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*Down on the Farm*  
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103 years young

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Happy anniversary,  
Rosie and Charlie!

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make everyone a winner

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## Patriotism is fervent love for country

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following essay won top honors in the VFW Youth Essay Competition conducted by VFW Post 2216 of Staunton. It also was selected first-place at the district level and earned third-place honors in the state contest. The essay topic posed the question, "What does it mean to be patriotic?"

By SIMON STOLTZFUS

What is patriotism? What does it mean to be a patriot? There are many different opinions on these questions and many different answers to them. Some people say that being patriotic is standing for the national anthem and never criticizing our leaders; some say that being patriotic means finding problems in the government and correcting them. Still others say it means joining the armed forces.

To me, patriotism is as much a feeling as an action. I think it means loving one's country, wishing the best for it, and wanting it to be as prosperous as possible. It means doing everything one can to help

one's country, and taking pride in being a citizen. It means, as John F. Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Being patriotic means being willing to do anything to serve one's country. That is what makes a patriot — loving one's country and being loyal to it, maybe even being willing to die for it. Being patriotic means one is willing to risk everything for the benefit of one's nation, not with one's self in mind, but one's country. For example, when Nathan Hale volunteered to go behind British lines as a spy in the battle for New York, he was captured and sentenced to death. When asked if he had any last words he said, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." That was being patriotic. He was thinking not of himself, but of his country. That is what being a patriot is all about, loving one's country so much one would do anything for its betterment.

In conclusion, being patriotic means being loyal and devoted to one's country, being faithful to it, and being a proud follower of it. Being patriotic is not only actions, it is a feeling, an idea, and an understanding. In short, it means having a fervent love for one's country and being willing to do anything for it. —

Simon Stoltzfus is a seventh-grade student at Beverley Manor Middle School.



STOLTZFUS

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## Open air burning regulations in effect through April 30

Open burning or outdoor fires are regulated and enforced through Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and, through April 30, the Virginia Department of Forestry.

The Middlebrook Volunteer Fire Department advises citizens to comply with state regulations concerning open air burning.

These regulations mandate

that anyone conducting burning shall call the Augusta County Emergency Operations Center at 540/245-5061 prior to burning. Only brush, tree trimmings and the like can be burned. Persons conducting burning must be in sight of the fire at all times while smoke and flames are visible. Persons conducting the burn are responsible for damage if fire

escapes and can be liable for fire suppression cost.

Citizens wanting additional information may call the Staunton Forestry Office at 540/332-7770 or the Salem district office at 540/387-5461.

Questions also may be directed to the Augusta County chief of fire-rescue at 540/245-5372. —

## Augusta County Library joins nationwide public awareness effort

To kick off National Library Week, the Augusta County Library will join libraries across the country in a new, national, public awareness effort called The Campaign for America's Libraries. Sponsored by the American Library Association, the multi-year campaign is designed to remind the public that today's libraries are dynamic, modern community centers for learning, information and entertainment. The campaign intends to increase awareness about the vibrancy and real value of today's libraries.

The public education effort is a response to research that shows that while libraries are popular they are

often taken for granted. Research also indicated that while libraries are rooted in nearly every community, in schools, campuses and busi-

nesses across the country, they are often not visible. The campaign is designed to showcase public,

See *LIBRARY*, page 12

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# Centenarian credits love for longevity

By NANCY SORRELLS

**STAUNTON** — At her 103rd birthday party recently at Loyalton in Staunton, Mollie Rogers revealed her secret of longevity — "plenty of love."

Mollie's 82-year-old daughter Mary Stout added that good nutrition might have something to do with it as well. "We think a lot of it is the way we eat. We have always had a garden and have eaten a lot of fruits and vegetables. Mother, who was the third of 13 children, had a lot of brothers and sisters with heart problems but Mother never developed heart trouble," she said. She added that her mother has three younger siblings still alive: a 96-year-old sister, an 89-year-old sister, and an 86-year-old brother.

Whether or not love has anything to do

with reaching the century mark, Mollie has spent a lifetime doling out love and caring for family and friends. "She has taken care of so many others that it's her turn. Her husband, my father, died 10 years ago today on her birthday and she took care of him. He was 95 when he died," said Mary.

There aren't many people who can say they have lived in three centuries, but Mollie is one of those rare individuals. She was born in North Carolina on April 18, 1898. She has early memories of having malaria and being treated with quinine, but she revealed another memory that goes back to the days when she was just a toddler. "I remember being sick and the family wanting to go to an all-day meeting on the church grounds. Mother had a beautiful quilt and she spread it out on the ground and put me on it and I remember laying on the quilt and looking up and seeing all the horses' feet all around at the meeting," she remembered.

Growing up in rural North Carolina made it difficult to obtain a good education but her family has always held education in high regard. Mollie's father gave land and lumber to build the first school in the area so his children wouldn't have to walk miles and miles to school. When she grew up, she went off to college, first to Elon College and then to the North Carolina College for Women, now UNC-Greensboro.

In 1917 she married James Henry Rogers, a graduate of North Carolina State and an agricultural reformer. The couple had seven children, five of whom are still living. "Education was always really important to us. We just always knew we were going to college," said Mary who is a retired teacher. Five of the Rogers children wound up teaching and 10 of the grandchildren became teachers.

Mollie and James Henry were active in the farming community wherever they lived. They were both active in the Grange, a national agricultural organization that worked

to improve the welfare of farmers. "Father worked to get REA (electricity) in Virginia through his work with the Grange," explained Mary. "Mother would lead the young people in the Grange," she added.

The stories from Mollie and her family describe a dynamic woman who loved people and accepted challenges head on. "Mother had a wonderful Tennessee walking horse named 'Charlie' and she loved to ride. She was one of the first women around to wear a divided skirt," remembered Mary.

Shortly after Mary was born, Mollie and James Henry bought a 1918 red Oldsmobile convertible with a rumbleseat. "Nobody ever taught me to drive," said Mollie when the car was mentioned. "I just got in the car and drove it and found out there was nothing to it."

Despite her own workload, Mollie was always willing to lend a helping hand to others. "When my children started coming along, Mother still had four children at home and she still would come and stay with me when the babies arrived. Back then little girls clothes had to be starched and ironed and she always came in looking for the laundry basket to help me," said Mary.

Mary's daughter, Mary Lu Lewis, has many fond memories of her grandmother, including the time she used the shotgun to scare off some squirrels raiding her bird feeders. "She took the shotgun down and shot the squirrel from INSIDE the house and through the window screen," she remembered. "Gran has always been a very precise and neat person," she added. "As soon as dinner is over the dishes have to be washed and put away. Even today when I come and visit her if I put my coat on the bed she tells me to hang it in the closet."

In addition to her daughter and granddaughter, a crowd of residents from Loyalton, where Mollie lives, attended Mollie's party. After singing Happy Birthday, many of Mollie's younger friends in



Mary Stout and Mary Lu Lewis, standing from left, daughter and granddaughter of Mollie Rogers, seated, celebrated Mollie's 103rd birthday with her recently.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

their 90s came up to wish her well and give her a hug. She was also serenaded by another Loyalton resident, Arthur O'Conner.

"It is hard to say what I want to say without crying," said Mollie in her birthday "speech." "You are all so dear. I never dreamed I would reach 100 much less 103. Everybody has been so sweet to me that I can never repay everyone. Just remember that God made this world with love and you can never get enough of it. Never forget to keep love for your family and friends because that's what means the most in life."

Two days after the Loyalton party, much of Mollie's family was planning to converge on the area and return some of the love they have received from the family matriarch. Mollie has 26 grandchildren, 30 great grandchildren (and two more due to arrive soon), and two great-great grandchildren. If that's not a legacy of love, then nothing is. —



Mollie Rogers slices her birthday cake during a party held in her honor recently.

## Tidds honored on 50th wedding anniversary



Rosie and Charles Tidd were honored recently for their golden wedding anniversary.

Photo by Vera Hailey

By VERA HAILEY

**STUARTS DRAFT** — A 50th wedding anniversary reception was given by family and friends in honor of Charles and Rosie Tidd at Stuarts Draft on Feb. 24 at the VFW building. The celebration included a reading of their family history and list of descendants. Attendees were invited to the microphone to share memories and congratulations. A buffet dinner followed the program.

Charles Tidd was born in the Dixon's Hill area of Highland County to John W. and Lillie Kelly Tidd. Rosie Bowen was born in

Augusta County to Robert W. and Cora Grimm Bowen. Charles and Rosie were married on Feb. 23, 1951 at the home of Rev. Guy Stump in Waynesboro.

Charlie attended Monterey High School before serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1946 to 1947, from which he received an honorable discharge. Rosie attended Wilson Memorial High School in Fishersville.

After their marriage, they moved to Herbert Chase's farm in Greenwood in Albemarle County where Charlie worked as a farm hand.

The family's next move was to

See *TIDDS*, page 19



Rosie Bowen and Charles Tidd during their "courting" days.

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# Mustang, burro adoption preserves link to past

By NANCY SORRELLS

Millions of years ago a small horse-like mammal called Eohippus developed in North America. This creature, which stood only 10 inches high, was the ancestor of today's horse. Fossil records show that this early horse thrived and eventually evolved into something very similar to today's horse before it disappeared completely. By the time prehistoric man showed up on the continent in large numbers, there were no horses. For tens of thousands of years the only domesticated animal in the Americas were the llama in the southern hemisphere and the dog in the northern hemisphere.

All that changed in the early 1500s when the Spanish conquistadors arrived with their short, stocky horses and burros. Very soon equines were again living in America. Inevitably horses and burros escaped and began living on the rangeland in the American southwest where they multiplied exponentially. Native Americans quickly learned to use the horse for riding and pulling supplies.

By the late 18th and early 19th centuries when settlers from the young United States began moving west there were several million wild horses living on the land. Those settlers soon brought more horses and introduced new blood. Miners brought more bur-



Wild mustangs are gathered for sorting and adoption through the U.S. Bureau of Land Management program designed to curb numbers of free-ranging mustangs on BLM land.

BLM file photo

ros as well, increasing the wild donkey population.

In the 19th century when land transportation was by horse, the mustangs of the west were seen as a valuable resource. The U.S. Cavalry even introduced thoroughbred

See related story, page 16

stud horses into the wild population to improve their remount program. Most of the U.S. Cavalry horses in the Civil War came from wild mustang blood.

But times change and with the advent of the auto the usefulness

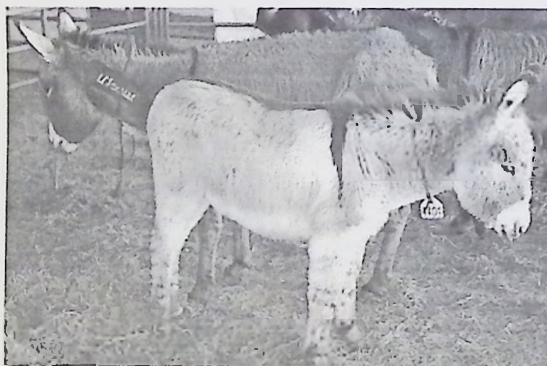
of the horse plummeted. With very few natural predators on the range, the mustang and burro population skyrocketed, ranchers complained about competition, and the natural resources of some habitats were completely depleted of food by large herds.

Most of today's wild horse populations are on Bureau of Land Management land which is under the U.S. Department of Interior. With 270 million acres, most out west, the BLM is the largest land management agency in the country.

By the 1950s the horse population on BLM lands was skyrocketing and the animals were being rounded up and slaughtered for pet food. The first wild horse act designating the animals as part of America's living history came in that decade. In 1971 the animals came under federal protection and in 1973 the Adopt a Living Legend program was launched.

Since that time, 170,000 wild horses and burros have been adopted. Even though several thousand animals are adopted every year, the program has not kept pace with the 20 percent reproduction

See MUSTANGS, page 19



Wild burros also are offered for adoption through the BLM program. Some of the burros have been used to control coyote predation on farms.



Two wild mustangs sample their feed while waiting for the adoption process to begin at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington. The horses are identified by a freeze brand visible along the neck of the horse pictured above at right.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

## Adoption requires facilities, commitment

Adopting a wild mustang or burro is a simple process and one that can bring a lifetime of pleasure. But it is not something to be undertaken lightly. Remember that these animals were truly living in the wild less than three months before adoption. They were gathered or rounded up by helicopter from western rangeland, given basic veterinary care, branded humanely with liquid nitrogen (called a freeze brand), and shipped east to adoption centers.

Animals are adopted through a competitive bid process that starts at \$125. Many animals are adopted for that minimum fee although some may sell for as much as \$800. The minimum adoption fee helps defray the cost of gathers, medical treatment, transportation and adoption. Persons wishing to adopt must complete a simple application form and submit it to a BLM office. An approved person may adopt an animal at a special adoption day, at the adoption center in Tennessee or through the Internet. It is important to remember that this is an

adoption not a sale. The newly adopted wild horse or burro still belongs to the government for one year. At the end of a year (during which time a BLM official may visit the animal) the title is transferred if a qualified person (veterinarian, extension agent, etc.) has certified that the adopter has provided humane treatment.

To qualify to adopt, a person must be 18, have proper facilities and have no convictions for inhumane treatment of animals. Adopters must provide a 12x12-foot covered shelter and a corral that is 20x20 feet and at least six feet high for horses and five feet high for burros. Adopters must also have a solidly constructed stock-type trailer with a covered top and side swinging gates to transport the animal home.

Adoption forms can be obtained from the BLM, Jackson Field Office, 411 Briarwood Drive, Suite 404, Jackson, Mississippi 39206, or by calling 1-888-274-2133 or at [www.adoptahorse.blm.gov](http://www.adoptahorse.blm.gov).

## VALLEY SYMPHONIC CONCERTS 2000-2001

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# Notes from the road

In this issue, *Augusta Country* staff writer Mark Gatewood takes us on a journey to Virginia's southwest corner for a biking adventure along Abingdon's Virginia Creeper Trail.

## Abingdon's Virginia Creeper Trail provides pleasant spring getaway

By MARK GATEWOOD

It was too good to pass up: a weekend in April all to ourselves. Destination? Well, how about the Virginia Creeper Trail near Abingdon? Great! And let's do something really different. Instead of the usual bivouac in a chain motel hard by the interstate, let's stay at a bed and breakfast! It would be a weekend of firsts.

My first task was to find a B&B. Abingdon's web site, [www.abingdon.com/tourism](http://www.abingdon.com/tourism) was on the blink, so I called the Convention & Visitors Bureau (540/676-2282) and got phone numbers for the several B&Bs in town. Calling around, I found that all were a few dollars either side of \$100 a night, had private bathrooms and — can you believe this? — jacuzzis! Now, I usually camp and I'm pretty happy if the pit toilet is less than a hundred yards from my site, but a jacuzzi? I don't even know how to work one. Our choice came down to who had the nights we wanted and that was The Love House, on South Valley Street in Abingdon. (Let's get the



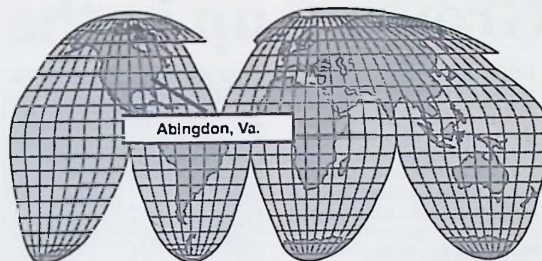
Hikers and bikers mingle at a rest area along Abingdon's Virginia Creeper Trail.

Photos by Mark Gatewood

name thing out of the way right now: the house was built by John A. Love in 1850. Or so they said.)

We left late Friday afternoon and enjoyed the rare experience of arriving in a strange place, after dark, worn out from four hours of dodging trucks on I-81 and trying to find our place of lodging. Actually, we easily found The Love House and innkeeper Richard Cano awaiting us. He showed us our room — and showed me how to use that jacuzzi — explained the breakfast arrangements in his nearby Victoria and Albert Inn and bade us goodnight.

I probably don't have to tell you how far the B&B experience was above a chain motel or a National Forest campground, so let's get on to the purpose of the trip, which was to ride on the Virginia Creeper Trail. This public access trail for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians, once carried lumber, iron ore, supplies and passengers on a steam railway. Virginia Creeper was the nickname given to the steam locomotives struggling along the steep grades and sharp curves of the rail line. The current trail runs for 34.3 miles between Abingdon and the Virginia-North Carolina border near Whitetop



My Wife the Biology Teacher checks out some of the perennials in the garden at The Love House, an Abingdon bed and breakfast.

passing through private land.

But first, we had to go to breakfast. We rolled out of bed — no jacuzzi yet — to a cool, cloudy, misty morning and walked to the Victoria and Albert Inn two blocks away. We met a young couple in the dining room who had done the trail the day before, choosing the option of being

shuttled by a local outfitter to the far end and highest point of the trail and riding back to Abingdon. From the tender way the young lady sat down at the table, I gather that the ride made quite an impression on her: 34 miles is a pretty ambitious introduction to mountain biking, even if

See *TRAIL*, page 19



Sections of the Virginia Creeper Trail cross pastures with access gained through a variety of self-closing gates. One was a very

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# Yesterday once more

*Voices from the past*

## Growing up in the mountains near Sherando

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Part of the following was included in the Augusta Heritage Book, published by the Augusta Genealogical Society in 1998. It gives a glimpse of life in rural Virginia in the early 1900s taken from journal entries recorded by Bessie Brydge Hailey.

By VERA HAILEY

Bessie Brydge Hailey attended Stuarts Draft High School, State Normal School in Harrisonburg and Dunsmore Business College in Staunton. She was a teacher at Laurel Hill School (within sight of her homeplace, near Sherando), Snead School (on Meadow Mountain), Cotopaxi (near Vesuvius), Rankin's School (near Rankin's Creek), Lyndhurst School (Lyndhurst) and Augusta Mennonite School (near Springdale Mennonite Church).

She was born near Sherando, Augusta County "on the cold, frosty morning" of Oct. 17, 1900 to Edward R. and Isabelle Henderson Brydge.

The following is excerpted from



BESSIE BRYDGE, 1926

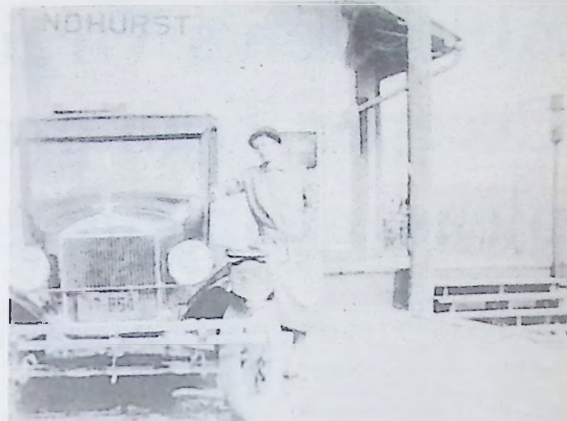
the 1977 journal reminisces of Bessie Brydge Hailey:

"In the summer of 1921, I helped with work at home, picking berries, working in the garden, helping with work on the sawmill. I turned screws and shoveled sawdust from the saw mill. Helped to pick apples

for fifty cents a day.

My first boyfriend was about my age of eighteen and we only dated several times a month, never through the week day. We walked, rode horseback and drove a buggy in our early friendship days, but there was always another couple or person along. We never had a date on Sunday afternoon later than nine o'clock in the evening. My cousin Daisy and I had a date with two brothers one evening at her home and about eight o'clock her daddie, who was in the next room, took off his shoe, struck it against the floor and said 'It's bedtime.' Believe me, the young men left immediately. We did not ask any questions.

For entertainment on Sunday afternoon, some of the young folks would gather at any home in the community that had an organ and we all gathered around and sang hymns and love songs, with me playing the music or a lady by the name of Mary Lunsford... So many of the young people on Back Creek were our cousins, so most of our boyfriends we had were boys who came from miles away,



Bessie Brydge with her first car at the Lyndhurst railroad station

walking or riding horseback as cars were not very plentiful.

In September of 1921, my sister Edna and I entered Stuarts Draft School at Stuarts Draft... Edna took the seventh grade and I took first year high school. We lived in a two room upstairs that belonged to Dr. W.B. Dodge. It cost about three dollars in rent per week and we had to board ourselves. Daddie would bring us to school on Monday morning and come for us on Friday after four o'clock and take us home for the weekend. This was when the telephone came in good, as we called home when we felt homesick. School went along good for us and we made our grades... I was historian of the freshman class, which is printed in the '1922 Chatters.' The faculty numbered ten and eight graduated that year. There were fifteen freshmen in our class.

Back home in the spring, to help with the work for awhile. About June of 1922, I took six weeks schooling at State Normal School at Harrisonburg and was given an examination on what was covered during the six weeks and I passed and received what was called 'Provisional First Grade Certificate,'

which allowed me to teach one term and I could work on renewal the next summer or a First Grade Certificate at forty dollars per month.

I was given a school in West heads District called Cotopaxi, a two room school with Miss Pauline Schreve helping. She had grades one through three and I had grades four through seven. We had about sixty pupils. The school had a large playground and was right near the highway. There were several families who had a lot of sickness that winter and we teachers would go in at night and help with them all night long and teach school the next day. My salary was now fifty dollars.

See BESSIE, page 7



The Brydge sisters of Sherando, from left, Edna, Bessie and Viola

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# ACHS holds volunteer orientation

By VERA HAILEY

The Augusta County Historical Society recently held a volunteer orientation at the group's temporary home at the Augusta County Government Center in Verona. Volunteers and prospective volunteers introduced themselves and gave a brief history of their interest in local history.

President Nancy Sorrells welcomed the group and gave a brief history of the founding of the society and spoke of her excitement regarding the future move to downtown Staunton. "Now we are ready to take that strong foundation and move forward to even bigger and better things."

Mrs. Sorrells described "firsts" for the society which have occurred in the past year — having an office for the first time and hiring professional staff member, Helen Morse, to run the office as well as getting the society's first webpage, "...to tell 'visitors' all over the world about the Augusta County Historical Society." The *Augusta Historical Bulletin*, formerly published bi-annually, will be sent to members yearly with its own index and new cover design that incorporates the society's new logo.

Within two years the society should be preparing to move into the R.R. Smith History and Art Center on New Street, which will also house the Historic Staunton

Foundation and the Staunton-Augusta Art Center. The renovated railroad hotel will afford much needed office space and climate-controlled archival facilities. Currently, the society collections are practically inaccessible to the public.

With these exciting new projects, a strong force of volunteers will be essential. The following jobs were cited as just a few of the opportunities available for volunteers:

Archives/curatorial work - putting items into acid-free storage, creating finding guides, identifying and labeling contents of boxes, photographing artifacts; banquet - distributing tickets, posting and distributing posters, securing sponsors, making programs; book re-

views - reading and reviewing historical and genealogical books; bulk mailing - stuffing envelopes and attaching address labels; cemetery clean-up - maintaining the Glebe cemetery; computer work - creating a data base, word processing; cookie brigade - providing snacks and drinks for events; desktop publishing - laying out the *Bulletin*, creating special events items; editing - editing research papers and documents within the archives; events coordinator - scheduling spring and fall programs and special events; fundraising - raising money for special projects through raffles, grant writing, seeking sponsorships; genealogical files - alphabetizing and organizing files; in-

ternships - working with students who would serve a related internship; office relief - filling in for staff by answering phones and assisting walk-ins; publicity - writing press releases, distributing information to media outlets; research queries - answering research questions that the society receives by mail, phone or e-mail; special events - being available to help move furniture, unload special equipment or usher a program.

Information about the society will be available on the ACHS webpage, [www.augustacounty-hs.org](http://www.augustacounty-hs.org), which is currently under construction.

ACHS office hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 9 a.m. - noon. The phone number is 540/248-4151.

Volunteer coordinator Gloria Shook may be reached at 540/949-7464. —

## •Bessie

Continued from page 6

lars for twenty days work, not counting the hours you spent at night correcting papers and building fires, cleaning the rooms, getting water for the coolers and such.

In the spring of 1923, I went home again to help do spring cleaning, such as whitewashing the out-buildings, the yard fence and helping with the planting of the gardens and the corn in the field. We always

planted what we called 'fall beans' in the corn and these had to be picked and shelled out for winter.

In the summer of 1923, I attended State Normal School for another six weeks and passed an examination and received a 'First Grade Certificate' which was good for a term of five years and meant I would be paid sixty dollars. Before getting this, you had to have the equivalent of two years of high school.

In the fall of 1923, I was given

the same school at Cotopaxi, near Vesuvius, for a term of seven months. My sister, Edna Brydge, taught the first three grades and I had the upper grades. We boarded with Mrs. Maud Carr and Mrs. Elsie Lawhorne. We had to report to the school board every month on how many homes of children we had visited. All the visitation trips were made on foot. I do not remember how much we paid for board...

One Sunday afternoon, a group

of us took a ride to the Crota Mines on a car which was being used to haul the material from the mines down the mountain, to be loaded on the Norfolk and Western Railroad for shipment. This was some excitement, as the car traveled very fast.

To raise money to buy books for the library at school, we had an oyster supper at school. Spelling matches were held frequently. In order to get the school children weighed and keep a record of their

weight, we marched the whole school about five miles to a mill, where there was a pair of scales. The miller took the time to weigh all the children and then we returned to the school house. Everyone walked to school. There were no school buses. In the spring, school closed and we bid the children farewell, and home again I went. —

Another installment of the *Brydge* reminisces appeared previously in the March 2000 issue of *Augusta County*.


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Time to renew?  
See page 2

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April 24

6 p.m. social hour;

7 p.m. dinner & program

Holiday Inn, Staunton

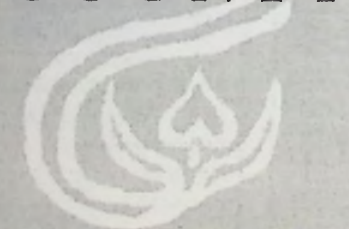
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# Online auction is fertile ground for collectors

By NANCY SORRELLS

They appeared on my computer screen late one night, summoned at the click of the mouse from their 19th-century home. They were a rowdy looking crowd, disguised in baggy clothes with sacks over their heads so you couldn't guess the identity of a single one on that Christmas Day in 1899. Some were on horseback, some in a carriage. They had gathered in Middlebrook to go shanghaiing, once a holiday custom where disguised merry-makers went through the area visiting and generally making loud nuisances of themselves.

I had heard old-timers talk about shanghaiing and I had even seen a diary reference, but until that picture went up for auction on e-bay I had no more than a fuzzy mental picture of the whole shanghaiing scene.

Over the past few months I have become quite enamored (my husband would say addicted) with the on-line auction house located at [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com). Some call e-bay the world's biggest yard sale and I would not dispute that. There is very little that can't be found on e-bay and searching for it is a relatively painless task.

I am a historian and over the past months I have picked up pieces of local Augusta County, Staunton and Waynesboro historical tidbits from all over the country. I didn't actually buy the shanghai picture mentioned above — I worked out an agreement with another local collector so we wouldn't bid



This circa 1899 photo shows a band of shanghaiers gathered in the Middlebrook. Shanghaiing was a Christmas custom in which disguised merry-makers went through the area

visiting and generally making loud nuisances of themselves. The photo was discovered on the internet at e-bay, an online auction site.

Photo courtesy Gary Rosen

against each other. He bought it and gave me a copy. Together we brought a piece of Middlebrook history back to the area from its home in California.

That's the beauty of e-bay. Without it how would we have ever known about this picture of Middlebrook that someone in California had in his possession? I recently purchased an 1854 letter from Middlebrook that someone in Florida owned. I found an Augusta County seal on a coin (given out

as a promotional item by a local business back in the 1970s) from a person several states away.

Without e-bay the odds that I would have stumbled upon the 1905 Spottswood Telephone Company bill would have been slim. The bill, for \$8, was for one year's rent of the telephone line! I had no idea that there was a Spottswood Telephone Company or that one once had to pay rent for the telephone line, not just for the service and phone in the house. Then there is the 1943 Victory Pig Sale card that I found which had been dis-

tributed by the Staunton Livestock Market. What a fascinating bit of local history showing how area farmers were doing their small part to win in World War II.

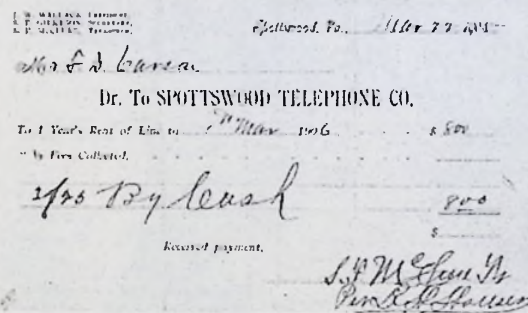
Postcards are a hot e-bay item and I have purchased my share. I got one of the old Lee High School for my father who is a graduate of that institution and another of Second Presbyterian Church for a friend who was once a member of that congregation. Those last two were Christmas presents.

Yes, I have now started shopping for presents on e-bay. A friend who

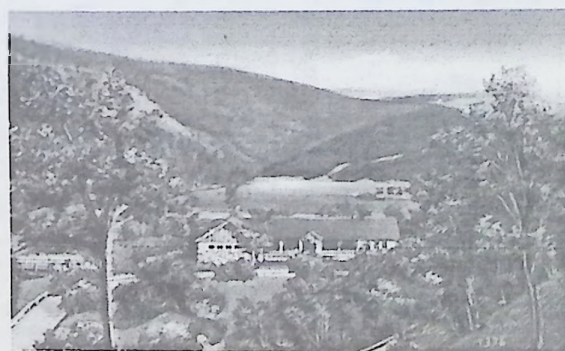
is a local sheep producer received a Christmas present amassed through e-bay that was a collage of maramma sheepdog memorabilia collected on-line. Maramma sheepdogs are well-known in Europe but relatively unheard of in this country except by sheep farmers who are harassed by coyotes. So I successfully bid for postage stamps, cereal cards, tobacco cards, and cigar bands with images of big furry white marammas. The items came from England, Holland, Germany and Italy. Through e-bay they made their way to Greenville, Va., and were combined into a nice gift.

It doesn't matter what you are looking for on e-bay, you can almost always find it among the millions of items offered up for sale every day. The search process is so easy that you can narrow down the list of items and then bring a photo and description up on the screen. The bidding happens on-line just as it does in a real auction only you type in the numbers instead of raising your hand. Despite the fact that there is no auctioneer inciting you

See E-BAY, page 9



A Spottswood Telephone Co. bill dated March 22, 1905 was among items purchased on the internet.



A picture postcard showing Sherando Lake and Forest Camp Lodge near Waynesboro in the George Washington National Forest. The postcard was purchased through the internet.

## VICTORY PIG SALE TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 1943

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A card advertises a "Victory Pig Sale" to be held in Staunton promoting the war effort. The card was purchased on e-bay, an internet auction site.

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# Conservation effort promotes win-win situation

By NANCY SORRELLS

There are no losers in Virginia's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. That's what a group of farmers, conservationists and media found out recently on a visit to Robert Morrison's Farm along Meadow Run in the northern part of Augusta County.

The 60-acre farm where the Morrisons run a cow-calf operation has more than 9,200 feet of stream bank to which the cattle once had unrestricted access. Not only was manure getting into the stream, but the creek banks were being eroded from the impact of hundreds of hooves.

As the streams that feed into the Chesapeake Bay from the hills and valleys of Augusta County trickle through farmland and subdivisions, paved-over industrial sites and parking lots, the water picks up sediment (dirt), pollutants, and human and animal waste. By the time all of those tiny creeks turn into streams and rivers and finally pour into the Bay, the effect has been multiplied many times over.

Morrison and other farmers and landowners like him across Augusta County and the Commonwealth decided to do their own small part to reverse the process through the United States Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Virginia.

The goal of the state's CREP program is "to improve water quality and treat environmentally sensitive areas by promoting the voluntary establishment of forested streamside buffers and filter strips and the restoration of wetlands."

Even by itself, that's good news



Robert Morrison plants a tree seedling on his farm in northern Augusta County. Morrison's conservation efforts have protected the stream bank of Meadow Run which runs through the farm.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

for the people and the environment, but CREP goes a step further and makes the program financially appealing to farmers. Through rental payments, signing incentives, and reimbursement payments, the creation of riparian buffers is virtually free or even profitable to the farmer. No fewer than eight government

and private partners contribute to the financial and planning success of the CREP program: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia's Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, USDA Farm Service Agency, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Morrison's farm was chosen to represent the success of the project. At the beginning of 2001, the cattle

he and his son own had complete access to Meadow Run which is a tributary of Christians Creek, one of the most environmentally impacted streams in Augusta County.

"I've been following this program for quite a few years. I thought this was the right time to do this. I've had some fish kill in this stream from somewhere upstream and believe me we used to have some nice fish in this stream," explained Morrison when asked why he has participated in CREP.

Through the program, the Morrisons have excluded from livestock access nearly 15 acres along the stream. That translates into 9,200 feet of stream bank which is now protected. Because the livestock no longer drink water from the stream, a system was installed that draws water from the stream with a 1/2 horsepower pump and places it in a 1,900 gallon reservoir. From there the water is gravity fed into two freeze-proof troughs.

In addition, nearly 2,000 hardwood trees and shrubs were planted in the now-fenced-off riparian corridor. The seedlings were protected

by degradable shields as well as porous black mats that allow for optimum water retention for the young trees' root systems.

"I've been impressed with the water installation and the tree planting. This whole thing has been an educational program for me," said Morrison.

The project was launched with the fence-line construction back in early January. In less than three months, the Morrisons are already seeing a positive impact on the stream's health. And in this win-win situation, every person, plant or animal in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is sharing in the success.

The success on the Morrison farm is being multiplied across the Commonwealth. In the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District alone there are 41 CREP contracts which translate into 372.5 acres and 37,600 new trees being planted. Clearly the area is doing its part in working toward Virginia's goal of 35,000 acres of riparian buffers and 3.5 million trees being planted.

For more information about the CREP program, contact your local USDA Service Center. —

## e-bay

Continued from page 8

to up the ante, it's still easy to get caught up in the moment and pay more than you planned for an item.

Since being turned on to e-bay I have purchased a wide variety of items from agricultural books to atlases to rechargeable batteries. I have bid on computer software and printers' manuals. I purchased from a man in Alaska a magazine published in Minnesota in the early 1980s. I have found old records by recording artists that are no longer available for sale in stores. I purchased a lemon squeezer for a friend going into the lemonade business and a bat house for myself. The latter is now hanging on our garage and will hopefully become a home to the world's best mosquito eradicators.

I have always loved auctions and so enjoying e-bay was a natural. I have been able to locate items without hours of searching stores and catalogs and in some cases I have found items that I would never have known existed. How would I ever have known that a man in California had a picture of Middlebrook, Va., or that a man in Alaska had a magazine that I wanted? In fact,

in the case of the magazine, I would never have known that it even existed without a search for a key word on e-bay.

If you haven't tried ebay, you should. It's easy to learn, just log on and run through the ground rules. But be warned: set some rules for yourself as well. Give yourself limits, don't get caught up in the bidding. If an item comes up once, chances are that a similar item will appear again in a few weeks so be patient and don't spend more than the item is worth unless it is a one-of-a-kind. You don't have to spend hours on-line. Bidding on items remains open for several days. You only need to note when bidding will close in the event you need to be online and prepared to bid as bidding comes to a close.

Once you have decided what you are after, you can check back every few days to see if anything new has come up for auction in your area of interest. For instance, every couple of days I run a search on Augusta County, Staunton, Middlebrook, Maremma and Metompkin (don't ask).

Likewise, if you're one of those folks who goes to auctions and buys a box of assorted "junk" for 50 cents, you may find some things that you would like to sell through e-bay. Odds are there's someone out there just as squirrely as me who's looking for old letters, magazines, or post cards from who knows where. Log on to e-bay to find out how you can place items up for bid.

After that, you are set. Sit down at your computer, pull up a mouse and click away. Where else can you go shopping for off-the-wall items at 2 a.m. while sitting at home in your pajamas? —

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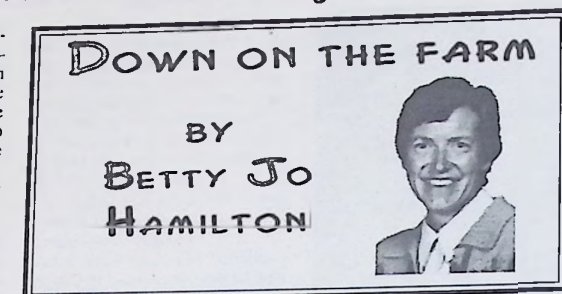
# The Chicken Little Syndrome, among other things

Down on the farm we're thinking about — among other things — the Chicken Little Syndrome. I'm going to tell you all about the Chicken Little Syndrome in due course. First, however, I want to spend some time talking about the "among other things."

Top of the list "among other things" is a thought which occurred to me just an hour before I sat down to write this column. The thought being, "If I didn't have all this work to do, I wouldn't have anything to do." Having nothing to do is scary enough that I'm thankful to have many pursuits which keep my time occupied. This time of year — late winter verging on spring — is possibly one of our busiest times of the year down on the farm.

Midwinter seemed sluggish to me. January and early February kept me busy enough, but not delightfully busy. There were a few lambs coming — these from a group of ewes purchased in the fall which were bred when I bought them. Let me assure you that if they hadn't been bred when I bought them, they certainly wouldn't have been bred to lamb in January or early February.

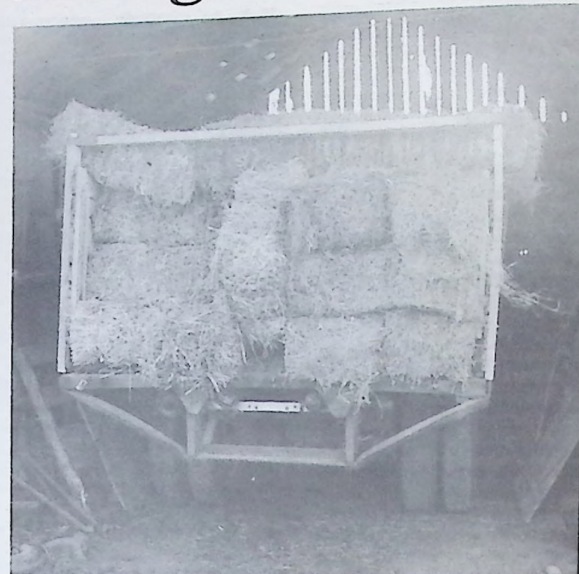
Then there was that little slip up



of mine back in the fall. I'd purchased a group of six ewes and their lambs, one of which had managed to remain a buck to the ripe old age of six months. Let me assure you that if I had been around when he was a week old, his future sexual prowess would have been ended with startling finality. Not being accustomed to having such a creature in existence down on the farm, my "little slip up" was absentmindedly turning out the six-month-old buck with some unbred ewes, which, as it turns out, did not remain that way — unbred, that is. About 10 days after turning the buck lamb out, I saw him on the hillside among the ewes and at that

moment I wished I could put my hands on some type of long-range weapon. A bazooka, I thought, would have been most appropriate.

So between my absent-minded slip up and the bred ewes which I purchased, there were just enough lambs coming in January to be a nuisance. And not nearly enough to keep me busy in a content sort of way, but busy in an unfulfilled way. A ewe would have lambs and I'd go into high gear. Then a couple days would pass before another ewe would lamb. Then a couple more days would pass before more would arrive. All the time I'm in high lambing gear only to take care of a handful of lambs here and there. It



**Blizzard Preparedness Drill: Load a truck with hay and have it ready for easy access during raging blizzard.**

Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

really began to try my patience.

Mostly though it just annoyed me, because I knew what was coming down the road. Near the end of February was when I expected the full complement of ewes to begin lambing — those which had been synchronized in the fall to lamb within a specific time frame when I knew they would be arriving. So the few ewes that lambed during January and February were sapping energy that I knew I would need when the "real" lambing began in late February.

My experiences with synchronizing heat cycles on ewes has been very positive. Using a feed additive prior to exposing ewes to rams, the ewes' cycles are synchronized to promote lambing within 7-10 day periods. Prior to last fall I had synched groups of 50 ewes at a time which resulted in about 15-20 ewes lambing in the first synch cycle, 15 or so in the second synch cycle, then the few remaining in the third cycle. Having started a second group of 50 ewes 34 days later than the first group, this would let the two groups overlap in lambing on the third cycle of the first group and the first cycle of the second group. Using this method, it seemed that the bulk of the lambs

arrived in the second and third cycle of the first group and the first cycle of the second group. I reasoned that it might be better to have more ewes lambing in the earlier cycles, thereby spreading lamb arrivals out a bit more. So back in the fall when I got ready to synchronize the first group of ewes, instead of starting with 50, I put together a group of 69 ewes. And very satisfied I was with my decision.

There's only one thing wrong with applying logic to sheep reproduction.

See LOGIC, page 11



**Blizzard Preparedness Drill: Move extra wood to the house placing at least two days' supply within arm's reach of the doorway.**

The latter measure precludes having to suit up in full-blizzard armor every time wood has to be brought in the house.

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## •Logic

Continued from page 10

duction. You can never predict what sheep are going to do. The weather has a lot to do with their breeding patterns. If it's been a hot, dry summer, ewes may not breed as well in the fall as they might if the summer has been wet and grass plentiful. From my experiences of this past summer and fall and the results I have seen in the lambing barn just recently, one might deduce that a lush summer followed by a very dry fall is enough to encourage sheep to new heights of reproductive activity. Although I was not witness to any particular events in the fall, I experienced first hand the end result of such when lambs began arriving.

And when lambs began arriving, boy did they ever arrive. In the first 10-day synch cycle, 52 ewes (out of the original 69) delivered 87 lambs. Of that number, 37 arrived in the 48 hours representing the last day of February and the first day of March. So, yes, in case you're wondering, March came in like a lamb — all 37 of them!!!

I can't remember much about those 10 days when the 87 lambs arrived other than I seemed to be in perpetual motion. Lambs would arrive, I would make sure they nursed, they would be moved to a jug — a small pen in which a ewe is confined with her lambs immediately following birth to promote bonding — lambs would be tagged and vaccinated.

With the number of lambs arriving the jugs remained at capacity for days. Leaving ewes and lambs in the jugs for at least 24 hours following birth is mandatory but I would prefer this time period be closer to 48 hours. In the face of 87 arrivals over 10 days, time spent in the jugs was never more than 24 hours.

In some cases, ewes with single lambs didn't even see the jugs. They went straight to the hardening pen — this is a 20-foot by 10-foot pen where lambs and ewes are placed when released from the jugs. Time spent in the hardening pen forces the lamb to identify its ewe and determines whether it can hold up through this process while competing with 8-10 other ewes and their



**Blizzard Preparedness Drill: Move bales of straw to be available for bedding into the lambing barn.**

lambs. The next step up is a larger hardening pen competing with more ewes and more lambs.

Fortunately, the weather during this 10-day streak was moderate until the last two or three days. Along about the 48-hour time period when the 37 lambs were arriving, I began hearing weather forecasters on the radio use the word "snow." With the weather being so mild, it was difficult to comprehend that snow might be headed our way.

With ewes delivering lambs non-stop, the threat of snow was not a cheery thought. By the end of that week, weather forecasters were using words like "blizzard," "disaster," "a storm of historic proportions" to describe what was headed our way. Neck deep in newborn lambs and facing the potential for as much as two feet of snow on the horizon, my mind supplied the sentiment, "This is not happening." I certainly knew I had my hands full — more than full — with the arrival of lambs without the added complication of snow in any amount. This is when I fell under the sway of the Chicken Little Syndrome.

Everybody remembers who Chicken Little was, right? Chicken Little is a character from a children's story who ran around squawking, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" And she got everybody all stirred up with her fear, which was in fact groundless as it turned out.

Down on the farm there is an element of society who falls into the Chicken Little mindset when weather forecasters start using the word "snow." Just let the word "snow" eke into a forecast and our very own Chicken Little starts scratching around in a flurry (no pun intended) sounding the alarm for "Blizzard Preparedness."

Because the last near-blizzard occurred in 1993 it didn't take many clucks from Chicken Little for me to realize what we could be facing if the predicted two feet of snow did indeed fall. But having spent every waking and non-waking moment in the lambing barn for the better part of a week, I didn't believe I had the physical stamina or mental energy to endure a "Blizzard Preparedness" drill.

I had plenty of work to do, as did everyone, without adding in several hours' worth of "Blizzard Preparedness." However, having consulted various computer-generated models of the approaching storm fronts — an encroaching warm, moist air mass from the Gulf of Mexico and a slouching Canadian cold front — I knew I needed to get ready despite my state of lambing exhaustion. And I knew if I didn't get ready and was caught with my pants down, so to speak, Chicken Little would never let me forget it.

So I spent a few precious hours on a Saturday — precious because they were wedged in between yet more lamb arrivals — getting ready for the "storm of historic proportions." I moved wheel barrow after wheel barrow of wood to my back stoop, placing at least two days' supply within arm's reach of my backdoor. I hauled the ashes out of the woodstove. I changed the cats' litter box. The latter might not seem like a big deal to some folks but let me assure you that you don't want to be trapped in a house during a blizzard with cats who suddenly decide their litter

box needs to be changed. So changing the litter box is always high on my list of priorities during "Blizzard Preparedness."

Continuing with the preparations, I hauled in a pickup load of straw to keep on hand for bedding purposes during the predicted blizzard. A dump truck was loaded with square bales of hay to have convenient for feeding without needing to get in the barn. Round bales of hay were set out in the field for the cattle in anticipation of not being able to maneuver through the predicted blizzard. A load of feed was ordered from the feed mill and delivered. If I had gone the full distance on "Blizzard Preparedness" I would have put chains on a tractor and changed the bale carrier on the front end loader to the bucket. But I resisted the latter two steps thinking that because I'd taken all the other steps of "Blizzard Preparedness" I wouldn't have anything left to do if the blizzard actually hit. So I saved the chains and loader bucket so we'd have something to do during the actual blizzard to keep from getting bored.

As a sort of caveat to my "Blizzard Preparedness," I took a yardstick and lashed it to the bird feeder pole in my backyard thereby giving me something to gauge the storm's intensity when the snow began to pile up. With the bird feeder plainly visible from my kitchen window, the yardstick attached to the feeder pole would serve as a guide for me before I launched out of the house into the storm. I even placed duct tape at the one-foot and two-foot levels on the yard stick for ease-of-reading purposes from a distance.

Does anybody know where the "storm of historic proportions" ended up going? I never did hear. Someone mentioned something about 2 1/2 feet of snow in Worcester, Mass., and two feet of snow in Upstate New York. That's a lot of snow for us, but not for those folks. Of course, they do their "Blizzard Preparedness" in July or maybe they just maintain it through the whole year because they always get piles of snow. I'm sure they get quite a chuckle out of our pre-blizzard frenzy.

Chicken Little has been mighty scarce since the blizzard didn't materialize. The threat of the blizzard wasn't groundless, but you never can tell about these weather forecasts. Sometimes it seems all these weather advisories are more about selling groceries than predicting the weather. I don't suppose the "Blizzard Preparedness" did me any harm. I was already exhausted anyway. Having extra wood piled up and extra hay at the ready actually gave me a couple days to recoup a bit. And I certainly won't complain about not getting the blizzard. The 40-degree drop in temperature and howling winds sans snow was enough to give me my fill. And enough to prove how glad I was it didn't hit on the last day of February and first day of March when 37 lambs were born.

Just to demonstrate how much

impact the weather has on lambing — from Monday to Sunday with 78 lambs born during moderate weather conditions there were no lambs brought to the house for intensive care; on the two days the Canadian cold front surged through the area, five lambs were brought to the house needing resuscitation and/or intervention due to hypothermia.

And what does resuscitation and/or intervention entail? My method includes tube feeding the lambs about two ounces of ewe's milk with a 1/4 teaspoon of brandy mixed in, subcutaneous injections of 50 percent dextrose (6 to 10 ccs depending on the size of the lamb), 15 minutes in a warm water bath with massage therapy followed by a vigorous rub down, then about two hours wrapped in a towel with a hot water bottle.

Once the lambs wake up from their brandy-induced snooze, they blink a couple of times, start bleating and the rest is mostly well-timed bottle feedings and re-acclimation to outdoor temperatures until the lambs are back on their feet and ready to return to the barn. Of course, these lambs never return to their ewes. Once a lamb is kept from a ewe for more than several hours, the ewe will not re-claim the lamb which means "guess who?" gets the chore of the twice daily bottle brigade.

And, in case you're wondering, it's not too difficult to move nearly-comatose lambs from the barn to the house. However, moving fully revived, vigorous lambs from the house to the barn is another matter. Having five to move to the barn all at once had me puzzling. I could walk back and forth to the barn five times carrying a struggling lamb with each trip. I just didn't have the energy to face the task. I was making so many trips back and forth to the barn as it was, another five trips in the space of an hour's time seemed unwieldy if not life threatening.

I ended up throwing all five lambs in the back seat of the car and drove them to the barn. It was so exciting. I just drove and never looked back. Of course, I could hear all sorts of racket and movement coming from the back seat during the short trip to the barn. The car and the lambs made it to the barn, with none the worse for wear.

Someone asked me if I count sheep to fall asleep. Well, in the first place, I rarely have trouble falling asleep. And in the second place, if I was having trouble falling asleep I certainly wouldn't count sheep. Because each one that I would count I would most likely see something wrong with it and that would just end up keeping me awake.

So, no, I don't count sheep to fall asleep. I'm not even sure where that notion came from. I don't expect there is a shepherd dead or living who has counted or counts sheep to fall asleep. Most shepherds I know stay worn out enough that insomnia is not an issue. Having plenty of work to do in order to avoid having nothing to do is as good a remedy for insomnia as we know of down on the farm. —

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Time  
to  
renew?  
See page 2



# Spring happenings and exciting new plants

Spring is such a busy season of the year and there's lots of news to report from many sources. My column this month will highlight Virginia events and new plants to grow and evaluate.

**Maymont Flower Show.** The 12th Annual Show (Feb. 22-25) in Richmond had a snowy first day but provided as always an advanced window on nature's bounty. The colorful display gardens adhered to the theme of KaleidoScapes as we saw and smelled hundreds of hyacinths, narcissi, tulips, primulas, cherry and pear trees, azaleas, fothergilla, daphne odora, forsythia, and other shrubs forced into full bloom.

This show was the last at the current Richmond Center. The exhibition building will be torn down. Scaffolding and construction already surrounds the center. When the show returns in 2003 the space will have tripled, parking will be added, and Virginia's largest horticultural exhibit will be better than ever.

In 2002 a mini-show is planned (Feb. 21-24) and in 2003 the new era will begin with an expanded show (Feb. 20-23).

## Upcoming events

The Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden (Richmond) will host an Easter Brunch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on April 15, a Plant Sale on April 20 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and 21 (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.), and a Mother's Day Concert on May 13 from 1-4:30 p.m. The gardens are

open daily from 9-5. Call 804/262-9887 or log on [www.lewisginter.org](http://www.lewisginter.org).

**Maymont (Richmond)** will sponsor a Victorian Estate Tour on April 21. Get an overview of the magnificent Dooley estate via tram and on foot. Advance registration is requested. The 17th annual Herbs Galore Festival will be held on April 28 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lectures, garden tours, cooking demos, and vendors will be featured. Phone 804/358-7166, ext. 310 or log on [www.maymont.org](http://www.maymont.org) for more details.

**The Blue Ridge Garden Festival** (Roanoke) takes place on June 9 and 10 at Virginia's Explore Park, Milepost 115, Blue Ridge Parkway. Traditionally the flame azalea should be in bloom. The festival will feature display gardens, speakers, demos, and a marketplace. Call 1-800-842-9163 for more information.

**Garden Fair** (State Arboretum of Virginia near Boyce), an annual event over Mother's Day weekend on May 12-13 from 10-4 both days, will again include a huge plant and garden supply sale (and many native plants), a curator's spring tour, music, and food. Phone 540/837-1758 or log on [www.virginia.edu/~hlandy](http://www.virginia.edu/~hlandy).

**Buffalo Springs Herb Farm** (Raphine) opens up for the year on April 4. The spring newsletter lists a multitude of herbal happenings through the summer. If you've never been to Buffalo Springs, you are in for a treat

as you walk through the many theme gardens, review potted herbs in the Plant House, and putter in the Barn Shop (which also boasts a fine book room). Visit online at [www.buffaloherbs.com](http://www.buffaloherbs.com) or telephone 540/348-1083 with questions. Visiting hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 10-5; Sunday, April through May, 1-5; Sunday, June through August, Closed.

## New plants

**All America Selections.** After vigorous testing at trial gardens across America including Virginia Tech's research center in Virginia Beach and the Botanical Garden in Norfolk, the following annuals and vegetables were selected:

## Annuals

**Zinnia "Profusion White."** Won the AAS Gold Medal Flower Award for 2001. Grows 10-12 inches tall, 12-20 inches wide. Has lush 2-inch blooms that fade from white to cream. Resistant to powdery mildew.

**Nicotiana "Avalon Bright Pink."** Another compact, vigorous grower that likes full sun and is pest free. It attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.

**Portulaca "Margarita Rosita."** Blooms all season in full sun and well-drained soil. Has semi-double pink flowers and grows 4-6 inches high.

**Helianthus "Ring of Fire."** This sunflower has distinctive coloring and many

## In the Garden

By Jenifer Bradford



improved traits. Stake these 4-5 foot plants. Use the 5- to 6-inch blooms in arrangements or as cut flowers.

**Eustoma "Forever Blue."** Best purchased as a potted plant and grown on a patio. Grows 12 inches tall and 8-10 inches wide. Commonly called the Texas bluebell, eustoma likes hot, dry conditions.

## Vegetables

Winners for 2001 are Jolly tomato, a large, sweet, cherry type with a peach shape and pointed end, grows in clusters of 9-14 fruits; **Giant Marconi pepper** (bred for grilling), virus resistant, 2-3 inches wide and 6-8 inches long with a sweet, smoky flavor; **Super Star onion** the first hybrid onion to win an AAS award, a large, mild, sweet onion and first day-length neutral white onion, grows in spring and fall conditions; and **Honey Select sweet corn**, a yellow hybrid, 8 inches long, very sweet, and adaptable in its growth habits regarding pollination.

**Gold Medal Award Winning Dogwoods.** The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society evaluates many university breeding programs. Hybrids of crosses between *Cornus florida* (our native dogwood) and *Cornus kousa* (the Korean dogwood) are becoming popular since they are more resistant to diseases and pests and can tolerate more sun. The Stellar Pink series falls in this category.

**Ruthan and Ruth Ellen** are two Gold Medal Winners, and *Cornus mas* "Golden Glory" (Cornelian cherry dogwood) is the 2001 honoree.

**Milky Way** is another recommended *Kousa* dogwood and **Appalachian Spring** will be available soon.

**Perennial Plant Association Choice.** The perennial for 2001 is *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* "Karl Foerster," a low-maintenance ornamental grass. The foliage grows to 3 feet and flower stems to 5 feet in 18-

See GARDEN, page 13

## ~~~ Garden tips for April ~~~

It's the month for showers, daylight savings time, Easter, and the real awakening of all things green. Leaves appear on trees and shrubs, wildflowers cover the forest floor, and early bulbs show off their flowers to the sun. Let's get outdoors and enjoy all that nature provides (with a little planting help from gardeners).

- Cut back old foliage of liriop and ornamental grasses. Cut buddleias and caryopteris back to 1 foot from the ground.

- Trim winter-damaged foliage and snap off overwintering sedum and coneflower stems.

- Deadhead faded spring bulb flowerheads and hardy pansies.

- Shorten old vines. Severely cut back autumn flowering clematis and Jackmanii clematis since these are two vigorous climbers which benefit from a hard prune.

- Prepare new beds for planting if the ground is friable (not too wet).

- Plant early vegetables.

- Turn the compost heap and if you have a large pile of ready-made compost, use this on your flower or vegetable beds.

- Pull up maple, oak, and tree seedlings as they appear and other weeds such as wild onions and dandelions.

- Divide overgrown perennials while they are young and the soil is soft.

- Take soil tests.

- Rake lawns free of debris and leaves. Reseed bare spots. Apply pre-emergent weed killers. Handpull large clumps of weeds.

- Mow lawns for the first time this season only when grass is growing profusely. Initially grass will clump and grow in spurts. Collect the first grass clippings and add to the compost pile. They contain many nutrients.

- Reconnect outside hoses.

- Set out pots of pansies, fill windowboxes, or add groups of pansies to areas where you can enjoy them in passing.

- Prune early spring-blooming shrubs such as forsythia, spirea, quince, or weigela once flowers fade. Cut back one-third of the stems at ground level of large, overgrown shrubs.

- Remove winter mulch from roses, fertilize, prune back major canes to 1 foot, and remove any twiggy growth from the base. Treat for blackspot when it appears.

- Cut back and shape herbs. Remove dead stems.

- Put in stakes to support tall plants and peony cages so they are ready for later growth.

- Do not clip, bend, or braid daffodil foliage. Remove only the heads of any spring bulb after they flower. Leave the bulb foliage to die back naturally.

- Set out rain gages and garden furniture. Sweep and clean decks and patios.

- Sprinkle a little 10-10-10 around all beds just before a rain to promote growth. —

## •Library

Continued from page 2  
school, academic and special libraries nationwide.

"Libraries are a part of the American dream" said Barbara Burdette, library director. "They offer opportunities for education and self-help. But they are also changing and dynamic places, on the forefront of the information age." This campaign will tell the exciting story of today's libraries.

April 1-7 is National Library Week, a great time to see what's new @ your library. The Augusta County Library is celebrating with local author Alice Leonhardt, a.k.a. Alison Hart, at 7 p.m., April 3. Dis-

cover the secrets, joys, and excitement of writing and publishing popular mystery books for children. The Friends of the Augusta County Library will honor volunteers at its annual Volunteer Coffee on April 6 at 10 a.m. Anyone interested in being a library volunteer is invited to attend.

"Libraries are truly unique. In person and online," Ms. Burdette says. "Where else can you have access to nearly everything in print and on the Web and have the personal assistance of a librarian to help find what you are looking for?" She

added that librarians are experts in navigating through the clutter of information that's out there. "Librarians are really the ultimate search engine @ your library. If you need to find something, just ask." The @ your library campaign will celebrate the role of today's librarians.

For more information about Augusta County Library's participation in The Campaign for America's Libraries and National Library Week activities, call Ms. Burdette at 885-3961 or 949-6354 or check the website at [www.lib.co.augusta.va.us](http://www.lib.co.augusta.va.us). —

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# Sweet woodruff classic to welcome May

One of my favorite herbs is sweet woodruff, with its delicate white flowers blossoming in spring and whorls of green leaves. It's polar with gardeners, crafters and cooks, but for me, it is a most welcome harbinger of spring. With its rich history of being an ingredient in May wine, sweet woodruff is the herb to use in welcoming spring and the "merry month" of May.

May wine is traditionally drunk on May Day to welcome the season and as a spring tonic. (See recipe.) The wine is part of the ancient custom of "bringing in the May" which began in Rome, where a five-day festival in honor of Flora the goddess of flowers was held. In ancient Britain, the festival of Beltane was celebrated on the first of May. Some of those traditions have found their way into today's festivals of spring — dancing around the Maypole, choosing a May Queen, and for some, drinking May wine, strewn with sweet woodruff.

Today the ritual of drinking May wine has most taken hold in Germany where the practice originated in the 13th century. The Germans still serve the "Mai Bowle" each day of the month. In Germany, sweet woodruff is called "waldmeister" or "master of the forests." The name undoubtedly comes from the fact that it grows in shady woods or un-

## Recipe for May Wine from *Herb Companion*

Steep sprigs of sweet woodruff and crushed strawberries in white wine in the refrigerator overnight, then strain the wine, and serve it in a punch bowl garnished with whole strawberries and fresh woodruff sprigs.

The best white wine for this is from Germany, actually called May wine, and is available in most wine stores during spring. —

der hedges, making it a wonderful border or ground cover. Preferring the shade, sweet woodruff, can be grown on paths where it will release its fresh, soothing scent when stepped on.

It is well known for its scent. In fact, it is often used for fixative in perfumes. I like to dry it and put it in muslin bags. The scent is very subtle, but refreshing, almost like vanilla. According to *Herb Quarterly*, sweet woodruff is called "muge-de-boys" or "woods musk" in old French, in reference to the herb's distinctive scent, which is only noticeable when it is dried or crushed. The scent is caused by coumarin, a constituent of sweet woodruff and the first natural scent to be synthesized from coal tars.

The fragrant use of the herb dates back to the Middle Ages. The herb was used as a fragrant strewing herb and as a mattress filling. It was also hung in churches as a sym-

bol of humility and placed among linens to repel moths and insects.

Medicinally, sweet woodruff was used as a liver tonic. Now herbalists know that it can actually stress the liver. And *Herb Companion* warns that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration considers sweet woodruff safe only in alcoholic beverages.

Still, it is used today by modern herbalists as a laxative and for some kinds of arthritis. You just don't want to overdo it. And with most herbs, you want to be careful. Just because an herb is natural, doesn't mean it's safe. Many medicines come from herbs and I feel that some herbs should be treated as such.

I had a friend once who began drinking chamomile tea for stomach problems. It took the doctors many months to figure out what

## Down to Earth

By  
Mollie Bryan



her allergic-type reactions were. She had always been allergic to grass, but it was under control with medicine. I suggested she stop drinking the tea — after all chamomile is a kind of grass, sort of. Her symptoms went away immediately.

Chamomile tea is as comforting as it gets, but if you are allergic to grass, you should probably find another kind of tea to relax and comfort you.

For me, herbs like sweet woodruff are best enjoyed in a garden, or for their scent. I have also enjoyed it as part of my own May Day celebrations with May Wine.

It is an easy herb to grow, especially in shady spots. And it makes a pretty addition to any garden. —

## oGarden

Continued from page 12

inch clumps. Light pink inflorescences appear in June but turn tan into the fall. Plant in full sun in well-drained soil. Noninvasive.

**Miniature Carolina Jessamine.** Jasmine "Lemon Drop" is a small version introduced this year. It is a low growing, rounded groundcover instead of the familiar vine. It has the same yellow flowers. It blooms in spring and sporadically in fall.

**USDA Introductions.** The Agricultural Research Service of the USDA is always developing new cultivars with better qualities. In 2001-2002 we will be able to find an improved lilac and redbud.

**Syringa "Betsy Ross."** This lovely lilac has greater resistance to powdery mildew, the biggest disease problem for lilacs. It has fragrant white flowers, lush foliage,

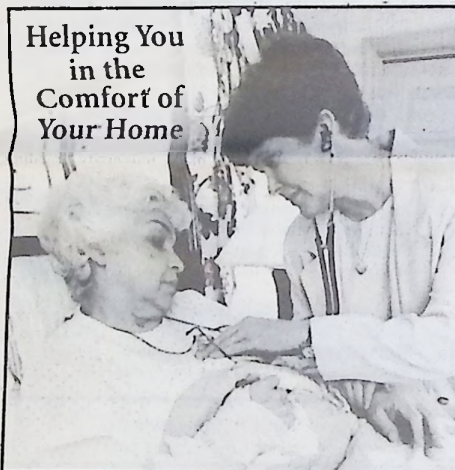
and compact growth.

**Cercis chinensis "Don Egolf."** A Chinese cultivar named for the late breeder/plantsman at the U.S. National Arboretum. This compact specimen redbud tree has prolific rose-purple flowers, dark-green leaves which turn yellow in the fall, and a high tolerance to canker.

**Best of the Rest.** To round out current listings we have "June," a hosta as Plant of the Year. June has heart-shaped, 6-inch, blue/green leaves. Sage is Herb of the Year. "Lady Frances," a miniature, variegated ivy for indoor or outdoor growing, is Ivy of the Year, the first annual selection by the Ivy Society.

Take this list with you when you visit nurseries or refer to it when you study catalogs. Look for these new introductions and award winners. Try some! —

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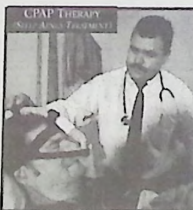
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## 2001 Augusta County Spring Clean-Up

April 21-April 28, 2001

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Free tire disposal at landfill only — 12 tire limit per home/farm. Tires mounted on split rims and tires from businesses will not be accepted.

### APPLIANCES

No fees for appliances delivered to these sites: Augusta-Staunton Landfill, Deerfield Community Center, Dumpsters in New Hope, Crimora, Mt. Solon, & Greenville.

### HAZARDOUS WASTES

The following hazardous wastes will be collected at Kate Collins School in Waynesboro on April 21, 2001 from 8:30 a.m. to noon: Oil-based paint, spent fuel, gasoline, solvents, antifreeze, liquid mercury devices such as thermometers & thermostats, rechargeable nickel cadmium batteries & lubrication oil.

**Latex paint will not be accepted.**

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Byrd's Wrecking 885-1445  
Shields Auto Salvage 949-5922  
Ord's Auto Parts 885-2877

### AUTOMOTIVE WASTE

During Spring Clean-Up, the following wastes will be collected at the Landfill: motor oil, transmission oil, hydraulic oil, diesel fuel, lead-acid batteries, antifreeze, (ethylene glycol-green color only.)

**Gasoline will not be accepted.**

### RURITAN CLUBS

Ruritan Clubs will be leading the clean-up efforts in their communities of interest. Please offer your help or let them know of an area needing attention.



# Schoolhouse News

## RHS Latin students win big at state convention

By KATIE CALDWELL

"SALVE!" the Latin word for hello, greeted 13 students from Riverheads on Nov. 19-20 as they arrived in Richmond for the annual Junior Classical League convention. Riverheads has competed in the convention for the past four years, representing one of only three schools from western Virginia, and consistently brings home numerous awards in artistic, dramatic, and academic subject areas.

This year's trip began early Sunday morning when the sleepy-eyed students, battling the chill, arrived at Riverheads High School to begin their journey into a weekend of contests and games. Every hand was filled with luggage and artistic projects to be submitted into competition. When the bus arrived, the group of upper-division Latineers, along with their fearless leader, Rick Heatley, boarded the bus and joined students from Rockbridge County High School. With tightly packed seats, the two-hour trip was soon under way.

Once students arrived at the Richmond Convention Centre, they scrambled to their annual "campsite" to deposit their gear, and then rushed off to register for competitions.

Shortly after the opening ceremony, Riverheads delegates joined a crowd of nearly 1,250 other students to take a series of academic tests. Throughout the course of the day, the students volunteered to take over 55 tests ranging from Roman life and mythology to reading comprehension and grammar. After all the toilsome

academic tests, Josh Sprouse reflected, "Carpe Diem: Seize the day, along with Caesar."

Besides academic and artistic competitions, some participants decided to test their speaking skills in storytelling, dramatic interpretation, and/or English and Latin oratory. Riverheads also had four students who competed in the annual costume contest. This year, students dressed as Psyche and Cupid, two famous young lovers of Roman mythology.

At 5:30 the group reconvened and, dressed in their most sophisticated Roman togas (bed sheets draped over one shoulder), the crew marched down to an authentic Roman banquet. After admiring each other's garb and dining on green beans, Caesar salad, and pasta dishes, the night was left open for various forms of entertainment.

After the third and final, strenuous testing session, many of the students headed off to shake, rattle, and roll Roman style at a dance in the Marriott ballroom. Other students listened to karaoke. Also that night, three RHS students, Daniel Gerber, Nestle Anderson, and Josh Sprouse, formed the singing sensation, "Reverse Oreo." This group received rave reviews, and was renowned as a favorite among the students. Cheers from the talent show, crowned "Reverse Oreo" with an honorable mention for its musical comedy.

That night, after traveling to the Crowne Plaza Hotel with song and enthusiasm, the students congregated for pizza and fellowship with 28 friends and a television with

cable hook-up. Typical of this kind of excursion, the group had a lot of fun, but slept very little. When asked what their favorite part of the convention was, several of the students explained that it was that night when a camaraderie developed among the students.

Back at the convention center on Monday, students listened for the awards they had won. The artistic projects were open for viewing and the talent show entertained hundreds. Competitions were extremely competitive among the 76 participating schools, but in the end, Riverheads returned victorious, earning 26 awards. Latin teacher Dr. Heatley explained that, "This year's JCL was exceptional, with many Riverheads students receiving high awards."

When the event was over, the students looked back at the weekend with pleasure. Senior Matt Ishee stated that, "JCL was an extravagant experience," and he regrets that he will be unable to attend another convention. Another student, Kearsten Ruud vivaciously exclaimed, "JCL is a Latin freak's paradise!"



Students from Riverheads High School with their sponsor, Rick Heatley, attended the state Junior Classical League Convention in Richmond, Nov. 19-20. Pictured are (back row, from left) Jonathan Everiss, Daniel Gerber, Nestle Anderson, Josh Sprouse; (middle row, from left) Katie Caldwell, Rebecca Bolin, Hana Machac; (front row, from left) Sarah Bernier, Julie Waltz, Sarah Payne, and Kearsten Ruud.

RHS staff photo

### Virginia Junior Classical League Convention -- Riverheads results

English oratory — Rebecca Bolin, first  
Sculpture — Will Dolive, first; Katie Caldwell, second; Julie Waltz, second; Daniel Gerber, third  
Miscellaneous (painting) — Sarah Payne, first  
Greeting cards — Nestle Anderson, third  
Dramatic interpretation — Sarah Bernier, third  
Modern myth — Katie Caldwell, third  
Reading comprehension (poetry) — Jonathan Everiss, fourth; Katie Caldwell, seventh  
Drawing — Daniel Gerber, fourth  
Dramatic interpretation — Kearsten Ruud, fourth  
Mosaic — Sarah Payne, fifth

Reading comprehension (prose) — Sarah Bernier, fifth  
Grammar — Sarah Bernier, sixth  
Pentathlon — Jonathan Everiss, sixth  
Mythology — Jonathan Everiss, sixth; Will Dolive, 10th  
Derivatives — Rebecca Bolin, seventh; Julie Waltz, seventh; Jonathan Everiss, eighth  
Storytelling — Kearsten Ruud, ninth  
Roman Life — Katie Caldwell, ninth

Send school news to  
goodnews@rica.net

## RHS band sponsors 'donkey-ball'

By KIM MCCRAY

GREENVILLE — The gym was packed, the jazz band was "swinging," and the crowd was getting anxious for the night's event to begin. From the look of it, this might just be another Riverheads High School basketball, volleyball, or wrestling match about to start. But when eight fuzzy donkeys made their way out onto the court, it became obvious that this was not just another sporting competition. Mike Conners announced the names of the riders, and then those of the donkeys. With riders including the RHS principal, faculty members, many RHS students and local citizens, the game was sure to be "entertaining" to say the least.

The game, sponsored by the RHS band, began with the opposing teams, designated by red and blue helmets, lining up under the

goals atop their burros. Then the whistle blew and both teams scrambled toward center court to get the basketball. However, they didn't make it very far before timeout was called, and the cleanup crew, with Finley Lotts the "pooper-scooper," came out onto the court to sweep up. Also, measurements were taken from the sidelines to the donkey mess to determine the winner of "Donkey Dung Bingo."

The game proceeded with successful shots few and far between. Even though neither team racked up the points, all riders seemed to be having great fun, even after fall-

ing or being thrown off the donkeys time and time again.

During halftime, children 12 and under were allowed to go on donkey rides around the gym. No doubt the donkeys were happy to have such lightweight riders on their backs for a change! Also during halftime the lucky winner of "Donkey Dung Bingo" received the \$106 prize.

The evening wound down with two more games. Then the riders, sore from getting bucked onto the floor, and the crowd, sore from laughing so hard, went home. No doubt everyone was happy that they came out to watch donkey basketball. —

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# Moonlighting during snow days and late nights

Do you get a little resentful of teachers who have "a day off" when schools are closed due to bad weather? Those of you whose schedules are not affected by weather conditions might find this hard to accept: teachers love a snow day. But if you consider all those late nights and weekends of planning SOL-related activities, grading lab reports and projects, and calculating grades, maybe it all averages out when we have "a day off."

Most teachers I know spend their snow days productively. Let me tell you about how I've spent my ferreted time. Confession time — actually I've been moonlighting for the past two years during summers, late nights and snow days. Have I been showing my students how to watch migrating birds across the face of the full moon? No. Have I been calculating the correlation between snow depth and phases of the moon? No. Have I been working at a second job? YES — and I'm so proud of it! AND it has been quite an education for this teacher!

Does anyone out there remember a TV show in the 60s that was about a young, handsome high school English teacher who was learning the lessons of teaching — often the hard way, but always the right way. In one episode Mr. ??? had to take a second job — moonlighting at a garage/car wash/parking garage at night while teaching in the day. Some students saw him there and he was mortified. Well, my students know that I've been moonlighting and we have enjoyed the result. Enough people know now, so it is no longer a secret. Let me tell the rest of you the rest of the story.

It started when my daughter Betsy was in third grade with Peggy Beck at Churchville Elementary School and she delved into her family history via a family genealogy class project. At that time, Betsy learned that her grandfather was a B-24 bombardier in World War II. His plane was shot down, he parachuted safely from

*It occurs to me that Kriegie 7956 will be larger than anything I am about today. A little sacrifice of my time is more than justified if the book helps young people know that another generation sacrificed so much for their freedom.*

the plane, but became a kriegie (German prisoner of war) for nine months. Over the last few years her grandfather sent us maps, pictures, telegrams, letters, newspaper clippings, and some of his earliest writings that he thought he'd put into a book someday. Initially he was reticent to relive it through telling us about it, but came to the realization that kids today don't know what or why "the good war" happened. Once he wrote: "We all gave some, but some gave all — their lives for our freedom." He felt the story needed to be told to emphasize how our freedoms were won.

So through an audio tape, his notes, letters and documents I crafted his true story. As I was working on it, I was hoping that somehow it would be in print someday for those who need to know. In the summer of 1999, Dad and I met with Katharine Brown, Nancy Sorrells and Sue Simmons of Lot's Wife Publishing to see if they thought we had anything. They encouraged us, but painted a pretty complicated picture that was pretty daunting. We decided to continue crafting, and during snow days in January 2000, I put together a proposal to a publisher.

Sample chapters and chapter outline, biographical sketches of us, suggestions for marketing and cover were sent in April. Over the phone in evenings, after dinner on visits, during spring vacation, Dad

and I hammered out the outline and details. The story line was already there, I just fleshed it out and geared it for the middle school audience. As I like to tell him, he lived the story and talked about it. I just wrote about it. Dad has always wanted me to be careful. "Your school work comes first." He was worried that the project would interfere with my school duties, and sometimes it was a juggle. I persevered and coincidentally the result meshed pretty well with school.

By May, we had a beginning manuscript and submitted it. I had made a couple of copies — one for Dad, one for the publisher to scour, and one for me. At S. Gordon Stewart Middle School for the last three springs, local veterans of World War II, Korea, VietNam and the Gulf War have been invited to school for a recognition ceremony that culminates several weeks of studying the last half of the 20th century. Under the expert direction of a sixth grade social studies teacher (and my former teaching team leader), Linda Petzke, our students study stories, wars, and veterans culminating in the "Heroes Welcome." Stories are shared, presentations are made, experiences are honored. It is enthralling and of high interest for a middle school student to hear a story in which the main character has faced deprivation, adversity, fear, sacrifice

and danger — and survived.

Last spring, Dad and I had the first draft of our book, *Kriegie 7956*, ready in time for our "Heroes Welcome," and I read it to my students. Their response told me that we had something. I think they liked the humor, the drama, the suspense, and the fact that it was a history lesson with a human side.

They learned about the geography of war as the stories of bombing mission locations and "the Kriegie march" unfolded. They learned about the unified effort of all Allied countries with examples of the overwhelming support of the war effort back home. They saw an art medium, the "Greene graphic," as an art form developed out of necessity and optimism. They relished the science moment (as did I), when they learned that membership in the Caterpillar Club is achieved only if one's life has been spared as the result of a silk parachute — made by silkworm caterpillars. Through it all, they were "with me" and could hardly wait for the next day and the next chapter. So I realized that I had something there in a form for the right audience.

The experience of writing the book has been a real education for us. We both have learned a lot about this business of publishing — deadlines, editors, cartographers, publishing costs, contracts, copyrighting laws, ellipses... and correct grammatical and punctuation uses as spelled out in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. We have made some amazing contacts. Our editors have been wonderful to help us through this maze of unfamiliar territory. And from Califor-

## From the teacher's desk

By Betty Gatewood



nia to Kansas City to Florida people have assisted us in this project. Not only did I learn a lot about military terminology and humor, B-24 heavy bombers, bombardiers, dangers, fears, and deprivations in prisoner of war camps, but I've learned that there is a tight community of interested folks out there with our same mind set for preservation of this history. It has been humbling, haunting and I've been honored to write about it.

So where do I stand now? During weekends, early mornings, late nights and snow days in February I was watching the clock and the calendar. My deadline for having contracts and returning the edited manuscript was March 1. Finally an early dismissal and subsequent snow day provided some time for me. Reassuring words from Lot's Wife, cooperation and encouragement from Dad, Mark and Betsy, and assistance from my editors enabled me to meet my deadline. Now we're waiting to hear how the editing proceeds and what I need to do next. By the time this issue of *Augusta Country* goes to press, perhaps I'll be on another deadline for submitting the final draft. Dare I hope for snow days in April?

Recently it occurred to me that *Kriegie 7956* will be larger than anything that I am about today. A little sacrifice of some of my personal time and utilization of that ferreted time on snow days is more than justified if the book helps young people know that another generation sacrificed so much for their freedom. My hope is that it will be printed by Veterans Day 2001. I'll keep you posted. —

## Boston socialites foil 'Scrubbs' in RHS play

By KIM McCRAy

The fall play was "Alice in Wonderland," a fantasy about a young girl's trip through magical Wonderland. The spring play however was quite different. This time, the production was a musical called "Lumberjacks and Weddingbells."

The play, directed by Krissy Brown and Jean Dillon, took place in the backwoods of the Pacific Northwest, in the days before Washington achieved statehood. The story revolved around four lumberjacks, all looking for wives. There weren't many available

women in the Washington territory in those days, and so when six lovely young girls came out from Boston, the lumberjacks were all very anxious to meet and court them. There was really only one problem — the Scrubbs. These mountain hillbillies did all they could to get rid of the Boston girls, so that Venus and Aphrodite, the two Scrubb girls, would have a chance at hitching up with the lumberjacks. However, all's well that ends well, and by the time the curtain fell, the Bostonian girls were all safe and sound, and happy in the arms of the lumberjacks. —



The "Scrubbs" played by Matt Ishee, Vicky Brannock, Lora Pattilio and Kim Reed

RHS staff photo

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# The Hitching Post

## Training wild mustangs requires plan, love, patience



I am considering adopting a wild mustang. I am an average rider with good basics. Can you offer some suggestions for breaking and training?

*Ready to Adopt*

There are three things that you will need for your endeavor. First, you will need a good understanding of horse behavior. Second, you will need a training plan to help you meet your goals. And third, you will need commitment and patience. Let's look at these three factors and I will explain their importance to your objective.

First, you will need to understand horse behavior because wild horses have a great deal of instinctive behavior that is common to domesticated horses. The difference between wild horses and domesticated horses is trust and dependency. Wild horses do not trust easily, and they have never had to be dependent upon humans for their support. Trust can be built up over time. The wild horse will have to learn to be dependent upon you for its care. Grooming, trimming hooves, worming, and feeding, if necessary, will be part of the care

you provide. This care also opens doors to interact with your horse to develop that important trust.

Understanding horse behavior will help you with the communication process needed for training. Knowing how horses act, and react to situations, will help you be able to see problems early and develop patterns or habits that are positive and healthy.

The second thing you need to consider is a training plan. Breaking a horse as a novice can be time consuming and dangerous. A plan gives you a step-by-step approach to working with your horse to teach it what you want it to know. Each step builds on a foundation of basics. I suggest you work with a professional trainer who can help you develop a plan.

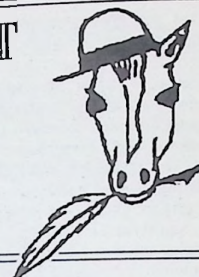
First, you will need to be able to handle your horse. Teach it to lead, tie, and halt. Then introduce it to training equipment such as a

surcingle, bridle, side reins, and long lines. Ground work is a very important part of breaking and training. Taking the time to teach voice commands and ground control will take some of the danger out of breaking. Decide what direction you want your horse to go. Trail riding? Jumping? Dressage? Showmanship? This will help direct your work once your basics are solid. The best advice I can give you here is to remember that good trainers always make their horses comfortable with what they need them to do. If the horse resists, go back to basics, make the horse ready for the new movement, introduce it, and build on success.

The third element in your goal is to remember the importance of commitment. Horses are creatures of habits. Habits are developed by commitment. Sporadic training is meaningless. Keep your objectives in mind and maintain a constant commitment to the goal.

Patience is also very important because horses do not always learn the way people expect. They sometimes fall back into old patterns, and I have found that people often want everything to happen too fast. Take it from the horse's mouth, taking the time to break and train a wild mustang will require some education, a training plan, and lots of love and patience. —

I.B. HOOFINIT  
From  
the  
Horse's Mouth



Breaking and training wild horses varies somewhat from domestic horses. Wild horses do not trust easily. They have never had to be dependent upon humans for their support.

BLM file photo

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 136, Greenville, Va. 24440. Questions become the property of Chris Marrs, and answers are subject to editor ap-

proval. 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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## Reckless: A hound short on ambition but long on love

By JEAN BRYDGE

As hounds go, he was a pitiful specimen. He was scrawny, his paws were too big for his legs, his head hung down as though he was apologizing for being here and his tail mostly stayed tucked between his legs. But he had brown eyes so beautiful they looked like two pools of Hershey cocoa.

I observed him one morning about six o'clock standing under a tree in our yard looking toward our kitchen door. He was truly a mangy looking hound. When I called my husband to see him, his first admonition was, "Don't feed him!"

For three days, the hound stared at our kitchen door but ran away each time we went out. Finally, at the end of the third day, I had to give him some food. He wouldn't eat while I was outside but gulped down every bite when I went back in the house.

Those were gentler times and the traffic on our highway was meager. We quickly discovered this hound had a peculiar habit: he laid in the middle of the highway to sleep or scratch fleas. That was how he acquired his name. We decided he was either reckless or stupid and I certainly didn't want a dog named "stupid."

We was so lazy, he waited for a flea to crawl around to his paw before he scratched and then it was a half-hearted attempt. When he ate — after his brush with starvation had been satiated — he would eat a little and rest a while. The one thing he did exceptionally well was howl. In the middle of the night, he would lie in the yard and start a howl with a low wail that kept rising until he was hitting high C and still going. Had I been our neigh-

bors, I would have requested that we move from the neighborhood. Reckless howled at the moon, he howled at shadows, he howled at cars and he howled just to hear himself. We decided he had a good sense of humor or else a mean streak, we could never decide which.

This weird hound dog became a fixture and when we went outside, he always followed us but at a slower pace because he had to keep resting. We tried to determine his origin and discovered he was actually from a good line of hunting dogs but when he was a pup, unfortunately, someone fired a gun directly over his head and after that he was no good as a hunting dog because he was gun shy. He belonged to a gentleman who lived approximately six miles from us and with his permission, Reckless became part of our family.

One day when we arrived home from work, Reckless introduced us to a visitor. The friend was a little beagle whose tummy almost touched the ground. Reckless was a good two and a half feet high. They looked like Mutt and Jeff. Reckless brought the beagle up to the door when he came for food so we assumed the beagle had also moved in and named her "Bugle, The Beagle." She had the sweetest personality and we loved her immediately. She had to take three steps

to one of Reckless' because his legs were so long and hers were so short.

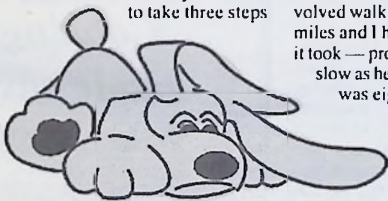
After a couple months, we discovered Bugle was pregnant and she was soon the mother of seven little beagles. At this stage we had nine dogs and actually hadn't planned to have any. We talked about getting rid of all of them but I said we had to keep Reckless. Well, as it turned out, the decision was taken out of our hands. One of our neighbors complained to the sheriff that Reckless had killed her ducks. I nearly died laughing! That dog was so lazy he wouldn't chase a bone. Unless the ducks attacked him, there was no way Reckless could have killed them but we decided it was time to move all our dogs.

We sent Reckless back to his owner and a friend took Bugle and her puppies. I was sad when they left for we had really grown to love this strange assortment of pets.

About three weeks later, I was given a wholehearted demonstration of unconditional love! One evening, I looked out in the yard and there was a familiar sight. Reckless had come home! When I ran out to see him, he jumped up around my neck and nearly wagged his tail off.

He ran away from where he lived and came back because he missed us. You have to realize, this involved walking approximately six miles and I have no idea how long it took — probably several days as slow as he was. His normal pace was eight or 10 steps and sit down and rest, so it had to take a great deal of time. The fact that he loved us that much made me cry and I cried even harder when I had to take him back.

In this life, I will never have a greater compliment than Reckless walking all those miles to say he loved us. He was some hound! —



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## Gymnastics help horse, rider develop balance

By CHRIS MARRS

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the first in a series of articles about presentations made during Equine Science University 2001 held recently at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington.

LEXINGTON — Hurley N. Ward, a local trainer who previously headed up the riding program at Virginia Tech, gave an educational seminar on gymnastic training at the Equine Science University 2001 hosted by the Virginia Horse Center on Feb. 7.

Gymnastics consist of a series of jumps that are used to supple and train the horse and rider. Ward divided the basics of student learning into three categories — hearing, visual, and feeling. A good trainer uses all three through the learning experience. By setting up a gymnastic course the rider can experience a greater "feel" for jumping.

The first course consisted of a ground pole, 9 feet to the first cross rail, 18 feet to the second cross rail, 29 feet to the third cross rail, 39 feet to the fourth cross rail, and 49 feet to the fifth crossrail. This series of low jumps is used to help develop balance, rhythm and stride in the horse and rider. The horse will also learn to balance itself over the jumps.

Two horses used in the demonstration had never been through a gymnastics course. The objective was to teach the horses to balance themselves by engaging their hind end for the take off. This gives the horses a powerful thrust in the take off. Without the thrust the horse tends to jump flat and does not recover as quickly after the jump. The presentation of a jump right after another makes the horse develop this thrust in order to save itself through the course.

Ward commented on educating people to the conformation of horses. One of the horses, a small quarterhorse, added a stride between jumps. Ward explained that as a judge she does not like to penalize against added strides. She suggested people be practical re-

garding conformation. Physical characteristics have an impact on rhythm, stride, and movement. The quarterhorse, with its muscled rear end, can have difficulty with stride and length. (Note: jumps are set up 9 feet apart as equal to one stride; for long distances, such as the 49 feet, horses with shorter strides will "add" a stride before take off.)

One of the lessons Ward brought home was the use of the rider's eyes. "Dropped eyes mean dropped leg," she explained. Eyes should be focused to the end of the ring or entire "line" of jumps. Looking down at the jump causes the rider to lose leg pressure which allows the horse to drop its momentum.

After warm ups over the first set of jumps, Ward set up a second course. She removed the crossrails and set up verticals. (Instead of two poles creating an "X" which encourages the horse to jump in the low middle, she raised one pole straight across between the standards.) This presented more of a challenge to the horse and rider and the audience could see how the horses started to engage their hind ends for take offs.

Ward spoke of two personality types in horses. "Passive-aggressive," which make great school horses. They don't "blow up," and see things in gray, rather than black or white. They tolerate mistakes from the rider. "Distractionary" horses see things in black and white. You either did or you didn't. They do not tolerate many mistakes from their riders. She commented that knowing your horse's personality type is important to how far you can "push" during the gymnastic exercise. Riders were learning to sit the horse at the same time the horse was learning to balance itself over the course.

After the verticals, the riders were presented with oxers. These jumps are two verticals close together (approximately 1 foot apart) which create a "spread." The spread causes the horse to stay in the air longer and asks the horse to square up over the fence. Ward asked for half halts through the line to rebalance rider and horse. One rider who performed an excellent demonstration said that it felt as if it were in slow motion. Ward agreed that was what the rider should achieve. The feeling of slow motion adds the third element to the learning experience.

The presentation demonstrated a "crash" course in gymnastics and Ward suggested riders and trainers use caution in asking horses to do so much so fast. The session put a great deal into a short amount of time and she stressed the importance of a good foundation. Take it slow, get good results, and then build on that. —



# Country Crossroads

## Reflecting pool reflections

March 2001

Dear Maude,

Well, it's been a colorful month so far. I did exactly what I said I would do in my last letter — I went out into the gray day and found myself a bright and cheerful peach-colored blazer and matching silk blouse, and buying it really did cheer me up. It cheered me up so much, in fact, that when they predicted the terrible blizzard of the century, I dashed off and bought myself a new pair of snow boots and a bright blue scarf and hat. The 37 flakes of snow, which arrived the next day, so terrified all of the government workers that no one went into work. The predictions were so dire that many people even had not set their alarm clocks, planning on that lazy day at home, and when they did awake, they had missed all but about six of the flakes. There was almost no one in our office, so I took a really long lunch hour and wandered about on Connecticut Avenue until I found just the right emerald green dress to wear to a St. Patrick's Day party to which I had been invited. Now, all I need is another excuse to go shopping, for I have not added anything yellow to my wardrobe!

Things in Washington are not exactly peachy. One would think that by now all of that promised "working together" would have taken effect, but instead we have not only the President's tax cut proposal to monitor, but the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill to deal with as well. It is being argued about throughout this month with Senator Hagel's competing campaign finance reform proposal in the wings. This kind of legislation does little to improve the boss' spirits. One cannot bill for hours spent monitoring soft money

contributions. Especially when some of it is HIS money!

Then there are those members of Congress who have announced that they are retiring after this term. They may not be coming back after 2002, but they are still on important committees until then, and the boss has to make sure that he treats those he will need with the greatest of support, while all of the time trying to figure out just who will be the one to concentrate on next. Oh, it can be trying! To make it even worse, they still seem to be trying to get settled in the Hill offices. The phone rang last week — it was the boss on his cell phone.

"You sent me to the wrong office!" he grumbled to his appointments secretary.

"Well," she replied, "they were there last week."

Not only are the offices still in their final stages of relocation, but also staff members are not completely settled. A lot of the press aides, communication directors, etc. seem to be moving around from one office to another. (Poor boss found out on one of his latest trips to the Hill that one of his most helpful aides had left the Senate and now was with a consulting firm downtown. Not only did he lose one of his most helpful staff people, he gained a competitor as well.)

The folks who are really blue are those new staff people who want to live near their work, but were not prepared for the cost of Capitol Hill housing. Many of the long-term staff people also have become increasingly sick of having to commute in the traffic from the suburbs and are eyeing housing on the Hill as a very good alternative. Finding something may not be all that easy, however, for in the last year or so, the successful political types have been buying houses on the Hill at a fast pace. All of the

little English basement apartments that young staffers love so and could rent for a somewhat reasonable amount have disappeared. If you really want to live on Capitol Hill now, you may be looking at a price tag of \$250,000 for a townhouse in the area. That's a bit of a price for a young staff member just out of college. So the ones who cannot afford to buy and can find no place to rent just grumble and haul their files back and forth from the suburbs. The people who are the happiest are the ones who held property for investment. They are all smiles as they fill their pockets with the bright green of profit.

One bit of sunshine, however, is the benefit performance, Hexagon, at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Georgetown, which runs throughout March. Just when you thought you had heard the last of the chads and flowered sports shirts and that Florida election, they are there singing and dancing and beginning their show with one final spoof. A friend and I plan to go this weekend to see the performance. There is a lot of Congressional participation, including some by members of Congress, making fun of life in our special town.

And, with happy anticipation of our evening in Georgetown, I think that I will go out at lunchtime and see if I can find a nice sunny, yellow outfit to wear. I knew I would come up with a good excuse to buy just one more new thing before the bills come in to starve me into watching my expenses!

Happy springtime, and love to all at home,  
LuLu



By Roberta Hamlin

## Cooking faster and easier

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Marlene A. Condon, a nature writer and photographer by profession, is also an avid cook. After being diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, she experimented with new techniques so that she could continue to cook without tiring herself out or creating undue strain on her painful joints.

I have been cooking from scratch for many years. Along the way I began to suffer with excruciatingly painful, swollen hand joints that made functioning difficult. I tested positive for rheumatoid arthritis and at that point worried that I might not be able to continue to cook as avidly as I always had. My illness sapped my energy and my hands were often quite painful. However, being of a scientific mind (my degree is in physics), I did not hesitate to experiment. Although this column will help those who are hindered by illness or simply the aging process, it will also help those who are too busy because of

work or other obligations to spend much time in the kitchen.

The first step one has to take to cook faster and easier is to scrutinize the kitchen. You must decide which utensils, cookware, and foods you use the most. These items then should be placed where they are most easily accessible.

For instance, in my kitchen I use lots of flour because, unless my hands are completely out of commission, I make all of my own bread and rolls from scratch. Therefore I rearranged my cabinets so that several jars of flour were on the first shelf, within arm's length. This saved my joints because I did not have to grasp a step-ladder, and it saved my energy because I did not have to move a step-ladder around to reach the flour.

Besides moving things inside your cabinets, you may also have to rearrange your countertop. Before having to coexist with arthritis, the only small appliance that I kept on the countertop was my toaster oven that was used every

day. Eventually I realized that items that were used often — even though not as frequently as every day — should remain on the countertop as well. I now have a bread machine and a stand mixer that are always out. You should evaluate your small appliances. It might be very worthwhile to upgrade what you have or even to add to what you already own. My original mixer was good for making small bread or roll recipes, but it was not big enough to handle large recipes that I formerly made completely by hand. Trying to make bread dough by hand was now extremely painful to accomplish, so I invested in a Kitchen Aid Ultra Power stand mixer. Although the Kitchen Aid was quite expensive, even on sale, it was well worth the money. Although I have arthritis, the quality of my life has not been diminished because I can still enjoy the superior quality of bread made from scratch — albeit with extra help!

When actually preparing food, it is easier and faster to get several

items from each cabinet at once. Look at your recipe. If several items are located in one cabinet, get all of them down onto your counter before moving on to the next cabinet for other items. When you have placed everything you need out onto the counters, then you can move them all to the spot where you plan to work.

If you are tired or suffer from foot pain, it is easier to prepare food while sitting down. If you do not own a bar-type stool, by all means get one. These are inexpensive and tall enough to allow you to work at the counter. As the years have gone by, I have had to contend with pain in my feet and hips. Having a seat to sit on while chopping vegetables

or mixing together spices literally takes a load off your feet!

Cooking involves lifting as well as cleaning. If you own pans or other kitchen utensils that are heavy and/or difficult to clean, consider buying lighter-weight items that require less-intensive scrubbing at cleanup time.

My large Cuisinart food processor was too difficult to clean and to handle with my much weaker hands. I donated it to a local charity and got a smaller and more easily held Black and Decker food processor. I also got rid of most of my glass bakeware and bought lighter-weight nonstick pans that are much easier to clean and to work with.

This is cooking made easy! —



### Cooking made easy

By Marlene Condon

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# Llamas find niche in Virginia agriculture

By NANCY SORRELLS

LEXINGTON — As we stood next to Delta Dawn and discussed her finer physical and intellectual attributes she kept up a worried humming sigh. It wasn't loud, but it was constant.

Who could blame her? The 270-pound tan-and-white appaloosa llama was in a strange place (the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington) surrounded by a curious group of outdoor writers who were pressing maybe a tad too close. I'll have to hand it to Delta Dawn, she behaved perfectly and only her humming revealed her nervousness.

Delta Dawn's owners, Harry and Laurie Mollin of Shangrila Farm in Callaway, were in Lexington for a Llama Show. Their half a dozen



DELTA DAWN

or so animals were among a long line of animals getting coifed and groomed for the show ring in this growing livestock hobby.

The Mollins were kind enough

to take time out to enlighten on-lookers about this unusual segment of Virginia agriculture. These good-natured animals, originally from the high Andes Mountains of South America, have created a niche for themselves in the United States where they are raised as pack animals for ecotourists, used as livestock guardians, and give wool for textile production.

Interestingly enough I got to see working llamas in action the next day in Highland County. While driving along the backroads of western Virginia during the Highland Maple Festival, I saw llama after llama resting among fields of sheep. They were there to protect the sheep from marauding coyotes and dogs and have proven valuable guardians for livestock

herds across the country.

These cud-chewing ruminants are highly intelligent and personable, said the Mollins. Llamas are easily trained to lead, pull a cart or carry a pack. In the Americas, llamas were the first domesticated animals and their agility on rocky steep trails makes them excellent pack animals today. A llama can carry 25 percent of its body weight (on average about 80 pounds) for 10-15 miles a day. As an added bonus, their padded feet mean that trails will not be torn up by their passing.

Llamas are low maintenance animals, that require little in the way of special feeds, shelter or fencing. Presently their economic impact on Virginia's agriculture is minimal and Mollin noted that he knew of no

farmer making a living entirely from llamas. However, he added, that there are a growing number of farmers who have diversified in order to include llamas in their overall agriculture production. And, of course, many mainline farmers now own one llama that has successfully bonded with their sheep and protects them from predators.

Finally, our curious group of writers broached the one question everyone had about llamas: Do they really spit? It seems that these animals have gotten a bad reputation on this subject. The truth is that llamas will spit at each other to establish dominance in a group or to warn off an unwanted suitor, but only rarely in abusive situations will a llama spit at humans. —



Rail trails are industrial artifacts which have returned to an apparent natural state giving no hint of what the area must have

looked like when the railway was in use. The Virginia Creeper Trail fits this pattern.

Photo by Mark Gatewood

## Trail

Continued from page 5

it was mostly downhill. And no, thank you, they wouldn't be seeing us on the trail today.

The trailhead was just a few blocks from The Love House, so we walked our bikes along the sidewalks through town. Abingdon was settled in the late 1700s and by 1800 was an established center of population in southwest Virginia. There are a lot of suitably old-looking brick buildings, most of them occupied by lawyers. This, I was told, is because Abingdon is the county seat of Washington County.

The trailhead is marked by a steam locomotive display and then the trail takes off across the first of its 100 bridges and trestles. We

passed through a nice housing area surrounding a golf course on the outskirts of Abingdon. A traffic light marked the intersection of the trail with the golf course entrance road — here was something we'd never seen before: a golf cart crossing! We yielded the right of way to a golfer walking with his clubs (they still do that?) and then we rolled out of town and into the woods.

Rail trails are industrial artifacts which have returned to an apparent natural state giving no hint of what the area must have looked like when the railway was in use. The Virginia Creeper Trail fits this pattern: second-growth forest surrounded much of the trail and cut banks had developed heavy mantles of vegetation. Spring had just sprung and we enjoyed seeing jack-in-the-pulpit, columbine and lush stands of fern including walking fern. Much of this section of trail crossed pastures with a variety of self-closing gates. One was a very sophisticated welded steel gate closed by an automobile shock absorber. There were a lot of cows on this stretch of trail, which is OK until you reach for your water bottle and find it spattered with

See GATES, page 20

## Mustangs

Continued from page 4

rate of the range horses. Today there are 43,000 wild horses and 7,000 burros in 10 western states with the largest herds living in Nevada.

Those numbers are approximately 50 percent over an ideal population of 24,000 to 27,000. To reach that ideal population, BLM officials are increasing the number of horses gathered from the wild herds and adopted out to people. For the next five to 10 years, between 6,000-8,000 animals will be removed from the wild herds.

Even animals removed from wild herds will not be destroyed. Some animals undesirable for adoption are

placed in a private sanctuary where they are allowed to live out their days as wild animals.

Recently 120 or so wild mustangs and burros were brought to the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington in order to be adopted. Among the potential adoptees were two very rare types of horses. Because the wild horse herds out west are often hundreds of miles apart and have remained as isolated populations for generations, many of the herds have developed unique characteristics.

The Sulphur Herd, located in the Needle Mountain Range of Utah, is one such group. These horses are very close genetically to the bloodlines of the horses

brought to the southwest by the Spanish in the 16th century. Dominant colors in this herd are dun, buckskin and grulla (gray or mouse colored). Very often their ears curve in, their manes and tails are bicolored, they have a dorsal stripe, and tiger striped legs.

The Sinbad Herd is another unique group of mustangs. These animals, located near Green River, Utah, originally consisted of escapees from well-bred herds being driven west to California for sale. Other horses escaped from local ranches. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, an operator of a uranium mine in the area bred Welsh ponies for his mining opera-

tions and thoroughbreds which he sold to the U.S. Army. Both the pony and the army horse blood wound up in the Sinbad Herd.

The Sinbad animals are short stocky animals weighing from 700 to 1,000 pounds and standing 13-14 hands. The most common colors are black, buckskin, grulla and bay.

No matter where the mustangs originated, however, the veins of each one courses with America's history. The adoption program allows the wild mustang and burro to remain free and healthy on the range while simultaneously allowing Americans across the nation to bring home a piece of that legend with their own horse or burro. —

## Tidbits

Continued from page 3

the Earlsyville area of Albemarle County where Charlie was employed as manager of Panorama Farm owned by James Murray.

In 1959 the family moved to Sherando in Augusta County and in 1961 they purchased their current home on Howardsville Turnpike.

Over the years, Charlie has been employed doing farm work, at Crompton (28-1/2 years), at Mastic (now Alcoa — 8 years) as well as owning a lock and key business. Rosie worked at Morton's Frozen Foods and as a cleaning contractor for Du Pont.

Their family includes six children, 11 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. —

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# Traffic portrays complexities of war on drugs

*Traffic*, Steven Soderbergh's uncompromising look at America's so-called war on drugs, is up for an Oscar this year. Hannah's mom, who initially didn't want to commit to two-and-a-half hours of feeling bad, finally broke down and went to see it at la petite Bijou downtown. And she's glad she did.

*Traffic* is not a typical Hollywood movie; Soderbergh recaptures his independent film mystique after his other blockbuster *Erin Brockovich*. It is definitely not an uplifting tale but it doesn't leave the viewer bereft. Most importantly, it doesn't pretend to have the answers although it does leave one with a lot to think about. *Traffic* is three stories.

It involves Michael Douglas (*Basic Instinct*, *The American President*) as Robert Wakefield who has just been appointed Drug Czar by the president of the United States. Woefully ignorant of the depth and breadth of the drug problem faced by the nation, Wakefield

only begins to realize the severity of the nation's drug problem when he visits a border crossing in Mexico. He needn't have looked any farther than his own living room to see the magnitude of the task before him. He eventually comes face-to-face with his daughter Caroline's drug use, and that of her preppie boyfriend who pulls her deeper and deeper into the hellish world of drug addiction.

It involves two cops Wakefield never meets but who serve on the front lines in the drug war. Don Cheadle (*Boogie Nights*, *Rosewood*, TV's *Picket Fences*) as Montel Gordon and Benicio Del Toro (*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *The Usual Suspects*) as Javier Rodriguez. Gordon and Rodriguez are the real conscience of the movie. Del Toro turns in an Oscar winning performance as the Mexican police officer who is caught in a power struggle between two cartels and is unwillingly pulled

into a dangerous situation by a partner who can't keep his mouth shut.

It involves Helena Ayala, (Catherine Zeta-Jones; *The Mask of Zorro*, *Entrapment*) the pregnant and unsuspecting wife of an American drug lord who is arrested when a minor dealer rolls over for the DEA. Coping with her sudden loss of status, threats to her son's life, and financial ruin, she takes over the family business. She decides to become a player rather than see her world collapse. Helena's transformation from housewife to drug boss is captured in a chilling scene where she out-maneuvers Mexican cartel boss Juan Obregon played by Benjamin Bratt.

Soderbergh has put together a talented cast that includes Miguel Ferrer as an informant; Amy Irving as Wakefield's wife; Steven Bauer as Helena's husband, Carlos; and Dennis Quaid as Carlos' lawyer. Cameo appearances from Albert

Finney, James Brolin, and Salma Hayek round out the cast. Even Senator Orrin Hatch makes an appearance as himself, one that drew a great deal of unwarranted criticism.

*Traffic* has a documentary quality, not unlike Soderbergh's masterpiece *sex, lies, and videotape*. It looks like it has been filmed with a hand-held Brownie. Soderbergh uses different colors (yellow for Mexico; blue for Ohio) and techniques to give each locale and story a different character. Eventually the stories come together but not in a neat climactic end. Characters subtly cross paths as strangers, never to know how intricately their lives are entwined.

*Traffic* doesn't offer any solutions to the drug wars. The message of the film finally is that talk is cheap when a problem is so complex. Douglas' character says it all when he asks, "How can we wage war on our own kids?" I found



myself thinking about the movie many days after seeing it and wanting to talk about it.

Hannah's mom doesn't know if *Traffic* will win or should win an Oscar. If you don't mind a disturbing, gritty movie, *Traffic* is a good choice. Hannah's mom gives it three-and-a-half bananas. The film is rated R for drug use, profanity, some sexuality. —

## •Gates

Continued from page 19

green mud. I think that cows, at some dim level of their consciousness, like bikes. Maybe it's the handlebars. If we can give a little lift to their day, a little break from the routine of chew, swallow and belch, I'll accept the green spatters.

We rode about eight miles, to a long trestle where the Middle and South Forks of the Holston River (the latter now South Holston Lake) join. Trestles make wonderful birding platforms, giving access to the treetops where the warblers like to sit and flit. My Wife the Biology Teacher got sidetracked at the start of the South Holston Trestle by a yellow-throated warbler almost at arm's length. This is a bird we don't see in Augusta County and hadn't seen anywhere in years, so it was a good sighting.

Just beyond the trestle was a nice little rest area with bike racks and a picnic table. We exchanged pleasantries with some backpackers and bikers and ate lunch. And then, to

make a long story short, we turned around and rode back to Abingdon.

We spent the afternoon walking around the downtown area, looking in antique shops and planning our evening. After Friday night's horrible road food, I vowed we would eat no more fast food on this trip. Only good food, brought to us at a table on real dishes, would pass our lips. So we found a late lunch at a quietly hip little sandwich shop called The Virginia Creeper. Dinner at The Hardware Company on West Main fully met our expectations and we easily made the transition from energy bars and water to steak, potatoes and ale.

Since this was to be a luxury trip, good food was to be expected. What I hadn't expected was a night at the theater.

Abingdon is home to the Historic Barter Theater, the State Theater of Virginia. During the height of the Depression, an unemployed actor and southwest Virginia native brought an acting troupe to Abingdon and opened a theater. Since cash was in

short supply in the local economy, patrons brought produce or canned goods to barter for their tickets. We paid in the conventional manner and enjoyed a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, set to 1950s rock and roll, black leather jackets and jeans. It was great fun.

Sunday was going home day. We enjoyed another gourmet breakfast by the innkeeper's wife, chef Hazel Ramos-Cano, packed up and said our goodbyes. Then we drove to the trailhead and repeated the 16-mile ride to the South Holston and back. This time with a little sunshine starting to break through — typical for the last day! We got back to Mt. Sidney in mid-afternoon, pleasantly tired with a camera full of pictures and a bag full of dirty riding clothes. It was a trip we're anxious to repeat. —

"Let's be fronds," My Wife the Biology Teacher says to a patch of walking fern, photo at right, along the Virginia Creeper Trail.



## Yesterday's weather

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

**April 2, 1982** — Severe thunderstorms spawned 56 tornadoes in the central



U.S., including 17 in the Red River Region of Texas and Oklahoma. The tornadoes claimed 30 lives, and injured 383 other persons. A violent tornado near Messer, Okla., left only the carpet tack strips on the slab of a house it destroyed, and carried a motel sign 30 miles.

**April 6, 1983** — The temperature at Denver, Colo., dipped to a record cold seven degrees above zero.

**April 8, 1926** — The lightning-set oil depot fire near San Luis Obispo, Calif., boiled over and engulfed



900 acres. Many tornado vortices resulted from the intense heat of the fire. One such tornado traveled 1,000 yards, picked up a house and carried it 150 feet, killing the two occupants inside.

**April 22, 1988** — Heavy snow fell over northern Nebraska, with 15 inches reported at Mullen. Heavy snow also blanketed the mountains of northern Arizona, with 16 inches reported at Munds Park. —

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

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