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Augusta Country

Down on the farm
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March 2002 Vol. 9, Issue 3

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March 2002

'WE ARE NOT ALONE!'

The truth revealed

NO HUNTING ALLOWED

Sheriff Shelters 'Little Green Men'

STAUNTON, Va. (AP)—Sheriff John E. Kent of Augusta County objects (UFO) have been fre- quens in this area, Tuesday night. says he will crack down on people three boys said they saw a small, who try to hunt saucers who harry cows to hunt saucer-riding "little green men." Reports of unidentified flying

Kent said some residents armed themselves and went out to hunt the creature, supposedly

landed by a UFO. "This thing has gotten out- of hand," he said. "Anyone carrying firearms in the county without good reason will be dealt with according to the

Besides, Kent added, suppose there really were creatures around from Outer space—What's got a right to mow them down?

Pacific Stars & Stripes
Sunday, Jan. 31, 1953

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Barrel-racing champ defies odds

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RES students play cupid

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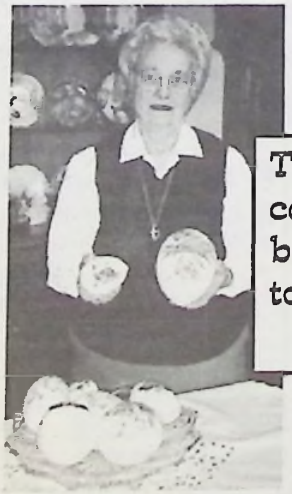

Blacksmith's hammer rings true at Augusta Forge

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These eggs are low calorie, low cholesterol, but please don't try to scramble them

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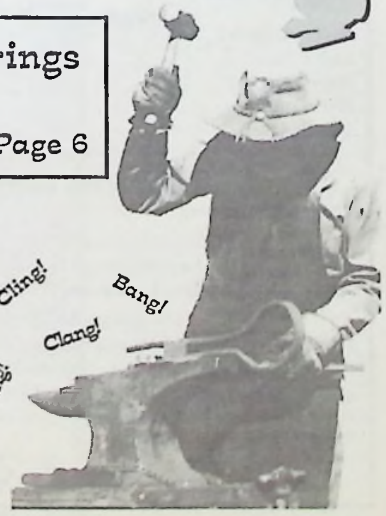

Augusta Library opens Churchville branch

By VERA HAILEY

CHURCHVILLE — The Augusta County Library, located in Fishersville, recently opened a branch to serve patrons in the western part of the county.

The new library offshoot is located at 3714 Churchville Avenue, in the heart of picturesque Churchville. "They tore down the rest of the old Churchville Elementary School and left the wing for use as the library... a gable roof was added for the heating and air conditioning systems and it was drastically remodeled to make it as new as they could for an old building," explained Branch Manager Debbie Sweeney.

The venture is the culmination of years of saving and planning by Augusta County. Funding earmarked for a library branch was allocated over time. When a location was chosen, work began on the renovation of the structure.

With 3,600 square feet, there is abundant space for current needs as well as future expansion. Augusta's Churchville library branch is expected to serve 10,000 area residents. At full capacity, with additional shelving, the archive will have space for 30,000 books. "We have a good base collection and anything that is available at the main or other locations can be brought to Churchville," said Sweeney.

The Churchville location employs two others in addition to Sweeney. Charlotte Stephenson serves as library assistant and children's specialist. Ron Blake, retired from the Ministry of Defense in England, works part-time.

Sweeney is excited about the reception that western Augusta County has given the new endeavor. The long-awaited grand opening celebration was held Jan. 12, with activities throughout the day and an opening ceremony. "It was wonderful, with loads of excited people." People of all ages expressed delight with the new community resource.

Patrons can expect the same kinds of quality programs and services that are available at the main library, including personal reference help, interlibrary loans, current magazines, best sellers, children's programs and an extensive collection of videos and audiocassettes. Internet access and a public meeting room are also available.

The Augusta County Library also has stations in Deerfield and Craigs-ville, which are staffed by Valley Program for Aging workers as well as volunteers. A recently refurbished bookmobile roams the county, providing books to those who might otherwise not have access to them.

A branch of the popular Friends of the Library will be developed to provide volunteer support for children's programs, special receptions, landscaping and other activities at the new branch.

For information on the Augusta County Library Churchville Branch, call 245-5287.

The hours are Monday and Tuesday, noon - 8 p.m.; Wednesday and Thursday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. The branch is closed on Friday and Sunday. —

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ACL children's specialist earns national recognition

VAL THOMSON

The National Association of Counties recently recognized Augusta County Library Children's Specialist Val Thomson. Her award-winning Volunteer Storytime Troupe was designated "Best in Category" in the libraries category and selected as the "Best Small County Program."

The Volunteer Storytime Troupe was organized by Thomson to serve area daycare centers. She trained 14 volunteers to present monthly story programs and designed and supplied storytime kits. The volunteers began visiting the centers in October 2000.

Thomson funded the program by writing and receiving a grant from the Library of Virginia.

Because of Thomson's dedication and hard work, the library was able to expand its preschool services to a population of daycare children who may never have received library services. Through the program, children and their caregivers are exposed to reading role models. —

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Keepsake eggs are year-round reminder of rebirth for Middlebrook collector

By NANCY SORRELLS

MIDDLEBROOK — Few homes could be as ready for Easter as that of Ruby Rosen. Her collection of vividly-painted glass eggs now tops 200, fills up two full cabinets and spills out into the space beyond. Truly it seems that the Easter Rabbit himself established the home as his egg manufacturing headquarters.

For Ruby it began innocently enough about 25 years ago when her late husband, George, saw her admire a glass egg at an auction.

These hollow eggs, made of a milky-white glass, were very popular around 1900 as Easter gifts. It was much in fashion to give them as gifts to a woman who had a special place in your heart — be she a wife, girlfriend, mother or sister. The eggs are as different from one another as the original gift recipients. Some are tiny — no bigger than a large songbird's egg at 1 1/2 inches — while others take two hands to hold and are the size of ostrich eggs.

Nearly every egg was made with some sort of decoration and some even have embossed horseshoes or crosses on them. Some eggs have a chick head emerging from one side of the glass shell. Other eggs have painted decoration — flowers, animals, verses, or landscapes — on them.

Ruby didn't bid on that first egg she saw and so the egg went home with someone else. But not long after that, George bought some similar blown glass eggs at an antique shop that was going out of business.

That was the start of a collection that now includes over 200 milk glass eggs of all sorts and sizes as well as Easter accessories like rabbits and chickens and baskets with rabbits and chickens. Even her son, Gary, has gotten into egg collecting, but he goes for paper maché eggs.

Ruby admits that collecting the glass eggs might be the perfect hobby for her. "Eggs aren't my favorite dish. I'm just not an egg eater. But I do love my old blown milk glass eggs."

Ruby Rosen displays a few of the many eggs in her collection which includes a number of different sized eggs.

Many of the eggs have come from local estate auctions and she knows the personal story about four of them.

"One was from a local family in our church. The man owned a store and went to Baltimore on a buying trip and bought each of his daughters an egg," Ruby said.

Ruby points to her son, Gary, as the one responsible for many of the eggs in the collection, which now dominates two rooms. "He enjoys auctions and he looks for them. My other son, Phil, helped research the history of the eggs," she added.

Ruby's eggs run the gamut in size from songbird size, to duck egg, turkey egg, and many of the ostrich egg variety. The painted decorations on hers include angels, rabbits, chicks, chicks emerging from eggs, anchors, crosses, horseshoes, pansies, roses, violets and forget-me-nots. Two are dated (1906) and three have girls' names on them.

Some of the eggs have beautiful verses on them. Her favorite egg earned that top status because of the verse painted on it:

Tho' life be
Sorrowful
Sometimes and drear
For grief most often
Bide with us here --
Take of the joy that
Comes
With Easter day,
Scatter its
Sweetness
Over thy way

Sentiments like this and the egg's symbolic association with Easter have drawn Ruby to the eggs. Eggs have long been intertwined with Easter because they symbolize rebirth — the same Christian theme that is the focus of Easter.

"I've enjoyed collecting the eggs as the Easter season is such a beautiful and meaningful time. The egg is the symbol of new life and my display of eggs keeps me aware of that all year long," Ruby explained.

Eggs, like this one painted with nesting chickens, are included in a collection kept by Ruby Rosen of Middlebrook.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

Some of the incredible, not-so-edible eggs in Ruby Rosen's collection are painted with Easter messages and images.

Displaying the eggs year-round has been somewhat of a challenge, however. Some are made with a flat bottom so they are easily displayed, while others represent a real logistical nightmare in displaying them without having them roll off a tabletop or shelf and shatter.

The eggs are fragile not only because they are glass, but also because the painted words and figures were often not fired and even a simple cleaning can destroy the 100-year-old paint work. The vivid colors on some of her eggs belie their age, while others are worn with time. "I keep most of them behind glass and I have to be very careful when I clean them," she said.

After 25 years of collecting, though, Ruby has a major problem. She is just about out of egg room. Unless she sees a very unusual egg, she won't add it to her collection. Recently, though, a very special egg was added to the display. It turns out that very first egg that Ruby had admired but not bid on at that auction years ago was purchased by a local woman who is a friend. When that friend gave it to her, well, that was one egg Ruby couldn't say no to, especially since it was responsible for the other 200 or so eggs in the Rosen house.

Through the years the egg collecting has provided a fascinating hobby for the Rosen family to enjoy. For Easter time, of course, the entire collection and accessories are on display. Upon seeing the collection for the first time, one woman was prompted to exclaim: "My but the hen went wild in here!" —

Augusta offered safe haven to 'little green men'

By NANCY SORRELLS

It's hard to imagine in the 21st century when a click of the mouse puts us in touch with people and events all over the world, but there was a time not long ago when Augusta County was, perhaps, just a little bit more rural, a little bit more isolated, and, yes, a tiny bit less sophisticated than it is today.

It was January 1965. That's when the "little green men" stopped by for a visit in Augusta County. Luckily when hysterical citizens and gun-toting vigilantes threatened the peaceful order of the county, Sheriff John E. Kent stepped up to the plate. His common sense and dry wit not only calmed an alarmed citizenry, but accounts of his actions and the protection he extended to any potential spacemen were reported in newspapers all over the world.

When one ponders the situation, the world really was a pretty scary place in 1965. Atomic bombs had been unleashed. The United States and Russia were involved in a space race that included launching men into outer space. Technology and computers were broadening scientific horizons to the point where we suddenly realized we were a small, insignificant speck in a great big universe.

There really must have been some atmospheric phenomenon happening in Virginia in December 1964 and January 1965: perhaps rare southern sightings of the Northern Lights, perhaps weather balloons gathering data, or maybe the military was engaged in some secret Cold War aircraft testing.

At any rate, the first local siting of an "unidentified flying object" occurred on Dec. 21 at 5 p.m. when a Grottoes man reported seeing a large, dark object land with a "soft whooshing sound," in a field near the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in Fishersville.

Lorain Kent shows one of the many newspaper articles which told of Augusta County's "alien-friendly" sheriff.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Augusta County Sheriff John Kent dismissed the sighting, noting that the U.S. 250 corridor is heavily traveled and nobody else reported seeing the flying saucer. However, a 14-year-old Staunton boy corroborated the story, saying that he had seen a "cigar shaped object over Staunton," when he looked out his bedroom window that same day at 4:50 p.m.

On Jan. 14, Horace Burns, the Grottoes man who saw the first UFO that had everybody craning their necks skyward, told his story to an audience of 400 in Harrisonburg. He was speaking to Eastern Mennonite College's UFO Investigators group headed up by Professor Ernest Gehman.

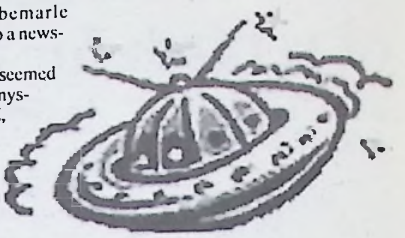
Turns out Dr. Gehman had visited the site of the purported landing in Fishersville and checked the field with a Geiger counter. He found radiation levels four times higher than normal.

Gehman's statements did little to quell peoples' worries. "I can't help feeling there is a prophetic significance to these sightings," he said. He added that the flying saucers could be foretelling the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The combination of the sightings was enough to make UFO believers prick up their ears. The National Investigating Committee on Aerial Phenomenon swooped into the area to explain that these sightings were very typical.

Perhaps it was Gehman's words or perhaps it was the coverage in the newspaper, but the "Martians" made a return visit on Jan. 15. On that day in Staunton and Waynesboro, a housewife, a farmer, and a high school student all reported seeing UFOs.

Across Virginia, the sightings continued as well. A minister in Chilhowie saw a flying saucer with lights hovering 600 feet above downtown Marion. Two men from Richmond saw UFOs in Williamsburg and nine different people saw a cylindrical shiny object with sparks flying from it in Fredericksburg. All of those sightings were thought to have been a weather balloon launched in Mississippi and eventually downed in Albemarle County, according to a newspaper account.



But just when it seemed part of the cosmic mystery had been solved, the situation got out of hand near Brands Flat on Jan. 26. On that evening a trio of boys near a barn caught sight of a little green man. Thinking they had surprised an alien, the boys chased the 3 1/2-foot-tall green man across a field but the "Martian" outran the boys.

With that sighting, civil order began to erode and rumors zipped through the area faster than one can say UFO. Soon one "Martian" had expanded to three "Martians." Posses of gun-toting men were formed to scour the fields and woods. One rumor had 16 members of Staunton's Reserve Police Force chasing spacemen across a muddy field. The story related how the law enforcement officials left muddy tracks, but the aliens moved across the field without leaving a mark.

That was enough for Sheriff Kent, who had maintained law and order in Augusta County since 1957. "This thing has gotten completely out of hand," he said. He added that it was "dangerous as well as ridiculous" for grown men to run around looking for spacemen.

The danger, he added, was not from alien creatures, but from hysterical residents arming themselves and creating the potential of accidentally shooting a neighbor. "Anyone can go out at night and see reflections in the sky. But anyone carrying firearms in the county without good reason will be dealt with according to the law," he said.

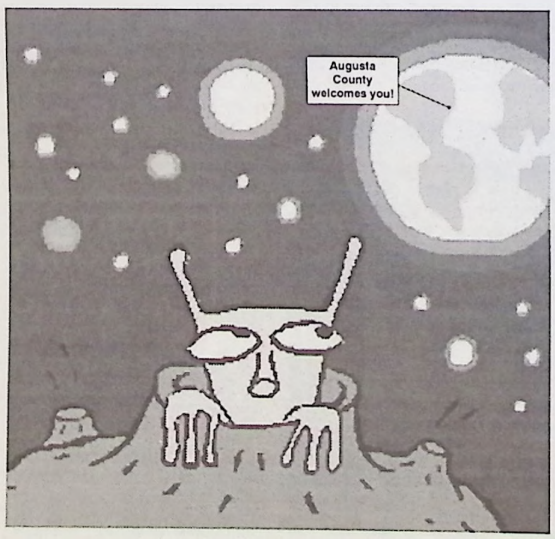
Nearly 30 years later, Sheriff Kent's widow Lorain, recalls the little green man scare. She remembers that her husband didn't believe for a minute that aliens were on the loose in Augusta County. "What he was worried about was people going off half-cocked. The main thing was that he didn't want foul play in the county on account of it," she explained.

Sheriff Kent's cool demeanor and no-nonsense reaction served to calm the situation. Within a few days a local man confessed to being the space invader. The newspaper reported that Donald Cash of Brands Flat had "turned in his ray gun and confessed." Apparently, Cash wanted to play a prank on a neighbor who was certain that Martians had landed. So he "donned a pair of overalls, mussed up his hair and went spooking." He

See *MARTIANS*, page 5

Although he had ample firepower at his disposal, Augusta Sheriff John Kent warned residents not to shoot at the "little green men" who visited the area in the early '60s.

Photo courtesy Lorain Kent



While Augusta County didn't exactly roll out the welcome mat to "invaders" from outer space in 1965, Sheriff John Kent did ask residents not to shoot the "little green men."

°Martians

Continued from page 4

was spotted by the boys before he ever arrived at his neighbor's house. The kids gave chase and Cash ran for his life, hopping a fence just as one of the boys snapped a picture.

Cash, who was almost six feet tall and weighed in at about 200 pounds, was not even close in size to the descriptions given by the boys. But that shows just how firmly the "Martian" hysteria had gripped the area and proved that Kent's concern was legitimate, especially in the Fishersville area where there were normally plenty of little green men — also known as Wilson Memorial High School students wearing green letter jackets.

For his part, Cash was glad to have escaped unscathed. "I didn't know what they might do if they got their hands on me."

With Cash's confession, interest in little green men might have vaporized but for an afterthought statement that Kent gave to reporters in the midst of the crisis. While verbally chastising local vigilantes, he strayed into the hypothetical. Suppose there really were creatures from outer space wandering around Augusta County he mused. "Who's got the right to mow them down?"

The sheriff's common sense and enlightened stand were praised in the local paper. "Certainly the worst thing which could be done should 'little green men' or other strange visitors appear in our countrysides would be to start shooting. If visitors had space vehicles as powerful as those required for traveling the universe, they would have capabilities for terrible destruction."

News of the good sheriff's ethical stand was picked up by the Associated Press and spread around the globe. "Don't shoot at those Martians!" screamed the front page headline of the *Virginian-Pilot*. "Please, Don't Shoot Those Green Men," said the *Atlanta Constitution*. "Sheriff Protects 'Little Green Men'" ran the headline in Augusta, Ga.

A Richmond newspaper ran a short editorial under the headline, "Saucers, Go Home."

"The most level-headed comment we yet have heard on flying saucers came last week from Augusta County's Sheriff John E. Kent. For his own part, he hadn't seen any saucers; he didn't believe there really were any saucers around, and he especially doubted the existence of little green men who might have arrived on saucers. But when it turned out that vigilante posses were being organized, he told his constituents firmly to put up their shooting irons and stay home.

'If there are any little men out there,' he said, 'who's got a right to mow them down?' An excellent question. The little men, if any, should be grateful — grateful enough, perhaps to climb in their saucers and stop complicating life in placid Virginia. If these elusive characters hang around much longer, one of them will run for Lieutenant Governor. Troubles enough, we got already."

Eventually news of Kent's defense of aliens' rights traversed the country and jumped both oceans. Way down in the Philippines, a Virignia man in the military picked up his copy of *Pacific Stars & Stripes*. There he saw an article under the headline: "No Hunting Allowed: Sheriff Shelters 'Little Green Men.'"

By late February, a magazine in Italy was telling its readers about how Sheriff Kent stopped the Martian scare and delivered the Staunton area from danger. In France, a similar tale was reported.

Following in the wake of the press reports was a stream of letters from across America, Canada and England, about 50, addressed to Sheriff Kent. "It was amazing, the things that he got," noted Lorain who saved many of the newspaper clippings and letters. One letter was even from a man who claimed to have been from Venus. "We really laughed about that one," she recalled.

The letters ran the gamut. Some praised Kent's tolerance, some wanted more information on the UFOs, and some poked fun at the whole incident.

"I would like to extend to you my congratulations for your humane and right thinking on this matter. It is a terrible shame that our first instinct is to shoot at something unknown," wrote a woman from Florida. A New York woman echoed those sentiments, saying that Kent's statements showed "compassion and a moral insight that is indeed rare today."

Others wrote for more information. Such was the case of the let-

See *LETTERS*, page 19

GREEN MEN ARE OUT OF SEASON

It's Okay To Watch The Saucers But Don't Shoot The Little Men

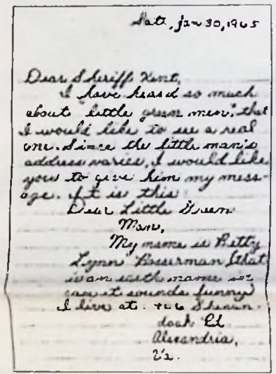
Would Shooting Of Space Visitor Be Murder?

NO HUNTING ALLOWED

Sheriff Shelters 'Little Green Men'

Pacific Stars & Stripes

News agencies around the globe carried the story about the 'little green men' being sheltered from harm by Augusta County's sheriff.



Sat., Jan 30, 1965

Dear Sheriff Kent,
I have heard so much about "little green men", that I would like to see a real one. Since the little man's address varies, I would like you to give him my message. It is this:
Dear Little Green Man,
My name is Betty Lynn Bousman that is an awful name as it sounds funny.
I live at 426 Shenandoah Ct.
Alexandria,
Va.

Sheriff Kent received numerous inquiries about the little green men from outer space who visited Augusta County. One such letter, above, asked Kent to relay a message from the letter writer to the visitors.

Sheriff John Kent: Firm but fair

By NANCY SORRELLS

No sheriff in the history of Augusta County has enjoyed the longevity or popularity of John E. Kent.

Augusta's 52nd high sheriff was appointed in 1957 and then ran for re-election six times. He never came close to losing an election in the 27 years he led the county's law enforcement. Sheriff Kent was a lifelong Democrat. Shortly before his Jan. 1, 1984 retirement, he was selected to chair Augusta County's Democrats following a reorganization of the county committee in late 1983. He held the chair for several years and his statewide name recognition and popularity helped revive the party in the area.

Kent's encounter with the little green men occurred during the first third of his tenure as Augusta's sheriff. He went on to maintain law and order in the county 19 more years after the little green men departed.

Kent spent 35 years in law enforcement after deciding to take a summer job as deputy sheriff after his first year at the University of Virginia. He never returned to school. Instead the Nelson County native spent five years as a deputy, two years on the probation and parole board, a short time as a security officer at American Safety Razor in Verona and the rest of his career as county sheriff.

Kent came to law enforcement after serving in the signal corps of the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. "He was trained as a radio engineer," said his widow Lorain Kent, a native of Waynesboro. The couple married during the war, in 1944.

After the war, Kent headed to U.Va. with plans to be an electrical engineer. But then Lorain's father saw an ad in the newspaper for a deputy sheriff. He mentioned to his son-in-law that he would make a good deputy and the rest is history.

Lorain's father was right, Kent did make a good law officer. "He tried to use commonsense," Lorain said. "He was sort of an Andy Griffith kind of sheriff, but don't think for a minute that he wasn't tough," she said.

He worked hard at maintaining law and order. "He took everything in stride. He wasn't one to sit around worrying about things," she said.

The job was tough on Lorain and the couple's two daughters although Kent always tried to be home for dinners. "It was a 24-hours a day job," she said. "But he always had a sense of humor. That was our survival."

Her husband really enjoyed solving crimes, she recalled. "When he got on something it really bothered him unless he solved it," Lorain explained.

Kent's personality served him well. "He had the ability to communicate with people of all social levels. He could relate with the uneducated and chat with the governor," she said.

People who remember Kent, always remember the trademark pipe clamped between his teeth. One of his hobbies was woodworking and all of his pipes were homemade. He also made several pieces of fine furniture and dabbled in beekeeping. Lorain used to joke that he was the "king of the green beans" because he planted and gave away so many green beans.

In the end it wasn't a criminal who proved Kent's undoing, it was the pipe clenched between his teeth. He passed away in 1997 of esophageal cancer.

Long before his death, however, Kent's record of fair and firm law enforcement was incorporated into the annals of Augusta County history. —

Augusta Forge resurrects the way of the blacksmith

By BERTRAND M. GUTIÉRREZ

Jim McGavock gives new meaning to the term ironman. This self-taught disciple of the coal forge welds, melts and works iron the way blacksmiths did before the Civil War.

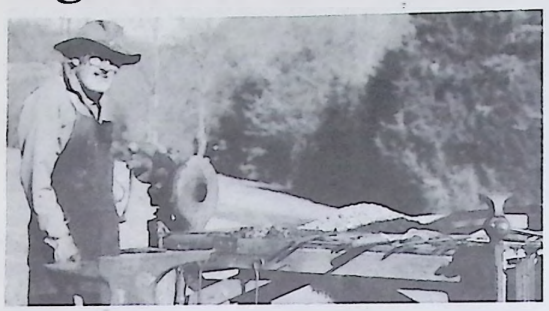
In 1860, McGavock would have been a familiar sight — another blacksmith donning a body-length smock and eyeing his metallic creation with ninja-like precision and calmness. The authoritative knock of his hammer against anvil would have produced an organic ping as familiar as today's electric car horn.

The blacksmith, who earned his moniker by smiting orange-hot iron, was the one who made the household items - candle holders, door knockers and hooks - that are now made by machine.

The running joke

The acetylene torch and mass production did away with those sights and sounds, rendering the traditional blacksmith nearly extinct. The bellows and coal forge have been replaced by gas and electric welding equipment, hydraulic presses and overhead cranes. Some blacksmiths stayed in business by converting their mom-and-pop shops into metal fabrication plants. Machines do today what blacksmiths used to do: make things.

The running joke among traditional blacksmiths is that they're the ones who put themselves out *of business, McGavock says with an accepting smile. It makes sense.*



Jim McGavock prepares to go to work at his forge.

Photos by Bertrand M. Gutierrez

The blacksmith is constantly looking to break the mold, to design and create something that will make things easier or work right.

I did it... my way

For his own home, McGavock created a mobile birdhouse that makes cleanup a little easier. But he made it using the ancestral arts of the blacksmith, not the cookie-cutter methods of the machine.

Stationed three feet off the second-floor balcony, the birdhouse can be drawn toward the balcony to replenish food. But when it's time to clean it out, the handler can keep the birdhouse three feet off the balcony and allow the scraps to fall on the field below. It's simple, and its maintenance is made easier, but it could not *have been bought off the store shelf.*

Jim McGavock forces air across the forge's coals which must reach 2,500 degrees in order to prepare iron for smiting.

McGavock, like other traditional blacksmiths, also makes his own tools. A pair of standard pliers, or tongs, he bought "just weren't tight enough... they didn't do the trick," McGavock says. So he made his own, a thick set of tongs that grip his iron projects with adequate torque.

His homemade tools serve as reminders that household items which can be bought in mass quantities off the shelf were once made one by one, by human hands, not machines.

Get it while it's hot

Let's start with a simple item. To make a hook large enough to hold a coat or a sauce pot:

1. Coal is placed in a forge and ignited to generate approximately 2,500 degrees of heat -- hot enough to make a proud iron rod yield to the authority of the hammer.

2. A bellows churned by hand pumps the air stream necessary for the coals to burn hot.

Keeping the coals going at the right temperature can be tricky at times. McGavock had to stop mid-sentence a few times to check the fire.

"Gotta keep tending, always have to keep going back to it," he would say while pumping the bellows with his gloved hand. The modern blacksmith would simply use a gas-heated forge and would not have to regulate the heating level.

3. Once the coals are prepared, McGavock selects a pristine iron rod the length of a baton and only as round as a straw. The rod's razor-straight, stock-produced shape will be forged into a curvaceous hook with its own identity.

4. Stab the rod into the coals. McGavock says that the orange-glowing belly of the forge is the best place to heat iron. "You don't want to place it too low or too high," the blacksmith says. "Right in the middle is the place."

5. Wearing gloves and eye protection, pull the rod from the coals and place it on the anvil.

6. Start pounding. Be aware, though, of the window of time allotted. The metal will be too cool to wrangle after only a minute; the thinner the rod, the smaller the window. McGavock knows how many heats - how many times a rod has to be placed back in the fire - it took to make most of his creations.

The first poundings draw, or stretch out, the rod. Aim four inches from the tip, then work toward the tip. The idea is to whittle down the rod and prepare a well-rounded point. After about five or 10 heats, a shape starts to emerge.

A blacksmith knows how to constantly rotate and hammer the rod, to simultaneously create a fine tip and maintain roundness. McGavock also knows that one percent of the metal is lost after every heat. In other words, 100 heats is the absolute limit.

7. With the pointed tip already forged, the rod is heated again and then bent around a pipe to form the hook's curve.

8. Make the hook about three inches long and saw off the rest. Use needle-nose pliers to form a little curlicue into the narrow tip of the hook. This feature is something that won't be found on store-shelf hooks.

After some fine tuning, there's only one thing left to do. Drill a hole through the flattened top. The hole will allow the hook to be screwed into a wall.

Twelve heats and 25 minutes later ... voilà, a hook is born.

The coal-heated forge rendered the metal pliable. The hammer pounded form into shape, and the anvil provided the backbone. The traditional blacksmith unites the power of these three players to adjust and counter-adjust an iron rod into curves, smooth-rounded edges, shapes of letters and images of mythical creatures - the smiling face of a dragon is carved into McGavock's S-shaped door knockers.

Each creation, like a snowflake, is similar yet bears a unique identity.

Augusta Forge

Why does McGavock like to make things the old-fashioned way? Why did he pursue traditional blacksmithing in 1996, three years after retiring? Why do things the hard way?

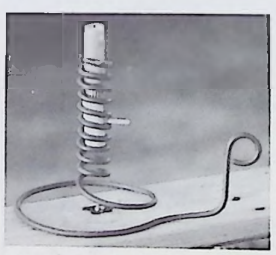
The answer is simple: "This is the stuff!" McGavock says with a boyish grin.

He's been tinkering and making things work right nearly all his life. McGavock owned his first acetylene torch in 1950 and used it handily around the farm. He also mastered the machines owned by Nibco during his career there. Today, he makes all sorts of items at his home workshop appropriately named Augusta Forge: candle holders, pot holders, cabinet handles, door knockers and weather vanes, to name a few.

And by selling some of his creations, McGavock is content that the hobby he loves pays for itself.

Whether he and his wife are enjoying a ski outing, presenting demonstrations of traditional blacksmithing at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton, or volunteering at a local food pantry, McGavock finds the time to tend his coal forge. He's constantly working it, finding the right touch, the right heat, the right balance. —

The beat of metal on metal rings from Jim McGavock's forge as he turns iron rods into useful tools and gadgets.



In Jim McGavock's skilled hands, plain iron rods become useful and attractive household items.

Churchville veterinarian steered scientific advances that shaped cattle industry nationwide

By NANCY SORRELLS

CHURCHVILLE — The 20th century saw some amazing advances and changes in the cattle industry across the country, both in dairy and beef. For most of the century Arthur Bartenslager was right there in the thick of those changes and, in many cases, helping make those improvements possible.

Dr. Bartenslager, who is 90, lives with his wife of 72 years, Delilah, in Churchville. Recently I had the opportunity to sit and chat with this retired veterinarian and university professor about the trends and changes he has witnessed.

"I was raised on a farm in York, Pa. My father and all his family fattened steers for the Lancaster and Baltimore markets," he remembered. When selecting cattle, he recalls that his father always tried to get those with Angus blood. He rattled off the reasons behind his father's preference. "There was more money in black cattle and you could get a dollar or two more per head than for other cattle. Black cattle on the average fattened more and Angus have many other good qualities. They have a resistance to sun-burned udders, resistance to pink eye and they were polled (hornless)," he said.

Arthur and Delilah, who is 92, were classmates in high school. When they graduated in 1930, depression gripped the country. "I wanted to go to veterinary school in 1930, but I didn't have enough money for veterinary school. I did have enough for a marriage license, so we got married. We grew vegetables for three years for the Baltimore markets and meat (mostly pork) for the local town," he recalled. He added that he did have some early success raising pigs and even raised a ton litter. "At six months of age I had a litter of 12 pigs which together weighed a ton. We got 3 cents a pound for them in 1929," he recalled.

After three years "we weren't getting too far ahead so we decided I would go to vet school," Dr. Bartenslager said. He enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine and paid for the first year. He listened in class and took good notes. Every week the students went to the stockyards and learned through hands-on practice

ARTHUR BARTENSLAGER

In 1937, he graduated and opened a general farm veterinary practice. Those were in the horse and buggy days, he remembered. One of the most important things a vet was called to do at that time was determine pregnancy in cattle, especially those that were ready to be sold. "It's easy to diagnose pregnancy at 6 to 7 months, but early on I developed some skill in diagnosing pregnancy within 30 days," he said. These days with sonograms, such a skill is unnecessary, he added.

Not long after he opened his practice he was contacted by a farmer who had bought two trainloads of cattle from Texas. The cattle were all sick and two were dead, the man said of his urgent need for a vet. "I must have paid attention in class because when I saw the first one I thought it was a textbook description of anthrax, straight out of Udell's veterinary book. I saved all but about half a dozen and of those, two were dead when I got there. I vaccinated them and myself too!" he recalled.

One of the lessons the doctor learned early on was to keep good records. He documented every farm visit and every case with great accuracy and he soon built up a thriving practice. Then his world came crashing down. Who knows how things might have turned out but for a twist of fate in the late 1940s? Dr. Bartenslager developed tetanus, often a fatal disease. He was sick for many months and when it appeared that he would recover, his doctors pessimistically told him that his health would never be such that he could work full time again.

Thinking that he would never be able to withstand the rigors of a farm veterinary practice, he accepted a part-time teaching job at the University of Pennsylvania. For the next 20 years he taught courses in bovine infertility and obstetrics.

Not content to simply be a classroom instructor, he began building up a veterinary practice specializing in fertility problems and pioneering artificial insemination methods. His initial interest in the field had been sparked by Dr. Emerson, a veterinarian who studied in Denmark, returned to the United States and taught at the University of Pennsylvania while Dr. Bartenslager was a student. Later the two men would work together as pioneers in bovine fertility.

Eventually the man who had been told his health was so broken that he would be unable to work, turned the tables on everybody. Not only did he maintain his part-time teaching schedule, but he also traveled all over the country consulting in regard to his fertility practice. By the time he retired, he had logged 3,000,000 collision free miles in his cars. Not accident free, he points out. "Once the tie rod broke and my car rolled over. The only thing I hurt was my elbow," he said. He made visits to every state but two in the course of his work and traveled to Scotland and Canada as well.

"The bulk of my work was in Virginia and the surrounding states, also a lot in Florida. I did that at the same time I was teaching. It was extensive and fun. I wasn't smarter than anyone else, but I was maybe just a little bit earlier. At the time I started, there weren't but maybe two other people in the country doing what I was doing in fertility," he recalled.

In 1955 the Bartenslagers and their five children moved to Virginia and the doctor kept up his hectic schedule which included teaching in Pennsylvania. On Sun-

See *FERTILITY*, page 8

History of Virginia cattle industry enters research phase

Nearly 400 years after cattle first set hoof on Virginia soil, the Virginia Cattlemen's Foundation has joined together with the Virginia State Dairymen's Association to tell the complete story of cattle and the cattle industry in Virginia.

An editorial board of John Mitchell, chairman; Ike Eller, advisor; James Bennett, Ernie Reeves, Nelson Gardner and Bill Harrison has been chosen to direct the project. The board has commissioned Nancy Sorrells and Katharine Brown of Lot's Wife Publishing Company to author and publish a well-illustrated, academically thorough book on Virginia's cattle history from Jamestown to the present. The book will be available in the fall of 2004. In addition, the research materials, including interviews, copies of documents, authors' notes, and copies of photographs, will be placed in a special collections library at the conclusion of the project and will be available for future generations of researchers.

This undertaking, the first of its kind, will tell the early story of colonial cattle drives and oxen used as draft animals on farms, document the development and arrival in Virginia of different bovine breeds, and detail the rise of the beef and dairy industries. Related topics such as veterinary advances, agricultural methods, technological advances, feed mills, co-ops, packing houses, and livestock yards will be included.

To be as all encompassing as possible, the authors need help in gathering materials that are in private hands such as stories, photos, diaries, ledgers, letters, agricultural journals, and other documents. If you have such information that the authors could borrow for inclusion in the project, please contact them. (Lot's Wife Publishing, attn. Nancy Sorrells, P.O. Box 1844, Staunton, VA 24402, call 540-377-6390, or e-mail: lotswife@rica.net) Many items are irreplaceable, so the authors recommend that a photocopy be sent or contact be made with them so that they might visit with you and see the document or illustration.

The foundation is also seeking tax-deductible contributions to help fund the project. Donors at certain giving levels will be recognized in the book. For more information about donations, contact: Virginia Cattlemen's Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 9, Daleville, Va. 24083. —

This 1949 photo shows "baby beeves" – Angus, Hereford and shorthorn – which were on test at a Front Royal facility. Cattle associations in Virginia have embarked on a project to chronicle the history of the state's cattle industry.

National Archives

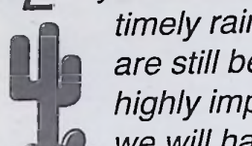
State climatologist calls drought 'normal'

By NANCY SORRELLS

RAPHINE — As for the weather, well, it's just about normal said Pat Michaels, the State Climatologist and a professor at the University of Virginia, while speaking recently at a Virginia Forage and Grassland Council meeting held in Raphine. In his presentation, "Weather Patterns in the Shenandoah Valley — Past, Present, and Future," he confirmed what many already knew: it's dry and the climate is getting warmer.

It's really nothing to be alarmed about, he said, because "we have returned to normalcy."

The Shenandoah Valley has always been the driest part of the state. Michaels explained. Unfortunately, most people don't realize that because the last half century has been abnormal in both cold and precipitation levels. If you think it really was colder and snowed more back when you were a child, you are right, but those weren't normal weather conditions.



"Last year we started low but got timely rains although we are still below normal. It is highly improbable that we will have such timely rains again."

Pat Michaels
State climatologist

This photo was taken near Middlebrook September 1996. Hurricane Fran swept through that Labor Day weekend drenching the area with 9-11 inches of rain. According to Pat Michaels, state climatologist, due to changing weather patterns, streams flowing with an over abundance of water may be a thing of the past. AC file photo

"We grew up in the most abnormal period in state climate history," he said. "Now we are back to a temperature era that characterized the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s."

The same is true of precipitation. "Because we've just completed the three wettest decades in the century, what we are going through right now is going to make us look even more droughty," explained Michaels.

However, there is no denying that conditions in the Shenandoah Valley are dry. "I look at pond levels in the Shenandoah Valley and they are atrociously low," he said. Unfortunately, in the historic scheme of things, precipitation like that seen in 2000 is not abnormally low in the Valley's climate history.

"Last year we started low but got timely rains although we are still below normal. It is highly improbable that we will have such timely rains again," he noted.

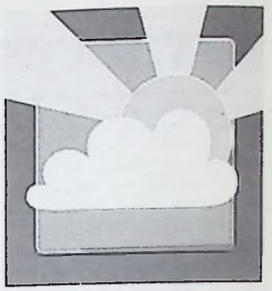
The good news, if you can call it that, is that the recent addition of the last three wet decades into the statistical picture has skewed the state's climate history enough that even normal to slightly below normal precipitation will appear as a drought and could open up the public coffers for drought relief.

As for global warming and the greenhouse effect, Michaels stands firmly in the corner of those who are less-than-alarmed by the situation. He says as much in his recent book, co-authored with Robert Balling, called *The Satanic Gases*. While there are certainly man-made climate changes across the globe, Michaels argues that the changes are not sending the earth spiraling toward meltdown as some doomsdayers predict.

Here in Virginia we have seen three distinct eras of warming and cooling in the last 100 years: during the first third of the century there was a general warming due to the sun's warming; during the second period in the middle of the century there was a definite, although little understood, cooling period. During the final third, we are back to the warming period but this time the increase in heat is probably due more to a greenhouse change than a change in the sun itself.

However, the changes are very minute and subtle, he noted, warming up the coldest air in the world — places like Siberia — just a degree, and making deserts just slightly hotter.

"There is a big difference between the way things appear in the media and the way they are in reality," he said showing a jagged graph on an upward march. The chart did not portend global warming; rather, it plotted the increase in the number of alarmist news stories reporting on global warming!



In Michaels' opinion, there are some things that have changed for the better, especially where the farmer is concerned. There has been no increase in the number of hurricanes, for instance, and the maximum force of the winds of hurricanes has dropped over the last half century.

"Our coldest days have warmed up a little and we are seeing pasture land staying greener in the fall and greening up earlier in the spring," he said, qualifying that statement with another: "of course, when there's water."

"The Central Mid-Atlantic is a region where it has always been pretty much feast or famine for rains and I don't really see an increase in flooding rains," Michaels noted.

On the whole, Virginians can expect an increase of 1.6 degrees in temperature in the next 100 years or just under a degree over the next 50 years.

"That is a rate that you have been living with and adapting to for the last 50 years," he told the farmers in the audience. "As farmers and agriculturists all we do is adapt because we can't change it." —

•Fertility

Continued from page 7

day nights he drove up and stayed overnight in York. Then on Monday morning he drove into Philadelphia and taught Monday and Tuesday. The rest of the week he did his practice consultation in such far-flung places as New Jersey, New York and Virginia.

That wasn't all. At the same time he was raising Guernsey and Angus cattle back on his Virginia farm. "I always had three goals in life: I wanted to get married and have a family, which I did; I wanted to have a purebred Angus herd, which I did; and I wanted an international grand champion Angus, which I never had," he explained.

What happened was that his work undermined his final goal. In the 1930s and 1940s a grand champion was worth $1 million because of its offspring, but with advances in artificial insemination, top bloodlines were available to farmers of only average financial means and the years needed to develop solid bloodlines were no longer needed.

"The big change in the cattle industry started with AI (artificial insemination). Present day people don't realize that there was a time without it. It was an opportunity to use bulls of a quality that farmers never would have had. With AI, anybody could build a grand champion or world champion herd," he said.

At first the need for AI was mostly in dairy, but then it was more and more in beef as well. By 1947, the technique was really making inroads into the industry. "We used it in herds to control trichomoniasis which causes infertility and abortions. Treatment of this disease is very difficult, especially in bulls, although cows will recover spontaneously after a couple of years. By using a virgin bull and artificial insemination, you could control the disease," the doctor said.

Artificial insemination opened the floodgate to other changes in the industry. Dr. Bartenslager points to AI as paving the way for embryo transfers and better husbandry methods, and the need for better education among farmers. "All the improvements stem back to that beginning," he said.

Alongside advances in fertility methods came the need to keep better production records. With better production records came the ability to evaluate and fine tune husbandry methods. "Before that time the only evaluation methods were to measure milk production in dairy herds and to measure the carcass in beef animals. But soon they were measuring birth weights, weaning weights, and yearling weights. VPI was right at the forefront of that too."

"Production records and carcass evaluation were responsible for changes in breeds. Before that the top carcass at the show in Chicago was the most popular breed for the next year," he explained.

Earlier in the century, all eyes looked to Chicago for the direction to go for breeds. People would travel to Chicago from all over the country for the big international show. "From Virginia they used to travel in a freight car, cattle cars actually. They fit the inside of the car with pens to hold the cattle and

See *CHICAGO*, page 16

Rockbridge farmers wary of rabies outbreak

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

An unusual rabies outbreak this winter in upper Rockbridge County has been causing concern among livestock producers. The outbreak, beginning in February, has resulted in three cows and one horse dying of the disease and seven people, as of this writing, taking the post-exposure rabies vaccine. None of the deceased animals had been vaccinated for the disease.

Also, the outbreak could be spreading. A skunk found more recently above Rockbridge Vineyard west of Raphine, tested positive for the disease. The owner of a farm north of Staunton was bitten by a stray cat earlier this winter. That cat also tested positive for rabies.

In Rockbridge, however, the outbreak is causing some different concerns. "This outbreak is unusual in that domestic livestock have been victims, and the animals are all in a concentrated area," said Jon Repair, Rockbridge's Cooperative Extension Agent.

Repair called a meeting recently in Lexington to address the concerns of livestock producers across the area. Another meeting, addressing both rabies and West Nile Virus, is scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon April 17 at the Augusta County Government Center in Verona.

"This meeting is not to scare you, but to tell you how you can deal with it," Repair told the 40-plus people gathered at his meeting. "It's not to throw out alarm bells, but to learn what livestock owners need to think about."

To address the livestock producers' questions, Repair gathered several experts who spoke about different areas of concern.

> *"This outbreak is unusual in that domestic livestock have been victims, and the animals are all in a concentrated area."*
>
> *Jon Repair*
> *Rockbridge Extension agent*

"Rabies is not new to Rockbridge County," Repair said. In 1999, one skunk and one raccoon tested positive; in 2000 one fox and one raccoon were positive; in 2001, two skunks and two raccoons tested positive, and so far in 2002, three cows, one horse and a raccoon.

"The raccoon has always been the common denominator," he said.

To explain the disease, Blue Ridge Animal Clinic veterinarian Michael Hepner both lectured and distributed a handout. He told livestock producers present that the disease that infects warm-blooded animals only, is transmitted by saliva of infected animals. However, the viral shed through the saliva takes place generally within the two to three days preceding the animal's death. The virus also cannot live outside its host at a lowered temperature.

"A cow can drool in a feed trough and another cow get the virus, but that almost never happens," he advised. He said also that the concentration of the virus in saliva of herbivores is low, and that because cattle seldom bite one another anyway, the spread is generally from wild animals. He said cases in the Brownsburg area were from raccoon to cow and raccoon to cow rather than cow to cow. Tests at the ag lab indicated the strain came from raccoons.

The virus, when transmitted by a bite, invades the nearest nerve and travels from there to the brain of the victim where its invasion causes death from the shutdown of involuntary and voluntary responses. The animal cannot swallow, and its muscles do not respond.

"This can take from a few days with an animal bitten on the head or face to six to eight months as with a 1,200-pound horse bitten, say, on a hind leg," he said.

Hepner said that symptoms for rabies in mammals mimic those of other diseases, such as grass tetany, epm, colic, or even tetanus or encephalitis, hence those working with sick livestock often do not know the animals are rabid until they have been exposed.

Rabies symptoms include aimless or excessive walking, staggering, lying down, excessive or abnormal bellowing, loss of appetite, difficulty swallowing feed or water, excessive salivation, stepping high, twitching excessively, circling, abnormal head posture, aggressiveness, excessive tail switching, straining to urinate or defecate, crossed eyes, head pressing, being overly friendly or reluctant to move.

"The key is, if the animal doesn't show improvement with treatment in six to 12 hours and is progressively worsening, suspect rabies."

In answer to questions about whole herd vaccination, Hepner said, "Don't turn everything into rabies. The state veterinarian says if the disease reaches epidemic proportions, vaccinate the rest of your herd to minimize exposure, but we're not at that epidemic point."

Livestock vaccine is available "over the counter" for about $2 per animal.

Animal vaccine is for pre-exposure. Immunity takes from three to four weeks to build. Humans can be vaccinated after or post exposure with treatments running about $2,500. Human pre-exposure vaccine is about $300, Hepner said, and is advisable for anyone in a high-risk position such as veterinarians, animal control personnel and livestock producers who are in constant contact with their cattle and run them over wide areas.

Farmers suspecting rabies in an animal can send it for testing provided the animal has had human or other animal contact. Livestock heads must go to the ag lab for testing; small animal heads can go to the health department for testing at the state lab. Destroyed animals that have had no contact with humans or domestic animals should be buried.

Labs like to receive the animals as soon as possible, and generally have results within two days. An exposed human has 13 days to begin receiving the vaccine. Those who have destroyed a suspected animal must use protective gloves and clothing when handling the animal.

Chad Fox, in charge of local coyote control for the United States Department of Agriculture, said that a rabies eradication program will come to Virginia in about four years. The program was in Ohio last year and was 100 percent successful. Funded by congress, the program targets the raccoon strain of rabies, and uses edible bait drops to orally vaccinate an animal population against rabies. Fox said that Fairfax County has funded its own bait drop program, and that local counties can do that as well. Other alternatives to rabies control include trapping the live animals, vaccinating them, and releasing them, but that effort, Fox said, is labor intensive and expensive.

Jerry Dove, local game warden with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, said suspected animals can be destroyed if no hunting season protects them. Those animals include foxes, coyotes and skunks. Raccoons and opossums, however, can only be killed during the legal game season.

> *Appearance of symptoms can take from a few days with an animal bitten on the head or face to six to eight months with a 1,200-pound horse bitten on a hind leg.*

Out of the season, animals which are suspected to be rabid can only be destroyed by a game warden, or by an individual who has obtained a kill permit for the animal.

"I can't tell you to break the law," Dove said, "But I expect you to protect your property and to use your common sense. There is not an enforcement officer who would ticket you or a judge who would convict you for destroying an unmistakably sick or dangerous wild animal."

Landowners also may trap the animals on their own properties, or can contact a local trapper to do this for them.

Dove also said that people should keep in mind that many animals are nocturnal, but just because they aren't seen in the daytime doesn't mean they are sick. "This is mating season for many wild animals, and they might travel further and end up hiding under your porch or house when the daylight catches them. If you get close to them, they may growl or hiss to defend themselves. But it doesn't mean they are sick," Dove said.

He also stressed that not every wild animal someone sees has rabies, and that people should keep away from them, and should keep their children away from wild animals. He also said those leasing or renting land must have written permission before destroying a wild animal on that land.

Dove said the biggest problem with wildlife was caused by folks moving into the area and not wanting hunters on their land. "Our game population is not being kept in check," Dove said. "Everyone needs to invite responsible hunters to come in."

He also said, "I want everyone to use common sense. I like to be told 'this is what happened and this is what I did.' If I can't get there, I expect everyone to use their own judgment, and to protect themselves and their families."

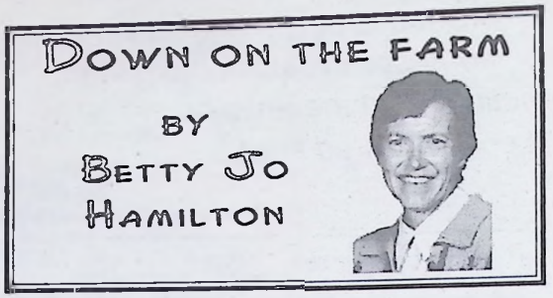
Larry Whiting, rabies specialist for the Central Shenandoah Health district, spoke last. He emphasized that rabies is not found in birds, fish, reptiles or amphibians, and seldom in rabbits, squirrels, rats, mice, and pets like gerbils or hamsters. If exposed to rabies, people should not panic, Whiting said. Bites require standard first aid. Attacking animals must be captured or confined in a box or can, if possible. Animal control can be called to pick up the animal, and the bitten person must call his or her family physician immediately. The Health Department also should be notified.

Whiting repeatedly stressed that all domestic pets and livestock that might bite, such as horses, need to be vaccinated. He also stressed that people should never handle wild animals, and that minimizing food sources, such as outdoor pet food and trash, will prevent enticing wild animals to come close to dwellings.

He said people should be especially careful of bats, which also can carry rabies and whose bites are almost too small to detect. If a vaccinated pet bites someone, the animal must be confined for 10 days as a precaution. If no rabies symptoms show up, then the pet is released from quarantine.

Information about rabies and contact with Whiting, can be obtained from the health district website at www.thehealthdepartment.org. Whiting also can be contacted through the website. Exposures in Rockbridge County should be reported to the local health department first. —

Yes, I'm crazy, but it's not contagious



EDITOR'S NOTE: You know how in a movie that has animals in it at the end of the movie it says, "No animals were harmed in the making of this movie?" Well, the following column has animals in it and while no animals were harmed during the writing of this column, it does include graphic descriptions of actual animal death. So if you don't want to read about animals dying, bail now. And just in case anyone cares, no humans were harmed in the writing of this column.

Down on the farm we're thinking about going absolutely stark raving mad. O.k., o.k. I hear you out there. You're saying we're just realizing we're absolutely stark raving mad but it's something you've known for a long time. Ha-ha. Very funny. I chuckle at your wit.

Actually this is a very serious matter, so if I can just get you to focus for a few moments, I really have something important I want to address. And it is no joking matter. I'm talking about rabies and the problems that have been occurring in our neighbor county to the south, Rockbridge.

As you read in the article on page 9, numerous cases of rabies have been reported in northern Rockbridge County. Rabid animals have been identified. Domestic animals have died or been destroyed due to rabies exposure. People who had contact with the rabid animals or animals which had contact with rabid animals have been inoculated for rabies. We tend to think these are isolated incidents, that the sick wild animals will die, and the spread of the disease will subside. This is mostly the case. However, we should never let down our guard when it comes to rabies because it is 100 percent fatal. It's not a disease to be taken lightly.

The annual number of deaths worldwide caused by rabies is estimated to be between 40,000 and as high as 70,000 if higher case estimates are used for densely populated countries in Africa and Asia where rabies is prevalent.

Actually, rabies is not all that rare. Just because you don't read in the newspaper about rabid animals being identified doesn't mean they aren't routinely being examined and identified by local health department officials. This is part of their job. We don't read about it in the newspaper very often because health department officials do not make a habit of calling the newspaper and saying, "Hey, we had an animal that tested positive for rabies today." What they do instead is call anyone who had contact with the rabid animal and make sure the proper precautions are taken in seeing a doctor and getting the shots for rabies. The folks at the health department have more important things to do with their time than to call the local muckrakers to report the raccoon that tested positive for rabies last week.

Down on the farm, we have had more brushes with rabies than I want to think about. The first occasion I remember happened when I was no bigger than a corn nubbin. We found a sick cow. As we do with any sick animal, we got the cow in and gave it the best general health check any farmer would. I recall that the cow was acting a little funny — listless, not eating, not responsive to stimuli. (Which means the cow didn't do anything when we smacked it across the rump with a stick — oh, quit your whining about humane treatment of animals. Hitting a cow across the rump with a stick is no worse than your doctor hitting you on the knee with a hammer to test your reflexes. It's not like we hit the cow hard or anything. It wasn't any more than a gentle swat.) The cow also seemed to be gagging on something, like it had something caught in its throat. And the cow was drooling some. But if an animal has something caught in its throat, of course it's going to be slobbering.

So we caught the cow in the head chute. (This is like your doctor's examining table, except with cows we have to catch their heads to hold them still while we look them over. Come to think of it, maybe there are some doctors out there who have patients whose heads they would like to catch in a head chute.) Anyway, we — my father, a hired man and myself — pried open the cow's mouth and had a look inside. Then we grabbed the cow's tongue and pulled it out and one or all three of us stuck a hand back in the cow's throat to see what might be stuck there. We suspected the cow had picked up a piece of wire or something while grazing.

Well, we couldn't see anything wrong so as an absolute last resort, we called a veterinarian for consultation. This being summertime, we left the cow in the pen, told the vet where he could find the cow, then went about our summer chores. We were not on the scene when the vet arrived to examine the cow.

Imagine our surprise when the vet called us late that evening to tell us he suspected the cow had rabies. He reported that when he attempted to go in the pen to examine the cow it wasted no time in making him run for his life. He'd had to vault over a fence and out of the pen to safety. The cow had not exhibited any aggression toward us, so we were perplexed and told the vet so. He insisted, however, that the cow would need to be put down and its head sent away so the brain could be tested for rabies.

My father consented of course, so the cow was put down and the head was sent away to be tested. Anticipating the positive rabies test, we contacted our physician about beginning the post-exposure treatment for rabies. Mind you, this is when the treatment was, I believe, a series of 11 shots given one per week in the stomach. Ouch. Talk about needing a head chute to hold a patient still.

The test results came back on the cow's brain and showed that it was negative for rabies. The vet was astounded. He was absolutely convinced the cow had rabies. He was sure enough of his diagnosis that he asked that a second test for rabies be made on the cow's brain tissue. There is, in any biological testing process, the chance of what are called "false positive" or "false negative" results. This means that something went wrong in the testing process to yield the incorrect results. The second test on the cow's brain was sort of a step up in the rabies testing process to make absolutely sure the brain tissue was not infected with the disease. And, yes, I think a mouse did give its life in the second test made on the cow's brain tissue. The result of the second test also came back negative for rabies.

It took a serious amount of thinking and considering to decide if we were going to trust the state lab test results on the negative indication for rabies or if we were going to trust our veterinarian's diagnosis of the cow having rabies. After consulting with our family doctor and health department officials, we decided not to take the rabies treatments. None of us died of rabies. (Oh, I know there are several of you out there making remarks behind my back about yes, I didn't die of rabies, but I've been crazy ever since. Well, you're right. At least I have an excuse. What's yours?)

Annually, an estimated 10 million people worldwide receive post-exposure treatments after contact with rabies suspect animals.

Fast forward about 20 years to another incident involving a suspected rabid animal. It was September and I was having some exterior painting done on my house. While I was in the yard watching the painter, I saw a skunk meander up the driveway from the barn. Seeing the skunk and considering its inherent ability to protect itself, my only thought was to stay clear of the skunk because I didn't want to get sprayed with its noxious scent. The dogs, however — being determined protectors of hearth and home — flew into action with no fear for their personal hygiene. Oddly enough, the skunk barely responded to the threat posed by the dogs. The skunk did raise its tail and it did spray, but it was a lackluster response. The dogs were unfazed by the skunk and kept after it.

Rabies is a viral disease which infects domestic and wild animals. It is transmitted to other animals and humans through close contacts with saliva from infected animals (ie. bites, scratches, licks on broken skin and mucous membranes). Once symptoms of the disease develop, rabies is fatal to both animals and humans.

Because the skunk didn't seem too threatening toward the dogs, I got closer for a better look. The skunk was breathing funny and it was swerving here and there as if it couldn't see. It kept its nose to the ground, didn't seem to notice when it went from the driveway into the pasture, then appeared to have no real purpose of direction once in the pasture. The dogs and I got tired of evaluating the skunk. It wandered off and so did we.

When I first saw the skunk I didn't think to kill it just because it was a skunk. I always find killing things to be messy business and if I can avoid it, I do. I just can't bring myself to do it. But after the skunk had disappeared from sight, it occurred to me that it was probably rabid and that even though my dogs were vaccinated for rabies, other animals — livestock, domestic animals — in the neighborhood might not be. Then I thought of the children who lived across the road in the tenant house and how children tend to think all animals should be picked up and petted, even if they have white stripes down their backs and smell like something that makes mothers shudder. Then, after I'd thought about it and after the skunk had disappeared, I decided it needed to be killed. But first I had to find it.

I went to my parents' house to obtain a weapon with which to do the deed then returned home to begin tracking the skunk. As it had been so feeble in its maneuvering, I didn't think it could have gone far. I started out on foot going in the direction I had last seen the skunk. I walked out into the pasture and had gotten some distance from the house when I heard a gunshot — "BLAM!" — come from the direction of the neighbor's house. "Ah," I thought, "that would be Mr. Skunk meeting his maker." I started walking toward the neighbor's house when next I heard a series of shots — "BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!" "O.K.," I thought, "Small skunk, big gun — how many shots could it take to kill it?"

When I arrived at the house it turned out that the teenage boy who lived there had been outside working when he felt something brush up against his legs. Thinking it was some of the many cats who hung around the dwelling he paid no notice until something began to scratch at his leg. He looked down to see a skunk at his feet, proceeded in the house to get his father's gun and shot the skunk. By the time I got there, the skunk had been thrown beyond the perimeter of the yard into some tall weeds and grass. I was told the story of what the skunk had done and because there had been human contact I knew the skunk would need to be tested. I asked to see the skunk and was taken to where it had been cast to find that, somehow, the skunk was still alive. See what I mean? Killing stuff is messy business. Ultimately I had to fire the killing shot to do in Mr. Skunk.

I got a box and, being careful not to touch the skunk carcass, used a shovel to scoop it up and place it

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•Skunk

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in the box. Then I put the box in a large plastic bag and tied it shut. Make no mistake — the skunk smelled just like a skunk. Pew!!! But once I had the skunk in the box, then in the bag, the smell seemed contained. I put the bagged box in the boot of my car and, having called the health department for instructions on what to do with the carcass, headed toward town to deliver the suspect animal to health department officials.

When I arrived at the health department I went in to ask for the man I needed to see about the skunk. A receptionist told me to wait and the man would be right out. I stood in the foyer area of the building and watched people come and go. People seemed to act oddly. They would walk into the area where I was standing, pause and look around as if something caught their attention. They would look at me and smile and I would smile back. This went on for some minutes and I couldn't imagine what was wrong with these people. Time passed in this fashion until there were a number of other folks standing in the waiting area with me when a health department worker walked into the area. She stopped dead in her tracks, sniffed the air and announced loudly, "Pew! Who's got the skunk?!?" I just kind of turned my head and became very interested in some official looking document on the wall. What I hadn't realized was that having spent a lot of time with the dead skunk I had become inured to its odor. The smell was all over me, I just couldn't smell it anymore. But everyone else I encountered sure could smell it.

A few moments later a man came out to the reception area — which by that time was mostly empty except for me, wonder why? — and without introduction looked directly at me and said, "You're the lady with the skunk." It was a statement not a question. The man accompanied me to my car and accepted the skunk carcass. He took it around the side of the building away from public view and removed the head. I did not watch but a large knife was involved. Then, much to my dismay, he returned the boxed, bagged, headless skunk carcass to me. When I seemed reluctant to take the carcass home with me, he said he only needed the head to test the animal for rabies and that I should dispose of the body.

Now here, it seems to me, is a bit of a flaw in this process. The carcass of a rabid animal is just as dangerous as the live animal. And while I can understand that perhaps the health department has no good way of disposing of animal carcasses, I can't help but think there must be a better way to get rid of them other than turning them over to the hands of untrained individuals for disposal. "What am I supposed to do with it?" I asked. "Dig a deep hole and bury it," he told me. Well, that seems kind of shaky.

Anyway, I did as I was told. The test on the skunk's brain tissue came back positive for rabies. The teenage boy had to undergo the inoculation regimen for rabies and several cats which had not been vaccinated for rabies had to be destroyed. I did not need to be treated for rabies because I had not touched the animal, nor had it touched me. (Again with the wisecracks about my mental state. I'm beginning to tire of your smart mouth.) And it took a looooooonnng time for the skunk smell to dissipate from my car.

Fast forward another 15 years to an early spring and my most recent experience with rabies. Some friends were out of town and had left their livestock in the care of their next-door neighbor. During my friends' absence a lamb became ill and the neighbor called me for assistance. There is one thing you need to understand about sheep. Basically, there are two kinds of sheep — healthy and dead. So when the neighbor called to say a lamb was sick and asked what could be done, I knew the answer was, "Not much."

The most frequent way that humans become infected with rabies is through the bite of infected dogs, cats, foxes, raccoons, skunks, jackals, wolves, and bats.

But I went to see about the animal which presented symptoms that could have been representative of almost any sheep malady. The lamb was down. It wasn't eating. It was slobbering some. Oddly enough, it seemed alert. I gave the lamb some penicillin for no good reason other than to say I had. The evening of the first day I took some water with electrolytes mixed in and drenched the lamb hoping to stave off dehydration. Working with the lamb some, I found it seemed to have control of its legs on one side of its body but not on the other. Again the next morning and afternoon I took fluids to the lamb and drenched it again. We didn't hold out much hope of saving the lamb. We thought the best we could do would be to keep the lamb alive until its owners arrived home. We could at least say we tried.

The morning of the third day when I was drenching the lamb with fluids, it began to bleed from its mouth. I noted too that the lamb's eyes were crossed. The one-sided paralysis had progressed to complete paralysis. When drenching the lamb with the fluids, it seemed to gag as if unable to swallow. I was glad my friends were returning home that afternoon. Although I've seen animals linger for days near death, I felt it possible this lamb could die soon and that no intervention would save it.

That evening I found myself puzzling over the lamb's illness. Like I said, they're either healthy or they're dead, but that doesn't mean we don't want to know what kills them. Most of what goes wrong with sheep can be prevented. You just have to know what vaccinations to use and what husbandry techniques to follow to keep them healthy. So I was ruminating on the lamb's symptoms — progressive paralysis, difficulty swallowing. Tetanus, I thought, maybe. I'd seen tetanus before but the lamb's presentation of symptoms didn't jive with what I'd seen tetanus do to an animal. The crossed eyes bothered me. If not tetanus, then some neurological dysfunction I thought. Then I began thinking about different neurological dysfunctions that might have befallen the lamb. My repertoire in this area is limited and rabies was a thought that came to mind. I thought of rabies as a possibility — a distinct but remote possibility. A lamb with rabies? How unlikely is that? I shrugged off the notion and chalked the lamb's malady up to the healthy or dead premise.

I talked with my friends the next day and inquired about the lamb. It had been alive when they arrived home but sensing the futility of the situation, they had euthanized the animal. Expressing my certain uncertainty of the possibility of the lamb having rabies, I was told by my friends that they were going to have the lamb tested just to be on the safe side. They agreed with me that it was the remotest of possibilities that the lamb had rabies.

There are two types of rabies — furious rabies and dumb rabies. The first symptoms of rabies are usually non-specific and suggest involvement of the respiratory, digestive and/or central nervous systems. In the acute stage, signs of hyperactivity (furious rabies) or paralysis (dumb rabies) are most notable. In both furious and dumb rabies, paralysis eventually progresses to complete paralysis followed by coma and death in all cases, usually due to respiratory failure. Death occurs during the first seven days of illness.

This is where the first rule of sheepdom comes into play. The rule goes, "That which is least likely to happen absolutely will happen." The lamb tested positive for rabies. My friends, their neighbor and I all had to take the shots. Fortunately, the treatment has been improved through the years. Now it involves a series of four intramuscular injections in the upper arm. After I'd had the first shot, I didn't feel very good — kind of that rundown feeling you get before you're really going to get sick. One of my friends got very ill after she took the first shot. The other fellows didn't feel much effect from the shots.

I've just told you about three instances of rabies on the farm. There have been more — times when suspect animals have been destroyed and disposed of but which had no contact with humans or domestic animals. These occasions have defied any notion that you only see rabies in the fall of the year — I've seen rabies every season of the year.

As for precautions we take, the livestock guardian dogs here are vaccinated for rabies annually. Augusta County requires vaccination for dogs and cats every three years, but because these dogs are out with the sheep and kill every varmint that crosses their paths — some I know about, others I don't — I vaccinate them annually just to be sure their resistance to rabies stays at its peak. Even rabies-vaccinated dogs and cats which come into contact with rabid animals are re-vaccinated and observed after exposure to make sure they do not contract the disease.

In case of human exposure to animals that are suspected of having rabies, immediate attempts should be made to identify, capture or kill the animal involved.

As for other farm animals, we do not vaccinate the cattle or sheep. However, rabies vaccinations for horses, purebred animals or show animals would be something you might want to consider if you keep these kinds of animals. Talk with your veterinarian. You certainly don't want to take a chance with human life and the cost of a rabies vaccination is not prohibitive. It certainly is money well spent if it protects a cherished pet or valuable animal from being destroyed. Remember Old Yeller? You sure don't want to make that dreaded trip to the corn crib with the shotgun.

As for Old Yeller's portrayal of a rabid animal as one that bares its teeth and growls, don't be fooled by Hollywood's presentation of a rabid animal. Of the rabid animals I've seen, not one has been affected the way Walt Disney's *Old Yeller* was. Animals with rabies may exhibit a wide range of symptoms — they may be lethargic, they may be agitated; they may simply act in ways they don't routinely act; they may act — for lack of a better word — "stupid;" they may be suffering neurological symptoms which you cannot detect; they will drool, eventually, because their throat muscles don't allow them to swallow. In cases where domestic animals contract rabies, you may begin to notice symptoms of general malaise — lethargy, diminished appetite, runny nose — in the disease's very early stages and just discount it as stomach upset or a respiratory disorder. I'm not saying you should suspect rabies every time an animal gets sick. But I am saying when an animal gets sick, use some common sense in how you handle the animal. Call the vet sooner rather than later if things don't seem ordinary.

My most recent experience with rabies shook me the most. Not because I was concerned that I had been exposed to a rabid animal. But because under different circumstances — had a lamb of mine gotten sick in such a manner — I might not have given it much thought at all. I simply might have shrugged it off as just another sick lamb that died for no good reason, hauled the carcass off and given no consideration to what disease I had been exposed. And I could have died because of it. There are many ways to leave this world but dying of rabies sure wouldn't be my exit portal of choice.

Now that I've taken the course of rabies treatments, I've decided to keep my vaccination current. I'm due for revaccination in May. You'll probably want to stay clear of me until then just to be safe. (HA!! Beat you to it that time, didn't I?) So if you see me and you think I'm acting a little crazy — it's just normal crazy and not rabies crazy. Rest assured, I am not a threat to public health. Yes, I'm crazy, but it's not contagious. Everybody's rabies vaccination — mine included — is up to date down on the farm. —

Information appearing in the inset boxes which accompany this article was taken from World Health Organization Fact Sheet No. 99, Revised June 2001.

FFA charts course to 'real success'

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — There are not many organizations in which a teenager can both learn to design a golf course and perform genetic research; that is, unless the young person is one of 457,000 members of the National FFA Organization.

Found in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Future Farmers of America programs prepare youth for more than 300 careers in agriculture. Real-world opportunities for members range from a future in marketing to law to science to international business and more. From Feb. 16-23, FFA chapters nationwide organized events and activities to build awareness of the promising and diverse opportunities available through agricultural education. Activities focused on this year's theme — "FFA makes it real."

Career success is only one of the benefits students gain from FFA membership. FFA involvement also develops their potential for personal growth and premier leadership. "Our students are prepared to excel in all aspects of their lives," explains National FFA adviser Dr. Larry D. Case. "FFA uses real-life applications to reinforce classroom learning."

FFA is not extracurricular. The program completes a three-part model of education. Classroom instruction is applied to hands-on supervised agricultural experience programs (SAEs), which are further strengthened through curriculum-enhancing activities and programs. Students learn by doing, practicing the real skills they will need for future success. It's a formula that has worked since 1928.

Nearly half a million young people nationwide already appreciate the genuine experiences created through FFA. On Feb. 16-23, these living success stories helped others realize their dreams by joining FFA.

FFA is a national youth organization of 457,278 student members preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture with 7,312 local chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. FFA strives to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. On the internet, visit www.ffa.org, for more information. —

Wilson members take pride in activities, accomplishments

FISHERSVILLE — FFA is an organization that has been continuously involved in the community. FFA develops premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

National FFA Week, Feb. 17-23, was a time for members to show their pride in this great organization. The Wilson Memorial FFA Chapter planned a different theme for each day of FFA Week by having students dress up in different styles of clothing throughout the week. This year some of the themes include Carhart Day, Patriotic Day and Official Dress Day, when students wore their FFA jackets. We also sponsored our annual venison feast. Students prepared a meal of green beans, potato chips and of course lots of deer hams. Community members who have helped our chapter are invited to enjoy this fine meal. Students donate the meat and chapter members prepare, cook and serve the food.

FFA week is a fun and exciting week that most students are proud to participate in. During this week, some students are so enthusiastic about showing their FFA pride, they drive their tractors to school. Anyone can be in a club, but to show pride in that organization says something about the person as well as the club. FFA Week is just one way for members to show what FFA is all about and to prove the point that "FFA makes it real." —

FFA members Jason Alford, Laura Shoemaker and Catherine Callison tenderize deer meat for the venison feast sponsored annually by Wilson Memorial's FFA chapter.

Photo courtesy Wilson FFA

Challenges are opportunities for BMMS chapter members

CEDAR GREEN -- The Beverley Manor Middle School FFA Chapter is 99 members strong. Chapter members participate in a variety of events and activities from chapter meetings, citrus fruit and flower sales, community service projects, career development events (contests) and recreational activities. Chapter officers are selected each semester to coordinate monthly activities. The 2001-02 school year will come to a close with the state FFA convention during which members will use their skills and knowledge gained in agriscience classes and practices and compete with other FFA members in activities on the campus of Virginia Tech in June.

Career development events allow students the opportunity to participate in agricultural areas that relate to their interests. This year, BMMS FFA members will participate in FFA Quiz Bowl, Small Companion Animal, Food and Fiber, AgriScience Technology Mechanics and Plant, Seed and Fruit Identification activities as well as Creed Speaking, Public Speaking and FFA Rituals events. FFA members also attend a variety of leadership conferences.

Agricultural awareness is also a major project for the FFA. AG DAY 2002 is a program for the sixth grade students at Beverley Manor Middle School to enhance their awareness about agriculture. For recreational activities, the FFA will hold several open gyms for members and their families, as well as their sixth annual FFA BUCKS Auction where FFA members participate in an auction, spending play money that they earn by participating in FFA activities.

The FFA at Beverley Manor Middle School strives to challenge each member to develop his or her potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. Sally W. Shomo serves as the chapter adviser. —

Ronnie Rohr and Dana McCray prepare geranium cuttings in the Beverley Manor Middle School greenhouse. The geraniums will be sold in the spring as part of the FFA plant sale.

Photo courtesy BMMS FFA

Year filled with events, activities for RHS chapter

GREENVILLE — Schools all across the nation as well as those in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands celebrated National FFA Week Feb. 17-23. Riverheads High School and all other schools throughout the county held fun activities and meetings during the week.

Riverheads High School FFA chapter participated Monday by having members drive tractors to school. It also was western day. Tuesday was Carhart day. Wednesday the teachers were served a luncheon and students participated in a college day. On Thursday the school hosted farm truck day and a hay stacking contest to which all county schools were invited for the games and for a cookout.

For the Riverheads chapter, the year started off with the annual Crop and Vegetable Show in August. The chapter held its first meeting of the year on Sept. 11. The chapter participated in the State Fair of Virginia and received outstanding exhibitor for its engineering projects.

Members participated in a community service project at St. Luke's Retirement Home by taking animals for the patients to pet. Later the members escorted the patients at their annual prom and dance. Another visit and petting zoo is planned for April.

On Oct. 1, the chapter began its annual citrus fruit sales and sold approximately 1,300 boxes of fruit. The top three salespersons included Angela Hinton with 100 boxes, Janie Hayes with 76 boxes and Jeff Buchanan with 73 boxes. All fruit was delivered successfully and with much appreciation.

Jason Shultz and Frank Dull attended the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky. The convention was held Oct. 22-28. While there, RHS members participated in the PALS program and many different activities such as sessions, tours, concerts, and leadership development activities.

Cole Heizer, Jason Shultz and Jeremy Arehart tune up Jason's tractor in the Riverheads ag mechanics shop.

Photo courtesy RHS FFA

On Nov. 14, Riverheads High School hosted the Augusta FFA Federation Leadership Conference. Approximately 110, including members, advisers, and guests, were present. Special guests included three state officers — Chad Brooks, Mandy Lambert, and Jacklyn Roller. Hunter Talbott, Susan Humphries, Kelly Chapman, Steve Barnett, Eric Bond, Dennis Case, Jenny Groh, Lee Ann Whitesell, and Emma Drummond were guests of honor. There were three individual leadership sessions which members attended following a meal served by the Riverheads FCCLA. Talbott gave a session on patriotism, Chapman gave a session on community service and Mrs. Humphries gave a session on written communications.

Upcoming events for the RHS chapter include the parliamentary procedure and the public speaking contests. Food for America, one of the most enjoyable events in which the chapter is involved in each year, will be held in April for students at Riverheads Elementary School. The officers will be presenting small sessions about the FFA and agriculture to RES students. Once a year there is always a display of cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, and other farmyard animals provided for the elementary students' enjoyment and education.

The annual 4-H and FFA market animal show will be held May 15-16. As always, chapter members hope to have some of the best animals in the show. Also in May there will be a livestock contest and the dairy judging contest. The chapter banquet will be held on May 9.

The slate of officers for the year are Jonathan Coleman, president; Frank Dull and Erin Lowry, co-vice presidents; Cole Heizer and Jason Shultz, co-secretaries; Garrett Irvine and Ryan Herndon, co-treasurers; Ashley Keaton and Pamela Proffitt, co-reporters; Jacob Leonard and Cassie Proffitt, co-sentinels; Angela Hinton and Megan Miller, co-historians; Jeremy Arehart, student adviser and Eugene McIlwee, chapter adviser. —

Gap chapter reaches out; ag lab up and running

SWOOPE — The Buffalo Gap FFA Chapter has been very active so far this year. In October, 11 students attended the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky. Four of the students participated in the National Livestock Evaluation Career Development Event.

Buffalo Gap students tend plants in the school's greenhouse. Flowers and vegetables fill the house during the early spring.

Photo courtesy Gap FFA

In December, officers prepared a meal for a local orphanage and went Christmas caroling at three local nursing homes. Two days a week, chapter members are participating in the Twentieth Century Project by going to Craigsville Elementary School and assisting children with homework. The leadership class created and produced a recruitment video to be shown to middle school classes.

The new ag facilities are receiving a lot of use. In the animal lab, a litter of pigs was born in September, and students have been learning about all aspects of the species ever since. In the greenhouse, students raised approximately 200 poinsettias that were distributed in December.

During FFA Week, the chapter will prepare breakfast for teachers and host Ag Olympics, a fun-filled afternoon uniting the FFA Chapters in the county. —

Fort members involved, active

FORT DEFIANCE — The Fort Defiance FFA chapter started the year strong, preparing to send two teams and one individual to national competitions. Sixteen members and three advisers traveled to the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky. in October.

FFA members also had the opportunity to visit Virginia Tech for the first annual Farm and Family Showcase. Aaron Shiflett was selected as Augusta Federation reporter and Christy Huffman is also a member of this executive committee. In November, the chapter recognized its supporters with its annual Alumni Banquet.

Several changes came with the arrival of the new semester in January. Fort Defiance ag teacher and FFA adviser Andy Seibel accepted the position of Virginia FFA Executive Secretary in January and has an office at Virginia Tech. The Fort ag department is pleased to welcome new teachers Leon Cash and Beth Grove to its program to finish out the second semester.

Upcoming activities for the chapter include parliamentary procedure and public speaking contests, as well as the chapter banquet to be held March 14.

Junior officers have been interviewed and the following slate has been selected: Ashley Shiflett, president; Meagan Carpenter, vice president; Daniel Stewart, secretary; and Willie Patterson, reporter. In February, the chapter attended the Eastern Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, Pa.

National FFA Week was Feb. 17-23 and the Fort Defiance chapter planned several exciting activities. On Tuesday, the officers and members held a teacher luncheon. Wednesday was the Venison Feast when members spent the morning preparing deer hams for all members to eat during their lunch periods. Some members also participated in federation activities, such as the Ag Olympics and hay stacking contest at Buffalo Gap High School. Throughout the week there was a school-wide FFA Trivia Contest so that the student body could be involved and learn more about the FFA. —

Fort Defiance FFA members construct fresh holiday wreaths in class to take home with them. This was a new activity for students.

Photo courtesy Fort FFA

Basil tops the list of cooking herbs

Down to Earth

By Mollie Bryan

Some folks are into herbs for their medicinal values, some for their scent or beauty, and some believe that herbs have magical powers to ward off evil and bring you money. For me, the lure of herbs is all of this and more. One of the tried, true, and tested uses of herbs is pure and simple — adding flavor to food. For this purpose, I have to say that basil is my favorite herb. I really missed growing it last year. With the birth of a new baby, I did not get in much gardening. But I did run around Waynesboro half the summer looking for fresh basil, which I hardly ever found. I know it was around because our friend Rosa brought us a wonderful dish when the baby was born, which was made with fresh basil, mozzarella, tomatoes and pasta. A cold salad that was greatly appreciated. I think Rosa was one of the lucky ones who found the herb in the grocery store; they never have much fresh basil on hand, though. And I could not ever find it at the farmer's market. So, this year, I am going to grow it — as I have done for many years.

Basil grows really well and easily in Virginia's climate. In fact, it is part of the mint family, so it can take over your garden. One thing I have learned is to be fastidious in clipping the buds (basil gets very pretty little white flowers on it) otherwise, it gets a bit stringy. And you want to keep those leaves as whole as possible — so I recommend an organic pesticide, called Schultz, because the bugs love basil.

The scent of basil is incredible and is lauded by aroma therapists for its invigorating quality. And it has an intriguing history. In Italy, for example, according to tradition, when a woman places a pot of basil on her balcony outside her room she is ready to receive suitors. Another tradition holds that if a man gives a woman a sprig of basil, she will fall in love with him and never leave him. And in India, the herb is considered sacred and dedicated to the gods Vishnu and Krishna. Sprigs of basil were laid upon the breasts of the dead to protect them from evil in the next world.

As for me, I have used it in potpourris and it holds up very well. But mostly, I use it for pesto sauce (see recipe). Pesto sauce is great over pasta, but we have also used it for pizza, bread, and sandwiches.

Some sauces are better than others when it comes to wine and beer. Pesto sauce is one of those that goes really well with good wine. I am no wine expert, but pasta with pesto goes very well with burgundy or a deep stout. Enjoy!

Pesto

2 cups fresh basil leaves
1/2 cup olive oil
3 cloves of garlic
1/2 tsp. salt
2 tablespoons pine nuts or walnuts

Place in a blender until smooth. Then add 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese. Stir well until blended. Refrigerate. (Freezes very well.)

The whys and hows of pruning

In the Garden

By Jenifer Bradford

Why do we prune a living plant? Can we improve on nature? When is this done? What tools should we use? There are many answers to these questions and many books on this topic. I'll try to provide a few answers.

Nature, of course, does natural pruning. A severe wind blows and takes down old, weak, and rotting tree limbs, and brittle branches and twigs. Ice storms press down on all vegetation and snap off branches (and break power lines).

Lightning thins out old trees, and animals and insects nibble and bite through leaves, shrubs, and anything tasty. An over abundance of fruits just fall to the ground.

However, nature's way of "pruning" is not selective and often prized boxwoods, ornamental trees, and flowering plants are ruined or destroyed in bad weather or by critters.

If we gardeners can recognize the need to trim, thin out, or even move and space out plantings, we can forestall some of nature's damage.

Today every pruning task should have a clear purpose. We shouldn't prune just for fun or to keep things tidy. We should know what needs to be done before we begin a project and we should use the right tools. All living plants should be left to grow gracefully and naturally, so allow for ultimate size before planting.

TREES

"Do:" Remove any dead, diseased, damaged, or crossed branches; cut back branches overhanging wires or paths; watch for weak crotches where branches might split; thin out extra branches; remove small limbs; shape carefully but naturally; use a saw and good cutting techniques (make three cuts — 1. an undercut; 2. an overcut; 3. a final cut to remove stub) to avoid tearing the bark or wood; and sterilize tools after each cut to prevent infection.

Do use a certified tree surgeon (such as Bartlett), not an uncertified man with a truck and a chain saw if the job is too big for you.

"Don't:" Use a chain saw to shape a tree or top a tree; put infected prunings into the compost pile. Most importantly, don't cut or injure the tree collar (at the base of each branch). This collar has a chemical zone that inhibits decay.

SHRUBS

"Do:" Use hand clippers or pruners; thin out a third of old growth every year at the base; lightly prune to maintain shape; prune after flowering.

"Don't:" Use a chain saw; cut into balls or artificial shapes (unless you are making a topiary or bonsai); prune before flowering else you will remove that season's flowers.

ROSES

Give plants light and good air circulation. Remove old, diseased, twiggy, or crossed canes. Deadhead by cutting the stem back to the first five leaves on a slant (old method) or snap off the bloom (where stem is swollen) to promote more prolific flowering (new method advocated by the Royal Horticulture Society).

Cut out the oldest canes at the base of ramblers and climbers. Tie up the newer canes onto trellises (tips should point down). Prune roses that bloom once a year after blooming. Prune repeat blooming roses in early spring after the last killing frost.

HEDGES

A clipped hedge makes an excellent windbreak or privacy fence. The base should be wider at the bottom than the top to promote good air circulation and drainage. Prune heavily during years 2-6 to build up a dense mass.

GENERAL SHAPING

Perform this task in late winter when shrubs or trees are dormant. There are a few exceptions such as honeylocusts and oaks, and sugar maples are tapped, of course, for maple syrup at that time.

ROOT PRUNING

Cut back roots 6 inches away from a tree

See *PRUNING*, page 16

~~ Garden tips for March ~~

The gardening year usually looks a little more promising this month as spring officially arrives on the 20th. Even if the ground is still cold or soggy, we can enjoy the indoor flower shows.

I hope that many of you traveled to Richmond in February to see the Maymont Flower Show. This month the biggest and the best, the Philadelphia Flower Show, runs from March 3-10. This year's theme is: The Pleasures of the Garden. Victorian-era gardens are featured with a romantic touch overall. Log onto www.theflowershow.com for information.

Shows and tours are important tools for the gardener since they reveal what can be done, who is doing it, where the plants come from, and we get a pleasant day out.

Back home we can:

- Work on the lawn. Apply a pre-emergent crabgrass killer (temperatures should be over 60 degrees). Scatter a light dressing of fertilizer. Reseed to thicken up cool-season grasses.
- Set out transplants of early vegetables: snow peas, asparagus, onion, spinach, rhubarb, and the brassica family. Potatoes are planted on St. Patrick's Day (March 17).
- Root prune any trees and shrubs that you plan to move in the fall or next spring.
- Uncover any protective windscreens on an overcast day.
- Divide and plant perennials when the soil is workable.
- Plant trees and shrubs while dormant.
- Plant more pansies.
- Fertilize flowerbeds and under trees and shrubs with a slow-release granular fertilizer.
- Buy a winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) or a vernal witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*), two of spring's earliest blooming shrubs (February and March).
- Plant fruit trees and bare-root roses.
- Spray boxwoods with Orthene or Cygon late in March to prevent leaf miner damage.
- Apply dormant oil to fruit trees.
- Clip back dead foliage as new green foliage appears.
- Prune roses when you see the buds swelling. Cut away diseased, weak, or dead wood. Cut back hybrid teas 15-24 inches.
- Thin out overgrown shrubs.
- Check out your lawnmower.
- Sharpen tools with a file.
- Clip overgrown vines.
- Don't remove any mulch yet.
- Check out house plants for signs of scale, mites, or white flies. These pests build up in hot, dry rooms over the winter.
- Take a walk in the garden to check out what's in bloom or what's peeping from the earth. Take photos. Record entries in your garden log. —

Schoolhouse News

Riverheads Elementary School students Isvell Lovett, Skyler Humphrey and David Abshire make valentines with the supervision of 4-H club leader Lynn McManaway.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

RES students play Cupid

GREENVILLE - With pink, red and purple construction paper together with glue, scissors, colorful markers, and a lot of creativity and enthusiasm, a group of students from Riverheads Elementary School created about 50 heartfelt greeting cards for Valentine's Day. The cards brightened up Cupid's holiday for the residents of Oak Hill Nursing Home.

The students are part of the 21st Century Community Learning Center After School Program at Riverheads Elementary School which operates Mondays through Thursdays from 3:15 to 6 p.m. The main goals of the program are to help students improve Standards of Learning scores through homework assistance and tutoring and to provide exposure to enrichment activities.

One of the enrichment activities is the opportunity to participate in 4-H on Thursdays. As part of a 4-H community service project, the students chose to make valentines for the Oak Hill residents. Lynn McManaway, the program's 4-H leader, headed up the program in which almost 30 children participated. —

Skyler Humphrey, David Abshire and Nick Wiseman show off the valentine cards they made during an after-school work session at Riverheads Elementary School. The valentines were presented to family members and residents at Oak Hill Nursing Home in Staunton.

Preventing the winter blahs

From the teacher's desk

By Betty Gatewood

How can we motivate and involve students in the middle of the stagnant winter blahs when Christmas seems so long ago and Easter seems so far in the future?

Between the lighthearted, festive days preceding the holidays and the homestretch feeling before spring vacation, comes a season of challenge for any teacher. How can we motivate and involve students in the middle of the stagnant winter blahs when Christmas seems so long ago and Easter seems too far in the future? Answers: Teach topics that the middle school mind is already agonizing about, AND sprinkle those tantalizing subject matters with some important SOL mantras. You have a winning combination.

Method 1 — Prepare students for their required science fair project. I know that parents dread the project assignment more than the students, especially since it surprises them when their child demands a "gotta-have-it" trip to Wal-Mart for art supplies at 7 p.m. the day before the project is due. To eliminate this I've developed a time line in which after each phase of the evolution of the project, parents are to initial the completion of that phase. It has worked well and there were not as many parental surprises this year.

By the time I get students in seventh grade, they have already had good scientific method preparation in the upper grades of elementary school and in sixth grade. We are so lucky at Stewart Middle School to have very creative sixth grade science teachers who require experimentation, not just a display, collection or survey for the science fair at the "open category" (sixth grade only). I was pleased this year to discover that most of my students already had a grasp on the scientific method: the formulation of hypotheses, experimentation, use of controls and variables, making multiple trials, doing graphs, and obtaining measurable data from a good experiment.

We work very hard in preparation, but some students have vocalized to me that they don't really see the need to learn the scientific method — "when will we use it again?" Perhaps they don't realize it, but life is full of opportunities to utilize the methodology of the scientific method. That SOL will be used time and again in the future, but they will use it without thinking. That's the beauty of learning some standards -- it becomes second nature to use them.

Another plus this year was utilizing the senior science and math students of the Shenandoah Valley Regional Governor's School in a "one-to-two" seminar time in a two-hour block of time. Students really liked this because they were able to get extended personal attention and help from some of their idolized high school students. Two of my students were paired with one governor's school student. It was a winning combination for middle schooler, high schooler AND teacher.

By the time you read this, some of our winning science fair students will have participated in the Regional Middle School Science Fair held at Beverley Manor Middle School held Feb. 14 and will be preparing for participation in the Shenandoah Valley Regional Science Fair to be held March 5 at James Madison University. We are very proud, and feel this activity has great merit.

Method 2 — Microscopic viewing of microorganisms. Usually I like to focus on microorganisms and the possibility of transmission of viruses and bacteria during the "flu season." This year I did it as a Reader's Theater — kids did skits about each type of microorganism and made up the test questions on their presentation. (Students had to take notes on presentations and the test was with open notebooks. To coincide with this study, students learn to view, draw and identify structures of the microorganisms discussed by using live cultures of the specimens. Microscope study is always a favorite.

Method 3 -- Study the human body. That's what they are thinking about anyway. Usually in January and February (after the school science fair), I do my unit on anatomy and physiology of the human body. They are ready for it. They have learned nutrition and sex education in health class, so I go pretty lightly on those topics. I do expect them to have knowledge of those topics however, so I can delve into digestion or genetics in detail without having to re-teach some of the basics. We study and learn the parts and functions of all body systems: skeletal, muscular, digestive, circulatory, respiratory, excretory, endocrine, nervous, and integumentary. (I leave the reproductive system to the health teachers.) Besides the text, we study with the skeleton model, human torso and various charts, and teaching aids. Various activities to punctuate the systems are conducted — muscle fatigue lab, blood circulation simulation, sensory experiments, fingerprinting comparisons.

Methods 1 through 3 are valuable, BUT the real attention getter is...

Method 4 — Dissection! Most middle school students really look forward to getting their hands on something to cut up. Investigating??? Discovering??? I'd like to think so, and not just cutting up to imitate mutilation. Actually I am pretty strict about who gets to participate. They have an assignment due on lab day and that is their

See *BLAHS*, page 18

The Hitching Post

Bit selection important tool in proper training of horses

Q: How important is it to have the right bit on a horse? I am learning about tack and would like to understand more about bits.

Bits are one of the most important pieces of tack with which you will work — understanding proper fit as well as the proper bit for the job is essential. Many head problems are from bits that are either too severe or ill fitted. Some problems you may see are constant head tossing and lack of flexion.

Let's look at fitting first. The horse has an area on its upper and lower jaw where there are no teeth. This is where the bit fits. Too low in the mouth and the bit will be loose allowing the horse to get it under his tongue. Too high in the mouth and the horse will be uncomfortable with the lips pulled back tightly. A good fit should allow the horse a "smile," two or three wrinkles of the mouth. The bit should also fit across. This is measured in inches and a bit that is too small will pinch. One that is too wide will not work effectively and be too loose. Fitting the horse properly according to size will be the first step in selecting the proper bit.

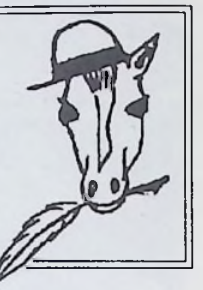
The second step in fitting will be what type to use. There are hundreds of bits on the market and each offers to work in a different way. This alone should enlighten riders to the importance of a bit in a horse's mouth! Two of the most popular bits are the curb and the snaffle. The curb bit is a solid bit with a bend that looks like a "C" in the middle. The larger the "C," or port, the more severe the bit. Many western riders work with curb bits. The reins attach to the end of the shaft and a chinstrap is used. When the rider pulls on the reins the chinstrap and bit put pressure on the horse's jaw. The longer the shaft the more severe the bit. More severe means more control or influence.

Snaffle bits are "broken" in the middle with two rings on either side. The snaffles can come in many different varieties such as rollers, twisted wire, rubber, D-ring, etc. The reins are attached more directly to the bit on a ring on either side. The thickness of the bit will determine the severity. The thinner the more severe. Learning the basics of these two types of bits can prepare you for most bit needs. The more severe the type of bit the more it punishes. This is important to remember because most behavior problems with horses are pain related! No amount of punishment will take the place of good training.

This brings me to the third part in fitting bits — the training responsibility associated with good horsemanship. Many trainers will use a more severe bit to correct immediate behavior problems. They intend to reinforce good behavior but many times their goal is to train the horse to work in a less severe bit! The goal is always to train the horse to understand the cues associated with riding. These cues are the signals riders use to communicate. There is a difference between horses that do not listen and horses that do not understand. Good trainers know the difference and realize that bridles are an important training and communication device.

Every good rider will depend upon proper training to use the least amount of punishment (bit severity) for the horse's temperament and personality. There are some riders who ride their horses with no bridles at all, which is a credit to their training ability. Take it from the horse's mouth, understanding the use of bits is one of the most important training and communication tools you will need to become an effective rider. —

I.B. HOOFINIT From the Horse's Mouth



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 approval. Information provided in this column is meant to be taken as general advice. Each horse, rider, owner, and situation reflects different problems. I.B.'s answers are meant to be informative and enjoyable, but not binding. Common sense in any situation is a must.

◦Pruning

Continued from page 14

trunk for each 1 inch of trunk diameter a year before you plan to move a tree. This step ideally should be done in early spring and early fall (two stages).

LAWN PRUNING

Remove no more than 1/3 of the height of the blade of grass at any one time. Always mow high. Use a reel mower for the smoothest cut. Leave grass clippings as compost.

GROUNDCOVER PRUNING

Use a rotary mower (set high) to shear large areas of groundcovers such as periwinkle, pachysandra, and candytuft.

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES AND LIRIOPE PRUNING

Leave these ornamentals over the winter for seasonal interest. Cut back to about 1 foot (grasses) or 4 inches (liriope) in early spring just before new growth begins.

EVERGREEN THINNING

Low spreading evergreens such as junipers need their tips clipped in early spring and early summer to keep them healthy and to prevent browning out. Evergreen shrubs such as boxwood need thinning out internally so that air and light can penetrate.

ARTISTIC PRUNING

Other types of pruning can be an art form. Bonsai is the Japanese art of dwarfing a plant with the aid of copper wire and keeping it in a shallow container. Topiary is the English art of clipping evergreens into severe sculptures in a formal garden setting.

Espalier means that plants are trained up a flat surface (usually a wall) into different shapes. These are great space savers but very ornamental. Many fruit trees adapt well to this procedure such as apples, plums and cherries.

Pollarding is used in European and American colonial gardens to create alleys. Suitable trees are pruned annually to form a globe shape between 5-12 feet in height. I'm not particularly fond of this art form.

TOOLS

Some useful tools of the trade are, from small to large: scissor-type hand pruners or clippers; small pruning saw; large double-edged pruning saw; toppers or long-handled pruners; hedge clippers; pole saw; pole pruners; and a long-bladed spade for root pruning.

Some books about pruning which you might want to consult include *Pruning Simplified* by Lewis Hill (Rodale Press); *The Pruning of Trees, Shrubs, & Conifers* by George E. Brown (Timber Press); and *Pruning Techniques, Handbook 126*, Brooklyn Botanical Garden

PRUNING SOCIETY

Yes, there's even a society to provide information on correct pruning techniques: Plant Amnesty, 906 N.W. 87th St., Seattle, WA 98117.

Good luck. —

◦Chicago

Continued from page 8

themselves. They put a loft in the car and slept there. After the Chicago show, the Canadians would go home and some of the other farmers would continue in their cars south for other shows, but Chicago set the standard in breeding and feeding classes," he remembered.

Dr. Bartenslager has seen many changes in breed preferences and in breed standards during the 20th century. In the dairy industry he has seen the Holstein eclipse all others for production levels. "Without a doubt the Holstein exceeded any other breed. When I started there were Ayrshires, brown Swiss, and Guernsey which are now rare. There were also Jersey cattle which have held on," he said.

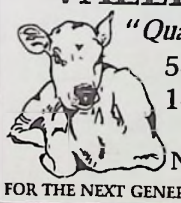
On the beef side, the Angus has remained strong, while the shorthorn has faded. "A lot of new breeds have been introduced, breeds we never heard of before. VPI has gotten into some interesting and worthwhile crossbreeding which provided some things like increased heat tolerance," he explained.

Even more interesting than the rise and fall of certain breeds has been the radical shift in animal sizes. "Starting in the 1930s there was a shift toward smaller animals. It was 'the shorter the better' for awhile. The animals were even called baby beeves. The idea was that people were having smaller families and they wanted smaller cuts of beef. It gained so much momentum that some of the animals were no taller than your belt," he said.

The shift was not something of which he approved. "I never agreed that you should make drastic changes. It may have been responsible for some blemishes in the animals as each breed tried to outdo the other. Artificial insemination probably helped perpetuate it somewhat because many animals were so short that they couldn't breed naturally but they were able to propagate through AI," he said.

The trend began to slowly reverse itself in the 1950s because breeders weren't getting enough pounds on an animal to make money. Unfortunately, the doctor said the pendulum swung all the way in the opposite direction. "It went to excessive size. By the 1960s they were trying to put more pounds on and so the animals were

See *SIZE*, page 17



Barrel-racing champ excels despite odds

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

LEXINGTON — The footing was a little better. The right combination of thaw and moisture made the ground around the barrels crumbly, maybe a little slick, but better than it has been. But it doesn't matter. Because Roper, nursing a leg injury, isn't running these days.

Roper is an old quarter horse with the gleam of ribbons won, trophies polished, in his wide brown eyes. One look at his owner, champion barreller Kathy Ramsey, and you know she is not the type to let anyone's dreams die — least of all those of an old friend.

In the world of barrel racing, Roper was somewhat of an amazement anyhow.

"Roper was running on heart, not on his knees; that's what my farrier told me last year," Ramsey admits about the 19-year-old horse. "My vet, Tabby Moore, put him on Adepan shots to keep him going comfortably."

So, after much soul searching and watching the big horse's enthusiasm to keep going, Ramsey decided not to retire Roper last year. With renewed inspiration, Roper and Ramsey kept on doing the barrels, and surged to the top of their division in the National Barrel Horse Association local competition and then the finals.

"I thought if we could go to Nationals and win, that would be great, especially with that retirement just ahead. I mean, he was only a half second from the fastest time in the second division," Ramsey says of the horse's great talent.

Barrel racers run to beat the clock. In the competition, three barrels are set up in an arena. Two are on either side and one is at the center opposite end. Each horse and rider race around the three barrels in a cloverleaf pattern with the fastest time winning. Of course, the tight turns and fast runs are what make, or break, a barrel racer's time. Any horse who works cattle can run fast and turn quickly, thus barrel competitions showcase that ability for the horse.

In professional rodeo, only the women barrel race, but in the NBHA, the competition is open to anyone. Once the NBHA got going, the membership jumped, literally overnight, to 22,000.

Because of the immense popularity of the NBHA, the umbrella organization is divided into districts. Each state contains five or more districts. In the VA-District 1 (from Goshen to Strasburg), 60 riders compete. Some shows combine districts, bringing together more than 200 competitors.

No set times mark the divisions within each district and at each competition until after the first qualifying runs. Those times set the standard for the individual competition, allowing the caliber of the particular horses at the competition to determine winning times for each division, A, B, C, D, etc.

Throughout the competition year, which begins with the Paint shows in January and February, each competitor accumulates points. By summer's end, the top 5 in each division earn a berth at the world championships, held late fall in Georgia. Because of their fast times and hard work, Roper and Ramsey accumulated enough wins, and corresponding points, to make the finals competition this fall in Georgia.

Ramsey purchased Roper three years ago, when the horse was 16, knowing that no matter what his time, he could fall into a division that fit with his aging legs. But in the competition this summer, Roper's times consistently qualified him near the end of the first division, and comfortably within the second. Ramsey entered him in the second division, and he promptly worked his way up.

As summer gave way to fall, Ramsey and Roper had worked up to third place in the first division. They were ready to run and ready for nationals.

"If he were 5 or 6 years old with that heart and that ability, I don't think I'd be able to stay on him," Ramsey said of the powerful horse. "Roper's from Ohio, Mr. Bar None breeding. A trainer friend of mine who rode several Bar None horses said none were as fast. Roper runs all the way and doesn't let up, but sometimes he turns a little wide. Of course, he doesn't flex much as he should anymore; he's stiff-legged sometimes and sometimes a little off after a three- or four-day show."

So Ramsey worked hard at giving the old horse extra attention: Grand Flex supplements, an occasional Bute tablet, a poultice paste when his troublesome right knee flared up.

And Roper kept on getting better and better: 15.2 seconds at an event at which the fastest time was 14.9 against his usual time of 15.8. Ramsey said those times made her glad of her strategy of keeping the older horse consistently fit, and working him year-round.

"We don't ever quit for the winter, the weather, anything. We just keep right on working. For an older horse especially, keeping them in condition is best," Ramsey said.

The more Ramsey worked with Roper coming into the fall finals, the more she realized that as a horse, Roper is one-in-a-million. She'd keep allowing him to run as long as he was willing. Roper, Ramsey adds, never runs on auto pilot. "You've really got to work with him, ride him," she said. "I've got to do something at each barrel to set him up for the next one.

"I've got to jerk him a little at the first barrel, keep him down a little. When we get around the second, I have to pick up for the third one and hold him. He doesn't let up, but he'll lose time if I don't help him do it just right."

At the Dave Martin Rodeo at the Virginia Horse Center last winter, Roper slipped and went down at the third barrel, flinging Ramsey into the back of her saddle. But he recovered and still placed fourth.

"He lunges so hard, he often throws me against the back of the saddle. If I didn't have a high-cantle saddle, I'd be on the ground," she says, laughing.

Roper originally came from the quarter horse racing circuit, and began running barrels at age 2. His owner then chalked up plenty of seconds and thirds at the Mesquite Rodeo in Texas. Roper came a long way to belong to Ramsey.

Kathy Ramsey and Roper pose with a National Barrel Horse Association trophy buckle following a recent competition.

Photo courtesy Kathy Ramsey

"He's a woman's horse, I think. He does better for me than he did for the guys who owned him," she explained. "I got him off Pistol Ayers who got him from Carlton Tomlin. I went to look at him and he was so fast, he scared me. I'd never gone that fast. So I traded horses with Pistol and brought him home.

"I rode him at Salem and he went so fast around the first barrel his nose burned the wall. All I could do was hang on to him; I sure couldn't control him. And that took me a long time to work out."

So the pair trailered to Georgia with visions of more wins in their minds. Ramsey signed in and ran where she was supposed to be running when she was supposed to be there. "Roper was doing pretty well in his last two rounds," Ramsey relates. "He was running strong in the third division. Not in the money, but good runs."

But as is so often in equine competition, tragedy lay around the next bend.

"In his last run, he started tying up in his back legs," Ramsey says. Tying up is an equine ailment that can turn serious, even deadly, within a matter of minutes. Horses with bulky muscles are more susceptible to the muscle cramps, caused by how the muscles burn, or fail to properly burn, the glycogen that powers them. Quarter horses, horses like Roper, seem especially susceptible. The problem strikes without warning. Just when Roper needed the little extra that his muscles and tendons and bones gave, it wasn't there.

"He was in the process of putting his back leg down, and it just came back on his fetlock (ankle)."

Since the arena for the competition was two miles from the stabling area, Ramsey immediately dismounted and slowly led her old friend to her trailer. She noticed that the ailing muscles continued to allow the fetlock joint (the first joint above the hoof) to overflex.

She got Roper in his trailer and took him to the stabling area where a dose of muscle relaxant kept him as comfortable as possible.

"That evening, the fetlock joint was badly swelled, but not hot," Ramsey tells. "When the swelling went down by Sunday, I just wanted to get him home and to the vet who has kept him going so well over the last three years."

Under the influence of a generous amount of liniment and leg bandages, Roper came home to the waiting Tabby Moore and her x-ray machine. The diagnosis: a pulled tendon in back, and six months rest.

And after that? Ramsey just shrugs. With Roper, who knows?

While Ramsey works with her younger mare, Spitfire (lots of ability, but not the heart to win that Roper has), she cares for the resting Roper.

"Other friends whose horses have had pulled tendons say they came out of it just fine," she concludes with hope. "I'm optimistic that Roper will run again. Everyone's got him on their prayer list, and I'm giving him lots of attention and letting that leg take its time to heal." Ramsey says. "He's my main man, almost like my other half."

Others are helping as well. The farrier has designed a special shoe to keep the healing leg at just the right angle to heal, and Dr. Moore has continued her vigil, amazed that old Roper has had little swelling or pain accompanying his injury.

Ramsey, too, remains nonplused. "I don't know either, but Roper is such an extraordinary horse. First his knees and now this. I just feel good that I've had the privilege to ride and own a horse like this."

Roper himself takes it all in stride, like any laid-up athlete. He watches Ramsey's other horses through the barn door. He puts weight on the leg and tests it constantly, dreaming about the day when he and the girl with the flying blonde hair can run like the wind again. —

•Size

Continued from page 16

bigger. Too big," he said.

Now, he says, things are just about right and the industry has years of data to go by to insure sensibility in future trends.

Since his retirement a decade ago, Dr. Bartenslager has had the opportunity to sit back and reflect on the changes he has seen and those that he helped fuel within the industry. When he sold his Angus herd of 600, he selected what he felt were the best 20 for his sons, so the tradition continues.

His contributions in the field have been huge. Not only did he pioneer modern fertility practices, but also he helped train future generations of farmers and veterinarians through his classroom work. At home he put his knowledge to work with his own herd and he served the cattle organizations on a national level as president of the American Angus Association. He has been honored as the national

See *HERD*, page 20

Country Crossroads

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin

February 2002

Dear Maude,

If I manage to get this letter finished without dozens of interruptions, it will be a miracle. What with first all the Enron mess throwing everyone into a frenzy, and then the battle over campaign finance reform which it inspired, needless to say it has not been quiet here in the office. A lot of nervousness is apparent in our nation's capitol with that of our boss among the most severe. This campaign reform business is something he had rather not even have to think about. Occasionally, to lighten things up a bit we will hear some silly joke inspired by Enron, but those jokes don't get all that many laughs. Messing with the giving of money to politicians is serious business!

Neither party wants to give in, or give up, any of that "soft money" which is not as good as, but safer than, plain old fashioned cash slipped under the table. With so many eager eyes watching these days, that cash thing is awfully tricky, so... good old soft money to the rescue. No limits. No control that can be easily traced. How convenient it has been. Now the Congress is trying to do away with it! In the never-ending debate, both parties are yelling at each other as well as yelling at members of their own party for siding with those of the opposite party. Of course, mind you, not a one of them has ever had any interest in any of that soft money — it is just the principle of the thing, or the principle of the party, or something. With all of this rhetoric going on, and party feelings so tense, it is hard on the poor lobbyists. They have to be extremely careful not to show any preference for one group over the other — they have to be absolutely non-partisan or run the risk of losing a little of *that inside influence. Oh, how tiring it all is!*

With the members and their top aides all busily dashing about and carefully phrasing their press releases and speeches and tending to other personal stuff, we, the minor players, are pretty much reduced to dealing with the junior staffers. This can sometimes be a good thing, for so many of them are really eager to help. But also, there are times when it can be quite exasperating. A week or so ago I was to deliver a fundraising check to a new, young staff member. (Yes, we have to get as much of that money out there as fast as possible before they change the rules on us.) The way these things usually work is that you write a check to the party, then you give it to a member of Congress, who in turn delivers it to the party officers. That way everyone knows exactly where the money came from, how much of it there was, and whom to thank. When I called to make sure that the staff member would be at the fundraiser and to tell him I would be bringing the check, he assured me that he most certainly would be there, for the Congressman did so rely on him in these matters. It was wonderful that, being such an attractive and brilliant person, he was able to offer his services to his boss, who was so extremely pleased with him. He went on to explain to me that also he was an extremely good friend of one of the party administrative staff members named Bettie and that by his taking my boss' check personally to her it would mean so much more to my boss. "Why just last week," he informed me, "when Bettie and I both were at the club one day for lunch, it appeared to me that she might be puzzled about the identity of one of the freshmen Congressmen, so I walked up to where she and one of her aides stood and told them who the person was. They both were so very pleased with me!"

I listened politely and told him that I had met Bettie a time or two and thought she was a very nice person. He did not seem to be able to think of anything suitable to say to my statement, but told me to meet him at the function that evening. When I got to the fundraiser, I saw him across the room and walked over to deliver the aforementioned envelope with check. As I handed him the envelope and stood talking for a minute, he said to another young man standing by him and, indirectly, to me, "Who is that woman over there in the red suit?"

I looked and saw who it was. I could not hold my tongue. "Oh," I replied, (perhaps a bit out of turn,) "that's your good friend Bettie!"

"My goodness," he stammered. "I didn't recognize her. It must be the light."

I apologized for having taken up so much of his time, and said I would leave so he could go say hello to Bettie. He gave me a slightly frightened smile and took off in the opposite direction. Poor thing, how embarrassing to be caught like that! Bettie didn't see him go away, or I am sure she would have been devastated that she was unable to tell him how much she admired his charm and intelligence.

Tomorrow I am scheduled to deliver some papers to a Senate staff member, however this should be a less exciting event. I know her — she is a friend of my friend Sara, and a great person. She is attractive and intelligent, but does not need to tell me about it every time I see her.

And about those scooters — it was bad enough when the staff members were playing with them while the bosses were away, but word got out and the next thing we knew, the little people movers were getting a work out — this time by the bosses themselves. Just last week a couple of Senators were rumored to have been seen racing two scooters toward the entrance to the Senate chamber. I did not hear who won this race either, but if they could only settle their differences with regard to the various legislative issues so easily, wouldn't it be great!

Tell everyone at home that I send my love,

LuLu

Redbud puts razzle in spring dazzle

Getting out

By Mark Gatewood

About the middle of March we start wandering through our yard and gardens, agonizing over every shoot and bud, wondering which plants will come back and which won't. The least rewarding character in this early search for life is always the redbud. There is nothing more dead-looking than a redbud in the winter and early spring. It doesn't show a hint of life — not even a swollen bud. And then one day in April those dead twigs burst out in color.

Anyone who's driven Staunton's Commerce Road in April and May knows all about the fabulous display of redbud. With that in mind, two years ago, My Wife the Biology Teacher asked for a redbud for Mother's Day. We knew we couldn't duplicate the show on Commerce Road, but we could put one little splash of that color in our yard. I planted the little container-grown tree along the fence that marks the end of the tended garden and start of the brushy woods. In my experience with redbuds, it takes a few years, some twig dieback and hard pruning, to get a plant established. So it has been with this one, and we're hoping this will be the year for a good show.

Redbud is, of course, a North American native. It is occasionally called Judas tree; this name correctly applies to the Mediterranean species, which is reputed to have been the tree on which Judas Iscariot hanged himself. The flowers, which in the myth were formerly white, turned red in shame. The name "redbud" was already in use in North Carolina in the 1700s and it was used in journal notations by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom planted it on their properties.

The diminutive redbud attracted the attention of plant explorers early on. A young English clergyman named John Bannister came to Virginia in 1678 and delighted in "a new world of plants, so strange and monstrouse (sic)." In 14 years in Virginia, Bannister sent back to his botanical contacts in England some 340 species of plants, including redbud. Bannister had begun compiling a "Natural History of Virginia," which was never completed. His career ended in a way which, unfortunately, we can probably identify with just a little bit. He was walking in a brushy area along the Roanoke River when a member of his party apparently mistook him for a deer and shot him.

I tried mightily to find some good "Gee whiz" facts — the kind that make you smack your forehead with the palm of your hand and say, "Gee whiz! I didn't know that!" - about redbud. There aren't any. It's a member of the pea family, but it doesn't have nitrogen-fixing nodules on the roots like most other pea family plants. The wood weighs 40 pounds per cubic foot and the seeds run 25,000 to a pound. That's it. No folklore, no medicinal uses, no commercial value beyond its use in landscaping. Not even a bogus Indian legend to relate.

Wait! Here's something: there's a little town in Illinois, near the Mississippi River, called Red Bud. It's right between Hecker and Ruma. Red Bud's website — "The Blossom City" — features a lovely picture of a redbud-lined rural road. The town was founded in 1867; maybe at that time "red bud" — two words — was common usage before the current one-word name was standardized.

Redbud dazzles us for a couple of weeks in early spring — when we need it the most — and then fades into the background. It's a little tree that does one thing and does it well. I think I like that. —

•Blahs

Continued from page 15

ticket to lab. If they didn't do the assignment, they are not prepared for lab and don't get to do it. I'm particular about how to do it, in what steps to do it, and how to follow-up on the dissection lab. This is usually the completion of the lab paper. There are always some who love to make a big deal about how "gross" it is, but most are "into it." It is something they will learn from, apply to their future, and remember for a long time. In conjunction with studies of the human body, students dissect a chicken wing to discover the four types of tissues in all organs. Dissection of mammalian hearts help students learn the structure of the human heart and its circulation. (Students could earn extra credit if they brought in deer hearts during hunting season or sheep/pig/beef hearts during butchering time.) Sheep eyeballs reveal the structure and function of the mammalian eye. I often bring in tripe (stomach lining), kidneys, and beef tongue if I can get them. Students are appropriately seeing these things up close and personal. It brings it... well, to life for them.

Method 5 — Classroom FeederWatch. I am continually amazed that my students really get into taking care of our bird feeders, learning the common winter feeder birds, and counting them for entering the data on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's citizen science Classroom FeederWatch website. Some students are entranced and addicted to watching the feeders on count

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Amos and the angel

By JEAN H. BRYDGE

The group seated around the King heater looked expectantly at Obern Massey, the community storyteller and country store proprietor. Always enthusiastic when "Mr. Obern" agreed to a story, several of them requested specific stories but he sat for a moment in a deep study.

Finally, he looked around and said, "Last time I told you about the bear hunt, but this story is different than any you have ever heard from me and if I had not been party to part of it, I probably wouldn't believe it either. But I'll tell it and you can make your own decision as to its truth."

Years ago, about 1943, down in the mountains of southwest Virginia, there was a little clapboard church badly in need of paint, a new roof and members. Young people moved away, older folks died and some Sundays, it was remarkable to have six or seven people in attendance. But there was one member always at services. Named Jake Mayhew, he was short, overweight, middle-aged, had a third-grade education, bloodshot eyes almost totally covered by cataracts and he normally kept his head half-ducked because light hurt his eyes. Jake remembered when the *Pilgrim* Church had a hundred members and three-fourths of them attended services.

As membership fell off, there was no one to take care of cleaning and building the fire so each Sunday in the winter, Jake walked to church at 7:30, built a fire in the wood stove and swept the floor. Well, one Sunday morning, he got the chores done and sat down beside the stove waiting for the church to heat up.

He was really discouraged because there was a foot of snow with temperature around zero. He knew there might not be anyone at church but him. After he was a little warmer, he laid his head against the back of the pew. There were four benches arranged in a square around the stove because when it was really, really cold, members just sat beside the stove for Sunday School. A visiting minister preached once a month.

Jake told me later he was sure he was awake but suddenly a figure sat down beside him. He thought someone had arrived for church and turned to say hello when he realized the figure was dressed all in white and had a golden halo. Jake knew it was too late for Halloween and he hadn't heard or seen anyone enter the church. He started to get up and run but the figure spoke in a soft voice which commanded attention. By this time, Jake had decided this was an angel. He didn't believe in angels but for want of a better word, that's what he'd call this figure.

The angel said, "Jake, we know you are discouraged and sometimes want to quit but I came today to tell you all of this will change. Someday on these premises there will be a grand and beautiful edifice. Keep being faithful and during your life, you will see the results of all these Sunday mornings when you come out in the cold and no one shows up for service. One day, you will walk into this building but you won't recognize it. All the pews will be filled and the choir will sing songs which will bring tears to your eyes. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed!" With that, the "angel" was gone. He didn't walk out the door or down the aisle, he just disappeared.

Jake sat a moment trying to recall exactly what had been said. He wasn't sure what an "edifice" was but thought it was some kind of building. His hands trembled as he put another piece of wood in the stove and he didn't know what to think of what had happened. He buried his face in his hands.

A man, Amos Flagg, who kept hidden as Jake sat in the pew, crawled from behind the piano in the corner of the sanctuary, wondering how to reach the front door without being seen by that man beside the stove. He folded up his sleeping bag so no one could see it. This had been his home for a week and he hesitated to make himself known. He had not shaved as the church had no bathroom and his clothes were wrinkled and dirty.

Suddenly, he had an inspiration. An accomplished pianist, he decided to make his presence known by sitting down and playing. As he played, "I Come To The Garden Alone," the music rang through the church like nothing Jake had heard in years.

Jake jumped up with tears in his eyes and rushed to the piano. He touched the stranger on the shoulder and said, "Where did you learn to play the piano like that and how did you get in here without me seeing you?"

Amos decided he better not tell the truth and said, "I just walked in the door, you must have been asleep and my name is Amos Flagg. Do you know if I can find a job around here anywhere?"

Jake thought a moment. "I'll try to think of something. There's not much. Will you play some more?"

He played for about an hour and no one came for service so Jake said, "Come on home with me for lunch. I live by myself so it won't be much but it will be something to eat."

Amos started to politely refuse but realized he was starving. He had not eaten since yesterday at lunch. At Jake's house, soon there was the smell of country ham frying and some potatoes boiling vigorously in the pan. Peas were simmering and coffee was percolating with the most delicious aroma Amos thought he had ever smelled.

Soon they sat down to eat and Jake asked, "Did you see anyone leaving the church when you came in?"

Amos had no idea what he was talking about and said, "No."

Then Jake told him what had happened and asked what he thought.

"I think you were sent a message this morning that you are not to be discouraged by the lack of members at the church. Obviously, that will change. Whether you were asleep or awake, I think the Lord wants you to keep trying and something is going to cause an enormous change either in this town or in the church itself."

Jake called me later that afternoon and asked if I could use someone to help me in the store for a few days and I told him to send Amos down the next morning. He seemed nice enough and I told him I could help him until he got on his feet. Later, Amos moved on but we continued to keep in touch.

Several years had passed when a large manufacturing plant came to town and lots of new people moved in. This also changed the local economy so things started looking up for the town. Jake found a kind little lady who thought he was wonderful and they got married. I guess I was the only one who wrote to Amos. I knew he settled in Boston and traveled a great deal but his mail went to a post office box. I never knew his real name. Jake couldn't write to him because Jake couldn't read or write — even though he had kept the Sunday school going all those years. Occasionally, we mentioned Amos and I told Jake I thought he came from a well-to-do family but didn't ever find out why he ended up poverty stricken in our little town. Shortly after Jake's marriage, I moved here but kept in touch with friends there.

One day, probably 1950, I got a call from Jake's wife. He was in the hospital after having a stroke, was unable to speak, and she wanted me to know. Then she told me something that made me want to shout for joy!

She said, "I visit Jake every day and take him the mail. We received a long envelope from a New York bank addressed to the Pilgrim Church in care of Jake Mayhew. We couldn't imagine what it was because we don't know anyone in New York. Well, you'll never believe! We opened it and there was a check from the bank for $200,000. There was no note — nothing. Jake motioned for me to send it back. I called the bank instead and the gentleman said he was expecting my call. He said if Jake wasn't well, use $10,000 for his care and the rest, $190,000 was to go toward building the new church. He said the only thing he was supposed to tell me was `Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!' Who do you suppose sent that?"

One of Mr. Obern's audience asked, "Did they build the new church? Who sent the money?"

He responded. "They built the new church but never found out who sent the money. I think it might have been Amos Flagg. Jake got his voice back and each Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. Mayhew sit on the front row. They now have a furnace so the church is always warm but it will never be any warmer for Jake than it was the Sunday he met the angel and Amos." —

•Letters

Continued from page 5

ter from Grants Pass, Ore. It was addressed only to: Augusta County, Virginia. Joseph Ferriere from Rhode Island wanted detailed information to publish in his *Controversial Phenomena Bulletin*.

From England came correspondence from a man who claimed to be the director of *Flying Saucer Review*. The man had no doubt that UFOs existed and that governments were covering up evidence. "Having myself seen one of these craft, so long ago as 1941, in the Deep Interior of China, I have no shred of doubt about their existence. And of course all the governments know it."

A letter from the research director at the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena wrote that he had "Just received word about Flying Saucers in and around your area. Also about little green men and the trouble the residents are causing with gun carrying." The man wanted copies of sheriff's reports and pictures to analyze.

Finally, from Maine came the tongue-in-cheek letter from a man who wrote: "When you capture one (of the green men) I am sure that you will find that they are Irish Leprechauns in the country without a legal visa."

Eventually the stir about visitors from outer space died down and Kent was able to get back to his normal crime cracking routine.

But the little green men returned again in 1968 and 1969. This time things were different. There were no sightings to wrestle with. Rather, a national magazine ran a story on the moral issues that Kent had raised. The magazine posed the question: "Is killing an Alien Murder?" The author of the article issued a call for laws to protect possible humanoid visitors, or UFOnauts, from being hunted down and murdered by alarmed citizens. Such legislation would also protect Earthling astronauts who might visit other worlds where word of their peaceful intentions preceded them.

Times certainly have changed since 1965. Through telescopes and rocket ships we have started to peer into the far reaches of the universe. With Augusta County's non-aggression pact with visitors from outer space firmly established, perhaps the next time little green men visit, we will be able to greet them as friends. —

Black Hawk Down presents grisly images of war

A movie review by Hannah's mom, Sue Simmons

The nation first learned of the military action gone awry in Mogadishu, Somalia from news footage of dead American soldiers being dragged through the streets. Two weeks later the Clinton administration withdrew troops and the incident faded from memory. Director Ridley Scott (*Gladiator, Hannibal*) and producer Jerry Bruckheimer (*Pearl Harbor*) has resurrected the story in *Black Hawk Down*, an unrelenting portrayal of the longest sustained ground battle Americans had been involved in since the Vietnam war.

Based on Mark Bowden's book by the same name with the screenplay written by Ken Nolan, this is the story of the American special forces — a combination of Rangers, Delta Force soldiers, and pilots of the 160th SOAR-that are part of a U.N. peacekeeping mission. They had been sent to civil war-torn Somalia to restore order and protect food shipments to millions of starving women and children from rival militia gangs. Warlords and gangs roaming the city of Mogadishu and the countryside ultimately foil their efforts. The most notorious gang is the one led by Mohamed Farrah Aidid who terrorizes the populace and seizes food shipments despite the presence of peacekeepers.

General Garrison, a Vietnam veteran, receives intelligence that Aidid and his "cabinet" will be meeting at the Bakura market in the heart of Mogadishu on Oct. 3, 1993. Without informing the Pakistani general who commands the U.N. forces, Garrison plans an "extraction," a quick-and-dirty kidnapping executed by dropping Special Forces into the market via Black Hawk helicopters. Garrison realizes only after the operation goes horribly wrong that he has been duped and his men have been lured into a trap.

If *Black Hawk Down* is accurate, and I have no reason to believe that it isn't, then there is no such thing as a "by the book" military operation. In the chaos — and this movie gives chaos a new meaning — of hostile fire, the unexpected can and does happen and plans changed instantly and rapidly.

One of Garrison's biggest mistakes is underestimating the communications capabilities of the enemy. The extensive use of cell phones allows Aidid to know the military's movement almost as soon as they leave base. Once alerted, heavily-armed Somalis throw up street barricades, set afire piles of tires, and race to the market.

Hostile fire greets the first men on the ground. A soldier misses the rappelling rope and falls 70 feet to the ground. Two HU-60 Black Hawk helicopters are shot down. There are 120 American troops on the ground, the number of dead and wounded mounts. There is no good way to save them so they must save themselves.

Fifteen hours later one American is captured, 73 are wounded and 19 Americans are dead. Two of the dead are dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. It is reported that over 1,000 Somalis died in the battle.

But in the end *Black Hawk Down* is about battle and honor.

Scott and Bruckheimer capture the closest thing to a battle that has ever been committed to film. This is not a John Wayne war movie; it is 143 minutes of the first 25 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*. I have no illusions that, were I plunged into a situation like *Black Hawk Down*, I would be one of the dead. I couldn't process the action on the screen much less keep the cast of characters straight. Like the men on the screen, the only thing I could easily recognize was the American uniform.

This movie is also about honor. Rangers pledge to leave no man behind. A soldier will risk his life to guard a comrade's back or retrieve his body. Even if the soldier isn't a "buddy," he wears the uniform and that's all he needs to know. It's also a point of honor not to harm civilians and obey the rules of engagement. The American soldiers cared far more about noncombatants than do the Somali warlords, who use women and children as human shields and even fire rocket propelled grenades from under their skirts. The movie-makers have been criticized unfairly for not telling the Somali side of the story. To their credit, Scott and Bruckheimer don't try to be all things to all people. They stay true to the story of the Special Forces under hostile fire and don't muddy it with other points-of-view.

A large ensemble cast portrays actual soldiers who saw action in the streets of Mogadishu. Notable are performances by Jason Isaacs as Captain Mike Steel who commanded 100 U.S. Army rangers dropped by helicopter into the market and Tom Sizemore (TV's *China Beach*) as Lt. Col. McKnight who leads a rescue convoy through the city only to get lost and come under heavy fire. Sizemore portrays McKnight as a modern day Stonewall Jackson, unflinching in the face of enemy fire. Eric Bana (*Chopper*), William Fichtner (*A Perfect Storm*), and Ewan McGregor (*Moulin Rouge*) are a trio of Delta Force operators who guide the Rangers through an ordeal even they are not trained for. Josh Hartnett (*Pearl Harbor*) plays Sgt. Matt Eversmann, the idealistic commander of Chalk Four, pinned down in the street fighting. Sam Shepherd is especially good as Maj. General William Garrison, the battle-tested Vietnam vet who watches the debacle unfold on satellite-fed screens and who, in the end, accepted full responsibility for the entire event.

This is not a movie for children or even pre-adolescents or the squeamish. It is an unforgiving picture of war and I will admit to a great deal of squirming and hiding my eyes. It is well-acted and executed and a timely reminder when American troops are putting their lives on the line in Afghanistan. Hannah's mom gives *Black Hawk Down* three bananas. It is not for children, pre-adolescents, or for the tender-hearted. The film is rated R for intense, realistic, graphic violence and language. —

Anthology gives glimpse of Irish culture

By MOLLIE BRYAN

Saint Patrick is not one of my favorite saints — but that is the subject of another article someday. I bring up Saint Patrick because it is March and during this month everybody becomes Irish for just one day.

The way in which the holiday is celebrated in this country is decidedly American. Ireland now celebrates it — but it is certainly more popular here. Americans have a strong tendency to romanticize both Ireland and the Irish.

As is true of most immigrants, the Irish have carried their culture around the world with them, but particularly to America. Irish American women carry along with them some complicated baggage and it is explored in some of their writings. *Motherland, Writings by Irish American Women about Mothers and Daughters* (1999, William Morrow and Co.) is an extraordinary collection of mother stories and daughter stories written by Irish American women. Compiled and edited by Caledonia Kearns, the book offers a realistic examination of motherhood.

It is hard to find a collection of just Irish-American women writers and even harder to find such a diverse treatment of Ireland and Irishness. One of the things I loved about this book is the somewhat unorthodox treatment of Irishness. The best example of this is the story "The Rebel Girl" by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. "When the Irish Labor leader, James Larkin once criticized American women for smoking, my mother said smilingly: 'Well, Jim I used to light my grandmother's pipe with a live coal from the hearth.' When another Irish friend turned up his nose at 'the garlic-eating Italians,' she told him that her grandmother used to pull up garlic in her garden like radishes and eat it raw."

My favorite piece is "Chasing Grace: Reflections of a Catholic Girl, Grown up," by Martha Manning, in which the author offers not only her advice, but her mother's and her great grandmother's advice to her daughter. It has the unusual characteristic of being both funny and poignant. The author's advice begins:

"Always be suspicious of a person, or restaurant, or a hotel that describes itself with clean as the first adjective. If that is the best quality, I have some serious reservations about the honesty or relevance of anything else on the list."

More seriously, "Get comfortable with your body. Treat it well. Put it to work. Give it rest. Let yourself love the way you look. I can't give you any more advice on that. I never got that far."

What really unifies this collection of stories goes beyond the Irish American and mothering aspect, though. It is consistent in both the excellence of its prose and its exploration of motherhood and a profound respect for the role of mothers is evident. And I like that. A collection full of quality literature that makes mothering, all of its aspects, the center of it.

One writer stood apart from the rest for me when reading this book. Maeve Brennan's prose about family in Motherland intrigued me to the point of going out and finding a book of her short stories.

Brennan must be one of the most gifted writers I have ever experienced. Her narrative prose is subtle, yet sharp in its observation of daily family life. In *The Springs of Affection*, Stories of Dublin (Houghton Mifflin, 1997) she explores and chronicles the lives of two Irish families. Brennan grew up in Ireland and came to the U.S. in 1934 when she was 17. She worked for many years for *The New Yorker* and wrote fashion and book notes and "Talk of the Town." Her stories about family life in Ireland are decidedly unromantic.

Each of the books presents a look at women's lives from different perspectives and a glimpse into the complexity of family life. They offer a great read; but one quality stands out for me among all of the facets of family life explored — the strength of the women writers and characters portrayed. No romantic, weak-in-the knees, buxom, perfect women exist here. They are real women and arrive flawed, which makes them rich and interesting to know, and most importantly, easy for us to relate to. —

°Science

Continued from page 18

day. We are in our second year of doing this and are one of only three schools in Virginia taking part. Many thanks to Augusta Bird Club for sponsoring us in this project.

By the time we've done all this, students have matured enough for my spring animal unit in which we do quite a few dissections —invertebrates and vertebrates. Then our interests have turned to the outdoors, environmental studies and outdoor labs. The fun continues...

Seventh grade science is a kick — high interest, high energy and high level of learning, I think. These methods have worked for me despite the season of potential winter blahs. No complaints of winter blahs from my students in Room 31. —

°Herd

Continued from page 17

cattleman of the year and was given a Centennial Award of Merit from the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. He was also selected as a member of the Angus Association for his contributions to the breed.

"I have been some great advances in the cattle industry," he explained. And, he added, that he is optimistic about the future of both beef and dairy production.

"Right now the industry is moderate. It will make it," he said. "I don't think people are ready to quit eating beef or drinking milk." —