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Augusta Country

ay 1997
ol. 4, Issue 5

P.O. Box 57 Middlebrook, Va. 24459

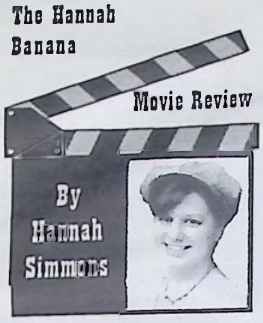
4-H & FFA Market Animal Show preview
Pages 16-17

Down by the old mill stream

Special section begins on page 6

Kilmer's *Saint*: Barely mediocre at best

The Hannah Banana



A saint he ain't.

He calls himself Thomas Moore or Simon Templer — saints' names used by a no name, unscrupulous world-class thief. With the predictable Val Kilmer in the lead and supported by Elisabeth Shue (as the cold fusion genius??) and Rade Serdezija as the villainous Tretiak, *The Saint* just ain't that good of a good movie.

This remake of a old and far better television show struggles hard as a .007 and Mission Impossible wannabe. So hard, in fact, that it hurts. *The Saint* is good in parts but it drags toward the end and the audience can't help but be relieved when the movie ends. The convoluted plot definitely does not help move this movie along.

A master of disguise, The Saint effortlessly eludes police officers trying to track him down. As the plot unfolds the movie's title character is hired by Tretiak (Serdezija), a Russian Mafiosi, to steal a cold fusion formula, an equation that could solve the world's diminishing fossil fuel supply by creating energy out of helium. By doing this Tretiak hopes to win Russia's trust by providing heat to its freezing citizens. The Saint, of course, must steal it from the unsuspecting physicist Emma Russel, played by Shue. The charming young innocent falls in love with the thief. This (surprise, surprise) taints the Saint and really complicates things for him.

Ultimately the plan backfires when the Saint — who is no Saint remember — tries to double-cross the Russians. The chase is on.

Kilmer, with a string of cocky characters to his name -- including *Batman* -- plays a fairly convincing thief with an attitude. The Saint is really a duplicitous human being. Yet we are supposed to feel sorry for him when we learn that his tragic past prevents him from being able to share his feelings with anyone. Oh, PAH-lease!

Shue plays the part and that's about all she does. She falls flat as a brilliant scientist and is only convincing as a love struck lady who has fallen for a mysterious man. Shue came into *The Saint* having put in a memorable performance opposite Nicholas Cages' 1996 Oscar-winning role in *Leaving Las Vegas*.

Overall *The Saint* isn't bad. Too many sub-plots make it somewhat confusing. If you're a Kilmer fan, you will probably like this flick. And if you're an Elisabeth Shue fan, well you will have to agree, she never should have left Las Vegas.

The Saint is rated PG-13. It has violence, sexual innuendo and some language. Hannah gives it two-and-a-half bananas. —

On the cover

Betty Jo Hamilton captured the rush of the millrace at the restored and operational mill at McCormick's Farm near Steeles Tavern for this month's cover photo. For details about the McCormick mill restoration see page 6. Also included in this issue are articles about milling in Greenville, Raphine, Staunton, and Rockingham County. These articles may be found on pages 6-9.

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

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Please recycle

Waynesboro's Norma Sayre working to finish afghan for benefit auction

By SUE SIMMONS

WAYNESBORO — Norma Sayre is trying to finish an afghan she has promised the Church of the Brethren Disaster Relief auction.

"I've had one in every auction," the 95-year-old Waynesboro woman says, the afghan lying across her lap.

She is trying to knit three rows a day. But a recent illness and a multitude of friends stopping by to see her now that she is home has slowed her progress.

"If I have many more days like this one," she exclaims, "I'll never get it done."

The afghans adorning sofas and chairs along with the braided rugs and seat covers that surround her give silent testimony to both her persistence and talent.

Born in Bridgewater in 1902, Mrs. Sayre did not learn how to knit until 1963.

"I had a heart attack and had to be off from work for three months," she explains. "When I got back to Du Pont all the women I worked with had taken up knitting." Not wanting to be left out, she took it up too.

She came to braid rugs in much the same way.

"My older sister lived in Westminster, Md. Her name is Bertha Sackett. She had learned how to braid rugs and she taught me when I went up to visit her," Mrs. Sayre said. "Pretty soon I got to making them for myself."

Mrs. Sayre recalls going to flea markets and yard sales to buy woolen clothes that she could turn into rugs.

"I had to be the judge of what I bought," she laughs. Not just any woolen was suitable for rugs.

In the winter after purchasing the second-hand clothes, she would cut them into two-and-a-half inch strips. Spring was reserved for rug making.

"The biggest I made was a nine-by-twelve. I started the first of May and it took me until the last of August."

Mrs. Sayre explains how she measures the length of the first strips; how she braids on the "right" side and laces on the "wrong" side; how she matches colors and mixes plaids and solids to turn her rugs into a veritable work of art.

Not one to hide her light under a bushel or let a folkway die, Mrs. Sayre taught her Waynesboro Church of the Brethren women's group to braid.

"I taught them the hard way," she chuckles. "If they made a mistake, I made them tear it out and start over. A big mistake can't be corrected."

That earned her the nickname, "The Boss," for what is today the Arts and Crafts Circle of the church. Mrs. Sayre's lessons have been well met. The group today numbers 14. They meet twice on Thursday, once in the morning and once at night to accommodate working women who don't want to be left out.

Like Mrs. Sayre, they produce numerous items — quilts, braided rugs, wall-hangings, chair covers, sundry crafts — for sale at the Disaster Auction.

The group has recently discovered the merits of cast-off blue jeans and are busy braiding denim welcome mats.

Asked why she likes braiding, Mrs. Sayre exclaims loudly, "I don't know. I wonder why I bother when I'm braiding, but when I'm not doing it, I want to.

"I am so glad I can knit," she adds.

Health problems have limited her activity and Mrs. Sayre readily admits knitting helps her pass the time. She also passes the time by phoning birthday greetings to everyone in her church.

Mrs. Sayre surveys the unfinished afghan on her lap. When finished it will measure 48 by 60 inches. She knows she's pushing it and comments that she may not be able to finish.

She happens to be the only one with any doubts. After all, she did promise. —

Norma Sayre of Waynesboro works on her most recent crocheted creation. It will be sold at the annual Church of the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction to be held May 16 and 17 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds.
Photo by Sue Simmons

Planet Earth: A very small world

By SUE SIMMONS

WAYNESBORO — When *Augusta Country* staff goes out on assignment they never fail to learn just how big the world is or just how small.

Norma Sayre appears at first glance to be an ordinary woman. Born in Bridgewater, she married, lived on a farm, and had four children. The death of her husband forced her to go to work at Du Pont to support her children and herself. She worked at Du Pont for 24 years until her retirement in 1966.

All quite ordinary until we find out that Mrs. Sayre has traveled around the world three times.

She has been to — among other places — Egypt, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and India where her son-in-law Temi Vakil lived and her daughter Louise Vakil served as a missionary in a Church of the Brethren hospital about 75 miles from Bombay.

She has ridden on camels; seen the Taj Mahal; passed time in the Veil of Kashmir; traveled in a Tonga (or "ox-mobile as Mrs. Sayre calls it); flown over the Himalayas; and eaten shish kabob cooked on the streets of Bombay.

Her only regret is that she did not get to ride an elephant.

To make what seems a very large world a very small one, Mrs. Sayre — as it turns out — is a "kissin' cousin" through marriage of this writer. She knew Aunt Nellie, Uncle Minor, Aunt Ethel and all the kids.

Since one doesn't get to pick one's relatives or one's husband's relatives (one of life's great injustices), it was a great and pleasant surprise to stumble upon a relative as extra-extra-ordinary as Norma Sayre. And it only took her three trips around the world to find me. —

Quilters lend talents to Brethren relief effort

By SUE SIMMONS

WAYNESBORO -- To many people she is simply known as the Quilt Lady.

And for good reason.

Quilts are Rachel Brown's vocation, avocation, passion, therapy, and service to her church.

She is responsible for organizing the quilt auction that is part of the Shenandoah District's Disaster Relief Auction to be held on May 16 and 17.

"I never know the number of quilted items donated until a week before the auction," Rachel says, chuckling. "Last year we had 50 quilted pieces." These included antique quilts, wall hangings, new quilts.

"This year we will have a vest and a teddy bear made out of an old quilt that was too full of holes to sell," she says.

Even with careful planning, surprises sometimes happen at the last minute.

"One church had a yo-yo quilt out on its craft table," Rachel related. "Someone saw it and realized it was an antique. It ended up in the auction. It brought around $1,200."

Churches and individuals donate quilts and quilted pieces for the sale.

Rachel says that Valley Pike Church of the Brethren in Mauertown north of Woodstock always donates two or three quilts. *"There are active quilters in that church, and we can always count on them," she said. Mill Creek and Greenmount Church of the Brethren* are also frequent contributors.

"There are not as many quilters as there used to be among the Brethren," Rachel comments. "As the church became more urban and working, the number of quilters dropped off. The quilts come from a narrower group of people."

Rachel was not born into a quilting Brethren family herself.

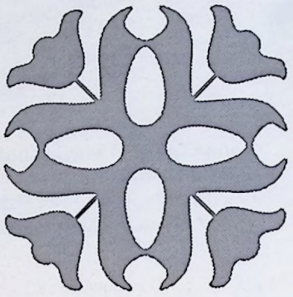
Although she had always sewn, Rachel first learned to quilt when her husband Dennis Brown went to serve his first pastorate at the Antioch Church of the Brethren in Franklin County, Virginia. "Antioch had quilters," she remembers. "They set up plain quilts on frames and let anyone quilt."

By the time the Browns went to the Middle River Church of the Brethren in 1980, Rachel was experienced enough to start women quilting there.

The crafter admits it is difficult to maintain quilting groups today. "It takes a long time to do a quilt," she said. "If a group starts one, they need to spend at least one day a week quilting."

"So many people work today," she says that it is difficult to set aside that amount of time.

Rachel found an outlet for her love of quilting when she joined the Association for the Arts in the



Church of the Brethren — a network that examined how arts were used in the church. The Art for *Hunger Sale grew out of that endeavor as did the Annual Conference Quilt project.*

Prior to Annual Conference, Rachel sends out a request for quilt squares from each congregation. About a third of the denomination's 1,000 congregations respond. The squares are quilted at Annual Conference. Mrs. Brown usually ends up with three quilts and several wall hangings. The quilts are auctioned at the end of Annual Conference, and the proceeds go to a hunger project.

"People ask me why I get so involved with the Disaster Relief Auction and the Annual Conference Auction," Rachel says. "I spend two days at the auction and two days getting ready for the auction. Then I see what the quilts sell for. It's beyond my ability to give that much money. But the sale multiplies my work into money for a very good cause."

Rachel does not see quilting as work. "It's therapy!" she laughs. "I love fabric; I love to sew. Quilting and dollmaking pull the two together for me."

She compares herself to an artist who works with paint. "My fabric is my palette," she says.

Rachel readily admits she is neither a prolific quilter nor a collector. She has made a few large quilts for family members, and she has collected only a few quilts that have sentimental value.

She likes to teach other people to appreciate quilts and quilt-making. To that end, she conducts classes in beginning quilting and dollmaking in her shop "Rachel's Quilt Patch," located at the Wharf in Staunton. "Quilting is enjoying a new popularity," Rachel says. She is careful, however, to keep beginning quilters from getting so overwhelmed that they give up.

A great deal of time goes into a quilt, the woman says. "It hurts a quilter to see her quilt sold for less than it is worth."

People always want to know what a quilt is worth.

"I tell them 'If you pay less than $800 for a full size handmade quilt, you have cheated the quilter," she notes.

Rachel hastens to add that she enjoys teaching quilting and enjoys watching people come to appreciate the work that goes into a quilt.

They don't call her the Quilt Lady for nothing. —

Rachel Brown adds a few more stitches to a work in progress. Handmade quilts will be among items sold at the Disaster Relief Auction May 16 and 17.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Brethren Relief Auction is May 16 and 17

By SUE SIMMONS

A letter came across my desk recently from a little girl named Virginia asking me if there really was another disaster relief sale besides the one held in Fishersville each fall.

Yes Virginia, there is another disaster relief auction.

It's sponsored by the Shenandoah District of the Church of the Brethren and it will be held May 16 and 17 at the Rockingham County Fairground.

The Brethren emphasize service and the District's Disaster Relief Auction is one of the many ways the denomination's members participate.

The Shenandoah District auction is a relatively new affair, first begun in 1993 to raise money to support local congregations' relief efforts.

Disaster relief takes many forms — clean up, repair, rebuilding, and sometimes counseling and medical services. Disaster relief also takes money and time, hence the auction.

The auction features livestock on Friday evening and quilts, woodworking, and art on Saturday. Quilts are donated from local churches and by individuals. Artists Lisa Geiman, Linda Patrick, and P. Buckley Moss each donate artwork to be auctioned.

Since its inception in 1993 the auction has netted close to a half million dollars.

Much of the money stays in the area and some of it goes to national disaster response.

The Church of the Brethren maintains a national disaster relief staff out of the New Windsor Service Center in New Windsor, Maryland. There the staff coordinates efforts with other national agencies active in disaster relief. The national staff, however, relies on local congregations and district coordinators.

At the congregational level, church coordinators keep the congregation informed of particular needs and get disaster relief teams into the field. Churches support their disaster relief through giving and participating. The auction augments these local efforts.

Yes Virginia, there is another Disaster Relief Auction.

And you too can participate.

Even if you don't have a cow or a quilt or painting to donate, go by the fairgrounds and eat, buy and bid. ---

Church of the Brethren ministers to needs of others

By SUE SIMMONS

The Church of the Brethren's belief that service is an integral part of Christian life has long been practiced by Brethren in America.

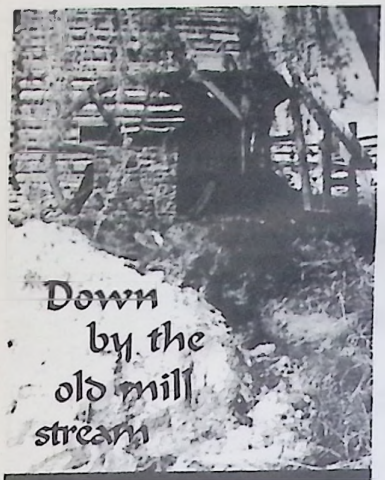
The early Brethren spent time and money ministering to the needs of newly arrived immigrants not unlike themselves — in 18th century Philadelphia.

Following the Civil War, northern churches raised and sent funds south to those left destitute by the war. The Brethren came to the aid of the Syrians and Armenians following World War I, both sides in the Spanish Civil War, and the Chinese following Japan's invasion in the 1930s.

The aftermath of World War II, however, provided a real opportunity for the Brethren to serve. The most notable service project was the Heifer project later adopted by other denominations around the country.

The Disaster Relief Response Network is an extension of these service ministries as Brethren minister to the needs of individual following a natural disaster.

Or as the Brethren say, "Continuing the work of Jesus — simply, peacefully, and together." —



Special section

McCormick's mill gets new lease on life

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

STEELES TAVERN — Unlike her eternally functional *cousin Wade's Mill just up the Raphine Road, McCormick's Mill has barely hung on through the years.*

*Her gears purposely jimmied, her logs deterio-*rated, she embraced neglect as her foundation settled into the hillside above the pond at Virginia Tech's Shenandoah Valley agricultural research station. Like the federal government that oversaw her care, she looked charming on the outside, but the interior begged for honest change.

Just before she passed the point of no-restoration-return, a family member heard her sighs. Chicagoan Hugh Adams, a direct descendant of Cyrus McCormick, visited, took stock and wrote a check for $100,000.

"The mill was in terrible shape," Glenn Wilson, owner of Olde Log and Stone near Raphine, said as he looked at his handiwork and remembered. "No work had been done here since the mid-70s, and that was haphazard. It actually accelerated the deterioration."

Wilson and his crew aren't old. But their craftsmanship bridges the decades as their combination of old logs and modern masonry pushes yesterday inside out. "When we started, we replaced 21 logs, 14 big logs and a number of short. Then we had to jack it up. It was six inches out of plumb, so we brought it back to the chimney," Wilson explained.

Naturalist and outdoorsman Pete Davis is a craftsman as well. "There's a separate timber frame inside that holds the mill itself... it needed sill replacement... and we pushed up the building with 30-ton jacks," he said.

Wilson matched the tan polymerized chinking to that of the adjacent building. Everything has been coated with preservative. Inside, a lighter chinking dispels shadows. The raceway and forebay, wooden workings that channel water to the wheel and control its volume, sport the toughest pressure-treated rough-cut lumber.

"I made sure it won't need anything for the next 50 years; that forebay should stand a long time," Wilson admits. The state permitting process held up re-channeling the water to the race, but eventually even that came through, making the wheel legal to turn again.

See RACE, page 19

Early Valley settlers built stone-ground economy

By NANCY SORRELLS

When one thinks of the history and landscape of the Shenandoah Valley in the 250 years since the first European settlers arrived, the best analogy is that of a jigsaw puzzle. A puzzle made up of many, many pieces which fit tightly together to form a clear picture of the past.

In the case of the Valley, quite a few of those puzzle pieces will include mills.

When the first settlers came southwestward up the Valley and into the wilderness, they came with intentions and ambitions. They may have arrived in a wild frontier, but they determined very quickly that they were here to clear the land, raise marketable products, and make money. To that end, mills played a vital role. And an abundance of mountain streams and rivers provided settlers with a power to be harnessed.

The purpose of these settlers was so focused that one Shenandoah Valley historian, Robert Mitchell, wrote a book on the subject called *Commercialism and Frontier*. John Wayland, another important Valley historian, wrote that "some of the first manufacturing establishments, and some of the most important of all, were flouring mills, built on the banks of the numerous power-giving streams." Another historian, W.O. Mowbray, wrote that the Shenandoah River and its tributaries were home to "more flour and feed mills than any other streams of equal volume in the world." The numerous mills along the Shenandoah, wrote Wayland, were just like "stops on a railroad line."

Research by local historian Richard Hamrick (*Augusta Historical Bulletin*, Fall 1982) revealed the first mill reference in the Augusta County order books as being on Feb. 11, 1746, just two months after the county was organized. But the wording of the document makes it perfectly clear that those mills had been around for quite some time as it talks of two roads, one from David Davis' Mill (on the South River) to the top of the mountain, and the other from Benjamin Allen's Mill to North River.

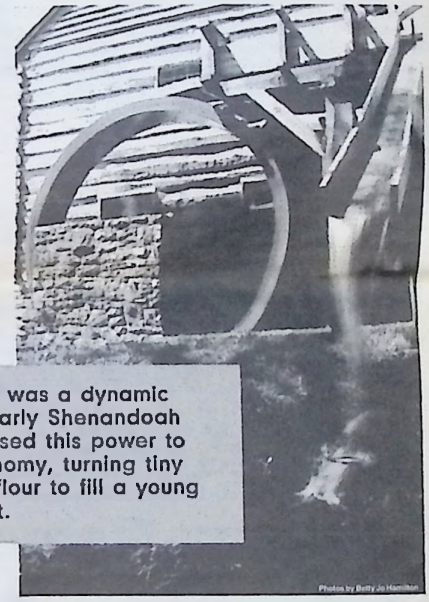
Other research indicates that there was a mill on Folly Mill Creek called Gibson Jennings' Mill prior to Sept. 2, 1740. This means that mills were not only some of the first commercial enterprises in the area, but they often pre-dated parish churches, courts and courthouses. And what would the water-powered mill machinery do? Most importantly, huge wheels turned by water transferred their power to gears which turned immense stones and ground grain, grown on newly cleared tracts of land, into food and animal feed. Excess grain was sold for profit.

Milling provided not only daily bread for the table but some money besides. The settlers knew a good thing when they saw it! By the 1850s, many mills converted from grindstones to steel roller mills and outside wheels were gradually replaced with turbines which gave more power with less water.

Thinking of the jigsaw puzzle again, it is amazing to discover how everything was related and fit together to complete the picture, one with the other. Be prepared to get dizzy with the circular nature of it all.

The settlers found rich land; they cleared it; they grew crops to eat and sell. The settlers also found fast-running streams. They built mills with machinery to turn the water into power. The water-powered mills ground the grain to eat and to be sold for cash. With more money farmers could buy more land and nicer things.

The miller made money too. With more money he could expand his machinery and harness the water power to do other things like saw lumber. When land was cleared, trees could be taken to the mill for lumber. More cleared land meant more grain. More lumber meant building nicer houses surrounded by neat wooden fences. It also meant lumber to be sawed and used for flour barrels, obviously in great demand to hold the increased amount of flour made from the grain being cultivated because more land was being cleared. Lumber was also turned into wooden wagons and boats needed to ship grain and flour to big cities.



Wheel and water -- it was a dynamic combination -- and early Shenandoah Valley settlers harnessed this power to drive the area's economy, turning tiny grains of wheat into flour to fill a young nation's breadbasket.

With more money the miller could also add the machinery to grind plaster, a type of fertilizer. With more money from his grain, a farmer could afford to buy more fertilizer so that his fields produced even more crops and thus more money the next year. Let's complicate it even more.

In addition to flour milling, water power could be harnessed in iron production. Giant forges to work iron were often built near or in conjunction with flour mills. Why? Iron is used for such important items as milling machinery and agricultural tools. With better tools, the farmer could grow more grain. With better machinery the miller could grind more grain. Iron. Grain. Water power. Mills. They are all part of the interconnected and complicated Valley puzzle.

The first settlers probably never stopped to consider just how it all related. They just began putting up mills. Simple gristmills at first, then later larger mills with many stories where grain could not only be ground, but separated, sifted and packed. By the time the 19th century rolled around, milling was the number one industry in Augusta County. Another grain-related industry, distilling, was number two.

When it came time for early Valley residents to place names on the landmarks around them, mill-related names were often selected. Many of the streams were given names like Mill Creek, as were many of the towns. Staunton was called Beverley's Mill Place before it was ever Staunton. In Rockingham, Port Republic was first known as Carthrea's Mill.

By 1750, within just a few years of settlement, there were at least 34 gristmills (to grind grain) in the Upper Shenandoah Valley — Rockingham, Augusta and Rockbridge counties. In Augusta County, there were at least seven businessmen working on mills in the 1740s. Hamrick has documented at least 160 mill sites in Augusta County from the 1740s until the 1980s. He also has a list that has surpassed 500 of Augusta County mill names, but cautions that many of the names belong to the same mill site being operated by a different fam-

See NAMES, page 8

As the saying goes...

"Keep your nose to the grindstone."

Mill stones must be adjusted correctly or their closeness can strike sparks that burn the wheat. Keeping his nose close to the stones, a miller could detect the burnt smell and know to adjust the stones. Today this saying is interpreted to imply that a person is working hard. However it was originally intended to express diligence in one's work.

Miller's son recalls boom and bust of grain economy

By NANCY SORRELLS

WAYNESBORO — It was the final blow. The second time flood waters swept away the Greenville mill dam was all one man could take.

James E. Furr, referring to his father's exit from the milling business, remembers much of his family's short-lived ownership of the mill.

The mill which Floyd Furr owned had been an integral part of the Greenville community since the 18th century. The Doaks, Lillys, Smiths and Shavers all owned the mill at one time or another. During the Civil War, Union troops burned the mill to the ground, but it was rebuilt and prospered as did the town in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Rebuilding was part of the elder Furr's short-lived ownership of the mill as well. While there, he replaced the traditional grinding stones with more efficient steel rollers. "Once a year when he had the stones he had to chisel them out. Doggone it that was hard work!" explained James of the stone "dressing" that was part of the miller's work. The stones had grooves cut in them that channeled the grains during grinding and these channels had to be reworked at regular intervals.

JAMES E. FURR

Even after the conversion to steel rollers, milling meant plenty of dirty, dusty and dangerous work for everyone involved. "You could get hurt in there dum easy, but the only thing that happened to me was I was pushing a two-wheel cart that held the sacks and I ran over my toe!" Furr said.

Because he was just a kid less than 10 years old, Furr's jobs consisted of things like holding flour sacks while they were filling with flour and helping with odd chores any way he could.

"When the machinery was running the whole building vibrated constantly," Furr recalled of his father's enterprise. "You would be so choked up with flour dust too. It was in your eyes and ears and your throat was full of that old dust!" A picture of flour-dusted Furrs and their employees is evidence to this effect.

The blood of the Furr family (James had 11 uncles and aunts) must have had flour dust in it, because quite a few went into the milling business. One uncle ran a mill in Lexington, another in Buena Vista and a third in Broad Run.

"Back then there were mills strung clear up the valley and everyone came in wagons to the mill. My father was a natural born miller. We were living in Verona, where I was born, and there was a mill there. My daddy saw that mill and just got a hankering for milling and from there we went to Greenville," he said.

Furr has other vivid memories of the Greenville mill, including some discipline meted out by his father using a flour barrel stave. "There were some kids swimming in the dam and I was on the other side pitching pebbles at them. My father was on the second floor of the mill and saw me and got out the barrel stave. I haven't thrown gravels since!" he recalls with a laugh.

Under Furr, the Greenville Roller Mill prospered for a time and farmers would wagon in their wheat, rye, barley and corn for grinding. "People would bring in more grain than they took away and my father would keep some as payment for the grinding. Then my father had to sell flour commercially to get his money," James explained.

"My father kept all his own books and had his office in the mill. He would work way up into the night. Milling was a long and dusty job, and I still remember that aroma of old flour sacks."

The Furrs' association with the Greenville mill came to a close in July 1920 after a second disastrous flood wiped out the mill dam.

"The second one broke the camel's back," James remembered. "After that we moved to Staunton. Dad couldn't make it milling any more. The Wade family bought the mill and ran it until the late 1950s when it went out of business and was eventually torn down."

The mill in Greenville was just one of a multitude which operated in turn-of-the-century Augusta County. Photo courtesy Richard Hamrick

Covered in flour, the Furr family and two mill hands stand outside the Greenville mill. Floyd Furr, third from left, owned and operated the mill. Margaret Fixx Furr, Floyd's wife, holds their daughter Louise, while sons James, second from left, and Dick hold Greenville Roller Mill sacks. Identifications on the mill hands were unavailable. Photo courtesy James Furr

By the time the Furr family moved away from Greenville, young James had learned how to work. While in Greenville, he and some other boys had hauled buckets of water for the convicts in the nearby prison.

"I can still hear those convicts hollering at us: 'Water Jack, Water Jack, oughta been there and halfway back," James said of one of his earliest paying jobs. "Back then you had to work, that's all," he explained of the many jobs he had. "We would thin corn and cut thistles from daylight until six in the evening. At the end of the week we would go into town with a big load of roasting ears. After a week's worth of work we had $1.25. Back then, though, if you went to town with a dollar in your pocket, you was loaded. You could spend all kinds of money and still come home with 50 cents in your pocket. The movies at the Strand (in Staunton) were 10 cents, you could get two hot dogs for a nickel and two ice creams for a nickel."

Going into Staunton was big-time for Augusta County's country boys.

"We had a Model T and it was an all-day trip to Staunton. I forget how many flat tires we'd have. The tires were like balloons and you had to patch them and pump them up with a hand pump. You'd go two or three miles and have to fix another flat tire!" James recalled of those early trips to town.

See TIRES, page 12

White Star still shines in Staunton

By KATHARINE BROWN

STAUNTON — When wheat was king in the Shenandoah Valley, around 1900, Staunton's downtown streets from the courthouse to the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad station area were jammed with horse-drawn farm wagons bringing newly harvested wheat to be ground at White Star Mills. At the turn of the 20th century, this giant mill in the heart of the city was a model of efficient, profitable productivity.

White Star was the largest and most modern mill in town, but by no means the only one. Valley milling dates to the early years of settlement. Staunton was originally known as Beverley's Mill Place around 1740. A long and proud tradition of water-powered mills is a colorful part of the history of Staunton and of Augusta County. Paul Shirey, writing in 1957, counted seven flour, grist and feed mills operating at the turn of the 20th century within the present city limits of Staunton. These were Hoy's Mill, Staunton Mills on Middlebrook Road, Witz and Holt Mill on Commerce Road, Knightley's Mill near the former R. E. Lee High School on Churchville Avenue, Clem Brothers Mill on Central Avenue, Coffman's Mill on Middlebrook Avenue, and White Star Mills.

White Star Mills logo from a 1911 invoice

White Star was never a water-powered mill. It was built in 1892 as a modern, steam-powered plant. The mill was an investment project of four local businessmen who already had experience in mill operation. Two of these men were Charles Asbury Holt and Isaac Witz. They had previously teamed up to purchase the site of the old James Cochran Mill on present Commerce Road, renaming it the Witz and Holt Flour Mill. Andrew Bowling was their miller partner in that venture. Bowling, a native of Warren County, had come to Staunton in 1861 just as the Civil War broke out. He entered the milling business in 1867. The partners sold the Witz & Holt Mill in 1895 to Mr. and Mrs. Tannahill, and concentrated their energies on their new White Star Mills venture.

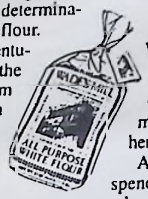
In this, they were joined by a new

See WHITESTAR, page 19

Wade's Mill withstands test of time

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

RAPHINE — As a structural icon, Wade's Mill is unimpressive. A determined relic, it hugs Mill Creek and turns on, heading for the 21st century with quiet determination and stone-ground flour.



For more than two centuries, time has ignored the mill's stubborn stand from an era of horse-drawn wagons and mule trains, to Confederate defenders and Union raiders, to the industrial revolution, to present-day 18 wheelers and cloned fast-food joints. That's because Wade's Mill keeps a secret or two tucked under its hard stones.

People who are ground between pressures of a fast-paced world are hungry for the deliberate quality of bygone technology. When they place those mill-emblazoned bags in their modern pantries, they've harnessed the past to drive back progress.

The modern miller and his wife, Jim and Georgie Young, likewise struggle to define the mill's allure, but they know first-hand its pull. Georgie is full of long stories with happy endings. "Jim and I lived in Washington, D.C., and worked for the government. We more or less liked our jobs, but always talked about what we would do after our careers. *D.C. is a fun place to live, but not a place I visualized growing old in,"* she explained.

"We talked a lot about different things, but we always wanted property two or three hours from Washington. We looked in Pennsylvania, northern Maryland and West Virginia."

An impossible tomato-growing venture in Front Royal hardened Jim's resolve like summer clay. If the answer wasn't tomatoes, something waited out there. About that time, a work-friend with a summer home in Steeles Tavern told Georgie about Wade's Mill.

And the mill? After managing to work continuously since the 1700s, charming Jim and Georgie seemed easy. On the way back from looking at the property, Jim hoped Georgie liked the old mill and house as well as he did. Back at the summer house, Georgie confided to her friend, "This is just perfect."

At first the Youngs would spend a week in D.C. and weekends at the mill. Soon their lives flip-flopped and they only went "home" to D.C. on weekends. Then, with remodeling finished, they started up the wheel. Under former miller Charlie Wade's tutelage, Jim ground his first batch of flour. The former government worker settled into his new niche.

Soon Georgie discovered she was a born teacher as her cooking classes inspired others to use old-fashioned mill products. (mushroom terrine with grits, polenta quiche, rosemary polenta bread, rustic potato bread, piadini bread, wheatberry salad with citrus vinaigrette, torte aux herbes, focacia, buckwheat pound cake, rustic bread pudding, to name a few) Georgie's favorite cooking supplies stock the mill shop, along *with creative items* from Virginia.

Mill tours, gourmet lunches for groups, creative marketing (Christmas gift catalog) and cooperative advertising (open house May 10 and the Valley of Virginia Bread and Wine Festival held in April) are just a few successes. The Youngs discovered that as others learned about the mill, it drew them off the interstate and down Raphine's back roads.

The backbone of Wade's Mill, however, remains the stone-ground flour, cornmeal, grits and polenta. Orders come from gourmet chefs near and far. The fresh-ground flour includes the wheat germ, rich in Vitamin E and protein. The relatively slow, water-driven mill retains nutritional quality that modern steel roller mills burn out.

The mill shop doesn't keep floor to ceiling shelves stuffed with products, but chances are you'll get it more recently ground than you've ever tasted. And if you arrive at the right time, Jim will power up the mill and show you how it's done.

The Youngs run into adventure as well. An order for semolina flour, or durham, took them to a mill in Minnesota. Contracts with farmers provide the hard wheat no longer grown in the Valley. Buckwheat often comes from seed company surplus, corn from the farmers' cooperatives.

Years ago, nearly every strong spring or creek sported its own mill. But not now. Osceola still stands between Vesuvius and Steeles Tavern. Along with the miller's house, it thrives as a bed and breakfast and restaurant. Brownsburg had two mills, one vanished and one, at Dunlap's, still stands. McCormick's Farm Mill has been remodeled thanks to a private gift. Its machinery is operational. Charlie Potter remodeled a mill into apartments near Collierstown. The wheel still turns. The fate of the Timber Ridge Mill, caught in nearby interstate development frenzy, is uncertain.

For them all, Wade's remains a proud representative. Early settler Captain Joseph Kennedy birthed his mill on bold Mill Creek in the 18th century. His family worked with flour-whitened arms for decades.

In 1882, James F. Wade bought the mill. The interior looked the same then as now. Four generations of Wades milled through some tough times. When everyone started going to the grocery store and buying nutritionally *stripped flour, a family man couldn't make* enough living from milling. So Charlie Wade passed his artistry to early retiree Jim Young.

Jim Young dumps wheat into a separator at Wade's Mill in Raphine.
Photo by Deborah Sensabaugh

Jim and Georgie are about as busy as they want to be, getting flour under their fingernails, bridging the past with the future, reminding others there was a time when quality and simplicity were a way of life.

Survivors like Wade's Mill will feel right at home in the next century. —

•Names

Continued from page 6

ily or under a different name. Nonetheless, the list is impressive considering there are no longer any operating grist mills in Augusta County.

The rapid rise in mill numbers from initial settlement is directly attributable to one thing: wheat. The people of the Valley had found a crop that would make money. It was certainly not the only crop they grew. But within a mixed farm economy where they grew corn, oats, hay, fruit and livestock, it was the single item that consistently brought in cash from the time of the American Revolution in the 1770s until after World War II in the 1940s.

Think for a moment of how wheat and, as a consequence, milling, connected the people of the Valley with the rest of the world.

During the American Revolution, the people of the Valley sent barrels of flour to Bostonians suffering under a blockade of their harbor. Seventy-five years later when Americans had pushed across the entire continent and were rushing to find gold in California, came a new need for flour. As mind-boggling as it seems, the bread those California Forty-niners were eating was often coming from Shenandoah Valley flour. Wheat grown here was sent, either as flour or as grain, to cities like Richmond, Baltimore and Alexandria. From there it was put on ships that sailed south, all the way around the tip of South America and then north to California where it was purchased and turned into bread. Talk about connecting the pieces of a big puzzle!

A few years further down the road, the Valley became the breadbasket of the Confederacy and provided food for Rebel soldiers. As such it became the target of the Yankee torch as well. When Sheridan brought his Union raiders into the Valley he issued instructions to burn barns (where grain was stored) and mills (where it was ground). He wanted destruction so complete that "a crow would have to carry his own rations" over the area. In 1864, Sheridan blackened the skies of Rockingham with the smoke from 60 or more mills, but there were so many mills in the county that still he missed some.

In Augusta County, Union troops under Gen. Hunter marched south, burning mills and barns between Staunton and Lexington. Peter Hanger's mill, which stood near where the old Lee High School is located on Churchville Avenue, was burned in the destruction, but Hanger and his sons bounced back and started at least three other mills in the area.

The farmers and mer-

See FARMERS, page 15

As the saying goes...

"Show me your mettle."

In this saying "mettle," which means spirit, ability or determination, was originally spelled "metal." In milling's heyday, metal bills were used to sharpen or dress the millstones. Pieces of the metal often flew off and struck the worker dressing the stones leaving cuts, scars, and sometimes bits of metal which became embedded in the worker's forearm. In seeking employment at a mill, the itinerant workers who dressed the stones would roll up their sleeves to show the scars on their forearms. The fastest and most accurate workers rolled their sleeves and "showed their metal" to win the job.

Mill operation creates new appreciation for bread

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

RAPHINE — With sharp corners, the new gear tooth catches the wheel with a clunk. Jim Young cocks his head, listening with a symphonic ear.

"There, hear it?" he says while pointing. Neighbor Jim Wade, third-generation mill expert, nods.

"Maybe it just needs to wear a little. Looks like it fits," Wade said. Wade shows me ready-made teeth from a wooden box of spare parts. "When you order, you get enough to replace a whole gear."

A slow stream squeezes under the gate, chattering across the 21-foot Fitz overshot wheel. Young is cautious. "We don't want it to turn too fast today, until we see what that gear is going to do." The new wooden tooth came from the box of spare parts.

Inside, the mill pulses with slow life drawn from the water. *Gears mesh, a four-floor belt joins smaller belts in graceful revolutions, more gears catch in a dance that has spanned* centuries on this very spot.

In calling the sleeping mill giant to life that morning, Miller Young had only to turn the pipe that fills the forebay, a watertight wooden box that reached from the third floor. "Most mills around here ran by gravity flow. This one used to have a box from the hillside in the 1700s, before the pipe was available," he says. He points to a distant spot above a fence.

"When mills are right on a river or stream, floods can cause real damage. As long as the dam, or water source, is above here, gravity flow brings it to the top of the wheel. With the gate, I can control the flow and make it faster or slower," he added.

Like all mills, the great wheel sparks life in a myriad of machinery. The complexity of gears and belts sort themselves out. Everything runs like magic. I follow Young up four flights of ancient stairs worn smooth by long-gone millers who never needed a health club. Tending to four floors of milling machinery kept them fit but not frantic.

Young explains that today we'll use some electric motor modifications since he doesn't want to stress the doubtful gear with full power. On the top floor, he throws open a Dutch door. I clutch the edge and lean out. Far below, Mill Creek sparkles in the sun; the wagon frame

See WAGON, page 12

Earl and Janet Downs of Staunton display some of the photos which appear in the book about mills in Rockingham County which they have compiled.
Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Museum exhibits to feature 'Memories by the Sackful'

By NANCY SORRELLS

There once was a time, in the memories of our grandmothers and great-grandmothers, when a trip to the local mill meant the opportunity to upgrade the family's wardrobe. In those days, feedsacks and flour sacks came in a nearly endless variety of prints and patterns. Farm women picked pleasing prints and recycled the sacks as family clothing — anything from underwear to dresses — or household items like tea towels and quilts.

Although the days of local mills and cloth sacks have disappeared from the countryside, the exhibition entitled "Memories by the Sackful" which opens simultaneously in May at four area museums recalls those earlier times.

The nucleus of the exhibition will be at the Virginia Quilt Museum in Harrisonburg. Complementary exhibits will be held at the Shenandoah Valley Folk Art and Heritage Museum in Dayton, the Museum of American Frontier Culture and the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace and Museum in Staunton.

"Memories by the Sackful" began as a highly successful exhibit on feedsack quilts in Northern Virginia. Virginia Quilt Museum curator Joan Knight has brought the exhibit to Harrisonburg and expanded it. Not only will there be Shenandoah Valley feedsack quilts, but an exhibit of photographs from the National Rural Electric Cooperative will be added. These photos show the changes wrought in the rural landscape when electricity replaced lanterns and signaled an end to reliance on "coal oil" for night time lighting.

The focus of the exhibit in Dayton will be mills, but will include feed sack quilts as well as mill tools. The highlight of this portion of the exhibit will be a display on the history of Rockingham County mills and a new book about them which was compiled by Janet and Earl Downs of Staunton.

The portion of the exhibit featured at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton is subtitled "From Flour to Fashion: Tools of the Trades." This exhibit, which runs May 17 to Aug. 17, features tools used by the miller as well as the tools used by the farmwife to fashion feedsack clothing and other domestic items. Needlework tools such as sewing baskets and scissors and mill tools such as wooden flour scoops and mill picks (used to dress the millstones) as well as historic photos will be on display.

Plenty of examples of the printed flour sacks will grace the display cases so that visitors can see the incredible variety of materials which once were available to rural farmwives. As a final touch, the exhibit will include a display on the advent of paper sacks which spelled the demise of feedsack fashion.

The portion of the exhibit at the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace takes yet another twist. Here the display will feature feedsack examples which President Wilson's administration sent to Belgium as part of relief supplies during World War I. Belgian women added embroidery work to the sacks and sent them back to the United States as a show of gratitude for American assistance. These sacks are on loan from the Wilson House in Washington, D.C.

The exhibits at all four sites will run from May throughout the summer. The portion at the Museum of American Frontier Culture closes Aug. 17, but the other three will remain open until Sept. 8.

For information, call the Virginia Quilt Museum at 433-3818, Frontier Culture Museum of at 332-7850, the Birthplace at 885-0897, or the Shenandoah Valley Folk Art and Heritage Museum at 879-2681. —

Staunton couple compiles book on Rockingham mills

By NANCY SORRELLS

STAUNTON — In one way or another, Staunton's Janet Downs says her life from the very beginning has always been intertwined with mills. Together with her husband, Earl, and Pat Ritchie of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, she has compiled a 500-page hardback book called *"Mills of Rockingham County."*

The 8 1/2 by 11-inch book, printed on archival paper and indexed, describes approximately 100 mills in the county and includes reproductions of old photographs, invoices, diaries, journals and other mill memorabilia. The book, which should be available mid-May ($35, plus $5 shipping and $1.58 Virginia sales tax), is sponsored by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, with proceeds to go toward the publication of this book and future local history publications.

When Janet and Earl got started on the project late last August, it was with humble beginnings. Little did they know that by digging around for information on old mills in Janet's home county, they would unearth such extensive resources.

"The project started out as a 'booklet' to go along with the feedsack exhibit that is being shown at the Virginia Quilt Museum, Shenandoah Valley Folk Art Museum, Woodrow Wilson Birthplace and Frontier Museum," she explained.

But when she put out the word that she was looking for information on mills, the floodgates opened. For Janet, it was a daily reminder of her Rockingham roots. "I was born in a Harrisonburg hospital, but my parents lived at that time in Penn Laird, within sight of the ruins of an old mill," she explained.

That connection, however, was just the first of her many mill associations.

"In 1944 when I was just six months old, my father was drafted into the army. My mother, two-and-a-half-year old brother and I moved in with my widowed grandmother, aunt, and two cousins being raised by my grandmother. Grandmother Addie Frances Shirey Meyerhoeffer who was the granddaughter of Samuel Good, founder of Goods Mill," she said.

The extended family created in 1944 lived together on Goods Mill Road, a half mile from the mill site. "The creek that ran through Grandmother's pasture and farm was the same stream that flowed through the Goods Mill race. As a child, my brother, the neighbors, and I played in the creek, happily making "dams" with burlap feed bags filled with sand," she noted in the book's introduction. When Janet was 6, her family moved close to Port Republic. There she played happily in another mill stream, appropriately named Mill Creek for the many mills that its waters powered. The play area was within a stone's throw of the site of the Jacob Stover Mill, which, according to Shenandoah Valley historian John Wayland, was the first mill built in Rockingham County. While she was still an elementary school student, Janet's parents built a house on the Goods Mill Road, directly across from her very dear grandmother. On a daily basis she walked the half mile to the exact site of Goods Mill and the Meyerhoeffer Store to catch the school bus.

Mills were part of her life in other ways as well.

"I clearly remember as a child going with my family to pick out the colorful printed feed bags which were used to make clothing," she noted, which is why the feedsack exhibit has been a special project for her.

This is the connection that led to her suggesting the booklet on mills to accompany the exhibit. "Little did I know what I was suggesting," she said with a laugh. "With the production of this book, my life-long link to mills has come full circle."

Together with her husband Earl, who provided much of the on-site photography and "chauffeur" service, they have traveled all over Rockingham County and surrounding areas, logging more than 4,000 miles to gather information and borrow items to be photographed.

"Every single person contacted has been extremely cooperative and has shared our excitement with the project. Earl and I extend a very sincere thanks to everyone who has shared information. This has been a topic that has created a lot of interest and families have gone searching for information. There has really been a bonding of the people and a coming together of the community to do this project," she explained.

In order to have the book on mills in Rockingham County ready for the exhibit, it was necessary to bring the project to a close and send it off to the printer. But that has not closed the floodgates. Already Janet and Earl have collected enough information to launch a second book, *"More Mills of Rockingham County."*

"Just in the last two weeks we have documented three more mills that we didn't even mention in the first book even under the section where we listed mills that needed more research," she said.

Janet is asking for community members to search their memories and attics for more mill information that may lay waiting to be brought to light. "There is much more research to be done — maps to be searched and more pictures, and memorabilia waiting to be discovered. All of which means, of course, that we will continue to collect and document Rockingham mills for the second book, and a third if necessary." To do that, they need your help. If you have pictures, mill invoices, mill stories or anything mill-related from Rockingham, please let them know by writing: *Mills of Rockingham County, Shenandoah Valley Folk Art and Heritage Center, Bowman Road & High Street,* Dayton, Va. 22821.

Although her rural heritage gave her a close association with mills from early childhood, Janet admits to learning a great deal through this project. After hearing stories like those of men walking from mills carrying 100-pound feed sacks on their shoulders, she has also gained a renewed appreciation for her ancestors.

"One of the things that surprised me the most was how close together the mills were. Mills were just a necessity of life back then," she said in summation. —

Verona's Jack Wine lives stargazer's dream

By NANCY SORRELLS

STOKESVILLE — You might say Verona's Jack Wine is a stellar individual. Consider these facts: He has an e-mail address that begins "starman," he has a license plate that reads "STR GZR," and he has his own personal key to a 17-foot domed observatory which houses a 14-inch telescope.

Right now the starman from Augusta County may have his feet planted firmly on the ground during the day when he runs a contracting business, but at night his head is in the heavens. As an amateur astronomer, Wine has been living a dream-come-true during the recent appearance of Comet Hale-Bopp.

But, it's been a sleepless dream during the last few weeks when the comet appears for a few hours after sunset and then again for a couple of hours before dawn. When asked about how much sleep he's had recently, Wine just laughed and admitted, "not much." He quickly added: "But when the adrenaline gets going, I can do with out sleep for 72 hours."

Just how did an Augusta County boy with no formal training in astronomy come to be the director of an observatory in the western part of the county? According to Wine, the story goes back to an interest sparked by his grandfather. "My grandfather was very knowledgeable of the constellations and taught me a lot when I was very, very young," he explained. A few years later, when Wine was a Boy Scout, he acquired a very small telescope.

It would be many years before he carried that childhood interest any further, however, although he admits to having an affinity for mathematics (and girls chimed in his wife, Kitty) while attending school.

The next step in the culmination of the dream came from a different source said James Madison University physics professor Dr. John Staib who picked up the tale. "In the late 80s a man named Ike Riddleberger had an interest in astronomy and some land in Stokesville. He approached JMU about the feasibility of the spot for an observatory and it became a joint project. Ike built the observatory and JMU furnished the telescopes and cameras," he said.

The availability of an observatory suddenly turned Wine's childhood interest into something much bigger. "I never really got serious about astronomy until I was invited out here, along with several other amateurs, by Mr. Riddleberger. He didn't know any of us, but he gave us each a key and said, 'Here, use it,'" Wine said.

An observatory was not the only thing on the tract of land. Riddleberger also ran a campground. "I started coming out here pretty regularly," Wine remembers. "Pretty soon the campers noticed it and started knocking on the door. We had lines with 50, 60 and even 70 people waiting to get in."

Before he knew it, Wine had a nighttime job, as director of the Stokesville Observatory, to go with his daylight employment. "I worked every Friday and Saturday night for four years until the campground closed (about two years ago)," he said.

Although the campground is no longer in operation, Wine continues his weekly trek to the observatory. He gives tours for groups, opens the observatory for special occasions like Hale-Bopp and the annual Perseid meteor showers, and, for the last three years, he has taught astronomy to Girl Scouts during summer camp.

Working with the girls has been quite rewarding he noted of the campers who visit twice a week for nine weeks. "I hope I can make a difference with them," he said before confiding one particular story. "I did hear a little girl one night — she was maybe 11 — say that she was going to be a country singer, but after coming to the observatory, she thought she would be an astronomer instead!"

At the end of the summer, the scouts will often send thank you notes which Wine cherishes. "Some of those letters are the cutest things you've ever seen. They give you a lump in your throat," he said.

Staib added that his astronomy classes also use the observatory every clear Tuesday night. Although JMU does not have a separate astronomy degree, three of Staib's science majors have done senior projects at Stokesville and all three have gone on to graduate work in astronomy.

Wine adds that as an amateur he has learned a lot from Staib and also spends as much time as possible reading everything about astronomy that he can get his hands on. As he sits and programs in the coordinates that will swivel the 17-foot dome around and aim the 14-inch telescope to the right pinpoint of light in the sky, Wine claims that the operation of the observatory is not complicated.

"It's easy, you just read the instruction book," he says with a laugh that belies the complicated nature of the science of astronomy.

As he talks of the heavens and points to objects on star maps, slides and photographs, it is readily apparent that Wine is very knowledgeable of the earth's celestial dome, with or without formal training.

Although Wine admits that the public has a desire to see the spectacular, like the rings of Saturn or Jupiter, he, as well as Staib, lean toward the stars themselves as favorite celestial objects. Each has a different reason.

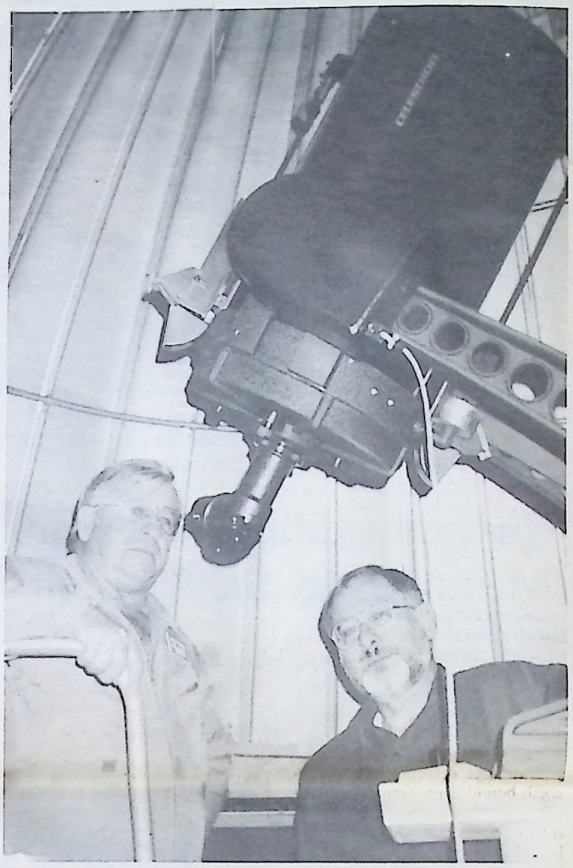
For the JMU professor, it's a matter of science.

"Knowing what the stars are made of and knowing that as long as they are out there burning they are making the elements possible for life. They make it possible for us to be here," he said.

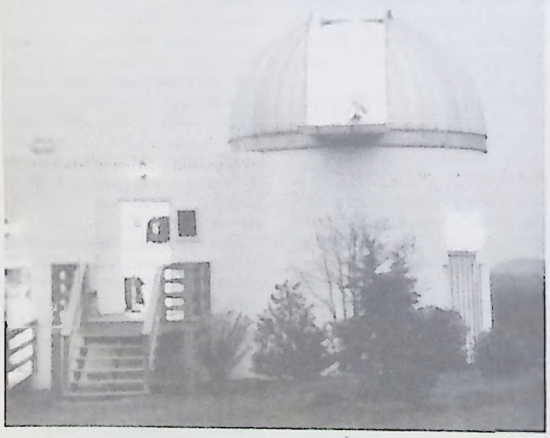
For Wine, it's a chance to peer into infinity.

"When I look at objects I think about the vast distances. We are not talking miles; we are talking light years. Some of the light we see has been traveling millions of years. We can look back to when the dinosaurs were here or even longer. Some of those things we are seeing may not even be there any more," he marveled.

See STR GZR, page 11



"STR GZR" Jack Wine, left, of Verona, and James Madison University physics professor Dr. John Staib use the telescope at the Stokesville Observatory to peer into the mysterious unknown of the universe. Photo by Nancy Sorrells



The Stokesville Observatory provides local residents an eye to the sky. Jack Wine of Verona is the "volunteer" director of the facility. Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Comet is spectacle of vast universe

By NANCY SORRELLS

STOKESVILLE — They came as if on a pilgrimage to see a supernatural event.

Hundreds of people trekked up the hill to the observatory here and waited in line for hours to get a glimpse of Comet Hale-Bopp. One man had been climbing to the roof of his work and watching the skies during his graveyard shift, others had been looking up at the evening skies with binoculars. Young and old, they all felt the urge to see and stare and marvel.

"This has been the biggest thing that has happened here," said Stokesville Observatory Director Jack Wine of the public turnout to see Hale-Bopp.

According to some experts, Hale-Bopp is the brightest comet to pass by the earth in 400 years — it passes as close as 122 million miles; in comparison the moon is about 240,000 miles away. And even those who didn't climb to the observatory for a look at Hale-Bopp can't help but glance up at the night sky and wonder at the vastness of this universe.

But just what is a comet, like this celestial visitor that last passed through Earth's neighborhood about 4,200 years ago?

Although spectacular to our earth-bound eyes, comets are, according to astronomers, relatively minor players in the universe of celestial objects. Actually, they are nothing more than frozen snowballs made of a mixture of dust and gas.

Comets are believed to have been spawned from a cloud of primeval matter located at the far reaches of our solar system. Some of these snowballs leave the cloud and are pulled by the gravity of our solar system into a vast orbit that brings them closer and closer to the sun.

Once a comet's orbit takes it close to the sun, the heat melts the snowball and gas and dust are released into a long, thin tail that can be millions of miles long. At the center of the vaporized gases is a nucleus or "coma" which is where we get the word comet.

Once the comet circles the sun, its orbit takes it back into the outer reaches of space where it is dark and infinitely cold. The vaporized tail disappears and the comet once again becomes a small, frozen snowball.

Many comets have very predictable orbits, like Halley's which returns about every 76 years. The shortest known cometary orbit is about 3 years, while others, like Hale-Bopp, take thousands of years to make the journey around the sun. Over thousands of years, comets eventually diminish as each close pass around the sun causes the loss of their already small mass.

Comets are usually named for their discoverers. In the case of Halley's Comet, Edmund Halley correctly calculated the comet's orbits and predicted the return of it in 1759. Hale-Bopp was named for Alan Hale and Thomas Bopp, two amateur astronomers who independently discovered the comet (officially designated Comet C/1995-01) on the night of July 22-23, 1995.

Almost simultaneously, the two — one in Arizona and one in New Mexico — were scanning the night skies with their telescopes and stumbled across the comet, still a frozen snowball way out in space. Realizing what they had seen, both contacted the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams and reported their discovery. The two have since met and get along well, linked forever by a frozen snowball blazing across the spring sky.

Perhaps those who journeyed up to Stokesville or just pulled their car off to the side of the road and gazed at Hale-Bopp arching across the horizon knew they were seeing something that comes along only once in a lifetime. And not just their lifetime, but only once in several millennia.

When the last humans looked up to the heavens and saw this comet, the pyramids in Egypt were brand-new high rises, and the Israelites would have to wait another 1,000 years before fleeing Egypt. Christ's birth was more than 2,000 years in the future as was the building of the Great Wall of China. In North America, pottery was just being developed by Native Americans living on the East Coast and agriculture that centered around corn was spreading through the new world. The Aztecs were 2,000 years in the future, however, and Columbus wasn't scheduled to arrive for another 3,700 years.

Yes sir, hope everyone got a good look at the spectacular comet this time around, because the next time anybody on this planet gets to see Hale-Bopp, the calendar will read 4377. —

Jack Wine piggybacked a camera on the telescope at the Stokesville Observatory to snap this photo of Comet Hale-Bopp. It took Wine five rolls of "experimental" exposures to come up with a shot which satisfied his astronomer eyes. The photo was taken March 16 and shows the comet's two tails. Photo courtesy Jack Wine

Comet Hale-Bopp as seen in the northwestern sky of Augusta County. This photo was taken by *Augusta Country* staff writer Nancy Sorrells using a 30-second exposure and 1600 speed film. The photo was stunning enough to make it Wal-Mart's Photo of the Week April 6-12. Congratulations Nancy!

STR GZR

Continued from page 10

Some of the things Wine sees during his nightly sojourns in Stokesville, however, have nothing to do with the skies. "I have seen just about everything up here: wild turkey, deer, fox, one night a black bear came walking by and one night I saw a bobcat," he said.

Of the many things he has seen, Hale-Bopp does rank as a highlight. In many ways, the comet has appeared at just the right time for the observatory's future. Once the campground closed down, funding for the observatory was eliminated, so the public exposure as a result of the comet has made people aware of the dire financial situation. The public response to open houses at the observatory has also been a bit overwhelming, Wine admitted, after an evening that saw 400-500 people make the pilgrimage to the remote western Augusta County site. "This (Hale-Bopp) has been the greatest thing since I've been here as far as the general public," he said. Wine added that this comet ranks in the "the top two or three" comets he has ever observed. "Hale-Bopp has some unusual features like wisps around the side facing toward the sun," he explained.

A photo that he took after painstakingly experimenting with five rolls of film was being sold during the open house in order to help with observatory expenses. To take the photo, Wine piggybacked a camera on the telescope and played around with a number of different film speeds and exposure lengths before he came up with a shot that pleased him.

Despite the lack of funding, Wine hopes to keep the observatory open and to continue the educational outreach. He realizes that such a place, a professional observatory, and such a situation for an enthusiastic amateur, hold a unique niche in the world of astronomy.

"It's an amateur's dream. I feel like I'm one of the luckiest amateurs in the world. Most amateurs would give their eyeteeth for this and a lot of professionals, too," Wine said. Even as he concluded with those thoughts, however, the Augusta County contractor turned his eyes toward a diamond speckled night sky. —

Bread bag rugs? Mt. Sidney's Flo Bonos crochets 'em; dogs love 'em

By PENNY PLEMMONS

MT. SIDNEY — "Let sleeping dogs lie," goes the old saying. And for Flo Bonos of Mt. Sidney, this is sage advice which she interprets quite literally.

It was an unexpected occurrence when Flo first realized her latest craft creation had gone to the dogs.

In Flo's hands, ordinary bread bags become attractive rugs that dogs can't resist. She didn't originally intend to crochet rugs to become beds for dogs but, according to Flo, "it just happened."

"Every time I would stop crocheting and lay the rug down, my collies would lie on it," Flo said. "They must be attracted to the bread smell. They loved it so much that it is now their permanent bed."

With this revelation, Flo made rugs for other dogs and discovered that they love them too. The rugs, made entirely of plastic bread bags, are ideal for pet owners not only because of their aesthetic appeal but also because they are easily cleaned. Just give them a good shake or wash them down with a little detergent and rinse with the garden hose.

Several years ago an elderly neighbor showed Flo a bread bag rug. She liked the idea of recycling the bags into something useful.

"I don't like wasting things," Flo commented. "I am very practical and I enjoy working with my hands."

Relying strictly on her memory and crocheting skills, Flo says that one day, about a year ago, she thought about the rugs and decided to "just do it."

Sunbeam, Wonder, and Nature's Own bread bags are typically the ones that become Flo's "yarn," but any variety will do. The only difference between a bread bag rug and a rag rug is the fiber used to create it. Flo claims the process is simple.

The bags are cut open along one seam, then folded in a fan-like manner and cut in various places. The outcome is a long continuous string of plastic which Flo catches with a large hook and forms into continuous rows of single crochet stitches.

"It's one of those projects you can pick up and work on whenever you have a little bit of time," Flo stated. There are no stitches to count as in cross stitch and you never lose your place." Sometimes Flo will use only one type of bread bag, and other times she will crochet a variety of bags together to give a mottled look. However, no matter what bag Flo uses, the outcome is always the same: a beautiful area rug filled with multicolored flecks that at a glance can easily be mistaken for an actual rag rug. Flo is a seasoned artisan who has a mastery of a broad range of crafts. She has crocheted numerous bedspreads, table cloths and afghans. She makes large Father Christmas dolls and paints village scenes onto bricks. Flo's husband Lou also is a recycler, using wood from barns to make beautiful tables, bookshelves and other handcrafted furniture. "I would be lost if I didn't do crafts," Flo says. The bread bags are a welcome reprieve, she noted, from some of the more difficult projects she undertakes. After all, she said, "It just takes a little common sense to create a bread bag rug." —

Flo Bonos of Mt. Sidney crochets a "bread bag" rug using strips of plastic bread bags. Photo by Penny Plemmons

•Wagon

Continued from page 8

becomes a toy beside the road. Pulling a rope, Young activates the mill-driven pulley that draws bags of grain from the ground.

Young points to empty bins. "They're full come June or July, that is if we have a good wheat harvest this year," he said. He pours soft wheat from bags into five-gallon buckets and shows me how to control the flow into the separator top. I perch on rickety steps, balancing the bucket. As the wheat brushes my fingers, I absorb the slow shift of the screens.

The wheat shakes its way to the bottom of the separator before plunging into a bin on the next floor. Likewise, the chaff and field rubble gathers. And I'm no longer an observer, but part of the mystery of turning wheat into flour into bread into life.

On the third floor, Young points out the holding bins, more machinery. Sticking my head out the door, I am enthralled with the overhead view of the 25-horsepower wheel, the exterior heart of the operation.

Second floor and we get ready to turn out unbleached flour. Jim grabs a can that will hold 125 pounds. We're just making enough fresh to stock the shelves of the mill store. With the flick of a switch, Jim powers the vertical stones. While the wheat comes from the bin upstairs and falls between the stones, he shows me the other machinery. A horizontal set of stones has been grinding buckwheat.

"We have about 5,000 pounds of buckwheat waiting to be ground. We'll use all of it and will likely run out. *Buckwheat pancake mix is one of our most popular items," the miller said.* He points out the grooved wooden rod that shakes the wheat between stones. "It chatters when the stones are turning. It's called a damsel. The damsel chatters and the grain falls between the stones."

Grain elevators in wooden beams look like little cups attached to a belt. They climb upward with wheat or corn. A paddle hung above a barrel is used to pack flour for bulk transport. A beam with metal pincers is positioned to raise the top stone for the annual sharpening.

Back at the grinding operation, the crushed wheat is sucked through pipes back upstairs where another separator sends flour through a hopper into the can; channels wheat bran through a pipe into a bag, and deposits middlings, or the most nutritious part of the wheat berry, into another bag.

"Some of the middlings stay in the flour and that gives it more nutrition. If they are added back, you get whole wheat flour, and some chefs order bran to add into their bread or muffin recipes. And some farmers want the leftover middlings and bran to feed to hogs or cattle."

While he talks, Young constantly rolls bran, middlings or flour between his thumb and forefinger, testing, listening, sniffing for trouble in machinery like a pit crew gauges a racecar engine. Flour dust powders the air, smudges Jim's nose, settles into the folds of my sweater. The white stream tumbles into the silver can. "We have to vacuum after we mill. The dust covers everything," Jim says.

The gear sounds better as its new rough tooth shifts into place. By the time I leave, the great wheel is still and I know Young is checking the gears. He has to get ready for Wednesday opening. I am inclined to agree with the miller when he says: "This is hard work, but it's really rewarding." I know I'll never eat bread with detachment again.

Wade's Mill hours are Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays 1-5 except summer months when Sunday is an off day. —

•Tires

Continued from page 7

It was on one of those Staunton trips that 9-year-old James got his first pair of shoes — an overwhelming experience for a rural lad. With his brand-new shoes on his feet, James left the store and was gazing up at the tall city buildings when suddenly he ran smack-dab into a telephone pole.

The variety of jobs did not diminish when James became an adult. He has tried his hand at laying bricks, he went around the world twice and served in two wars as a sailor, he ran the Skyline Theater and then finished out his working career at Acme.

"I retired and have been playing golf ever since," he said of more recent years.

All-in-all, he looks back on those days of growing up in Augusta County as enjoyable ones.

"It's been a pretty hard life, I can tell you that. But I got through it all alive," he said. "And I wouldn't mind going over it all again." —

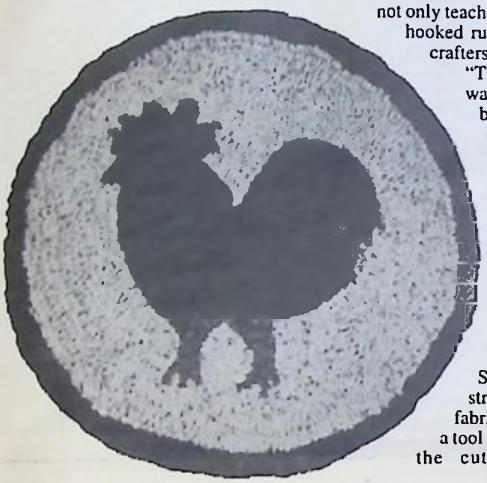
Swoope's Sandra Sevigny gets mixed response to call for 'hookers and strippers'

By PENNY PLEMMONS

SWOOPE — Six years ago Sandra Sevigny, then a newcomer to Swoope, was surprised to find that the Shenandoah Valley — so rich in tradition and history — was without an established and prosperous group of hookers and strippers. So she offered her 18 years of experience to the Staunton Recreation Department and began teaching others the art of rug making. (So what did YOU think this story was about? After all, this is *Augusta Country* isn't it?)

Sandra jokingly admits that using "hookers and strippers" as an advertisement for her Country Manor Rug Shoppe does not always draw the kind of business she is looking for, but it does accurately describe the procedure of creating hooked rugs.

Partly to meet her own needs for supplies, Sandra opened a shop in a remodeled chicken house and moved her lessons closer to home. Her business has grown and Sandra not only teaches the art but sells original hooked rug kits and supplies other crafters through mail order.



"Traditionally, rug making was salvage art with the rag bag being the main source of fabric," she said.

The pioneer homemaker of the late 18th century and early 19th century was a very frugal woman, according to Sandra. Clothing was commonly made of wool and when it was worn out it was reused and often recycled into bed rugs or furniture coverings. Scrap wool was cut into strips and a hook secured the fabric into a burlap bag. Today a tool called a stripper speeds up the cutting process. Hence, Sandra's play on words.

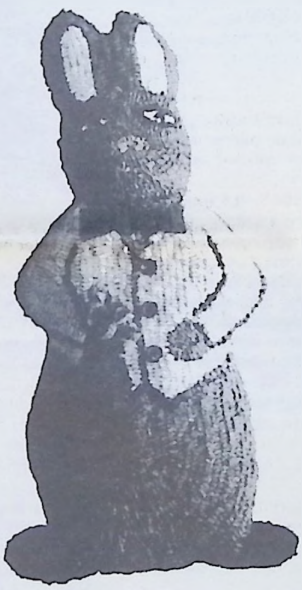
Sandra describes her craft as "painting with textiles."

She prefers to emulate the primitive look and style of the Colonial hooked rugs and creates simple, authentic patterns. Sandra's rug portraits include The Homestead in Hot Springs and the American farm located at Staunton's Frontier Culture Museum.

According to Sandra, rural women typically chose motifs from their surroundings to use for rug designs. "Pets, homesteads, farm animals and flowers were favorite subjects," she said.

Sandra said it is a great pleasure to be asked to take a wool garment that belonged to a loved one who has passed away and use the means of a hooked rug as a practical avenue to store the memory of that person.

Sandra Sevigny of Swoope holds one of her hand-hooked rugs. Another hangs on the chimney behind her. Other original works include a rooster and a Beatrix Potter rabbit. Dyed wool to make rugs is stacked on shelves in the photo's background to the left.
Photo by Penny Plemmons



"Often times my students use a garment that has a sentimental value. It is a way of keeping our past alive. The rug becomes very special," she commented. Sandra keeps a stock of wool dyed in various colors at her shop but finds that thrift shops can also be suppliers of wool clothing for the cost conscious crafter. While living in New England Sandra discovered hooked rugs as a craft. It fit in with her training in art design and with her busy lifestyle as a wife and mother of four children. Sandra claims that hooking rugs is ideal for the busy person because it doesn't require complete concentration and there are no stitches to count.

"A rug can be picked up or put down at any time. It is perfectly suited for interruptions from the phone and children," she said. Sandra enjoys her group of students who gathers weekly to hook rugs. It provides fellowship and according to Sandra, "is a great stress reliever." For more information about rug making, Sandra can be reached at 337-8438. —

Yesterday once more

War, shortages boosted Crimora mine to nation's top manganese producer

By VERA HAILEY

CRIMORA — A manganese mine operated in Augusta County in the 19th and early 20th centuries. According to "Staunton, Virginia: A Sketch of the City," published in 1884, "Manganese is mined in large quantities at Crimora, the bulk of which is shipped to England..."

The story of the Crimora mine begins with the early iron furnaces which operated in the area from the 1750s until the 1850s. These were in existence because of the great ore belt that stretched for 300 miles along the western foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In prospecting the ore belt, the miners discovered numerous small manganese deposits, but they were not important at the time.

In 1856, it was discovered that a small amount of manganese, in the form of an iron-manganese alloy, added to steel during manufacture increased the hardness, tenacity and elasticity of that metal. By adding 13 pounds of manganese to a ton of steel, a very hard product is made.

When knowledge of the value of manganese spread, the expensive charcoal blast furnaces gradually became extinct. Miners turned their attention to the manganese deposits, and the local deposits at Crimora were no longer ignored.

The identity of the original discoverer of the Crimora deposit is not known. The first records available indicate that in 1867 a stock company purchased the land containing the mine. By 1869, it was being operated by Samuel W. Donald, who named the mine after a local girl named Crimora Frances Withrow.

The mine, which began operating around 1866, was located near the southern boundary of the present-day Shenandoah National Park. The business passed through the hands of nearly a dozen owners, as one after another would declare bankruptcy or become discouraged with the low financial returns.

In 1914, nationwide production of manganese in the United States was just over 2,600 tons. With the war approaching, manganese imports were difficult to obtain. The World War I German U-boats began to control overseas reserves. This atmosphere boosted production in domestic mines, and new equipment was installed at Crimora in 1915.

Up until 1918, the mine had produced more ore than any other operation in the country, accounting for over one-fourth of the entire yield nationally. During the 1920s and 30s, the production of ore lagged, and little effort was made to work the mine.

The onset of another world war again cut off foreign sources and boosted demand for domestic manganese. In 1943, modern strip-mining was implemented at Crimora.

The state of Montana surpassed the Virginia manganese yield for a short time. But the resumption of large-scale operations at the Crimora mine in 1944 made the local industry the largest single producer of manganese in the United States.

During full operation, the mine employed 66 men. They worked on a two-shift basis, six days a week. The majority of the employees lived near the site. According to local historian Curtis Bowman, the management "provided well for employee housing." An early photograph showed a dirt street with a series of two-story homes for the miners and their families.

After World War II, the mine became unable to compete with high-grade, low-cost imported ore. The Crimora vein officially shut down in March 1946, although the pump was operated for more than a year after that with the expectation that the mine would resume operation. —

This photo shows a structure -- probably a maintenance shed -- at the manganese mine in Crimora. Operations at the mine shut down in 1946 when low-cost imported ore became available domestically. Until that time, the Crimora mine had accounted for a quarter of the annual total U.S. production of manganese.

Photo courtesy Owen Harner

Waynesboro's 200 years to be focus of ACHS spring gathering

AC staff report

WAYNESBORO — The heritage and history of Waynesboro, which is celebrating its bicentennial this year, will be celebrated at the spring meeting of the Augusta County Historical Society.

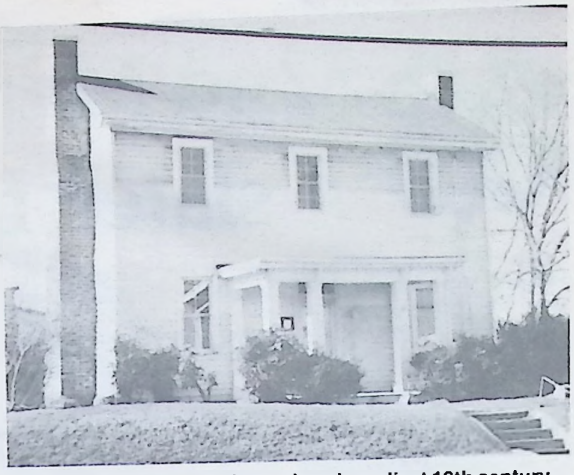
The Waynesboro Heritage Foundation will host the spring meeting of the society May 18 at 3 p.m. The meeting will be at the new Waynesboro Historical Museum which the foundation operates in the former Jefferson Bank Building on Main Street.

Historical society members and guests will have an opportunity to see the current exhibit at the new museum which focuses on the history of Waynesboro from the 18th century, when the community was known as Teasville, to the present. The program will feature a presentation by Waynesboro Heritage Foundation representative Marvin Stoner as well as other board members from the foundation. They will introduce the audience to the organization, describe current projects and explain more about the special events and happenings associated with Waynesboro's Bicentennial celebration.

Refreshments will be served at the conclusion of the society's business meeting. Following that, member may drive to Plumb House at 1020 West Main Street for a special tour of this early 19th century log house that the Heritage Foundation is restoring. Parking is available at both the museum and Plumb House. The general public is invited to the program.

The Augusta County Historical Society is a local organization interested in the history and preservation of Augusta County, Staunton and Waynesboro. Memberships are available for $10 per year. Two newsletters and two journals are included in the membership fee. The society hosts two historical programs and a banquet each year and sponsors other occasional workshops and programs. Oral history and architectural projects are currently ongoing in the society.

For information about the society or the spring meeting, call president Ann McCleary at 540/234-9569 or president-elect Katharine Brown at 540/332-7850 (day) or 540/885-5979 (evening). —



Plumb House, one of Waynesboro's earliest 19th century log houses, has witnessed a lot of the city's history, including a Civil War battle. The house, which is being restored by the Waynesboro Heritage Foundation, will be open for tours following the May 18 spring meeting of the Augusta County Historical Society.

•Farmers

Continued from page 8

chants of the area had a business sense about them, and mills were an important part of it. Hundreds of mills came and went along the streams and rivers. Amazingly, there were probably very few farmers who had to travel more than five miles to get their grain ground. *Streams with a lot of fall, meaning swift running water moving downhill*, were often lined with many *mills of varying* sorts.

Millers operated on two different economic levels — domestic (or grist) system and factory (or merchant) system. The domestic system is probably most closely identified with the first gristmills. Also called custom grinding, this was a system whereby the miller processed the grain for area farmers and charged a toll, or a portion of what was being ground.

If Farmer Jones brought his wheat to Miller Wampler and 20 barrels of flour were the result, then Farmer Jones might take 18 barrels home and give Miller Wampler two barrels as toll, or payment, in exchange for the grinding work. Under this system, the miller assumed no risk for sudden price changes because no money was exchanged, he simply earned a portion of what he ground.

This photo taken about 1905 shows James Jordan's Grist and Cidar Mill on U.S. 42 west of Churchville. The mill was located on Whiskey Creek.

Photo courtesy Richard Hamrick

In the factory stage, the merchant miller purchased the grain and resold it as a middleman, therefore assuming the risks of the market and price changes. A merchant miller sold grain under a trade name like Melrose and White Star of White Star Mills, Belrose of Swoope Milling Company, White Lily of Wade Mill at Greenville and Pearl of Mt. Solon Mill. One important point, however, is that mills could operate at both stages simultaneously and this was often the case. Millers were custom grinding some grain for toll payment and buying other grain outright and then reselling it either locally or in big cities like Richmond.

Either way, mills often became the nucleus from which a little community sprang forth with a blacksmith shop, store, church, post office and cobbler all clustered around the mill. Farmers would bring their grain to the miller, and while their crop was being turned into flour and meal, they could catch up on the area gossip with other farmers. Because this was a gathering place and the miller was a literate member of the community, the business often acted as a local bank as well, holding and lending money for farmers. Because of their importance to the community, a great deal of folklore surrounding mills and millers sprang up.

In the Valley, especially in German communities, young children with whooping cough were sometimes taken to the mill and put in the hopper with the grain in hopes of a cure. The miller always kept a few cats or a terrier at his mill to keep down the population of mice and rats who came to feast on the grain. Millers were often described as jolly individuals, although they were watched carefully because some had "heavy hands" when they were weighing out the grain to figure up the toll.

Jolly they may have been, but the work was hard and dangerous. Once the heavy machinery got rolling, the whole building would shake and shimmy and creak and the noise made normal talking impossible. With all that moving machinery, accidents were bound to happen. Horror stories abound of the stones, which could weigh up to a ton and were four to six feet across, breaking loose from their housing and careening across the mill like spinning tops, maiming everything in the path. Fire was another risk. Wheat flour is highly combustible and the tiniest spark could ignite a building filled with flour dust.

Floods, too, threatened mills clustered together along good streams and rivers. Local historian Hamrick writes that the flood of September 1870 destroyed three grain mills and 10 sawmills, washed out six dams, badly damaged seven mills and destroyed over 4,700 bushels of wheat and 140 barrels of flour in Augusta County alone.

As milling became more and more important in the 1800s, millers desired to keep their water wheels turning year round. Many looked to other work besides grinding grain. Simple machinery changes or building attachments made versatility commonplace. Saws were hooked up to produce lumber, textile machinery was attached to process flax, hemp and wool, fruit presses were added to made cider and other juices, plaster was ground, forges were operated, and cabinet making machinery was set up for woodworking shops.

Through the years, though, grain and mills were the industry's primary drivers. Together they made up many pieces of the puzzle.

Any Valley resident over 45 years old will have vivid memories of mills. If their families farmed, then the memories probably include taking a product to the mill, and wearing clothes made from brightly colored feed sack material. Ask any resident under 40, and the memories are not quite as clear.

For a number of reasons, including a shift from grain emphasis to cattle and poultry, most of the area mills closed their doors for good by the 1970s. Today mills are just memories, but what important memories — ones that form the pieces of a puzzle which is a picture of the Valley's past. —

52nd Market Animal Show slated for May 7 and 8

STAUNTON — The 52nd annual 4-H and FFA Market Animal Show will be held May 7 and 8 at Staunton Union Stockyard on New Hope Road.

4-Hers and FFA members from across Augusta County will be exhibiting lambs, hogs and steers during the event which is sponsored each year by Augusta County Ruritan clubs and the Staunton-Augusta Chamber of Commerce.

Wednesday's events open with the show dedication at 3:30 p.m. Each year the show is dedicated to an individual who has been a long-time supporter of the event. The lamb show will begin immediately following the dedication. Single lambs will be exhibited first, followed by the pairs competition.

Thursday's events will begin with the market hog show at 8 a.m. Hogs will be shown as singles and pairs. Following the conclusion of the hog show, the steer show will begin at approximately 9:30.

Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion will be selected from the single lambs, pairs of lambs, single hogs, pairs of hogs, and the steers. Exhibitors will also compete for $100 U.S. Savings Bonds for the top junior and senior showmanship effort in each specie. Showmanship Savings Bonds are sponsored by *Augusta Country*.

The Market Animal Show culminates Thursday evening with the Parade of Champions beginning at 6:45 p.m. Sale of livestock will follow at 7 p.m. Area businesses and individuals support 4-H and FFA members by bidding on animals for sale. For information about participating as a buyer at this year's Market Animal Show, call the Augusta County Extension office at 245-5750. —

Helping hand steers Jonathan Coleman into cattle production

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

ARBOR HILL — A helping hand goes a long way. Especially when it steers a youngster toward a productive endeavor. In this case, and Jonathan Coleman's case, "steer" is the operative word.

Young Coleman has two steers which he is preparing for the 1997 4-H and FFA Market Animal Show. This will be his fourth year as an exhibitor in the event held annually the first Wednesday and Thursday in May at Staunton Union Stockyard on New Hope Road. The 13-year-old Beverley Manor Middle School student credits his brother, Kevin Smith, with introducing him to competitive cattle exhibitions.

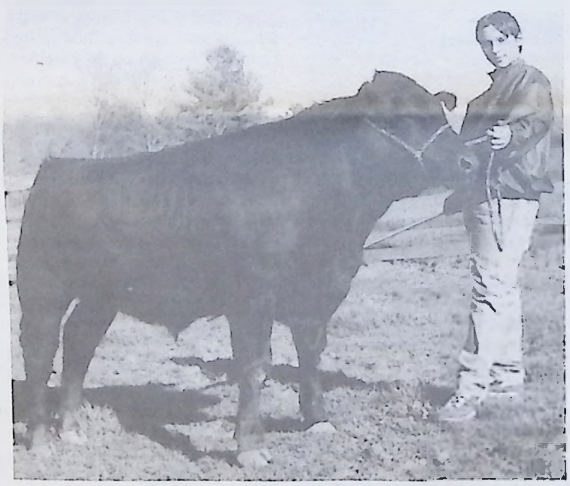
"Kevin got me into it," Jonathan says. "I owe most of it to Kevin. He helped me out a great deal. Thanks to him I made a-not-too-good-a-steer look a little better."

In his latter statement, Jonathan refers to the fitting of a steer for the show. It has been brother Kevin who has helped his younger sibling learn the proper techniques of clipping a steer and fitting it to show.

Kevin's introduction to Market Animal Show competition came by way of Kemper Croft who farms a multigenerational dairy, beef cattle, and sheep operation near Hebron. Croft helped Kevin get his start showing beef cattle; Kevin, in turn, passed along his knowledge to Jonathan, and now Jonathan is assisting some of his junior 4-H club members make their start in the show ring. And they would be hard put to find someone better than Jonathan to give them pointers on showing cattle.

In only his first outing in the steer

See CATTLE, page 17



Jonathan Coleman of Arbor Hill sets up one of the steers he will exhibit in the Market Animal Show May 8.

Johnston brothers learn big business

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

They may be only 12 and 9 years old, but Austin and Garrett Johnston have already learned a lot about big business — big pig business, that is.

The Rt. 1, Staunton brothers are preparing for the annual 4-H and FFA Market Animal Show to be held May 7 and 8 at Staunton Union Stockyard on New Hope Road. Among the animals they will be exhibiting at this year's show are four hogs which the brothers purchased in early February. This will be the Johnstons' second year with entries for the market hog contest, and Austin and Garrett say what they learned last year will help them in their 1997 outing.

"They have to be really, really tame," Austin said of the show hogs. "If you get them in the show ring and they're not tame, they just get really wild with everybody else's (hogs). This year we're trying to work them more."

While showing the hogs is an important part of the exhibition, Austin and Garrett know it's the quality of the animal that ultimately determines the winner in the show ring.

"Last year our pigs were too big in the end and wastey," Austin said. "This year we started with pigs with smaller weights in the beginning."

With the decline of the pork industry in Virginia, just finding hogs to show was no small task. The Johnston brothers had to travel out of state to find the four 80-pound hogs for the show. The Landrace, Yorkshire, and two Hampshire-Yorkshire crosses which the brothers bought were purchases made out of the proceeds from the sale of animals which they exhibited in last year's show.

"They paid for all of them with what they made last year," said the boys' mother, Dinah. "And they'll pay for the feed they've used at the end when they sell these." She noted that she and her husband Donnie encourage the boys to participate in the Market Animal projects because it "teaches them about responsibilities and taking care of things.

"They learn how to work," she said.

See WORK, page 17

Austin and Garrett Johnston work with the hogs they will exhibit in the Market Animal Show May 8.

•Work

Continued from page 16

Austin and Garrett have found that caring for the four hogs as well as the five lambs and two steers which they will show is no simple endeavor. Even though both boys are playing little league baseball this spring, they have had to make other sacrifices of time normally spent with friends in order to assume the responsibilities of their Market Animal projects.

Austin and Garrett are members of the Middlebrook 4-H Livestock Club. Austin is participating in the Market Animal Show for the fourth time. It will be Garrett's second year in the event. As a novice showman last year, Garrett received the Alton Lewis Award which is awarded for outstanding achievement to a first-year exhibitor showing hogs, sheep, and steers in the event. Austin is a student at Beverley Manor Middle School and Garrett attends Riverheads Elementary.

Although there is a lot of hard work involved in the Market Animal projects, Austin says hogs are "low maintenance." A 16 percent pelleted pig grower is fed to the hogs using an automatic feeder and water also is available from an automatic waterer.

"Give them food, water, a little bit of attention and they're in heaven," said Austin.

"We clean out their pen every day because it gets really messy," said Garrett. "And we change their bedding once a week."

The Johnston brothers also know that getting the hogs to the show ring is only part of the battle. Once in the ring, they must maneuver the hog into the judge's field of vision and do all they can to make the hogs look their best. Likewise, the sale of the hogs which follows the show demands thought and planning. The brothers must contact potential buyers in advance of the sale and make sure they have bidders present who will help with the sale of the animals.

"We write letters to buyers," Austin said, "and personally visit some of them."

Despite the hard work and sacrifices of time, the brothers admit there is ultimately one reward to which they look forward."

"MO-NEY!" exclaims Austin with a grin.

The Johnston brothers hope their hogs will place high enough in the show to bring them a premium price at sale time. Hogs will be exhibited beginning at 8:30 a.m. May 8 at the 4-H and FFA Market Animal Show. The sale will be held later the same day and will begin after the Parade of Champions at 7 p.m. —

Swoope's Nycums redefine trip to the car wash

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

SWOOPE — It would be worth seeing.

Picture this. It is 5 a.m. on a spring morning in the village of Craigsville. A pickup truck slowly approaches Nick's Car Wash. In dawn's dim light, several people move about in the shadows. Gates are unloaded and placed at either end of one of the car wash's bays.

In a carefully timed maneuver, six hogs — no, we're not talking motorcycles here, these are the squealing four-legged variety — are released into the car wash. The hogs are scrubbed clean with the soap bristle, then rinsed with the high pressure wand.

By now you're probably thinking, "This is just a bunch of hogwash." Not so. This is the way Sheila and Nick Nycum get their hogs spiffed up for the annual 4-H and FFA Market Animal Show.

"My dad owns the car wash," says Nick of the special arrangement he and his sister have to clean their hogs for the show. "We go there real early before anybody gets up."

And in response to the obvious question, he replied: "Just wash and rinse, no wax."

Nick and Sheila will be among the many Augusta County 4-H and FFA members participating in the Market Animal Show to be held May 7 and 8 at Staunton Union Stockyard on New Hope Road. This will be the 52nd edition of the show, which for all of those years has been sponsored by the Staunton-Augusta Chamber of Commerce and local Ruritan Clubs. This will be Sheila's seventh outing in the event and the fourth year exhibiting for Nick.

In addition to the six hogs they have — each will show three — the sister and brother also are preparing six lambs for the event. Their participation in the show was preordained by what might be viewed as a less

See LAMBS, page 19

Nick and Sheila Nycum of Swoope will exhibit these two lambs in the Market Animal Show May 7.

Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

•Cattle

Continued from page 16

exhibition, Jonathan garnered the Junior Showmanship award for beef cattle at the Market Animal Show in 1995. This past summer he exhibited the Grand Champion Hereford heifer at the Virginia State Fair and in 1995 took Supreme Champion heifer honors at the Virginia Beef Expo. He was recently honored by the Augusta County Feeder Calf Association by being awarded its Youth Beef Award for outstanding achievement in beef cattle production by a 4-H member. Jonathan is a member of the Middlebrook 4-H Livestock Club. He is the son of J.R. and Betty Coleman of Arbor Hill.

For young people interested in exhibiting cattle, Jonathan says the annual 4-H and FFA event is a good starting point.

"It's a very good experience for kids who want to show," he says.

Jonathan's entries in this year's show include two steers, a Maine-Anjou/Angus cross and a Maine-Anjou/Angus/Hereford/Shorthorn cross. The latter of the two has proved quite a challenge, according to Jonathan. His primary objective with the steer is "just to get it halter broken." While the steer was a bit contrary initially, Jonathan notes that he has made progress with the animal. Both animals, in fact, have required extensive training and have tested Jonathan's ability to break them to lead and show.

"These are the steers that I've had to work with the most," he says comparing this year's calves to calves he has raised in previous years.

Jonathan purchased the calves in October from Dorothy Rosen, a Mt. Crawford Angus breeder. At the weigh-in in early November, the calves tipped the scales at 665 and 685 pounds. Each steer is about 14 months old and will weigh about 1,250 pounds come show time in May. The calves have been fed a ration of rolled corn with a light protein supplement. By late March, the calves had gained about 450 pounds each which puts them at just under 3.5 pounds of gain per

See GAIN, page 24

Schoolhouse News

Buffalo Gap's Show Choir performance filled with variety, talent, and more

By LAURYN PLEMMONS

BUFFALO GAP — Talent, creativity, beautiful voices, and snazzy costumes are just a few of the wonderful things you would have experienced if you had attended the 1997 Buffalo Gap Show Choir Talent Show. This diverse program held at Buffalo Gap High School could just have well been entitled "Gap's Variety Show."

Many students decided to go solo where others felt more comfortable singing in groups. The choice in music was mixed. Performances ranged from country selections along with gospel, pop, and alternative songs.

Jimmy Lucus, who performed two gospel solos stated, "I chose these two songs because they are a testimony of what Jesus has done for me."

There was also a surprise performance by Cutch Tuttle, the lead singer of Galactic Super Spies. He played the guitar and sang a song that he wrote himself entitled "Gray Summer."

The individual musical artists joined with the rest of Gap's Show Choir to top the night off with four upbeat songs performed with original choreography. This is the first year that the Show Choir has designed its own choreography.

The talent show was held in an effort to raise money for a trip to Toronto, Canada May 8-11.

In Toronto, the Show Choir will compete in three different categories — mixed choir, show choir, and men's choir.

"We are real excited about this trip and that we are eligible to compete in three different categories this year," stated choral director Kathy Rowe.

Mrs. Rowe said she is very pleased with the hard work and commitment of the school choir.

Seniors Matt Haynes and Sabrina Chester are two examples of students whose dedication and hard work brought them rewards. They were chosen out of 200 competitors to participate in "All Virginia Chorus."

Senior Brooke Fawley has also done exceptionally well in Show Choir, receiving a James Bland Scholarship for placing second in the Lion's Club competition.

The Gap Show Choir will be demonstrating its giving spirit on May 17, by singing at 1 p.m. for the Staunton-Augusta Rescue Squad Radiothon. Mrs. Rowe urges listeners to phone in their pledges between 1 and 2 p.m. to the radiothon which is broadcast on WTON 1240 AM. —

Jimmy Lucus performs during the Buffalo Gap High School Show Choir extravaganza.
Photo by Lauryn Plemmons

Between Classes

From AC staff reports

Staunton's Amy Wells takes Tech Hokie Bird to top

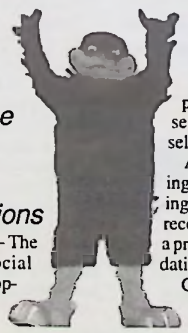
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Together they are the Hokie Bird, but Amy Wells of Staunton, daughter of Butch and Donna Wells, and Todd Maraldo of Cherry Hill, N.J., are more than that now. They're number one! Maraldo and Wells recently competed in and won first place in the National Cheerleading and Mascot Competition in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Held over a period of several days, the competition found the Hokie bird capturing the title with a 90- second skit, which included a number of props, set to music.

In addition to being the nation's number one mascot, the two were each given gold championship rings.

The Hokie Bird Rules.

Amy is the daughter of Butch and Donna Wells of Staunton. A story about her exploits as one of Virginia Tech's Hokie birds appeared in the February 1997 issue of *Augusta Country*. —



Augusta teachers make textbook selection recommendations

FISHERSVILLE — The Augusta County Social Studies Textbook Adoption Committee wound up its year-long work recently when it recommended the adoption of 22 social studies books spanning grades k-12 and including advanced placement history, government, economics, sociology and psychology.

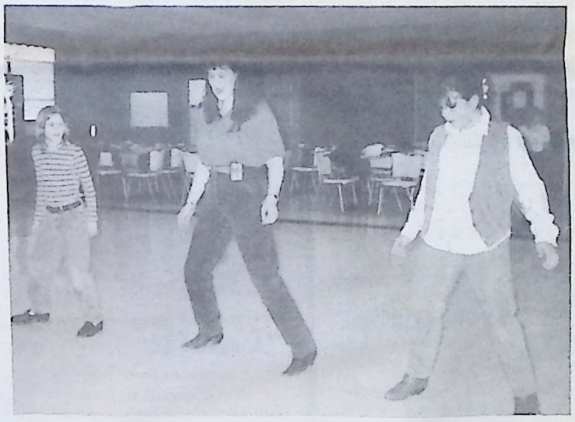
State mandated textbook adoption takes place every seven years across Virginia. Dramatic changes in Virginia Standards of Learning also necessitated social studies textbook adoption.

The Social Studies Textbook Adoption Committee serves as a model of teacher-parent-student involvement in the selection process which began in October.

Early in the school year, teachers at each grade level sought the help of interested parents and students to help them evaluate the many sample textbooks and materials that arrived from publishers. The numbers of books for each grade level or subject area evaluated varied — from two in eighth grade civics to 15 in world geography.

Administrators, teachers and parents had an opportunity to hear directly from publishers at a large meeting held at Blue Ridge Community College in March. Important information about costs and ancillary materials presented at the various sessions was critical to the selection process.

After many hours of reading and evaluating and meeting, teachers made their final recommendations along with a priority list. The recommendations will go the Augusta County School Board for approval. —



Amanda Taylor, daughter of Bridgette Taylor, and Christine Hornsberger, daughter of LaShel Hornsberger, practice the Electric Slide with Donna Riley, instructor at Gone Country in Staunton, during a recent Beverley Manor Elementary School dance program.
Photo by Sue Simmons

BME students tap toes to country music beat

STAUNTON — Beverley Manor Elementary School fourth and fifth graders danced into the evening at "Gone Country" as the final activity in a rhythm unit taught by physical education teacher Brian Quick. The students were introduced to a variety of dancing styles, including square dancing and line dancing in gym class. Quick invited Donna Riley, a dancing instructor, to teach the children line dancing.

In return, Mrs. Riley invited the students to "Gone Country" for some practice and some fun.

"And to learn some new steps," according to Amanda Taylor a fifth grade BME student.

Her toes tapping, a bit breathless, and clearly ready to return to the dance floor Christine Hornsberger, a BME fourth grader agreed. —

Churchville's Sarah Huffer pens top VFW essay entry

AC staff report

STAUNTON — Sarah Huffer, a seventh-grade student at Beverley Manor Middle School, is this year's recipient of a $200 U.S. Savings Bond for writing the top placing entry, "What Makes America Great," in the annual Veterans of Foreign Wars essay contest.

Miss Huffer, 13, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Huffer of Churchville.

Receiving second-place honors for the essay contest and a $100 Savings Bond was 14-year-old Harry Hogshead, a BMMS eighth-grade student. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hogshead of Churchville.

The contest's third-place award of a $75 U.S. Savings Bond was won by Ben Ludwig,

HUFFER

HOGSHEAD

LUDWIG

13, a seventh-grade student at Shelburne Middle School. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Victor Ludwig of Staunton.

Individual school winners who each received $25 Savings Bonds were Brandy Buchanan, a ninth grader at Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind; Brandon Murray, a ninth-grade Grace Christian School student; and Julie Johnson, a ninth-grader at Buffalo Gap High School.

Awards were presented to recipients during a ceremony held April 14 at VFW Post 2216 on Frontier Drive. Award recipients and their parents were special guests at a banquet hosted by Post 2216 and its Ladies Auxiliary. —

•Lambs

Continued from page 17

than extraordinary occurrence.

Sheila was given an orphan lamb by a farm neighbor. She raised the lamb on a bottle, then exhibited it the following summer at the local fair. A year later found her participating in her first Market Animal Show. Nick's participation would follow a few years later when he became old enough to exhibit. Having started with an orphan lamb, the Nycums now own 10 purebred Dorset ewes which they take to state fairs in West Virginia and Virginia and county fairs in Augusta, Albemarle, Rockingham, and the New River Valley.

The lambs they will exhibit this year in the Market Animal Show are Dorset, Hampshire, and a cross of the two breeds. They were purchased from Buster Wilson in Rural Retreat in the fall. For much of the time since then, the lambs have been eating at an automatic feeder. The Nycums note, however, that some feed management is required beginning a few weeks before the May show.

"We had them on an automatic feeder for about three months," Sheila said, "then we switched to hand feeding to keep the lambs from getting overfinished."

"We give them what they need, not as much as they want," Nick explained, and noted that experience through the years has helped them "learn how to feed [the lambs] better."

Likewise, the Nycums' hogs have been dining at an automatic feeder since their purchase from Frank Fieser of Maryland in January. However, the swine are fed a formula ration which changes depending on their maturity. They will remain on the automatic feeder until show time, but require some monitoring to "keep

See HOGS, page 24

•Race

Continued from page 6

The proof of the work has been in the grinding. Former Wade's Mill owner and miller Charlie Wade loaned his expertise to the works.

"It still needs a few adjustments," said Wilson as he ran the coarse commeal through his fingers.

Wade must have climbed like a squirrel among the gears. They worked together adjusting, calibrating. "We had to adjust the shafts. The bull gear had to move two inches to get it to engage," Wilson said.

Next, Wade got to work with sharpening files. The dismantled stones were readied for the cut. One set coarse grinds corn; another set fine grinds flour.

The mill gears span a stone foundation where hogs once ate the grain that fell. The renovated structure likely will not contain hogs, Wilson conjectures. But some days, interpreters will operate the mill for visitors to the McCormick Farm, thus recreating in a small way, the past look of the mill.

"It's been a very interesting project," Wilson said of the four-month job. "And it wasn't an authentic building to begin with."

The original mill is thought to have been built in 1809, before Cyrus McCormick's birth. It served both the farm and the neighborhood, grinding flour, commeal, and animal feed. Once the reaper was perfected, the McCormick family moved to Chicago, and founded International Harvester, a company which soon presided over the agricultural scene. The Virginia property was remembered — occasionally.

By 1936, the mill had fallen in. Dr. Herbert A. Keller, a librarian at the McCormick Architectural Library in Chicago, traipsed across the South to document mills. His working photographs replaced blueprints in a year-long restoration soon after. Well-known local carpenter Ollie Groah supervised that renovation which was completed in 1938.

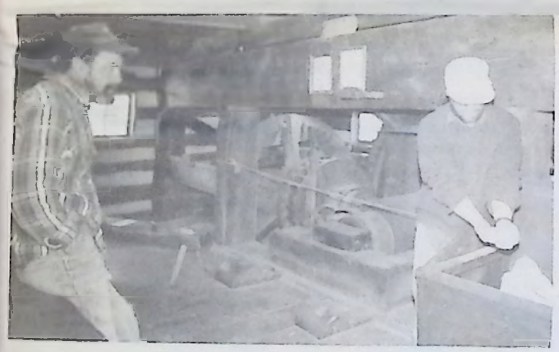
"After running it some in 1938, they just let it stand to the weather. It went to pieces," Wilson explained.

The McCormicks didn't have the funds to keep up the place. The Virginia Department of Agriculture took over the farm in 1954. The state opened the historic mill exhibit to the public, installing a metal gear that could not be engaged.

Concerned with establishing the research station, the state put the mill on hold until the 1970s, when too little, too late failed to preserve the structure.

"Another couple of years and it would have slid off its foundation," Wilson theorized. But not now. Not in Glenn Wilson's lifetime. ---

The renovated mill at McCormick's Farm was dedicated April 20 and Hugh Adams was formally thanked for the mill's salvation. And after 70 years the stones again ground out flour.



Glenn Wilson, left, watches as Pete Davis checks some wheat stored for grinding at McCormick's mill in Steeles Tavern. Wilson is the craftsman who restored the mill to running condition. Photo by Deborah Sensabaugh

•White Star

Continued from page 7

partner, Michael Kivlighan. He was a Staunton native whose parents had come here from Ireland in the 1850s after the potato famine. After graduating from Hoover High School, Kivlighan got into the feed business, and in 1885 set up on his own as a commission merchant dealing in flour, grain, seeds, hay, and wool. This business was located at 25 Middlebrook Ave. in the Wharf area, opposite the C&O Station.

The mill the partners built, at New Street and Railway Avenue, was a six-story brick structure covering some 40,000 square feet of floor space. This is the building which still stands today. Attached to this was the elevator, which had a capacity of 100,000 bushels of grain. Today, in the place of the elevator building are the silos that are a feature of the downtown skyline.

Modern milling machinery which the Edward P. Allis Company of Milwaukee installed was capable of producing 500 barrels of flour daily, year round. White Star Mill employed from 20 to 35 hands working round the clock in shifts six days a week. In those days, no businesses operated on Sundays.

A photo of the work crew of 16 men, taken c. 1925-1935, shows most of them in the white caps that were traditional for millers.

See MILLERS, page 21

A work crew at White Star Mills in Staunton took a break for this photo taken around 1930. Note that the crew includes a cat, being held by one of the workers seated far right. The cat may have been kept at the mill to control rodent populations.

The Hitching Post

Dana Noel enjoys success as novice rider

By CHRIS MARRS

Riding and caring for horses is a continuous learning process. Just ask Dana Noel, daughter of Lynne and Bruce Noel of Rt. 2, Staunton, and she will tell you the best thing about riding horses is working and learning more about them.

Dana has been riding for the past four years and has competed the last two. Competition had a good start for this 15-year-old rider who, in her second show — the 1995 Churchville PTA show — won Grand Champion in the short stirrup hunter/jumper class.

Dana looks forward to competing this summer on her new horse, "Justa Piece A Cake," nicknamed "Ginger," which is a registered 12-year-old quarter horse mare.

"I looked at horses for a long time," Dana said. "I liked her when I got on her. She has a good attitude and will do new stuff."

Dana says riding is therapeutic for her.

"Riding takes away your problems," she said. "When you start to ride, you forget everything else."

Dana is an active 4-Her, and her clubs include the 4-H Council, Hippology, Horse Judging Team, and the Galloping 4-Hers. She is also involved in a youth group at her church and likes to swim and ride bikes. She sees a future for herself in horses and talks about going into stable management and teaching riding lessons. College — maybe Virginia Tech — is one of her goals and she hopes to pursue a degree in horse nutrition, animal science or veterinary medicine.

Learning to ride can have its ups and downs, as Dana has found. She remembers one time when she was riding a thoroughbred in an open arena (no fenced boundaries).

"We were trotting over fences, and he started cantering," Dana recalled. "I didn't think it was a big deal. He was strong and started galloping toward the barn. I lost my stirrups, the reins, and was hanging up on his neck. Everyone that was watching thought that was great and started clapping."

If this incident gives one the notion that Dana will always come out on top, consider another situation which occurred at the 1996 Augusta County Fair Horse Show.

"I didn't do too badly," Dana said. "I didn't think I'd won anything and they mailed me a Reserve Champion ribbon in the open class division." On that occasion, Dana's mount was "Glenmore's Last Kill," owned by Vickie Smith. The year before at the fair's show, Dana won Grand Champion in the junior division and Grand Champion in the 4-H division on "Grey Cloud's Rainbow" owned by Windy Springs Farm.

Dana says she enjoys the challenge of riding horses and appreciates the learning process involved. This summer should find her competing and trying new things. And if past events are an indicator, Dana will always find a way to "land on her feet." —

Dana Noel is relatively new to the riding arena, however she has racked up quite a few blue ribbons in recent competitive outings.

Round pen can be useful tool for training horses

By CHRIS MARRS

HARRISONBURG — Round pens can be useful tools to develop communication skills between a horse and its rider.

Trainer Mike Armstrong of Highland County told about using round pens to train horses at a workshop he gave during the recent Rockingham County Open Horse Forum.

The average size of a round pen is between 50 and 60 feet in diameter. The preference is for open rails as opposed to that of a "stockade." Armstrong said closed pens create a "narrow-minded" horse. With open rails, the horse learns to deal with "the world" of dogs, other horses, and the environment during the training period. This allows the horse to come out of the round pen training better equipped to deal with reality.

Round pens enable trainers to work closely with untrained horses, Armstrong said. It allows the horse and trainer to work back and forth in an action-reaction "dance" until they form a basic communication system of trust and security. The trainer does not "threaten" the horse, but neither is he something that is going to "go away." The "dance" involves the horse's natural movements and instincts with which the trainer works to develop a pattern of communication. The whole process works toward the horse allowing the trainer to touch, rub, and make physical contact with rope, blanket, and eventually tack (saddle and bridle). Armstrong explained that he allows the horse to move away and come back. It is a process that asks the horse to become comfortable with each step. The horse cannot "get away," but has room to back up and come forward.

"Let the horse do it," Armstrong said. "If it is his choice, it doesn't bother him to do it."

Armstrong also says that the round pen is NOT for running a horse to death. He advises horse men and women to learn to use the tool effectively.

"It is like a schoolhouse," he said. "A classroom where the student can't leave and has to pay attention to the trainer."

Another advantage of the round pen is that it gives the trainer the opportunity to stop and think about the horse.

"You learn how to read the horse," Armstrong said. "Horses become open to suggestions. If the horse tells you when it wants to change direction, you learn to read your horse and TEACH it to change." Armstrong noted that this establishes part of the communication pattern.

He also instructs trainers to appreciate their horses.

"Realize when they work for you and be proud of them," he said. "Appreciate their efforts. The more you work with them, the more you learn to see that they ask you what to do next."

Armstrong explained that horses learn to take cues from the trainers.

"They like the leadership and don't like to be left by themselves," he said.

See TRAINING, page 21

Patience, persistence helpful in overcoming problems when using mounting block

I.B.HOOFINIT

Horse Sense

Q: My horse does not stand still at the mounting block. How can I teach him not to move while I'm getting on?

Sign me,
Waiting to get on

Ah! The mounting block. The place in a horse's life to have a little fun with his rider!

I know a couple moves myself that can turn my rider's face pretty red, cause him to huff and puff, and give him as much exercise getting up and down off the block as I get going around the ring afterward.

Horses learn to move away from the mounting block in order to avoid the rider getting on. It is one of the easiest things for us horses to figure out. And we can come up with some fancy moves.

There's the Hindquarter Twist. The rider gets the horse all ready, climbs up on the mounting block, and the horse moves *its hindquarters away* and tries not to look too obvious.

Then there's the *Rider Leg Stretch*. The horse waits until the rider puts a foot in the stirrup and *slowly* starts to move forward stretching the rider's legs to the point of no return.

My personal favorite is the Two-Time Dance. Part one, the rider gets the horse positioned and climbs up on the mounting block. Then the horse steps off just enough for the rider to climb back down. Part two, put the horse back, and do it again. Up, down, up, down, and we'll dance 'til dawn.

There's always prevention as the best remedy.

Teaching the horse to stand quietly ANYWHERE a rider wants to mount is the first rule. The mounting block just puts a rider at a disadvantage because of the awkwardness of the situation. If the horse stands quietly for mounting *anywhere BUT the mounting block*, then it has learned that the rider is at a disadvantage and that is not good. The horse has one up on you. If the horse does not stand quietly for mounting anywhere, then the mounting itself needs to be worked on.

Let's consider the mounting itself, because that is where most of the problems start. Riders will have to think about what they're doing to their horse when they mount. Is your mounting a major attack on the horse? Do you mount calmly and quickly without unbalancing the horse too much? Or do you throw your weight around and sit down heavy in the saddle like a ton of bricks? After your foot is in the stirrup and you're ready to pull yourself up, does it come easy, or do you sort of "hang" in the air as if your body is trying to decide which way to go next — up or back down?

Exercises to help riders develop strength in the leg can help with the mounting process. Work on a graceful, quiet mounting. Light landings and patience after getting on can help. Don't let the horse walk off right away. Ask the horse to stand while you adjust stirrups, gather your reins, or whatever so that the horse learns to stand until asked to go forward. Working on your mounting technique is a good place to start.

At the mounting block itself, a rider can practice working around the horse. Ask the horse to stand. Climb the mounting block and pat and rub the horse. Remember to use patience and persistence. Teach the horse to stand whether you are going to mount or not. Then the mounting block can lose its importance in the horse's mind.

Bring the horse up to the mounting block. Teach it to stand and wait while you walk up and down. Then move the horse off WITHOUT getting on. Bring him back and do it again. Remember that the horse makes associations with situations. If the mounting block is a place where the rider mounts, the horse can avoid the process and start a pattern to frustrate any rider. But you can teach a horse that the mounting block can be a place that is nice, too. Patting him and rubbing him without getting on can teach him not to expect the worst.

Using a command word such as "stand" or "whoa" can also help. Bring the command to the mounting block and use it to correct him when he moves off. If he respects and understands the command in the stall or in the ring, then it is easy to apply it to the mounting block.

But the bottom line will often be how much pressure the rider puts on a horse in the mounting experience itself. Concentrate on a smooth, calm and quiet mounting practice and the horse will learn that a rider doesn't always mean ATTACK! It can mean the best part of the riding — that first contact that tells the horse it's going to be fun and a pleasure for both horse and rider. —

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.

VPA hosting Draft Horse Field Day

CHURCHVILLE — The Virginia Percheron Association is hosting a Draft Horse Field Day May 24.

Events will begin at 10 a.m. and will include a log skid and wagon rides. Beginning at 11 a.m. there will be plowing and working the fields, wagon hitching, and blacksmith demonstrations. Vendors are welcome to call 337-7281 to reserve booths for crafts and concessions. A fee will be charged for vendor booths, however there is no admission fee to enter the event.

The Percheron is one of many breeds of draft horses and the VPA is planning this event to demonstrate to the public how these horses are used in farm work. The field day will be held off U.S. 250, 1/4 mile west of Churchville. Signs will be posted directing visitors to the field day. —

•Millers

Continued from page 19

White Star Mills produced three brands of flour which were sold throughout Virginia, West Virginia, North and South Carolina. At some times in the year, flour was sold to New York for export.

Bowling left the partnership in 1902 to found a mill of his own. Albert Walker's 1906 Dispatch and News Historical and Industrial Number, "Staunton, the Queen City," reported that Andrew Bowling's Augusta Flour Mills in Verona could store 35,000 bushels of wheat in its elevator, and could grind 150 barrels of flour a day, one-third the size and capability of White Star Mills. Bowling also had a mill twice the size of his Verona operation, the Jefferson Mills in Charles Town, W.Va., which his son operated for him.

With Bowling's departure, Kivlighan assumed the lead in the practical end of mill operation, and continued in that until his death on Dec. 12, 1942. Kivlighan, an able and respected businessman, continued his commission merchant operation for many years, and also served as president of Augusta National Bank for 28 years, from 1914 to his death. He and his family lived in the lovely Colonial revival house at 220 North New St.

Although several sons and cousins of the large Kivlighan connection worked some at the mills in the summer when they were young, only J. Harold Kivlighan followed in his father's footsteps and spent his entire professional life at White Star. Harold Kivlighan had a liberal arts degree from Georgetown University, but his father sent him to Dunsmore Business College in Staunton "to learn how to make a living."

When Michael Kivlighan died in 1942, Harold Kivlighan succeeded his father as general manager of White Star Mills. The forward-looking businessman realized that in the face of growing competition from the huge national mills in the Midwest, White Star would have to modernize. He oversaw the conversion of the original Allis-Chalmers equipment from reel type to all-sifter. Along with this went the conversion of the mill's power from steam to electricity in 1946. This enabled the mill to produce 1,000 barrels of flour in a 24-hour period. White Star was the third largest mill in Virginia.

The old grain elevator was replaced with enormous storage bins, still standing today, that held 160,000 bushels of grain. Kivlighan also installed a modern loading system to get the grain from trucks or even from sacks into the bins.

The years following World War II saw great changes in American agriculture that had a strong impact on the Valley and on White Star Mills. At the close of World War II, the Valley Association of Mills had 45 members. By 1959, the organization had gone out of existence, as so few mills were left in the Valley.

One of the last good years was 1959. But by 1963, Kivlighan and his partners decided to sell the White Star Mills. The mill's new owners operated the mill for three years, then closed it in 1966.

The mill buildings were purchased by Churchville resident and Staunton businessman J.B. Hanger. A restaurant has operated in the ground floor for some 15 years under several managers and names. Stained glass windows in the restaurant, depicting the story of wheat, from the field to flour to bread remind diners of the rich history of the building and connect them with an important part of Staunton's and the Valley's pasts. —

•Training

Continued from page 20

Armstrong noted that there can be no time limits when it comes to training a horse. Each horse is different, he said, and the round pen is where the trainer builds the foundation to a horse's training. Hard work and patience pay off in the long run when training horses, he noted.

The Rockingham County Open Horse Forum is sponsored annually by Virginia's Cooperative Extension Service. This year's event included workshops on grooming, saddle fitting, and competitive driving. Watch for more details on the Horse Forum in future issues of *Augusta Country*. —

Country Crossroads

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin

April, 1997

Dear Maude,

Well, thank goodness we had our springtime early last month, for since then there certainly hasn't been anything to remind us that it is no longer winter! Just as those Japanese cherry trees were in peak bloom everything came to an end. When that sky got dark and the wind began to blow I knew we were in for it and went to the back of my closet and dug out my newest lined raincoat (a gorgeous purple one with a wonderful matching hat which I bought back in February when they were on sale.) Was I ever glad that I had it! By late afternoon the wind began to blow so hard that one could hardly stand up. Leaves and papers were whirling around cars and under pedestrians' feet. When you work in D.C., you become accustomed to windy streets. Because of the way the avenues are laid out, all coming from the center of the city like spokes of a wheel, they catch the wind and even on the stillest of days, there is usually a breeze blowing down most streets. But, I'll tell you, the first of this month was something else!

Then the snow began to fall, but fortunately did not stick. It looked like it had though, for all those petals from the cherry trees were blowing around in that awful wind and they looked just like big flakes of snow. And while the real stuff melted when it hit the ground, the blooms didn't. There were little drifts of petals all against the buildings. The greatest amount of actual snow fall was to the north in the Maryland suburbs and up into Harford County, just north of Baltimore where there was as much as six inches on the ground. Now I ask you, is that any way to start off the month of April?

The very worst thing that happened to me was that all that wind blew my best umbrella inside out and I could not get it back together. I finally just threw it away. And if that were not enough, one particularly fierce gust blew my beautiful new hat right off my head and sent it flying out into the middle of Connecticut Avenue where a Metro bus caused it to become a small purple spot on the wet street. I stood and looked and almost cried. You have no idea how long I had to search to find just the right color hat for this new coat. I was heartbroken.

The one thing about the weather which had everyone in Washington talking for many days was the fact that the very strong winds created a situation that had not been seen in the city in 20 years or so. Those winds came from just the right direction, with enough force and at low tide to blow the waters of the river so that the bottom was exposed. From the Potomac River bridges you could actually see the rocks on the bottom. And, at one place along the Anacostia River a 130-year-old boat, nestled down in the mud, could be seen. It is something that happens so seldom that everyone was talking about it.

It is not that we are not accustomed to all kinds of wind here in the nation's capitol, it's just that what we see most of the time are big bags of wind rather than so much of the real stuff. And while there certainly are many people here who really think that they can part the waters, it took a real wind to actually do it!

And speaking of bags of wind — most of what we are dealing with this spring is being directed towards campaign financing mismanagement and reform. There is so much time devoted to that subject that very little is happening legislatively. When does anything ever happen? But I guess I tell you the same thing about this time each year. Once everyone gets over the first of their spring fever, fussing about their income taxes and one another, it is almost time for the Memorial Day break. And I, for one, will be happy to see that weekend come, for I plan to head straight home to Middlebrook for a little sanity.

It should be an easy month ahead for the ordinary working folks. At least with all those politicians so busy defending themselves and their contributors, there is not such a push of work in the offices and I can get together with my friends for lunch a little more often than in the past. There are several of us who like to get together when we can just to catch up on hill gossip and legislation. Two times during this last month we have been able to just that. This last week we went to a great little restaurant on Massachusetts Avenue and had a wonderful time. I kept thinking, however, throughout the whole lunch that I really should be out on the streets shopping, trying to find another hat to match that lost one that went so well with my coat. But the new spring items have been out for so long that I may have to wait until next fall to find what I want. Oh well, that gives me something to look forward to.

Everyone was excited also when they finally caught the "Capitol Hill Slasher" the first of the month. For weeks this guy would suddenly appear out of nowhere with a knife and start slashing at someone. He had been targeting men and would strike just about any time. Whether he was after men or women, it still made everyone nervous to go out alone. But the last time he tried something, and got caught, he attacked a delivery person who just happened to be a woman. That was his undoing and he is now behind bars. Now, even though our streets are not the safest of places, at least we feel a little easier walking the streets by ourselves when we have to be out past office hours.

Hopefully, now that we have made it through April, spring will come in earnest. I can't wait to get out all my warm weather clothes so I can decide how much shopping I can do! I know how you hate crowds and traffic, but the city really can be lovely this time of year. Why don't you plan to visit before school is out and the summer tourists arrive and we can hit every store on the Avenue?!

Love to everyone at home.

LuLu

Keep looking

Saying grace

By

Roy Howard

When you look to the skies on a clear night, you will see a display of breathtaking beauty. The further away from city lights the better, which is another compelling reason to make haste to the country if only for a short respite. Few disciplines are better for the soul's nourishment than sitting quietly underneath a twinkling sky.

A sure sign that your soul is in need of such food is the moment you choose television over the night sky. Whatever wonders you may ascribe to that stupefying invention of the late-20th century, (there are very few), television doesn't come close to the wonders of the universe spread across the sky. Another sign that you need to look up is the thought that there is nothing new to see because you've seen it all.

This "been there, done that" popular syndrome is the sound of a slamming door, shutting out the possibility of any new experience. It's the same sound of the person sitting in a church pew who decides he has heard the Bible enough to know there is nothing new to hear. With the door closed tightly you can be sure that the next hour will confirm his convictions. There is nothing new. When we face anything familiar, be it the Bible or our backyard, we need an extra nudge to look and listen with fresh eyes and ears. A little saying on my desk by Mary Engelbreit, the children's artist, gives me a regular nudge: "Look to the beauty of this day, miracles are all around you."

> *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ...is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and spreads its wings toward the South?"*
>
> Yahweh speaking to Job

One of nature's wonders has nudged us out to the night sky. Like last year, when Comet Hyakutake graced the skies, we are being treated to a comet racing before our eyes. Brighter than ever, tail stretched across the heavens, Hale-Bopp has given us a chance to be in awe of the majesty and enormous dimensions of the universe we inhabit. I enjoy the story behind this comet's "discovery" almost as much as the comet. It's an example of what may happen when we choose to be open to new wonders in familiar places.

Alan Hale, a Ph.D. without a job longing to see a comet, set up his telescope night after night scanning the skies. His wife and 8-year-old son Zachary tolerated his habit good-naturedly. "Dad and his spacey stuff again," was how Zach described what his father was doing on the eventful night — the same as he had been doing on every other night. There is nothing new under the sky.

Only 90 miles away, Tom Bopp had driven his truck to the desert near Phoenix, Ariz. There he gathered with a few stargazing buddies from local astronomy club. Tom didn't own a telescope or Ph.D. in astronomy; all he had was a lifelong love for star-gazing that kept him out late at night looking into the wondrous twinkling sky. It was this love for the stars that brought him to the desert that night with a pair of binoculars. The same as he had done for years and kept on doing even after someone shot him, mistaking him for a coyote. On this night, as on all the other nights, he would simply look into the heavens. There is nothing new under the sky.

Late Saturday night, July 22, 1995, Alan Hale and Tom Bopp found that there is always the possibility to see something new. Still what was new for them (and us) was seen several thousand years ago.

"New" discoveries are often like that; we find them in the ordinary places where we've been looking for a long time. The person who has heard the Psalm 23 her entire life will one day truly hear it, as if for the very first time, and she will wonder how she never heard it all those years. The parable of the prodigal son and loving father, one wasting his life, the other full of long-suffering forgiveness, is the same. What we discover may be thousands of years old and yet always new. When Solomon said there is nothing new under the sun he may have been right. What he didn't say is also true: that when we see a comet in the sky, hear a sacred story and experience awe, it doesn't matter whether it is new, at that moment it is new as never before known.

What enabled Alan Hale and Tom Bopp to "discover the comet" was the discipline of attending to the same thing night after night. Each time they stood in the darkness, they gazed with expectancy, openness and hope. Night after night they went home to bed without seeing anything new. Just the same old spacey stuff, as Zachary said. Nevertheless, they kept going into the darkness, gazing. In the discipline of gazing at the same thing, night after night or listening to the same thing day after day, with openness and hope, we may stumble upon something new. Some beauty is before us all the time, it only takes years of gazing and listening to discover. —

Weird tomatoes for normal gardeners

The Garden Path

By Jeff Ishee

Nothing much happened in Middlebrook this week, except a young family started building their brand new home on the hill behind the general store.

It was pretty good timing actually, with the simultaneous dismantling of an ancient log home taking place just a few hundred yards away in the village. Since the community lost a house and gained a house at the same time, I reckon you could say everything just kind of evened out. Welcome Tom Womack, wife Barbara, and their charming daughters Betsy and Amanda.

By the way, when Tom went down to the village post office to get his new address, Susan (postmaster) conferred with Bill (hardware store proprietor) about assigning a house number for the new home.

In a high level meeting over by the copier machine, they resolved that since this neighbor had such-and-such a number and another neighbor had such-and-such a number, they would just pick a number somewhere in-between the two. This is a fine example of our federal government and local commerce working together efficiently and sensibly. I imagine that this would be a much better world to live in if every meeting between government officials and business executives ended with the comment, "Sounds good to me." Ah, life is normal in Middlebrook.

Which brings me (rather indirectly) to the subject of normalcy... or specifically, what is normal for gardeners.

You know, I'd wager a two dollar bill that a lot of gardeners are fed up with normalcy in the garden. Every year, over and over, we grow those beefsteak tomatoes, e-v-e-r-y-d-a-d g-u-m y-e-a-r. Well, this year why not let it all hang out. Take a walk on the wild side of gardening. Let's grow some weird tomatoes!

And wouldn't you know, there are dozens of weird tomatoes available from which the shameless gardener may choose. I've been getting a seed catalog for a few years now from a company down in Georgia. It's called "Totally Tomatoes." This year, they have more than 350 varieties of America's favorite backyard garden vegetable. They've got 'em all, including the standard Beefsteaks, Better Boys, Big Girls, Romas, etc.

But forget those, this year let's grow some weird tomatoes such as:

1. Nebraska Wedding — An old Great Plains heirloom tomato that has not been offered commercially for over 50 years. The fruits are a deep orange color and globe shaped. They say you'll get a prolific number of 10-ounce beauties with this variety. Ripens in 105 days.

2. Eva's Purple Ball — A medium-sized purple tomato that originated in the Black Forest Region of Germany. It's not a huge tomato, but the plant produces perfectly round, smooth, and very juicy fruits that are virtually blemish free. Exceptionally disease resistant and ripens in only 80 days.

3. German Red Strawberry — Now here is a weird tomato! This is another German heirloom that is said to be the quintessential choice of many gardeners for making the perfect tomato sandwich. The fruits are about 10 ounces in weight and average three-and-a-half inches in length. They actually resemble strawberries in both color and shape. The facts that it has very few seeds and is rather meaty seem to, indeed, make this an ideal sandwich tomato. Ripens in 80 days.

4. Sausage — You can imagine what this tomato looks like. Yep... up to six inches in length, this tomato looks just like a nice big link sausage (or even a huge, red banana pepper). They say it makes a fine paste tomato. Normal gardeners (such as yourself) use it to make ketchup, salsa, and spaghetti sauce. Tomatoes ripen in 75 days.

5. Mortgage Lifter — Originally known as Radiator Charlie's tomato, named after the shade tree mechanic who developed this renowned strain. As the story goes, old Charlie ended up making more money with these tomatoes than he did repairing radiators. In fact, enough to pay off the mortgage. A long time favorite of our friends and neighbors in West Virginia, this pink-skinned tomato gets big... really, really big... averaging over a pound each! A wonderful slicer, but it has to be put on a full size dinner plate. Try stacking slices of Mortgage Lifter on a saucer and you'll have tomato flopping over the edges and onto your nice white tablecloth. Yuck!

6. German Johnson — Another "weird" but popular tomato here in the mid-Atlantic. This tomato is one of the parent strains of the Mortgage Lifter. Some of the fruit weigh up to 24 ounces! It has a pink flesh with nicely rounded shoulders. German Johnson is always one of the highest rated tomatoes in both flavor and yield. Ripens in 80 days.

7. Green Grape — Yes Virginia, this tomato is green when it gets ripe! They say a fellow in Europe spent five years of his life and thousands of dollars (francs, marks, lira?) to develop this cherry tomato. It is about the size of a grape, just under one inch thick. It is very sweet, juicy, and has tiny little seeds. Highly flavorful... and really weird. Ripens in just 70 days.

So let it all hang out this season. If you want the standard Beefsteaks and Big Boys, you know there will be tons of them available anytime you want them (in your neighbor's yard, at the farmers' market, etc.). So take a walk on the wild side of gardening this year and grow some weird tomatoes. It's perfectly normal. —

To get this fascinating seed catalog, write:
Totally Tomatoes, P.O. Box 1626
Augusta, Ga. 30903

•Gain

Continued from page 17

day on feed. Jonathan notes that he had some particular reasons for selecting the steers to show.

"This one had excellent bone structure and was very eye appealing," he says of the four-way cross steer. Of the other steer he says: "I chose that one for his thickness and good muscle expression. He also has good structure but he's not as heavily boned as the other."

Jonathan has incorporated knowledge gained through showing steers toward developing what he calls his "little herd" of cattle. In the pasture behind his house are two cows, both with calves at side, and a very-soon-to-be first-time mama. In the barn are three heifers waiting their turns in the showring at this year's Virginia Beef Expo. These are animals which Jonathan has purchased with proceeds from the sale of his steers from previous years' shows. A summer lawn mowing job helps Jonathan pay for the feed which he buys to keep the cattle going and growing.

Jonathan also has three lambs which he will be exhibiting at the Market Animal Show. He concedes that lambs are easier to train than steers, but says he prefers working with cattle rather than sheep.

"I like cattle because they have a sense of humor," he says. "Each has its own personality. It helps me and the animal out a great deal if we bond. Then we both know how we should act together."

With three years' experience under his belt, Jonathan can offer some sound advice to younger counterparts who are interested in pursuing Market Animal projects.

"Lambs are the best for little kids to start out with," he says. "You don't have them as long and they're easier to work with. You don't have to worry about them yanking you around. And it's easy to get burnt out with steers because you have them so long."

This will be Jonathan's last year to show as a junior-aged exhibitor at the Market Animal Show. But when he advances to the senior level, you can bet he'll be more than ready to compete against 4-H and FFA members who are several years his senior. And if history is destined to repeat itself, you can be sure that Jonathan will be extending a helping hand to some of his younger counterparts to give them a boost in Market Animal Show participation. —

•Hogs

Continued from page 19

them slender," according to Nick.

In selecting both the hogs and lambs for the show, the Nycums looked for a number of traits. Body structure and muscling were important characteristics.

"You want them to have long bodies and good muscling," Sheila said. "You don't want anything too short and fat or too skinny." For lambs in particular, "you want a lamb that sets up good on all four legs," she explained.

Time is a precious commodity in the Nycum household. Sheila is playing softball this spring and, although Nick is taking a break from baseball this year, he played football in the fall, and basketball in the winter. Although their schedules are demanding, the Nycums understand the commitment necessary to complete their Market Animal projects.

"It takes a lot of time to work with the lambs and hogs," Sheila said. "It's hard finding time to work them."

Sheila, 17, is a member of the FFA chapter at Buffalo Gap High School. Also an FFA member, Nick, 13, is a student at Beverley Manor Middle School. They are the daughter and son of James and Brenda Nycum of Rt. 1, Swoope.

While Sheila and Nick agree on the amount of time and effort needed to maintain their Market Animals, they split over the reason for devoting their attentions to the lambs and hogs.

"Money," says a determined Nick.

"I've just always liked lambs. I like to bottle feed them," says Sheila casually.

Neither of the Nycums have any post high school agricultural ambitions. Sheila is interested in a career in broadcast journalism and would like to attend Syracuse University in Upstate New York after she graduates in 1998. Nick has a few more years to consider his future, but says he would like to attend Virginia Military Institute.

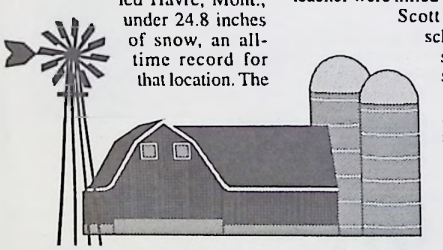
The final days before the Market Animal Show will find both Nycums hard at work on their entries. The lambs will be sheared and trimmed. All 12 animals have to be washed. They also have to be properly trained to make an appearance in the show ring. Ultimately, the Nycums have a single objective in mind for each of their lambs and hogs.

"We try to work them and get them as tame as possible and make them look good for the show," Nick said.

And for Sheila and Nick, that's more than a bunch of hogwash. Or is it a bunch of hogs washed? Or a washed bunch of hogs? Or hogs washed a bunch? However the Nycums manage it, be at the Market Animal Show on May 8 and see how clean hogs can be once they've been run through a car wash. —

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.



May 2, 1899 — A storm buried Havre, Mont., under 24.8 inches of snow, an all-time record for that location. The water equivalent of 2.48 inches was a record 24-hour total for the month of May.

May 2, 1929 — Virginia's worst tornado disaster occurred. Six tornadoes, two of which were west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, killed 22 people. Twelve children and a teacher were killed at Rye Cove, in Scott County. Four schools were destroyed by the storms.

May 12, 1934 — A dust storm darkened skies from Oklahoma to the Atlantic coast.

May 21, 1896 — The mercury soared to 124 degrees at Salton, Calif., to establish a U.S. record for May.

May 31, 1889 — The Johnstown disaster occurred, the worst flood tragedy in U.S. history. Heavy rains collapsed the South Fork Dam sending a 30-foot wall of water rushing down the already flooded Conemaugh Valley. The wall of water, traveling as fast as 22 feet per second, swept away all structures, objects and people; 2,100 persons perished in the flood. —

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