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July 1999 Vol. 6, Issue 7

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Draft family makes
effort to preserve
prehistoric river route

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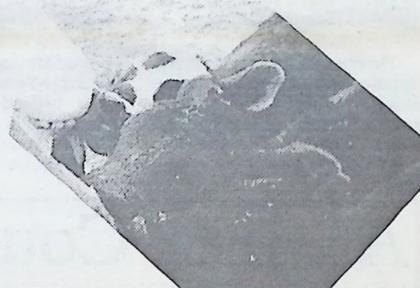
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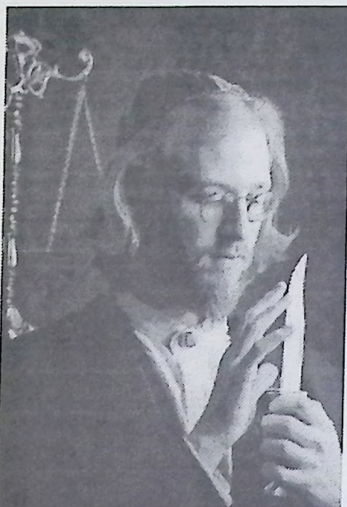


See how draft horses
pull their weight
in Churchville

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Troupe takes audience on entertainment express



By SUE SIMMONS

Last winter Shakespeare fell in love. This summer we fall in love with Shakespeare. The Shenandoah Shakespeare Express that is.

The internationally acclaimed theater troupe recently moved its offices to Staunton. For those who missed the three-play repertory at Mary Baldwin College's Fletcher Collins Theater, take heart! The Valley season continues at Court Square Theater in downtown Harrisonburg from July 5 to July 31.

For those who have yet to sample the delights of the Shakespeare Express, get thee to the theater. Long before Leonardo de Caprio and Gwyneth Paltrow dished up the bard

David Shiller brings complexity and texture to his role as Shylock, the persecuted, vengeful Jew in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Photo courtesy SSE

to gen-Xers, SSE celebrated Will Shakespeare with its own unique brand of Renaissance theater.

The play's the thing, of course and this season you can see Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *MacBeth* along with Francis Beaumont's (a Shakespeare contemporary) *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. The 11-member ensemble casts 22 roles in a somewhat non-traditional approach.

The audience sits on three sides of a set reduced to a few prop boxes and chairs for the actors. Costumes are simple black and white affairs often changed in open view. The lights do not go down. There's even a "sound-track" of sorts provided by the actors.

Throughout the heavily trafficked play, the actors involve two or three members of the audience in discreet ways, like patting a bald head, speaking directly to, making eyes at — a good reason for the shy to go early and get a back-row seat. The troupe tries to recreate Renaissance theater with groundlings untrained in theater etiquette.

They are sometimes clearly disappointed that the audience isn't more raucous in true 16th century fashion. (Perhaps if we had to stand up through the whole play we'd be a more demanding group!)

SSE does not demand a pound of flesh, however. Even if you're no Shakespeare aficionado, the language is easily understood — perhaps a result of the laid-back atmosphere — and eminently entertaining. The program even offers a section called "Stuff that happens in the play" that helps the uninitiated follow character and plot without marking time with all that "Act I, Scene I" business.

Your courtship with Shakespeare and the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express begins by making a simple phone call to 885-5588 or toll-free at 1-800-434-7484. Or log on to their website at www.ishakespeare.com. And this love affair will not be a tale of woe like that chick Juliet and you-know-who. Promise! —

Tech hosts Animal Industry Day July 9

BLACKSBURG—The 36th annual Animal Industry Day is scheduled to be held July 9 at the Virginia Tech Livestock Center on the campus of Virginia Tech. While the Animal Industry Day serves as a homecoming for Ag Alumni, farmers, and industry professionals, its goal is to bring academia and the industry together to discuss current issues and new technology.

The program kicks off with registration at 8:30-9:30 a.m. During this time, participants may visit over 30 commercial and educational exhibits on display.

The 1999 Animal Industry Day

keynote speaker is Dr. Temple Grandin. Dr. Grandin's keynote address will be "Understanding Animal Behavior." Dr. Grandin is an animal behavior specialist, a designer of livestock handling facilities and an assistant professor of animal sciences at Colorado State University. Facilities she has designed are located in the United States, Canada, Europe, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and other countries.

She obtained her master of science degree in animal science at Arizona State University. Dr. Grandin received her doctorate in

animal science from the University of Illinois. Today she teaches courses on livestock behavior and facility design, livestock handling, and animal welfare. She has appeared on television shows such as 20/20, 48 Hours, and Larry King Live. She has also authored over 300 articles on animal handling, welfare, and facility design.

Dr. Grandin will focus on cattle and horses. The horse section will address "How to Think Like A Horse and Using This Information to Assist Training."

See *HORSES*, page 17

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Goshen native returns to roots to open B&B for R&R

By PENNY PLEMMONS

GOSHEN — The promise of rest and relaxation at Big River Guest Lodge in Goshen begins with the last leg of the drive there.

Turning off Va. 39 north onto the slowly winding Big River Road, tension and anxiety roll away like the hills of green pastures slipping past the car window. And that is exactly what Jerry Huffman, owner of the Big River bed and breakfast wants guests to experience.

"Leisure," he said, "is a forgotten word in today's society."

Huffman, who has a master's degree in recreational services and leisure counseling and 10 years' experience as a leisure therapist, created the lodge based on the importance of rest and relaxation.

"I want people to come here and do nothing. I want them to rediscover the balance between work, worship, and play," he said.

With the Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Lexington's historic district, and Staunton's Woodrow Wilson Birthplace and the Museum of American Frontier less than an hour's drive in any direction of the lodge, there are plenty of opportunities for play. However Huffman is perfectly content if his guests choose to stick around the lodge all day.

"If you want to curl up on the couch, I'll get you a blanket," he said.

Nature helps Huffman set the tone for tranquility. The pine ranch is situated on a two-acre lot overshadowed by Great North Mountain. Off in the distance, the Calf Pasture River silently careens across the land. Wide open spaces bordered by aging oaks and forests lend serenity to the ranch.

"I want people to come here and do nothing. I want them to rediscover the balance between work, worship, and play."

*Jerry Huffman
Goshen*

Inside, the rooms open freely from one side of the house to the other. Huffman has blended old and new furnishings, country and modern decor, into a comfy, cozy just-like-home appeal. He prefers a usable dwelling.

"I didn't want a B&B full of antiques, where guests might be afraid to sit in a chair for fear of breaking it," the lodge owner said.

Huffman capitalizes on the peaceful bliss of the outdoors to bring solace and even a bit of humor inside. Each of the bedrooms — Chestnut, Bamboo, and Knotted Pine — are named according to the view seen from the window. And then there is the Minus Mimosa room, so named

because the mimosa was causing structural damage to the roof and had to be cut down.

The most frequented room in the lodge is the Florida room, named because of its many windows and sunny exposure. Laid out like a den, it is complete with a television, overstuffed couch, and exercise equipment. According to Huffman "down time" really happens in this room.

It was happenstance that led Huffman to begin a bed and breakfast two years ago. He had never entertained the idea. But in 1996 he returned to his Goshen birthplace to visit

family. He and a cousin were driving the backroads on their return trip from the Highland County Maple Festival when Huffman spotted the house for sale.

"I didn't even know where we were," Huffman stated. "I saw the house and said, 'I am going to buy that house and make it into a bed and breakfast.'" Immediately obstacles presented themselves. The price for the home was beyond his purse and the job he had secured as a recreational therapist bottomed out. Without any other options Huffman said, "I called the Realtor made a ridiculous offer on the house, and they accepted."

He immediately began a five-year plan to refurbish the home and open it for business. To enhance his job skills Huffman enrolled in a computer class. "I was sitting in the class one day, and



Goshen native Jerry Huffman stands near the entrance to Big River Guest Lodge which he opened in 1996.

Photo by Penny Plemmons

thought 'What am I doing here?' I got up and walked out right in the middle of class." Ten weeks later the Big River Guest Lodge was open for business.

Huffman is a paradox to his own gospel of quietude. His bed and breakfast venture is a one-man show. He does his own marketing, cleaning, cooking, yard work, and hosting. However, he noted, that he does take doses of his own R&R tonic.

"I have lots of energy and I am

a good time manager. When I feel overwhelmed, I take a step back, meditate, hike, or take long drives," he said. Huffman has even contributed his talents to directing a local musical with the Tri-County Pastures Players.

Huffman focuses on giving his guests more than just a bed and breakfast. His personal gospel is plainly stated on the lodge's entrance sign. Written directly under Big River Guest Lodge is the statement, "Where Leisure Is Important." And Huffman adds, "It happens." —

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CORRECTION

In the Tire Mart ad published in *Augusta Country's* June 1999 issue, the price of the Stihl 029 Super chainsaw was incorrectly listed as \$229.95. The correct price is \$299.95. *Augusta Country* apologizes to Tire Mart and its customers for any inconvenience caused by this mistake.

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Don and Polly Weaver and Robert Whitescarver of the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District stand on a bluff above the Weaver's wetland which is being

placed under easement. The tightly-curved oxbows behind them are what remains of the prehistoric watercourse of the South River.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Stuarts Draft family preserves prehistoric path of South River

By NANCY SORRELLS

STUARTS DRAFT — As Don and Polly Weaver walk through the thick grasses and the boggy marshland along the South River near Stuarts Draft, they outline the many reasons why they have placed 54 acres here under an easement with the Valley Conservation Council's Headwaters Riparian Partnership.

The partnership is aimed at preserving and protecting riparian corridors, land along Shenandoah Valley streams and rivers, by placing conservation easements on the property and, in many cases, reimbursing landowners for taking such initiatives. This unique public-private partnership is backed by more than \$500,000 worth of funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Their reasons include, of course,

the uniqueness of the land and its ultimate incompatibility with development. What they have in this tract is a kind of prehistoric time capsule. Along one length of their property flows the South River proper, but on the other side, meandering in slow-moving tight oxbows that almost turn back and touch each other, is another water course.

"This is the prehistoric South River," said Robert Whitescarver of the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District. "At one time, maybe a thousand years ago, this was the channel of the river. Then a big flood came along and the present-day channel was created, leaving these oxbows cut off from the river," he said.

Today those oxbows, rippling along within eyesight of the South River, drain 1,000 acres of nearby farm and subdivision land. This ancient watercourse is at the heart of the Weaver's tract of land.

Much of the area between the two rivers is marshy wetland, although when the elevation rises an inch or so, the habit changes significantly. Even as the Weavers, Whitescarver and a United States Department of Agriculture wetland team survey the nuances of the property, another reason for this conservation easement comes bounding through the grasses. Betsy is a 2-year-old Vizsla, a Hungarian bird dog, and she and Don Weaver occasionally enjoy hunting waterfowl. Most of the time, though, they just come and walk the land.

"She comes out here and runs every day," Weaver said of his high-energy companion. "I'm a wildlife enthusiast and I wanted to develop this area for hunting ducks and geese," he said, noting that the variety of wildlife they have seen here is endless. "The bird club came

“The South River and its lands are the most environmentally sensitive areas in Augusta County... This is really one of the best comprehensive plans in the area that meets objectives for wildlife, endangered species and game management.”

**Robert Whitescarver
Headwaters Soil and Water
Conservation District**

out and found several fairly rare birds, and we have seen all kinds of ducks, Canada geese, quail, snipe, kingfishers, herons, hawks, deer, beaver and fox," he said.

In addition, the land is prime habitat for a number of endangered plants. "There is prairie cordgrass, which is more common in the prairie pothole region of the country," noted Whitescarver.

The Best Management Plan, which is required for a conservation easement, being developed by the Weavers through Whitescarver's guidance, will take into account the gamut of reasons for setting this tract aside in perpetuity. Some areas will be planted with warm season grasses and others with wildlife food like millet and sunflowers. A shallow water impoundment will be added to attract water fowl. The upland areas will have hardwood trees, and the old river will be allowed to grow up in its natural state,

which is a prairie wetland.

The fragility of the South River ecosystem makes projects like this doubly important, Whitescarver said.

"The South River and its lands are the most environmentally sensitive areas in Augusta County," he explained. "This project will be a good marriage between game management and natural heritage. This is really one of the best comprehensive plans in the area that meets objectives for wildlife, endangered species and game management."

The Weavers are enthusiastic about the project. Although the property has been in Don's family for several generations, the couple only acquired the land about a year ago. "When we say we are never going to build here, some people would look at that as a downside, but we look at it as the good side. We see this land as a commitment to the future," said Weaver. —

Extension service offers water testing

VERONA — This summer the Augusta County Extension Office will be sponsoring a household water testing program. The service will be offered for testing private, individual water supplies only. Public water supplies will not be tested. During the month of July, meetings will be held to hand out water sampling kits. Results will be available in August. There is a limit of one sampling kit per household.

The cost for the water testing will be \$40 and will include testing for total hardness, nitrate, iron, chloride, sodium, pH, fluoride, copper, corrosion index, sulfate, manganese, total dissolved

solids, total coliform counts and E. coli bacteria counts. If done in a private lab, the value of these tests is more than \$150.

The meetings to receive instructions for sampling water and the sampling kits will be held in July. Attendance at one of the meetings is required for participation in the household water testing program. Call the Extension Office at 540/245-5750 to register. The Virginia Tech lab in Blacksburg can only handle a limited number of samples for the July testing period. Space is limited to 600 people who will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. —

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Accordion player thrills audiences with vast range of melodies

By STACEY BAKER

Everyone has heard jokes about accordion music. From Garfield the Cat comic strip to professional comedians, accordions — and the people who play them — have taken their lumps. If anyone has heard an expert play the accordion, they would certainly feel otherwise.

Many people in the valley area were treated to such an artist during the month of April. Ron Tomocik arrived here from Colorado, the guest of Irene and Dean Sarnelle of Staunton.

The next several weeks were busy ones for Tomocik, as he played for folk dance groups at James Madison University, various Augusta county elementary schools and Mary Baldwin College where Ms. Sarnelle is a professor of dance. He also participated in the Staunton Victorian celebration, and played at several restaurants and private gatherings.

Tomocik, a former high school and college teacher, started playing the accordion when he was 10 years old. The legend is his parents took him to a music store, told him to pick out an instrument he wanted to play, and he chose the accordion. Keep in mind, this was a time when rock and roll was really rolling, and the electric guitar was the instrument of choice for most young people.

The accordion was popularized through the Lawrence Welk television show and Roy Rogers movies, one of which netted Rogers the hit single, "Tumbling Tumbleweeds."

As a musical instrument, the accordion has not been around that long. Cyril Damian of Austria patented the original version in 1829. This instrument consisted of a bellows, with buttons at both ends to control the notes. The more familiar piano keyboard accordion arrived in the 1850s. All versions of accordions are reed instruments, consisting of small metal strips, called reeds, which vibrate when



Ron Tomocik plays the accordion while Irene Sarnelle, a Mary Baldwin College adjunct professor, works with kindergarten students at Stuarts Draft Elementary School.

Photos by Stacey Baker

air is forced around them from the bellows. The bellows is what one sees when the musician alternately squeezes and pulls the two ends of the instrument.

What types of music can be played on the accordion? Just about anything. Tomocik's

specialty is folk dance music, particularly from Europe, but he also plays music from China and Korea, as well as jazz, ragtime, swing, and modern popular music. A gifted musician, Tomocik is comfortable playing almost any category of music. At one performance, Ron started off with Israeli folk music. Then, at the request of the folks listening, he played songs from all branches of the military service, hymns, Disney favorites, even the theme song from the TV western, Bonanza.

During the month-long visit, there was one sad incident. Tomocik was watching the news and was shocked, as the entire world was, to learn of the events in his hometown of Littleton, Colo.

As a performer, Tomocik finds himself playing for many and varied events, including weddings, reunions, folk dances, and folk festivals. At one gathering of German dancers in New England, Tomocik played the music so authentically, that some of the native German people spoke to him in German, convinced he was from their country.

The most amazing thing about Tomocik's talent is his extensive repertoire of music for which he uses no printed material when he plays. Instead he relies on sheet music in his head. When asked how long he could play the accordion with out repeating any one piece, he replied, "Probably all day, if my arms would hold up." Anyone who had the privilege of hearing Tomocik play would have to agree — even Garfield. —



Ron Tomocik plays his accordion during downtown Staunton's Victorian celebration.

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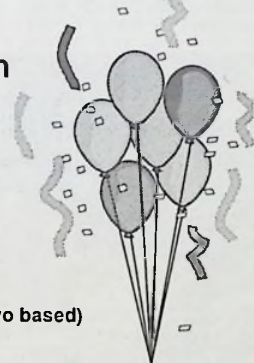
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Notes from the road trail

Summer time is a great time to flee the congestion of interstates and opt for bipedal travel along mountain trails. In this issue, Augusta Country staff writer Nancy Sorrells takes us into the mountains for some scenic views along the Appalachians. Contributing writer Madison Brown offers a few thoughts on some of the hikers he has met while hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Augusta's western Knob is distinct in many ways

By NANCY SORRELLS

ELLIOTT KNOB—There may be 50 ways to leave your lover according to the popular Paul Simon song, but there are just four ways to get to Elliott Knob, the highest point in the Shenandoah Valley. All four ways are varying degrees of steep. All four are worth the effort. Recently five intrepid Augusta County hikers took to the hills in order to lay claim to the record books.

Elliott Knob is simultaneously the highest point in the Valley and in Virginia's George Washington National Forest. It is also the third highest peak in the Old Dominion. **AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY FOR THESE AUGUSTA AUGUSTANS, THE HIGHEST POINT IN AUGUSTA COUNTY!**

Atop the knob is a 40-foot firetower, a leftover from the days when early forest fire detection depended on a series of these gangly towers perched on mountain tops along the spine of the Appalachians.

Getting to the tower was only part of our hiking goal for the day. Tucked just beneath the knob, which is officially 4,463 feet above sea level, is a small pond fed by three rock-in springs. Until proven otherwise, we have awarded this small pond a place in the record books as the highest body of water in Virginia. (Several phone calls to forest districts with promising potential turned up no contenders.)

How many outdoor wanderers can lay claim to having taken a dip in the highest body of water in the Commonwealth while in the

shadow of the highest peak in the county? At least some of our intrepid group were determined that we consummate our trek to the mountain top with a dip in the chilly waters that overlook the Valley floor—despite the fact that it was only mid-May.

After consulting the requisite maps of the area: the Deerfield Ranger District map of the George Washington National Forest, the USGS Elliott Knob quadrangle map and the North Mountain Trail map, a plan was formed that would take us along two of the four routes to the knob.

We parked one vehicle at the terminus of the 4.2-mile North Mountain Trail, and took the other to the beginning of Cold Springs Trail. We would tackle the mountain from the west, hiking the steepest, but shortest route—the 2.2-mile Cold Springs Trail—and descend to the north, along the last 4.2 miles of the North Mountain Trail. Both trails are marked with yellow blazes placed closer together on difficult sections and at intersections.

Cold Springs Trail begins as an old logging road, but quickly turns upward through the woods. Within half a mile it became rocky and steep as we made our way up a spur ridge. The narrow trail was bounded on our right by abrupt banks, while the left was a quick drop-off into hardwoods that, surprisingly, contained a number of brave young chestnuts mixed with the oaks. A misstep here would not send us hurtling into space, but we certainly would have been slaloming among tree

trunks and brush for quite a few yards before coming to a halt.

As the trail got steeper, I found more and more reason to stop and look at the amazing wildflower display that was laid out before us. Trilliums of several varieties, Jack-in-the-pulpit and squawroot were just a few of the 10 or so blooming plants we saw during the day. We were lucky enough to have two local naturalists along on the hike, including Augusta Country's own nature columnist, Mark Gatewood. He and Stephanie Caplen helped us identify the most elusive and effusive of nature's flora and fauna along the trail.

Just over halfway through the hike, the trail took two, wide sweeping bends. Each time we were rewarded with spectacular vistas as the Deerfield Valley spread out before us on this crystal-clear May morning. Softly shielding each curve on its outside edge was a vast, ancient rock-slide that now rose up the hillside with an almost ethereal grace. These rocks had obviously not been on the move for eons. So moss-covered and fern layered were they now, that we half expected a hobbit or leprechaun to pop out from one of the shady crevices and invite us in for a spot of tea.

Occasionally as we hiked upward, a clearing in the trees revealed our goal—the spine of Great North Mountain etched in the skyline. If we peered closely at the jagged ridge line we could see what appeared to be the snaggles of a broken comb. Those snagglies, a stand of towering Norway spruce, marked the knob itself.

We had climbed nearly 1,900 feet in elevation and hiked about 2.2 miles when we intersected the North Mountain Trail and turned left. In the leaf litter near the trail

marker was our wildflower find of the day. We had no need for yellow blazes at this intersection, rather the little yellow flowers of *Clintonia borealis* marked the way. Known as bluebead lily because of the blue berries that develop later in the summer, we first spotted this high-elevation flower because of its large oval leaves.

Within a quarter mile of turning north on the North Mountain Trail we were under the cooling branches of the spruce grove. Here the trail crosses a fireroad, a left turn and two hundred yards of walking puts you at the firetower, a right turn and a similar amount of walking takes you to the pond. We chose left and scrambled around the edge of the cliff to more breathtaking views of the Deerfield Valley in the distance. At our feet along the path were pink and green clumps of bleeding heart. Purple patches of crested dwarf iris carpeted the bald on the mountain top.

On top of the mountain, and adding 40 more feet to the official 4,463 elevation of Elliott Knob, is the metal firetower, a dinosaur from an earlier forest service era. The tower, built in 1948 to replace a 1920s structure, was once part of an early forest-fire detection system that saw over 5,000

towers strung across America's national forests. Men remained in those towers for months, usually March to May and again from October to December, during fire season. Their charge was a lonely one: scan the horizon, to the east, to the south, to the west, to the north, watching for a tiny puff of smoke or a nighttime glow of

orange that could mean the enemy was on the loose. They strained their bloodshot eyes and tested the lengths of human endurance in hopes that fires could be detected and contained quickly.

If there is a ghost haunting the 14 by 14-foot house atop the Elliott Knob tower it would be Ernest Kelley. For more than 30 years the Deerfield man kept his vigil there. "Ernest would walk up to the tower from Deerfield and sit for a month or so and then walk back down. One time he walked down to Deerfield, got married, and when he walked back up he took his bride up there and they stayed up there for the next month," said Dave Frazier, a fire management officer in the Deerfield Ranger District. On another occasion, Kelley was up in the tower during a severe thunderstorm and was struck by lightning. It took him several weeks to recover from that and from the time he fell from the tower ladder and broke his heel.

Towers such as Elliott Knob are scarce as hen's teeth these days. Aircraft reconnaissance made them obsolete, and most have been dismantled. That will not happen on this mountain top, however.

See **KNOB**, page 7



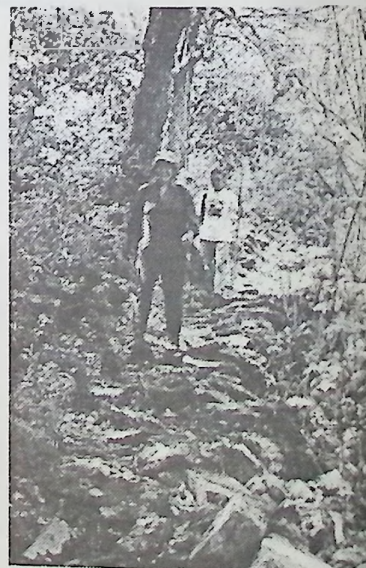
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A hiker takes a break on the rocks overlooking Deerfield Valley, just below the firetower at Elliott Knob.

Adjacent photos, left and right

Hikers enjoy a spring day on the Cold Springs Trail which runs 2.2 miles up Great North Mountain's western slope.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells



Log records pilgrimages made to Elliott Knob

By NANCY SORRELLS

STAUNTON — Hidden in the library of the Deerfield Ranger District is a jewel. At first glance it doesn't look like much—a yellowed notebook, its page edges brittle and broken with age. Although its monetary value is probably not much, its intrinsic value is immense, for the pages of the register contain a record of hundreds of visitors to Elliott



The 40-foot firetower on Elliott Knob

Knob, the third highest peak in Virginia. In one horizontal line across the page, each person who made it to the knob was asked to record for posterity a few details about his or her walk on the wild side.

The book, officially imprinted as the National Forest Travelers Register, was started in 1946. The first visitor to record his name was Rex Hauser of Madison Street in Staunton. It was Halloween 1946 when he signed his name. In those last months of 1946, 24 more people followed him and signed their names to the logbook. Many simply wrote their name and address, while others answered the column of questions that included how they traveled to the top, why they were out in the woods, and what their destination was.

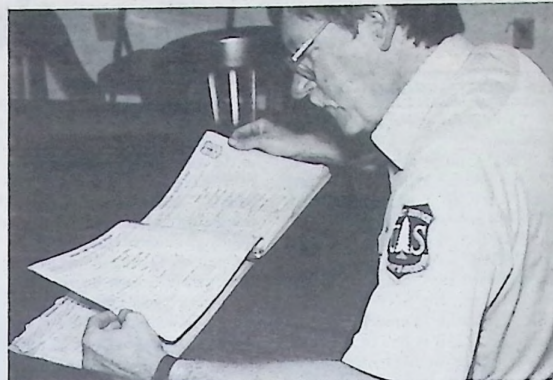
Over the years the numbers who signed the book, which was kept in the firetower, remained fairly steady. Forty-eight people registered in 1949, 63 signed in 1966. Many of the people were local—Staunton, Greenville, Middlebrook, Mt. Solon, Waynesboro and Stuarts Draft all sent sojourners to the mountains. The majority were

from western Augusta County. People from Deerfield, Augusta Springs, Churchville, Fordwick, Lone Fountain and Craigsville made the trip to the top more than anyone else. They knew a good thing when it stood in their own backyards!

Not all of the visitors were local. Names of people from all over Virginia are scribbled into the ledger. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia are also represented. One hiker hailed from Saskatchewan, Canada, another from Zurich, Switzerland.

Over the years the Boy Scouts made frequent treks to the top. Scout Troop 4 from Staunton journeyed there in 1946. That same troop would make several trips to Elliott Knob over the years. Cub Scout Troop 122 from Staunton, and Boy Scout Troop 100 hiked there in 1957, as did Boy Scout Troop 13 from the Greenville area and the VSDB Scouts in 1964. In 1965 Troop 8 from Grottoes climbed to the Knob.

The last space on the entry line left a place for visitors to fill in their destination. Most travelers left the slot blank, while a few wrote firetower, or Deerfield. Some opti-



Mike Gallegly of the Deerfield Ranger District looks at the Elliott Knob logbook that was once housed in the tower to record visitors who made the climb to the top of the mountain.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

mistic souls wrote "heaven" in the space. On several occasions, area military personnel used the trip up the mountain as a meditative time before being shipped overseas. In 1947 Pfc. Harold Burgess from Ft. Belvoir wrote that he was taking the day to sightsee before going to the South Pacific and Brazil. Another soldier was headed to Tokyo.

On October 14, 1950 a group of soldiers from Staunton that included Johnny Gardener, Ed Blackwell, Bill Birgensmith, Dale Powers and Don Shumake, drove a Jeep to the top "for fun." Their

next destination was Korea.

This group of soldiers was not the only group which drove to the top. In those days the rough forest service road was not gated off and many visitors made it to the top by some sort of utility vehicle. Many wrote in that they walked, or were "hoofin' it" according to one entry, but many others came by Jeep. Two visitors came by motor scooter, a 1960 group wrote that they arrived by way of a "1957 Power Wagon," one came by tractor, and one recorded, tongue-in-joke, "See LOG, page 9"

•Knob

Continued from page 6

Recognizing the uniqueness of the tower (only three remain in Virginia), District Ranger David Rhodes nominated it for listing on the National Historic Lookout Register. In 1994, the tower, now known officially as US#87, VA#2, was listed.

In addition, the structure is still in use as a radio relay tower. "Nothing beats having somebody in that tower," noted Frazier of times when danger from fire is high.

For a mountain top, I suppose, there are advantages and disadvantages to being the highest point around. In addition to the fire tower, an area just below the peak is used as an antennae farm and a number of receiving devices now intrude on the solitude of the mountain. In year's past the mountain was the site of an airplane crash, and, during World War II, a radar installation operated on its crest.

Following lunch and some birdwatching from the peak, we

made the five-minute walk to the pond. There, it was discovered that three-fifths of our group was having second thoughts about the dip in the water that only pushed the mercury up to 58 degrees. And so two of us bravely pumped up our life preservers (a blue duck, and a

black inner tube) and waded out to chest level where the water temperature came NOWHERE close to 58! As our legs quickly went numb in the frigid depths of the pond, the shoreline photographers made small talk and admired the views of the Valley floor to the east.



A number of geographic features make Elliott Knob unique including a pond near the mountain ridge making the pond the highest body of water in Virginia.

When we finally emerged, we had one for the record books. We had taken a dip in Virginia's highest body of water. Nothing more remained but to head home, which we did by way of the last 4.2 miles of the North Mountain Trail.

The hike down was superb, through forests and glades, along the ridge line and gradually down to Dry Branch Road. The descent was steep enough that our knees welcomed the short uphill section near the end, and the trail was rocky enough that sturdy boots are necessary. More trilliums and lousewort (*Pedicularis canadensis*), the flower that looks like a perpetual bad hair day, were sighted on the way down.

The hike up (2.2 miles) and the hike down (4.2 miles) each took about two hours and each had an elevation change of just under 2,000 feet. When we arrived back at the vehicle we had parked early that morning we were exhilarated and tired all at once. We had been to the mountain top, bathed in the waters, and feasted our eyes on all nature had to offer. Even

the blue duck-shaped life preserver knew that this trip was everything it was quacked up to be.

Getting there: Of the four ascents to Elliott Knob, three are about 4 miles and moderately steep. The fourth, Cold Springs Trail, is half the distance but still makes the 2,000-foot elevation climb, so by virtue of that fact it is considerably steeper. A North Mountain Trail brochure can be obtained by writing: Deerfield Ranger District, Rt. 6, Box 419, Staunton, VA 24401. ---

Directions to DRY BRANCH GAP (North Mountain trailhead, where our hike ended). Travel west from Staunton on Va. 254 through Buffalo Gap, continuing south onto Va. 42. After .7 mile, turn right at Buffalo Gap Presbyterian Chapel onto Va. 688. Follow 688 to Dry Branch Gap, at the top of the mountain. The North Mountain Trail is on one side of the road and Crawford Mountain Trail on the other. There is limited parking here.

Directions to COLD SPRING TRAIL (the beginning of our hike). Continue past the North Mountain trailhead on Va. 688 to Forest Development Road 77 (Cold Spring Road). Turn left onto Cold Spring Road and travel about three miles to the Rowland Road (FR 398) intersection. Then follow Cold Spring Road another .6 mile. The trail begins as a road on the left side of Cold Spring Road. Pull off the road to park. Look for the yellow paint blazes marked about eyesight-high on tree trunks along the trail.

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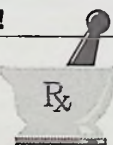
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AT brings together eclectic group of hikers

By MADISON BROWN

"You're not going hiking alone, are you?"

"Hiking on the Appalachian Trail in the Shenandoah National Park the week after Memorial Day? There's no way I'll be alone."

The first shelter on the Appalachian Trail — the AT, on the way south into the Shenandoah National Park, the SNP — is Tom Floyd Wayside. Three miles south of U.S. 522, it is one of the more stylish three-sided shelters with a large sun deck in front on the open side. Here was a young hiker traveling under the trail name Plato and a young woman from Germany using the trail name of Angel. Plato's hiker dog was doing a credible portrayal of playing dead in the shelter. It had not even bothered to take off its saddlebags.

Plato was on the trail for a life change: nine years in the same Florida scene with the same people. "They are good people, don't get me wrong." He had found nine years enough and was now dreaming of working five months and hiking on the AT the other seven.

Angel was worried about her too. Even though a doctor had declared it in fine condition, she was contemplating its turning black and maybe dropping off.

Another hiker came up. He seemed to know Plato and Angel but had not told them about his performance at Trail Days in Damascus, Va. He had rewritten the text of a current country and western tune to portray the lament of a girl who had lost her boy friend to the AT. He readily told us he had sung his song to all the 2,000 gathered at Trail Days and with no hemming

or hawing sang it to us too.

The next hiker to arrive at Tom Floyd just put his pack down got his water bottles and disappeared in the direction of the spring. The fifth hiker came, asked about hikers he knew, and switched the topic of discussion to feet, then boots, and finally all kinds of equipment.

One of the first questions hikers ask when they meet each other is about other hikers. One commentator called the AT America's longest community. True. I thought it might also be one long college dormitory filled with hobbyists.

At my shelter for that night I saw my first yarmulke on the AT. The next morning the hiker was standing facing the sun with yarmulke and prayer shawl on, saying his prayers and reading his scriptures.

There are certain words which hikers coin. I learned how to "yogi." I looked and looked all through my pack and couldn't find my spoon. I announced this for any one listening. This nice young couple gave me a fork. That's called "yogying" on the trail. There are some very skillful moochers among the through-hikers who get all kinds of things, including trips to the beach. Hikers call it Trail Magic.

One of the married couples I met was on the trail to help them get used to doing routine things on a regular basis. They saw this experience as a good way to acquire

the skill and discipline they will need to run their businesses. They planned to open a hostel on the AT and charge \$3.50 a night. They will live off that price and live off the income from their Internet businesses.

In some past outdoor setting, I once asked about wildlife by which it was obvious that I meant animals. I got a stern lecture informing me

in no uncertain terms that plants are wildlife too. Well, in the northern part of the SNP the millipedes are the animal wildlife in greatest visible abundance and half of them are dead — in the recycle phase. Next most numerous are the first of the gypsy moth caterpillars. These early comers are on the ground instead of overhead in the trees eating the leaves. Soon their brothers and sisters will be out in the upper canopy munching away and their droppings will be falling on the lower canopy making the sound of a light rain.

Bill Bryson's book, *A Walk in the Woods*, is still on hikers' minds. His mention of nude hikers lusting after beer came up. One young woman through-hiker allowed she lusted "after fruit salad." Another hiker said he could live with Bryson's book now that he has categorized it as entertainment.

Just because all through-hikers are hiking on the same trail, headed for the same place does not mean they are alike. They are as diverse a group as the rest of humanity is: some are taking this hike to sort out their lives, some think it is a neat undertaking, a challenge, some have a list of outdoors things they want to do and the AT is on it, some hikers' plans did not work out and they are free to do the AT, and some through hikers are out there for

reasons I have never heard of. A SNP ranger said a survey point

in North Carolina had counted 40 percent more through-hikers this year than last. The statistics for the SNP will be out next year. I asked if the hikers this year are a better lot than those of previous years. "That's a good question. I don't know."

The number who actually make the whole 2,100-plus miles in either direction between Springer Mountain in Georgia and Mt. Katahdin in Maine is far less than the number who start out. The Appalachian Trail Conference, the organization of the 25-some AT clubs, keeps track of reports of through hikes — either in sections or all at once. As of mid-1999 it has 4,768 such reports since 1936 including 346 for 1998.

Through-hikers are sometimes defensive about themselves. One noted there were a lot of professionals hiking. Another said they were an educated lot — college graduates or with at least some college.

There are the steady, dedicated hikers for whom the hike is the thing and they concentrate on it, day after day, to the neglect of other aspects of AT life. My impression is that they are not along for the socializing. At the other extreme are the town-to-towners who stop over at town after town for as long as the social life really swings. Rumor had it that there was one former town-to-town hiker who had reformed, changed her ways and was back on the AT again but this time as a serious through-hiker.

Through-hikers, when they meet you, hope you are one of them. They ask flat out if you are "through-hiking." Their opinion slipped visibly when I allowed I was hiking just the SNP. That made me a "section hiker." Section hik-

See *Hikers*, page 9



Madison Brown prepares for an AT hike.

Book provides resource on Appalachian wildflowers

By NANCY SORRELLS

Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail, by Leonard M. Adkins, photographs by Joe and Monica Cook, Menasha Ridge Press, 1999, \$15.95. ISBN 0-89732-295-9

Anyone who has ever tramped the Appalachian Mountains can wax eloquently of vistas and views beyond compare, but how many of those same people rave about the white Clintonia, the Joe-Pye weed, or the false hellebore that they brushed past on the trail?

Leonard Adkins, long-time traveler of mountain paths around the world, insists that the totally fulfilled hiker needs to carry a magnifying glass as well as a pair of binoculars in order to fully appreciate the flora of the mountains from Maine to Georgia. And it wouldn't hurt to carry a copy of Adkins' newest book, *Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail*, published by Menasha Ridge Press along with the Appalachian Trail Conference as well.

More than just another wildflower guide, Adkins has created a volume of plant biographies. Coupled with fantastic color photographs from the husband and wife outdoor photography team of Joe and Monica Cook, the book is a good read whether you stow it on your end table or in your backpack. Nearly 150 flowers are highlighted in the book with each bloom receiving a page of text and a full-page photograph. Another 16 flowers get honorable mention status in the back.

The biography of each plant includes botanical names, common names, and a couple of paragraphs of "gee whiz" facts. For instance, the stems of fire pink have tiny hairs covered in a sticky substance designed to capture insects intent on the flower's nectar, while the toxins in monkshood give it the nickname "Pretty Poison." Roman soldiers used trout lily as a treatment for blisters, and round-lobed hepatica was once used to treat liver ailments.

Adkins has arranged the book

for the convenience of the plant novice. Flowers are arranged by bloom color and within each color section the order is determined by bloom season, earliest to latest.

Although the book is useful anywhere in the eastern U.S., Adkins has written this book with the AT hiker specifically in mind (hence the title). To that end each flower comes with a list of places along the AT where hikers are most likely to "encounter" that particular plant. Each plant's north-south range is also included.

If you are interested in getting the full impact of your forest sojourns and want to appreciate the tiny jewels of the land as well as the overwhelmingly large ones, then rush out and get Adkins' new book, before you miss any more of this year's blooms. —

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Roanoke man hikes length of AT across 7-mile section

By NANCY SORRELLS

CATAWBA — There are people who want to hike the length of the Appalachian Trail and then there are people who hike the Appalachian Trail. And then, there's Olen Waldrip. This 88-year-old retired Baptist minister with a sturdy body that makes him look more like a retired football player than a preacher is determined to hike the length of the trail... by hiking the same 7-mile portion of the AT once a week until he accomplishes the task.

Right now by that reckoning, Mt. Katahdin, Maine (milemarker 0 on the AT) is nearly within sight as Olen theoretically trudges along somewhere in New England. Back in October 1993, when Olen and his wife Louise, moved into a Roanoke retirement community, he began looking for a physical activity that would keep him in shape.

Having already hiked other trails in Virginia's mountains, he was naturally drawn to the nearby portion of the AT trail that led up Catawba Mountain to the sandstone outcroppings of McAfee Knob. So once a week, every week of the year, he rises at 4:30 a.m., dresses for a hike, puts on his backpack, straps on a wicked-looking buck knife, grabs his two walking sticks and makes the short drive to the parking area on the mountain.

The hiking sticks are of note, because of the unique touches Olen has added. Instead of having foam handles, he has tightly-wrapped IV tubing on the grip area for cushioning. In addition, one of the sticks is nearly covered, top to bottom and all around, with notches. Those mark the number of "assaults" he has made on McAfee Knob.

"I hike 7 to 12 miles each time, and if I eat my lunch at the top, on the Knob, then I cut another notch," he said of his own little ritual. In early May when I had the opportunity to hike with Olen he

was preparing for his 263rd ascent of the mountain top.

We began from the parking lot on U.S. 311 near Salem. From there we crossed the road, picked up the access trail which was a short, steep climb to the intersection with the AT. There Olen, a.k.a. Mountain Man, signed the logbook, recorded the temperature and added his signature phrase, "Keep your socks washed."

He explained that keeping your socks washed is very important to the hiker whose feet have to take him thousands of miles, but the phrase is really a recommendation for life. "My kids, grandkids and great-grandkids know that it means keep everything about your life clean," he said before setting off at a swift clip up the trail.

The 3.3 mile trail to the top is steadily uphill and narrow at times, but not steep and rocky until the final half mile or so. The walk alternates from oak and hickory canopies to stands of heath shrubs that include mountain laurel, fetterbush, blueberry, and azalea all crowded along the trail. It is also a geologic journey with a story that can be read in the rocks underfoot. Some of the rocks speak of the ocean floor 300 hundred million years ago, others are a mere 250 million years old and tell of the violence of continents crashing into one another. Occasionally fossils and rocks with water marks frozen in time will make their way to the surface.

Olen is tuned in to the geologic history of the trail he knows by heart. During the week he reads up on geology, paleontology and archaeology and then points out his newfound knowledge using rocks along the way as his classroom examples. It is clear that he could almost walk the path with his eyes closed and he knows exactly where to pause to show the spot a bear ripped into a honeybee

nest or point out a rock that presents evidence for the Big Bang.

Although he watches the weather a week in advance in order to decide the best day for his assault of the knob, Wednesdays and Thursdays are his most common hiking days. Weather plays less of a role in the decision making than



Olen Waldrip of Salem pauses at McAfee Knob on Catawba Mountain. The retired minister is hiking the length of the AT by re-hiking a seven-mile section of the trail.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

if there are special guests he wants to take along. In fact, he has hiked to the top in every season of the year, the only things that turn him back are electrical storms and ice. Snow on the other hand, makes the final half mile as "nice as a sidewalk because it covers the rocks." His coldest walk this year began in 14-degree temperatures, and in the last 12 months he has only missed making the trip three times.

As the trail heads up to the mountain top, house-size sandstone boulders perch on either side of the path. Then, just at the steepest part of the ascent, hikers break out into a sunlit clearing where shrubs, weathered from exposure to the elements, crowd the top. Pushing through the bushes takes one to the rock outcroppings of Silurian sandstone, remnants of the Paleozoic era that have resisted erosion for 400 million years.

As we peer over the edge of the sandstone ledges, we are fully aware of being 2,460 above sea level. Below us

the west is the edge of the Valley of Virginia, with line upon line of the Alleghenies standing guard beyond that as far as the eye can see.

Olen makes himself comfortable on one rock and soaks in the scene that has become part of his very being. "I like watching people up here. The young people are like

goats scrambling around on the rocks, but the adults are a little more tentative."

After enjoying a small lunch from his pack, Olen glances around to see if there is anyone watching who would question his sanity. If the coast is clear then he engages in the ritual that has occurred here on this knob once a week since 1993. Olen pulls out the giant buck knife, then points the glistening blade skyward. Three times he points and shouts, "Hip, Hip Hoorah," then he carves another notch in his walking stick. Finally, he whets the steel blade on the rock and returns the knife to its leather scabbard. With that complete, the Mountain Man heads for home.

Olen admits that enjoying good health has helped in his "journey" along the AT, and maintaining that fitness is one reason for the weekly trek. "I've always had good health, and really the most dangerous part of the hike is crossing the road from the parking area to the trail!" he said. "I like to keep going because at 88 I guess I've got more years behind me than in front of me and I'm never going to see those again." ---

Getting there: Take I-81 south to the Salem Exit (141). Turn right (west) off the exit and follow Highway 311 for 2.5 miles up the mountain until you get to the parking area marked with hiking signs. Take the access trail up to its intersection with the AT.

Hikers

Continued from page 8

ers may be second class but day hikers are an even lesser life form. One through-hiker paid me the highest of all high compliments: "You have a good attitude, Madison," he said, "why don't you hike with us to Maine?"

Zero-days are nothing like my 13-mile days or through-hikers' 20- or 30-mile days. On zero-days a hiker lays out and hikes zero miles. Most zero-days are spent in town and are essential for many reasons. Most obvious is the recuperative opportunity. Through-hikers get their mail-drops of supplies or equipment replacements at the post office, get their laundry done and their showers taken, see movies and eat in all-you-can-eat restaurants, and visit libraries. Libraries? No, they are not checking in and out books or sleeping in the air-conditioned reading rooms. They are on the Internet checking their mailboxes, answering and sending electronic mail, and posting their journal entries. The times, they have changed.

One dog hiker on an uphill stretch was huffing and puffing far more than his through-hiking master and flopped down right away on his belly in the trail when his master stopped to greet and talk a bit with me.

Each evening at any particular shelter is unique because of the mix

of hikers. One evening we were all more or less separated each unto her- or himself. One hiker was in her tent, another in her bivy-sack (a tent reduced to just enough room for the hiker and no equipment) and the four of us in the shelter really stayed pretty much to ourselves.

One hiker this evening played his traveling guitar. He said he had been at Trail Days and got up when it seemed his turn to play. "I just played my traveling guitar and didn't even know I was entered in this talent contest. I won \$250 in new equipment." He joked that the shelter mice stayed away from us and our equipment as long as he played.

The annual Trail Days in Damascus must be about 10 years old by now. The whole town takes part and gets taken over. It is part reunion and socializing with the early arrivals called the Blue Blazes arriving there two weeks in advance, part carnival with parade and contests like talent shows with donated equipment for prizes, and part trade show with equipment and service purveyors showing off, giving away, and helping out.

Trail names: Mike ("Just plain Mike?") "No, not Just Plain Mike, thank you. Mike."), The Peaceful Warrior (from Maine), Second Wind, Night Crawler, Hugo (reading the unabridged *Les Misérables*), Red Foot (with blisters and iodine on his feet), Mr. Conversation, Pace, Dogbone (from Nova

Scotia who is known for his stopping in the afternoon for his own blend of Earl Gray and green tea), Tahoe, Doesn't Matter, Patch, Patches, Raindancer, By the Numbers, Wandering Taoist (who signs the registers with pictograms), Bronco (the glass blower waiting to get in a special school in Oregon), Grace's Son, Second Wind, McGiver, Danger, Bagel, Last Exit, Walking Home (also from Maine), Magnolia (who hiked topless for a hot afternoon)... Some of these trail names are suggested by fellow hikers and some are self-bestowed. And then there are even hikers who change trail names part way through the hike or have more than one trail name.

Non-hikers are always posing questions, questions, questions: why are you hiking, what do you eat, what's in your pack...? There was an interview published in a newspaper and the names in the article were not the trail names but the real names. The other hikers could tell who'd been interviewed and which of their friends had said what.

One hiker's brother-in-law had met him and taken him and two other hikers home for a day or two. The brother-in-law's little girl had taken the three hikers to her third grade class for show-and-tell. The brother-in-law came back to the AT looking for his hiker relation and reported that the third grade class

See TRAIL, page 17

Log

Continued from page 7
check, that he arrived by boat.

Those who made the logbook entry were queried as to why they made the trip. Many were simply hiking, while quite a few others were hunting. One wrote that he did it for the "thrill."

With one exception, the last logbook entry is Nov. 29, 1967 when a man from Mechanicsville signed in

at the firetower. The next entry, and the very last, is 10 years later. In April 1977 Jeff Schreier of New Jersey made the hike to the top and took the time to write, "This mountain has great vibes."

With that final message, the logbook was retired to the forest service library. There it remains as a record of those who decided to take the day for a walk on the wild side in Augusta County. —

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Susan Lucci and cicadas — what's next in '99?

Down on the farm we're thinking about those events in our lives that happen so infrequently they are looked upon in almost Biblical proportions. In fact, had we lived several millennia ago and these things happened, they might very well have been interpreted as messages from our Creator.

You remember some of the Bible stories you learned growing up as a child, like Joseph's dreams and how the small ears of corn swallowed up the big full ears of corn and that meant there was going to be a famine. Or the plagues sent upon the Egyptians to force the release of the Hebrew slaves. Or Moses' encounter with the burning bush. There are countless others.

You can get caught up quite easily in arguing between the literal or symbolic content of these stories. But whether you accept them at face value or merely a writer's attempt at creating some powerful symbolism (sometimes writers will go to almost any lengths to capture the reader's attention even if it means stretching the truth a bit, not that I would know anything about that, but...) anyway, whether you take the literal or symbolic interpretive stance on scripture, you have to agree that these Biblical passages must represent genuinely powerful occurrences in the lives of these people.

Maybe it's that pesky old Y2K bug that's got me looking for things that aren't really there. Not that I give any credence to this whole Y2K hullabaloo. And I don't even want to get into the argument about 1999 not being the last year of the 20th century which doesn't actually start until Jan. 1, 2001 or that the end of the first millennium passed us by a number of years ago because somebody goofed

DOWN ON THE FARM

BY
BETTY JO
HAMILTON



when they came up with the first calendar or that the 33 years of Jesus' life is unaccounted for on the modern time line or any other arguments like these.

What I do know is that when I wake up on Jan. 1, 2000 I will be among a select group of 5 billion people on the planet who will have to make themselves write 2-0-0-0 instead of 1-9-9-9 every time a check is filled out. It's not like I'll just be messing up one digit of the number when I forget. The whole number will be wrong so there will be massive scratching out and writing over to correct the 1-9-9-9 mistake to 2-0-0-0. The last batch of checks I received don't even have the century part of the figure supplied. I've been having to write all four numbers on the year line for some time now. Checks printed prior to this year at least had the 1-9 pre-printed in the space for the date. But they've left that off now assuming I won't run out of checks before the calendar flips over to what is being hyped as an incredibly awkward year for everyone involved.

But I don't think this being 1999 has much to do with the infrequent occurrences we've noted down on the farm. Although it may be the folks of the third millennia who will

be the ones who will look back on 1999 and be able to say, "That didn't really happen, it's just a symbolic representation of life in those days." Of course by the time the year 3000 arrives, *Augusta Country* will be no more than dust carried by thousands of winds — a speck on a speck across the literary ages. Just the same, I want to make a record of some infrequent occurrences that have caught my attention in this, the first half of the last year or the next to the last year in the 20th century.

The first occurrence I'd like to point to is the weather. The weather is one of the "biggies" among Biblical literature the most notable among this group being Noah's story of building the ark in preparation for 40 days and nights of rain and the ensuing great flood which erased civilization from the face of the earth. It was God's way of tidying things up a bit, so the story goes. How many of us have ever wanted to take that approach to a messy situation? Just hold on to one or two good things, completely purge the rest and start over from almost the beginning.

Interpreting the weather is something that can't be done on a daily basis. It doesn't do much good to look at a couple days of weather or a week's worth and try to draw any conclusions. The weather has to be viewed from a long term perspective to determine its impact on our lives and nature.

Our current situation has us facing one of the driest springs in recent memory. But it's not just these last few spring months that have

ing in to spring. Oddly enough, due to the huge amount of precipitation in the spring of '98, we finished the year several inches ahead of the average annual rainfall for the area. But now we find ourselves several inches behind the annual average for rainfall with the dry months of winter and spring behind us.

In fact, we don't even talk about rain any more. "Did you get any rain this week?" or "How much rain did you get out of that storm?" or "Did the storm miss you?"

We've all but eliminated terms like "thunder bumper," "down-pour,"

Feeding time can get a little crowded for triplet calves when three mouths want to be filled at the same time.

brought us to this point. The present plight brought about by the lack of precipitation began last July 3 which marked the end of one of the wettest springs and early summers we had known in some time. I measure this from July 3 because there wasn't another rainfall after that until Aug. 15, and then not another until mid-September. In fact, farmers began feeding livestock last year in August and September, a practice which doesn't normally begin until November or December.

We were happy to have one of the mildest winters of recent memory moving into 1999. Of course, one of the reasons it was so mild was because there was virtually no snow and no ice and very little rain through the winter months. This put us even further behind on ground moisture com-

"toad strangler," and "gully washer" from our vernacular. An entire generation might grow up without knowing what these terms mean. Now, when it comes to talking about precipitation, people talk about dew. "There was a heavy dew this morning," or "There wasn't any dew this morning." We're so anxious to cling to any hope of precipitation that even a heavy dew thrills us. Heck, I get excited if I see a glass of ice tea sweating.

So what can we interrupt from the lack of rainfall? Are we being parched into submission by our great Creator? As for the two percent of the population who derive their livelihoods from farming, I think God knows it takes barely a week without rain to have these folks holler "Uncle!" if that's God's angle to the situation. As for the other 98 percent of the population,

See RAIN, page 11



A number of unusual occurrences have been noted Down on the Farm since the beginning of 1999. Among these occurrences was the arrival of a set of triplet calves (unverified) in March. Had we attempted to interpret the signs and wonders associated with this event, might we have deduced anything from the markings on the cow's face? (Is

that Twilight Zone music I hear?) And what about the markings on her calves? One has four marks on its face, one has none but some white under its jawline and one is solid black. And what of the calves' genders? Two are bulls and one is a heifer. Perhaps folks in 2999 will know the answers.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

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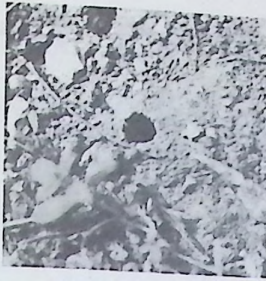
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Rain

Continued from page 10
not having to put up with rain is seen as an end to what can be a huge inconvenience to everyone's social agendas for the summer — rain-out ball games or picnics. Another notable weather phenomenon that has drawn note since last fall is the temperature. It drew serious note when the mercury hit 100 on June 8. Everyone acknowledged that it was too early in the summer — still spring, in fact — for the temperature to be so high. But once again, if you look at what the temperature has done over the past several months, even since last fall, you'll understand that this elevated temperature is not just a one-day occurrence. The fall months of '98 were hot and dry, so much so that the leaf color was seriously affected. It wasn't nearly as brilliant as in past years. Then, too, the winter months were not nearly as severe as some have been. In fact, I can't remember a winter or early spring that was better temperature-wise for the arrival of newborn lambs and calves.

So has it finally happened??? Has the ozone layer, which protects the earth from the sun's intensity, finally been lost??? There's no scientific data to prove that it has or that it is in any danger of being lost, according to Pat Michaels, state climatologist for Virginia.

The weather seems prone to extremes more than it is to typical performance. We just notice the extremes more than we do the norm, and the memories of the consequences of the extremes stick with us longer than circumstances of "normal" weather.



Cicada nymphs burrow their way above ground through half-inch holes like this one when they emerge from their subterranean existences.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

Another occurrence being monitored this year is the phases of the moon. Again, this is a celestial event which has prompted wonder and awe down through the ages. One of the most unusual events of this nature is the occurrence of the moon coming full twice within a calendar month. This event happens so rarely, well... it happens only once in a blue moon — a blue moon being the occurrence of the moon coming full the second time within a calendar month. Oddly enough this has happened twice this year. There were two full moons in January and then again in March. And, in fact, May missed having two full moons by only one day. Then there was no full moon in the month of February. It seems that would be a more unusual occurrence than two full moons in a month. But I don't recall anyone commenting on the lack of a full moon in February having any significance. Not that two full moons occurring in a month is cause for any particular interpretation in the great scheme of things. I guess it's just something to pass the time while you're waiting for Susan Lucci to win a daytime Emmy which happens even less frequently than once in a blue moon.

In March, we were particularly stunned down on the farm by trying to interpret the signs and wonders associated with the birth of a set of triplet calves. Calves born in threes is truly a blue-moon occurrence if there ever was one. The last case of triplet born calves in this area documented by *Augusta Country* was May 22, 1997 on a farm near Smoky Row. With all the technological advances applied these days to the cattle industry by way of embryo transplants and the like, you might expect multiple bovine births to be on the upswing. However, the Smoky Row cow, like ours, is just an ordinary run-of-the-mill, pasture-bred crossbred beef cow.

Our triplet calves, if we're going to insist on calling them that, technically can't be verified as a set of triplets without genetic testing. We didn't witness the actual birth of the three calves from one cow, however two of the three were definitely determined to be from one

cow. The third came into the mix by way of a nearly unexplained — dare I say Biblical — turn of events. I'll let you be the judge.

My father saw a cow with a newborn set of twin calves late on the afternoon of March 17. Because cows sometimes have difficulty taking care of twin calves, the cow and her twins were brought into the barn for some supervision.

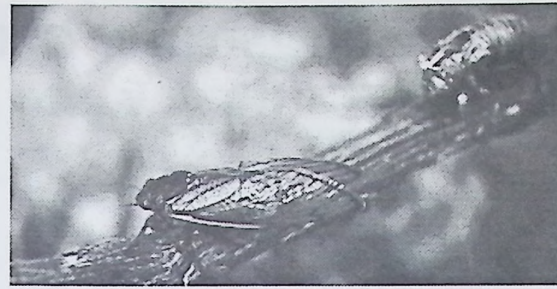
The births of the twin calves came just as the arrival of all the spring calves was approaching its crescendo. It's not a time when seeing a newborn calf in the pasture is any great cause for unusual curiosity, although we make every attempt to vaccinate and tag the newborn calves as they arrive.

The next morning after the arrival of the twin calves, I saw a newborn calf lying along the fence not far from the barn. I thought it a little odd there was no cow near this new calf. Cows normally stay pretty close to their calves for the first few days after their births. I like to have some idea which calf belongs to which cow, so I decided to wait to tag this newborn calf until its cow returned to claim it.

By late that afternoon, no cow had returned to claim the calf and the calf had not budged from its spot along the fence the entire day. I checked the calf. Nothing seemed to be wrong. It just pressed its head flat against the ground as baby calves do in a foolish attempt to appear invisible to would-be predators or other nosy ne'er-do-wells. Keep in mind that the cow with the twin calves had been moved to the confinement of the barn and away from the pasture.

When no cow claimed the newborn calf along the fence by late in the afternoon, we went out to check the cows trying to find one which had abandoned her newborn. Despite careful observation of every cow in the herd, none could be identified which might be the mother of the newborn and apparently unclaimed calf. I went ahead and vaccinated and tagged the calf despite not knowing which cow it belonged to. After I had finished tagging it, the calf took off across the pasture like a streak, also not uncommon behavior for newborn calves. It took off so fast, in fact, that by the time we had driven across the pasture and turned back toward the barn the calf had vanished. My father and I even commented on the calf's virtual disappearance from the landscape. It was almost as if it had been spirited away from the pasture.

The next morning I went out to check for newborn calves which had arrived during the night and spent some time looking for the calf which had gone unclaimed the day before. I eventually found it, wedged in an impossible fissure between a downed tree limb and a limestone outcropping in the pasture. The calf had squirmed its way into this spot, again in another instinctive attempt to hide itself. It



An adult cicada rests on a twig. Behind it is an empty nymph casing. The insects emerge from the casings after spending 13 to 17 years below ground.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

again pressed its head flat on the ground when I approached, trying hard to hide from me. I checked the calf's mouth which was warm. The calf appeared fine except for the absence of its significant cow other.

The problem of this seemingly unclaimed calf (or my obsessive-compulsive desire to chronicle every newborn creature on the farm) reached its height when I decided to bring the calf to the barn in order to force its cow to show herself. Again we checked the herd. And again, we could find no cow which could be identified as the one belonging to the supposedly unclaimed calf.

Friday afternoon came and no

a cow to begin the routine process of searching for her lost calf. Any time I heard a cow bawl even just once, I went to the pasture fence to see if a likely candidate was emerging from the herd only to see a cow with a baby calf in tow and both perfectly content.

Things were getting tense from my perspective. When you have a cow which won't claim her calf you want to find her and insist she own up to her maternal responsibility. If she won't accept this responsibility, you want to show her the way to town.

The unclaimed calf seemed remarkably unconcerned about its abandoned status. I took a portable pen to the pasture and put the calf in it hoping the calf might draw the attention of the cow to which it belonged. As noon on Saturday approached, the calf bawled regularly in hunger but no cow would come to its aid. I resigned myself to giving the calf another bottle of milk which it again nursed empty. I again searched the herd for any cow which might be the mother of the calf only to once again find none which even remotely fit the bill.

By late afternoon on Saturday, a whole three days since the calf's birth, the mystery of the unclaimed calf was gnawing at me enough to make me mentally retrace the events of the calf's arrival and any other occurrences which might be related. The most remote, the extremely remote, the practically impossible scenario which dawned on me — since the unclaimed newborn made its first appearance in the immediate vicinity of where the twins had been born — was that the cow with twins had possibly had triplet calves rather than two. Here, I felt, I was just grasping at straws. But, since practically every other scenario had been exhausted, I decided to give the apparently abandoned calf a look at the cow with the twin calves.

It had been clear the first day I'd found the calf that it had nursed after it was born. There are ways to tell when a newborn calf has nursed and the fact that this one had remained content for more than a day without bawling for food was the first indication that it had nursed after it was

See CALVES, page 19



A virtual army of cicada nymphs emerged from the ground and started their upward climb before molting into adults.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

cow presented herself to claim the newborn. I got a bottle of milk replacer for the calf and it nursed the bottle handily. I determined the calf's cow would surely make an appearance the next morning. Meanwhile, the cow and her twin calves were doing very well, all seeming content and satisfied with their newfound status among the chosen few in the barn lot.

Saturday morning dawned and I anticipated the mournful lament of a cow searching the pasture for her baby calf, but there was nothing to fulfill my anticipation. I went about my morning feeding at the barn expecting at any moment for

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Stock dogs take center stage at Va. Beef Expo

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

LEXINGTON — Larry Maggard doesn't have any problem rounding up his stock — from sheep to cattle to hogs to anything else he needs to put in a pen or push into a trailer. That's because he's got dogs.

Maggard, from Richlands, introduced a new, three-fold event at this year's Virginia Beef Expo — the Stockman's Dream Stock Dog Show and Sale. His demonstration of working stock dogs wowed the crowd and made it think about using dogs to work stock. His auctioneer's ability sold those dogs on Saturday at the first-ever working stock dog auction at the Beef Expo. And his expertise advised, counseled and paired up owners and would-be owners to promote stock dogs to those serious about saving themselves time and work on the farm.

"As far as I know, this is the first one on the East coast," Maggard said of the stock dog sale. The top selling dog today went for \$1,750.

And in an arena in which dogs

sometimes sell for as much as \$6,000 or more, this first sale's prices weren't too bad.

Some folks got some bargains, though. Mary Louise and Paul Peasley came from Kingwood, W.Va., just to get a dog. Their old dog, purchased in 1988, has diabetes, Mrs. Peasley explained. "We needed another dog to help Van — that's our old dog — out. We have purebred Angus and Herefords, and Paul is by himself. He can do more things with a dog to help."

The Peasleys paid \$300 for the dog they got from Rebecca Ryan of Mountain Top Farm and Kennel in Grassy Creek, N.C.

Ryan was pleased with the sale's results. "Of the eight dogs I brought, I sold six, up to \$1,750 (the high seller) in price. But I think I sold more after the sale than during the sale," she said.

"In fact, I may have sold the other two," she said during her wheeling and dealing. "I'm real pleased with this sale. People get to see the dogs work before they take them home. That helps a whole lot."

Ryan said the dogs should have brought a little more money than they did. "I feel people don't understand how much time and money goes into a good stock dog. That's why the dogs didn't go as high. I had \$1,500 in one of my dogs and got \$1,750 for her. I got robbed. But a lot of people got good dogs today."

Ryan's stud dog, Bart, "wins left and right" at stock dog trials. She paid \$3,000 for him, and says his pups are great.

"Dogs really make things easier. Two heifers got in with our other cattle. We took a four-wheeler and Bart and cut out those two heifers from the herd. It didn't take an hour and these were Wilk Mountain cattle that weren't used to being worked."

The award for the top-selling pup under 6 months at the sale went to Michael Boyd of Richlands whose Red Heeler brought a whopping \$500. Boyd, who works from his 13-year-old mule, Katie, uses dogs as a hobby. "I like to fool with dogs," he said.

Maggard came up with the idea of the Stockmen's Dream Sale after he talked to a man from Scotland who



Larry Maggard of Richlands puts one of his stock dogs to work during a demonstration at the Virginia Beef Expo.

Photo by Deborah Sensabaugh

told him these kinds of sales were popular there. He's planning a similar sale for Jackson, Ohio, in the fall.

"I think this one went real well, especially since it was the first one on the East coast," he said.

Maggard's mom, Winona Patrick and fiancé Flechia Dickerson, watched him put the whole thing together. "And it worked," they

agreed. "People came from as far away as Michigan. It was a great opportunity to get the buyers and sellers together and let the buyers see the dogs."

Maggard agrees. "We had great success in getting consignors. It was the buyers who were a little wary, but we're looking for bigger things at the fall sale." —

Beef Expo finds new home at Va. Horse Center

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

LEXINGTON — Jim Johnson couldn't have been happier with the 1999 Virginia Beef Expo's inaugural run at the Virginia Horse Center.

"What a facility!" the expo director said. "We couldn't be happier with it."

Johnson agreed that a move to

any new facility requires a year or two for the process to gel. "We had really outgrown the Rockingham County facility and there weren't many places to go," he said. "We had been looking at the Virginia Horse Center for a while and decided to give it a try. For next year, we'll iron a few things out, especially now that we know the facil-

ity, what's here and how to use it."

Virginia Beef Expo started 12 years ago to promote the beef cattle industry. "It's probably the largest beef expo and fair in the Mid-Atlantic area and likely in the whole East Coast," Johnson said.

"We had 650 cattle here. For the most part, the sales were good, the averages were higher, the weather

was good and everyone has been pleased," he said.

The expo provided a boon to commercial exhibitors, Johnson said. "There were 80 commercial exhibits in more than 100 booths."

He said the Angus sale was the most popular event, drawing the largest crowd. He also was pleased with the stock dog demonstration and sale, a new feature for the expo.

"We had higher sales and a bigger crowd. We had a bunch of folks going through the trade show. We had folks from Texas. Dogs were sold to Michigan. Cows went to Minnesota, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama

and Tennessee. We had exhibitors from as far away as Kansas. We usually have up to 18 states represented here, and this year there may have been more," he said.

The crowd for the weekend totaled from 8,000 to 10,000, Johnson said. "And we had 250 junior exhibitors. That's the future of our beef industry and we like to support that," he said.

Next year's expo, according to Johnson, will run more smoothly than the first year's outing at the horse center. "We're used to the facility now and so are the people who come here. Everyone's been really pleased with the whole thing." —

Rapidan River Plantation hosting Ag Expo

ORANGE — Virginia producers will be "Developing New Opportunities with Existing Resources" at the 1999 Virginia Ag-Expo. The Expo will be held Aug. 12 at Rapidan River Plantation in Orange County. A 2000-plus-acre farm on the banks of the Rapidan River, Rapidan River Plantation is managed by Ted and Diane Haberland. The rolling fields of this beautiful farm will offer farmers the opportunity to view and discuss the latest in crops, equipment, technology and services. A former dairy farm, Rapidan is being converted to grain production using existing equipment and facilities in new and innovative ways.

In addition to corn and soybean variety plots, evaluations will be made of corn for grain in 20 compared to 30-inch rows, B+ and non B+ corn iso-lines, at-plant Force insecticide compared to no insecticide and comparisons of herbicide combination for corn and soybeans. A replicated demonstration will compare commercial fertilizer nitrogen rates for the 1999 corn crop following bio-solid application in the

spring of 1998. Plans for herbicide evaluations include planting herbicide tolerant corn hybrids such as Roundup Ready, Liberty Link, IR, Poast Tolerant, and standard corn. Roundup Ready-STs soybean variety to allow a wide range of herbicide programs will also be planted. The expo will also feature the Soybean Yield Challenge. There will also be corn hybrid silage plots.

Two new activities are planned for the afternoon. The first is a tour of the milking parlor turned into a nitrogen storage facility, Harvestore turned into a grain drying and storage facility and a bunker silo turned into a bio-solid holding facility complete with sediment

pond. This will be offered by allowing people to select which of the above 15-minute stops they want to attend. The second stop will be the demonstration of a corn grain "header chopper" and a Kemper head to harvest silage.

Over 60 exhibitors in the tradeshow will feature the latest in products and technologies. The day will include the traditional barbecue lunch and a children's program for the younger generation of producers.

Pre-registration information will be available in July. Admission is \$5 in advance and \$7 on site. For information contact Ellen M. Davis, 804/843-4001 or George Bruner, 804/527-2184. —

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Fun Field Day shows versatility of percherons

By CHRIS MARRS

LONE FOUNTAIN — The Virginia Percheron Association held its third annual Percheron Fun Field Day at "Hillbilly Farm" in Lone Fountain on May 29. Hosted by Ray, Virginia, Gary, and Mary Ann Kisamore, the field day offered demonstrations of the percheron draft breed as a working farm horse. Plowing, cutting and baling hay, wagon rides, two-, three- and four-

horse hitches were all part of the program demonstrating the beauty and continued usefulness of this large, powerful horse.

Doug Britt, a member of the association and one of the organizers of the event, said he felt this year's field day was the best turnout so far in participation from spectators. Displays included mares and foals, farming equipment, and even vendors.

After checking out the displays,

one could hitch a wagon ride to the back fields for demonstrations of actual hay making. Plowing was demonstrated by a team of gray percherons called "Ben" and "Tom" driven by Brett Seal. Back at the barn, Sam and Gladys Slate of Dabney, Va., with the help of Nancy Wood, were unhitching their carriage horses "Bess" and "Pearl" after two hours of giving rides to guests. Rest included water and hay and some quiet time.

In the back fields, spectators enjoyed watching a four-horse hitch driven by Gary Kisamore pull a hay mower-conditioner. A three-horse hitch nearby demonstrated baling and reminded everyone of times when horses were a large part of farm life.

The Kisamores breed and raise

percherons at their farm in Churchville. Gary Kisamore also explained that he continues to show his horses up and down the East Coast. These horses can range from 16 to 18 hands high and weigh from 1,600 to 2,400 pounds at maturity. They originate from France and, although believed to have descended from horses ridden by knights in armor, were developed as a working horse for farming and hauling heavy loads of freight. The

breed has been popular in this country since the late 1800s as work horses, but also as "hitch" horses in shows and exhibitions, pulling wagons in teams of four or six.

Anyone interested in seeing the percheron draft horse can visit the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington on July 31 for the Eastern All Draft Breed and Mule Show. The show begins at 9 a.m. Draft horses also will be in competitions at the Augusta County Fair at Fishersville in August. —



In the photo at left, Gary Kisamore uses a three-horse hitch of percherons to operate a mower-conditioner. Horses are used to bale hay in the photo at right.

Photos by Chris Marrs



Augusta junior 4-Hers win state wildlife contest

VERONA — Augusta County's junior 4-H Wildlife Judging team captured top honors in the Virginia State 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Contest held recently. The team of Nate Salatin, Josh Salatin, Lindsey Kilbourne and Garrett Blevins was High Team overall in the contest. The team's score was double that of the contest's winning senior team. The Augusta juniors placed first in Rural Wildlife Management Plan and first in Ur-

ban Wildlife Management Plan.

Nate, Josh and Lindsey were first, second and third high individuals, respectively. Garrett was high individual on aerial photographs. Nate Salatin was high individual in foods with a perfect score. He also was high individual in oral reasons. Josh and Nate tied for high individual in Wildlife Management Practices.

The 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Contest, also known as Wild-

life Judging, is a comprehensive wildlife management program that consists of five parts. Contestants individually compete in three parts, the aerial photograph judging and oral reasons, foods ID, and wildlife management practices. As a team they write and draw an urban wildlife management plan and write a rural management plan.

In the aerial photograph judging, contestants rank four areas on an

aerial photo based on the habitat suitability for a given wildlife species. Then they must give a set of oral reasons justifying why they ranked the photos in the given order. For the foods ID, contestants must identify the category that a food item fits into, then identify the wildlife that eats it. The wildlife management practices check-off sheet allows individuals to prescribe management practices that

should be utilized to create the optimal habitat at a given site for a set list of wildlife species.

The team works together to create an urban and rural management plan. This is a real situation where the team is taken to a site and given a set of field conditions. Based on this information team members must develop plans to meet the objectives of the landowner which may include increasing the population of several species, increasing sightings of certain species, or decreasing pest or overpopulated species. The urban plan also must take into consideration the aesthetic value and human influence on the area.

The team practiced for 2-3 hours once a week in addition to studying their wildlife manual at home. Three of the team members will advance to the senior contest next year. They have their sights set on winning the senior contest in 2000. The winning senior team goes on to represent the state in the National Wildlife Habitat Invitational. In 2000 that contest will be held in New Mexico. After a short break for the summer, the team will resume practice.

The results of the 1999 state contest show how hard this team has worked to achieve its goals of outscoring the senior teams, having a top individual in each category, and winning its contest. All members are to be congratulated for their dedication to the 4-H Wildlife Judging Team. —



Augusta County junior 4-H members, from left, Josh Salatin, Nate Salatin, and Lindsay Kilbourne won the Virginia State Wildlife Evaluation Contest held recently at Holiday Lake.

Photo courtesy Augusta County Extension Office

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Annual lily festival promises delight-filled day for gardeners

AC staff report

FISHERSVILLE — Wine tasting and a wine-colored flower will be in the spotlight July 17 at the André Viette Farm and Nursery in Fishersville during the third annual Daylily Festival. The festival, sponsored by the Staunton Augusta County Chamber of Commerce, will feature gardening talks and demonstrations, live music, children's activities, horticultural exhibits, area craftspeople, and food and wine vendors.



The featured speaker will be horticulturist, designer and lecturer Peggy Bier. A Certified Virginia Nurseryman, Ms. Bier is the hostess of the weekly television show "The Gardening Advisor." At 10 a.m. she will talk on "Container Gardening with Perennials and Annuals." Three other speakers will round out the day's seminars. At 11 a.m. Mark Viette will discuss "Gardening with no work;" at 1 p.m. Keith Folsom of Springdale Water Gardens will demonstrate "Creating a Water Garden;" while the final seminar of the day, at 2 p.m., features Debbie Gartzke, co-owner of Weir Dude's Plant Zoo, who will discuss "Pushing the Zones: Growing non-hardy plants successfully in your garden."

In addition to wandering the grounds, listening to the seminars, and looking at the hor-

ticulture exhibits, the mood will be set with jazz concerts from 10:30 until 1:45 by S.P.L.A.A.A.T. and from 2 until 4:45 by The Moonlighters.

Basking in the sunlight and being unveiled for the first time as the featured celebrity for the day will be Shenandoah Cabernet, a newly developed grape-colored daylily bred specifically for the festival. Shenandoah Cabernet will be vying for the spotlight among the dozens of other daylily varieties which should be in full bloom in the gardens during the festival.

The perfect complement to a grape-colored flower is some grape-colored wine. Five Virginia wineries, Wintergreen Winery, Shenandoah Vineyards, Prince Michel Vineyards, Chateau Morrisette, and The Williamsburg Winery, will introduce their Old Dominion wines to festival goers. Included in the selections are such eclectic names as Mill Hill Apple Wine, Black Dog, and Governor's White. A number of exotic food ven-

Daylily Festival

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 9 a.m. — Gates open
- 10 a.m. — Children's activities begin
- 10 a.m. — Seminar by Peggy Bier
"Container Gardening with Perennials and Annuals"
- 10:30 a.m. - 1:45 p.m. — S.P.L.A.A.A.T. performs live jazz
- 11 a.m. — Seminar by Mark Viette
"Gardening with no work"
- 1 p.m. — Seminar by Keith Folsom
of Springdale Water Gardens
"Creating a Water Garden"
- 2 p.m. — Seminar by Debbie Gartzke
of Weir Dude's Plant Zoo
"Pushing the Zones: Growing non-hardy plants
successfully in your garden"
- 2 - 4:45 p.m. — The Moonlighters perform live jazz
- 5 p.m. — The festival closes



dors will make available such delicacies as buffalo and ostrich burgers, bratwurst, as well as tried-and-true favorites like chicken salad, ham sandwiches, and brownies.

In addition to a number of horticultural displays, crafters will sell a range of art pieces from watercolors and etchings, to hand-painted flower pots, ceramic tile, stained

glass stepping stones, and wooden garden ornaments.

The Daylily Festival runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Advance tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for anyone under 21 years of age. For more information call or write: Staunton Augusta County Chamber of Commerce, 1303 Richmond Road, Staunton, VA 24401, 540-886-2351.

New Hope FCE hears program about Mennonites

CRIMORA — The New Hope Family Community Educators (FCE) held their May meeting at the home of member Jean Critzer near Crimora. Study of the month was Mennonite Churches of the area. Mennonites belong to a Protestant group that emphasizes a simple style of life and worship. They base their beliefs on the New Testament and live according to the Sermon on the Mount. The first Mennonites belonged to a church organized in Zurich, Switzerland.

The name Mennonite came from Menno Simons, who led their beginning in the mid-1530s. German-speaking Mennonites came to Pennsylvania in 1683 and became part of the Pennsylvania Dutch, which comes from the word Deutsch meaning German.

During the business meeting \$50 was given to 4-H to help sponsor a child to 4-H camp. Plans were made to serve a meal at the Extension office in June. It was noted that the Augusta County Fair is coming up. Members were reminded to think about exhibits to enter.

The program "Staying Healthy" was presented by Brenda Mosby, Extension agent.

Ms. Mosby told members how viruses are spread easily through indirect contaminated surfaces. Proper hand washing (20 to 30 seconds with scrubbing) is essential to control the spread of germs. Antibacterial hand-washing products need to be used with care for they kill good germs as well as bad ones. Regular soaps can clean and kill germs when used properly. To be

an effective disinfectant, a product must have a EPA symbol (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) on the label. Household liquid bleach is a safe and inexpensive disinfectant. Ms. Mosby stressed that labels on all products need to be read carefully for proper and effective use of it.

The club's next meeting is 10 a.m.

June 28 at New Hope United Methodist Church. Pat Ewers will present a program on dried flower arranging. Club members will be holding cultural arts contest at the same time. A covered dish luncheon will follow the program.

Anyone interested in joining this meeting or FCE may call 363-5932.

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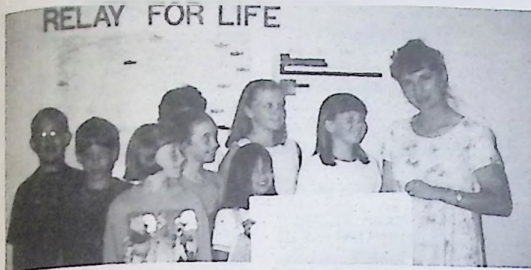
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Schoolhouse News

Craigsville Elementary students raise funds for cancer research



Susan Holsinger, Relay for Life team captain, far right, holds a check presented by Craigsville Elementary School students, from left, Josh Sprouse, Travis Harris, Brittany Lawhorn, Sierra Adkins, Heidi Wooton, Kristin Puckett, Jenna Temple and Dana McCray.

Photo by Penny Plemmons

By PENNY PLEMMONS

CRAIGSVILLE — Craigsville Elementary School students raised \$265.12 in the "Relay for Life" sponsored by the American Cancer Society.

According to ACS area captain and organizer Susan Holsinger, the relay was primarily targeted at school staff and administration.

"Although the drive was primarily for adults, students at Craigsville and Clymore Elementary took a major roll in collecting money," Holsinger said. With the help of Student Council Adviser Ann Sours, Craigsville students created their own relay in the form

of a mock car race. To thwart crashes and spur racers onward, Sours stated that, "for two weeks the SCA officers encouraged student participation through vignettes given during afternoon announcements." Individual classroom progress was recorded on poster board by moving miniature cars — representing each classroom's cash total — along a race track and toward the finish line.

Winners were Ruth Duncan's second grade class, beating Headstart and first grade, and Ann Sours' third grade class in the third through fifth grade competition. Prize winners were awarded an ice cream sundae

party. Holsinger was touched by the fact that six staff members, "came all the way from Craigsville to participate" in the finale — a relay-walk-a-thon at Gypsy Hill Park on June 4 in Staunton. The walkers were CES principal Kirk Johnson and teachers Freta Johnson, Josh Leonard, Terri Painter, Linda Parslow and Susan Pytel.

Holsinger said she felt one reason for the success of the relay was because, "everyone, even children, knows someone who has had cancer." ACS had set a goal of \$20,000 for the relay fundraiser. Total money raised exceeded \$70,000. —

Shenandoah Electric awards three scholarships

MT. CRAWFORD — Three area high school seniors have been selected to receive \$1,000 scholarships from Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative.

Lauren Paige Plemmons of Bufalo Gap High School in Augusta County, Kristin Lynne Hamilton of Harrisonburg High School and Rhonda May Burkholder of Broadway High School, both in Rockingham County, were selected from applicants received from schools in all four counties served by the cooperative — Augusta, Rockingham, Shenandoah and Hardy County, W. Va.

Recipients were selected based on several criteria including scholarship, activities both in and outside of school, letters of recommendation and an in-depth essay provided by each applicant. The schol-

arship program was open to any local high school senior whose parents are currently consumers of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative.

Miss Plemmons is interested in studying business communications at James Madison University. She has been active in a number of Gap programs including National Honor Society, the school newspaper, forensics, Latin Club, Varsity Club, and Bison Against Drugs while also participating on the varsity basketball and softball teams.



PLEMMONS

She is a member of Calvary Baptist Church. She is the daughter of Bryan and Penny Plemmons and lives near Craigsville in Augusta County. In her application for the scholarship she wrote, "Education helps the mind to grow just like rain makes the grass grow. Each new thought and each new idea are refreshing drops of learning that unlock the door for self-improvement." In writing of the importance of the SVEC scholarship she noted, "Perhaps, eventually I could return a similar gift to someone in need by sharing my wealth, time or knowledge."

Miss Hamilton of Harrisonburg High School hopes to study English or history and may choose to become a teacher or a writer. She is the daughter of Judith and Bruce Hamilton, and she lives west of Harrisonburg. She has been active

in many school organizations and activities including Harrisonburg High School's newspaper, the National Honor Society, Poets-in-the-Schools, French Club and has been a reading volunteer at the elementary school level. Kristin plans to attend Mary Washington College in the fall. In expressing the importance of a college education Kristin states, "At college, education is not simply facts and figures. It is instead the application of knowledge: using one's knowledge to hypothesize, experiment, analyze and draw new and startling conclusions."

Miss Burkholder of Broadway High School is the daughter of Marlin and Christine Burkholder who live in the Singers Glen area of Rockingham County. Her plans for college are to study nursing at Berea College in Kentucky. Her school activities included Virginia State Honors Choir, District Chorus, and FFA Chapter Vice President. Her community involvement includes being active in her church as a worship leader, summer Bible school teacher and volunteering at

the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale. In her essay she states, "I want to become a nurse so that I can give back to my community. I want to serve individuals who are hurting." She continued, "I have chosen a career where family can come first when necessary. One of the most lasting ways to affect a community is to raise children that love God and serve others."

The SVEC Scholarship Committee consisted of Sharon R. Bowman, former educator, Shenandoah County public schools; Lisa Geiman, watercolor artist; and C. Steven Smith, Computer Management and Development Services.

"The committee was impressed with the overall quality of the candidates this year. The three individuals selected rose above the others due to their commitment to their education, school and community," Smith noted.

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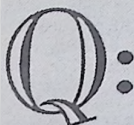
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References provided upon request.

The Hitching Post

Know DANGER ZONES to avoid getting kicked



Q: How can I keep from getting kicked by a horse? I am a lesson student and do not want to get kicked. Do horses kick on purpose?

Unfortunately some horses do kick on purpose. Most lesson horses are chosen for their safety and high tolerance levels. Lesson horses allow mistakes and are usually very forgiving. The mistakes most students make around me is in little things that a horse with a poor attitude would take advantage of in a minute. Lesson students don't EXPECT anything bad to happen to them and this is probably their first mistake. Lesson horses are safe to work around, but you should be learning all the safety rules, too.

Here are some DANGER ZONES to learn about and remember. If you

can learn to recognize these DANGER ZONES you can keep an eye on your horse's attitude and hopefully prevent an accident.

- Catching a horse in pasture
- Sensitive Areas
 - on a horse's body
- Girthing
- Mounting
- Improper warm up (at least 5 minutes at the walk with halt transitions)
- Crops (they are used to reinforce the leg aid, NOT beat the horse)
- Riding too close to other horses
- Poor ground manners (Horses should have manners!)

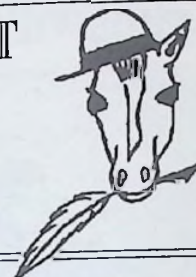
•Clashing of "aids"

(Learn to use your aids properly as part of the communication process with your horse)

DANGER ZONES are places to exercise caution in horsemanship. The best way to keep from getting hurt is to be aware that you CAN. A little caution asks that you consider the risk. In lessons you should learn that safety can make riding fun.

As a horse I am taught to behave, but like any animal, under the right circumstances, I can have a bad day. Students can learn to be on guard in the above situations for their horses' attitude. Horses as well as most animals usually give off warning signals to tell you they are upset. Pay at-

I.B.HOOFINIT
From
the
Horse's Mouth



tention to these signals and know when you are in a DANGER ZONE.

One important thing to remember is that kicking, biting, and bucking are all part of horse communication. We sometimes get our point

across using these as a last resort. Try not to let the problem get that far. Respect, consideration, and proper discipline can all add up to a safe riding partner. —

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 reflects different problems. I.B.'s answers are meant to be informative and enjoyable, but not binding. Common sense in any situation is a must.

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I. B. Hoofinit's 'Horses in History'

Can you identify the horse and rider described in the following vignette? If so, simply write your answer down and mail it with your name and address to I. B. Hoofinit's Horses in History, P. O. Box 2955, Staunton, Va. 24402 or call 540/885-0266. The first correct answer received will be sent a free gift! The answer will appear in the next issue of *Augusta Country*!

Last month's question asked "What breed am I?" referring to the kind of horse bred by the Nez Perce Indians.

The Appaloosa breed was developed by the Nez Perce Indians in the 18th century. Originating from northeast Oregon, the Appaloosa name comes from the term "A Palouse horse" referring to the Palouse river where the Nez Perce tribe lived. These colorful horses are famous for their spots and the skillful breeding philosophy adopted by the Nez Perce. Not only bred for color, Appaloosa were culled and carefully bred by the Indians for conformation to develop a distinctive, practical work horse.

In 1876 the Nez Perce tribe under Chief Joseph sought to reach the Canadian border after negotiations with the United States' military officials broke off. Joseph realized that his warriors could not face the U.S. forces. The American Army feared that if enough dissatisfied tribes met, they could possibly form a hostile confederation much like the one taking shape at Custer's Last Stand. Col. Nelson A. Miles was ordered to cut the Indians off before they reached the international boundary.

Col. Miles ordered an attack on the herd of horses belonging to the Nez Perce. In the massacre which ensued (known as the Bear Paw



battle) about 120 Indians were killed, 55 of them women and children, as well as 177 soldiers and civilians. Another 147 were wounded. Some of the Nez Perce Indians escaped to Canada, but between 405 and 431 people gave themselves up to the government forces. The Appaloosa breed was virtually wiped out.

In 1938 the breed was revived when the Appaloosa Horse Club was formed in Moscow, Idaho. (references: *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Chicago 54, IL, *Let Me Be Free*, *The Nez Perce Tragedy*, David Lavender, HarperCollins, *The Ultimate Horse Book*, Elwyn Hartley Edwards, Dorling Kindersley, Inc. NY)---

This month's question asks: WHO AM I? In 1860 I was an important part of American Western History. My rider rode me at a full gallop for approximately 10 to 15 miles between "stations." My rider's package never weighed more than 20 pounds. My rider was highly paid sometimes earning as much as \$150 a month. —

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•Horses

Continued from page 2

Dr. Jim Knight and Dr. William Velandar will be discussing "Human Pharmaceuticals from Pigs." These researchers have produced transgenic pigs that express therapeutic proteins critical in blood clotting and antithrombotic in humans.

The Virginia Cattle Industry Board, Virginia Poultry Federation and the Virginia Pork Industry Board are sponsoring a complimentary beef, pork and chicken barbecue at noon.

During lunch Doug Meadows, from Lenoir City, Tenn., will be demonstrating and talking about the hard running, deep sliding, dirt throwing reining horse. Meadows has presented clinics throughout the country. He trained numerous state, regional and national champions in reining, working cow horse, and western pleasure. While reining and dressage may seem to be dramatically different, the basic movements are in many ways very similar.

The afternoon horse program also spotlights Marat and Janna Bakharinov, of Dark Horse Stables, Inc. from Boyce. They

will be demonstrating the high school of training at its best with a Grand Prix "Pas De Deux." This pairs performance will mirror the intricate balance and beauty of dressage.

The afternoon Beef Program begins at 1 p.m. Bill McKinnon, Scott Greiner and John Hall will introduce the three-part interactive Beef Quality Assurance Workshop. Dr. Joe Fontenot, a pioneer in forage systems for beef production, will instruct farmers on what works best for the Appalachians. Hall, Extension beef specialist, will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of new estrous synchronization systems.

The sheep program will focus on turning cutting edge farm flock management principles into routine practices. Dr. Greg Lewis will discuss reproductive management and technology and make it "user-friendly" for producers. Dr. Dave Notter, nationally recognized sheep geneticist, makes genetic management simple with his presentation. Dr. Mark Wahlberg will tackle the timely issue of nutrient management cycles.

The afternoon sessions will adjourn at 3 p.m. For further information, contact Dr. Dan Eversole, 540/231-4738. —

•Trail

Continued from page 9

is still talking about that show-and-tell.

Through-hikers come from all over the U.S. and foreign countries. Besides the young German woman I met at Tom Floyd, I met a husky, jolly Israeli and his shy daughter. He had voted in the recent election. I did not pursue his opinion of the results. What had brought him to the U.S.? "The AT," he said. He and I did all the talking. As soon as we said good-bye and set off in our opposite directions, I heard a very lively conversation between him and his daughter break out.

There was a very outgoing couple from New Brunswick, the Canadian Providence adjacent to Maine, which contains the northern continuation of the Appalachians, the tallest of which is Bald Mountain with an elevation of 2,400 feet. They were not worried about the secession of Quebec: "The U.S. gets along with Alaska separated from the rest of the states." They began to list all the details which will have to be negotiated and could never have stopped at the rate they were going. Neither Canada nor Quebec has a large enough army to turn the situation into a Kosovo. This couple did mention that their kayak is waiting for them under their porch.

There was a Pole using the trail name of "Hiking Pole" who when he passed me announced in a very breathless but proud and excited voice, he had seen two bear just that morning. There was a tall, stately young woman who greeted me with an accent. That gave me the opening to say something like, "You don't

sound like you come from around here, do you?" She said she came from Sri Lanka but lives in California.

Some through-hikers smoke. "They get on the trail and find they can hike and still smoke," commented one non-smoker. Some smokers hike along and take smoke breaks. One smoker even hikes with a lit cigarette in his mouth. Rumor had it there were at least two recovering alcoholic through-hikers. No one mentioned hikers regularly carrying alcohol with them. Through-hikers may occasionally bring a beer back on the trail after a town visit. And there is "refreshment" drinking in stopover towns and in the occasional restaurant or tap room on the trail.

The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club which has its headquarters in Vienna and is known by its initials PATC, maintains the trail and the shelters in the Shenandoah National Park. It works closely with the Park Service of the Department of the Interior. The PATC hires two "ridge runners" for the summer whose job is to spend 10 days every two weeks hiking back and forth on the AT helping hikers and the trail in any way they can. They too work closely with the park rangers.

Amy, "Breaking Dawn," the PATC ridge runner I met, is studying natural resources at the University of the South. Her pack was in Rock Spring Hut when I pulled in. (All the SNP markers call the shelters "huts.") My theory is SNP does this to save the space of printing four extra letters every time it mentions a shelter on one of its markers.) She was nowhere to be seen. Closer to dark, she did appear, grabbed her radio and dashed

off back up the trail to answer her pager. With that gesture I thought she was some kind of action figure. Amy turned out to be not only energetic and conscientious but also very personable, well trained, dedicated, trying hard to learn her new job and the person I wanted first on the scene in the most unlikely event I hit a rattlesnake or stumbled on a protruding rock and landed on my head. I later found a shelter register entry announcing that a hiker thought he had fallen in love with the ridge runner.

It must be Saturday, I thought to myself. There are lots of day hikers out from the camp grounds and picnic grounds. The volunteers on the PATC heavy-duty trail maintenance crews were also out. Powerful young men were digging out sizable rocks and moving them to make those drainage runs across the trail called "water bars." So many hiking feet displace the spongy layer of needles and leaves and compact the ground so that the rain is not absorbed but runs downhill. Water bars are supposed to drain the flow away from the trail back to the forest humus before too much erosion occurs.

One maintenance crew was all women who remarked that they were cleaning up the waterbars just like they would have been cleaning up at home. "The men make 'em just as always and we still end up cleaning 'em!" No words came to my mind to disabuse these women of their self image or inspire them to grab the pick axes, start making water bars and leave the cleaning out to the men for a change.

One of these women, a school teacher from Bordentown, N.J., found special reward doing this work. She

See WATER, page 18

Country Crossroads

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin



June 1999

Dear Maude,

How wonderful it was to get your letter and hear about the gardens and the barbecues and the firemen's carnivals. Oh, how I would love to have a big piece of barbecued chicken right now!! Of course, when I have the time, I can fix my own chicken and green beans, but they just don't taste like they do at home.

We are again into fundraising, and there are constant invitations to breakfasts, luncheons and receptions, and as always, the heavy-hitting dinners. (Yes, it is indeed that time again!!) Since the boss has always been most generous, we get an amazing number of invitations. Many members, as well as those who want to be members, are getting a little nervous because the money is slow about coming in. Many contributors don't begin to give until an election year. For someone who is running to have to wait until the first of January to start receiving funds makes them very uncomfortable. What if the money doesn't come in? What, oh mercy, if one should have to pay for some special election expense, like a glass of wine, out of one's own pocket? So because the politicians are so nervous, those invitations are rolling in.

There is no way the boss could go to them all, (or would want to,) so the rest of us take turns showing up with a happy smile and a check in our hands and sample the offered repast. The breakfasts are not so bad, since about all one has to deal with is coffee or tea and some kind of fancy pastry. No need to spend any extra money on hot foods no one will eat at that time of day. A reception is also not such a bad place to be sent with a small, white, unpretentious envelope in one's handbag. One discovers, when exposing such an envelope, that there are people who are suddenly the best friends you ever had, even though you cannot remember their names. These receptions can be fun, however, for a lot of the people in attendance are other aides who are representing their bosses, and many of us know one another. The refreshments are usually not all that tempting. After all, just how much can you do with cheese and other pick-up food when you do not want to waste too much of the incoming cash. The dinners, of course, are an entirely different matter, and needless to say, seldom are

any of us sent on the errand of delivering a check to one of these affairs. The bosses like to have their own smiling face seen behind the little white envelope, and to have the opportunity of visiting with their peers, bragging about their golf game, and being with the politician in whose honor all of this is done.

The luncheons, however, many of us get to attend. And, often we even get a chance to plan them. The boss wanted to do something for one of the female members of Congress, and thought that it might be nice if I took care of it. The lady, so far, has only done breakfasts, and they are not as successful, for personal meeting of contributors, as are the luncheons. Those with money in their pockets like to sit down and talk to the person into whose pocket they plan to place the money.

I have been working on this luncheon for the past two weeks. Finally, I found someone who is both a friend to the boss and to the lady who is running, and convinced him to pick up the tab. That was quite a job, but now at least, the lady can come as a guest and hopefully, leave with a bit to add to her campaign chest. We finally decided on a place to have it — a nice medium-size, trendy, but not too trendy, restaurant that is often used for this purpose. Then I was stuck with the choice of a menu, which meant I had to set up a tasting with the restaurant staff. So off I went last week, to sit and have put before me all the special choices selected by the chef. There was a cold plate which consisted of a chicken salad made with walnuts and blueberries, and other interesting things. Then there was a fancy fish dish, so carefully displayed with three pieces of asparagus and one or two other tiny

vegetables, that I did not know if I was allowed to disturb it. A little piece of steak and a very elegant salad, containing grapefruit and more nuts and who knows what else, was next offered. Here I had to taste three different salads with various dressings to decide which of those I liked best. Finally, a broiled piece of chicken breast with a puff (not nearly the size of Mama's smallest biscuits) of garlic mashed potatoes with a dollop of something I was never able to identify and a little speck of green in the top which on closer inspection turned out to be parsley. Beside this was a very artistically arranged little fan of five, barely steamed, green beans. As I looked at the plate I thought of those dinners at the fire hall. Wonder what folks at home would say if someone were to put one of those plates in front of them!! They wouldn't know whether to eat it or have it framed, would they?

Even though the main course was finally decided upon, the work still was not over. Desert had to be chosen. Here came a tray with all this stuff that, by then, after the fish and chicken and other things, did not look so exciting. One is expected to taste everything offered and to say that something looks nice simply will not do. So taste, taste, taste I did. Now I will have to go shopping to find some clothes to fit over the pounds I gained in that two-hour session at the restaurant. I wonder if I can put a couple of new dresses on my expense account?

Please give everyone at home my love and tell them that I wish I were there with them enjoying the really good food. Love, LuLu

•Water

Continued from page 17
was happy to be out in the woods doing whatever away from her class.

The Romans may have built straight, level roads all over their empire but they did not have the Blue Ridge Moun-

tains to contend with. The CCC built not only lots of the Skyline Drive, lodges and shelters but also lots of the AT. On the sunset side of the Blue Ridge opposite Luray and Stanley, the New Market and Woodstock Gaps, there is mile upon mile of trail with heavy rocks on the downhill

side and level dirt packed against them.

Today's hikers give themselves trail names and use them with great consistency and enthusiasm. But I noticed that most of what was carved or burned into the ceilings of the shelters are initials or given names. The times,

they are ever changing.

Through-hikers were quick to recount their deer, spotted fawn and bear sightings. Several had walked right up on fawns and touched them. I guess these might be city types who don't know that wild newborns spend lots of their time

See TIME, page 19

Bird Blitz yields uncommon woodpecker sighting

By MARK GATEWOOD

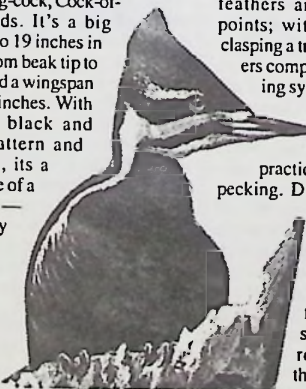
If we'd been inside a vehicle, we never would have heard it: a high-pitched squealing commotion 30 feet up in a roadside tree. We were taking part in the Augusta County Bird Club's Breeding Bird Blitz. The Blitz was an effort during the summer of 1998 to get a lot of observers out in the field during breeding season to pinpoint just what birds were breeding in the county and where.

My Wife the Biology Teacher was coordinator for the Mt. Sidney block and we were doing one of her routes by bicycle, which put us in position to see something we'd never seen before: a pileated woodpecker nest with young. The nest tree was right beside the road and the commotion was the "baby," which was nearly as big as the parent, squawking for food.

The pileated woodpecker is the biggest, boldest, most outlandish bird you'll see in this neck of the

woods. Some of the bird's other names, taken from turn-of-the-century literature, reflect the awe and astonishment of early observers: Lord-god (very similar to my dad's reaction the first time he saw a pileated at close range in his wooded, suburban backyard), Log-cock, Cock-of-the-woods. It's a big bird: up to 19 inches in length from beak tip to tail tip and a wingspan up to 30 inches. With its bold black and white pattern and red crest, it's a caricature of a bird — Woody Woodpecker on steroids.

As a group, the



woodpeckers have several design features which set them apart from other birds. Where songbirds' feet have three toes to the front and one in back, woodpeckers have two toes to the front and two to the back, making a very effective grasping tool for climbing. Their tail feathers are stiff and taper to points; with both feet securely clasping a tree trunk, the stiff feathers complete a three-point bracing system to aid in climbing and to give leverage for pecking.

Woodpeckers practice two distinct types of pecking. Drumming, a sustained rat-a-tat-tat, is used to advertise territory and the presence of a male. It serves, in other words, the same function as song in songbirds. The more resonant the surface, the better for drumming.

A dead, hollow tree is good, but a telephone insulator, metal gutter or the side of a house may be even better. The second type of pecking is what we'll call chiseling and is the removal of wood in search of food. Chiseling is usually more tentative-sounding, consisting of a few pecks and a pause. A pileated, on a standing dead tree, can remove literally bushels of bark and wood in a short time. Pileated chisel-work is very distinctive for its size — you can put your fist in some of its holes — and the fact that most borings are a very regular rectangular shape.

The woodpecker diet is mainly the insect larvae and ants which inhabit decaying wood. They will augment this seasonally with acorns, fruits and berries, including poison ivy berries. As chiseling uncovers the insects, the woodpecker's long, sticky, barbed tongue goes to work to spear and snare the prey. Knowing this, I sup-

pose you could regard a woodpecker drumming on the side of your house as a mere annoyance; if he starts chiseling away your siding, he might know something you don't about the condition of your home.

Our nest sighting went into the records of the Breeding Bird Blitz, but it's by no means a rarity. *Birds of Augusta County, Virginia* lists the pileated as uncommon to locally common and cites several other nests in the county. The pileated is a big bird and requires a lot of territory just to find food, so it's never going to be abundant. This is probably good news for all those people building wood homes on wooded lots. Pileateds are said to form pair bonds and maintain territories year-round, so if there's a pileated woodpecker in your neighborhood — or, more correctly, if you're in a pileated's neighborhood — it's likely to be a long-term relationship. —

Notting Hill puts humor in star-struck romance

William Thacker has lived his whole life in Notting Hill, a quaint but unassuming London neighborhood. He runs a small book store and has a close circle of friends. His marriage lasted about four minutes, however, and he has taken in a border, a Welshman named Spike, to make ends meet. Life is normal. Then one day Anna Scott, superstar Queen of the Screen, walks into William's shop and his normal life turns upside down.

So begins *Notting Hill*, a quaint, unassuming film now playing at the Bijou. Writer Richard Curtis (Four Weddings and a Funeral) and director Roger Mitchell (Persuasion), prove that the Brothers Grimm don't have a lock on fairy tales. There is a sophisticated and witty tale of love, celebrity, and friendship with a light sugar-coating.

William (Hugh Grant — *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Nine Months*) immediately recognizes Anna Scott, the superstar (Julia Roberts — *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *Conspiracy Theory*) and just about every other movie made in the last 10 years. He tries to be cool and make an impression all at once, stammering and blushing and smiling in true Hugh Grant style. His charm does not work, however.

Anna, used to being recognized, is impervious to serendip-

William Thacker, his Notting Hill friends, and other characters in the movie all react differently when they come face-to-face with the celebrity Anna Scott. It begs the question, how did you act when you had your brush with a celebrity? The Statler Brothers don't count.

Some years ago while standing in line for Virginia Metalcrafters' post-Thanksgiving day sale, I struck up a conversation with the man standing in line in front of me. His rather upscale, chic clothes told me he was "from away," but he was quite friendly, talkative and effusive about the sale, having

ity and skilled at civility while remaining aloof. She leaves. But, of course, if that were the end of the story this would be but a 10-minute movie, hardly worth your time and money. And this movie is worth your time and money, so you must know that William and Anna soon meet again.

A chain of events brings William and Anna together. William eventually takes her on a date to dinner at his unsuspecting friends' home. By the end of the evening, he is completely smitten with Anna — hooked on love heroin, as he says later. The ro-

Tell me your star-struck tales

been to one there before.

After the doors opened and the line of people moved into the plant, the man disappeared. After about an hour of shopping, I saw the man walking toward me with a woman. I started to call out, "This is every bit as good as you said" but stopped short when I saw the woman at his side — Sissy Spacek. She was casually dressed and wore — yep, you guessed it — sunglasses. She walked quickly through the aisles with her head down, obviously not wanting to be recognized.

I didn't speak, but I was excited to tell someone of my "discovery."

mance turns sour when Anna's boyfriend (a surprise, uncredited appearance by Alec Baldwin), another superstar, unwittingly puts William back into his place as a "nobody" and Anna vanishes back into her Hollywood life.

This is still not the end of things (remember, this movie is worth your time and money!). Anna comes into and goes out of William's life several more times. In one very smart sequence director Mitchell marks the passage of a year as William walks down his street. Eventually romance blossoms but not before the star-crossed lovers

I grabbed my daughters, Amanda and Hannah, who were 8 and 6 at the time, and whispered, "See that lady over there? She's a famous movie star." They coolly walked over to the actress, looked her up and down, and then walked away. Hannah later told me she could tell the lady was a star. "How?" I asked. "She was wearing black jellies." But of course.

Have you had a brush with fame? Tell me about it.

Send your "starstruck tales" to Augusta Country's Flick Flak movie critic Sue Simmons at P.O. Box 51, Middlebrook, Va. 24459.

must hurdle all the obstacles celebrity puts in their way.

While I am not a huge fan of either Hugh Grant or Julia Roberts (I'd like to wipe that smirk off of his face just once and doesn't that toothy grin and cloying little scream of hers just drive you crazy?), they are terrific together in this movie. Their chemistry is irresistible as they play off, rather than at, one another. They must have had great fun making this movie which gives each actor opportunities to take some potshots at the press which regularly puts both stars through the grinder.

FLICK



FLAK

A movie review by

Hannah's mom, Sue Simmons

The movie's chemistry doesn't just come from Roberts and Grant, though. A nearly perfect ensemble, especially Emma Chambers as William's sister and Rhys Ifans as his roommate Spike, supports the story beautifully and sometimes steals scenes right out from under the stars' noses. Spike in particular is a catalytic piece of work — quirky, funny, "out there." It's hard to describe the character but he gets the biggest laughs in the movie.

Notting Hill is reminiscent of last year's *You've Got Mail* but better, more sophisticated and satisfying. It's a nice love story with a message about the price of fame and the appeal of normal life. It's fun summer fare and the perfect "date movie." The movie is rated PG-13 for language and some sexual innuendo. Hannah's mom gives *Notting Hill* four bananas.

Calves

Continued from page 11

born. If the calf had nursed, as I was convinced it had, then presenting it to the cow with twins would determine if it did belong to her.

The calf was bawling and hungry when I took it into the barn lot late that Saturday afternoon. It drew a bead on the cow, approached, the cow sniffed it and the calf sniffed the cow, then the calf went straight to the cow's udder — almost as if drawn by some electromagnetic force — and began nursing with vigor. The cow had her other two calves in tow and she did a couple tumarounds demonstrating some confusion in an attempt to count the calves, but the unclaimed calf would not be deterred. He latched onto the cow and as far as I'm concerned, that solved the mystery of the unclaimed baby calf.

Now why, you ask, mightn't we have seen the third calf the afternoon it was born and not know it belonged to the cow with what we thought were twin calves? I mean,

after all, a baby calf is not so small as to go unnoticed in an open field. Well, here's the thing. Down on the Farm devotees will recall my mention in an earlier column about the stuff which my mother calls "all that trash" and which my father says "might come in" piled up in great heaps near the barn. With that column there was even a photo of a cow with her newborn calf which had been born during an overnight snowstorm in the shelter of some rolled up fence wire among the heaps of cast offs. Well, it was in this same area where the cow which we thought had twin calves delivered her offspring.

If the cow had triplets, she must have had one which got up and nursed. Then it moved off, perhaps to the opposite side of one of these vast piles of incredibly valuable items and settled itself down for its post-birth nap. The cow then went into labor for the arrival of the next calf which turned out to be the next two calves which occurred in rapid succession. These are the ones my father saw born and determined the

cow needed to be moved to the barn lot because she was headed up over the hill with one calf and had left the other behind. This is the danger in multiple births among cattle. One, and in this case, two, get left behind and do not receive the necessary care. And there would have been practically no earthly sense, no plausible reason, no power of creation that would have sent us looking for a third calf. But yet, when this unclaimed calf was presented to the cow with the twins, it was reasonable to deduce that they had met before.

So with the reunited but unverified set of triplet calves this left me with the chore of providing some supplemental nutrition which I did in the form of milk replacer twice a day. We kept the calves shut away from the cow and turned her into them twice daily — one, to provide her with some respite from having three calves nurse her continuously; two, to make sure the calves shared equally in her milk and keep one calf from hogging it all; and three, to keep the calves hungry enough between feedings so they would take the milk replacer when it was offered instead of having

their appetites curbed by what little milk they would get from the cow.

The calves did very well the first week. The second week the runt of the three turned up with an injured hind leg which must have happened when the calves were nursing the cow. With three calves nursing at once, somebody is bound to get stepped on. But after another week or so, he began to get stronger and now, all of three months later, the triplets continue to thrive with some milk replacer once a day supplemental to what they get from the cow. They are no longer penned from her but graze with her in the barn pasture and come running for their bottles when I appear in the mornings.

I guess the arrival of triplets (even unverified) could be one of those infrequent occurrences which might give one cause to interpret what these signs and wonders might possibly mean in the grand scheme of things. Does it portend some event to come? Or is it just simply one of those things that happens, well, once in a blue moon?

And beyond the pasture this spring, I couldn't help but notice a

low level whirring emanating from the woods. Too busy to have a look for myself, I sent off an e-mail to a friend to inquire if he had noticed this same whirring sound. His response sent me scurrying off to the woods despite my busy-ness to find just what he had said I would find — the arrival of the 17-year cicadas.

As it turns out, this hatch of cicadas occurred on or about May 15 and was foreseen and even documented prior to the date by cicada watchers across the country. There was even a big Cicada Celebration in Columbus, Ohio on June 5. Ohio, it seems, is at the very epicenter of this year's cicada invasion.

If you don't know what a cicada is, do not be afraid. Although their appearance is a bit startling and maybe even a little spooky, they present virtually no harmful effect to the environment. And, if you can believe anyone would try it — and yes, of course, this being 1999 you know there's somebody somewhere who would — one internet website reports the cicada "tastes just like shrimp when you fry them up with butter." Drat, and wouldn't

See *CICADA*, page 20

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Sun., 11 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Time

Continued from page 18

lying around. Fawns and their mothers were quite tame and let us observe their moseying, preening, licking, nursing, and shaking of tails and heads to keep the gnats busy. The fawns were so small they

could walk under their mothers' stomachs without touching.

Tents, bivvy sacks, bug netting and tarpaulins have become so light, easy to set up and free-standing that many through-hikers now carry their own shelters. The huts, all three-sided shelters, are nonetheless the principal congregating

points for overnight stays because there are water sources and privies as well as the log books where you can keep up with how far ahead or behind your hiking companions are and any messages you are leaving each other. Nothing upsets through hikers as an empty, brand new replacement register
See *SHELTERS*, page 20

Shelters

Continued from page 19
and no sign of the old log with all the vital information.

Way back when, hikers entered not much more than name and date into shelter logs. Entries have expanded to epic and rhapsodic descriptions, commentary and critiques on any subject and communications among hikers. The times, they have changed.

The PATC shelter maintainer at Bearfence Shelter was no nonsense on the one hand: "Some of these hikers who benefit from the good condition of the AT should be doing some of the maintenance. Good intentions just don't cut the weeds!" On the other hand he had brought water and other drinks for the hikers staying at "his" shelter. Some through-hikers talked en-

thusiastically about "slack packing." You hike and someone else brings the pack along by car or truck. One hiker was happy to report hiking 128 miles of which she had slack-packed more than 100. The times they have changed.

Buttercup was one hiker dog's real name not her trail name. She did not even have a trail name. She did not even carry a pair of saddlebags filled with her own food. "Why not?" I asked. "The bags were wearing sore spots on her." I wondered if my dog would have carried my pack for me if I had showed him my backpack was wearing holes in me.

One group of six behaved like a reunion group of some sort: a father and his two sons, a coach-like type in fair shape and two young men who had flown into Charlottesville where

they were met by their shuttle who took them to the AT at Rockfish Gap. We other hikers speculated as to whether they were family, workplace, or maybe hometown related. They got along well together, ate the same meals, knew each other and mutual acquaintances well and mentioned this was their third year hiking together. They said the PATC keeps a list of shuttlers available upon request.

Some hikers are real characters, going out of their way to be different. One pair of young women was carrying a plastic swan planter, which they had named and which was making its own shelter log entries. Some couples were married, other couples not, some had formed couples right there on the AT, some of the solo hikers were sociable and others more on the

reclusive side, some out for the social adventure, some concentrating on the through-hike and nothing else. One shelter log had a whole page in color devoted to excited congratulations and a picture of one couple's wedding.

There were a variety of estimations of what the through hike costs. \$1 per mile is at the low end, \$1.50 at the average. No one dared calculate in the cost of equipment on a per mile basis. No hiker seemed ready to venture such a guess because there is such a variety of equipment, equipment cost and hiking style. Some hikers try for ultra-light hiking with little but expensive equipment. Others carry more but consider the extras worth the effort. And then there are some who over-pack. One hiker told of "a brick" of

the complete set of AT maps from Maine to Georgia in another's pack.

But all on the AT is not beauty, joy, paradise or utopia. There was one thing I saw which was awful. It was the worst thing I saw on the AT in all those nine days. No it was not a smashed beer bottle or a dozen candy wrappers, not a pile of cigarette butts or worse. It was a paper clip.

I am extending my string of consecutive zero-days right here in Staunton and will do so until the first frosts clear the air of gnats and mosquitoes. In the meanwhile, I will keep these through-hikers I met in early June clear in mind. When I meet any one of them, I will find out all about my fellow hiker and then ask about all the others we know in common. Am I through-hiking? "No" and "No." —

Cicada

Continued from page 19

you just know it's a delicacy we can get only once every 17 years?

For those unfamiliar with cicada — pronunciations vary, cicada with a long "a" in the middle or cicada with a short "a" in the middle, like potato or potaaaaaaahhhhhito, to-mato or to-maaaaaaahhhhhito — either way you pronounce it, the cicada is among the insects which some folks refer to as 17-year locusts. But the bugs aren't locusts at all. Locusts are of the grasshopper variety. Cicadas, the adult form of which have wings and can be found high in the forest canopy, emerge every 13 to 17 years. The nymphs come out of the ground from their subterranean existence and begin their upward climb on tree trunks or any vertical structure which they can grasp. You may see the cicada's empty brown shell-like casings, split open down the back and attached to tree trunks. After emerging from the shells, the insects continue their climb into the trees where they spend the remainder of their brief existences emitting the cicada love chirp.

If you go into the woods, do not be surprised to find a virtual army of empty cicada casings attached to tree trunks. Upon study of the forest floor, you will find numerous holes no more than 3/8th-inch across from which the cicada nymphs emerged. The cicada casings, all poised straight up, present the appearance of something those wacky X Files folks might have fictionalized for their TV series. But cicadas aren't an imagined phenomenon like flying saucers — oops, hope I didn't burst any mother ship bubbles out there — or Big Foot — sorry to disappoint you, but it's just a big guy in a hairy costume. Cicadas are here — in countless numbers — for our summertime enjoyment.

To give you a better understanding of the cicada, I provide the following information taken from a University of Michigan internet website.

"In the spring of the 13th or 17th year, a few weeks before emerging, the [cicada] nymphs construct exit tunnels to the surface. These exits are visible as approximately 1/2-inch diameter holes or as chimney-

like mud 'turrets' the nymphs sometimes construct over their holes. On the night of emergence, nymphs leave their burrows after sunset (usually), locate a suitable spot on nearby vegetation, and complete their final molt to adulthood.

"Shortly after molting, the new adults appear mostly white, but they darken quickly as the exoskeleton hardens. The cues that determine the particular night on which the nymphs emerge and molt are not well understood, but soil temperature probably plays an important role. Sometimes a large proportion of the population emerges in one night. Newly-emerged cicadas spend roughly four to six days as 'teneral' adults before they harden completely; they do not begin adult behavior until this period of maturation is complete.

"After their short teneral period, males begin producing species-specific calling songs and form choruses which attract females. Males in these choruses alternate bouts of singing with short flights until they locate receptive females. Contrary to popular belief, adults do feed by sucking plant fluids; adult cicadas will die if not pro-

vided with living woody vegetation on which to feed.

"Mated females excavate a series of Y-shaped egg nests in living twigs and lay up to 20 eggs in each nest. A female may lay as many as 600 eggs. After six to 10 weeks, in midsummer, the eggs hatch and the new first-instar nymphs drop from the trees, burrow underground, locate a suitable rootlet for feeding, and begin their 13- or 17-year development."

Scientists are at a loss to explain the cicada's 17-year cycle which they refer to as "an unusual life strategy." The insects spend many years below ground, emerge in great numbers (up to 1.5 million per acre have been documented), and spend a relatively short amount of time above ground as adults. They provide an abundant food source for birds, snakes, spiders, dogs, cats or just about anything that comes across them. However there are so many, those getting gobbled up don't even make a ripple in the entire cicada population. (As odd as the cicada life strategy appears, it's interesting to note that cicadas hatch more frequently than Susan

Lucci can win a daytime Emmy.)

So there you have it. Only half of the last year before nearly the beginning of the 21st century has passed and we've already been inundated with enough infrequent occurrences to last us until the next millennium. Weather that is monotonously predictable only because the occurrence of precipitation is the most remote possibility of all forecasts. The moon has come full twice in two calendar months. One month had no full moon at all. A cow delivered (unverified) triplet calves. The cicadas have mounted their once-in-17-years invasion. And, yes, Susan Lucci finally won a daytime Emmy after 18 years of being nominated for the award.

It's hard to tell what's ahead for the remainder of this year. Forecasts for a more active than average hurricane season have already started. It's difficult to sort out all these events. Particularly the Susan Lucci Emmy win. But there's no real reason to try, I suppose. The best we can do down on the farm, is take note and wonder, and leave it to the folks in 2999 to look back and know all the answers. —

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.



July 3 — The "Dog Days" of summer traditionally begin this day of the year. The hot weather period received its name from Sirius, the brightest visible star in the sky and known as the dog star. Sirius rises in the east at the same time as the sun this time of the year.

July 3, 1956

— A world record for the most

rain in one minute was set at Unionville, Md., with a downpour of 1.23 inches.

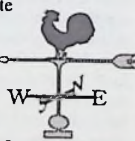
July 8, 1950

— The town of York, Neb., was deluged with 13.15 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record.

July 15, 1954 — The temperature at Balcony Falls, Va., soared to 110 degrees to establish a state record.

July 22-23, 1923 — Sheridan, Wyo., was drenched with 4.41 inches of rain, an all-time 24 hour record for that location. Associated flooding washed out 20 miles of railroad track.

July 28, 1934 — The temperature at Grofino, Idaho climbed to 118 degrees to establish a record for Idaho. —



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