"Friendly news for friendly people"

Augusta Country

April 1997
Vol. 4, Issue 4

P.O. Box 51 Middlebrook, Va. 24459

Down on the farm
Pages 12-13

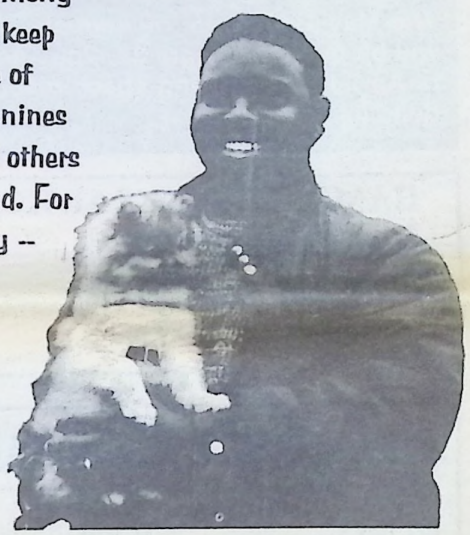
Hot diggidy dog!

They come in all shapes and sizes, each as distinctly different as the people who care for them. We keep them for work and just for fun. In this issue of *Augusta Country*, we salute the four-legged canines who put up with us even when we're cranky and others which pull more than their fair share of the load. For these furry friends -- whether at work or play --

"It's a dog's life."

Stories begin on page 8

Betty Smith of Staunton with "Petey" and "Ouisi"



Jonathan Payne of Staunton with "Chico"

For details on our "Cover Dogs" and their owners, see page 3

J.C. Wolfe of Staunton and "Mischief"

Gloria Shook of Waynesboro with "Dahli"

Robin Culver with "Becky", left, and Diana Young with "Salome." All are of Crimora.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

Allen's *Jungle 2 Jungle* same shtick as usual

Remember Tim Allen's *The Santa Claus*? Well, *Jungle 2 Jungle* is the same shtick only set in New York City during the summer. It has the same director, John Pasquin, and the same actor, Allen, and the same story, a father who learns the true meaning of fatherhood.

Work-alcoholic Michael Cromwell played by Allen flies down to Leebo Leebo to secure his divorce papers from a wife who left him 13 years earlier. There Michael learns about a son he never know he had (surprise, surprise). And what a surprise it is when Baboon, Mike's Leebo Leebo name — an appropriate name for Allen, movie or not — must take Memeseko, his son, to the American jungle: New York City.

Taking Memeseko to New York is the easy part, teaching him to live in New York is the hard part. When the two cultures clash, Mike must mediate, but instead he reprimands Memeseko for his misunderstandings.

Memeseko is also introduced to Mike's fiancée, a model named Charlotte. She doesn't take too well to Memeseko or his pet tarantula, Matika. Predictably, Charlotte soon becomes irritated with Mike and begins to distance herself from him. Allen is funny in this movie, but a lot of the comedy comes from Mike's associate Richard, played by Martin Short. Allen gives his usual performance which can be seen practically everyday on the small screen's now-syndicated sitcom *Home Improvement*.

Jungle 2 Jungle is not slapstick funny, but it's funny enough to keep the audience watching. One of the funnier scenes comes when Mike accidentally puts Charlotte's cat, Cocoa, to sleep with a dart gun. Kids will probably enjoy this movie. Tim Allen fans will also enjoy it, although if you're neither a kid nor a *Home Improvement* aficionado, you may want to consider another movie.

Hannah gives *Jungle 2 Jungle* 2 1/2 bananas. The rating is PG for some violence and language. ---

The May 1997 issue of *Augusta Country* will be published April 29. Copy deadline is April 8. Advertising space reservation deadline is April 11.

Augusta Country
is published 11 times each year by
See-KWA! Publishing
P.O. Box 51 Middlebrook, Va. 24459
Subscription rate: $16 per year

Publisher & editor: Betty Jo Hamilton
Sales associate: Chris Marrs
Sales associate: Leslie Scheffel
RHS News advisor: Cherie Taylor
RHS News editor: Heather Caldwell

Staff writers
Vera Hailey, Betty Jo Hamilton, Roberta Hamlin, Roy Howard, Jeff Ishee, Deborah Sensabaugh, Sue Simmons, Lois Skeen, Nancy Sorrells, Penny Plemmons

Contributing writers
Katharine Brown, Chris Marrs

Student writers
Heather Caldwell, Ruth Jones, Lauryn Plemmons, Hannah Simmons

Call 540/885-0266 or 1-800-884-8248 for publication information.

Please recycle

Subscribers!!! Tell your friends they can find *Augusta Country* at one of the following retail outlets.

- IGA–Churchville
- Beverley News Stand-Staunton
- Gitchell's-Staunton
- Kroger -- Staunton
- Augusta Co-op-Staunton
- Augusta Co-op - Weyers Cave
- Pappy's Place-Buffalo Gap
- IGA-Craigsville
- Greenville Shell
- Middlebrook General Store
- The Candy Shop – Stuarts Draft

"Friendly news for friendly people"

Time to renew!

Augusta Country

Don't delay! Renew today!

It's as easy as
1 - 2 - 3
to renew your subscription to Augusta Country!

1. Check your mailing label for your subscriber number and expiration date.

Subscriber number *Expiration date*

John Jones
467 Regent Way
Staunton, Va. 24401
0945 10/97 C006

2. Write your subscriber number on your $16 check.
3. Send your check to Augusta Country, P.O. Box 51, Middlebrook, Va. 24459.

Filling out and enclosing the form printed below with your check will insure that you are credited for payment.

Name_____
Rt. or St. no._____
City_____ State_____ Zip_____
Subscriber number_____

4/97

Please patronize our advertisers, and let them know you saw their ad in Augusta Country!

Craigsville's 'roadrunners' keep rollin' down the highway

By PENNY PLEMMONS

CRAIGSVILLE — Cornelia "Neil" Johnson of Craigsville laughingly claims she "ran the wheels off" her Dodge providing transportation for Craigsville's seniors. She has retired the old worn out Dodge and suspects that her current car, a 1987 black Chrysler, is headed toward the same fate. "I love to drive, and I love people," 80-year-old Neil said. Prior to Neil's "taxi" service, an active senior citizen group in Craigsville provided transportation for those who were unable to drive. As the years passed, the group dwindled in membership and finally disbanded leaving some of the group without a way to "get around."

Neil was already accustomed to doing the lion's share of driving for her husband, Ernest.

"I always drove so that Ernest could look around and view the scenery," she chuckled. After Ernest passed away, it was only natural for Neil to continue driving and to use it as a means to help friends and neighbors.

Neil has been at it for the last 15 years. She and her regular riders have become such a familiar sight on the local byways that the community has fondly nicknamed them "The Roadrunners."

Neil's chauffeuring provides such necessary senior services as taking the sick to the doctor, visiting the grocery store, the mall and Wal-Mart. There is always a seat available for anyone who wants to attend Sunday morning church services or midweek prayer meeting. The Roadrunners also take time to visit local shut-ins and area nursing homes.

Lillian Swisher, a rider for the last five or so years, stated: "Neil is a wonderful person. I don't know what I'd do without her."

Neil gets behind the wheel year round, day or night. She travels to Staunton almost daily, and her excursions take her as far away as Waynesboro. She and her crew of five or six ladies have never been stranded along the roadside due to car troubles, nor have they been surprised by difficult driving situations related to bad weather. The only thing that has ever hindered Neil from driving has been a recent break-in at her home. She plans to curtail some of her evening outings until the burglars are apprehended. Neil makes it a point to keep her car in good condition. She checks her own oil regularly, insures that her windshield wipers are in good condition, and always keeps plenty of gas in the tank. "There are some things a body can do for themselves," Neil quipped.

Recently, she heard a "pecking" noise under the hood. She made a stop by Daniel's Garage in Craigsville and learned that the Chrysler needed a new engine. Leaving the car at the garage didn't slow Neil down. She borrowed a car from her daughter, and the Roadrunners have kept on running.

The Roadrunners routinely patronize favorite eateries such as Hardees and McDonalds in Staunton. And, according to Neil, they hated to see Woolworth's, one of their favorite places to shop, go out of business.

Neil states that she and the gals, "don't have any boyfriends" to squabble over. "We just enjoy each other's company, talking about church, and about old times," she says. Neil's formula for life is captured in the lyrics of her favorite song, "Do For Others." The chorus goes: "Others, Lord, Yes Others, Let this my motto be. Help me to live for others, that I may live like Thee." —

Cornelia "Neil" Johnson and passenger, Edna Buchanan, both of Craigsville, prepare to hit the road. Mrs. Johnson serves as "chauffeur" to many western Augusta County residents who do not have transportation of their own.

Photo by Penny Plemmons

On the cover

Staff writer Nancy Sorrells spent some time roaming around the community to get photographs of people and their dogs who are featured on this month's cover of *Augusta Country*. Mild pre-spring days brought a lot of these folks out with their dogs to enjoy the good weather.

Betty Smith, top left, was enjoying a walk through Gypsy Hill Park in Staunton when Nancy found her and her canine walking partners, "Petey" and "Ouisi," pronounced "weesie." Betty says Petey is a year-old. She identifies his breeding as "anybody's guess." Ouisi, 16, is half golden retriever and half Newfoundland. Despite her advancing years, Ouisi still makes it around the park once a day with Betty.

"Chico," a four-month-old Pomeranian pictured top right, was accompanying Jonathan Payne of Staunton through Gypsy Hill when Nancy encountered them. Jonathan said he loves Chico because he's cute and doesn't shed.

In the lower right corner, Robin Culver, left, and Diana Young also were enjoying a day at Gypsy Hill when Nancy found them. Each of these women has three dogs, but on this particular day, Robin was accompanied by her 10-year-old beagle, "Becky," and Diana was escorted by her two-year-old whippet, "Salome." Both Robin and Diana live in Crimora.

"I love my dogs, because they're good companions and love you no matter what," Robin said.

"They're my best friends and are good for your health," proclaimed Diana.

In the lower left corner is Gloria Shook of Waynesboro. Her dog is called "Dahli" and is a 7-year-old Lhasa Apso.

And last, but not least, in the center of the page is J.C. Wolfe and his Great Dane, "Mischief." It was Mischief who caught Nancy's eye in this instance when she spotted the sizable dog sticking out the back of a utility vehicle parked at a business on Barterbrook Road. After inquiring inside, Nancy learned the dog belonged to Wolfe who is a dentist. He obliged Nancy's request to have his photo taken with Mischief. The photo was taken while Wolfe was still wearing his surgical scrubs. I guess that makes him a "Wolfe in doc's clothes." Oooo, bad one.

Thanks to each of these folks and their canine companions for posing for *Augusta Country's* camera. ---

'Millions and millions' served by forestry center in Crimora

By NANCY SORRELLS

CRIMORA — Once when I was small, I had this idea that I would count to a million. Every night as I lay down to sleep, I would chip away at it, counting until I got drowsy. Although this went on for many nights, I never even got close to my goal. Thus, knowing how large a million is, it boggles my mind that the State Forestry Center at Crimora, one of three in Virginia, ships between 7 and 10 MILLION seedlings to landowners every spring. Those millions of trees, grown right in Augusta County soil, and germinated from Virginia seed, are as suited to growth in the Old Dominion as any trees you will find anywhere. Recently Thomas Frazier, who manages the Crimora nursery with Larry Estes, took time out from his busy schedule to show me around the 189-acre center that has been in the tree business since 1966.

Although it was late February and most of us were still searching for signs of spring, the crew at Crimora was hard at their spring work, removing trees from the ground, counting, labeling and bundling them for shipment all over the state. On this day alone, 80,000-100,000 trees would be packaged and moved into the cold storage room (that holds a mere 2 million trees) to await shipment.

As part of the Virginia Department of Forestry, this site is one of three centers designed to produce trees that are well adapted to Virginia soils and climate. The Crimora nursery is officially known as the Augusta Forestry Center, while the other two are New Kent Forestry Center, near Richmond, and Garland Gray Forestry Center near Courtland. Combined, the three cover more than 1,200 acres and produce 38 million seedlings annually.

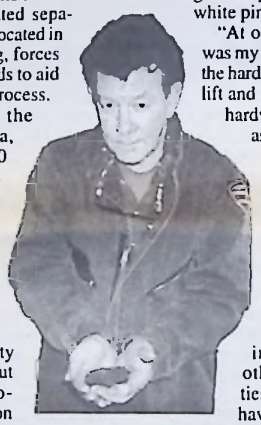
According to Frazier, the Augusta center specializes in hardwoods, but also has quite a few conifers, mostly white pine and Norway spruce. "We grow about 40 different species here," he explained as he drove his truck through the fields lined with rows of miniature trees. Each species, when crowded together by the thousands, painted a different picture, some with barks of gray, others red. Some still had the brown shriveled leaves of last year, while the green of the pines stood out on the winter fields.

Arbor Day is April 26

Trees shipped out each year are two-year-old seedlings, which were germinated, planted and grown at the Crimora facility. "The two-year-old seedlings have established a little better root system than the year-old trees," Frazier explained. Sixty to 70 percent of the seed for the trees is also collected on the property. For white pines, there is a seed orchard — a stand of trees delimbed except for a cluster of limbs at the top of each tree. These limbs droop heavy with cones.

"To pick the seed, we get lift trucks, like the power companies have, and pick the cones by hand in September," Frazier explained, adding that this is a job which can be "pretty hot and dirty." That pine seed is processed at the New Kent center where it is extracted from the cones. Then it returns to Crimora where the top-grade viable seed is separated from the small and medium seed as well as from seed coverings, dirt and even stones that work their way into the batch. A gravity-operated separating machine, located in the seed building, forces air under the seeds to aid the separation process.

This spring, the crew at Crimora, will run 11,000 pounds of the seeds sent from New Kent through the machine. When they are finished, they might have 100 pounds of large grade, top quality seed to plant, but that seed produces germination rates of at least 98 percent. Because the fall pine seed crop was good, extra cones were picked, and the surplus seed will be stored in the cold storage center for possible use next year if the trees in the orchard produce fewer cones.



Jim Gering holds a handful of top grade pine tree seeds produced at Crimora's State Forestry Center.

Hardwood seeds, like those from oaks and maples, are treated differently. They are floated in water, and those that come to the surface are scooped off and discarded. Depending on the species, seeds are planted at different times of the year.

"Seventy-five percent of the crop is seeded in the fall, and the other 25 percent in the spring," Frazier said. Not all the seeds produce a 98 percent germination rate, and there is a bit of irony in the most difficult species, according to Frazier. "Red cedar. It grows like wild in the fields, but for some reason we have had a little trouble getting our germination rate up on it," he noted.

Working at the center is a year-round job for 10-15 full and part-time state employees, but during the peak labor periods, like in the spring, the nursery has had a great deal of success with crews from the state prison system. On the day of my visit, there were about 10 men out in the field digging up trees for shipping, and 30 more in the building counting, grading, bundling and labeling trees. Not a particularly easy task, according to Frazier, because the dormant trees have to be properly labeled according to species.

Lifting the trees from the ground is a task that has become easier in recent years with the use of a four-row tree harvester that unearths the trees and shakes off the dirt. The machine has to be adjusted for different species because of the variance in root structures, but on a good day it can lift 200,000 white pine trees.

"At one time the pine tree was my favorite tree, because the hardwoods were harder to lift and manage, but now the hardwoods are just about as easy to manage with the machinery that's been developed," Frazier said. "Anyway, I kinda like dealing with so many different species."

In addition to lifting and shipping trees and separating seeds and planting, there are many other seasonal activities. "In the summer we have to put out irrigation pipes — the water comes from the South River — and we have to get the fields ready and put a cover crop on the fields where we took trees. We use fields in a two-year rotation. The fall is when we plant, and pick seed. We also raise rye straw that we mulch with." He added that there is also spraying, weeding and field fumigation that takes up much of their time.

Frazier has been full-time at the center for 24 years and worked there another five years as a part-time summer hire. "I didn't care much for factory work," he says of the short stint he spent in another line of work. But, although he enjoys being outside and likes the variety, there are a few parts of his job that he doesn't care for too much.

"I don't like pulling weeds!" Frazier admitted. "In the hardwoods we have to do it pretty much by hand. The conifers can be controlled by spray, but that hasn't been gotten down to a science yet for the hardwoods."

Frazier thought on his answer for a little while, and then opined that there was one task that he liked even less than pulling weeds.

Thomas Frazier, co-manager of the State Forestry Center in Crimora, checks some white pine seedlings ready to be harvested. Photos by Nancy Sorrells

"Cleaning up after floods is worse," he said as he drove along the river that is both a boon and a bane to the nursery. "Since 1969 we have had seven major floods. We were kinda fortunate with Fran, although we lost some fields that we had just fumigated, we didn't lose a lot of trees, and there wasn't much silting. But the January '96 flood caused a lot of damage," he explained.

He pointed out that the center was entirely self-supporting so that heavy flood damage can cut into the operating budget. "If the trees don't come up, we don't make any money," Frazier noted. "The cost of the trees runs this place. The electric bill, salaries, chemicals, everything, comes from the sales. We raise a few trees for private nurseries, but mostly we sell the trees at cost and are self-supporting. The tree sales support us and we generate our own funds."

Through those sales, Virginia landowners have the opportunity to purchase large quantities of quality seedlings at affordable prices. "You can order 25 to however many thousand you want and have them shipped by UPS. Two thousand orders through UPS leave here every year. We just shipped an order to southwest Virginia for 300,000 trees," the nurseryman said.

When talking to Frazier, one can sense a certain amount of pride in the work that goes on at the Augusta center. Trees that don't meet the height standards listed in the seedling catalog, for instance, are pulled and never sold. Men spend hours sifting through pine seeds to get the best grade possible in order to ensure the trees are the best from the start. That pride comes through when Frazier explains the part of his job that he likes the best: "The feeling of getting those trees lifted and providing a service to the public — of getting them a good quality product," he said.

Seedlings and seed are shipped until late April of each year. For a copy of the catalog write Augusta Forestry Center, P.O. Box 160, Crimora, Va. 24431 or call 540/363-7000. —

Waynesboro horticulturist finds he's hooked on trees

By NANCY SORRELLS

WAYNESBORO -- Waynesboro city horticulturist Dwayne Jones is hard pressed to find a tree he doesn't like. He finds it equally difficult to choose his favorite tree. Trouble is, he likes them all.

"That's like asking me if I have a favorite color," he said. "Actually I have a series of favorite trees. The ginkgo is one of them. It is classified as a living fossil, because it is so old. And its fall color is so nice. Its color only lasts a week, but it evokes a great deal of emotion because it is so beautiful," he said.

The ginkgo comes from the Far East. A bit closer to home on his "favorite" list is the sourwood, a native to Virginia.

"Sourwood is a multi-season plant. It has good blooms and good fall color," Jones explained.

The newest species on his list is *Acer triflorum*, the three-flowered maple. This maple is the subject of several journal articles that Jones is writing and is a tree new to the landscape scene. "You think of the genus maple and are surprised to discover a relatively unknown species of maple. It is a smaller tree, 25 to 30 feet when mature, and will fit most landscapes. It grows equally well in almost full shade and full sun, and it has no pest or disease problems. And because I am a big fan of ornamental bark, I love its fantastic peeling brown bark which reveals orange white underneath," he said in describing this award-winning maple.

As the city horticulturist, Jones and his staff of one full-time and two part-time employees are responsible for more than just trees. Their work includes everything in the city that is green from flower boxes to the turf on the soccer fields. Jones' position was created in the 1980s when Waynesboro created an active beautification program. As part of that work, the city has added enough trees through a variety of grant programs that it can claim the status of a "Tree City USA."

Dwayne Jones, Waynesboro city horticulturist, checks a branch on a tree which is part of the city's landscape.
Photo by Nancy Sorrells

"The program started with tree plantings in the median strips, and then the citizens said, 'We need to maintain these trees.' It has really blossomed from there, and the citizens have embraced the whole program," he explained.

Jones, who holds a degree in landscape design and horticulture, came to Waynesboro after eight years of internships and job experience at some of the country's best gardens. The field was an obvious choice for Jones who said his grandmother raises day lilies (and even named a new variety for him) and his father is in the landscape business. Although trees are just one part of the versatile work in which Jones is engaged, he says that trees anchor any landscape design. "Our department's motto is 'Planting for a better tomorrow," he explained. "When you plant small trees, you can come back in 10, 15 or 20 years and take a look at them."

One of the most enjoyable parts of his job, he added, is helping educate Waynesboro's citizens about landscape design, including the what, where, when and how about tree planting.

"When you decide you want a tree, you have to get the right tree for the right place. There are many things you have to keep in mind. Among those things are the mature size of the tree — its eventual size and spread. You have to keep in mind what is overhead, like powerlines, and what underground services there are as well," Jones said in describing the steps one needs to go through when adding trees to your property. "You have to look at the particular situations and see what you want the tree to do. If you want shade from the summer sun, then you plant a deciduous tree in the southwest corner of your property. If you want a windbreak, then you look at where the prevailing winds are coming from and decide what trees you want."

Aesthetics also play a large part in the use of trees in landscaping, he added. "Trees increase the property value. A well-landscaped house sells better. Trees also increase the wildlife habitat by adding cover and food."

Another important rule to keep in mind is to plant a tree in an environment where it will thrive. "Trees are genetically programmed for certain conditions, and they will respond for you if you plant them in those conditions. For instance, if a tree is native to a wet area, plant it in a wet area," he explained. Jones tries to keep all of these rules in mind when planting trees in the city. "We strive to use the best adapted plants to our particular climate with an emphasis on something a little unusual," he explained. Which is why in the winter you may see a cluster of leafless shrubs that stand out from the dull January scenery because of their striking yellow bark. This particular variety of dogwood was chosen, according to Jones, for its year-round visual appeal.

In creating Waynesboro's urban forest, which Jones describes as the interface between urban dwellers and plants in urban situations like sidewalks, medians, under powerlines and in parks, he is lessening some of the negative impacts of people on the environment. "Urban forests will alleviate problems like urban heat and pollution," he explained. And in order to maintain the healthiest urban forest possible, he strives for a diversity of species throughout the city so that unforeseen blights like those that struck elms and chestnuts earlier in the century will not be so devastating to the city's tree population.

The city's horticultural staff is working on a tree inventory of the entire city which includes listing tree varieties, planting dates and health status of the tree. Many of the trees are in the city's parks. Those who want to see a little different twist on trees might want to head over to Constitution Park on the South River. Here Jones is working to complete labeling on the many shrubs and trees. The different twist at this park is because many of the trees are "famous and historic" meaning they are direct descendants of trees which were planted or owned by famous Americans. For instance, a tulip poplar was grown from the seed of a poplar which still stands at Monticello and was there when Thomas Jefferson walked the grounds.

Jones encourages anyone to look closely at the city's landscaping and call if they have any questions or need information for their own property. "The best part of the job is when someone calls. The excitement part is educating people," he said.

Just as trees anchor any good landscape plan, they also serve as an anchor in Jones' love of the botanical world. "It's a passion for me," he said. "It is something I do as a profession and at home. I can't get away from it." —

Tree planting project marks Waynesboro's birthday

By NANCY SORRELLS

WAYNESBORO — The City of Waynesboro would like to join with its citizens to celebrate Waynesboro's bicentennial in a special way — by planting 200 new trees.

"The city is planting 100 trees over 1997, and we are asking the citizens to match that. One hundred trees on public land and 100 on private land for 200 trees that mark 200 years," Dwayne Jones, city horticulturist, explained of the idea which will be officially launched around Arbor Day.

Citizens who plant trees — and these should be at least 4 to 5 foot trees — should call the parks and recreation department and let the city know. The type of tree and its location will be recorded and a certificate will be awarded. "We initially thought that we would plant a tree as a memorial for the bicentennial. But then we thought 'Hey, why not plant 200 trees!' Then when the city turns 250, everyone can look back at those trees and also read what was written down about their planting. It's a neat take on the whole bicentennial," he said.

Jones noted that the city will be distributing brochures and posters to publicize the tree planting project. His department is, as always, also available for advice on tree planting and care. For information call 942-6735. —

Dogs and trees are part of Virginia's history

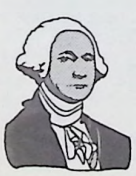
By NANCY SORRELLS

Isn't it ironic in this *Augusta Country* issue that features both trees and dogs, that perhaps the most important tree in Virginia is the DOGWOOD tree and that the Old Dominion has its own official state dog?

Dogwood, or *Cornus florida*, is both the Virginia state tree and the state flower.

In 1918 the Virginia General Assembly chose dogwood as the state tree in order to "foster a feeling of pride in our State and stimulate an interest in the history and traditions of the Commonwealth."

The honor of being chosen as the state flower did not occur until 1956 when the assembly noted that the dogwood "is well distributed throughout the Commonwealth and its beauty is symbolic of the many attractive features of this State."



While we're on the subject of emblems and Virginia, in 1966 the assembly picked the American foxhound as the state dog because, "George Washington... imported fox hounds into this State for hunting purposes and all fox hounds are descendants of these dogs."

The dogwood has a lengthy history in Virginia, and was already a long-time native when the first settlers arrived. It is found throughout the state and usually grows from 15 to 30 feet in height with a trunk 6 to 12 inches in diameter. The wood was once prized for small wooden utensils and tools and was in great demand for parts in textile mills. Its white or pink blooms in the spring and its bright red berries in the fall are part of the state's landscape.

Despite what the Virginia assembly said in 1966, the roots of the American hound, although truly American, do not go back exclusively to George Washington. In 1650, English fox hounds were imported by Robert Brooke. More than 100 years later, the descendants of those dogs were crossed with French hounds sent by General Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington. The result was a truly American breed that is lighter-boned and lighter in weight than English foxhounds. —

Yesterday once more

Thomas Lewis tamed land with surveyor's tools

By NANCY SORRELLS

Family legend remembers that he was so near-sighted he could not distinguish an Indian from a settler at 20 yards. But Thomas Lewis, perhaps the least renowned of the Lewis family who settled Staunton and its surrounding area, proved that in the long run, the quill pen was indeed mightier than the sword.

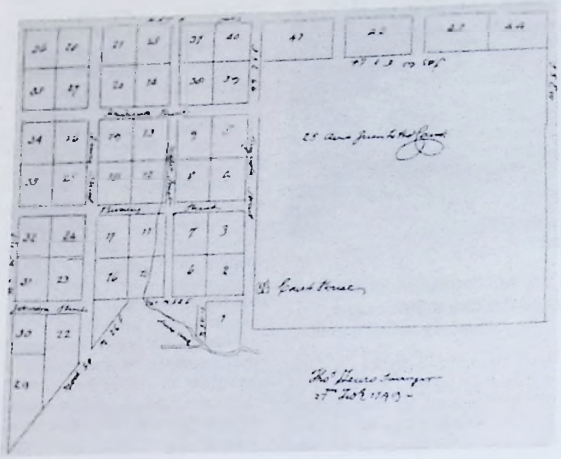
Hiram Arey, who has been featured in Augusta Country, has been a long-time historian of the area. In 1933 while pursuing a masters degree at the University of Virginia, Arey gathered a great deal of information on Thomas Lewis as part of his thesis titled "The Public Career of Thomas Lewis."

As Staunton celebrates its 250th birthday, further examination of Thomas Lewis as an unsung hero of the frontier is important, if for no other reason than the fact that a close look at the original Staunton plat reveals the signature of "Thomas Lewis, Surveyor" in the bottom right-hand corner.

In his thesis introduction, Arey noted that "Thomas Lewis was not *a glamorous character, but typical of a group of leaders who though not widely known today, were im*portant factors in the early life of our State and Nation."

This Lewis, the eldest child of John and Margaret (Lynn) Lewis, was about 12 years old when his family immigrated from County Donegal in the north of Ireland and became one of the first white families in Augusta County. The facts surrounding the family's flight from Ireland are shrouded in a mythology that speaks of John Lewis "slaying the Irish Lord," apparently a reference to a dispute with a landlord.

Whatever the reason for the move, though, the Lewis family wound up settling on the creek that was eventually named for them, Lewis Creek, and built a house on the outskirts of present-day Staunton.



The original Staunton plat reveals the signature of "Thomas Lewis, Surveyor" in the bottom right hand corner.

John Lewis and his six children, *five of whom were born in Ireland, were important leaders* in the frontier community. Contrary to popular belief, though, even then this sparsely-settled region, was not isolated from the rest of the world. The men who came here had several things on their minds, but it all boiled down to making money. They wanted to make money, and the abundant land around them was the way to do it!

Probably because of his poor vision, Thomas Lewis gravitated toward book learning where he particularly excelled in mathematics. Some thought him one of the finest mathematicians in the colony of Virginia. Mathematics, of course, are an important part of land surveying and with literally millions of acres of new land waiting to be surveyed, divided up, and sold for a profit, Lewis was standing on the edge of a gold mine.

Lewis was quite a young man when he first appeared in the public eye. As a 21-year-old, he and his 19-year-old brother Andrew became the western partners with three eastern Virginia gentleman in a land company that had rights to 30,000 acres along the Cowpasture River in Bath County. As a 24-year-old in 1742, he became Clerk of the Courts Martial of the newly formed Augusta County. By 1744 he was appointed the surveyor of Orange County, but never accepted the office, because in 1745 Augusta County, which had been formed in 1738, had enough residents that an active government could be established and official positions could be filled.

So, at the age of 27, Thomas Lewis became a magistrate and sat on the first Augusta County court in 1745. He continued as a magistrate until the American Revolution. More importantly, however, Lewis was appointed Augusta County's first surveyor. Arey describes the appointment this way: "Lewis was thus thrown immediately into one of the highest and most influential local positions attainable."

The job of county surveyor was an exalted one on the land-rich frontier. Lewis was responsible for measuring and helping distribute the unsettled lands of an immense, beckoning expanse of land. In theory, the land that Lewis was to survey reached to the Mississippi River or even to the Pacific because Augusta County's western boundary was loosely described as being all the land claimed by the English crown.

With such a jewel dangling in front of them, the colony of Virginia was ripe for land speculators — well-heeled men looking to make money by acquiring land and then reselling it to settlers who they convinced to come live on the new expanse. This land boom was evident in Augusta County and as the surveyor in charge of it, Lewis was in the thick of things. The statistics of this land rush speak for themselves. Between 1728 and 1748 more land was patented in Virginia than in the first 100 years of the colony.

Frontier surveyors, then were essentially in positions of great power and became "junior partners" of the big land speculators like Lord Fairfax and William Beverley who set up headquarters in Virginia. Having wormed their way into the well-heeled circles of the speculators, surveyors could move up the social ladder, become gentleman of some means and create their own regional dynasties all through surveying. George Washington began his public career as a surveyor. The fathers of Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry were also surveyors.

Perhaps no surveying dynasty created by a Virginia surveyor was more influential and powerful than that which was created by Thomas Lewis. But all of the frontier surveyors together put a special twist on the position from which they ruled. Historian Sarah Hughes, author of "Surveyors and Statesmen," calls the group "Valley Immigrant Surveyors." They were all men who were born in another country, usually Ireland, and made their mark on the land and politics of the frontier. Despite their immigration status, they did not move to America as lowly indentured servants. They came from good circles, were connected through family and friends to prominent and influential speculators and thus used their surveyor status to advance even closer to the top of society. They further used the dynasty they created to insure the future success of their understudies.

A roll call of Thomas Lewis' dynasty is as dizzying as it is revealing. Thomas Lewis' uncle, for instance was William Lynn, a speculator who had come from Ireland to Fredericksburg in the 1720s. Lewis' father, John, was closely involved with William Beverley whose land grant eventually encompassed most of present-day Augusta County and all of Staunton.

In the early years of settlement, county surveyors worked unceasingly to get tracts of land measured and mapped. The need for assistants was pressing. Thomas Lewis' most famous prodigy was his cousin William Preston who was 11 years younger than his cousin and worked under him from 1751-1769. Preston's uncle was the early Valley speculator James Patton. Once huge hunks of land began being carved off of Augusta County, Preston was appointed county surveyor in his own right, first in Botetourt, then in Fincastle and finally in Montgomery County where he died in 1783.

Just how closely these surveyors were bound by "complex ties of family and of friendship" according to Hughes is seen when Preston was recommended for the newly formed job of Botetourt surveyor. Who recommended him? His

See LEWIS, page 23

The federal farmhouse that stands on Lynnwood today was not built until 1809, probably by Thomas Lewis' son, Charles. A small frame story-and-a-half house which stands just behind the house is remembered in family story to have been the house lived in by Thomas Lewis and his family.

Augusta Historical Society honors two Stauntonians

AC staff report

VERONA — Two Stauntonians who have devoted much of their time to the study and preservation of local history were honored recently by the Augusta County Historical Society.

Katherine Bushman and Richard Hamrick received the society's Distinguished Service Awards for 1997. The presentation was made at the ACHS annual banquet by board president Ann McCleary.

"I can't think of anyone more deserving," she said in recognizing Mrs. Bushman and Hamrick with the awards. This is the first year the society has conferred the distinguished service recognitions.

McCleary noted that Mrs. Bushman and Hamrick have played influential roles in the county's historical society from its inception. Both are charter members, and each has served as president of the society's board of directors.

"Both Katherine and Dick have made other very significant contributions," McCleary said. "Katherine has been a dedicated editor of the *Bulletin*, and she has been an active genealogist for many years. She maintains extensive files on local families, and is always willing to share her research with others and to help with research if one calls her.

"Dick's most significant contribution, at least during my tenure in the historical society, has been in maintaining and developing the archives, which is a considerable and an important undertaking, and in maintaining an extensive photography archives of the region, which he generously shares with others."

McCleary called Hamrick "a wonderful resource on local history and particularly the history of Staunton.

"Every time I ask him a question, I'm always amazed at how much he knows!" McCleary said.

Keynote speaker for the society's banquet was Katharine Brown who spoke about "The Joys of Local History." Brown is director of research and collections at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton and has previously worked as executive director of Woodrow Wilson Birthplace in Staunton and Stonewall Jackson House in Lexington.

"We are the raw meat of history," Brown told her audience. She noted that for many years, local history was looked upon as "second class."

"Real history was about power," she said. "Important events did not occur in kitchens, farm fields, and sweat shops."

Brown disputed this notion, however, noting that the study of local history is now a major field at many universities. Having worked at three museums, Brown said she looked upon local history as "more than a job or a career.

"It is an avocation, a passion," she said.

Simply put, Brown said local history is no more than a study of "ordinary people in ordinary lives." She noted that county courthouses can provide a wealth of information about local history through deeds and wills kept on file there. She referred to searching these documents as "local history adventures" and told of some of her encounters as she has researched the "passage through time of ordinary mortals."

Brown encouraged historical society members to continue their interest in local history. She said that by being "guardians of history," it can be preserved and studied by future generations. —

Ann McCleary, right, president of the Augusta County Historical Society, congratulates Katherine Bushman and Richard Hamrick for receiving ACHS Distinguished Service awards for 1997. AC staff photo

Waynesboro history exhibited in museum

By VERA HAILEY

WAYNESBORO — In the heart of downtown Waynesboro, a historically significant project is under way. Located in the former Jefferson National Bank building at the southeast corner of Wayne Avenue and Main Street is the Waynesboro Heritage Museum, which opened its doors for the first time in January.

The 3,000 square-foot museum is a labor of love for volunteers, who sign up for two-hour time slots to greet visitors and arrange exhibits. Over 75 volunteers have contributed money, time, materials and labor.

"Don't forget to sign the guest book," reminds Dorothy Sayre, museum volunteer and treasurer of the newly-incorporated Waynesboro Heritage Foundation. The Foundation rents the building from its owner for a nominal fee.

It is not what is typically thought of as a museum — there is vibrant life here. This is a celebration of the present and future as much as it serves to preserve the city's past.

"So many people have expressed interest. Someone even asked about an alumni group for Fairfax Hall," Sayre said.

Most of the items on display were housed at the Waynesboro Public Library before the museum opened on New Year's Eve. "We wanted a place with enough room to expand the collection, especially for the bicentennial. Some items have been donated and others are on loan," she said.

There is something here for every history lover. The section on old hotels shows Ike and Mamie Eisenhower leaving the General Wayne Hotel. A silver watercooler from the Hotel Brandon sits nearby. An Indian artifact exhibit gives a glimpse into the life of the native inhabitants of the area. A section on industry contains early products and tools from Du Pont and Virginia Metalcrafters. There is even a "mud crack pick" that was used in the last century by workers supervised by Claudius Crozet to chisel the famous tunnel through the mountain at Rockfish Gap.

For those not quite old enough to remember the construction of the tunnel, there are milk bottles from Early Dawn Diary, medicine bottles from Fishburne Drug Store, the clock from the old C&O Railroad Station and countless other items of memorabilia.

The museum wouldn't be complete without the "Mystery Wall" for unidentified photos. Visitors are asked to leave a note if they recognize the people or places on the wall.

Admission to the Waynesboro Heritage Museum is free. Hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday and Saturday. —

Waynesboro Heritage Foundation

Fast facts:

Chartered as a corporation on Jan. 18, 1996

Mission: *"...Exclusively for charitable or educational purposes relating to the study, preservation, and perpetuation of the physical, archival, tangible and intangible history, culture, and heritage of the City of Waynesboro, Virginia, its residents (past, present, and projected future) and surrounding area, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the United States of America..."* **— excerpted from the by-laws.**

Current projects: establishment of a museum, preservation and restoration of the Plumb House, assisting with the bicentennial celebration, planning a tour of historic city homes

Officers: President, J. Marvin Stoner; Vice-president, Harry Nash III; Secretary, Andrew Shifflett; Treasurer, Dorothy Sayre

Board of Directors: C.P. Barger, Penny Kent, George Hawke, Jacquelin Jeutter, Shirley Kiger, Jerry Layman, Carl McCutcheon, Earl Meese, Linda Wilson, Joe Moyer, James Wright, Suzanne Goldsmith, Madelon Zakaib

Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Waynesboro Public Library.

For membership information, call (540) 943-3WHF. —

It's a dog's life

Caring Canines offer companionship, assistance

By SUE SIMMONS

GROTTOES — This is a story of Gertsen, Maggie, April, Katie, Cassie, Sonsay, Minnie and of their many friends.

And of the humans who love and train them.

Caring Canine Companions is a local chapter of Assistance Dogs International, Inc. dedicated to the training of service dogs for the mobility impaired.

The local chapter, started in 1988 by Sylvia Fisher through the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, is one of 42 state chapters but the only active chapter in the state of Virginia.

Recently, the group of trainers and owners gathered for a party at Caring Canine Companion's Grottoes office.

People and dogs attended from as far away as northern Virginia and Charlottesville to visit and reunite dogs with trainers.

It soon becomes clear that these dogs wear many hats. Helene Leichter's dog April visits nursing homes as a "pet therapist."

"April is the first dog I ever owned," Helene explained. "I was besotted with her, and after 18 months I knew I needed help."

Helene called Ursula Strider, a trainer who volunteers for Caring Canine Companions, to re-train April.

After several weeks, April passed her canine good citizenship test, and Ursula inquired about the dog joining a pet therapy team at an area nursing home.

In order to be certified for nursing home visits, the dogs — usually a small lap dog like April — must meet a number of requirements. Most importantly, the dog cannot show any aggression, cannot jump up, and must be comfortable around moving wheel chairs.

Helene and April joined the therapy team and visited Oak Hill for a period of several weeks. It was on one of those visits that an amazing thing happened.

"After we arrived one of the nurses demanded to know 'who is this April!'," Helene recalled. "I was just sure April had done something terrible."

After she reluctantly admitted her dog was the April in question, Helene continued, "the nurse went on to tell us that a woman who had not spoken for over a year asked for April after we had visited with her. She asked for April by name and talked about April all week."

April is trained only for pet therapy. However, other levels of training serve the needs of mobility impaired clients.

Roxanne Benton's dog is a fully trained service dog.

An athletic and active person, Roxanne's diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, following on the heels of her father's death, put her into a depression. A friend gave her a puppy in the hopes that it would cheer her up.

"Katie" provided not only cheer but invaluable service to her master.

Roxanne immediately thought of turning Katie into a service dog. While it is unusual for a service dog to be trained by its owner, "Sylvia Fisher thought it was a neat idea. I could really be specific with what I wanted Katie to learn," Roxanne explained.

So under Sylvia's watchful eye, Roxanne trained Katie to do a wide variety of services for her. She picks-up, carries, opens doors, picks up the telephone and puts it back.

And so much more.

"Katie senses when I need her help. I will be walking at the mall and suddenly fatigue sets in. Katie seems to know when this happens to me. She braces me so I don't collapse."

Make no mistake. Katie is still Roxanne's pet.

Owner training creates "more of a pet mentality — more of a relationship" as Roxanne put it. She admits her dog gets away with a bit more but when she is in harness she knows she is working.

Service dogs cannot be denied entrance to any public place. Roxanne says sometimes grocery stores and restaurants hesitate when Katie walks in, but when they understand that the law gives service dogs full public access, they accept a dog in their midst.

"The public is fascinated with dogs. Kids seem to have the most respect for Katie when she is working," Roxanne said.

The public should never pet or try to distract a service dog in harness, however.

While service dogs can be of any breed, Labradors and retrievers and mixes tend to make the most successful service dogs. Dogs bred for specific purposes like running or guarding — huskies or Dobermans for instance — tend to be less successful as service dogs.

It takes an estimated $5,000 to $8,000 and nearly a year to train one dog. Before being accepted into the program, Fisher tests the dog to determine if it has the temperament for service. If accepted, the dog is turned over to one of the 12 trainers who volunteers for Caring Canine Companions, all of who have been trained by Fisher. Throughout training, the dog's health is monitored. Hip dysplasia will place a dog out of the program as will any sign of aggression. If a dog demonstrates even mild aggression — snapping or growling — it is dismissed.

Roxanne Benton of Harrisonburg with "Katie"

Photo by Sue Simmons

Service dog training has become a family affair for the Ralph Jones family. Both Mr. and Mrs. Jones train dogs for Caring Canine Companions as does their 8-year-old granddaughter Brittany Cubbage of Luray.

Brittany not only trains dogs for Pet Therapy, she puts on demonstrations at her school as well. Brittany and her grandparents make the complicated look easy.

Each dog must take a test to be certified for public access. This is not the same as a skill/task test, rather the Public Access Certification Test demonstrates that the dog is stable, well-behaved, and unobtrusive, that the owner has control of the dog, and that as a team they pose no public hazard.

In addition to Public Access Certification, the dogs are trained to perform any number of tasks.

John Farley of Char-lottesville is one of the youngest recipients of a service dog.

The Walker Middle School student, who is profoundly deaf, picked out "Maggie" as a puppy. With the help of a trainer, Maggie is becoming a "hearing dog," and John is learning to use his dog properly and ethically. John and his parents together decided the specific tasks they required of the dog. The dog was then turned over to a trainer.

See JOHN, page 14

For more information about Caring Canine Companions call 248-6655 or write to P.O. Box 353, Verona, Virginia 24482.

Standards and Ethics of Assistance Dogs International, Inc.

1. Applicants have the right to be considered to receive an Assistance Dog regardless of race, sex, religion, or creed.

2. Applicants, students and graduates have the right to be treated with respect and dignity at all times in the dealing with the member organization's personnel and representatives.

3. The student has a right to receive a sound educational program to learn how to use his or her Assistance Dog most effectively.

4. The student has a right to receive appropriate education on his or her role as a user of an Assistance Dog in the community.

5. The graduate has the right to receive regularly scheduled team evaluation and follow-up support programs.

6. The graduate has a right to receive information on or ask for assistance in the following matters:

a. Additional training for the dog that is needed due to a change in the graduate's functional level

b. A behavioral management problem with the dog

c. A major veterinary problem

d. Legal problem pertaining to use or access for the Assistance Dog as allowed by law.

7. Applicants, students, and graduates have a right to expect that personal files will remain confidential and will not be disclosed unless they have given express prior permission.

8. The community has a right to expect an Assistance Dog to be under control at all times and to exhibit no intrusive behavior in public.

9. The community has a right to receive information concerning ADI Program standards and Ethics.

10. The community has a right to receive education on the benefits received by a person with a disability through the use of an Assistance Dog. —

Runaway pooch in training as Caring Canine

By PENNY PLEMMONS

MIDDLEBROOK — About a year ago, Shelley Daniel found "Ben" loitering outside her place of employment, the Middle River Veterinary Hospital in Verona. A 30-foot chain attached to his collared neck indicated that this golden lab-golden retriever-mix puppy was no stray. The dog was somebody's pet and duty demanded that every attempt be made to find his family. Newspaper ads, radio spots and SPCA notification did not find Ben's owner.

So Ben went to live with Shelley and her husband Wayne, in Middlebrook.

"Ben had such a wonderful gentle personality," Shelley stated. "He was such a good dog, not too nervous and not too shy." These qualities led Shelley to believe that perhaps Ben would be a good companion and helper for a handicapped person. Shelley contacted Caring Canine Companions and scheduled a "temperament" test for Ben.

Sylvia Fisher, co-founder of Caring Canine Companions, placed Ben in a variety of situations to determine the dog's suitability as an aid for a disabled person.

"Our tests are not fool-proof. However, they do give us some idea about a dog's character," *stated Sylvia.*

Since the need for dog companions throughout Virginia is greater than the supply, Sylvia was extremely pleased when Ben passed the test with flying colors. Shelley agreed to be Ben's volunteer trainer, and the arduous process of training began with eight weeks of obedience school.

There was just one problem. By happenstance, Ben's real owners visited the veterinary hospital during an open house. Naturally they recognized Ben, whom they called Trapper, and took him home. "Ben was just too good of a dog to stay in a backyard," Sylvia stated. "I visited the owners the very next day and told them what wonderful things Ben had the capabilities of doing for a handicapped person." The owner, Becky Davis of Verona, graciously donated Ben to the program.

After passing obedience school, Ben began work on obtaining the level one certification. Shelley and Ben spent 15 minutes each night working on voice commands that taught Ben such things as kennel up, heel, sit, stand, come, stay put, and "potty time." Ben had some difficulty grasping the tasks, and Shelley noted that for awhile she thought, "Ben was the stupidest dog in the world." But by the end of six weeks, the dog had mastered all the assignments and earned the level two certification: his backpack.

Placing the backpack on Ben is his signal that it's time to go to work. It carries the legal credentials that give Ben access to public places and labels him as a "dog in training."

Onlookers are asked not to pet Ben when he is at work, and according to Shelley, this is one of the most difficult aspects of taking him into the public eye. Ben is a natural attraction for the affection of most children and adults. But, Shelley stated, "While the backpack is on, Ben is not a pet. He is a working dog."

Ben is still working on achieving his 40 hours of public training. He must visit and learn to maintain control in such places as churches, grocery stores, malls, libraries, post offices, airports, hospitals, nursing homes, dog shows, farms, riding stables and so on. He will be required to retrieve objects such as a pencil, wallet, and pill bottle and return it to his owner. He will be taught to pick up the phone receiver, open doors, go for help and turn lights on and off. And because Ben is a large dog, he will also be trained to pull a wheelchair.

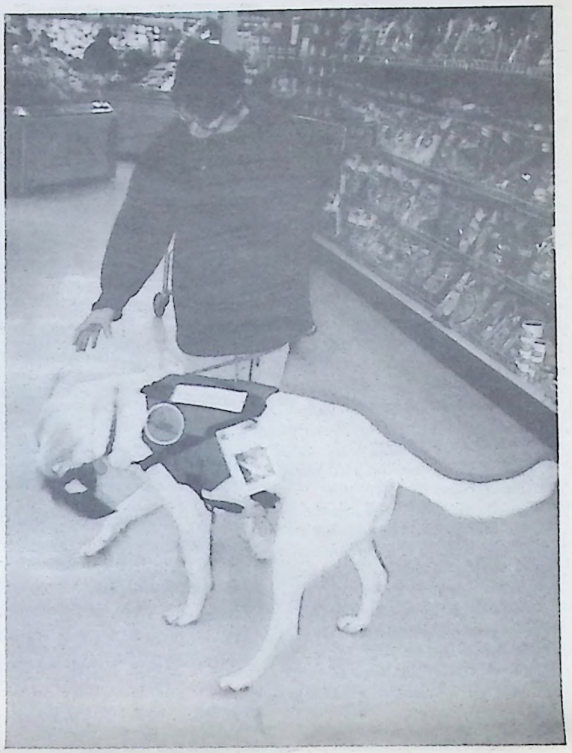
Shelley has discovered that people respond to Ben in different ways. Most people are disappointed, but understanding, when they learn that they can't pet Ben. Occasionally, Ben produces a surprise reaction in unsuspecting folks. Such as the time Ben and Shelley were riding an elevator.

"When the doors opened up, the waiting people were so shocked to see this big dog that they wouldn't get on!" said Shelley.

Level three certification focuses on restaurants, fast food places and grocery store training. Dogs in these places must exhibit a great deal of confidence and control. Ben must learn such restaurant manners as sitting quietly under a table and resisting the temptation to eat crumbs that have fallen to the floor. He will also learn to help with the grocery shopping by retrieving canned goods and packages from the shelves.

In the final step, Shelley will give up all contact with Ben. He will spend 65 hours of intensive training with his new owner and a new trainer. Ben and his new owner must

See BEN, page 11



Canine-companion-in-training "Ben" retrieves a dropped hat for his trainer Shelley Daniel of Middlebrook. The dogs are also taught to assist with grocery shopping and can carry bags of groceries for their owners.

Photo by Penny Plemmons

Volunteers train dogs for service

By PENNY PLEMMONS

GROTTOES — Caring Canine Companions (CCC) is an all volunteer non-profit program founded in 1988 by Sylvia Fisher and Terry Porter.

The goal of the program is to train dogs which will help improve the emotional and physical quality of life for the handicapped, nursing home residents and the home-bound person. Therapy, resident, social and service are the programs offered by CCC to dogs that have completed a basic obedience course.

The Therapy Dog Program requires an additional eight hours of training in a nursing home with a trainer and the dog's owner. Owners and their dogs visit the homes regularly and, according to Sylvia, bring a special "canine cheer to the shut-in."

The Resident Dog Program is similar to the therapy program with the exception that the dog actually lives in the nursing home. Residents provide the actual care of the dog and are benefited not only because of the companionship the dog affords, but because they must expend physical energy in order to walk, groom and feed the dog.

Home-bound persons are best assisted with the Social Dog Program. This program teaches a small dog good manners, and the dog becomes a special friend to the owner.

The most widely publicized of all the courses is the Service Dog Program. This program trains the public access dogs that become the eyes for the blind, ears for the deaf, and arms and legs for the person in a wheelchair. Sylvia said she feels the benefits of a service dog are not only practical in the physical sense but have incredible intangible benefits. Often people will overlook a person in a wheelchair, but if there is a dog attached to the wheelchair an avenue of conversation is opened up. As one recipient said, " My dog is a bridge of communication between me and the walking world."

Since 1989 a total of 42 service dogs have been placed with handicapped persons living in Virginia. Of those, one has gone to an Augusta County resident, two dogs live in Staunton homes and several dogs have been placed in Rockingham County.

Sometimes suitable dogs come to CCC in unusual ways. Fisher recalled a dog who was on "death row" at the pound. A simple phone call to CCC saved his life, and now he is a service dog for a quadriplegic. Another dog was about to be "run out of town," according to Fisher, because he was a cow chaser and a perpetual nuisance. CCC rescued him, and he has become a wonderful aid to a handicapped person.

CCC operates on a shoestring

See CCC, page 11

Four-legged family members forge strong bonds

By NANCY SORRELLS

What I miss most are the head presses. Those times when she would sidle up and press her forehead into your body like she was compelled to conduct some sort of mind meld.

She was a gentle giant, weighing in at about 100 pounds, and when she pressed her head into your leg or arm she pressed hard as if just standing there wasn't enough. Somehow she had to get closer.

Misty, officially Misty Mountain Journey on her AKC certificate, was special. Our first dog in our first house, she was plowing new ground when we brought her into our family circle. And she made such an integral place for herself that we will certainly never be without a canine companion again. The bond that she created was shared for 9 1/2 years, and when she was gone, the void was terrible and deep.

But she knew none of this then or ever. Dogs know only what is and what was, and when we picked her up on that spring morning, we fit neither category.

We had been married about four years when we were finally able to purchase a house and a little piece of land. Hard on the heels of that dream came another, to get a dog as a companion for us and for our little cat buddy, Scruffy. We had no sooner moved in the house when the canine search began.

Mickey Mouse Club aficionados will remember White Shadow, the white German shepherd who palled around with Corky Brady, a tomboy who lived in Glen Forks with her widower father, Sheriff "Big Matt" Brady. White Shadow was the lonely girl's companion, and together they got into many a scary adventure while her father was busying rounding up bad guys in their little Old West town.

Misty Mountain Journey

For me there was no question about the type of dog. I wanted a German shepherd dog, preferably female and preferably white. Logic, of course, played no part in this decision. I wanted a German shepherd dog, because I had grown up with one.

When I was three years old a tiny black puppy with tan points followed my cousin home from school. When advertisements flushed out no potential owner, the puppy came to our house. All of this occurred while my father was away on a business trip. When he returned and was greeted at the door by his exuberant 3-year-old shouting, "Daddy, I have a puppy," he just nodded absently. "That's nice sweetie," he said, while silently wondering at the power of a toddler's imagination.

He soon found out the truth, and Princess was a part of our household for the next 15 years. In reality, a toddler only has so much imagination, and I tagged the new puppy "Princess," because the neighbors down the street had a dog by that name, and it sounded pretty.

Princess became my best friend. She signed my autograph book (OK, I helped her), she slept in my bed (my parents never knew that one), and whenever I ran away, she accompanied me (I later learned that my parents did know about that part and were quite relieved when I took her along).

We were finally forced to put her to sleep when I was a freshman in college. Today, one of our most cherished family heirlooms is a piece of a blue blanket with a white star pattern. The blanket has a scattering of holes in it, created when Princess did what puppies will do, and chewed.

With Princess as my example, I came to appreciate the strong qualities of German shepherds. They bond closely with their immediate family, often to the exclusion of anyone else. They can be extremely protective of their family, but they would never harm their own even if sick and in pain. At an early age, I watched and observed these qualities in Princess as well as other German shepherds, especially famous ones like Rin Tin Tin. But the one that most made its mark on my young mind was White Shadow.

Only Mickey Mouse Club aficionados from the 1960s will remember White Shadow, the white German shepherd who palled around with Corky Brady, a tom-boy who lived in Glen Forks with her widower father, Sheriff "Big Matt" Brady. White Shadow was the lonely girl's companion, and together they got into many a scary adventure while her father was busying rounding up bank robbers in their little Old West town. So you can see why, when it came time to choose a dog, there was no choice. The problem is, white shepherds are hard to come by. The white coloring is a recessive gene carried by some, but not all, black and tan shepherds. A black and tan shepherd with the gene bred to another black and tan shepherd with the gene can produce some white puppies but both parents have to carry the trait in their bloodlines.

Every day I scanned the papers seeking a white shepherd. Finally one day, I saw it, a litter of German shepherd puppies, some black and tan and some white. Quickly I called the Bridgewater number and made an inquiry. "Well," said the man on the phone, "I did have a litter for sale, but they are all gone except one... I have a white... female." Upon hearing his words, I soundlessly gasped. That was exactly what I was looking for.

Being on the phone in another county, the man could not see the excitement on my face and so continued. "We're getting ready to go on vacation, but if you can come pick her up today, I'll sell her to you for half price." Little did he realize that knocking the price down was unnecessary, but we didn't argue. Within a few hours we were at his house for the puppy.

The puppy we picked up was barely that. It was May, and the litter had been born in early February, so we were looking at a scared, gawky teenager. She weighed over 30 pounds, was solid white with big brown, deer-like eyes, big, clunky paws and the most ridiculous set of ears imaginable. The oversized ears, which we ever-after referred to as antennae ears, because they appeared to be perfect for collecting large amounts of sound waves and refused to stand up for any length of time. First one would flop over her eye and then the other. To top it off, she was scared of her own shadow and shaking like a leaf when we put her in the vehicle for the first car ride of her life.

As we meandered down Va. 42 we crooned to her, telling her that everything was going to be just fine and soon she began to relax. We stopped in Churchville at the Tastee-Freez for lunch and gave her a few licks of vanilla ice cream.

The journey continued through the county to Greenville and then, when we were less than three miles from home, the scared puppy proceeded to empty the contents of her stomach (including the ice cream) in our car. Nothing to be done but punch the gas and get home as quickly as possible.

The as-yet nameless puppy did not bond immediately with us. More to the point, she ran from us. Every time we tried to get near her, she skittered to the side and ran into the next room. Finally, she tired of running and went into the living room where she deposited the rest of her digestive system's contents, this time from the other end, in front of the television. So much for good beginnings. We now had a half-grown puppy with no name who would not come to us and who was desecrating our new house.

On the plus side, because she had never seen steps before, we could put her out on the deck and not worry about her running off. She started shaking all over whenever she peered up or down stairs. The first order of business, we de-

See PUPPY, page 11

Draft poodle defies odds of longevity

Katherine Monroe of Stuarts Draft with Pepper, her 26-year-old poodle Photo by Vera Hailey

By VERA HAILEY

STUARTS DRAFT — Most people would be amazed to hear about a dog who has passed the quarter-century mark. No, not dog years, but actual people years. A local Stuarts Draft pooch can make this claim.

After Katherine Monroe's late husband was diagnosed with cancer, their daughter Betty gave him a 3-month-old poodle named Pepper. That was in 1971. Now, 26 years later, Pepper is still the family's favorite dog.

"She (Pepper) wouldn't have anything to do with Allen at first," Mrs. Monroe said. "We would put her on his lap, and she would jump right off."

A visit to a local vet solved the mystery of Pepper's aversion to her new owner. The previous owner had apparently fractured the dog's leg, and Pepper had a fear of men. It wasn't long before Pepper's phobia disappeared. She was Mr. Monroe's constant companion until his death, and still prefers to lay in his favorite chair.

Now Pepper won't leave Mrs. Monroe's side.

"I'd be lost without her... she is my companion, friend and everything," Mrs. Monroe says. "She won't let me out of her sight. When I go out, she rides in the car with her nose smearing against the window." When bedtime comes, Pepper sleeps in her own baby crib at the foot of her owner's bed.

Is there any secret to the dog's longevity? "No. I just take her to the vet for checkups... she has never really been sick," Mrs. Monroe explained. A recent checkup gave Pepper a clean bill of health. "The vet said he's never seen one any healthier," Mrs. Monroe reports.

Pepper's favorite foods include any type of meat. Visitors who wish to gain special favor with the dog give her jerky treats and back scratches.

The years have taken their toll on Pepper's teeth — there are only two left — and she does have a benign growth on her stomach. Other than that, she's the picture of health. With her neatly groomed gray coat, red ear ribbons and matching nail polish, she looks less than half her age.

Augusta Country wishes Mrs. Monroe and Pepper many more happy years together! In the meantime, somebody call Guinness. —

•Puppy

Continued from page 10

cided, was to give her a name. Her father was Bear Iwan Baumann, a big blundering name we thought, and her mother was Fran-Jo-Journey. We took the "journey" from her dam and added "Misty Mountain" for the view of the fog-shrouded mountain we could see from our new front yard. In the dozen years since that day, the trees across the road have grown so much that the misty mountain is no longer visible. But the journey launched that spring by that silly puppy continues in our hearts.

Hard work, repetition and lots of patience gradually tightened the bonds between us. We took her everywhere, and the mere mention of "going for a ride" in the car was enough to send her spinning in happy circles.

Although the adventures were numerous, a few are particularly clear, and those, in one way or another, involved Misty being bred. When we purchased her we envisioned, not only a family pet, but also a little money-making scheme on the side. We figured that if we bred her to a purebred shepherd and she had 10 puppies which we sold at $150 each, we could make a pile of money. This imaginary money never made it to our hands.

The first time Misty came into heat was the most eventful for the entire household. At the time we were keeping a friend's young puppy, a golden retriever named Alex., so our household consisted of two humans, one yellow puppy, one black cat and one white dog. Misty's enticing condition had no effect on the youthful Alex, although her loose morals quickly tried our patience, because we had determined to wait at least one more cycle before breeding her.

Waiting was not what she had in mind, and she would stand for long minutes with her rear end pressed to the screen door, advertising her condition on the neighborhood winds. Such scents brought one disheveled, but ardent suitor, who camped out in our yard refusing to budge despite the rocks and insults that we hurled at him. He was a mangy little creature with dirty cream colored curls that completely obscured his eyes. We called him the dustmop, because that was what he most resembled.

One evening, both my husband and I were off working, so we put the two dogs and cat in the basement. Because the evening was muggy, we cracked the small basement windows so air could circulate. The windows were typical basement windows on ground level with metal window wells on the outside. Inside, they opened about five feet off the floor. I was the first to return home that evening, and I hurried through the kitchen and over to the basement door in order to free the trio of animals which had been cooped up for more than eight hours. I opened the door and out burst Misty... Alex... Scruffy..... and..... the dustmop.

See MISTY, page 17

Randy and Nancy Sorrells with Ginny, Gandolph, and Misty

•Ben

Continued from page 9

pass the final test before Ben will be released from the Caring Canine Companion program and become a full-time attendant.

The entire process of training a dog to be a companion for a handicapped person can take as long as a year. It requires a great deal of patience and time from the volunteer trainer. "Sometimes I get tired of all the work, often times it's boring," Shelley says. "But, remembering what a blessing Ben will be to a handicapped person makes it all worthwhile." —

•CCC

Continued from page 9

budget that comes strictly from donations. Their biggest fund raiser is held in September of each year at Gypsy Hill Park in Staunton and is called, 'Puttin' On The Dog.' Money is raised with a dog walk-a-thon, raffles, and dog shows. Dog lovers showcase their purebred dogs in a 'Parade of Champions' and the American Kennel Club is on hand to present the 'Canine Good Citizenship Test' award.

Sylvia credits the volunteers for making the CCC program work.

"There is no way I can put a value on the time and effort that volunteers give to make this program successful," Fisher said. "The volunteers are wonderful!" —

Losing sleep and lost sheep

DOWN ON THE FARM

BY BETTY JO HAMILTON

Down on the farm we're thinking about losing sleep.

There are any number of things that will keep you awake at night. These things fall into five general categories — health, finances, relationships, crime and the forces of nature. We'll leave the first four to the talk show hosts and their ever-inquisitive audiences. It is the last which we will examine herein.

Farmers are sleepy people. You know this because most farmers only need to sit still for about a half-minute before they've drifted off to sleep. It's easy enough to understand this when you consider the type and kind of work they do — long hours at hard labor are guaranteed to make even the hardiest soul a weary one. Then stack on top of that the sleep farmers are prone to lose because of various concerns that weigh heavy in their subconscious thoughts.

I'll wager that most farmers will say money — or where it will come from — is a big concern that likely might keep them awake some nights. But I'll also bet many would say the thing which causes them to lose the most sleep are the forces of nature.

How high will the river rise? When will it stop raining? When will it start raining? How deep will the snow be in the morning? How many roofs will the wind blow off? Will a late freeze kill the new crops? How hot is it going to get? How cold is it going to get? The forces of nature bring to farmers both good and bad — rain to make crops grow, floods to wash them away; wind to dry out the ground for spring planting or heighten a drought in midsummer.

I'm guessing the forces of nature would easily rank as one of the farmers' top three things that keep them awake at night. Down on the farm, we can add another to the long list of natural occurrences that keep farmers awake at night. And we can't help but chuckle a little bit, because we've found a way to fight nature with nature, win the battle, and not have to lie awake nights feeling guilty over a choice we made about solving a problem of nature.

The story actually began a long time ago — centuries ago, for that matter. But I'm not going to go back that far. In fact, I'm going to condense the whole story of sleep loss on my part into a single word — coyotes.

Four-week-old Maremma puppies pile up for a nap with their wooly "littermates."
Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

You may have read about these wily creatures of nature which in the past two decades have immigrated to eastern states. They weren't brought here from their native western lands by hunters looking for a new sport: they weren't brought here by government agencies to control the fox population. Coyotes came here simply because there was no reason not too. Their natural enemy — the wolf, which kept coyote populations checked in western states — was eliminated from the food chain through extinction. With wolves out of the way, this left Mr. and Mrs. Coyote at the top of the food chain which in the animal kingdom is the equivalent of winning the lottery.

So the Coyotes bought a Winnebago and came east. And they just jumped up and down with delight once they got here. Because when they did they came into a beautiful green valley just west of Monterey, and there were these marshmallow like creatures walking around on little toothpick legs that went, "baaa-a-a-a," and Mr. Coyote said, "Life doesn't get any better than this." And Mrs. Coyote said, "This looks like a nice place to raise a family." It wasn't long before things got a little crowded for the Coyotes in Highland County, so Mr. and Mrs. Coyote sent some of their kids over to Augusta County where they found a whole lot more of the plump little marshmallows propped up on toothpicks just ripe for the picking.

And so about five or six years ago we began to feel the presence of Mr. Coyote's relatives. Those plump little marshmallow creatures on toothpicks which we have out in the pasture were easy targets. Sheep don't have many natural defense mechanisms. They appear to be the most vulnerable of practically all farm animals, because — and I apologize to all shepherds who think the world and all of their sheep, myself included — sheep simply do not have a clue when it comes to self-preservation. But then, on the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Coyote and their kids have too many clues about everything in general.

These cunning creatures can slither into a pasture, pull a sheep to the ground no more than a few feet from its flockmates, suffocate the sheep in a matter of seconds by clamping its powerful jaws down on the sheep's throat, consume the portions it wants, depart, and the rest of the sheep in the flock will barely notice. Even if they noticed, what would they do?

Visits to our farm by Mr. Coyote's kids began about 1990. Buzzards circling on a spring midday told the story. Two lambs were dead in the pasture — a set of twins, as it happened — the carcasses no more than 10 yards apart. With throats punctured at the jawlines and viscera cleaned from abdominal cavities, the carcasses showed the obvious evidence of the Coyotes' presence in southwestern Augusta County. A few more lambs were lost that spring, then the killings seemed to stop as suddenly as they began. Until the fall.

Then, suddenly, they started again. By this time the Coyote kids had kids which were sent to check out the marshmallow crop. Now they were after 80-pound feeder lambs. This was considered to be no small offense, and a trapper was called in to settle the score with the Coyote clan, two of which met their fates in fence snares.

But the Coyote clan proved to be a formidable foe, and the feud between us and these unwelcome emigres heightened. With each passing season thereafter we tried some new tactic to foil the Coyotes' intent to feed on our sheep. Trapping, snaring, fencing, night penning, strobe lights, sirens — you name it, we tried it. And we thought we were making progress.

After a few years' experience with the Coyote clan, we found that by keeping ewes with small lambs penned close to the barn until the first of May we could protect them from the likes of the Coyotes. Once the newest batch of Coyote kids were out of their dens, the clan seemed to keep itself occupied close to home. But, as we learned the hard way, the Coyote clan spent a lot of time thinking, planning, and trying to figure out how to get to those marshmallows they love so much.

In the late spring of 1993, I turned out to pasture one of the best lamb crops I'd ever managed to get through the lambing shed. The flock of ewes with 150 lambs at side made their way to summer pasture with their only instruction for the next several months being to do no more than eat.

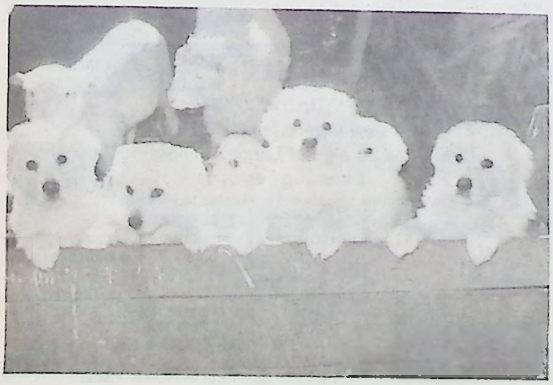
Sheep are difficult to quantify while they roam free in the pasture. You can't tell by looking whether you see before you 40 sheep or 60 sheep, 100 sheep or 130 sheep, and certainly if the numbers are any greater than that, you might as well give up trying to determine how many are there. On the odd occasion when sheep are brought in during the summer, you can tell how *many are in the flock by counting them as they move through gates. On the second such* occasion when I did this that summer, I knew something was wrong.

Sorting through lambs to go to market, I came across very few ewe lambs. These I knew, because I notch their ears when they're a week old, so I can tell them apart easily when I'm sorting. I couldn't understand why there seemed to be so few ewe lambs. It seemed I had marked quite a few in the spring, but then, that had been a long time ago, and I just assumed my mind was slipping. It does, you know.

Feeling almost certain that the count on the lambs was not right, I separated everything — no small task — and counted sheep.

For those who think counting sheep is a good way to fall asleep, let me assure you that if you're a shepherd and you count sheep, the outcome may very likely keep you awake nights. My tally turned out completely wrong — way off, in fact. The count was so far off that I went back to the

See SHEEP, page 13



Even at 10 weeks of age, guardian pups respond to a potential intruder in their territory.

Do you ever have the feeling you're being watched?

Alert to an intruder near their territory, two livestock guardian dogs patrol the perimeter of a field with feeder lambs.

Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

Once guardian dogs have become integrated with the flock, sheep pay the dogs little attention.

•Sheep

Continued from page 12

pasture to see if I had missed some sheep. As it turned out, there were some lambs in the pasture that hadn't come home with the rest of the flock, primarily because all that was left of them was their marshmallow exteriors and the toothpicks.

What had happened over the course of three months was that the Coyote clan had been using our farm as a drive-thru — McSheep, the fast-food restaurant for coyotes on the go. The result of my count on the lambs proved 65 to be missing in action — more than a third of the spring lamb crop and many of them meant to be kept as replacement ewes. Now there's something to keep you awake at night.

Sure, we brought in a trapper. Traps and snares were set throughout a three-mile radius of our farm. We caught three coyotes, a fox, a deer, the neighbor's dog once, and my dog twice. And the trapper and I got shot at once by someone hunting squirrels. After the trapper departed, leaving me the day-to-day responsibility of the trapline, it took me no less than two hours every morning to make the circuit checking the traps and snares for catches. I found this less than thrilling. Davy Crockett I'm not.

The next spring came and so did a new crop of lambs. We resigned ourselves to keeping the lambs in the front meadow where the fence was new and tight. Here we believed the lambs would be safe from the Coyote clan. In a matter of a few weeks that spring, buzzards were circling over a lamb carcass in the front meadow, and no more than 20 yards from the front gate to my yard.

To that point there was only one predation control method we had not tried with the sheep — use of a livestock guardian dog. For that matter, recommendation of this practice is way down on the list of techniques used to prevent coyote predation. Literature on these dogs claimed they would bond to the sheep and serve as their guardians, remaining with the flock and alerting it to danger. Other literature told of instances when the dogs became too protective of the flock, and not even the shepherd could get near it.

I couldn't imagine using dogs with sheep for any purpose. We've never used dogs for herding, and everything I've ever known about dogs and sheep said the two just don't mix. After all, I'd known times when a pack of dogs had done as much damage to a flock of sheep in one night as the Coyote clan did in an entire summer.

There were two straws left in the stack — get rid of the sheep or try the guardian dogs. Getting rid of the sheep seemed like a good idea. The previous summer market lamb prices had dropped to 45 cents a pound. There certainly was no profit in the venture, and there seemed to be little reason to keep the sheep for another season. But I had to wonder, if the sheep were out of the picture, what would the Coyote clan feed on in their absence?

By then there had already been instances of calves disappearing in the neighborhood. In fact, the trapper told me Coyotes like beef better than lamb; it's just that lambs are easier targets. Having seen what the Coyotes were capable of, I had no doubt they would adapt and start killing calves for food if sheep were removed from their menu.

Who goes there? A guardian dog determines if a visitor to its territory is friend or foe.

So with cattle prices high as the sky, keeping the sheep seemed a cheap alternative to bait the Coyotes away from the calves. But, with a little encouragement from the state's animal damage control officer, I resigned myself to giving livestock guardian dogs a try anyway.

There are a number of breeds of dogs which fall into the guardian category — Great Pyrennes, Akbash, Kuvasz, Anatolian shepherd, Komondor, Kangal, Caucasian Ovtcharka, Polish Tatra, Tibetan Mastiff, Jugoslav shepherd, and Maremmas. Most folks have heard of Great Pyrennes, but I suspect the others in this list are unknown to many folks.

These breeds originated in Europe and Asia where they have been used as guardians for centuries. There are even those who speculate that the use of guardian dogs goes back as far as biblical times, and the shepherds who visited Bethlehem left their flocks in the care of guardian dogs.

The natures of these dogs vary; while they all have instinctive guardian abilities, some are very aggressive, others are less so. I'd heard any number of stories regarding aggressive guardian dogs, so I was reluctant to bring a dog on the farm which might cause problems toward people. However literature about the dogs listed some breeds as being less aggressive.

Following the animal damage control officer's advice, I acquired two Maremma pups from a sheep farm in Russell County. Maremmas are listed among guardian dogs whose nature is the most mild-mannered. The 10-week-old male and female pups were brought to the farm and promptly put into pens with sheep.

After a couple weeks, I was astounded to see the dogs doing exactly as I had read they would do, and with little direction on my part. The pups slept with the sheep, they ate with the sheep, even at that young age they would bark fiercely when any creature came near the pen with their sheep.

Even the smallest member of the flock falls under the scrutiny of its canine protector.

I spent that summer watching — more than anything — as Bucky and Bess went about their job of guarding the sheep, a trait which the dogs possess through their natural instincts. The only commands they learned from me and which they seemed to learn naturally were, "stop," "no," and "get back." The dogs responded promptly to little more than a raised voice and, unlike most puppies, never required the use of a rolled up newspaper for discipline.

There were a few minor problems initially. After some time I found Bucky had gnawed the leg of one of the lambs in his pen. It was nothing major, and there was barely any blood, but yet it was obvious the dog had gnawed the lamb's leg. I removed the lamb from the pen as instructed by literature about the dogs. The lamb was put out with 180 other feeder lambs of similar size and kind. Two weeks later when Bucky was introduced to this group of lambs, he wasted no time in finding the lamb on whose leg he had gnawed and singled it out from the other 179 lambs. But it took only a sharp word to discourage him, and Bucky never bothered the lamb again.

The problem in the other pen was just the reverse. On almost every occasion when I approached this pen I would find Bess crouched beneath the feed trough. No amount of coaxing would bring her out. But neither did she try to leave the pen when no one was around. Her desire to remain under the trough puzzled me, but some days later I put the pieces together.

In addition to the lambs in her pen, I had placed a couple senior ewes to help the pup become accustomed to the larger sheep, and vice versa. I chose the aged ewes, because I felt they were least likely to be aggressive toward the pup. Yelps of distress drew my attention to

See BESS, page 17

Six-month-old Maremmas lounge in the shade with their "flock." Adult maremmas weigh from 70 to 120 pounds. Their guardian abilities are developed completely between a year and 18 months of age.

Weldon Dean of Cross Keys honored by Virginia Sheep Producers Association

Weldon Dean of Cross Keys with a Romanov ewe and its lambs

By JEFF ISHEE

CROSS KEYS — "If I were 35 or 40 years old, I'd be expanding right now," says Weldon Dean of Rockingham County. This energetic and wise sheep producer, who lives and farms with his wife Shirley near the Cross Keys community, is winding down his operation, however.

Having obtained his goals and being well-deserving of retirement, Dean is letting the size, but not the quality, of his award-winning sheep operation taper off. In recognition of his accomplishments in sheep production, Dean was named the Roy A. Meek Sheep Producer of the Year for 1996 in December at the Virginia/North Carolina Shepherds Symposium in Blacksburg.

When Dean heard that Rock-ingham County Extension Agent Pete Martens had nominated him for the award, he said he thought to himself, "Well, it'll never happen." But when he was called by telephone and received official notification that he had won the award, Dean says, "It really was a surprise. Pete had told me I had a really good chance to win it. It was a nice enough award that we went to Blacksburg in a snowstorm to get it."

Dean says that now is the time to be in sheep production.

"Right now, for the sheep people, the ones that get out and roll their sleeves up and work and look after the animals, I think that sheep could be one of the best enterprises on any farm."

Divulging the scope of his operation, he says, "In 1995 we had around 300 ewes. In 1996, we cut it back to about 250. Here in 1997, we're down to about 150 ewes, mainly because of our age. About 25 of the ewes we have now are purebred Romanov."

Weldon and Shirley Dean of Cross Keys

Photos by Jeff Ishee

Pride is readily apparent in his sage expression as Dean notes, "Last year, we weaned 200 percent lamb crop." This spring has been exciting on the farm, as Dean noted by saying "six of our ewes have had quadruplets so far this year, and I've stopped counting the number of triplets. Quads are not unusual here on our farm. Last year we had three ewes that had five lambs each. That was kind of exciting.

"I think that sheep can be very profitable," says Dean. "I believe that a farmer could probably do some lambing in the fall, then some in the spring to split their income up. I think this could be done economically, especially with the prolific breeds like the Romanov. The Finns and some of the Dorsets can be good also."

The Deans acquired their current farm in 1980 and started with sheep in 1986.

"Our lambing percentage at that time was 150 percent, which everybody thought was really good," Dean says. "But we strived to do better. Prior to sheep, we were in the poultry business for about 25 years with both commercial layers and broilers. Then we were in feeder cattle, and we kept them until 1986."

Dean gives his wife credit for much of the farm operation's success.

"My wife Shirley has been a big help here in this operation," Dean notes. "She did it all for a long time until I retired from off-farm work in 1992. She basically ran the farm. Without her, I don't know if we could have made it."

Not only have they made it, but the Deans established an award-winning sheep operation on their farm in the process.

These days, when Dean goes out to shepherd his flock, he always takes a look to the east just down the farm lane. There by the road is a brand new home *which Dean designed and built.* Construction is almost complete. He and Shirley can hardly wait to move in. A man of many talents, Weldon Dean deserves to sit back and enjoy life. He still maintains, however, "If I were 35 or 40 years old..." —

•John

Continued from page 8

Braves, wanted his dog to answer the phone, wake him up, and tell him when the microwave oven buzzes.

John also wants to be able to walk to school. A properly trained dog will respond to traffic.

The dog has mastered all its skills except traffic avoidance training. In addition to those skills mentioned, the dog "fetches" John for his mother and can turn light switches off and on to get John's attention.

Since the trainer lives only four miles from John's house, he sees the *dog frequently, and they spend weekends together. As soon as Maggie masters traffic avoidance, she will go* to live with John permanently.

Maggie sat dutifully at John's feet during the Christmas party. She did manage to coax numerous treats from him and others and enjoyed a great deal of ear scratching. She almost seemed to enjoy the company of the crowd and the attention of the other dogs in the room.

Maggie almost seemed to smile. —

Randalls ready for market's fifth season

By JEFF ISHEE

FORT DEFIANCE — Watering thousands of plants by hand daily, Susan Randall listens to the radio and thinks about what will be happening one day very soon — specifically April 12. Coming off a record market season last year, Augusta County farmers Jim and Susan Randall are eagerly anticipating the opening day of the Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market.

"We'll have a lot of plants this year, even on opening day" said Jim, who has been an anchor vendor at the market since its inception five years ago. The Randalls are owner/operators of Elk Run Farm, a 30-acre diversified cattle/vegetable/small grain farm between Fort Defiance and New Hope.

"We bought this farm in 1980," reports Jim, "because it is table-top flat, has no rocks, and has plenty of good water on it. Since then, we've been growing mixed vegetables and raising Holstein calves."

Both Jim and Susan work full-time jobs and run the farm in (what they modestly term) their "spare time." About five years ago, the couple decided to experiment with greenhouse methods of production.

"We've been very pleased with the outcome" recounted Susan. "We started with cold frames and worked our way up. Every year we find ourselves adding on to keep up with demand. It has worked out really well."

Susan and Jim Randall of Fort Defiance prepare for the fifth season of the Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market which will open April 12 on the Wharf Parking Lot in downtown Staunton. Photo by Jeff Ishee

Susan advises other growers: "It is definitely worthwhile (for a small farm operation) if you have the experience and the education necessary to operate a greenhouse."

The Randalls are firm believers in marketing their farm products directly to the customer.

"Where I grew up, there were a lot of small farmers' markets just like the one in Staunton. Since moving here, we've tried most of the markets in the area. The Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market, however, was closer, had a lot more people, and was a lot better environment," Jim said. "Direct marketing is about the only way to go [for a small farmer] these days. It cuts the middle man out," he continued. "Why should you do all the work, then have your produce trucked away, and have somebody else put the money in their pocket? You can sell it yourself and put all the money in your pocket."

The Randalls are particularly proud of their buckwheat flour. The grain is not only planted, grown and harvested by the couple, but "processed right here on the farm," says Jim. "We sell the buckwheat flour straight to our customers at the farmers' market. I imagine most people make it into buckwheat pancakes or something else on Sunday morning after the market."

Jim realized the power of selling his products at farmers' markets several years ago when he was growing pumpkins for a market in New Jersey. "We had about an acre of the small sugar pumpkins that weighed about five or six pounds each. The conditions were just perfect for growing that particular year, and the crop was really nice," he said. "I was selling pumpkins off an old short bed Chevrolet at the local farmers' market one Saturday morning, and had maybe 200 pumpkins on the truck. There were also a few on display on a table out front.

"Well, this lady comes along, and she looked at the pumpkins on the table. Then she looked at the pumpkins on the truck and asked, 'Is that all the pumpkins you have?' I told her there were more where these came from, and then asked her, 'Well, how many do you want?' She said, 'Oh, I need 1,500.' When I asked her if she realized how many 1,500 pumpkins is, she replied 'Well, no.' I then told her that there were about 200 pumpkins on this truck. To get 1,500, you are talking about several truckloads! "I then inquired, 'Are you sure you want 1,500?' She said I'm sure.' I suggested, 'How about if I bring you a thousand, see how you do, and then you can call me back?' This was on a Saturday morning at the farmers' market," Jim continued. "We settled on a price, and on Monday morning, I delivered a thousand pumpkins to her office, which was a real estate business. We literally filled her office with pumpkins. Everybody pitched in, and we formed a line to unload. I left her my name and phone number and told her to call me if she needed any more. Well, she called me back on Wednesday night and bashfully asked, 'Can you bring me 1,200 more?'" Jim was astounded by the question.

"It turns out that she was using the pumpkins as a goodwill gesture and marketing tool for her real estate business. She gave almost everybody in that town a pumpkin that year, and every pumpkin had a tag with her name on it. It was a wonderful advertisement for her, and it was even greater for me," Jim said. "At a farmers' market, you never know what's going to happen."

Jim and Susan laugh when they retell the mega-pumpkin story. Farmers' markets have certainly been good to them. They really love their customers, and their customers really seem to enjoy the Randall's products — fresh from Elk Run Farm. —

Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market to open April 12

STAUNTON -- Opening day of the Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market is April 12.

The market is located at the Wharf Parking Lot in downtown Staunton. Hours are 7 a.m.-noon, rain or shine. For more information, contact Market Master Marilyn Young at 885-7593.

Products anticipated to be available on opening day of the Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market are:

Baked goods including fresh bread, rolls, cakes, pies, cinnamon buns, maple donuts;

Meats and poultry including fresh eggs, chicken, beef, pork, rabbit;

Plants including day lilies, Chinese cabbage, pansies, snap dragons, petunias, broccoli, lettuce, cabbages, ferns, ivy, philodendron;

Vegetables including radishes, asparagus, rhubarb;

Other items including honey, buckwheat flour, apple butter, herbal vinegars, jelly, gourd birdhouses and handmade soap. ---

Va. Beef Expo is April 25-27

HARRISONBURG -- The eighth annual Virginia Beef Expo will be held April 25-27 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds.

The Expo is for its industry as well as the general public with a trade show and educational programs to help tell the story of the beef industry in Virginia. Livestock exhibits, contests, and commercial and purebred sales will be featured during the event

Many youth events are planned for this year's Expo. A crowd favorite in previous years has been the youth cattle working contest.

For a schedule of events or information about the Beef Expo call 540/992-1009 or the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-5750. —

Feeder Calf Association recognizes Augusta youth

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

STUARTS DRAFT — Two Augusta County youth were honored recently by the Augusta County Feeder Calf Association at its annual meeting.

Troy Lawson of Churchville and Jonathan Coleman of Arbor Hill received the association's Youth Beef Awards for 1997. Lawson was recognized as the county's outstanding FFA member and Coleman was selected as the outstanding 4-H member, each of whom excelled in beef production projects.

Lawson is a student at Buffalo Gap High School and a member of its FFA chapter. He participates in parliamentary procedure, public speaking, and livestock judging. He has shown both steers and hogs in the annual Market Animal Show. In addition to the cattle he exhibits, Lawson owns 20 head of beef cattle and is interested in pursuing a career in agriculture. Lawson is the son of Jeff and Barbara Lawson.

Coleman is a member of the Middlebrook 4-H Livestock Club and serves as its treasurer. He participates in livestock judging and exhibits cattle at various shows throughout the state. This past fall he exhibited the Grand Champion Hereford heifer at the Virginia State Fair. Coleman is the son of J.R. and Betty Coleman.

Bill McKinnon, Extension animal scientist, was keynote speaker for the event. He addressed the topic of cattle and color and explained how this makes a difference when cattle are sold.

Market prices on feeder cattle show black-hided animals bring higher dollars per pound than cattle of other colors, McKinnon said. For steers, prices for black-hided cattle at 1996 markets were in the 62-cent per pound range. For steers colored other than black, the price per hundredweight was $3 to $8 less.

Likewise, the same was true for heifers, according to McKinnon, however he noted the variation was less. Market prices for black-hided heifers in 1996 were in the 49-cent per pound range while discounts on heifers of other colors ranged from 20 cents to $7.50 per hundredweight.

McKinnon noted, however, that producers cannot just look at price per pound figures to determine the value of crossbred cattle. Using black Angus as a baseline, McKinnon explained how the hybrid vigor created by crossbreeding can make up the difference from per pound price to per head price.

Analyzing data on weight showed that crossbred cattle are heavier than straightbred Angus of the same age at market time.

"Dollars per head is comparable," McKinnon said, "because crossbred calves are generally heavier than straight Angus cattle." He noted that cattle producers selling other than black cattle may make up the difference on the per pound discount in the per head price of the cattle because "there's more pounds to sell in that critter."

The only exception to this surfaced in examination of the use of Hereford bulls crossed with black/whiteface cows. McKinnon explained that producers need to consider that this cross yields cattle which outweigh straight Angus by very few pounds and that some of the calves will be red-hided.

While figures on crossbred cattle looked encouraging from an income perspective, McKinnon urged producers to use caution in their breeding strategies.

"If you're crossbreeding, you've got to address the issue of replacement females," he said.

He also advised producers to think about potential markets for their cattle before selecting a particular type of crossbreeding.

"If you're the average producer in Virginia and not selling trailer load lots, you can't be 'The Lone Ranger.' Think about fitting your breed of cattle so they look a little bit like your neighbor's (cattle)," McKinnon concluded.

President Mike Schooley brought association members up to date on the organization's business. He polled members concerning the issue of land use taxation in Augusta County being increased according to the production potential of land of various soil types. Members discussed the issue and directed Schooley to send a letter to the Augusta County commissioner of the revenue. This letter is to detail the feeder calf association's position on holding the tax rate at its existing level.

The association elected Mac Swortzel, Bob Wise, and John McAllister as new board members, each to serve three-year terms. Directors rotating off the board are Terry Smiley, Mike Hemp, and Schooley.

Feeder cattle sale dates for 1997 were announced. State-graded sales will be held at Staunton Union Stockyard on New Hope Road March 25, April 8, Aug. 12, Sept. 9, Oct. 14, and Nov. 11. For information about consigning feeder cattle to these sales, call the Augusta County Extension Office at 245-5750. —

Mike Schooley, right, president of the Augusta County Feeder Calf Association, congratulates Jonathan Coleman, center, and Troy Lawson for receiving the association's Youth Beef Awards for 1996. AC staff photo

Texas rancher tells Virginia cattlemen 'beef is back'

By JEFF ISHEE

HOT SPRINGS — Hundreds of people involved in Virginia's cattle industry gathered at The Homestead in Hot Springs recently where they heard Texas rancher Clark Willingham declare: "U.S. beef is the standard in the world to meet." Willingham is president-elect of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

A graduate of Texas Tech University and past president of the Texas Cattle Feeders, Willingham addressed the Virginia Beef Industry Convention as the keynote speaker. He told the assembly that is was important for producers to remember that "we are all involved in a great industry... and I bring you good news today. Beef is back!" This was welcome news to most of the audience, as the beef industry has been struggling financially. Most members of the audience were aware, however, that the cattle market has begun to show some strength.

Willingham attributed the better prices to several factors. "We have finally realized that we, as an industry, must be consumer driven. Your own association here in Virginia has taken up that ideal and is publicizing the positive aspects about beef and nutritional value," he said. Indeed, the Virginia Cattlemen's Association (VCA), headquartered in Daleville, has devised a campaign to publicize "the fact that beef is much lower in cholesterol than most people think."

In its promotional brochure, the VCA maintains "three ounces of trimmed, cooked beef contain 73 milligrams of cholesterol. By comparison, the same amount of chicken, with skin removed, contains 76 mg."

Willingham reminded the convention, "Cowboys were the first environmentalists. We've always cared for the land, the water, and the animals. We have known all along that we need to have a good environment to live and farm."

The vast majority of Virginia's cattle are pastured. Manure is put back on the grazing land where it fertilizes forage growth and helps maintain water and mineral cycles. VCA officials report: "The USDA has reported that soil productivity, water quality and air purity are better maintained under the permanent vegetative cover of well-managed grazing lands than with any other land use system."

As beef prices appear to be on the rebound, most cattle producers in attendance at the Virginia Beef Industry Convention are hoping Willingham's declaration "beef is back" proves to be true in upcoming spring sales. —

•Misty

Continued from page 11

Wait a minute.

We put three animals in the basement and one, two, three... four came out! I gave chase to the group, and we paraded through the house at a rapid pace. In the kitchen, around the living room and dining room, through the hall into the bedroom. Finally, I had everyone cornered, and I reached for the offending interloper. Suddenly the little mongrel who had been bold enough to break into our house and leap five feet into pitch darkness to win his woman had had enough. He went limp, apparently in a dead faint, and I was able to pick up the bundle of curls and lay him outside where he soon roused and trotted away. He continued his courting for a few more days, but at a respectful distance.

Misty's second heat was no less eventful. This time we brought my brother's registered shepherd over for a hoped-for consummation which, try though they might, never occurred. Several more heats and breeding attempts passed with no puppies and no cash windfall.

By the time Misty was 3, we figured that she was infertile and began to worry less about visiting suitors when she came into heat. That was a wrong decision on our parts. As soon as we let our guard down, she eloped. For Misty and the neighbor's black Labrador, Spud, it was lust at first sight, and they took off for a night of love in the swamp behind our house.

Debates about whether they "had" or "hadn't" were quickly extinguished when Misty's stomach began looking like a pumpkin. A visit to the vet confirmed the eventuality of a "large" litter. The joyous occasion arrived on March 29 and for six hours puppy after puppy emerged and wiggled into a squeaking little pile. By late afternoon the family was complete — 10 living, squeaking black rats and one more who had only lived long enough to take a single breath.

The final picture was ludicrous — a snowy white dog nursing 10 solid black puppies, but there was no mother prouder than Misty. The cat was also intrigued. He sneaked from one piece of furniture to another watching and peering with eyes as big as saucers. And when all 10 puppies worked themselves into a feeding frenzy, suckling as hard as they could with their little black tails sticking in the air wiggling, he could stand it no more. He launched himself in the middle of the pile and began batting tails hither and yon with his paws. To him the puppies were an irresistible draw, but he was always firmly and gently repulsed by a push from Misty's big head.

Because Spud was a registered lab and Misty was a registered shepherd, there would be no pile of money from this swamp rendezvous. We did, however, make birth certificates outlining the family lineage for each "purebred mutt."

Good homes were found for nine puppies, and we kept the 10th, because she was the only one who resembled her mother. (She had a patch of white the size of a silver dollar on her chest). Ginny inherited almost nothing else from her mother except some goofy black ears that would try to stand up, get about halfway and then stick straight out from her head with tips pointing downward.

Ginny turned out to be a wonderful family dog, however, and a good companion for Misty who was promptly spayed. By the time the following spring rolled around, our family of two dogs and a cat settled into a routine that continued for half a dozen years.

Then, in 1994, abnormal became normal. Ginny developed severe liver disease and took an extended "vacation" to Virginia Tech veterinary school for treatment. Just when we pulled her back from the brink of death, we noticed things weren't quite right with Misty.

An increased amount of panting and some enlarged lymph nodes finally pointed to the grim diagnosis of cancer. Once the diagnosis was made she slipped away very quickly, and the dog who had bonded so closely with us was soon gone forever. Ironically there was a great deal of closure to her departure. As the fluid built up in her body, she became increasingly uncomfortable. Her large, alert ears were no longer erect but drooped as if enduring a terrible burden. Knowing that my husband Randy, who had headed out to our camp in Highland County for the weekend, would want to say good-bye to her, and knowing her love for riding in the car, I carefully helped her in the car for our last trip together. Once we got going, she seemed to rally a bit, perhaps energized by the ride. Although she was too weak to get out of the car, she ate a few pieces of grilled steak

See TRIP, page 24

Beneath a trough was a good enough hiding place for this 10-week-old guardian pup which retreated there to avoid confrontations with a less-than-hospitable ewe.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

•Bess

Continued from page 13

the pen one day where I found one of the ewes slamming Bess against a metal gate. That's reason enough to hide under a trough, I guess. But, in typical Maremma fashion, Bess was undaunted by the battering. Even today when a cranky ewe butts her, Bess just flops over and turns up her belly in submission.

The next spring after acquiring the Maremma pups, another lamb crop came, but by this time Bucky and Bess were a full year old. Even though these dogs don't usually develop their guardian traits completely until about their 18th month, Bucky and Bess moved about the pasture in full command of the situation and "their sheep."

When turnout time came, I gritted my teeth and sent the ewes and lambs out to pasture under the watchful eye of their canine guardians. Since Bucky and Bess' arrival in the spring of 1994, there have been no losses to coyote predation on the farm. So why did the Coyote clan stop coming?

Some folks think guardian dogs are like attack dogs. True, they take no prisoners when it comes to groundhogs, skunks, raccoons, and muskrats. Cats which are familiar to them are left alone, however stray cats are fair game. I once saw them run a stray cat — and how they knew it was stray I don't know — up a 20-foot utility pole. And that cat would still be up that pole had I not intervened.

But attack is not what guardian dogs are meant to do. The presence of guardian dogs in pastures establishes a basic rule of nature — this is my territory, and everybody else better steer clear. These dogs spend quite a bit of time marking their territory with urine and droppings. They do this everywhere they go which is everywhere the sheep go.

Even though we haven't had problems, we know the Coyotes are still out there because there has been coyote predation in the neighborhood since we got the guardian dogs. But let's assume for a moment that Mr. Coyote did come this way anticipating a tasty meal of McLamb nuggets.

As Mr. Coyote approaches the farm, he's thinking about his next meal and wondering where those plump marshmallows on toothpicks are. He comes in downwind so the sheep won't pick up his scent. But the strong breezes blowing directly in Mr. Coyote's face carry a new scent this time. Suddenly Mr. Coyote detects the scent of another canine's markings, and instead of wondering what's for lunch, he starts wondering whose territory he has entered and whose lunch he might become. Having adopted a whole other attitude about the situation, Mr. Coyote decides that it would just be a good idea to steer clear of this area.

But what if Mr. Coyote does get brave — or stupid — and try to chance it? Maybe the sheep don't have a clue, but the guardian dogs do. They spot a stranger — be it two-legged or four-legged — and they begin barking immediately. One of the guardian dogs, usually the male, comes charging out of the flock barking, its head and tail high, hackles up.

The other guardian dog, usually the female, makes a brief appearance doing the same then races back to the flock, gathers them up, and moves them away from danger. Isn't this a great setup?!? And what makes it even greater is that it's a natural solution to a natural problem. No more complaints from carping animal rights advocates. The sheep are safe, and nobody from the Coyote clan gets hurt.

Bucky and Bess proved early on in this great experiment that they were more than capable of taking care of the sheep. Folks often ask if these rather large dogs, which can weigh from 65 to 120 pounds, don't require a lot of feed, and is it really worth it? The answer is: They require some feed, but not a lot; they mostly prefer to fend for themselves. A good size groundhog will last them for a week, and they will not forsake it for store-bought dogfood even if it is offered. The lamb market has improved substantially since Bucky and Bess came onboard. In fact, it's at its highest point in history. Slaughter lambs are worth more than $100 a head now. Are guardian dogs worth it? Let's see, 65 times $100... that's $6,500. I think that more than covers the little dog food they eat. And the only thing else the dogs ask for is an occasional pat on the head and to be left alone with their sheep.

Will livestock guardian dogs work with any flock? No. Will they work with most flocks? Maybe.

A large part of the success of guardian dogs depends on the shepherd's ability to be flexible enough to allow the dogs to work. They are difficult to mold into specific behavior patterns, because they choose to make most of their decisions independent of instruction. They also stand less chance of succeeding in high-traffic or densely populated areas. They appear to be best suited for open areas where they have considerable ground to cover. However, they can be adapted to small areas for those who are willing to put in the effort to help the dogs understand their boundaries. For our purposes, Bucky and Bess proved that guardian dogs can be integral to a successful sheep operation.

Sadly we lost Bucky last summer when he was run over by a truck. It was one of those things the literature had warned about — guardian dogs' longevity may be brief because of the hazardous duty of their responsibilities. And males particularly are territorial to a fault, even when it comes to posturing their dominance with trucks and other heavy duty vehicles.

But the fall before Bucky died, Bess had delivered eight plump pups, Bucky's offspring, which by the time of his death were well on their way to fulfilling their potential as livestock guardians. Five of these pups are now working on sheep farms as guardians and three are "household guardians."

Before Bucky and Bess came along, I spent a lot of nights lying awake wondering how many coyotes were killing how many lambs. Even when I slept, I dreamed about coyotes floating into the pasture and killing at will, several of them at a time, with me in hot pursuit but completely unable to do anything about it.

When Bucky and Bess first began their duties as guardian dogs, I continued to spend nights lying awake. But I was awake because there were two dogs in the pasture barking and barking and barking. Before long, I got used to their barking and quit wondering what they were barking at. For as long as they were barking, I knew they knew something was out there, and they weren't about to let it get close to their sheep.

Losing sleep over lost sheep used to be one of the many things that kept us awake nights down on the farm. At least now, with the help of livestock guardian dogs, there's one less reason for the sheep and I to stay awake. And now, instead of losing sleep when I count sheep, I just pet Bess and her two helpers, Big Curly and Buddy, and thank them for a job well done. —

Here, there, everywhere

Girl Scouts past, present celebrate 85th anniversary

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

STAUNTON — If it hadn't been St. Patrick's Day weekend, you might have thought it was anyway.

Green was the color in abundance at a special observance held March 15 at Stuart Hall. The event was the celebration of the 85th anniversary of the founding of Girl Scouts in America.

Savannah, Ga., native Juliette Low founded the Girl Scout organization in 1912. The then 52-year-old Low was a "woman before her time," according to Girl Scout officials present at the anniversary celebration. The event was held at Stuart Hall because Low attended the girls' school from 1873-1876.

The formation of the Girl Scout organization came after Low returned to America from a visit to England where men were being organized to go to war. Feeling that America would soon be undergoing the same preparations, Low determined the need to prepare women for the onset of war.

"She wanted to prepare women to take over while the men went to war," said Denise Valz, Girl Scout field specialist. "She taught them to be prepared for anything, and that's what we still try to do."

Low started with a group of 18 girls in her newly organized program. They learned everything from the household responsibilities of child care, home health care, cooking and cleaning to survival skills such as first aid, outdoor survival, and even Morse code. Since 1912, more than 38 million girls and women in the U.S. have been involved in scouting. Today's membership stands at 3 million with 13,000 of those in the Virginia Skyline District. But these scouts have a very different focus than did their Victorian counterparts.

"Developing self potential, relating to others, developing values, and contributing to society" are the areas of emphasis in which modern day scouts are schooled, Valz explained.

"We teach them everything they possibly need to know about to build their self esteem and be leaders in the community," she said.

Today's Girl Scouts focus on "contemporary issues," Valz said. These include preventing teen pregnancy, protecting the environment, promoting cultural pluralism, and drug awareness. For 20th century scouts, their fields of study are a world apart from those of scouts eight decades ago.

"Most of these girls probably don't know how to sew," Valz said, "but they can sit down at a computer and do a web page for someone."

Age groups of scouts are broken into five levels. Daisies are 5-year-olds, Brownies are 6 to 8, Juniors are 9 to 11, Cadets are 12 to 14, and Seniors are 15-17. These groups spend time studying contemporary issues to prepare them to meet the challenges of today's society, according to Valz. One component of scouting hasn't changed, however.

"Outdoor education is one small part that hasn't changed," she said.

The 85th anniversary celebration in Staunton was just one of many which were held throughout the state during Girl Scout Week, March 9-15. Staunton's event was attended by about 200 past and present scouts who were offered the opportunity to view memorabilia from local scout troops.

Brownies participated in a cultural arts seminar in which they learned about Victorian life and customs. Cadet and Senior scouts attended an afternoon program which included speeches by women leaders in the community. Speakers included Kathleen Tosco of ShenanArts, Linda Petzke of Augusta County Public Schools, and Trimble Bailey, Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership regimental company commander. —

Denise Valz, left, Girl Scout field specialist, talks with Barbara Glovier, leader, and Jane Ellen Glover, former Girl Scout, at the organization's 85th anniversary celebration held March 15 at Stuart Hall in Staunton. Glover is wearing a 1920 adult uniform, Glovier's is an 80s version of the same, and Valz' is the present-day leader uniform.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

MS WALK honors Lexington's Betty Jo Price

AC Staff Report

WAYNESBORO — Betty Jo Price, an employee of WalMart in Lexington, was selected to be the Waynesboro MS WALK Honoree for 1997. The announcement came from Courtney Reddington, who is Development Coordinator of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Betty Jo has been diagnosed with MS for approximately three years and says, "I really appreciate the support I receive from my family and friends."

The MS WALK will be held in Waynesboro April 13 at 2 p.m. at Ridgeview Park. WALKers raise funds to support the MS WALK from friends, family and co-workers. Throughout the route, the MS Society provides rest stops, snacks, first aid, and lunch at the end courtesy of local businesses.

"We are thrilled that Betty Jo will support the MS WALK this year, said Reddington. "With leaders like Betty Jo, we'll win the fight against MS."

"I would like to reach out to the business and civic community to gather support," Betty Jo said.

"This is a super event, because it's a fun, social, healthy activity that supports ever-encouraging research and provides vital services for people affected by the disease."

For information about participating in the 1997 MS WALK, call 1-800-451-0373.—

Schoolhouse News

RHS students excel in Vo-Tech contest

By RUTH JONES

GREENVILLE — This year, Valley Vocational Technical School once again held competitions in different areas of vocational skill. Each area was to fulfil a specific task assigned to the students dealing with the job skill they are learning.

The first competition was at the local level. Riverheads High School had several first place winners and a second place winner. Michael Bennett won first in residential wiring, Jonathan Grove won first place in carpentry, Heath Potter won first place in welding, and Chris Wimer won second place in welding. All of these students have done exceptionally well against tough competition. They have worked hard to win.

BENNETT

POTTER

WIMER

Chris Wimer, second place winner in welding, said, "It was a great learning experience, and it was fun."

During the welding competition, Chris and Heath worked at three different stations for three hours. After this, judges surveyed their welding abilities along with the other competitors.

Since Heath, Chris, Michael, and Jonathan won at the local level, they continued on to district competition in Charlottesville. Students competed against three other schools, Turner Ashby, Jackson River, and Massanutten. Then students received their awards and heard words of encouragement. Heath, Michael, and Jonathan won first place in district.

"It was a great accomplishment. It's not often a junior wins a competition," said Bennett.

Now they await the State Conference Competition which occurs on April 11-13 in Roanoke. These students go on to Virginia Skills U.S.A. Champions and will be competing against 11 students. We hope all of these young men win first again! —

BUCHANAN

Kathleen Buchanan, work and family studies teacher at Riverheads High School, was nominated "Teacher of the Year." Each school nominates one teacher for the award. A luncheon is sponsored by the county recognizing nominees and to announce the winner. Dennis Case, assistant principal at RHS, said, "Mrs. Buchanan is outstanding in the Work and Family Studies Department." -

Lee student receives American Patriot Scholarship

AC staff report

STAUNTON — Sarah Frances Roberson has been awarded the American Patriot Scholarship by the Beverley Manor chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

The presentation was made at a recent chapter meeting.

Miss Roberson is a senior at Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton. Extracurricular school activities include varsity track, and symphonic, jazz, and marching bands. She is a member of Hebron Presbyterian Church and is president of its youth group.

The American Patriot Scholarship is awarded each year to an outstanding graduating senior of Staunton and Augusta County high schools who is dedicated to the ideals of the DAR which include devotion to God, home, community, and country.

The award is based on scholastic achievement, leadership, service to the community, church, school, and nation, and patriotism and good citizenship. Personal qualifications of individuals receiving the award include loyalty, dependability, and all-around superiority including sports and social activities during four years of high school.

Miss Roberson was recognized by the Beverley Manor chapter as being "an excellent student, with outstanding qualities of achievement, leadership, service, and citizenship."

The Lee senior will attend Davidson College in the fall and is considering English as her major. She is the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. William C. Roberson of Swoope. —

Harriet Baldwin, left, regent of the Beverley Manor chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, presents the American Patriot Scholarship to Lee High senior Sarah Frances Roberson of Swoope. AC staff photo

Send information for Schoolhouse News to
augustacountry@juno.com

RHS students, teacher travel on art program

By HEATHER CALDWELL

GREENVILLE — Two seniors and a teacher from Riverheads High School participated in a special art workshop entitled, "3 Days in March."

Troy Richmond and Mary Chiaramonte, both advanced art students, represented their school along with art teacher, June Bosserman. Troy, Mary, and Mrs. Bosserman traveled and lodged expense free thanks to the Virginia Museum of Art. To be eligible for this trip, each prospective person must fill out an application which was reviewed by a committee.

Troy, and senior Ashanti Wilson from Stuarts Draft High School represented the Staunton/Augusta Art Center. Mary and Dean Hurley from Wilson Memorial High School represented the Shenandoah Valley Art Center. Mrs. Bosserman was selected from other teachers throughout the state and attended the workshop with the students. It was a great honor, not only to have two students attend, but also a teacher.

From March 19 through 21, they joined a group of about 90 students who participated in functions and activities using the theme, "Seeing is Believing." The group toured the Virginia Museum of Art and the University of Richmond's Marsh Gallery. While visiting Richmond, Troy, Mary, and Mrs. Bosserman viewed a production entitled, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare." This took place at the Barksdale Theatre.

Prior to going to "3 Days in March," Troy stated that, "It was an honor to be selected for this workshop. I had the chance to preview the program and got to take part in painting a mural." Mary agreed, saying, "It was a really good learning experience, and I got to focus on the art area I like." —

The Hitching Post

Rockbridge roper aims for top competitions

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

FAIRFIELD — The half-grown steer bursts from the chute, legs puffing the dust like machine gun bursts. For the black horse, ears pinned, eyes hard brown, the chase is everything as he and the cowboy mesh in pursuit. The white rope snakes like lightning, settles with a snap around wide-spaced horns. Philip Back and Slick have headed another steer.

With rope dallied on his saddle horn, Back reins Slick. Tugged left, the steer offers Back's partner only seconds of opening. His rope spits out, loop catching both lunging heels, immobilizing the steer. The rope is complete. And the time is very good.

"We usually get about 10 seconds, but my fastest time is 7.1," Back drawls.

Once a rodeo-only event, team roping has matured with its own following — competitors, state and national organizations, sizable prize money and ropings every weekend in every dusty pen and big arena around.

The Virginia organization lists 198 team roping cowboys; Texas lists more than 11,500.

In team roping, the steer is held in a tight chute with a rope-wielding cowboy on either side. When the steer leaps forward, he breaks a rope barrier that starts the clock. The "header" lunges after the steer, roping the horns as soon as his horse closes the distance.

Phil Back and Slick hold a steer waiting for their heeler to catch the hind feet. Photo courtesy Phil Back

Hot behind, the "heeler" waits until the header completes his rope and turns the steer broadside. The heeler gallops in and, with split-second timing, ropes both of the steer's heels.

In ranch work, the steer then is ready for branding, vaccinating or other health procedures. In competition, the steer is freed, leaving the cowboys to assess their time. If the heeler has caught only one heel, five seconds are added to the time; if the header's horse breaks its rope barrier, 10 seconds are added.

According to Back, roping is a progressive education. Headers usually haven't worked on heeling while heelers usually started out heading and honed their coordination and timing until able to rope galloping heels.

Back roped for a year before he edged into competition. The next two years saw him working his way to the top.

"If I didn't have to work, I'd get in more practice time, and I could get better faster," Back laments. His 40-hour-a-week job at Des Champs Laboratories in Natural Bridge leaves him only weekends to pursue his fast-moving dream. Des Champs is lenient in giving him time off to rope and also provides a sponsorship. Buckeye Feeds in Lexington sponsors him too.

"There's nowhere to practice locally. If I had a place to practice, I could do better, too. Usually I have time to do a couple practice runs at the competition. Sometimes, Slick and I just go in a rope cold."

As it is, Back earned enough state and Eastern championships to take him to the national finals in Oklahoma in October. Out of 200 or so ropers, he made the top 15.

See BACK, page 21

Build confidence, build relationship between horse and rider

Q: My horse scares me. He can be pushy and strong. I'm afraid of getting hurt. I have no problem riding him. It is when I am on the ground around him that I am not confident. He doesn't do anything aggressive, it is just me. I think he knows I am a little afraid. How can I build up my confidence?

Alisha

I know that as a large animal I can intimidate some people. But I have found that the most confident people are the ones I trust the most. It is because I trust their confidence to handle situations that might frighten ME. Building up confidence is important in building a relationship of trust between you and your horse. If you are scared, I can sense it. The problem is, if you are scared, and I trust in you, then I can become scared too. But I don't have a focus for my fear. I cannot say it is a snake, or a large jump. I only know to be afraid. And blind fear is probably the worst.

Fear is a healthy emotion. It protects us from danger. Too much fear can cause problems in decision making and taking action. I want to assure you that it is O.K. to be afraid of your horse. We are large animals and because of our size, we can hurt you. But most injuries are accidental.

What you need to do is work with an instructor on awareness. Being aware of potential danger signals or signs can help prevent accidents. Working with someone who cares about horses and has experience can help you learn more about their behavior and habits. Horses can have natural behavior patterns and habits that are common. Each also has individual mannerisms that make it unique.

Concentrate on your horse first. Learn his habits and behaviors. Have your instructor talk to you about the things that frighten you. A good instructor can help you overcome problems between you and your horse. An objective person can tell whether the problem is serious, a misunderstanding, or just a natural behavior that isn't an intentional "crime."

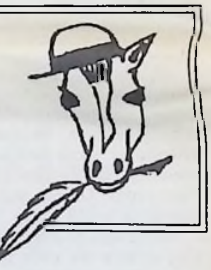
I am afraid of things, too. Sometimes it is a natural fear, other times I am taught to be afraid. For example, I am naturally afraid of snakes, but I am taught to fear a riding crop. In my training I am taught a reasonable fear. It is a form of respect. I respect what the crop can do, but I do not work under the fear of it "coming to get me." That would be irrational. Poor trainers who use too much fear to control a horse can create worse problems.

I would like to see you gain confidence through developing a healthy respect for me and what I can do. Developing a healthy respect means being aware of dangerous situations, choosing the best time to confront an actual issue, and asking for help when needed.

Build your confidence up over time. Work with your horse on a daily basis getting to know him. Brushing, grooming, and even taking long walks can build confidence on the ground. Sometime, just being together can help. No pressure, just a relaxed time together that allows you both to get to know each other, build trust in each other's intentions, and most of all, come to an understanding of attitudes, behaviors, and personalities.

Yes, there are riders out there that can jump on almost any horse and ride successfully. But the real bond between horse and rider starts on the ground. Take the time to build that bond and you will have a lasting friendship between you and your horse. And isn't confidence building just that? Making a friendship that lasts... —

I.B. Hoofinit is a fictitious horse character developed by Chris Marrs as a service to teach horse care. Questions to I.B. Hoofinit may be submitted to P.O. Box 2955, Staunton, Va. 24402. Questions become the property of Chris Marrs, and answers are subject to editor approval. Information provided in this column is meant to be taken as general advice. Each horse, rider, owner, and situation reflect different problems. I.B.'s answers are meant to be informative and enjoyable, but not binding. Common sense in any situation is a must.



Greenville instructor brings horses, people together

By CHRIS MARRS

GREENVILLE — Horses can make or break a successful lesson program.

"The best lesson horses like people," says Amy Chandler, instructor and trainer at Penmerryl Equestrian Centre in Greenville. Besides the instructor, lesson horses are the strength or weakness of any lesson program.

Amy has a favorite horse named "Playboy."

"He's my Steady-Freddy," she says. "I wish I could clone him. He is the kind of horse that can be trusted with anyone."

Amy has been an instructor for 10 years, but grew up riding horses. She rode ponies with her best friend, Beth Forbes, of Greenville. She recalls a "pony tale" from those days.

"We were riding on a grassy area near the road. Beth's house was up the hill. My pony ran into a barbed wire fence, and we were stuck there. We were too scared to tell Beth's mom, so we stayed stuck there until her dad came home over an hour later. He got us out."

Amy's riding days started there. Out of that rough beginning came a career of riding that has taken her from Greenville to Middleburg, to Florida, and back to Greenville again.

Her riding career involved dressage, eventing, hunter/jumpers, and lots of competition. Under the tutelage of Terry and Robin Koenig, Amy rode and competed in dressage on imported warmbloods. She was a working student and rode every day. When the Koenigs moved to Middleburg, she commuted to their farm every weekend to ride. In her senior year of high school, she went to Miami, Fla., with the Koenigs and rode up through Prix St.. George.

"I finally got burnt out," Amy says. "I graduated and came back to Middleburg."

From there, Amy went back to school. After a break, she started riding with Sally and Olin Armstrong in hunter/jumper.

"I had no toe point from loss of muscle from taking time off," Amy recalls. "But Olin put up with me, and I learned a lot from them."

Today, Amy is the instructor and trainer at Penmerryl Equestrian Centre. When asked what her favorite award in all her years of competition was, she explained that while teaching at a kids' Pony Club camp in Roanoke, camp participants presented her with a flower and certificate of appreciation at the end of the week. "That meant a lot to me," said Amy.

Other than horses, Amy also likes to water ski. And her main objective in life is to "find a place where I'm completely satisfied." Amy says she does not feel the need to compete any more. Penmerryl, being a resort and not a competitive barn, comes closest to fulfilling Amy's goal.

Amy's advice to student riders is to join the Pony Club.

"I'm a firm believer in background. Pony Club gives a well-rounded education," she says. "It is important to learn the non-riding skills, too."

Amy says that the most difficult part of being an instructor is the quickness with which you have to assess the rider.

"I deal with different people every day. I worry about that the most," she says. "If under assessed, the student is bored; if over estimated, they risk injury."

Another important recommendation that Amy offers to other instructors for improving on safety is to "know the horses that you teach on. Make sure you have ridden or schooled them. Know their reactions to mistakes and environments."

Amy gives riding lessons to guests who stay at Penmerryl. Riders come for tune-ups, training, and sometimes to fulfill a long set-aside dream. This summer will find Amy in the ring teaching, out on the cross country course riding, and in the lounge enjoying breaks with other staff members. But no matter where she goes, Amy always has time for a smile and a kind word. —

Greenville farm boasts equestrian facility in resort atmosphere

By CHRIS MARRS

GREENVILLE — Penmerryl Farm of Greenville is a horse lover's paradise. Ken Pittkin, the owner, originally bought the farm for a summer home nine years ago. Today it is an equestrian resort, local facility open for both public and private use for horse shows and clinics, and breeding farm for Irish Draughts, a unique breed of horses used by the military during World War I.

Angela Lin, the guest coordinator and marketing manager, explained that besides horses, there is plenty to do for the non-equestrian visitor to Penmerryl. There is a lake for fishing and canoeing, and a pool for swimming, tennis, and hiking trails. The center is located within close proximity to golf courses and antique shops.

Visitors are welcome to bring their own horses for training with a professional instructor or take lessons on horses provided by Penmerryl. Guests can stay in cabins, which sleep up to eight people, or use the lodge which is set up like most hotels. Cabins feature bedrooms, baths, and full kitchen facilities. Included in overnight accommodations is a continental breakfast and buffet lunch.

Riding lessons are provided in the English disciplines of hunter/jumper, dressage, cross country jumping, stadium jumping, and guided trail rides. Instructor Amy Chandler has years of experience in competition and training. Stable manager Studley Knopp is also an experienced equestrian.

Penmerryl boasts a beautiful cross country course, a sand ring for stadium jumping, a dressage ring, and an indoor riding arena. For the local community, Penmerryl offers rates for riders interested in using the facility for their own private training, clinics, or horse shows.

Stallion manager James Lamb is in charge of the breeding program for the Draught horses. These large, even tempered horses are beautiful.

"They're sane and sound," Jim explained. "We have two stallions imported in June of 1996 that are registered Irish Draughts, and two registered mares."

In a personal breeding program that plans to make Penmerryl Stud the number one farm for Irish Draught in North America, the herd at Penmerryl already boasts 15 horses. Jim explained that the plan is to have stock for sale by next year.

Irish Draughts were "drafted" into the English army from Ireland during World War I, hence their unusual name. Officially recognized as a breed in 1917, Irish Draughts have a history of courage, agility, and sound temperament that benefited numerous cavalry soldiers. Today this breed is used successfully in the hunt field, eventing (bold cross country jumpers) and as a sport horse. When visiting Penmerryl, whether overnight or just for an afternoon, take time to check out the farm's Irish Draughts. —

Guided trail rides, canoeing, and fishing are part of the fun at Penmerryl Equestrian Centre in Greenville.
Photo courtesy of Penmerryl

•Back

Continued from page 20

"I've been offered a spot roping full-time for rodeo. But the money isn't as good as in the roping leagues, and I'd have to leave home." With five-year-old son Josh at home, Back isn't anxious to hit the rodeo trail yet.

Back ropes with different partners. A roping is scheduled; cowboys arrive with their horses and pair up for the roping. By exchanging partners, both headers and heelers get as many chances at the roping money as they can find partners.

Like many of his Western counterparts, Back grew up with cowboy in his blood. His father, Charlie Back, came up jousting in Natural Chimneys tournaments. When he got some size, he lit out for Montana where he cowboyed for a few years. Back in Virginia, he rode for Silverbrook. His sons grew up on horseback, barrel racing, pole bending, and hitting the local show circuit.

Back is a cowboy prodigal, however. When he outgrew horses, cross-country motorcycle racing pulled him into a motorized world of competition. With the growth of team penning and roping in the East, Back found himself seeking the familiar. He started team penning, decided he was too slow to just calf rope and got hooked on team roping.

When a cowboy gets serious about roping, he better find himself a good horse real fast. Back's four-legged partner is a registered American quarter horse off a Michigan race track. "He's got some thoroughbred in him," Back says of the 12-year-old 15.1-hand sprinter.

Back got him in Virginia, but the horse originally came from a ranch in Texas. "He'll be good another eight or nine years if I use him wisely, and Josh can start on him, too.

"My dad didn't like Slick at first; called him a high-dollar horse, but he likes the horse now. That horse has really earned his keep," Back says.

"Slick's a real good cow horse. He gets a little lazy now and then. I've just got this one horse, and if we have three days roping, come Sunday, he's a little wore out."

Back is optimistic about 1997 roping. He plans to stick to U.S. or national league ropings.

In an age of sophisticated sports psychology, this cowboy keeps one step ahead of his fast-moving dream. "I get slumps sometimes, but you just keep going, and you come back out," he said.

He flicks some dust from his championship hand-tooled saddle won at a roping contest in Kentucky.

"I really needed a new saddle; mine was wore out," he said of the award. An inscription on the saddle reads: "USTRC (United States Team Roping Competition) Champion Header."

"It all comes together," Back philosophizes as he looks toward the next arena, the next steer, and the next coil of rope. —

Country Crossroads

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin

March, 1997

Dear Maude,

Today is such a glorious day here in Washington, (as long as one does not think about what is going on in the government,) that I just had to come out and sit in the park and write to you on my lunch break.

So far, this month has been more like April than March. All of those beautiful star magnolias have been in bloom for over two weeks, and the bulbs are all doing their best to out-shine one another. The way it looks now, by the time of the Cherry Blossom Festival all of those beautiful blossoms will be long gone. It is hard for the planners of the event to guess the date correctly each year, but even if they are a week off, the girls who come as princesses usually can get a glimpse of the blossoms at the Tidal Basin on one end or the other of their week here.

But this year, it looks as if those cherry trees were determined to bloom really early. It is such a pretty sight when they are at their peek that I hate that all the young girls coming in from all over the country can not see them. Spring in the city is usually early because of all the concrete to absorb the sun's warmth, and the shelter which the tall buildings offer the little areas of plantings, but even out in the suburbs everything is coming to life. I went to pick up some papers from one of the boss' partners the other afternoon, and when I got out of the car I could hear the spring peepers down along the banks of the stream which winds through that part of town. I stopped and just listened for a while. It was so wonderful to hear them. Everyone is hoping we will not have one last blast of terrible weather to ruin everything. It has been a really long winter and I am especially happy to have spring here.

But, of course, all of this warmth that brings smiles to almost every face one passes on the streets never seems to make its way through those impressive stone walls of Congress. In your last letter to me you asked if I thought there would be an investigation into the President's fund-raising/hospitality activities. To tell you the truth, I don't know. Of course people are talking about that, but then, in Washington, there are always people talking about investigations. With the ratio of lawyers to ordinary folks in D.C. what it is, the lawyers have to have something to keep them busy when they are not fighting over the wording of some legislation dealing with money.

Investigations make great lunchtime conversation for visiting firemen from out of state, so whether or not one occurs, for a while we will use the possibility as grounds for debate. As I have said before, here in our Capitol, it all boils down to money. Everyone either wants to give or get it. And whether something is legal most often depends on which side one is on.

Of course, all successful lobbyists are very careful to give to both parties in equal amounts, (however, an accusing party rarely will admit that, yes, they too did receive a contribution from so-and-so.) Regardless of what any of the politicians or special interest groups may say, they all are aware of those dollars when a bill is up for a vote.

When it comes to spending the night in the White House, I guess it might be interesting, but many, many of those successful (or pretending to be successful) people who deal in legislation have much nicer homes in better and safer settings around here than Pennsylvania Avenue. And, from what we learned during the inauguration, it would be possible to spend incredible amounts to stay in some of the fancier hotels. Perhaps the President was just trying to help save his friend a little money. I often wonder if God doesn't have some very clever comedian helping him with the script for what we see going on around us down here!

But I try not to think about all those things too much. So many of my friends get up an hour early so that they can read the Washington Post from cover to cover before they go to work, just in case something important happened the day before which they missed. I am afraid I will never have that kind of drive!

Needless to say my interests are more in the direction of having a little fun in-between the days of hard work. At least in March we have St. Patrick's Day and things really liven up then. On the streets it looks a lot like a green Halloween, and I have to admit that I am as guilty as anyone. What with parties going all day all over town, and especially at The Dubliner and The Irish Times, I joined everyone else in the wearing of the green. Needless to say, when I looked in my closet there was not a thing there that would do. Thank goodness for Filene's Basement — I got there just as they were having a half price sale on their already reduced and marked down things and found just the right dress for practically nothing. Fortunately, there was just enough credit left on my card for me to buy it.

Our boss took the staff to the University Club for lunch on the 17th. They always have Irish stew as a special, and the dining room there is so wonderful with the real napkins and tablecloths, and all the special service. After we finished that and managed to look like we were thinking about maybe doing some work, but not seriously, he told all of us to go and join our friends who were already beginning to party. I am so annoyed with Dylan that I decided to go with a few of my girl friends. It was a lot of fun, but I never have been able to stand the thought of green beer, so I went home much earlier and in much better condition than the rest of my crowd.

It was a wonderful and silly day and took our minds off how much who gave to whom and for what and who on the other side didn't like it because they got less. Oh goodness, am I beginning to sound cynical?

I am glad that Mama enjoyed wearing the evening dress I sent. I still have not been able to catch her at home — I wonder what would happen to her if all of the stores were to close at one time and she couldn't go out to shop and have lunch and dinner! When you see her tell her I send my love and say hello and love to everyone else also.

Love,
LuLu

This ground is holy

Saying grace

By

Roy Howard

We were out hiking on a path that meandered through forest trees showing the first budding signs of spring. The path cut across streams rushing with the latest rains, filling the woods with water songs. We stood in a clearing resting our eyes upon the distant mountains basked in sunlight under blue skies. Resting on a log, breathing in the beauty, my hiking buddy said, "This is a holy place." He didn't mean it in a sectarian religious sense. He meant AWE-FULL; that emotion that wells up in the presence of what is truly beyond description. As in "shhhhhh! Listen! Look!"

A broad-winged hawk circling across cloudless sky casting a keen eye for prey of the tiniest kind; an occasional deer leaping, racing away for dear life. Warblers singing joined with the knocking of the pileated woodpecker sounding through the tall trees and the constant chatter of the chickadee. Holy is the only way to describe what we felt around us in this small corner of the forest on an early spring day. Everything was alive, teeming with the promise of new life, feeding us with hope simply by being in the presence of such created wonders. The community of creation felt whole that day, as it was meant to be in the original Genesis design. We were living as members of the community, not dominating or in isolation from it, but members walking on holy ground with respect and awe; thankful for the pleasures afforded two-legged, frail creatures of God. In fact, after such a long siege of winter, we were giddy with the pleasures of nature's bounty.

"Helloooo, Mr. Hawk. Nice colors, you have! Good luck hunting. Mr. Woodpecker, does your beak ever hurt, and do you comb your hair that way just for us to enjoy? Can you laugh, please, just once like Woody Woodpecker? Little chickadee do you ever stop flitting around? River, river sing all day, sing us home, and sing us to bed." We were being silly in God's creation, taking it all in as children — guests at a party. God's party where all is given, all is grace. All we wanted to do was enjoy it and preserve it for a time when our children would be walking with us.

Later I wondered about another day, perhaps in the spring, that may have begun in an ordinary way. A young man out working in the pastures taking care of his father-in-law's sheep. Maybe he was daydreaming or planning for his future, or maybe he simply let the sheep graze toward new area. In any event, what Moses saw and heard that day was anything but ordinary. A fire blazing in a bush — not consuming it — and a voice that penetrated his soul: "Take off your sandals for you are standing on holy ground." Among all the things that are startling about this event is the description of the place as holy ground. Why should Moses be asked to take off his shoes? All that was there was a bush in the desert. What makes it holy? God's presence? Yes, of course, the presence of the Holy One makes any place holy. In our time when so much of land is being covered with asphalt making space for consumer outlets and fewer people take the time to feel the ground on their naked feet, it's at least worth noting that in this most significant encounter with God, creation itself is caught up in the event; not simply Moses but the whole created place. "Where you are standing is holy ground."

This story encourages the wildly wonderful possibility that the Holy One may break forth from any bush in any pasture at any time. Perhaps, when we least expect it we will hear that voice: "You are standing on holy ground." Impossible? Of course it's possible! Why not? There is nothing in Moses that made him an exceptional candidate for revelation. Quite the contrary; he had committed murder in the heat of passion which is how he wound up tending Jethro's sheep. A task he was not especially suited for.

Any path can lead to a revelation on fire with the divine. Get on the path. The most ordinary bush can suddenly be burning bright beckoning you to look again at the wonders before you. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins says it well: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God./It will flame out, like shining from shook foil." We are members of God's creation — earth, sky, water, all creatures.

Shssss! Stop what you are doing, get off the asphalt, go to the fields, the woods, the forest, the mountains, your back yard. Stand shoeless on the ground, bow down low. Look around. You are standing on holy ground. Listen. Who knows what revelations will occur? On holy ground is where God chooses to be revealed in signs and wonders. It happened once. It happens again and again. That alone is reason enough to preserve creation to bear the naked feet of generations to come. —

Making a case for raised beds in the garden

By JEFF ISHEE

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

And then, of course, there was the sinkhole that appeared on Va. 252 at the end of Bittersweet Lane. Whew! What a sudden and vast hole in the earth that could have easily swallowed up Mr. Decker's van — or Mrs. Clemmer's car — or Mr. Heizer's pickup. Maybe even all three at once! I stood uneasily next to the black hole while several VDOT workers filled it with numerous, huge truckloads of massive rocks, gravel, and finally topsoil.

Peering down, I thought to myself "Hmmmph. Terra firma is not so firma today. Wonder how big Grand Caverns really is? Hmmmph."

As I returned to the farmstead to do some work out in the gardens, the sight of an empty hole in the earth caused me to ponder something that I've been considering doing for quite awhile — lifting the soil to make raised beds. I contemplated, "Why in the world would anybody want to do something in the garden that requires even more shoveling?" After a little field work, I went inside for a glass of iced tea and started researching the concept of raised beds. Here's what I found.

Raised garden beds are not a new concept. The idea of shaping and elevating topsoil in the garden has been proven over time. Terracing goes back centuries, but what we are talking about here is simply forming a bed of topsoil that lies about six to ten inches above the rest of the ground. Normally this bed is three or four feet wide and runs anywhere from 10 feet to the full length of the garden. Building raised beds accomplishes several things, all of which are apparently better for your garden crops.

**Warming effect* — a raised bed of topsoil has more surface area and consequently gathers more sunlight in early spring. This warming effect (sometimes as much as 10 degrees warmer than topsoil at ground level) causes the soil to dry out earlier and creates an ideal place to plant warmth-loving crops such as tomatoes, pumpkins, and cucumbers.

**Higher quality root crops* — Since there is more loose, friable topsoil in a raised bed, it is possible to grow longer and straighter carrots. Radishes, beets, and turnips respond well to raised beds also.

**Better drainage* — After a soaking rain, you don't want to find your garden with standing water. Raised beds do not allow rainwater to sit on the soil and pack it down. The water drains off easily into the surrounding walkways where it won't do as much harm to the plants.

**Easier on your back* — Since the working area of a raised bed is six to 10 inches above the spot where you are standing, there is a little less bending and stooping while you are planting, cultivating, fertilizing and harvesting. If you've got a sizable area to work, that seemingly small benefit is dramatic at the end of a long afternoon in the garden.

**Much less soil compaction* — Since there is a walkway between the beds, people tend to stay off the growing area. This allows the soil to remain light and aerated, avoiding the tight and packed soil conditions which hinder healthy root growth. Some gardeners build raised beds with rigid borders such as boards, plastic panels, railroad ties or stones. If using lumber, it is recommended that you do not use pressure-treated boards for vegetable gardens. It is possible that the chemicals in these boards could leach into the topsoil and into your vegetables.

While requiring considerable work to build, raised beds offer many benefits that gardeners can readily discern. The sight of topsoil rising and expanding (not sinking) is a welcome spectacle to any gardener. —

Building a simple and durable raised bed in 10 easy steps

1. Lay out an area 3 feet x 10 feet.
2. Work the soil at least a foot deep with a garden fork or tiller.
3. Incorporate two wheelbarrow loads of aged manure, composted leaves, or other organic matter.
4. Rake the well-mixed topsoil into the center of the bed.
5. Find three old railroad timbers and cut one into 3-foot lengths. Keep the other two ties full length. The black timbers really help heat up the soil in spring.
6. Lay the ties around your pile of topsoil in a rectangle. Fasten corners with spikes or scrap lumber.
7. Smooth the soil out. It will be well below the top of the ties.
8. Shovel in additional topsoil from outside the ties. (This forms the new walkway). Bring the level of topsoil to two inches below upper edge of the ties.
9. Scoop out a sample of the dirt for a soil test. Use the results of this test to determine the fertility of your new bed.
10. Smooth out the top with a rake, and you are ready to plant.

The Garden Path

By Jeff Ishee

Lewis

Continued from page 6

cousin and supervisor Thomas Lewis, and John Madison who was not only the clerk of the Augusta County court but was Thomas Lewis' brother-in-law. When Preston moved on to yet another county, Lewis' next prodigy, his nephew Samuel Lewis, took over the Botetourt job.

Despite the fact that frontier county surveyors moved in the best social circles, they did not live a life of ease. The sheer abundance of land meant that they were in the field, traipsing across untamed wilderness for much of the year. Traditionally, surveyors work in the spring and fall in order to avoid insects, snakes and obstructing foliage. Because of the workload, however, Lewis spent the better part of the year in the field. From 1747 until 1769 he always had at least four and sometimes five assistants.

Perhaps the most difficult job he was called on to perform came in 1746 when he was one of four surveyors chosen to lead the crew selected to draw the Fairfax Line. The purpose of the surveying expedition was to determine the southwest boundary of the 5,000,000-acre Northern Neck land grant owned by Lord Fairfax.

The group, which also included Thomas Jefferson's father, Peter, began their plotting within the present-day boundaries of the Shenandoah National Park east of the Blue Ridge with the idea that they would take a straight course across two mountain ranges and intervening Valleys. Fifty-four days, 76 miles, and many hardships later the group, which numbered about 40 men and as many horses, arrived at the headwaters of the Potomac in West Virginia. Much of the line they marked out of the wilderness remains as viable boundaries today. The dividing point between Maryland and West Virginia and the division between Rockingham County and Hardy County, West Virginia, for example, were part of the line surveyed by Lewis and company.

Lewis' abbreviated journal of the trip is the only remaining primary source documenting the journey. He writes of horses perishing after plunging over rocks and down precipices, running out of water except for the fetid supply from bear wallows, and of hacking the way through thickets of laurel and ivy, the branches of which were "All Most as Obstinate as if Composed of Iron."

Another memorable surveying job, although far less dangerous, was launched in 1747 when William Beverley hired Lewis to draw up a plan for Staunton at Beverley's Mill Place. The result was a town with 44 half-acre lots, and the basis for Staunton's downtown arrangement even 250 years later. Soon after the plat was drawn up, Beverley began to sell lots and Lewis, as his agent, helped.

Staunton was by no means the only tract of land that Lewis first surveyed and then became involved in the selling end. Together with his colleagues, who were often his family, he surveyed and was involved with land schemes along much of frontier including areas around the following rivers: New, Allegheny, Kanawah, Calf Pasture, Cow-pasture, Greenbriar, Monongahela, and Jackson River. Not surprisingly, he also became a landholder in many of these same areas. He and his brother were the first owners of Hot Springs in Bath County.

His most important land, however, was in Rockingham County, just beyond the present-day county line near Port Republic along the Shenandoah River. Thomas Lewis married Jane Strother and in 1751 purchased 478 acres from the Franciscos. This became the nucleus of the farm that became known as Lynnwood, after his mother's maiden name of Lynn. Thomas and Jane raised 13 children to adulthood at Lynnwood. The neighborhood was certainly a fashionable one for prominent Augustans (for this area was considered Augusta County until 1777 when Rockingham was formed.) Across the Shenandoah River from the Lewis estate was Bogata, the farm of their brother-in-law the famous lawyer and statesman Gabriel Jones. Just up the road was the home of John Madison, the first clerk of the Augusta County court, and also Lewis' brother-in-law.

As the years passed and the frontier was tamed, Lewis found himself in the field less and less. At the same time, the position of county surveyor had passed its zenith and, although still a position of prominence, was no longer the position of power that it once was. Lewis was Augusta's only surveyor during the Colonial period. When Rockingham was formed in 1777, he became the new county's surveyor and remained at

See SURVEYOR, page 24

•Surveyor

Continued from page 23

that post until 1789, just a year before his death. At the same time, his world began to revolve more around Lynnwood and his life there. Land purchases over the years made the size of the farm nearly 2,000 acres. When he died he was the largest landholder in the county and the third largest slave holder. The elegant federal farmhouse that stands on Lynnwood today was not built until 1809, probably by Lewis' son, Charles. A small frame story-and-a-half house which stands just behind the house is remembered in family story to have been the house lived in by Thomas and his family although it is hard to imagine a family with 13 children fitting into such a structure!

During his later years, Thomas turned toward statesmanship even as his brothers and his sons were dashing off to become heroes in the military arena. During the French and Indian war, in many ways precipitated by the aggressive land surveying that Lewis and others practiced in the western frontier, his brothers fought, while he lobbied for a string of frontier forts to protect the Great Valley. It is said that he even personally supervised the building of such a fort in Greenbriar.

When rumblings of the American Revolution were heard, he represented Augusta at the state conventions of 1775, and was a member of the committee that helped frame the state constitution, the first such document ever written by a free society. He also traveled with his brother Andrew to Fort Pitt and negotiated with the Delaware Indians there. In 1788, Lewis was a member of the Virginia Federal Convention.

His reputation in the new country was widespread even if few people remember him today. He was elected a member of the board for the school that eventually became Washington and Lee University, and his personal library was said to have been the largest in the west. In 1784 when George Washington was in the area, he stopped and spent two days at the Lewis farm. The two surveyors of Virginia's frontier spent time reminiscing, talking of surveying and of the potential for navigation on the Shenandoah River.

When he died of cancer of the face on Jan. 31, 1790 at the age of 73, Thomas Lewis left behind a settled Shenandoah Valley — one that he had helped personally take from an untamed frontier to a growing cultural and commercial center. He did it not with guns and fighting or even with plows and cultivation, but through his surveying instruments, a quill pen and a hunger for land. "His role, therefore, was to be that of a statesman in the public service, a career less glamorous but in no sense less important than that of his famous brothers," wrote Arey in his thesis.

Statesmanship must have run in his veins, however, and many of the descendants from his 13 children have gone on to pursue prominent careers. George Rockingham Gilmer was a two-term governor of Georgia; John Francis Lewis was a U.S. Senator from Virginia and twice lieutenant governor; and Lunsford Lomax Lewis was chief justice of the Virginia Supreme Court, just to name a few. Perhaps the most famous descendant is Charles Spittal Robb, a ninth generation descendant, who became Virginia governor and now serves as a U.S. Senator for the state. —

•Trip

Continued from page 17

that were offered her and sat patiently while we talked to her and petted her. Ginny, who was already at the camp, jumped up in the car with her mother and sat with her for long minutes.

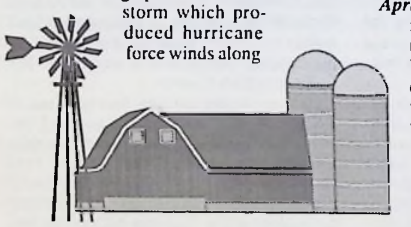
When we departed, I drove slowly so as not to jostle her. On the way back, I stopped at the Churchville Tastee-Freeze and shared some vanilla ice cream with her, just as we had done nine years before when she was just a scared puppy. Steak and ice cream were the last things she ever ate. That night as I lay unable to sleep because of her labored breathing, I prayed that she would soon have peace. I must have eventually dropped off to sleep, because when I woke it was to an unnatural silence. I heard no labored breathing, and so I rose to look for her. I found her laying on the dining room floor, very peaceful and natural, her brown eyes still wide open and, for the first time in days, her beautiful big ears were straight up and erect like a shepherd's should be.

We buried her under a hemlock tree where she joined her little puppy that lived just a few seconds after birth and a family cat who had passed away at the age of 17. Two years later, Ginny joined her under the hemlock, after finally succumbing to her liver ailment.

What we have put there in that little patch of ground, though, are just the bodies of some very special creatures. Their spirits carved out places in our hearts that can never die. Because of Misty's journey into our hearts, we can never be without a dog again. —

Yesterday's weather

Most newspapers include a weather forecast in each edition. But we try to be a little different at Augusta Country. We may not know what the weather will be like tomorrow, but we sure know what it was like yesterday.



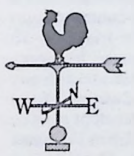
April 2, 1975 — The northeastern U.S. was in the grips of a severe storm which produced hurricane force winds along the coast, and two to three feet of snow in Maine and New Hampshire. Winds atop Mt. Washington, N.H., gusted to 140 mph.

April 12, 1934 — Winds atop Mt. Washington, N.H., averaged 186 mph for five minutes, with a peak gust of 231 mph, the highest wind speed ever clocked in the world.

April 19, 1775 — The first engagement of the Revolutionary War took place under clear crisp weather at Lexington-Concord.

April 23, 1885 — The city of Denver, Colo., was in the midst of a storm which produced 23 inches of snow in 24 hours, and at Idaho Springs, Colo., produced 32 inches of snow.

April 27, 1988 — Mt. Washington, N.H., reported seven feet of snow in 10 days, pushing its snowfall total for the month past the previous record of 89.3 inches set in 1975. —



Information for this report was taken from the World Wide Web homepage of the U.S. Storm Data Center.