objects were photographed, measured and catalogued before the final task of narrowing down information for inclusion in the book even began.

The end result is a scholarly social history as much as it is a picture book of material culture. Seven chapters address a variety of arts that sprung forth both from the hearths of farmers' wives and the shops of master craftsmen. Fine arts, textiles, furniture, tall clocks, rifles, ironwork and pottery — this chapter is written by Kurt Ross, a leading authority on Rockbridge pottery and the director of Washington and Lee University's laboratory of anthropology — are each addressed in a separate unit.

The reader is struck by the range of "art" created at the hands of the Scotch-Irish and German settlers who wrested a living from the land in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of the examples, such as the painting of Natural Bridge and the folksy panoramic view of the hamlet of Fairfield, were created as works of art.

Other pieces certainly once had a more utilitarian origin. Elizabeth Elvira Blair might express a bit of surprise at the inclusion of her mid-19th century red and green overshot coverlet. A similar smile might cross the face of George Fulton if he learned about the picture of his stoneware butter churn in the book, and the tailor who sweated while trying to make a piece of cloth wrinkle-free by wielding a heavy iron cast in the county might actually chuckle out

loud at his tools being called art.

But such is the way of material culture. The coverlet, the churn, and the irons are all part of a past which has disappeared in the face of rapid industrialization and a homogenization of the American people. The authors have done the Valley a great service by compiling this book and capturing a rapidly disappearing material culture. Just as important as the first seven chapters is the final section, labeled "Profiles: Rockbridge County Artists and Artisans, 1750-1900. Here the work and biographies of more than 400 artists are profiled; from George Adams the cabinetmaker to William Zollman the gunsmith.

This book, according to the authors, "is only a beginning in understanding the creative legacy of the long list of creative people who were active in Rockbridge County from the mid-18th century and throughout the 19th century. But the first step has been taken." It may be only a beginning, but it is still a book no lover of local history will want to be without.

The history of Virginia has been equally enriched by the husband and wife team of John and Margaret Peters. Their book on Virginia's historic courthouses is much more than a coffee table picture book featuring pretty buildings.

Although it is certainly that — the book is a visual treat as it takes the casual browser through the state's legal history — it is also much, much more. The social and historical significance of the courthouse within the state's local history is laid out as well.

The roots of Virginia's legal system clearly go back to England, but it was in America's courthouses that the Mother Country's roots sprouted a unique system which fostered independence and tamed a frontier. Perhaps the words of Sir Christopher Wren best describe what the courthouse meant to the people of Virginia: "Architecture has its political uses. Public Building being the Ornament of a Country, it established a Nation, draws People and Commerce, makes the People love their native Country which passion is the original of all great actions in a Commonwealth."

With Wren's words echoing through the pages, the authors take readers on a journey through Virginia's most important courthouses. The buildings depicted all hold special importance to the state either for historic reasons, architectural reasons or both. Certainly, they were all built in an era before the public constructed government centers and municipal buildings to deal with its burgeon-

ing bureaucracy. None of the buildings in this book is younger than a half century and many have witnessed several centuries and countless generations of citizenry.

The volume is divided into five chapters: The Colonial Courthouses, The National Period (1776-1830), The Antebellum Period (1831-1861), Recovery and Growth (1865-1902) and The New Century (1902-41). The authors can't help but weave a rich social history as they describe each courthouse.

Important legal cases argued within the courthouse walls and gatherings on the courthouse steps are described. There was a time in the nation's history when no day held more promise of excitement than the regularly scheduled court days. Such days were times to catch up on shopping, gossip, friendships, paying bills, and taking care of countless other general affairs of the community. A disappointed peddler described a rather low-key court day in Essex County in 1807 with these words: "It was a very Poor Court, no fighting, no Gouging, very few Drunken people."

The cities of Staunton, Lexington and Harrisonburg were hosts to hundreds of such court days over the centuries, and their courthouses remain significant today. All three appear in the *Recovery and Growth* chapter. The Rockbridge courthouse, constructed in 1897 of red pressed brick, replaced a structure that had been described by observers as "filthy, dirty and absolutely a disgrace to our county...the shabbiest Temple of Justice in the Valley."

The Rockingham (constructed in 1897) and Augusta (1901) courthouses have a great deal in common. Both are the fifth courthouse of their respective counties and both were designed by T.J. Collins, a Union soldier who moved to Staunton in 1890 and opened a very successful architecture firm. Collins' work reflected the ways in which changing architectural fashions were interpreted in small-town America according to the book, and both courthouses remain today as impressive halls of justice.

The list of credentials brought to the book by the authors shines through the volume from beginning to end. Margaret Peters was formerly a historian for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is now its Information Director and Publications Manager. Her husband has been a practicing attorney for 30 years.

Together the Peters' love of Virginia's history and architecture and deep knowledge of the state's legal system have created a book that will grace the shelves of Old Dominion history buffs everywhere. —



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# To the stable at midnight

Down on the farm we're thinking about wandering around in the dark.

Sometimes we have the occasion to find ourselves wandering around in the dark — that is we fall off the couch, struggle into heavy work clothes, sleep walk to the door, leave the cozy warmth of the house, and stumble out into midnight's stunning chill. The air we suck into our lungs is cold enough that it wrings the grogginess out of our bodies. Suddenly we find ourselves wide awake and wandering around in the dark.

"That's funny. How'd I get out here? I could have sworn I was asleep on the couch the last time I checked," we say, doing a kind of personal assessment of the situation. But, nonetheless, there we are — wandering around in the dark.

It is my fortune (or misfortune — the jury's still out) to have under my supervision about 135 ewes. Those of you who have read this column before have already met some of these creatures. For others of you who have not made the sheep's acquaintances, I will simply say that sheep require a great deal of supervision particularly during lambing season. This is what most often has me out wandering around in the dark.

Although other sheep producers tell me their lambs arrive in the day — and I'm not sure I believe them when they tell me this — the sheep which I supervise seem compelled to deliver their lambs at night.

You may recall a column earlier this year in which I explained the process of synchronizing some ewes to breed so most of the lambs would arrive about the same time. I was not informed by those who conjured up this practice that "arriving about the same time" meant 2 a.m. the day before Thanksgiving. My plans and scheduling called for the ewes to deliver the first week in November which some did — about 10 out of 53. Evidently the sheep chose to set their own schedule in this instance.

From Tuesday, Nov. 21 through Saturday, Nov. 25, 25 ewes delivered 44 lambs. Out of that group of 25, only four delivered their

## Down on the farm

By Betty Jo Hamilton



lambs during the day — day being the time between when the ewes are turned out in the morning, about 8 a.m., until when they are shut up in the evening, about 4:30 p.m.

Now I ask you. Given a choice of shifts to work, wouldn't you choose the dayshift? But then sheep aren't capable of making an easy choice like that. They usually prefer to do things the hard way.

So, of course, the sheep I have to supervise have decided they want to work the graveyard shift. This choice is easy for them to make. They simply ask themselves what time of day/night am I most likely to want to be asleep, and that is when they decide to have their lambs.

Of course, you say, it's all my fault anyway. I was, in fact, the one who put the sheep on this accelerated breeding program. OK. I'll take the blame for resetting the ewes' body clocks so they were bred about the same time. Somebody really should find a way to set their body clocks so they'll lamb during the day instead of at night.

But having the need to go to the stable at midnight to check on the ewes has presented me with the occasions to see and hear a few things I might not otherwise.

Once I'm out the door, fully awake, and my eyes have adjusted to it, the night's not really as dark as it seems when you look out at it from inside a lighted house. I actually prefer nights when there is no moon as opposed to nights when a full moon coats everything in its reflected light. There's nothing too extraordinary about nights like these, because the moon's reflection of the sun is enough to

make things look almost like they do in the day. And the brightness of the sun reflecting off the moon overshadows the stars so you can't see them. Dark nights — India ink nights — are my favorite.

I'm hearing a lot about virtual reality these days. It is, I think, a developing technology whereby you are transported to a place which isn't real but seems almost like it is. Huh? But wandering around in the India ink dark nights seems to me a bit like what virtual reality might be.

You see shapes which you're sure are one thing then turn out to be nothing at all. You hear sounds which you've never heard during the day and for which you're not sure of the source — a screechy squawk coming from the vicinity of the creek and which you hope is a great blue heron. Sure, darkness has its eerie qualities. But there's also some solace in it as well. I take comfort in the fact that if I can't see something that's out there in the dark, neither can it see me.

The distance from my house to the barn is not that great, maybe 150 yards or so. The walk there in the darkness to check the ewes is not too difficult. Since I can't see much in the dark, my hearing becomes acute. For instance, I can usually tell when I step through the yard gate — still some 150 yards away from the barn — whether or not there's anything happening in the stable at the barn.

For the most part, the sheep are quiet at night. (Except for the ones that snore and, there are a few of those.) But if ewe happens to be lambing, it may tell the world about the process by baaing continuously until birth is complete. After lambs have been born, they tell the world of their arrival by bleating a greeting. When I hear either of these sounds on my way through the dark to the stable at midnight, I keep my fingers crossed that my arrival will be timely — either early enough to help a ewe with labor difficulty or early enough to make sure newborn lambs are bonding properly with their mother.

The week of Thanksgiving I spent a lot of time wandering around in the dark. It's best to check ewes at four- or five-hour intervals during lambing in order to be on hand when a crisis occurs. Fortunately for me, we do have lights at the barn which I turn on after stumbling down the lane and in through the stable door.

On Tuesday night of Thanksgiving week I arrived at the barn at 10 p.m., switched on the lights and found that four ewes had lambed within a two-foot radius of one another and all within the space of about 10 minutes' time. This group birthing had yielded seven lambs — and each of the four ewes was convinced that all seven lambs



**Setting sheep of the flesh and blood variety out on the lawn to pose as holiday decor is carrying things a bit too far in my book. And what a job getting them back in the attic for storage!**

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

belonged to her. It took considerable sorting, moving, and coaxing to get each ewe and its lambs into separate, temporary quarters where they would stay until morning when they would be moved to permanent quarters. So it was midnight before I started back to the house.

You might reason that if the ewes have their lambs at 10 o'clock, that's still early enough for the shepherd to go on to bed and get a pretty good night's sleep. Not so. Lambs which arrive at 10 — particularly those which are confused about who belongs to whom — have to be checked again within a couple hours to make sure they have nursed. So back to the barn I went at 2 a.m. to check these lambs and gather up a few more which had arrived in the interim. Wednesday and Thursday nights were equally busy in the lambing shed with me — the shepherd —

making haste to attend each sheep's every need.

This is the time of year when shepherds and sheep command a lot of attention. Indeed, while I was attending the recent Shepherds' Symposium at Virginia Tech I met a woman who had some sheep — three to be exact. Three sheep? "Why would anyone want just three sheep?" I asked myself. That's not even enough to call a flock.

At any rate, the woman and I were discussing a particular type of portable fence arrangement which she had used with her "flockette" and liked.

"As a matter of fact I'm going to use it to put our sheep on the front lawn for Christmas decorations," she said, seeming to be enthused at the prospect of a live display. Sheep as Christmas decorations? I don't think so. Setting sheep of the flesh and blood variety out on the lawn to pose as holiday decor is carrying things a bit too far in my book.

And what a job getting them back in the attic for storage!

Admittedly, no Christmas pageant is complete without a number of shabbily dressed, crook-toting, haggard fellows portraying the humble shepherds who left their flocks outside Bethlehem for their trip to the stable at midnight. On nights when I'm expressed in the delivery of lambs, I often wonder about those shepherds and their decision to leave their flocks. What would I do if I were confronted by a "heavenly host praising God and singing

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill..." How would I respond? Would I believe? Would I leave my sheep and follow a star? Or would I say, "Hand me that bottle of Betadine scrub and help me catch that ewe?"

I wonder too about the folks driving the vehicles I see whizzing down the road through the darkness when I've gone to the stable at midnight. They must be able to see the lights shining from inside the barn. I find myself wondering if they are wondering why the lights are on at the barn in the middle of the night. Do they ask, "What's going on over there? What is that light? Who's gone to the stable at midnight? Maybe we better go check it out and see what's happening." Or do they say, "Aw shucks, it's probably nothing... just those doopey old shepherds and their silly old sheep."

Then, too, my midnight sojourns at the stable give me a glimpse of life that others don't often see. I pull lambs from a ewe's womb and watch as that limp, wet mass inflates with its first breath of air. The ribcage expands — another breath and eyes begin blinking. The ewe gives the lamb her immediate attention — licking the lamb all over and nudging it with her

See STABLE, page 13



**Shepherds and sheep command a lot of attention this time of year. Do those doopey old shepherds and their silly old sheep know something the rest of us don't?**



# Producers approve Virginia's sheep checkoff

AC staff report

BLACKSBURG — Virginia's sheep industry now has a checkoff. The checkoff passed and became official when Gov. George Allen signed the proclamation designating the referendum results as official Nov. 27.

There are about 1,800 sheep producers in Virginia and 388 of them voted in the referendum, according to Steve Umberger, Virginia Tech sheep specialist. The checkoff passed by a margin of only 27 votes — 156 in favor and 129 opposed.

Virginia's checkoff will draw 50 cents per head from the sale of each sheep sold in the state. This money will go into a pool which will be administered by the Virginia Sheep Industry Board. Money has been deducted from the sale of sheep since July. These funds were used to carry out the referendum.

The 1995 General Assembly passed legislation which authorized the sheep referendum to be

carried out. The same legislation calls for the establishment of the VSIB and election of directors. However a glitch in the legislation requires that it go back through the 1996 Assembly for revision so that directors can be appointed. Due to Virginia's election rules, directors cannot be elected by popular vote to the VSIB. The VSIB board will consist of 14 members. Three members will be appointed by the governor, each of the state's nine wool pools will appoint a member, and Virginia Tech, and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will each appoint a member.

Funds provided by the checkoff will be used for predator control in the state. With the checkoff in place, federal matching funds will become available to aid in predator control programs. Checkoff monies will also be used for market development, education, research and promotion of Virginia's sheep industry.

The referendum which passed



also includes language which allows the VSIB to increase the checkoff to \$1 per head over the next five years at a rate of no more than 10 cents per year. Umberger said he felt the board would be reluctant to increase the checkoff in the near future due to the narrow margin by which the referendum passed. The close vote indicated there is not overwhelming support for the checkoff, according to sheep industry analysts. This year Virginia growers are expected to sell approximately 95,000 market lambs and 500,000 pounds of wool.

Virginia sheep producers and

those nationwide face another decision in 1996 when they will have to decide whether to accept a national sheep checkoff.

The national checkoff, if passed, will deduct 1 cent per pound on each lamb sold and 2 cents per pound on wool sold. Its legislation caps the amount of increase per year at .15 cents for lamb to a maximum of 2.5 cents per pound and .2 cents on wool to a maximum of 4 cents per pound. Increases in the national checkoff must be approved by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

The sheep industry fell on hard times with the repeal of the National Wool Act which provided funds for research, education, and development. If the national checkoff passes, domestic producers of lamb will be contributing \$7 million to the fund, and importers will be paying in \$6 million. Twenty percent of domestic collections will be returned to state sheep associations. It is anticipated that \$13 million will be raised annually through the sheep checkoff with the money being used for research, education, and development.

If the national sheep checkoff fails, the sheep industry will be the only major agricultural commodity without a national promotion effort or a national organization to handle research and education efforts. Checkoffs in the beef and pork industries are providing \$70 million and \$40 million, respectively, on an annual basis for promotion and development of those commodities.

All sheep producers are eligible to vote on the national referendum. For information about obtaining a ballot contact the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-5750. —

## Stable

Continued from page 12

nose as if to say, "Come on. Get going." Only seconds pass before the lamb lifts its head for the first time. Moments later this small creature is resting upright on its chest before beginning the gradual process of standing on all fours.

I can't count the number of times I've seen this happen. I wouldn't even begin to estimate over the years with the number of sheep and the numbers of lambs born how many times I've seen a creature come to life. And every time I've seen it — see it — it is a miracle, a wonder of infinite proportions.

And because it happens in a stable -- because somehow life finds its way to the murky shadows of a dirty, drafty stable, because there where it is rude and bare a light delicately flickers and grows bright, because there of all places and against all odds a new being has its beginning -- it is a miracle of miracles.

Wandering around in the dark, I find my journey to the stable at midnight — or any time of night for that matter — has a brightness to it. Returning to the house from delivering lambs and looking up at a star strewn night, I am content there is a connection between the incomprehensible vastness of the universe and the infinite wonder in the miracle of birth.

Down on the farm, we may be wandering around in the dark, but gradually our eyes become adjusted to it. Although deprived of light, we still have vision -- are capable of sight. In order to see, we need only to look at the darkness through different eyes. And when we go to the stable at midnight, we don't expect a miracle. But -- time and time again -- there it is just the same. —

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# Miss Virginia brings home Supreme Champion honors

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

GREENVILLE — Patience and hard work go a long way in running a successful sheep operation. Nobody knows this better than the Wade family of Greenville.

For the Wades — Bill, his wife, Margaret, and their sons, Billy, Jimmy, and Mark, — a quarter century of hard work paid off in a big way in mid-November when a Dorset ewe bred and raised by the Wade family was selected as Supreme Champion at the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Ky.

And while the family is proud of its accomplishments with the flock of purebred Dorset ewes, Virginia's sheep producers recently placed another feather in the Wades' cap. Bill was named the recipient of the Roy A. Meek Outstanding Sheep Producer Award at the annual Va.-N.C. Shepherds' Symposium held recently in Blacksburg. The award recognizes lifetime achievement in sheep production for the state of Virginia. Personal accomplishment aside, the Wades would point to the recent success at industry livestock shows as proof of and reward for their work to build what has become a nationally recognized source of Dorset seedstock.

The Wades sent their fall born ewe lamb — Miss Virginia — out on the annual livestock show circuit at the end of August. Before many showings, Miss Virginia was making a name for herself. The ewe won Supreme Champion honors at the Virginia State Fair, Vermont's Champlain Valley Fair, and Eastern States Livestock (The Big E) in East Springfield, Mass. She was Grand Champion at state fairs in Maryland and Illinois and took Reserve Champion and first place honors at the Indiana State Fair. Miss Virginia traveled to seven shows in 11 weeks enroute to her supreme championship performance at Louisville.

Unlike many of their competitors — purebred sheep have become the sideline preoccupation of millionaires like those who own and operate Sugar Loaf Ski

Resort in Vermont — the Wades' sheep operation began as a family endeavor aimed at raising money for college tuition. Operating under the name "Wade Brothers," the family bought 12 purebred ewes in 1975 to start a flock for the children's 4-H project.

"Once the boys' college was paid for we rolled it over to the family. That's when it became serious business," Margaret said.

But for any 4-Hers who ever competed against the Wade brothers at fairs or the annual 4-H and FFA Market Animal Show, it was apparent that the boys were serious about their sheep operation even as youngsters. Lambs raised and exhibited by the Wades throughout their years in 4-H and FFA consistently placed at the tops of classes and often claimed champion and grand champion honors. The success and nationwide recognition of Wade Brothers Dorsets comes as no surprise to their Augusta County neighbors.

Out of all the sheep the Wades have bred and raised, the family said they felt from the beginning that Miss Virginia had winner's circle potential.

"When she was three weeks old you could tell," said Billy, the oldest of the three Wade brothers. "She just had a look about her. When they're as good as she is they're easy to pick out." Billy holds a degree in sheep science from Colby Community College in Colby, Kans. Even though the Wade Brothers sheep operation now is in the ownership of Bill and Margaret, Billy's knowledge of sheep played an important part in Miss Virginia's breeding.

"On her dam side there's several generations of Wade Brothers breeding," he said, explaining that the brothers built the Wades' 65-ewe flock from the original 12 which were purchased. All existing ewes in the flock are descendants of those ewes. Miss Virginia's champion stature was also influenced by her sire which was the champion Dorset ram at the Louisville show in 1994. The years of careful attention to breeding by the Wades produced a ewe which had "all the right stuff."

"The biggest thing on show sheep is that you've got to put everything together in the best combination," Billy said. "You've got to talk her up in advance of the show so she doesn't get lost."

The family said they felt Miss Virginia had a good chance of winning at Louisville because of the ewe's success at The Big E. With purebred sheep breeders from across the continent gathered at Louisville, Miss Virginia had to work her way up through the ranks of more than 1,300 ewes exhibited. She emerged victorious over the other 113 Dorset ewes exhibited then advanced to the all-breed contest. Competing against 16 other breeds in the Supreme Champion class, Miss Virginia became only the second Dorset in 19 years to win the show's top award.

"This is the best by far we've ever done," Bill said.

The brilliance of the show's supreme champion spotlight was especially sweet to the Wades, according to Margaret.

"We were competing against millionaires and here we are from little ol' Greenville..." she said.

From its inception, the Wades' sheep operation has been a family venture. Once their sons were established as Dorset breeders, Margaret and Billy began putting together their own flock. For a time on the show circuit, the parents competed against their sons with sheep from the separate flocks.

"Some people said we were wrong for doing that," Margaret noted, pointing out that some felt adults would be more competent showing the Wade brothers' animals than the youngsters were. "But we never did that. We always felt they should be able to show their own sheep," she said.

Bill noted that one of his primary concerns in competition was that the Wades remain true to ideals which preserve the integrity and reputation of any operation. Often in the highly competitive world of show livestock, the desire to win with no regard for ethics sometimes overshadows the goal of excellence.

The projects eventually developed into a partnership for the Wades' three sons. Wade Brothers Dorsets became recognized throughout the country as a top Dorset breeder.

Virginia sheep producers credited Wade with devoting his time to teaching his sons the science of sheep husbandry and contributing endless hours in the support of purebred and commercial sheep activities throughout Virginia.



Margaret and Bill Wade of Greenville show off the purebred Dorset ewe which won Supreme Champion honors at the North American International Livestock Exposition held recently in Louisville, Ky. Wade has been named Outstanding Sheepman for 1995 by the Virginia sheep producers' association.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

"We've never changed a birthdate. We've never changed an eartag. We've always played by the rules, and that's what's important to me," Bill said.

Just as they were building reputations as ethical competitors, the Wade brothers were also building their reputation as producers of Dorset seedstock which would become known for its value from a breeder's standpoint.

"These females will work for anybody," Billy said. He noted that the "maternal traits" of a flock are those which ultimately determine the type of animal produced.

"The dam is more important than the sire," Billy said. "If the dam doesn't take care of them, they're not worth anything."

Now at the top of her species, Miss Virginia's show days are over. The Wades have retired her from the show circuit, and she will be put to work in the flock. Although they could show her again, there's a very important reason not to do that.

"You don't ever want her to be second," Margaret said. "It's not a chance you want to take."

The next challenge for the Wades lies in Miss Virginia's offspring.

"We would get more satisfaction out of taking one of her lambs back," Margaret said. The Wades hope they will be in the winner's circle again with a lamb out of Miss Virginia.

"They (show participants) have a saying about winning," said Margaret. "The easy part is getting there. The hard part is staying there."

While some species can only be bred by animals of another family tree, the genetic mapping of sheep permits linebreeding which is used when offspring are bred back to their sire. The practice eliminates the introduction of unknowns into the gene pool thereby producing animals which are consistent in their type and performance. The Wades will breed Miss Virginia in April to lamb in September and may breed her back to the champion ram which sired her.

It may be hard to stay in the winner's circle at Louisville. But there is no doubt that the Wades are capable of the hard work it takes to do just that. —

## Greenville producer is Virginia's outstanding sheepman

BLACKSBURG — Virginia sheep producers honored Bill Wade of Greenville with the Roy A. Meek Outstanding Sheep Producer Award at the Va.-N.C. Shepherds' Symposium held recently in Blacksburg.

"A family man, shepherd, and lifelong supporter of the Virginia sheep industry" were words used to describe Wade at the awards ceremony.

Wade earned a bachelor of sci-

ence degree in animal science from Virginia Tech in 1967 and was shepherd of Tech's sheep flock for four years prior to his graduation. Upon leaving Virginia Tech, Wade and his wife Margaret moved to Augusta County where they established their first flock of sheep. The success of their family sheep operation centered around a purebred flock of Polled Dorset ewes which was used as the basis for 4-H and FFA projects.

The projects eventually developed into a partnership for the Wades' three sons. Wade Brothers Dorsets became recognized throughout the country as a top Dorset breeder.

Virginia sheep producers credited Wade with devoting his time to teaching his sons the science of sheep husbandry and contributing endless hours in the support of purebred and commercial sheep activities throughout Virginia.

"While many breeders were out looking for the quick fix method of producing quality breeding stock, (Wade) provided the steady hand for their operation in selecting replacement stock that would result in the consistency of breeding for which the flock is currently recognized."

Dorset rams from the Wade flock are tested and sold through the Virginia Ram Performance Test Station on an annual basis.

Wade Brothers Dorsets have been shown and sold in all of the highly recognized shows and sales throughout the eastern U.S., consistently stand at the top of their class, and are in demand as breeding stock for use by other Dorset breeders. The capstone accomplishment for Wade Brothers came by winning Supreme Champion honors at the 1995 North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Ky. —



# Virginia Farm Bureau salutes WWII vets at annual convention

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

**WILLIAMSBURG** — Former Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh and Farm Bureau's World War II veterans were front and center at Virginia Farm Bureau Federation's 70th annual convention held Nov. 27-30 in Williamsburg.

Augusta County delegate and county federation president Harold Armstrong of Churchville led off the parade of World War II veterans who were honored with a special 50th anniversary salute during the Farm Bureau Women's Luncheon on the convention's second day. Marsh greeted and congratulated each veteran who received a commemorative ribbon for service during World War II.

Other Augusta delegates attending the convention included Richard Shiflett, Sharon Phillips, Charles Wonderly, and Kitty Armstrong. These individuals had voting privileges and represented Augusta County in the convention's General Session held Wednesday. Also attending from Augusta Farm Bureau were Nancy Wheeler, David and Kitra Shiflett, Hershel and Alice Gardner, and Kevin Phillips.

Augusta Farm Bureau earned a seven-diamond rating for activities the chapter carried out during 1995. Also bringing home honors for Augusta County was Jason Shiflett, son of David and Kitra of New Hope, who was named winner of Virginia Farm Bureau's Youth Leadership Award. Amy Trout, daughter of James and Susan Trout of Swoope and Augusta's representative to the Miss Virginia

Farm Bureau contest, was among the five finalists for the state crown.

The women's luncheon fell at the convention's midpoint and gave delegates a chance to reflect on United States history. Marsh's appearance at the luncheon was a last-minute change. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., had been scheduled to speak but was called to an Armed Services Committee meeting in Washington which was convened due to the Bosnian conflict. Marsh delivered Warner's apologies for missing the event but recognized the importance of Warner's senatorial committee responsibilities.

Marsh, a native of Winchester, formerly represented Virginia's 7th congressional district in Washington. He is a former assistant Secretary of Defense and was a cabinet level advisor to President Gerald Ford. He is a five-time recipient of the Department of Defense's Distinguished Service Award. A veteran of World War II, Marsh served in the Army Reserve and retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel from the Virginia National Guard.

Farm Bureau's 50th anniversary tribute to World War II veterans was, Marsh said, "very appropriate."

"Man is the only creature on earth that has a sense of history," he said. He noted that the years since 1945 when World War II ended have been "momentous." Approaching the end of a century is a time for reflection, Marsh said.

"It's not just the end of a century. It's the end of a thousand years... the end of an old age and the beginning of a new age," he

said. "Americans have a unique opportunity to shape world events as we enter a new century."

The 20th century's finale will mark the end of the Industrial Age, according to Marsh. "We are moving very rapidly into the Information Age," he said. "The Information Age will make substantial economic and cultural changes on our society." Marsh pointed to the United States as having a "unique leadership opportunity" in the approaching era.

In an overview of the 20th century's last half, Marsh called the world wars "two cataclysmic events." World War II, said Marsh, "changed the world order and the national way of life."

Farm Bureau delegates applauded Marsh when he described the Vietnam conflict as a "war lost on the main streets and crossroads of America." It was a war that was "never lost on the battlefield," he said.

The United States is still learning lessons related to armed conflict, Marsh noted.

"The bitter lessons of Somalia raised serious questions about deployment of U.S. armed forces," he said. One of Marsh's two sons served in Somalia and was critically wounded during the Somali occupation by United Nations troops.

"U.S. forces should be led by U.S. commanders and not United Nations commanders," Marsh asserted firmly.

Facing another conflict in Bosnia, Marsh warned that "serious consideration" must be given to the utilization of U.S. forces.

"The war (in Bosnia) cannot be



Former Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh, left, congratulates Augusta County Farm Bureau President Harold Armstrong of Churchville during a salute to WWII veterans made at Virginia Farm Bureau's convention held recently in Williamsburg.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

permitted to extend beyond that country," he said. "If we decide to go in — and I lean toward that decision — we must retaliate swiftly and with an overpowering and devastating force. There is a risk, if we do nothing, that we are looking down the road at a broader, far more difficult war."

Turning his thoughts toward the future, Marsh asked Farm Bureau delegates to consider what the world will be like in 50 years.

"You must ask yourself, 'What kind of world do you want for your children?'" he said. "What happens in the next five to 10 years will determine what the world will be like in 2045."

Marsh concluded by quoting Abraham Lincoln who said, "Dogs of the twilight past are inadequate for the stormy present."

The Farm Bureau convention — using the theme, "The Spirit of Virginia Farming" — included educational sessions on a variety of agriculture related topics. The delegates also spent time hammering out the group's position on legislative matters which will come before the 1996 session of the Virginia General Assembly. Issues of national importance were considered and will be referred to action at American Farm Bureau's convention to be held in January. —

## Farm Bureau puts forth issues; legislators provide answers



Virginia legislators, from right, Steve Landes, Creigh Deeds, and Vance Wilkins talk with Todd Beck, far right, and Richard Shiflett, Augusta County Farm Bureau's legislative action chairman, at the Farm Bureau's 24th

Senatorial District meeting held Dec. 7 at Holiday Inn. Farm Bureau representatives from a six-county area met with the delegates to present Farm Bureau's 1996 legislative agenda.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

### AC staff report

**STAUNTON** — Issues and answers were at the heart of Virginia Farm Bureau's 24th Senatorial District Meeting held Dec. 7 at Holiday Inn.

Representatives from local Farm Bureau Federation offices in Augusta, Alleghany, Amherst, Rockingham, Rockbridge, and Highland counties met with state legislators Vance Wilkins, Creigh Deeds, and Steve Landes to express support for issues of interest to Farm Bureau. In turn, the legislators offered their views on how particular legislation will fare in the upcoming session of Virginia's General Assembly.

Each year Farm Bureau develops a General Assembly Priority Package which includes issues of greatest importance to agriculture interests across the state. Farm Bureau expresses its support for these issues to state legislators and seeks their endorsement of

pending legislation.

Topping Farm Bureau's list of priorities for 1996 is state funding for agriculture research and Virginia Cooperative Extension. VFB wants vacant positions at the 12 Virginia Tech Agricultural Research and Extension Centers fully funded by the state at an estimated cost of \$4.4 million.

"At this point we don't know what the research part of the governor's budget looks like," said Deeds, R-Hot Springs. "The state budget is like a big puzzle and all the pieces have to fit together. If the money is there and we can do it, I'll support it."

Wilkins, R-Amherst, questioned whether filling vacant positions at research stations would require "new money" in the budget. Virginia's Extension Service has frozen positions which were left vacant by employees who retired or resigned. Although funds for these positions were once in-

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# Vets address animal health concerns at Springhill forum

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

SPRINGHILL — Four-legged critters of all varieties were in the spotlight Nov. 16 when the Springhill Community 4-H Club and the Pleasantview-Springhill Ruritans hosted their annual community education forum.

Veterinarians June Cohron of Stuarts Draft and Bruce Bowman of Waynesboro were guest speakers for the event which drew about 50 youth and adults as an audience.

Dr. Cohron, who told the group of her 4-H background showing beef cattle and sheep, opened the program by describing what items should be included in an emergency first aid kit for dogs and cats. A veterinarian for four years, Dr. Cohron practices out of the Animal Hospital of Stuarts Draft.

"The Number One thing you should have in your first aid kit is your vet's telephone number," Dr. Cohron said. She explained there are some human medicines which may be used on animals, however these should only be used on the advice of a veterinarian.

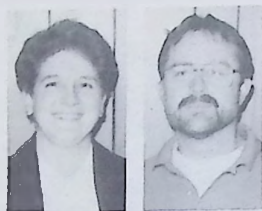
"Most vets are more than happy to answer questions," she said. Calling first may save a trip to the veterinarian and might also save a pet's life.

Items to be included in a pet first aid kit include hydrogen peroxide, an antibacterial ointment such as Neosporin, baby aspirin, Benadryl or a generic equivalent, adult aspirin, a large syringe, eye ointment, Kaopectate or Pepto Bismol, and antibiotic capsules obtained from a veterinarian. She noted that most items needed for a pet first aid kit may be bought over the counter at a drugstore.

In responding to emergency situations involving pets which have been injured, Dr. Cohron urged pet owners to be cautious. If an animal has an open wound, it may be treated much in the same way as a human wound would be. She noted that the first priority is to stop the bleeding by applying pressure. Once the bleeding has stopped it should be determined whether the wound needs stitches. Bleeding which will not stop or blood which spurts from a wound may indicate that a vein or artery has been severed. This requires the attention of a veterinarian. In this instance, pet owners should maintain pressure on the wound until the animal can be taken to a veterinarian. Minor lacerations and scratches may be treated by applying an antibiotic ointment.

If a pet owner suspects that a dog or cat has a broken limb, the pet should be taken to a veterinarian.

Another injury which is common among pets is bee stings. Dr. Cohron noted that dogs or cats have a tendency to stick their noses directly into a nest of



COHRON

BOWMAN

yellowjackets and then get stung around the muzzle and eyes. Typically this results in swelling around the eyes.

"Some dogs are more allergic to bees than others," Dr. Cohron said. Small dogs and cats which have been stung respond nicely when treated with Benadryl which suppresses the body's allergic reaction to the sting.

One injury to animals which Dr. Cohron called "actually a genuine emergency" is snake bite. Puncture wounds made by snakes are "notorious for getting infected," she explained. For this reason, pets which have been bitten by a snake should be treated promptly by a veterinarian.

With the holidays approaching, Dr. Cohron warned pet owners not to overfeed their pets. Dogs and cats which are given leftovers from holiday feasts are just as likely to get upset stomachs from overeating as their human counterparts.

In the event a pet develops an upset stomach, Dr. Cohron told the group to give the animal a small amount of water and only make available foods which are easy to digest. If the animal's stomach remains upset, veterinary care may be required.

"Don't continue to feed the animal if its stomach remains upset," Dr. Cohron said. "Call the vet if

the dog or cat can't keep anything down. Animals can get dehydrated just like small children can."

Dogs or cats suffering from diarrhea should be given bland food to eat. Pepto Bismol or Kaopectate may be used to treat them, but the amount given should be determined by calling a veterinarian. Generally, Dr. Cohron noted that 1 teaspoon per 20 pounds of body weight should be sufficient. If the pet's condition has not improved in 48 hours, she explained, then it's time to call the vet.

Although eye ointment should be kept in the pet first aid kit, Dr. Cohron told pet owners not to use this for eye injuries without first consulting a veterinarian.

Aspirin may be used for animals but only on the advice of a veterinarian, Dr. Cohron said. Animals weighing less than 50 pounds should be treated with baby aspirin while regular strength aspirin is preferred for pets weighing more than 50 pounds. She cautioned pet owners not to use Tylenol or Ibuprofen on animals. "Tylenol will kill a cat," she said.

In instances where pets have eaten something poisonous, Dr. Cohron instructed the group to call a veterinarian. In most cases the vet will ask that the pet owner give the pet some hydrogen peroxide. This can be done using a large syringe and by inserting it in the animal's mouth. The hydrogen peroxide will cause the animal to vomit which should help remove the poisonous substance from its stomach. The animal should then be taken to the vet for further treatment.

For those people involved in showing livestock, Dr. Cohron offered advice on how to prepare for traveling to shows. Planning

ahead, she said, is the most important element in preparing for a livestock show.

"If you're going on a long trip, make sure animals are vaccinated for pneumonia," she said. "You want them to be absolutely as healthy as possible."

Because travel stresses animals, they should not be fed the morning of the trip, according to Dr. Cohron. Handlers should take along some rough hay for animals to eat while at the show. Stress causes animals to have upset stomachs, she said. Feeding them rough hay stimulates the digestive system and helps it return to normal. Dr. Cohron urged handlers to give livestock time to recover from traveling before putting them back on a regular diet.

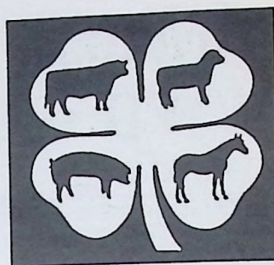
Cattle and sheep may also bloat due to digestive difficulties. Bloat is caused when gas accumulates in a rumen which is not working properly. Mineral oil or a product called "Therabloat" may be used to help settle the animal's stomach. Animals recovering from bloat should be fed rough hay. Dr. Cohron noted that it also may be beneficial to stand animals in a place where "their front ends are higher than their backends." The ramp of a loading chute might be one possibility, she said.

Dr. Cohron noted that livestock handlers will also want to carry an antibiotic cream along to treat cuts or scrapes. Also, a thermometer and an injectable antibiotic should be kept on hand. Cattle which run a temperature over 104 degrees should be started on an antibiotic. She reminded handlers to be aware of the withdrawal time of antibiotics for animals going to slaughter.

By in large, Dr. Cohron noted that many of the injuries and illnesses suffered by animals are treated in a similar way to those affecting humans.

"Animals aren't that different than we are," she concluded.

Dr. Bowman, who operates



Commonwealth Veterinary Clinic west of Waynesboro, spent some time addressing the health concerns of horses.

"If a horse never gets any other shot in their lives," he said, "they should get a tetanus shot."

Tetanus or lockjaw is a disease which comes from dirt getting in a wound. The disease affects the animal's muscle coordination. Death results when the animal becomes unable to swallow or breathe.

Dr. Bowman warned that horses may be difficult to treat when it becomes necessary to do so.

"Horses are the single biggest baby on the farm," he said. "Horses in pain will invariably do foolish things."

Like cattle, horses can also get upset stomachs. However unlike cattle, horses should never be drenched with mineral oil. Dr. Bowman noted that even a small amount of liquid going into a horse's lung can cause pneumonia. The most common therapy for horses with upset stomachs is to make them walk.

"In eight out of 10 cases, walking them is probably the best thing you can do," he said.

To parents and children, Dr. Bowman addressed the incidence and danger of rabies. He urged children not to "pet, touch, or handle" any strange animal.

"In the last five years, two or three boys and girls died of rabies after touching animals with rabies," he said.

"Rabies is a terrible disease. We can prevent lots of heart-

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# Issues

Continued from page 15

cluded in the state budget, keeping the positions vacant has provided some dollar savings to Extension.

Also falling under Extension's umbrella are services provided by home economists. Wilkins questioned Farm Bureau's preference for funding of agricultural research over positions needed for home economists. Policy developed by a special VFB committee to study Virginia Extension recommended that emphasis be placed on agricultural research and the state's 4-H program which are part of Extension's enabling federal legislation and most commonly referred to as "original mission."

"Research money is vitally important," said Landes, R-Waynesboro, who will be a newcomer to the assembly when it convenes in January. Landes said money spent for agricultural research is important to the state's economic development.

VFB seeks level or increased funding for Virginia's Extension Service. Rick Shiflet, chairman of Augusta County Farm Bureau's legislative committee, expressed concern over the current climate of Extension. He noted that due to budget cuts over the past several years Extension employees "feel deserted" and that moral is low due to the uncertainty of job security. He stressed the need to support the Extension Service with adequate funding while maintaining a sense



of fiscal responsibility.

"Nobody's in favor of wasting money," he said.

Deeds questioned Extension's restructuring plan which calls for regionalization of some services. This may require that smaller counties such as Highland and Bath share Extension agents in order to operate within budget constraints.

"I'm afraid there will be more regionalization than we're prepared for," he said.

New to VFB's priority list for 1996 is the Agricultural Stewardship Law. Steve Saufley, VFB state director, explained this law will create an enforcement mechanism to address agricultural water quality concerns. Known as a "bad actor" measure, agriculture stewardship calls for a committee of peers to address complaints made against producers using questionable conservation practices.

Chuck Ahrend of Rockingham County noted that an ordinance passed there to prevent pollution of the Chesapeake Bay had earned the county national recognition for the efforts of its poultry producers to police themselves. Rockingham has under consideration an ordinance which ad-

resses the means to deal with "bad actors," but Ahrend said "it has no teeth" since there is no state law to support it.

"The stewardship law would allow a peer committee to go to the attorney general," he said. "We should try to resolve our problems rather than having the government do it."

Deeds noted that he had seen a draft of the stewardship law but was uncertain of how it would be received by the Assembly.

"Just because it's new and never been out there before, some people are going to oppose it," he said. Deeds pointed to the legislation as being a step in the right direction regarding enforcement of conservation practices.

"It's not a whole loaf, but it's certainly a half a loaf," he said.

Ahrend pointed out that the law "didn't mention any dollars," hoping that the legislators might find it attractive from a cost standpoint.

Saufley noted that Ohio and Maine have "bad actor" laws which have proven to be effective enforcement mechanisms. Without a stewardship law, "all of us have to be punished for what the minority are doing, he said.

"If there's some way we can work it out so the board of supervisors have control on the local level I'd be in favor of signing off on it," Landes said. "I'm all in favor of doing anything to decentralize state government."

The state's position on land use assessment has been one which VFB has kept watch over for a number of years. VFB supports the existing land use assessment law and opposes any increase in the five-year roll back provision.

Virginia's land use law allows for the value of land to be assessed depending on its use. Land used for agricultural purposes is valued at a lower rate than land used for development. Agriculture land which is sold and goes into development is subject to roll back taxes on its development value for each of the five years prior to its

sale. VFB promotes the land use law as a means to prevent farmers from being taxed off their property. In the event a farmer decides to retire and sell his property, VFB advocates that a farmer's land is equitable to a savings account. Subjecting farm land to rollback taxes for more than five years would make farm land less marketable.

Wilkins warned Farm Bureau representatives that their position on land use may be subject to criticism.

"You're trying to have your cake and eat it too," he said. "We've been getting the urban areas to go with us on this because we've told them it preserves open spaces." Wilkins questioned Farm Bureau's stance on land use to protect farm land versus restrictions on rollback taxes making agriculture land attractive from a development standpoint.

On the issues of real estate assessment and taxes, VFB supports an increase in state sales tax or income tax only if the funds are returned to the local level. It also endorses the continuation of a commission which is examining real estate tax reform.

"We need relief on real estate taxes," Saufley said. "This puts a burden on landowners."

Ahrend noted that Rockingham County is looking for alternate sources of income and that sales tax or income tax coming back to the county level would be a possible alternative.

Shiflet expressed interest in legislation which would provide tax credit for open space. He noted that farmers' tax bills are not equitable with the services they receive.

"We give tax credit for urban development," Wilkins said. "[Open space tax credit] might be a possibility."

"Tax on non-income producing property doesn't make sense," Deeds said.

Issues of health care and workers' compensation are also on the VFB agenda for 1996. The legislators all agreed that it would be

hard to find anyone who opposes Farm Bureau's desire that health care costs be reduced. Farm Bureau's stance on worker's compensation drew similar remarks. VFB opposes changes in the workers' compensation act which would increase rates and expand employee benefits.

"I think many small businesses would agree with your position on this," Landes noted.

Farm Bureau wrapped up the session by voicing its support for Best Management Practice incentive and private property rights.

Todd Beck of the Augusta County Farm Bureau explained to the legislators some of the environmental regulations which farmers face. He noted that often these regulations require large investments on the farmer's part. Beck asked that the state "step up" low interest loans and tax credits to farmers following Best Management Practices. While neighboring states Maryland and North Carolina spend \$6 million and \$8 million respectively on cost share programs, Saufley pointed out Virginia spends only \$1 million.

"It's a good investment," Deeds said. "If Maryland's spending \$6 million, then we should be too."

On the issue of private property rights, VFB supports legislation which protects the rights of private property owners against laws affecting the market value of their property. Instances related to this issue involve environmental laws which restrict land use based on its environmental or historic significance. Farm Bureau champions private property rights as the basis of a free society and which demand the same protection as civil rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion.

Deeds called Farm Bureau's stance on private property rights "a concept I can go along with."

Emmett Hanger, senator for the 24th District, was unable to attend Farm Bureau's legislative forum due to a called meeting of the Senate Finance Committee. —

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# Pets

Continued from page 16

ache and lots of upset children if we vaccinate [pets] for rabies," Dr. Bowman said.

Rabies is an infection which is spread from one animal to another through the infected animals' saliva. The disease locates itself in the fluid around the brain. Animals which are suspected to be carrying rabies must be euthanized. The brain of the animal is tested to determine whether it was infected with rabies.

In instances where humans are exposed to rabies, Dr. Bowman noted the need for immediate treatment.

"If you don't get medicine as quickly as possible, that's when you get sick. The sooner treatment starts for rabies, the sooner the danger passes."

Dr. Bowman spent a few moments addressing a health concern for cattle producers. He noted that

he has recently treated several cases of haemophilus in feeder cattle.

"This is the kind of pneumonia where they were fine yesterday, today they're running a fever of 107, and tomorrow they're dead," he said describing the disease.

The disease can be prevented by using a blackleg vaccine which includes a vaccine for haemophilus. Dr. Bowman noted that while these vaccines are a bit more expensive than regular blackleg vaccines, the savings in lost animals or veterinary expense is worth the investment.

Likewise, he urged horse owners to vaccinate their animals for flu. "Horses get the flu every year just like you do," he said. "A good way to prevent that is to vaccinate."

Ultimately, Dr. Bowman urged members of the audience to use their veterinarian as a resource.

He concluded by saying: "I don't know of any vet around here who charges to talk to you on the phone." —



# Schoolhouse News

## Fort Defiance FFA members attend national convention

By KRISTI AVOLI

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Thirteen members of the Fort Defiance High School FFA chapter attended the National Future Farmers of America Convention in Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 5-12.

Seven among Fort's ranks made up Virginia's Parliamentary Procedure team and competed in the national contest. Parliamentary procedure is one of the most difficult contests in which students may participate. They must work as a team to solve a given problem in a 10-minute time period. During that time they must solve the problem using correct parliamentary law. The students are also given a test on Parliamentary law which they must complete individually.

Members of the Virginia Parliamentary Procedure team were Ashley Craun, son of Mr. and Mrs. Benny Craun of Rt. 5, Staunton; Jason Shiflett, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Shiflett of New Hope; Willie Morris, son of Mr. and Mrs. G. Edward Morris of Centerville; and Melvin Heatwole, son of Mr.



and Mrs. Lowell Heatwole of Weyers Cave. Also, Jeff Michael, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Michael of Mt. Sidney; Brian Garber, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lowell Garber of Mt. Sidney; and Kristi Avoli, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. John Avoli of Staunton.

Virginia's Parliamentary Procedure team received a silver rating for their performance in the contest.

Fort Defiance represented Virginia in the National Agricultural contest. Three members attended the convention for agricultural sales. The Ag Sales contest is composed of a series of events

dealing with sales related activities which include a marketing plan, a telephone conversation, building a product display, and a written test.

The team from Fort Defiance placed 12th overall which gave it a silver rating. The team was coached by FFA ag instructor Andy Seibel. Members were Mary Hylton, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Rodger Hylton of Weyers Cave,

who placed 15th in the contest on her individual score; Kristi Avoli, who placed 28th; and Amanda Shreckhise, daughter of John Shreckhise of Grottoes and Cheryl Robertson of Staunton, who placed 32nd.

Two Fort FFA members attended the convention to compete for the state in the national Tractor Troubleshooting contest. Tractor Troubleshooting is a contest

designed for students to be able to find a problem in five tractors and fix the problem. Participating in this contest were Brian Garber and Sam Burns, son of Hilda Vanfossen of Staunton.

The National FFA Convention draws members from across the United States for four days of national contests, activities, banquets, and sessions. —

## Fort FFA members receive American degrees

By KRISTI AVOLI

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Five Fort Defiance High School graduates received their American Future Farmers of America degrees at the national convention held recently in Kansas City, Mo.

Fort Defiance FFA members Adam Hatton, Brian Jones, Mark Cline, Kate Morris, and Bobby Bergdoll were awarded American degrees in recognition of their achievements during their FFA careers. Hatton is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Larry Hatton of Mt. Solon. Brian is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Rodger Jones of Weyers

Cave. Mr. and Mrs. John Cline of New Hope are the parents of Mark. Kate is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. Edward Morris of Centerville, and Bobby is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Orlando Bergdoll of Bridgewater.

The American FFA degree is the highest degree an FFA member can obtain. To receive this degree a person must complete all the qualifications for the degree. Members must have received their Greenhand, Chapter, and State degrees. The American degree is awarded post high school graduation with the graduate having achieved a satisfactory grade-

point average. American degree recipients must have maintained a supervised agricultural work experience program and must possess outstanding leadership skills, community involvement, and have participated in at least five activities above the chapter level. American degree candidates are those members who have been in FFA for at least three years.

Applications are reviewed then approved by the state FFA adviser. If approved, applications are sent to the national board of directors for review. The last step in the selection process is approval by delegates at FFA's national convention. —



Riverheads High School students, from left, Stephanie Harris, Derek Farrish, Amy Badgley, and Jenny Roudabush display some of the bears which members "dressed" for the Salvation Army. The bears were to be distributed as Christmas gifts.

## Riverheads students give to the needy

By KIM WILSON

GREENVILLE -- Recently Riverheads High School students participated in two events to help the needy.

RHS Future Homemakers of America dressed bears for the Salvation Army. The bears will be given out to young children that are less fortunate to make their Christmas more joyful. Each bear was taken home on a volunteer

basis and was dressed using the students' own money.

The second activity the students participated in was a canned food drive for Thanksgiving. Each grade was to bring as many canned items as possible. The grade that brought in the most cans would win a prize. The race came down to the last minutes as the seniors pulled ahead to win bringing in well over 100 cans. All together the classes brought in around 250 cans. —

## Silent auction benefits Riverheads yearbook

By HEATHER CALDWELL

GREENVILLE --- On Nov. 20 and 21, Cherie Taylor's classroom at Riverheads High School was filled with anxious students ready to place their bids. Thanks to our great patrons throughout Augusta County, the Yearbook Class was able to make \$1,000 towards the school's 1996 book.

Prints from renowned artists like MaryAnn Vessey, Lisa Geiman, Susan Chiamonte, and P. Buckley Moss were very hot items. I, along with the other members of the class would like to thank these fine ladies for their graciousness. MaryAnn Vessey is the mother of Dulaney and Julia. Susan Chiamonte is the mother of Sara and Mary who attend RHS.

Gift certificates from El Puerto, Great Wall of China, Applebee's, Rosa's Cantina, The Beverley Restaurant, The Stock Exchange Deli, Arby's and many others helped tremendously and also will make terrific Christmas presents. Steve Corell donated an impressive SONY walkman tape player which was also a great gift idea.

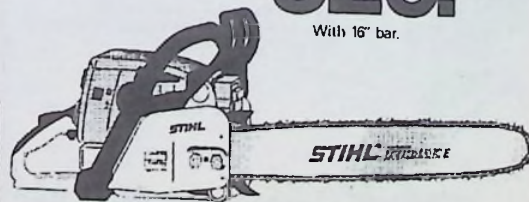
This was the third annual silent auction. Many people do not realize how much money it takes to produce a yearbook. All and any donations were greatly appreciated because of the rising cost of yearbooks. —

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# RHS heads for the hills in 'Hatchet Holler'

By CHRISTINE MANLEY

GREENVILLE -- A hush fell over the audience in Layman Auditorium at Riverheads High School as the lights were turned on for the fall play. The curtain went up at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 13 for Hatchet Holler, a comedy by Dan Neidermyer.

A modern twist on the Hatfields and McCoys, the play was presented under the expert direction of English Department Chairperson, Bill Dillion. Hatchet Holler featured veteran thespians such as Christine Manley, Amy Bosserman, Tom Taetzch, Stormy Koiner, Elijah Ward, and Meghan McIlwee. The play centers around two families,

the Rooters and Huyetts, who have been feuding in a holler hidden in the hills of Kentucky for generations.

The story opened with Sunflower Rooter (Amy Bosserman) and Wolf Huyett (Kevin Davenport) secretly meeting in a forbidden romance. Scene Two begins with Elmer (Chris Carpenter) and Samantha Rooter (Christine Manley), also known as Pa and Ma, arguing over Elmer's stubborn decision to go to a concert sponsored by the Huyetts while armed with Betsy, a trusty B.B. gun.

Confusion occurs with the arrival of irate school board members (Katie Manley and Stephanie Cutlip) and two small time gangsters (Tom Taetzch and Micah

Ward). The gangsters tie up Ma and Pa, but Wolf and Choat Huyett (David Arehart) come to the rescue, wrestling the gangsters like alligators. A lawman (Robb Shipp) breaks up the action and arrests the gangsters. As a result the Rooters attend the Huyett's concert, and Ma makes Pa accept Wolf Huyett as his future son-in-law.

A further twist to the plot occurs with the arrival of an alien (Lori Bosserman). The resident lunatic of the holler, Crazy Sally (Stormy Koiner) is identified as an alien informant. The strange single male Rooter child Percy (Elijah Ward) finds that he too is an alien and the son of Crazy Sally. The play ends with Ma persuad-

ing a reluctant Pa to forgive and forget problems with the Huyetts. He is finally convinced by the philosophy that he will be a better person than his neighbors.

The rest of the cast consisted of the remaining Rooter girls played by Kristin Lowing, Beth Bartley, Meghan McIlwee, Mary Kessler, Meghan Carty, and Julia Vessey. The crew was made up of Danielle Richardson and Kelly Davenport.

Hatchet Holler used minimal scenery and tattered, yet appropriate costumes. Though the play was a success humorously, a few good moral points were made, too. Judging by the applause, Hatchet Holler would get two thumbs up from all of "ya'll." ---



BROWN



SMITH

## Livestock Club organizes; elects officers

By CARRIE HEIZER

MIDDLEBROOK -- The Middlebrook Livestock 4-H Club held its organizational meeting Nov. 17 at the Middlebrook Community Center.

Officers elected included: Junior club -- Carrie Brown, president; Amanda Hemp, vice president; Amanda Rexrode, secretary; Jonathan Coleman, treasurer; and Austin Johnston, reporter; Senior club -- Jennifer Smith, president; Jack Hinton, vice president; Angela Gilbert, secretary; William Woods, treasurer; and Carrie Heizer, reporter.

Berkely Gray of Augusta Cooperative Farm Bureau spoke to the two groups about calf nutrition. The club's emphasis and project area will be livestock production.

As a holiday project, the club met Dec. 10 and made two fruit baskets which were delivered to community residents.

Leaders of the Middlebrook club are Betty and J.R. Coleman, Dinah Johnston, and Claude and Peggy Smith. The club will meet at the community center at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month. Anyone interested in joining the club is invited to attend the next meeting. ---

## 'Powder Puff' game benefits RHS round ball

By KIM WILSON

GREENVILLE -- Monday Oct. 9 at 7:30 p.m. marked the start of the 4th annual Powder Puff football game. The Powder Puff game is a game where the senior girls get to show the junior girls what they're made of. The game is actually a huge fund raiser for the girls' basketball program. All

money made off ticket sales and Powder Puff Queen earnings went to help buy new uniforms and equipment for the team.

The juniors got off to a quick start as "Hammerhead" (Karman) Hemp ran for two touchdowns in the first half. The juniors were called for numerous penalties in the first half, one of which was for tying their flags on. One anonymous senior was quoted as

saying, "some people need to learn the difference between knots and Velcro." The seniors however were unable to score, as they controlled the ball for only three plays.

In the second half the seniors put up a gallant fight, but to no avail. The juniors won in a second half stalemate 16-0. After the game, junior Amy Berry put the whole game into perspective when

she said, "I think it was really fun, but it puts so much pressure on you, especially if you have friends on the other team."

During halftime the tension mounted as all awaited the crowning of the Powder Puff Queen. He or she, however you care to look at it, won by earning the most money campaigning for queen. This year's queen was Dwain "Scarlet" Galvin of Greenville. ---

## Buffalo Gap sweeps Quarterback Super Bowls

By LAUREN PLEMMONS

BUFFALO GAP -- Buffalo Gap's Quarterback Football Club accomplished a first-time ever feat by winning Super Bowls in all three age divisions.

In addition to the Super Bowl wins, the six remaining county Quarterback clubs voted to give the H. Lynn Moore Sportsmanship Award to the Buffalo Gap Club. This Sportsmanship trophy was

then given to Mrs. Bob Smiley in honor of her late husband for his founding of and dedication to the Buffalo Gap Club.

Gap's senior division team went undefeated the entire season, averaging 30 points a game.

"I've been coaching 19 years, and this has been the best team," said Head coach Mitch Accord. He also noted that the players get along well and have great team work. The seniors defeated Stuarts Draft 50-7

in the Super Bowl title game.

Hook Elkins coached Gap's junior division team which forged a regular season record of seven wins, all shutouts. They also defeated Stuarts Draft in the Super Bowl 13-6.

"One of our biggest accomplishments was winning two games to get to the Super Bowl," said assistant coach Bruce Wenger.

A 6-0 win over Fort Defiance gave Gap's midjet division team its Super bowl victory. The midjets were coached by Rick Shiflet and Bob Hildebrand.

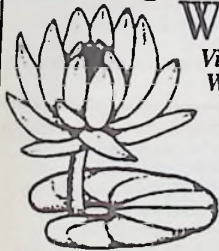
This year's Buffalo Gap Quarterback Club was directed by Joe

Colvin. The intent of starting the league was to build high morals for young people and to build character and establish self discipline, Colvin said.

The club, formed by Bob Smiley in the late 60s and early 70s, was called the Churchville Cowboys and competed against five other teams. Today there are seven teams in the league.

"The Quarterback Club has been a great model for other clubs throughout the state," commented Colvin. The Buffalo Gap league consists of players from Churchville, Craigs ville, North River, and Beverley Manor Elementary and Middle schools. ---

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# Country Crossroads

## Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin  
December, 1995



Dear Maude:

How wonderful my visit home was!! It was awfully hard to get back into the swing of things once I returned. The longer I stay in the city, the more of a culture shock it is each time I return home. Why, in Washington, if you went shopping, threw a package in the back seat of an unlocked car and went to pick up something else, not only would the package be gone when you returned, but possibly the car as well!

This month has been filled with more holiday parties than most years. Some time back, the Senate passed a new gift rule limiting gifts (and that includes lunches, parties and all kinds of entertainment) to \$50. That means the Senate staff members can still go to lunch, but a dinner where they would be invited to attend with their spouses or dates would probably be above the limit. The House, however, recently passed its new ethics rules which do not allow for even this. Before all of this goes seriously into effect, everyone is busy trying to get to that last big bash. There is, however, an escape clause in the rule which says staffers will be able to accept invitations to "widely attended affairs." What that means is that if there are people attending from a wide area in which the member of Congress for which they work represents, then it is in their "line of duty" to go and associate with the constituents. The committee staff members who were appointed by a Senator or Congressman can not use this exclusion, however, and often they are the ones who are the first to be invited. I am sure that something will be done to work that out, though. We have a clever bunch here in the Nation's Capitol.

With all the luncheons, Christmas and year-end parties to attend, I had to dash out and do a bit of shopping. For the past year, with Dylan out of town so much and with all the extra work I have been doing, there was not much time to party, and I had not been shopping in such a long time. My poor charge card bill will show that I am back to my old habits. I hadn't been shopping long before I had filled up my limit! I wanted some new dresses, so off to Filene's Basement I went (since their clothes are really good labels, and at discount prices) to see what I could find. Sure enough, there they were — just the dresses I was looking for. And while I was in the store, I also found a beautiful black wool coat that I could wear anywhere from black tie balls to football games. So of course I bought it as well.

When you work in Washington, you become accustomed to seeing homeless people on most of the downtown streets. Some years back, when new psychiatric drugs came on the market, many mental hospitals decided their borderline cases could get along outside of the hospital on these medications, and they discharged great numbers of patients who now make up a great portion of the homeless in the city. There are both young and old, black and white, mostly men who hang around the subway entrances with their blankets and cups. Almost all of the homeless we see are men, but there are a few women as well. There is one woman who drags around two big plastic bags filled with her belongings and wears a heavy coat and scarf both summer and winter. Another younger woman begs on the street with her two small children. Many of the women in the area make a special effort to help her and often buy food and small toys for the children. There is another woman who is out there occasionally. She looks as if she is in her late 40s.

## The Glorious Impossible

The great festivals of Christmas and Chanukah always seem to arrive on the scene when we need them the most. For Christians there is no greater miracle than the one celebrated on Christmas day, when we sing of God clothed-in-flesh lying on a bed of straw. Christmas, not the holiday but the event of God-with-us, is one of those impossible things that once you believe in it, opens your life to marvelous wonders. Madeline L'Engle says "possible things are easy to believe. The Glorious Impossible is those things that bring joy to our hearts, hope to our lives, songs to our lips." I need such an affirmation that this world is not bounded by merely the possible, but is boundless because of the impossible things that occur beyond our efforts and beyond even our ability to comprehend.

Lately the reminder that Christmas brings hope has come at the same moment when the world seems on the verge of collapse. (Maybe this is as it should be; after all Jews and Christians both hope for the day when this weary world will be overcome with everlasting peace and justice.) One year we sang carols within days of when over 200 people, many of them college students, were blown out of the skies over Scotland. While the tragedy was no less painful for the singing; the act of singing in the midst of sorrow somehow lifts our hearts and makes it possible to move forward. Without the singing, without the affirmation of this Glorious Impossible: God-With-Us, what is merely possible seems terribly grim.

This year, the message of Hope born among humanity, comes against the backdrop of another peacemaker shot down by the forces of hatred; when racial violence in this country is (again) commonplace and in-your-face confrontation has replaced civic conversation about the common good. I need a message that this is not all there is. Christmas gives those who believe a collective opportunity to breathe more easily, to let go of the enormous anxiety of a collapsing world and to turn our attention toward the evidence of this Glorious Impossible alive among us.

If this messy, mixed-up, violence-torn world has been invaded once by God, then it changes everything. God may be present anywhere, at any moment, bringing some impossible thing into being. Just the hint of that possibility causes some people to give more generously; to think more kindly; to laugh more frequently and to celebrate the sheer joy of life. For just this reason, the Christmas season which someone invented long ago, is a grand idea even if it has become a gross distortion of everything it was meant to be. Originally it was a season, preceded by long days of preparation, to feast and sing, laugh and dance and worship with joy. (Unfortunately, the Scotch-Irish ancestors of Shenandoah Valley dwellers didn't think so. They would have nothing to do with a popish-pagan celebration like Christmas. It's still the case in many parts of Scotland and Northern Ireland and even in the United States.) But, I say, in a world bounded by terrible tragedy, we need such occasions

She says her name is Maggie, and she is not homeless, just penniless. I saw her when I first came to Washington, standing very quietly outside the Farragut subway station. She was as clean as could be but wore faded, tattered clothes. She had on a dress and coat and scuffed shoes and stockings. I try to help her whenever I see her, and also try to talk to her for a minute or two. She told me that she had once been in a hospital, but the doctors gave her some pills and told her she could go home. But she had no home anymore. With the money she gets each month from a small disability check, she pays for a room -- not in the best neighborhood, but clean and warm most of the time. It costs her almost all of the check. She holds out as long as she can, but, toward the end of the month, if she is to eat, she must beg.

I had not seen Maggie in weeks, but when I came out of Filene's, there she was, shivering a bit in the cold, in her spotless, threadbare clothing. I spoke to her, and asked her to wait where she was, for I had something to bring back to her. I dashed off to the office, cut off all the price



Saying grace

By  
Roy Howard

to celebrate and to be reminded of such an event as wonderful as God-In-The-Flesh.

Few activities are better for the human condition than those that happen this time of year. (And, alas, few are worse.) Take our annual visit to the Staunton Academy of Ballet performance of the Nutcracker. That many young people spinning and leaping, twirling and sliding across the stage; losing themselves in the beauty of the ballet, is enough to make the heart sing and hope, again. The acts of creative gift-giving unleashed at this season, are enough to make you glad to be a part of the human race. No, we don't need Christmas to give gifts, but somehow the structure helps us to do what brings deep and lasting joy to our lives. Of course, there are other gruesome reminders of the dark side of our race; but for a moment there is a glimmer of the possibility of love at work in life.

Violence and hatred, warfare and cruelty are not the only reality. There is another reality happening around us all the time, if we but look for it. The forces of darkness, though they be powerful and punishing, have not succeeded in extinguishing the Light that lightens this world. This is Christmas: the Glorious Impossible that gives us the courage to carry on and even laugh in the face of darkness.

The celebration of Chanukah is no less uplifting for Jews and all those who find hope in the impossible becoming possible. There is never enough oil to keep our lamps lit for as long as they are needed. Yet, the ancient Rabbi's lit the lamps anyway, rather than simply curse the darkness in despair, and sure enough, miraculously the oil lasted. The lamps stayed lighted for the appointed time and the people preserved their integrity and their faith. Glorious. Impossible.

Every day, we have the choice to accept what seems inevitable — the oil has finally run out on our lamps, the darkness shall surely overcome us — or to do the wildly impossible thing. Choose the impossible. If God did, why can't we? Light your lamps with whatever oil you have left. Share it with your neighbor who sits in darkness. Lift your light high against the darkness in celebration of the life that has been given the world. There will always be enough oil.

The Light has come into the world and the darkness shall not overcome it. —

tags from the coat I had just bought, put it on, grabbed my old coat, and ran back the two blocks to find Maggie. When I handed my old coat to her, she did not seem to know what to do, but suddenly she smiled and reached out to touch my hand, and I noticed tears in her eyes. I gave her a big hug, slipped a little extra money in her hand and whispered "Merry Christmas" in her ear; then dashed back to the office, before I started crying too. I shall miss that old coat, for it was nice and long and the warmest thing I owned. I know that the new one will not be anywhere near as comfortable. But Maggie certainly needed the coat more than I did, and I will never have any greater Christmas present than Maggie's smile and look of happiness when I gave her the coat. Two days later I saw her again at the subway station. She smiled a big smile and waved very slightly. She was wearing the coat.

I hope that the boys are over those awful colds they had when I was home. Give my love, and a hug, to everyone.

Love,  
LuLu



# AROUND THE CORNER

## Virginia Farm Show, Jan. 17-18

RICHMOND — The Virginia Farm Show will be Jan. 17-18 at the Virginia State Fairgrounds in Richmond.

The show exhibit area will include three large exhibit buildings as well as a large outdoor exhibit area.

The event promises to showcase the latest in farm equipment, technology, and supplies for the industry of agriculture from seed varieties for corn and soybean to the newest in livestock equipment, aquaculture supplies, and even the equipment necessary for the new technique of farm management, Precision Agriculture. Information and equipment for an old crop recently returned to the Old Dominion, King Cotton, will be featured at the show.

The 1996 Virginia Farm Show is being sponsored by the Farm Chronicle and its parent company, Lee Publications, Inc. For information about the show call 1-800-218-5586 or 1-800-820-1024. —

## Ewe & Ram sale, Jan. 6

DUBLIN — The Virginia Commercial Bred Ewe & Ram Sale will be held 10 a.m., Jan. 6 at the New River Valley Fairgrounds in Dublin.

The sale will include 250 ewes and 15 rams consigned by sheep producers from across the state. Sheep will be individually inspected for soundness by the Sales Review Committee. Sale animals may be viewed during processing on Jan. 5.

The New River Valley Fairgrounds is located one mile north of Dublin on Va. 100. For information about the sale call 540/980-7761. —

## 4-H Wildlife

### program, Jan. 13-14

VERONA — Youth interested in participating in the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program are invited to attend a training weekend Jan. 13-14 at Holiday Lake 4-H Center in Appomattox.

The event will include a hands-on training session and a mock contest. No experience in wildlife habitat evaluation is necessary to participate. Registration is \$20 and includes food and lodging. Call the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-5750 for information. —

# Santa Hank is comin' to town

Some things are annually anticipated at this festive time of year. There will be tinsel adorning Christmas trees. There will be a Christmas pageant at church. Children will hang their stockings with care. December 23rd will arrive, and Hank will not have done his Christmas shopping.

Shopping for that special someone had been an activity all but overlooked by Hank in his pre-parent days. In recent years however, with three sets of big brown, soft shining eyes staring up at him, he has been unable to evade the mercantile hustle and bustle.

"Dad," inquires Little Elmer during the first week of December, "When are we going to go buy Mom a Christmas present?"

"Some time," responds Hank.

The second week of December rolls around, and Katie Sue suggests, "Why don't we go Christmas shopping for Mom tonight, Daddy?"

"We can't tonight," is Hank's quick reply. "I feel that your homework must take precedence over shopping. I'm sure Mom would agree, too."

"Dad," comes the final beckoning on December 23rd from teenage Irmaleen, "It's now or never. And you know how cranky Mom has been on Christmas Day when you have opted for never!"

It's not that Hank doesn't want to get Irma something nice for Christmas. He really does, but a visit to a store with people milling around, pulling and tugging at items on racks and clattering plastic credit cards makes him feel nervous and itchy all over — like a short-haired hound dog at a flea convention. Unable to postpone the shopping any longer however, Hank takes a mental deep breath, loads the kids into the pick-up and heads to town.

"This is Mom's favorite store," announces Irmaleen. And like a wisp of smoke up the chimney she disappears to the junior department to look at expensive clothing with holes in it. Hank stands forlornly, a small child attached to each hand, and stares at the overwhelming quantity of "stuff" from which to pick.

"Let's get Mama something to wear," suggests Katie Sue. "Her clothes are sort of worn out."

"She should bring them here and trade them in," says Hank. "Look over there where Irmaleen is. Those jeans have holes in the knees and look at those kids grabbing them off that rack!"

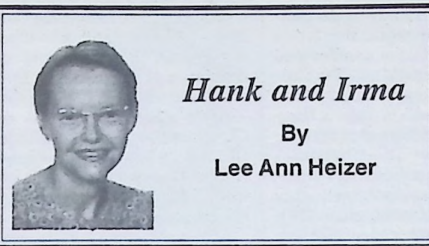
At about this moment Hank and the two young children are accosted by a pleasant appearing saleslady who asks (with a knowing glimmer in her eye) "Can I help you, sir?"

"You sure can! I've got to get a Christmas gift for my wife, and I've got to get it fast. I don't have much time left," croaks Hank in such a manner that the saleswoman is unsure whether his urgency is related to the nearness of December 25th or some impending disaster of which only he is aware.

"What do you have in mind?" asks the smiling clerk.

"Going home as soon as I can get out of this place," is Hank's terse response.

The upturned corners of her seasonal



Hank and Irma

By

Lee Ann Heizer

smile drop as the saleswoman realizes she is dealing with a man deep in shopping denial.

"I meant, what type of merchandise do you have in mind?" continues the shopping consultant whose nametag reads "Bessie." "We have a variety of items to select from: jewelry, perfume, handbags, shoes, housewares, lingerie..."

After the third option Hank begins to squirm as decision-making anxiety sets in, but he turns as red as a crimson Christmas tree ball when the choice of lingerie is verbalized. It's too much. Doesn't this nice lady know you just don't discuss the mysterious realm of women's undergarments with strange men? He stares at the ceiling in embarrassed, red-faced silence. Not realizing her faux pas Bessie follows his heavenward glance and wonders if he is pausing for prayer before making his selection.

"Clothes! Clothes! Clothes!" suddenly chant Katie Sue and Elmer together. Both children are gleefully twisting and yanking at Hank's hands as he is pulled first one way and then another by their perpetual motion.

Bessie doesn't have her 18-year service pin for nothing, and she sums the situation up quickly. There is a sale to be made here, but it will have to be done with Olympian speed to suit this nervous shopper and his twirling offspring.

"Is your wife Petite, Missy, or Today's Woman?" Bessie inquires with an air of efficiency.

She might as well have asked Hank to spell frankincense and myrrh. He couldn't have been any more baffled. After a few moments of puzzled pondering he answers,

"She's not Today's Woman. ('Aren't they the ones who wanted the E.R.A. and set fire to their you-know-whats?' remembers Hank silently.) I don't know what the sam-holy-heck 'puh-teet' is. How about Missy? She was Miss before she was a Mrs. That sounds like a safe bet."

"And what size, sir?" counters the ever inquiring Bessie.

Once again stymied, Hank rolls his eyes and heaves a sigh. An inspiration occurs to him as his eyes fall on Katie Sue.

"Katie, honey, what size does Mommy wear?" he hopefully questions the eight-year old.

"Don't know," responds Katie Sue. "But I wear an eight. I'm eight years old, and I wear an eight. When I was six, I wore a six. When I'm 10, I'll wear a 10. When I'm 12, I'll wear a..."

"Thanks, sweetie, I get the picture," replies Hank, and turning to Bessie he manfully says, "She wears a 38."

"Well, sir, that really sounds more like Today's Woman sizing," wheedles Bessie.

"Now, look, lady, I told you she wasn't one of those National Organization of Women kind of people!" counters Hank with some irritation.

"I didn't mean to imply anything of the sort," begins Bessie, when suddenly she is interrupted by high-pitched feminine squeals coming from an area close by. A line of indignant, harumphing, head-shaking matrons are hurriedly exiting the ladies fitting room. One particularly irate customer eyeballs Bessie and icily reports, "There's a little boy in the ladies' dressing room watching us!"

Hank suddenly realizes that one of his arms has not been twisting for a few minutes. Looking down he realizes that Little Elmer has become unattached.

"Daddy, do you know they've got a lot of little stalls back there? It would make a really good stable, except there's no watering troughs," Elmer remarks as Bessie marches him out of the changing area."

While attending to Little Elmer Hank realizes that Katie Sue has managed to undress a department store mannequin. Noticing that Bessie is becoming less courteous, helpful and efficient by the millisecond Hank says, "We'll take these," pointing at the suede leather mini-skirt and matching gold lame camisole which Katie Sue has strewn in the floor. Jerked to the alert by the certainty of a sale Bessie's cooperative zeal returns. "Christmas only comes once a year, and I'm sure your wife might enjoy a blouse, vest, sweater, and shoes to complement your selection."

"Sure, anything. Just get me out of here," is Hank's woeful response.

Katie Sue is crying because she can't take the big Barbie doll home. Little Elmer is doing his Elvis Presley imitation in front of the three-way mirrors. Hank is sweating profusely as Christmas shopping anxiety wraps around him like an electric blanket gone haywire. Irmaleen shows up from who-knows-where with a huge bag of who-knows-what just as Bessie is ringing up Hank's purchases.

Bessie smiles winningly and states, "Sir, that comes to \$748. 52. Cash or credit card?"

Hank's mouth drops open so wide you could stuff half a holiday fruit cake inside.

At the end of his rope, the sweating, fidgeting, panicked Hank sputters explosively, "What do you mean \$748.52? It just won't do!"

"If you think they won't fit your wife, she can always bring them back after the holiday to exchange them," offers Bessie. It has been a hard sale for Bessie, and she is not quite catching Hank's meaning.

"It's not my wife they don't fit. It's my wallet," snaps Hank.

Bessie's face falls, and her lips purse in a grim line. "Come with me please. I'm sure we can find the perfect fit for both your wife and your wallet in the gift certificate department."

Leaving the store some minutes later with a generous, yet not extravagant, gift certificate plunged deep in his trouser pocket Hank mutters to the children that he is glad Christmas shopping is over for another year. Little Elmer has lost one of his gloves and is insisting on returning to the ladies' dressing room to look for it. Katie Sue's body seems to have turned to lead, and she is moving toward the pick-up only because Hank and Irmaleen are dragging her like a sack of potatoes. All in all however, Hank is beginning to calm down when Irmaleen says, "Dad, you haven't forgotten have you? Mom's birthday is the week after Christmas." ---



# Communists didn't steal Christmas from Hungary

By BETH GREENAWALT

BALATONALMADI, Hungary — Even the Communists didn't dare play Scrooge with Hungarians' Christmas.

"As far back as I can remember, people had holidays from the 24th through the 26th of December," recalls Gergely, a 22-year-old student teacher at our school.

Many customs are similar. Hungarians, too, spend December days sending greetings to friends. They usually send 30-40 Christmas postcards to friends that they don't see anymore.

Hungarians are known for their love of good food. The cooking and the baking begins days in advance. However, the decorating waits until the morning or early afternoon of Christmas Eve.

In addition to glass balls, electric lights, and foil icicles, Hungarian Christmas trees are often decorated with *szaloncukor*. The children enjoy eating these brightly-wrapped candies right off the tree. Real candles and sizzling sparklers (*csillagszoro*) are typi-

cally lit on Christmas eve.

Often, the family waits outside the door while the father secretly lights the candles and two or three sparklers. The children wait in eager anticipation for "the angel" to ring a summing bell before they rush in.

Once under the Christmas tree, many families sing Christmas carols and thank each other (in advance) for the gifts. Then they wish each other a Merry Christmas (*Boldog Karacsonyt!*) along with the traditional *puszis* (cheek kisses.)

After that, the children attack the gifts piled under the tree. There's no waiting for Santa Claus; Hungarian children already shined up their boots and put them by the window for *Mikulas* (St. Nicholas) to fill on Dec. 6. He usually contents himself with offerings of oranges and chocolate bars in the shape of St. Nick. Anymore, these specially-wrapped bars are often made by Nestles, which took over the national chocolate factory.

Under Communism, the Hungarians weren't allowed to cel-

brate a saint's day, so *Mikulas* was disguised as *Telapo*, the "Old Man of Winter." Still, Christmas is the main event; the children don't even get to stay home from school for St. Nicholas' Day.

After opening presents on Christmas Eve, families traditionally dine on *Toltott Hal* or *Rántott Hal* (stuffed or breaded fish) and special *Beigli* cakes, made with nuts or poppy seed.

Afterward, some families may talk and read liturgies (although predominantly atheistic in practice, Hungary's nominal religion is Catholicism.) Many watch TV specials.

Under the Communists, television programs were usually non-religious, even on Christmas Eve. "One year there was a Western," Gergely remembers.

Now, however, Christmas programming is more traditional and often includes hymns and carols.

Some families attend church services on Christmas morning, many of which include Nativity plays.

Hungarians spend the rest of

Dec. 25 and 26 visiting relatives throughout the country. (That's not as much traveling as it sounds like; present-day Hungary is a bit smaller than the

state of Virginia, although it boasts a few more people.) Meanwhile, the children are busy with their new toys.

*Boldog Karacsonyt!*



Traditional Christmas celebrations in Hungary include decorating trees and giving gifts. Not even communism was strong enough to eliminate the Hungarians' annual holiday observance.

Photo by Laszlo Durst

## I won't be home for Christmas

By BETH GREENAWALT

A certain poignancy attends Christmas overseas, far from family and old friends. I'd found that I didn't dare play "I'll be Home for Christmas" too often, despite my fear that our children would grow up without their proper heritage of Bing Crosby.

However, we were looking forward to Christmas in Hungary and to spending time with our new friends here.

We enjoyed the Christmas program at the high school where my husband Dave teaches English. Students sang Hungarian Christmas carols in front of a huge Christmas tree.

As the finale, a student lit several *csillagszoro*. It was the first time I had seen the sparklers with which the Hungarians love to enliven their trees — kind of a combination of the Fourth of the July and Christmas.

We were busy writing on Christmas postcards. Not only did we want to remember our friends and supporters back home, but also the 150 Hungarian students who had attended last summer's camps. We went back so often to the post office for more stamps and postcards that we began to get embarrassed at the workers' evident astonishment.

After while we started making furtive trips to other post offices around Almadi and Veszprem, the nearest city.

We also began watching for appropriate gifts for our friends and neighbors, such as Magdanini, the grandmotherly lady next door who



Rosemarie, Jon, and Matthew Greenawalt celebrate Christmas in Hungary.

Photo by Beth Greenawalt

had crocheted coordinating hats and scarves for all three of our children.

Visiting the Christmas market in Veszprem, we found a series of open-air booths manned by clerks in thick coats and mufflers, their noses red with cold.

A small porcelain Nativity scene lit by a candle caught Dave's attention; we got one for the team gift exchange in Budapest but resisted getting another for ourselves. After all, the children had loaned us a toy barn and various animals borrowed from their Noah's Ark and farm sets. We had added some cut-outs from old Christ-

mas cards, and Matthew had made some cotton sheep.

Our traditional family Nativity scene, bought at a Mennonite sale, was at home in Virginia.

We also picked out some attractive red candles in plastic holders as gifts; one for Magdanini, another for our friend Jozsef, a local pastor. Months later, we began to wonder if the candles were intended for graveside use, according to Hungarian tradition. I guess our friends forgave us our ignorance, if so.

It had been years since we'd bought a Christmas tree; Dave's dad always gave us our choice from his tree farm near Greenville.

A couple weeks before Christmas, merchants began selling trees in a nearby parking lot. Most of them were scrawny Charlie Brown specials, with short needles and widely spaced branches. Dave brought one home on the bike trailer.

A few days later Dave was able to get a couple strings of electric lights in a downtown store, and we trimmed the little tree. The children all agreed that it looked much happier hung with an abundance of *szaloncukor* and homemade decorations; I tried not to think of last year's beautiful blue spruce.

Friends who came to our door were shocked that we had already brought in our tree and decorated it — fully a week before Christmas. We couldn't bring ourselves to tell them that many Americans trimmed theirs right after Thanks-

giving.

In turn I was amazed by the Hungarians' generosity. Living expenses in Hungary equal those in most American cities, but the average salary is less than \$300 a month.

Yet, while I was selecting medium-sized boxes of Legos for the boys' Christmas presents, I saw a Hungarian mother choose a huge doll that walked, talked — and cost the equivalent of \$79. Our friend Istvan got his son, Mate, a deluxe set of pirate Legos that our sons knew better than to even ask for.

All year long, Istvan walks and rides buses while his car sits in the garage. With gas at \$4 a gallon, he says he can't afford to run it, except for an occasional trip to see his parents.

The Hungarians' generosity was not only directed toward their own families. Keeping in mind their strained circumstances, we had selected modest gifts for our friends, hoping not to overwhelm or embarrass them.

Instead, we were the ones who felt overwhelmed and em-

barrassed. Our friends showered us, especially our children, with gifts we knew they could ill afford.

A few days before Christmas, we walked to a children's program at the downtown Reformed church. On impulse, we invited Istvan to bring his family and come with us.

Naturally, the carols and Bible verses were in Hungarian. However, in their shepherds' robes and angel wings, the children could have been walking down the aisle in any of the Nativity plays taking place across the ocean in America. We nodded our heads in contented familiarity, lifting up Rosemarie so that she could see Mary with Baby Jesus.

Istvan watched as intently as his young children did. Raised in a typical family during the Communist regime, it was the first such play he had ever seen — to us the age-old story of Christmas, whether told in English or Hungarian, to him a brand new event unfolding. It became new to us once more as we saw it through his eyes. —

Season's Greetings

from

LEONARD

SHOVER

AUCTION

Middlebrook, Va.



# Hoop dreams... in the garden

Nothing much happened in Middlebrook this week, except the potato chip man came by.

And then there was the moon. It was the kind of moon where big-eyed deer tip-toe across open fields, the anxiety of being seen by interlopers utmost on their mind. And, of course, the swollen moon was abetted in its magnificent display by clouds sailing from one side of the Shenandoah to the next, seeming to illuminate and reflect the newly fallen snow on the valley floor.

Shadows from the moonlight danced across the silent forests of Augusta County, and all who saw this particular moon had to stand and be silent for a moment, as an audience might. Even though our family has lived in this community for only a short time, the thought keeps reoccurring to me that we have such a big moon... for such a small town.

And indeed, it was many moons ago that I planned to erect a greenhouse in my garden, for what serious gardener does not contemplate having a tiny little place in the winter months where he can go and fiddle in the unfrozen soil?

My inspiration came from a fellow named Eliot Coleman, who is a market gardener in Maine, and the author of a book titled *The New Organic Grower*. I suppose it was the subtitle of the book that caught my eye originally. It proclaimed "A Master's Manual of Tools and Techniques for the Home and Market Gardener."

As I thumbed through the volume, I noticed a unique greenhouse building concept (unique at least to me) called the "walk-in tunnel" or "hoop house," which is a Quonset design utilizing flexible arches to support the clear poly greenhouse film. The entire structure is rather simple and straightforward in construction strategy. One can move it around from year to year with just a little effort.

The design calls for a 12-foot width and up to a 48-foot length.

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Greenville Shell  
Middlebrook General Store

## The Garden Path

By  
Jeff Ishee



The nearly completed "hoop house" skeleton is prepared for the polyfilm cover, spread out in background. An inexpensive greenhouse can be made using 3/4-inch PVC piping spaced at four-foot intervals.

The hoop house (as I like to call it) is made of 20-foot lengths of 3/4-inch Schedule 40 PVC pipe, which are bent and placed over steel rods which have been driven into the ground. You then place clear polyethylene plastic over the structure, anchor it, and voila! You have a homemade greenhouse!

So I set to work. I made it my goal to build this project for under \$100. My good friend at the farmer's market Fritz Flower helped make it possible when he told me that he was replacing the poly on his professional greenhouses in Churchville, and I could help myself to the used plastic he was taking down. The heavy duty 6 mil UV treated plastic appeared to be in great shape and still have a lot of use left in it. I hauled this huge section of plastic (a 40' x 50'

piece) home and set to laying out the hoop house of my dreams.

I must point out at this juncture that there is a great difference between a hoop house (or walk-in tunnel) and a true greenhouse. Most commercial greenhouses are not only larger in size, but are covered in double air-inflated poly plastic, or glass (if your pocketbook can stand it). An authentic greenhouse also has a reliable source of heat, a mechanical method for providing air ventilation, and usually, a built-in watering system. Of course, I'd love to have a setup like this one day; however, this hoop house project would allow me to get my feet wet in the area of garden season extension without being tied to the intensive management that a true greenhouse demands.

The hoop house is designed to allow earlier maturity in the spring and an extended season in the autumn. Since the design and materials

are low cost, the extra garden production can normally justify the expense. For those reasons, I like it.

The first thing I did was lay out a 12' x 20' rectangle on the garden surface. This portion of ground was used for last summer's bean patch, so the soil was in good condition. (We all know that beans are a legume, and add nitrogen to the soil, right?)

With stakes and string in place I then took 2-foot lengths of steel rebar and pounded them into the ground 18 inches, and at 4-foot intervals down the sides of the hoop house. With six stakes on each side, and 4 feet between each stake, the sides measured 20 feet.

I then took the 20-foot lengths of 3/4-inch PVC pipe and arched them from stake to corresponding stake. Taking another 20-foot piece of plastic pipe, I created a ridge purlin by tying it to the apex of each hoop with strips of rubber cut out of an old inner tube. These strips are non-abrasive, strong, flexible, and incredibly cheap!

Because our place at Bittersweet Farmstead

is a little windy at times, I wanted to make my hoop house exceptionally strong. Accordingly, I added 2 more purlins, each being about 3 feet down from the apex. These also were attached with strips of old inner tube. The ends of the purlins were finished off with PVC tees measuring 1 inch x 1 inch x 3/4 inch, the large portion of the tee sliding over the 3/4-inch arch, and the 3/4-inch portion attaching directly to the purlin. Wrapping a strip of inner tube around the junction several times, it most certainly made a strong and smooth connection.

With the frame of the hoop house in place, I then called the wife and children out of the house, and we all gently eased the pre-cut piece of plastic over the affair, which resembled a giant skeleton. The top, front, and back were cut to form one piece of plastic, which we anchored down along the edges by leaving an 18-inch excessive border and covered it with soil and small rocks (no shortage of the latter around our garden).

I then framed up a homemade door

for one end, anchored it in the ground with stakes and attached the top of the frame to the plastic hoops with 14 gauge wire. A layer of clear poly was placed over the door, and then attached with thin strips of lath and finish nails.

I didn't get the poly quite as tight as I have would liked, which is critical to the stability of the structure, so I took Eliot Coleman's advice and ran nylon cord over the top of the house and then attached it to a bungee cord on one side. The tension of the cord allows for expansion and contraction of the plastic due to temperature changes. The object of this technique is to keep the plastic taut at all times.

To further anchor the hoop house against the chill winter winds, I attached a steel guy wire to the end exposed to the prevailing winds. This guy wire was 14 gauge steel wire attached to an eye bolt over the door frame and then to a stake in the ground placed 20 feet away.

Having completed the project on a cool November after-

noon, I stepped inside and hung a thermometer from a ridge purlin. Within 20 minutes, the thermometer registered 65 degrees. "Umm huh," I said, as I stood alone in my little hoop house after a half-day's work. "It's much simpler than I thought it would be. It's bullet proof, it's cozy, and above all, it's CHEAP!" Indeed, I had come in way under budget, having spent only \$60 for materials. In all my manly pride, I thought "Yeah. This is really great. I'm going to spend a lot of time out here."

And then, five days later, it snowed. As I awoke at dawn to a scene of pure white Augusta County splendor and prepared to go feed the chickens I took a moment and gazed out the window, thinking "How beautiful!"

Long pause.  
"Hey. Where is my hoop house?"

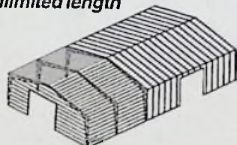
To be continued

Join us next month along *The Garden Path* when we will learn the fate of Jeff's hoop house.



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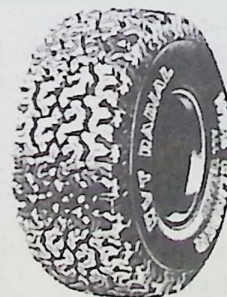
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# Sometimes the only thing that makes sense is horse sense

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** L.B. Hoofinit is a fictitious horse character developed by Chris Marrs as a service to teach horse care. All questions submitted to L.B. become the property of Chris Marrs. The answers given are subject to editor approval and are meant to be taken as general advice. Each horse, rider, owner, and situation reflects different problems, and L.B.'s answers are meant to be informative and enjoyable, but not binding. Common sense in any situation is a must.

If I could describe the best time of my life it would be when I was a young colt being raised on a small farm on Cape Cod, Mass. Jane Birch was the owner and responsible for training me. Her daughters and lessons students did most of the riding, but Jane was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. My life would take me through many riders, over many courses, from Massachusetts to Virginia -- from competing in collegiate programs and in three-day eventing to working as a therapeutic riding horse for the handicapped.

Jane's training gave me the basics I needed for carrying me through hard times. All horse owners are not alike -- everyone has different ideas and theories about right and wrong ways to train horses. But mostly they can be broken down into two schools of thought -- the French method and the German method. Jane taught the French school which begins with the three T's -- Things Take Time.

There were so many things that she taught

## L.B. HOOFINIT

### Horse Sense



me that still come to mind when I need it the most. But probably the most important and influential was her advice to a nervous rider at the beginning of a cross country course. The first fence was a coop built into the railings of a board fence used for a pasture. To me it was a boundary I wasn't supposed to cross. My rider was going to take me over it for the first time. Jane prepared us both by saying, "How you take that first jump determines the rest of the course!"

After coming out of the starting gate we headed for the jump. I was looking for a way around, but my rider squeezed her legs on me and drove me forward in spite of all the outs I was trying to come up with. Once we crossed that hurdle, the rest of the course was just one jump after another. I will always remember that advice. Because every course is different, every jump is a new obstacle. And if we take the first one with confidence in spite of our fears and perceptions, the rest may be tougher and bigger, but we will always finish the race.

Questions to L.B. Hoofinit may be submitted to P.O. Box 2955, Staunton, Va. 24402-2955. A sample question follows.

**Dear L.B.:** I have a problem with my six-year-old mare. She's starting to refuse jumps. What could be the problem?

"Sometimes the only thing that makes sense is horse sense."

Without giving me more information, the only answer I can give you is some of the reasons why I would refuse a jump. Basically horses are able to jump. We have physical limits and rider limits. If we can see a way around a jump, we're not idiots, we'd go around, especially if it's a brick wall. We're taught to jump. And the best way we're taught is through repetition and a building up of confidence from the small to the large. After jumping enough with a confident experienced rider, we can pretty much be expected to take many obstacles or "hazards" as you like to call them.

Now, myself, as a veteran event and hunter competition, I've had a lot of experience in jumping. And I've had enough different riders to know that the rider gives me the cues I need to follow the course. I don't get a map of where I'm going, so I just follow what I'm told. When I get a rider who's nervous, I never know what to expect. I always

listen to the loudest aid. If the rider approaches the jump squeezing the leg into it, but holding back with the hands out of fear, or too much control, then the strongest aid gets it. Sometimes the hands win.

Another problem I run into is the confusion on the part of the rider. If the rider can't remember the course, then I sure don't know where to go either. When this happens, I'm really nervous, because I pick up on the rider's confusion. And nine times out of 10, I'll get blamed for mistakes if the rider is embarrassed about it. This adds to the pressure. Riders don't realize that some emotions are contagious. Fear is one of them, but so is enthusiasm. An enthusiastic rider is the best to work under. I give the ride of my life for it.

I can refuse a jump when I take it enough times and the rider doesn't unlock the elbows to "let me down." If they stiffen up after two point then now I'm in for a nasty bang in the mouth when we hit the ground. A few of these I can forgive, but if it's often enough and I realize it's coming, I bow out and take my knocks on the rump. I figure I have a choice -- skip the jump and get it on the rump, or take the jump and get it in the mouth. Remember, I said if it's avoidable, we're not idiots. We'd rather not. ---

## Safe riding habits

- Always wear a hard hat.
- Make sure tack fits comfortably.
- Use the three girthing method -- once before bridle to hold saddle, firm; once after bridle, snug; and once before mounting, tight. Also keep in mind that a rider's weight displaces the girthing pressure. If a 200-pound man girths a pony for a six-year-old child, there is a good chance the pony will be girthed too tight. Keep this in

mind -- the saddle is supposed to be comfortable for both the rider AND the horse.

- Warm up your horse before making it exert strenuous physical exercise.

- Try to use the buddy method when trail riding or jumping cross country.

- Use proper cool-down methods after a workout. Offer three or four sips of water, walk a little, offer water, walk, etc. until the horse stops drinking. ---

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