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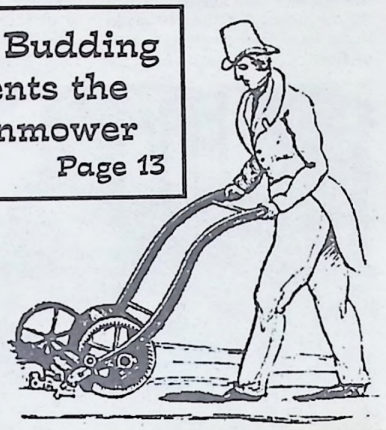

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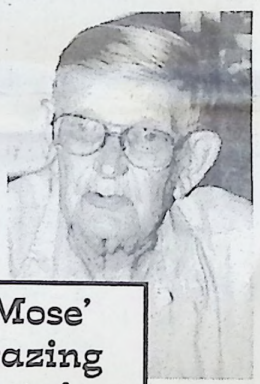

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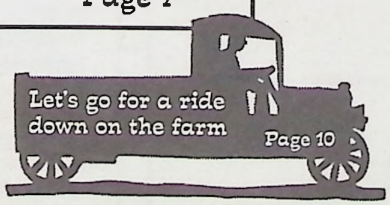

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LVA dedicates library in Fishersville

By VERA HAILEY

FISHERSVILLE — Candida Clark, board president of the Augusta Area Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), welcomed visitors at the group's February open house and library dedication at LVA headquarters in Fishersville.

The new library was named to honor the memory of the late Sarah E. Nutt. Following her death in 1998, Mrs. Nutt's children asked that memorial donations be made to the local literacy group in lieu of flowers. The funds were earmarked for the purchase of books.

"Sarah was a founding member of our affiliate. She was asked to serve on a board planning to deal with the problem of illiteracy in Augusta County in 1980. By 1981, LVA-Augusta Area had been formed and been accepted as an affiliate of Literacy Volunteers of America," Clark said.

Mrs. Nutt tutored in both basic reading and English as a second language, and served on the board of directors. In 1990, she was named one of President Bush's 1,000 Points of Light because of her efforts to eradicate illiteracy.

The namesake, whose picture hangs in the library, was characterized as a caring, enthusiastic individual who personified the mission of helping illiterate adults.

Children of Mrs. Nutt, Bob Nutt, Joe Nutt and Janet Lembke, attended the ceremony. It is not surprising that both of them have a love for reading and have written and/or illustrated books.

Following the ceremony, Clark mingled with guests and explained the focus of LVA: "We guarantee students free, confidential, one-to-one tutoring." She stressed the importance of strict confidentiality and explained that many times a spouse is the only person in the world who knows a person cannot read. Often even their children and co-workers don't know.

Studies have shown that only 2 percent of the population cannot be taught to read because of a brain injury or other illness. In contrast, it is estimated that 20 percent of the national population is functionally illiterate.

Anne Gutterman, a volunteer who is a retired teacher, talked about the shame associated with being illiterate in today's society. "Many people use 'Oops, I forgot my glasses,' or 'I don't spell very well,' when they really can't read or write and are ashamed."

Clark and Gutterman claim that there is more illiteracy in the country today than there was 50 years ago. They noted it has become customary to push students ahead when they have not grasped the material instead of holding them back to repeat a grade.

"Then they quit using phonics and started teaching to read by sight," said Gutterman. Children were expected to memorize each word instead of teaching them how to figure out words on their own. The volunteers agreed that this type of educational experimentation contributed to the national illiteracy situation.

Then there is the story of the recent graduate who came into the LVA office with her diploma and asked a volunteer to read it to her. "She couldn't read it!" Clark said.

Family situations seem to perpetuate illiteracy. "It goes through the generations. When the parents can't read it's hard for them to help their children through school," Clark commented. "Sadly, some illiterate parents don't recognize the value of being able to read and even tell their children they did fine without reading."

Many other issues affect a person's ability to read. The generation during the Depression quit school to help their families. Dyslexia and other disabilities may have been incorrectly diagnosed. Uncorrected eye problems have kept many people from learning to read. Some students just simply fell through the cracks of the educational system.

Fifty volunteers provide tutoring in basic reading for adults who are not in the school system and who read below a fifth grade level. English as a second language is offered to immigrants and refugees. The local group has helped students from China, Mexico, Lebanon, Bosnia and many other countries.

Tutors and pupils meet in a mutually chosen neutral place, usually not in their homes. With the opening of the library, a more convenient meeting place is accessible.

"There are always more students waiting for tutors than tutors waiting to be placed," Clark stressed. Volunteers with a love for reading and a desire to help people are always needed.

A United Way Agency, LVA works with a yearly budget of about $5,000. There is only one paid part-time employee, Barbara Stark, who runs the office. The non-profit organization survives because of time and monetary donations.

The office space at 59 John Lewis Road in the Wilson Complex is generously provided at no charge by the Augusta County School Board.

For more information on the programs offered or to volunteer, contact LVA at 540/245-5136, extension 5136 or lvaaa@cfw.com. —

Augusta Area LVA Board President Candida Clark shows off the new library. Photo by Vera Hailey

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Taxes have filled county coffers through centuries

By NANCY SORRELLS

If you have ever groused that your taxes were too high or wondered just where all that tax money goes, then you are not alone. The complaint is universal and timeless.

Recently I ran into a bundle of papers at the Augusta County Courthouse that showed exactly where taxpayers' money was going in the 1790s and early 1800s. Taxes, or the county levy as it was called, were determined by adding up the expenses and dividing the amount by the number of tithables (people for whom taxes were paid). White men were tithables, white women and white children were not. African-American men and women were tithables, but African-American children were not.

In 1796 there were 3,000 tithables and the county collected 54 cents on each one of those individuals in order to cover its expenses. The money paid for the services of an attorney, reimbursed men for repairing the roads and paid-wagoners for the use of their wagons. Mathias Swink was paid 12 shillings for the use of his "waggon Team" for a day.

Money also was paid to procession, or walk the boundaries, of land. Processioning land was not only required by state law, but it helped diminish boundary disputes and let the tax collector know how much acreage there was in a tract when figuring up real estate tax.

In 1796 the county also paid Augusta County Surveyor John Poage $27.90 to survey the line between Augusta and Rockingham counties.

In the 1790s wolves were still enough of a problem in the county that a bounty of $2 was paid for each man who brought a wolf head into the court house and took an oath that he had killed it in Augusta County. Seven wolf heads were turned in during 1796. In 1797 the following receipt was written: "This Day Archabald Kinkead brought before me the head of ann old Wolf and Took the oath Required by law of those that kills Woolves given under my hand This 25th Day of April 1797. Thos Hughart"

Of course the clerk of the court had to keep records of all the legal transactions, like deeds and wills, in the county. In the days before computers or even typewriters, that meant writing everything out longhand, with a quill pen and ink mixed up from powder, into a bound ledger book. In 1797 the clerk bought ink powder, writing paper and a box of wafers (for placing a seal on a document). In 1803 the county bought "medium record books" and a "Docket Book" from the Staunton firm of J&J Fackler.

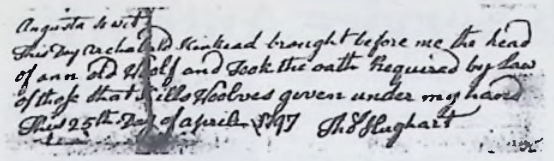
In addition to paying for processioners, the cost of patrollers came out of the county coffers. Patrollers were militia men assigned to check the roads at night for disorderly individuals as well as slaves traveling without passes. The report of one patrol commander, Isaac Tate, has been preserved as it was presented to the county court. The men went out three days in October and found only a slave without a pass who was released after he had been questioned. On one night they reported being out from 6 to 10 p.m. "We did not meet with any strolling Slave or other disorderly Person," the captain wrote.

Just as today when a capital improvement project is launched, a building project in the late 18th or early 19th centuries meant more taxes. In 1795 Augusta County jailer, Mr. Roads, submitted a bill of 1 pound, 16 shillings, 6 penceto the county. He was charging for chains, shackles and handcuffs. In 1798 Staunton blacksmith Joseph Points charged the county for making the iron grate at the jail and then added a pound extra for welding 43 bars on the grate. He also charged a few extra shillings for making a fireplace and putting a hole in the chimney for the stovepipe so that the jail could be heated.

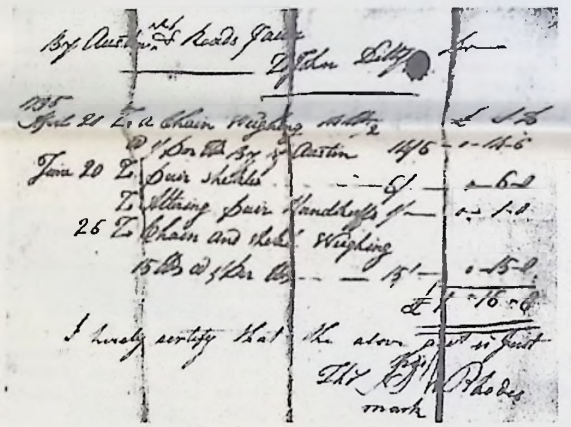
More than likely the second set of fees was for the construction of a new jail in 1798.

In 1813, Jacob Swoope was paid 111 pounds and 16 shillings, which was "the Ballance of his Account for Building the Chancery Court House." It was noted that the amount owed Swoope was to be included in the "present levy" which means that it was part of the taxes collected for the year. To put it simply, the county was going to raise taxes in order to pay for the construction of a new courthouse. A few weeks later, it was noted that Swoope was still owed $9.39, which was "the Balance of his Acct. for finishing the Clerks Office."

The conclusion from all this? We might gripe and complain that our taxes are too high, but history proves the cause futile. More than likely Augusta taxpayers in 1800 would just laugh at our complaints and reply, "You say your taxes are too high? Well, quite frankly, so are mine." —

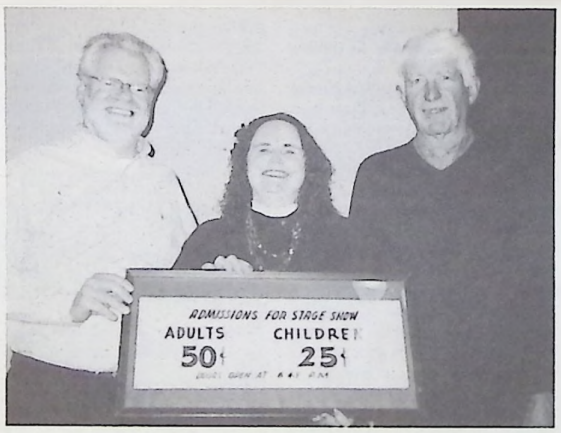


The note above records the wolf bounty paid by Thomas Hughart to Archabald Kinkead.



Early records reveal how taxes were collected in Augusta County.

Dixie theater group reorganizes as performing arts center



Paul Lavigne, far left, Kathleen Tosco, and Brandon Collins, new officers of the Staunton Performing Arts Center, display a sign advertising admission prices for stage shows performed at the Dixie Theater.

Photo courtesy Staunton Performing Arts

STAUNTON — The Staunton Performing Arts Center, formerly known as The New Dixie Theatre, has reorganized with a new a slate of officers.

President is Brandon Collins, who succeeds Marney Gibbs, who will remain as executive director. Kathleen Tosco has been elected vice president and Paul Lavigne will serve as development committee chairman and secretary. Judy Fisher is treasurer.

The non-profit organization purchased the theatre and plans to renovate the building which will provide a venue for area professional and touring entertainers.

Collins, who is the son of Margaret and Fletcher Collins, graduated from the University of Virginia and is a retired commander of the Naval Reserve. He is founder and president of The Staunton Performing Arts Alliance, as well as a board member of Shenandoah Shakespeare, Queen City Acoustic, and Theater Wagon.

Ms. Tosco has been managing director for ShenanArts since 1982. She is president of the Staunton Rotary Club and has been honored as a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary club.

Lavigne is executive director of Valley Program for Aging Services. He previously served on the ShenanArts Board of Directors and has been involved in the Staunton Performing Arts Center since its inception. He also is a member of the Shenandoah Valley Kiwanis Club. —

Hildebrand thanked for his years with Service Authority

By NANCY SORRELLS

VERONA — Steadfast and loyal are words that come to mind when describing New Hope's Lawrence Hildebrand. When he gets involved in something, it's a life commitment. Just take a look at his numbers: he has been living in the New Hope area for 55 years, he has been married to Anna Lee for 56 years, he has been a member of the New Hope Ruritans for 41 years.

In February, Hildebrand retired from the Augusta County Service Authority (ACSA) Board after 28 years. The service authority is the agency that makes sure Augusta residents have water, sewer and landfill service. It's not a glamorous job — making decisions on sewage and trash — but it is essential. In virtual anonymity the seven members of the board meet once a month to make important decisions that affect the health and welfare of area residents and the environment in which we all live.

One example of a positive change that Hildebrand and the rest of the board members recently enacted is the new summer sewer billing policy designed to save customers money on sewer bills. Board members were concerned that higher water use in the summer for washing cars, watering lawns, and filling pools was reflected in higher sewer bills when that water wasn't actually going through the sewer systems. The problem is that meters do not measure the amount of sewage that enters the public system from individual residences. Therefore, the sewer rate is determined by the amount of water that comes into the house. Under the old policy all water usage measured at the water meter was also charged a sewer fee. With the new policy, a "winter period average" is computed using actual consumption numbers during the winter months when most water usage is for things like flushing commodes, doing laundry and bathing.

Sound fiscal policies, a strong adherence to the county's comprehensive plan, good customer service, and visions for the future have been trademarks of the service authority that Hildebrand has helped mold.

Although Hildebrand was actually born in Charlottesville, he had strong ties to Augusta County, particularly to the New Hope community where his grandparents farmed. He and his wife Anna Lee moved to the area

LAWRENCE HILDEBRAND

for good 55 years ago and have worked hard at being contributing members of the community.

Hildebrand worked at DuPont in Waynesboro as a supervisor in engineering. As part of his duties, he was in charge of the sewage pumps at the plant. In February 1974 Frank Nolan thought that Hildebrand could apply his engineering knowledge to the service authority. Little did he know when he accepted the position that it was a 28-year-job! During those years he would serve as chairman or vice-chairman of the board 14 times including continuous service as chairman from 1996 through 2000.

"Mr. Hildebrand is the last remaining board member from when I came here in 1993," noted Ken Fanfoni who heads up the ACSA. "He has always been a gentleman to his peers and to the employees of the service authority," he added.

The ACSA was only a few years old with limited facilities when Hildebrand began serving. "It has really changed. There are more people and more facilities — we have some really good facilities," Hildebrand explained of the utilities that are spread out across the countryside of the second largest county in the state.

One of the biggest changes that he has witnessed has been the multitude of environmental regulations that have been placed on the service authority. "Every time you turn around the regulations are changing, but that is good because the regulations are protecting the environment. It boggles my mind to think of what this county's streams would be like if we didn't have those rules," he said.

Although he never expected to serve almost three decades when he was appointed in 1974, he notes that his time on the board has been a pleasure. "I don't know of any board that I've served on where I've derived any more satisfaction than this one. We are helping people and that's what it all boils down to. I am thankful to have been given the opportunity to serve the people of Augusta County," he explained.

Although he is now retired from both DuPont and the ACSA, Hildebrand still has a full plate of activities. He knows that a great deal of his time will be spent with the Ruritans as his New Hope group converts the old New Hope school into a community center.

In addition, he and his wife were long ago bitten by the travel bug. They have taken several trips through the American West, and have visited the 48 continental states as well as Canada. "It's beautiful country out there. I'd like to travel as long as I've got a hill to go over and see what's on the other side," he explained.

Of course, he added, family time comes first, which means his wife, children, grandchildren and even a great granddaughter.

He admits that he will miss some aspects of his service authority work. "I have derived a lot of pleasure out of helping people and I really think that through our service we were giving back to Augusta County. There have been some good people on the board and the staff has some of the most knowledgeable people around. The people are what has really made the service authority," he said.

The feeling is obviously mutual. At his last meeting in February, he was presented with a framed resolution citing his "exemplary qualifications and capabilities in the performance of his duties over the past twenty-eight years." ACSA chairman Larry Davis signed the resolution.

"Mr. Hildebrand will be missed very much and his knowledge of the service authority's history can never be replaced. We thank him for his kindness and understanding that he has shown to all of us and to the residents of Augusta County," Fanfoni added.

Although he is moving on to other activities, Hildebrand will never stop serving the community that has been his home for most of his life. There's one thing for certain: Augusta County is a better place because of his dedicated service. —

Program showcases African-American cuisine

By MOLLIE BRYAN

Cous cous. Curried vegetables. Peanut soup. Sweet potato biscuits and cornbread. These are just some of the dishes that welcomed cookbook author Jessica Harris to the Frontier Culture Museum cooking program in the dairy barn education and research center on Feb. 26. A bevy of volunteers and museum staff volunteered to cook some of the food from her cookbooks.

"I am looking forward to this. You learn so much about people from what they eat. So much today in black history is all about statistics... this really speaks to who African-Americans are. In fact if you look around at this museum, a lot of what is here relates to food," says Hal Meyers of Staunton, one of the attendees.

Harris would agree. "Our food defines us," she said during her slide presentation.

Her program was a unique combination of history, anecdotes, literature and food. As a culinary historian, Harris has lectured on African American foodways at the Museum of Natural History in New York City, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, and other museums and colleges across the country and the world. She earns her living as an English professor at Queens College, CUNY, which may be the reason her cookbooks are not just interesting to the historian or cook — but they are also well written and easy to understand. They are:

Hot Stuff: A Cookbook in Praise of the Piquant; Iron Pots and Wooden Spoons: Africa's Gifts to New World Cooking; Sky Juice and Flying Fish Traditional Caribbean Cooking; Tasting Brazil: Regional Recipes and Reminiscences; The Welcome Table: African American heritage Cooking; A Kwanzaa Keepsake; and The Africa Cookbook: Tastes of the continent.

"It all began in Africa," Harris said. She pointed out that six basic cooking techniques can be traced to Africa — boiling, steaming frying, roasting, grilling and baking. And seven uses of food can be easily traced to Africa — abundant use of okra as a thickener, the use of leafy greens, the use of peanuts and seeds as thickeners, use of hot sauce, composed rice dishes (rice and bean or vegetables and meat) the use of smoked ingredients, and creation of fritters.

"Africans left their culinary marks on food in affable ways. A hint of pepper here tells of the continent's love for the fiery side of culinary life; a green tip of okra there reveals its affinity for the pod's ability to thicken a soup to a stew-like consistency; and a piece of pork... tells of an almost spiritual connection to the pig," Harris said.

According to Harris, there is good reason that African foodways are part of the American culture. "Slave traders wanted to know what kind of food their slaves were used to and so did the plantation owners. They wanted to keep them healthy," she said.

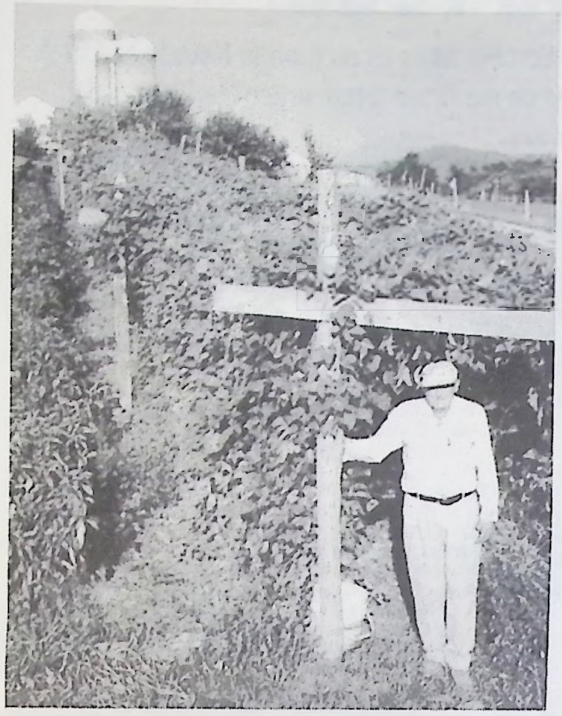
In some cases, this meant finding the food stuffs that were the closest thing to what Africa had. Take sweet potatoes and yams. Harris says that what we call yams are really sweet potatoes. She showed a slide of real yams — huge tubers grown in Africa. Sweet potatoes were called yams by the slaves, which was the African name given to the huge tuber grown in Africa.

"Yams were very important to some African cultures. They became almost totemic because the only way you could grow them was from another yam — so they had these really old yams. Now they actually have yam festivals in Africa," she said.

After her presentation, Harris led the food line. She went down the table and told the participants about the different food on the table, as she filled her plate.

"This has been great," said Susan Van Acker of Waynesboro. "What a great opportunity to attend this free lecture and learn about some of the history of food and Africa." —

Father, daughter join forces in garden marketing



Bob Hanger of Arbor Hill stands in his garden. Hanger and his daughter Martha Erickson have joined forces to turn their gardening into a money-making effort.

By SUE SIMMONS

Martha Hanger Erickson's friends all know that if they want to see her in the spring, summer, or fall, they have to plan their social events around her garden and the Staunton-Augusta Farmers' Market.

Erickson and her father, Bob Hanger, have been producing for the Farmer's Market for four years. What began as a "bonding" activity between father and daughter is today a growing enterprise.

"Whenever we were in the garden, my father would always say 'Boy, when we grew vegetables for the curb market, we put out six rows of peas or a hundred tomato plants.'" Erickson was amazed at the memories gardening evoked in her father. "He spoke so fondly of growing vegetables for the curb market, I thought it would be fun to try again," she said.

Father and daughter began cultivating existing gardens at Hanger's home in Arbor Hill, at the site of their former home that burned a number of years ago, and at a relative's garden patch.

They produced vegetables in the first year's gardens. "We doubled the crop from the first year to the second year and doubled that the third year," Erickson states. Now in their fourth year, she admits that they have cut back a bit and are trying to be more efficient by growing crops that match the buying habits of the market's customers along with novelty items — like blue potatoes — that seem to attract shoppers.

Erickson states emphatically that the elder Hanger is the driving force behind their enterprise. The amount of time the two devote to the project varies but, "It's a lot of work," she adds.

"We're always promising ourselves that we are going to get organized but sometimes you'll find us working by flashlight on Friday nights," she said.

When asked if she minds the work, Erickson responds without hesitation, "Gardening is good for the soul."

Despite the work and late nights, Erickson also has good memories of the old curb market. "It's more of an impression than specific details," she recalls. "The curb market was this cavernous room in an old ramshackle building. I was just a backward country girl. For me it was the height of excitement of going to town. The Farmer's Market captures that excitement."

Erickson's friends know the secret of getting on her social calendar. The rest of you will just have to stop by her booth at the Farmer's Market. —

Bob Hanger is dwarfed by tomato plants which exceeded 6 feet in height last summer.

VFW begins planning for parade

STAUNTON — VFW Post 2216 and the Ladies Auxiliary want to plan early for the 2002 Veteran's Day Parade to be held 11 a.m., Nov. 9 in downtown Staunton.

The parade is held annually to honor all veterans of all wars, their families and especially all Gold Star families. VFW and the auxiliary encourages churches, veterans' groups, businesses, civic organizations, schools, scout troops and individuals to support the Veterans' Day Parade, the third of its kind to be held following a 27-year break in the tradition. VFW organizers hope this year's edition of the parade will be bigger and better than ever.

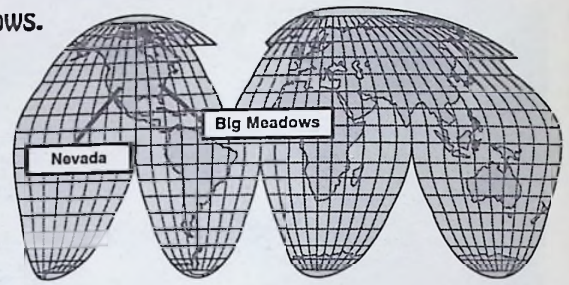
Following the 2002 parade, the VFW and its auxiliary will host an open house at the post home located at 212 Frontier Drive. By planning early, VFW hopes to promote the event so there will be more organizations sponsoring floats in the parade. The post also is requesting assistance with financing and food donations for the parade and open house.

Organizations or businesses who wish to assist with the Veterans' Day Parade should contact Harry Huff at 540/885-8837 (daytime), 540/885-7970 (evening) or Don Hall at 540/887-8024 or write Veterans' Day Parade, P.O. Box 1843, Staunton, VA 24402. —

Time to renew? See page 2

Notes from the road

In this issue, *Augusta Country* staff writer Nancy Sorrells takes us on trips to Nevada and Utah where she finds things wild both in the casinos and on the range. Staff writer Mark Gatewood reacquaints us with the finer qualities of Big Meadows.



Viva Las Vegas!
Viva Virginia's Valley!

By NANCY SORRELLS

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — It's opulent, it's extravagant, it's luxurious, and it's all fake. It's called Las Vegas, the city of lights, sin city, the city that never sleeps. Recently my husband, Randy, and I spent four days in this Nevada desert city.

"Why?" you ask. Quite simply, it's a restlessness that comes from the end of winter in the Valley. Every year at this time we feel the cabin-fever stirrings. One year we went to Niagara Falls, another we headed to Florida to see the Baltimore Orioles in spring training. A mid-February phone call from my brother, Andrew, and his wife, Lori, was the impetus for this trip. Andrew informed us that he was flying his mother-in-law down to *his Charlotte home for four days to watch their three young girls* so that he and Lori could make a quick getaway to Las Vegas. "Would we like to join them?" he asked.

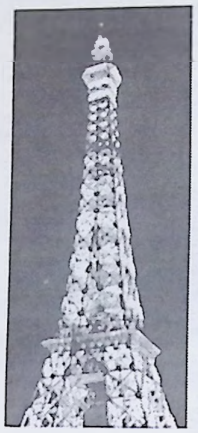
"Hmm." We pondered for about 48 hours as the temperature took a classic late-winter dip and the biting winds picked up. O.K., if we could get a flight out of Charlottesville that connected and put us on their connecting flight in Pittsburgh then we decided to go for it.

The planning was launched. A few hours on the internet got us our plane tickets, a rental car, reservations at Bally's, and tickets to see Las Vegas' signature show, Siegfried & Roy.

And so the second weekend in March found us in a very anti-Shenandoah Valley kind of place on our winter break. Las Vegas, for those who have never been, is about as far removed from Augusta County as one can get in America. Imagine a place where there are gambling machines in the grocery store, where people walk down the street with alcoholic drinks in their hands, and where it's legal to hand out cards advertising prostitution to passersby on the street.

Walking through the casinos of the city overwhelms the senses. There are lights flashing, bells ringing and coins jingling 24 hours a day... and free drinks distributed to all who avail themselves of gambling opportunities. Fortunes are made and lost in an instant and the outside edge of reality is pushed at every turn.

Las Vegas is not the only place to thrive on an ambiance of sin. There's New Orleans for instance. But having been to both, I can say that there is a subtle difference. New Orleans has a long tradition of living life on the wild side, while Las Vegas is fabricated. There's no tradition; there's no record of generations of families forming the city. It makes sense that one of the best-known hotels on the Strip is the Mirage because that's what Las Vegas resembles more than anything else — a mirage in the desert. Yes, one can walk past fountains that resemble those of medieval European cities, but tap your hand on the sculptures and you hear the hollow thud of plastic rather than marble.



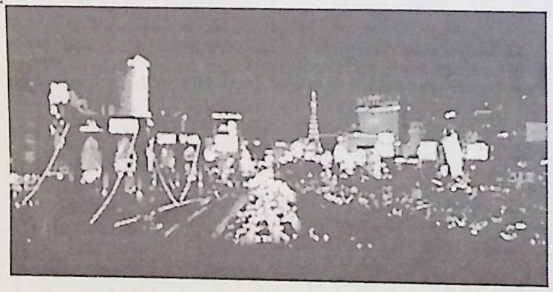
"Sin City's" version of the Eiffel Tower. If it's fake, Las Vegas has it.

We didn't immerse ourselves totally in the opulence of this faux city. We took two day trips into the countryside (hey, we had to make use of that rental car), both to places where Randy and I had been just eight months before. The Valley of Fire is a state park about 60 miles north of Las Vegas. This incredible landscape of wind-and-water carved sandstone rock formations is surreal, but in a natural sort of way. Hundreds and perhaps thousands of years ago the Native Americans decorated the rocks with petroglyphs which give the place a sort of spiritual feel. Our second trip to the park was as enjoyable as the first — perhaps more so because it was about 50 degrees cooler (60 degrees as opposed to 110).

We also headed south about 20 miles to Boulder City and Hoover Dam, which we had also visited last year. Here we saw more effects of the Sept. 11 tragedy. Andrew and Lori had hoped to take the hardhat tour of Hoover Dam, which we had enjoyed in May. On that tour, guides had taken us down into the bowels of the dam. We had walked around giant generators, into engine rooms and through construction tubes. Sadly, such behind-the-scenes tours are things of the past for security reasons. The tours, now revamped as Discovery Tours, take visitors to spots across the top of the dam and inside to an overlook above the generators. As a tradeoff, the walkway to the Nevada intake tower, one of two located just above the dam, has been opened to tourists for the first time.

We saw several other stark reminders of terrorism's new global presence. The sculpture of the high scaler located on the dam has changed since our visit last year. This bronze depiction representing the men who risked so much danger as they scaled the canyon walls to build the dam is now holding a large American flag. In addition, visitors to the dam can trade in their ticket stubs for a small bumper sticker that says, "Hoover DAM proud of America." After leaving *the dam, we stopped for lunch in a* 50s diner in Boulder City. We picked up a newspaper and discovered that one of the seven American soldiers killed in the Afghani-

See *NEVADA*, page 8



The night lights of the city that never sleeps.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

Andrew Taylor and Randy Sorrells pose next to a one-armed bandit -- one of the many slot machines found in Las Vegas casinos.

National Park Service makes changes at Big Meadows

By MARK GATEWOOD

Last summer we rekindled our love affair with Big Meadows, the spectacular open vista on Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park. We were, of course, captivated by the area on our first visits 10 or so years ago. Finding old National Park Service friends from other parks now on duty at Byrd Visitor Center made it even more special. But in later years, other activities got in the way and we didn't visit the park very often.

Sometimes, though, you just have to put your foot down and say, "We're going to do this and we're going to do it on this day and that's it!" Some people call this planning, and it works in recreational pursuits as well as financial. And it worked: in the summer of 2001, we visited Big Meadows three times.

We were pleased to note some changes have been going on since our last visits. One change doesn't have much to do with the meadow, but is still worth mentioning. You probably already know something about this. The park service has recently revised its story of the park's formation to cast a more favorable and realistic light on the people whose lands went to form the national park. This is evident in the new interpretive display in the Byrd Visitor Center. Instead of being ignorant hillbillies, the "mountaineers" are now shown to be more like the rest of us, capable of owning and operating businesses, reading, writing, thinking, feeling. It's been a long, difficult process for the park service and I don't think it's over yet. No one can doubt the value of this national park in today's world, but they need to show the true story of the sacrifices that made it come about.

So, on a lighter note, we walked out into the meadow. The park service has been busy out here, too. In 2000, it began a four-year plan to halt encroachment of trees and shrubs and to restore Big Meadows to its former size. The first thing we noticed was the blueberry bushes — or rather their absence. In our earlier visits, knee-high blueberry bushes and other shrubs covered two-thirds of the meadow. To control this growth and allow for the return of grasses and herbaceous plants, the park service has burned and mowed the meadows. Big Meadows has existed as an opening in an otherwise forested landscape for over 200 years. Its exact origins are not known, but burning by Native Americans followed by grazing by cattle are the leading possibilities. Thus burning and mowing are logical maintenance strategies.

We could see that the meadow had been enlarged — from 119 to 137 acres, according to park literature — by cutting trees at the edges of the area. But that and the missing blueberry bushes were the only striking changes. Otherwise, the meadow looked green and healthy. As we walked the network of paths, we saw the same flowering plants and the same birds we'd remembered from earlier visits. But strictly speaking, the meadow is not "natural." Some of the plants that give it its beauty — the daisies, butter-and-eggs, Deptford pink and others — are European and Asian imports — weeds, in effect. What are they doing here? Well, these non-native invaders thrive on soil disturbance. Anywhere we break the soil for construction or agriculture, they show up. And Big Meadows is a product of disturbance right from the get-go. Then we build a road through it and put a CCC camp on top of it. Most of the alien plants I've seen are along the Skyline Drive edge of the meadow. These overly enthusiastic alien plants, referred to as invasive exotics, are a problem in parks, agriculture and forestry when they crowd out native vegetation or crops and upset wildlife food chains. The park service is addressing the problem throughout the park as well as in Big Meadows.

If you've never been to Big Meadows, it's easy. Take U.S. 33 east to Skyline Drive and go 15 miles north. Stop at Byrd Visitor Center which overlooks the meadow. Other amenities are available here, including gasoline, groceries, camp supplies and a restaurant. Big Meadows campground, picnic area and lodge are nearby. But really, go to the meadow.

The two main ways to experience Big Meadows are sitting and sauntering. Sitting is pretty self-explanatory. It can take place at the big windows in the visitor center or anywhere in the meadow. Sitting sometimes, if the weather is mild, morphs into reclining and dozing. Sauntering is a kind of slow, hands-in-pockets walking (which often leads to sitting!). There is a network of paths and deer trails all over the meadows. You can't get lost because you can see everywhere. Sauntering puts you in contact with life in the meadow — plants, birds, deer — and allows plenty of time for photographs and chatting with companions. A ranger-led walk is also a good intro to the Big Meadows. You'll get a program schedule when you enter the park.

The park entrance fee is now $10 per car. Heaven knows, the National Park Service needs the money, but they don't need to get it all from me. We get a season pass for $20. It's one of the great entertainment bargains — not to mention being one of the few legal ways to get one-up on the government.

However you get there and however you pay for it, Big Meadows is a fascinating area and well worth a foray out of Augusta country. —

Mustangs, burros are living legends of America's past

By NANCY SORRELLS

Last year at this time I attended the wild horse and burro adoption at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington. I was particularly drawn to several horses identified as being from the Sulphur Herd. As the dun colored animals stared at me from behind shaggy forelocks, I wondered what kind of life they had left behind in Utah. Little did I realize that in less than three months, I would visit their home range and find the answers to my questions.

Millions of years ago a small horse-like mammal developed in North America. This creature, which weighed only a few pounds, was the ancestor of today's horse. However the fossil record of the eohippis, as this equine ancestor is called, disappeared. By the time prehistoric man showed up on the continent there were no horses. For tens of thousands of years the only domesticated animal in the Americas were the llamas in the southern hemisphere and the dog in the northern hemisphere.

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

By the late 18th and early 19th century when settlers from the young United States began moving west, there were several million wild horses living on the land. Those settlers soon brought more horses and introduced new blood. Miners brought more burros as well, increasing the wild donkey population.

Four "bachelor" stallions from the Sulphur Herd approach for a curious look at strangers visiting on the range.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

In the 19th century when land transportation was by horse, the mustangs of the west were seen as a valuable resource. The U.S. Cavalry even introduced thoroughbred stud horses into the wild population to improve their remount program. Most of the U.S. Cavalry horses in the Civil War came from wild mustang blood.

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

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

By the 1950s the horse population on BLM lands was out of con-

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•BLM

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

Many of the animals that make their way to adoption centers are actually quite rare. Because the wild horse herds out west are often hundreds of miles apart and have remained as isolated populations for generations, many of the herds have developed unique characteristics. The Sulphur Herd, located in the Needle Mountain Range of Utah, is one such group. These horses are very close genetically to the bloodlines of the horses brought to the southwest by the Spanish in the 16th century. Dominant colors in this herd are dun, buckskin and grulla (gray or mouse colored). Very often their ears curve in, their manes and tails are bicolored, they have a dorsal stripe, tiger striped legs, and they have one less vertebra than other horses. Genetic tests have confirmed the kinship.

Survival of the fittest rules over the Sulphur Herd.

In early June of last year, my husband and I and another writer met three people from the Bureau of Land Management. When we climbed aboard their SUV it was 5:30 a.m. in Milford, Utah — a blink of a town in the western part of the state. It was dark, it was cold, and we were leaving all traces of civilization behind. By the time the sun was coming up we had passed Frisco, where a gold and silver mine had once operated, and had come and gone through the Wah Wah Valley, the last bastion of civilization and the end of the line for electrical service. Soon we were in Pine Valley, and the sun was climbing even as we were going up.

Pine Valley is green and tan with sagebrush, juniper and pine, but it's the gray green of a land that sees little moisture. We were entering the land of the Sulphur Horse Herd, which was given its name for the sulphur springs in the region.

Survival on this land is hard. One cow can survive on one acre for one month. A horse consumes half again as much forage as a cow. Competing in the same area are elk and antelope. In Pine Valley the average rainfall is 8-10 inches annually. In the mountains where we were heading, the precipitation is often double that.

As we climbed upward, trees replaced the sagebrush, but this was unlike any forest we had ever visited. This was a pinion pine/juniper forest. Seventy percent of the Sulphur range consists of these scrubby, stunted trees. The rest is sagebrush and grasslands.

Passing through the trees is like moving through a chaotic hedgerow maze. The tallest trees were no more than 20 feet, most were shorter and twisted in their struggle against the elements. There was no underbrush, but the bare ground was occasionally broken by a roundish clump of sagebrush.

This type of forest makes it extremely difficult to round up wild mustangs when the herds need to be culled. The only way to achieve even marginal success, we were told, is with helicopters.

Scattered on this range, which is 50 miles long north to south and 20 miles wide east to west, are about 1,400 horses. Counts are taken from the air in the winter because the animals stand out against the snow. The horses travel in small, isolated herds of 10 or 20 animals. The land can't support herds of any larger size.

Fourteen hundred horses competing with other wildlife and themselves is twice as many as the land can support. The limiting factors are forage and water. Horses will travel up to 20 miles for water. In the summer they travel up to the highest elevations of 10,000 feet and drink from the dwindling snow patches.

As we traveled through the re-

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◦Nevada

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stan fighting graduated from Boulder City High School.

Except for those two forays into the desert, we immersed ourselves in the faux city. How appropriate then that on the first night we enjoyed Las Vegas' signature show, "Siegfried & Roy" the self-described "Magicians of the Century." An evening of illusion is the perfect introduction to a city based on illusion.

One of the two intake towers at Hoover Dam. The walkways to these towers are open for the first time ever -- a trade off for no longer allowing tourists to visit other less-secure areas of the dam.

These German-born magicians put on quite a display of dance, music, fire, smoke, and mirrors. They cut people in half, make elephants disappear, and parade the white lions and tigers, which the two mean raise, across the stage. The greatest illusion of all, however, is that these two men, rumored to be in their mid-60s, are at the peak of their performing years. I got the feeling that they are struggling to maintain the youthful zeal they once had. No doubt about it — the show was good, but the tickets at $100 each were more than slightly overpriced. Granted you do get two free drinks and a full color booklet with each ticket, but I've never paid that much for lime daiquiris! Although Siegfried and Roy dazzle the crowd with their theatrical illusion, the reality is that the theater contains 1,500 seats with the minimum ticket price of $100. They do two shows a night, five nights a week. You do the math!

We went to a second show on Sunday night — the comedian Rita Rudner — for about $40. She was very good and had us in stitches most of the evening. However, we didn't get any free drinks.

So what else is there to do in sin city once you've taken in the shows? Well, walking the streets is fun. Along the Strip one can soak in New York City, Paris, Rome, and Egypt. Why bother to fly all over the world, suffering through long airport lines, jet lag and the confusion of foreign currency when you can visit a pyramid, the Eiffel Tower, and the Statue of Liberty in one afternoon. Heck we could see the Eiffel Tower from our hotel room's window. We could walk through Bally's casino, turn right and within a few yards we were looking up at the painted Parisian sky. There were even bicycle vendors peddling loaves of French bread. There were also, of course, hundreds of slot machines and blackjack tables right there on the streets of Paris. Go figure.

Because nothing is real anyway, we figured what harm did it do to push that to the limit. Being Star Trek fans, Randy and I decided to check out the "Star Trek Experience" virtual reality adventure at the Hilton. After plunking down our $25 each, we wound through the Star Trek "museum" and then boarded the ride. There we were "beamed" into the future by some conniving Klingons. The Enterprise crew had to get us aboard a shuttle and back to our century. In the process we swooped through the galaxy, dodging planetary rings and enemy spacecraft, before being sucked through a wormhole back to our time period. Finally we arrived safely and were able to disembark. For dinner we dined in Quark's restaurant — he being the big-eared Ferengi who runs the bar on Deep Space Nine.

All in all it was a fun, albeit surreal, four days. And I mean four full days because we actually arrived back in Charlottesville with only 20 minutes remaining of Monday. We had won no money at the slots or blackjack tables although my brother had persevered through the night and by 6 a.m. Monday morning made enough to pay for his trip. We had eaten well, enjoyed ourselves, and broken the winter doldrums. Granted it was a very anti-Shenandoah Valley thing to do. But that's o.k. because it makes reality here all the better. —

Yesterday once more

Waynesboro museum features exhibit of relics

By VERA HAILEY

WAYNESBORO — Robert Langdon credits luck with leading him to buried remnants of the past. His interest in buried things has led him on local excavating missions.

When Langdon moved to Albemarle County from Maryland in 1969, he built his home in Greenwood with materials salvaged from the original general store in Churchville. He became interested in a nearby property that had been settled by Michael Woods in 1734.

Michael Woods, from Ireland, migrated to Chester County, Pennsylvania with family members in 1724, according to descendant Anne Woods Sampson, in her book *Kith and Kin*. Because of an increase in restrictive laws, Woods moved down to Augusta County, Virginia, and from there migrated across the Blue Ridge Mountains and entered what was then Goochland County. He became one of the first known pioneers in what is known today as *Albemarle County.*

Woods' home served as a boarding house and later as an inn. The railroad crossed the property between the Greenwood and Crozet stations.

Langdon was granted permission to use his metal detector at the location in 1985 and unearthed some interesting artifacts. A collection of items found at the site is on display at the Waynesboro Heritage Museum.

ROBERT LANGDON

Included in the small display case are 70 items: gun pieces, a pocketknife, buckles, thimbles, buttons, coat weights, pewter spoon pieces, an iron tag, an unusual medal, a brass lid with an early patent stamp, a horse bit and stirrup, several coins, a pipe bowl and miscellaneous brass and iron fragments.

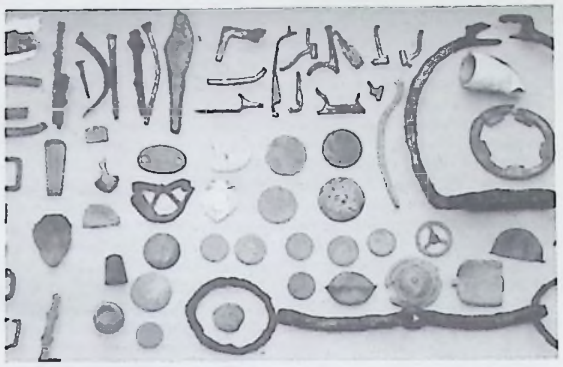
After learning the history of the 1865 Civil War Battle of Waynesboro, Langdon decided to search for items left behind by tracing the path of soldiers as they traveled from Waynesboro to Greenwood.

More than 1,000 Confederate troops surrendered at the battle. Roughly half of those were moved to a prison encampment at Greenwood Depot. The remaining prisoners were kept at a site in Waynesboro, which was located near the river at the south end of Albemarle Avenue.

On March 18, 1865, the *New York Times* reported:

"At Waynesboro Gen. Early was met with a force of about 2,000 infantry and some cavalry, and in less than two hours after skirmishing commenced, Gen. Custer's division had whipped Early's command, captured more than 1,300 prisoners, 75 to 100 wagons, between 100 and 200 horses and mules, destroyed a depot of stores at Greenwood Station containing commissary supplies, ordnance of all kinds enough in value more than to pay the expenses of this expedition, nine pieces of artillery and some twenty-five or more flags.At Waynesboro the last last-named brigade was not brought into action until the enemy's line commenced breaking, when the whole brigade charged, and, crossing the South River, the advance did not halt until Greenwood Station had been reached."

Instead of relying solely on good luck, Langdon employed research to trace the movement of the soldiers. He analyzed old maps, documents and war history. Fortunately, basic topography remains constant through the years in spite of other changes.



Items dug from the early Albemarle County Woods homestead include various coins, nails, hooks, and a thimble among other items. Photos by Vera Hailey

Finding a letter written by one of the prisoners to his wife describing his ordeal also gave clues to the route of travel and camp locations.

A 36-item assortment of items dug by Langdon as he followed in the footsteps of the soldiers is also on display at the Waynesboro Heritage Museum.

Display items include: handforged stakes, horseshoes, a lock plate, a trigger guard, tent grommets, barrel bands, a luck, buttons, buckles, coins, a spoon, a harmonica reed plate, a pen knife, dropped projectiles and other small items.

In addition to the Woods property and Civil War artifacts, Langdon has unearthed a vast range of curiosities over the years. His four metal detectors lead him to assorted discarded items.

Digging at old home sites and trash piles is a favorite pastime. "Any place where people have been, there is stuff to find," he said, noting that he always obtains permission from property owners before beginning a "relic hunt." Over the years he has unearthed countless coins, toys, cans, guns, pieces of metal scraps as well as incidental finds - those not picked up by a metal detector - such as bottles and pottery.

Langdon's interest in salvaging history was reinforced during his days at Newberry College in Maryland when he spent a summer assisting a stone mason in preservation work. He later worked as a restoration contractor for the National Historic Society. As a general contractor, he still enjoys repairing and restoring older homes.

Since moving to Albemarle County, Langdon has witnessed the loss of history. "When I first moved here, many old buildings were still standing in downtown Crozet." He saw the potential for preserving the town's past for the future.

Unfortunately, Albemarle County officials were not enthusiastic about Langdon's ideas.

He toyed with the idea of converting the former Crozet Hotel building into a motel, restaurant and museum. "I envisioned it being a tourist town like has worked in other areas," he said, however local government opposed the plan.

Albemarle County officials seemed more interested in promoting manufacturing at the expense of historic structures. With the closing of the frozen foods plant in Crozet, the area has been left with an industrial eyesore as well as unemployment.

The veteran relic hunter had also visualized a combination coffee shop and museum in Ivy to share his found treasures. The zoning commission frowned on that idea.

On the other hand, Langdon praises preservation efforts that have been undertaken by Staunton and more recently, Waynesboro. He believes strongly that preserving historic buildings and sites and building an economy based on attracting tourism is a clean, productive way to line the local coffers and simultaneously improve local quality of life.

Langdon will continue to dig, conserve, preserve and encourage others to appreciate history. —

Items will be on display at Waynesboro Heritage Museum until the end of April. The museum is located in downtown Waynesboro, at the corner of Main Street and Wayne Avenue. Regular hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m., however because the museum is staffed by volunteers, the hours are subject to change. Call 540/943-3943 before visiting to be sure the museum is open.

Cows, clothes and country lawlessness

DOWN ON THE FARM

BY BETTY JO HAMILTON

Down on the farm we're thinking about driving. I've been driving so long now, it seems I can barely remember a time when I couldn't drive.

As it happens, country singer Alan Jackson has a new song out titled — very simply — "Drive." The song's lyrics tell how Jackson's father instructed him in learning to drive a motor boat then later an old pickup truck. The song's third verse tells about Jackson teaching his daughters to drive an old Jeep on the family's 140-acre farm. The point of the song being Jackson's fond memories of his father and his hopes that someday his daughters will look back fondly on the time he spent teaching them to drive. It's a nice song that probably prompts some nice memories for folks about their own early driving experiences.

Which is why I had to laugh — guffaw and snort, actually — when I was reading an article about Jackson and his new song, "Drive," which *Entertainment Weekly* called "a song in the great tradition of country lawlessness: It's about underage driving."

Country lawlessness? Come on. Like there's no such thing as city lawlessness? Country lawlessness, indeed. Saying that Jackson's song "Drive" is about country lawlessness and underage *driving is like saying "The Sound of Music"* is about a bunch of nuns who like to sing. The folks at *Entertainment Weekly* need a lesson in music appreciation.

And I'll wager that if you took a survey of driver training instructors in Augusta County's high schools, they would say that students who have spent time behind the wheel on their parents' back 40 are light years ahead of their unschooled, law-abiding counterparts. In fact, I shudder to think about 16 year olds who get behind the wheel and drive for the first time on our state highways with no previous experience. And I know they're out there because I've gotten behind a few of them in the specially marked driver ed cars. I'm glad to be behind them — waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaayyyyy back behind them.

Learning to drive on the farm is about necessity, not lawlessness. Youngsters coming along on the farm usually learn how to drive small tractors, then steer a truck while seated in an adult's lap. I can even remember sitting next to my father in the pickup; as he "drove" the truck, he would tell me when to shift the gears as he operated the clutch. Is there a better way to learn to drive?

What usually happens on the farm is that young folks learn to drive out of necessity. Driving is one of the easy chores to be done down on the farm. A youngster may be needed to "drive" a vehicle leaving the bigger folks free to do some heavy labor the youngster can't do. There may even be an instance when there is an emergency some distance from the house or barn when there is no one but a youngster who can drive a tractor or truck to fetch some help. Country lawlessness, indeed. Underage driving down on the farm is about necessity and practicality. The folks at Entertainment Weekly would disagree, I suppose. However a case-in-point might go a long way to prove my argument for underage driving. In fact, youngsters who are learning to drive down on the farm may find themselves to be in less danger behind the wheel than they are on foot.

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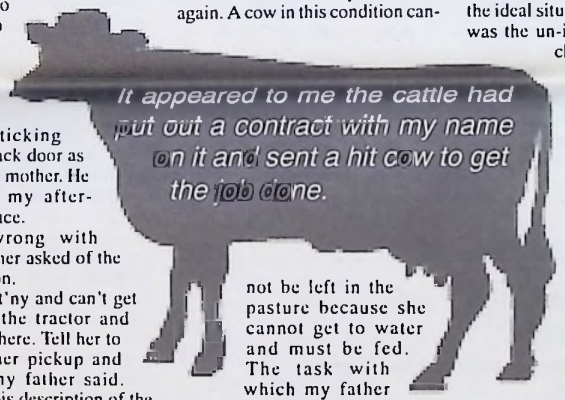
"Tell Betty to come down to the Shuey Place and help me get *this cow.*" My father's head was sticking through our back door as he spoke to my mother. He was seeking my after-school assistance.

"What's wrong with her?" my mother asked of the cow's condition.

"She had tet'ny and can't get up. I've got the tractor and loader down there. Tell her to bring the other pickup and come on," my father said. Overhearing his description of the task made me cringe. I was 13 years old and had already seen many cases of the disease which renders a cow incapable of muscle coordination causing a sort of paralysis. The tetany my father had referred to was not lockjaw. It is a condition brought on by magnesium deficiency. The onset of the disease is rapid and a cow can be dead within an hour if not treated. It is a condition which is easily prevented by adding a magnesium oxide supplement to the cows' always available salt box. Of course, we never put the magnesium supplement out until after a cow collapsed from magnesium deficiency.



It appeared to me the cattle had put out a contract with my name on it and sent a hit cow to get the job done.

The only hope of saving a cow suffering from this condition is solutions of calcium, magnesium and dextrose administered intravenously to the cow. When the treatment works, it's like magic. Within a few minutes the cow gets up and goes about her business. However, sometimes the treatment is not fully effective and the cow may lie immobile — partially paralyzed — for some time before being able to stand under her own power once again. A cow in this condition cannot be left in the pasture because she cannot get to water and must be fed. The task with which my father needed help was one of moving the invalid cow to the barn. It was a task I dreaded.

Two long and large logging chains would be placed on the ground next to the cow. If the cow could not raise herself up any so the chains could be put under her, she would be rolled over onto the chains. With one chain under the cow's body just behind her front legs and the other under her body just in front of her hind legs, each chain would be hooked to its opposite end which reached around the cow's girth. Each of the chains around the cow would be connected to hooks on the two ends of another chain which would be looped over the front end loader bucket on a tractor. Once hooked to the loader, which operates off the tractor's hydraulic system, the cow could be lifted off the ground. A pickup truck would be backed underneath the cow, which dangled from the front end loader, and then the cow could be lowered into the bed of the truck. She would be unloaded by performing this procedure in reverse.

Of course this is a description of the ideal situation. What I dreaded was the un-ideal situation. If the chains weren't properly placed around the cow then she could slip out through them and drop back down on the ground requiring that the procedure be started over. Sometimes the cow would have enough mobility to put up a struggle once she was lifted off the ground. The sense of being suspended with only air beneath her would cause the cow to panic and begin twisting in the chains. One chain would slip loose and the cow would be left dangling from the front end loader by her front or hind end. I didn't think a cow could possibly enjoy any of this procedure and I hated to see us do it but it had to be done.

Usually out of the house like a flash when my father asked for my help, the dread of the task before me caused me to drag my feet. I unhurriedly went to the basement stairway where work clothes hung on nails up and down either side of the staircase. My work clothes were my father's hand-me-downs.

An insulated vest which he had used until the ribbon hemming had worn through but which still zipped was my first layer. A pair of coveralls which had shrunk a size too small for my father, was my second layer. The jacket I wore was one of my father's of which the pockets had torn out. Pocketless it was useless to him but suited me just fine since I never carried anything in the pockets. The sleeves on the jacket were only a little too long and could be cuffed if I preferred. The cap I chose was one which my father had abandoned after the bill had become misshapen when the cap got wet.

Wearing the work clothes which were the same as those worn by my father, the difference between the two of us could hardly be distinguished. Then I was simply a slighter, baggier version of my father. I figured the cows probably thought they were seeing double when the two of us came at them. I didn't give the cows credit for being able to tell us apart. As I would find out later, cows are much more discriminating than I realized.

Just as I was opening the kitchen door to leave, I heard the motor of a truck as it descended the hill up the road from our house.

"There he goes," my mother alerted as she looked out the kitchen window. I looked out and saw my father's pickup go past. The bed was rackless and the cow, which was unable to get up, was lying in the bed of the pickup, casually looking around as if she were out on some kind of joy ride.

"You better get goin'," my mother said. "And you be careful in that truck. I've told you all and told you all about drivin' these vehicles without a license. One of these days you're gonna' get cau——" I shut the back door and cut off my mother's criticism of my driving on state highways and not being old enough to possess a license. My usual excursions took me only on the one-mile round trip from our house to my grandparents and back. I didn't think the state's attorney general would dispatch troopers to nab such a desperate criminal as a 13-year-old unlicensed

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•Troopers

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driver. I had already learned to drive and whether the state recognized this ability made little difference on the farm. When the ox was in the ditch and a 13-year-old was the only one available to drive a truck in order to pull the ox out of the ditch, then pragmatism preceded state laws.

I had been driving tractors for five years and straight-shift trucks for two years by then. I don't remember learning to drive the trucks. I remember learning to ride a bicycle then it just seems that one day I was driving a truck. By the time I was old enough to have a learner's permit and take Behind The Wheel in high school, I had already been driving more than five years. Completion of the driver's education course and biding my time to reach the state's sanctioned driving age of 16 was merely a formality for me. But my mother never let me forget I had no business on the road even if I was only driving one of our jalopy feed trucks.

Having escaped detection by the ranks of state law enforcement again, I arrived safely at the barn. My father had pulled his pickup out of sight into the shed at the end of the barn. Here the cow would be unloaded. I walked across the barnyard and to the open shed door. Standing in the doorway, I *looked in to see my father up in* the bed of the pickup — its tailgate down — positioning the chains around the helpless cow.

"Can't she move at all?" I asked, hoping there might be another way to unload the cow. But my father didn't have time to answer my question. The moment she heard my voice, the cow raised her head and swung it around in my direction. Now I do not know what sense of emotions cattle have but I can confirm they have some feelings. When the seemingly paralyzed cow looked at me, hers was the most hateful expression with which I have ever been fixed by a cow.

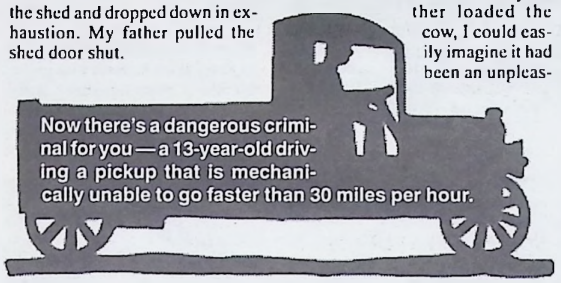
Her eyes glued on me, she began thrashing around in the pickup truck bed. My father looked at the cow and followed her daggered stare to me. When the cow rose up on her front knees, my father jumped down out of the truck in anticipation of what was about to happen. The cow unfolded herself and rose shakily to all fours. Her weak and poorly coordinated movements brought her out of the truck bed and onto the ground. Once she felt solid ground beneath her feet, she became more sure of herself than she had been in the bouncing truck bed.

The cow's eyes had been riveted on me through all of this. When she was clear of the pickup, she charged at me. This was no longer a pathetic, paralyzed invalid cow. This was a raving mad, out-for-blood cow.

Sidestepping my father, who was standing immediately in front of the cow, she put her head down and came running toward me where I was still standing in the shed doorway.

My father and I were so stunned by the cow's extraordinary and nearly miraculous recovery that we *had stood unwaveringly, as if our* feet were set in cement, and watched the cow leap out of the truck. The reality of what was happening didn't strike either of us until the cow was using her head to batter my body against the barn wall. As the one being knocked about, I could do no more than wave my hands in the cow's face and yell, "Hey!" between buttings. The cow just kept after me. Finally my father came to life, ran up to the cow and began pushing against her neck to try and direct her away from me.

"Get back! Get back!" my father puffed breathlessly. I couldn't tell if he was yelling at the cow or me. Because the cow had me nailed to the wall, back was not somewhere I could go. I guess he was talking to the cow. The cow finally relented but not as a result of any of our actions. She stumbled back into the shed and dropped down in exhaustion. My father pulled the shed door shut.



Now there's a dangerous criminal for you — a 13-year-old driving a pickup that is mechanically unable to go faster than 30 miles per hour.

"She got me!" I said, incredulous over the cow's attack. I was stamping around in the barnyard dirt trying to shake off the fright caused by the cow's outburst. I was also trying to determine if all my bones had withstood the onslaught. I knew I would be bruised and sore but I did not detect the grating edges of any broken bones.

"*You can go on now,*" my father said, indicating the task was complete and I was free to return home. Not "Are you hurt?" Not "Are you all right?" Not even, "Thank you for almost getting yourself killed so we could get the cow unloaded." Just, "You can go on now."

"What are you gonna' do with her? What about your pickup?" I asked wondering how my father was going to get his truck out of a shed where a lunatic cow was being held.

"I `spect she'll settle down. I'll get it out later."

Not really wanting to have another go round with the cow, I shakily followed the course of retreat offered by my father. In addition to having been scared witless by the cow, her actions had insulted the pity I had felt for her in her condition. Even though I had not been on hand when my father loaded the cow, I could easily imagine it had been an unpleasant ordeal for her. I wasn't naive enough to believe my father had gotten the cow in the pickup truck bed without provoking her at least a little. If she was going to charge anybody, she should have gone after him. But no, she came after me, a carbon copy of my father in his coveralls, jacket and cap.

Perhaps the cows had discussed my father and me and had concluded: "Clothes do not a farmer make." Perhaps during a cud chewing klatsch they had plotted: "When the going gets tough, go for the little one. It doesn't feed us every morning." Whatever the case, whether the cow had feigned paralysis or not, it appeared to me the cattle had put out a contract with my name on it and sent a hit cow to get the job done. The cow was, in fact, lucky to be alive. It was a wonder her frenzied outburst had not killed her.

In instances of tetany, a cow must be left undisturbed after intravenous solutions have been administered. If a cow is forced to get up too soon or becomes agitated, the shock to her system can cause heart failure and she will drop dead in her tracks. I also know a cow in pain or disoriented from a disease or injury does not always act as she would normally. Unable to understand the pain or distinguish its cause, a cow may strike out at any convenient person or object. This explains the broken gates which lie in junk heaps behind the barn.

"Supper'll be ready soon. Go get washed up," my mother said when I came in the kitchen door. The table was set. Glasses were filled with ice and tea signaling the immediacy of the meal. My sister was plunking out a tune on the piano in the living room having helped with supper preliminaries.

"Where's Joe?" my mother said.

"He's comin'. Be here in a few minutes," I said, my muffled reply came as I shrugged out of coveralls and hung them in the basement stairway.

"Y'all get the cow unloaded?"

"Yeah," I said truthfully.

"Fath-Ga-we-bow-our-hes-n-than-thee-for-our-da-bre-we-pray-tha-chiren-erywh-may-ha-go-fo-n-lo-n-ca-amen." It was a grace taught to me by my third grade teacher and which was the usual pre-meal mumble. We were eating supper. My father was working his way toward seconds. Once the gun goes off starting a meal, my father usually doesn't come up for air — which includes speaking — until he has reached his capacity of food. My mother, on the other hand, easily coordinates eating and talking which enables her to launch lengthy discourses, one of which she was now in the middle.

"...and another thing — Joe, you've got to stop letting Betty Jo drive these trucks around. She's gonna' get caught. What if she'd have a wreck? Somebody's gonna' get hurt with these vehicles one of these times," my mother admonished.

My father did not look up or even break his chewing rhythm. I became immediately preoccupied with spearing the one green pea which remained on my plate.

What my mother didn't know was that I was much safer in the pickup and driving it to the barn than I was once I got there. But neither my father nor I nor the cow would tell my mother otherwise.

****

No, Alan Jackson's song "Drive" is not "a story in the great tradition of country lawlessness." Good grief. It is, however, a song in country music's great tradition of a story well-told and -- as Jackson explained -- a tribute to his father.

For many folks, Jackson's song probably evokes memories of a parent's guiding influence over that most sacred of all coming-of-age accomplishments -- learning to drive. And how a youngster felt like "a hero" when "daddy" let him "drive." Can a father (or mother) do anything more for a child than to foster this kind of parent-child undercurrent?

I think I'll send Alan Jackson a copy of this column and see if he'll write a song about the cow that tried to kill me. Of course, the folks at *Entertainment Weekly* will just hear his song and say it's about animal abuse. I don't expect them to understand. There haven't been too many cows taken to court for assault and battery.

But I suppose there have been any number of underage drivers who have been caught in the act. Now there's a dangerous criminal for you — a 13 year-old driving a pickup that is mechanically unable to go faster than 30 miles per hour. And that, my friends, is country lawlessness at its best — or worst — down on the farm. —

Don't delay. Renew today. See page 2 for details.

Summer grazing cattle in mountains all-but forgotten

By NANCY SORRELLS

People today might react a little strangely if you talked about driving cattle to the mountains. But a half-century ago things were different. Cattle have been raised in the Shenandoah Valley since the early 1700s and until the last 50 or 60 years it was common practice to gather up the cattle in the spring and take them to the mountains where they grazed all summer.

The practice was so common that it probably gave rise to names of the three rivers in Augusta County, Bath and Highland counties being called the Calfpasture, Cowpasture, and Bullpasture. According to legend, as drovers moved the cattle out of the Valley and into the hills, the calves tired first and were left in the grassy areas along the eastern-most Calf-pasture River. The cows were hardier and didn't tire until they had crossed another mountain. They were left at the Cowpasture River. Finally the tough bulls made it over another mountain and were pastured in the meadows along the Bullpasture.

Pasturing cattle in the mountains was done for a variety of reasons. The Valley was a wheat producing area and removing cattle from the land freed up more acreage for grain production and lessened the chance of livestock damage to crops.

According to Leon "Mose" Kiracofe, 84, who grew up in the Sangerville area along the Augusta/Rockingham border, the mountains were cooler and farmers welcomed the opportunity to save on feed costs.

"It was 50 cents a head to pasture them for the summer and that money was mostly paid to the forest service," recalled Mose.

Animals were summered in the mountains all up and down the Valley; in the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east as well as the Alleghenies to the west. Mose is familiar mostly with the area where he was born and reared. That mountain grazing area was about 15 miles long and not quite 15 miles wide. The animals were let loose in forest clearings. Those openings in the forest were often called balds or more often in the German Sangerville area, sods.

"There were hundreds of sods, some were little bitty and one cow could take it in one day. Some were 50 acres or more," Mose said. The origin of the mountain sods has always been somewhat of a mystery. Some contend the forest clearings are natural, others say the Native Americans first created them by burning. Some were documented as being cleared by settlers who used some of the wood for firewood and burned the rest.

The sods were sprinkled all over the hills. The smaller ones were nameless but the larger ones went by such strange sounding designations as Click's Hacking, Goolsby Sod, and Shull's Sod.

Each collection of sods had a man who oversaw the grazing. About the middle of May he would go from farm to farm and gather up cattle from the neighbors. It was three or four here and two or three there until he had about 35 animals.

The cattle were a mixture of breeds and colors. "Most had shorthorn in them or were what we called blue dun. There was some Hereford in there too. The bulls, who went out in the mountains too, were the only ones that were purebred. Those cattle that were born without horns were called muley," he said.

"All of 'em had to be belled," recalled Mose of the cattle. "The bells had the owner's initial on it. Those old boys could listen to a bell and say, 'That's on so-and-so's white heifer.' They could listen to a bell and tell what animal it was and whose it was." Mose added that the bulls wore different, larger bells which had a different tone.

"One fellow had rented some land in Sugar Grove Valley. They said he would drive his cattle up to the top of the ridge and start 'em down the road. Then he'd just turn around and go back home. The cattle knew what to do."

Mose Kiracofe

After the drover had picked up all the cattle, he moved 15 or so miles into the mountains and let them loose. The animals were accustomed to the routine and meandered off in search of food.

"One fellow had rented some land in Sugar Grove Valley. They said he would drive his cattle up to the top of the ridge and start 'em down the road. Then he'd just turn around and go back home. The cattle knew what to do," Mose said.

The drovers checked on the cattle once a week, putting out salt, and making sure that bears hadn't gotten into them.

The cattle would roam freely from sod to sod, sometimes traveling 10 miles or more in search of good grass and water. In a severe drought, the men might go up in the mountains and bring some cattle home so they wouldn't starve.

As a youngster Mose witnessed the grazing practices first hand and was sometimes called upon to help bring the cattle home in the fall. Up in the higher elevations, the cattle were brought down by the first of September.

"Up on the high mountains the oaks would start maturing and dropping their acorns. When cattle eat acorns it cuts their insides, so the cattle were brought back before the oaks matured," remembered Mose.

Mose recalls helping drive the cattle off Shenandoah Mountain. He remembered that it took three men and two dogs to accomplish the task. "We would get up there early and get all the cattle in a little corral," he recalled. That evening they would feast on hams and homemade pies that had been packed by the men's spouses. "Those meals at those cattle camps were something," said Mose with a grin.

"The next morning we would get the rest together and if we were lucky we could get away by 10 o'clock. They were always getting cattle mixed up when they drove 'em out. They would just drop those others off at a farm and the owners would come and get them. It was a nice cooperative effort."

Once the cattle were home, those that were finished out might be driven on into Harrisonburg or Staunton to be sold. "A lot of times people would come by the farms and buy them," Mose added.

Even though seven decades have passed since he saw the cattle camps, Mose easily describes the camps and grazing areas within his old stomping ground. Many of the old camps had cabins and doubled as hunting camps.

Starting at the south end of that range was the North River area where Camp Todd was located. George Washington Shull was paid by various people to take their cattle up in that area.

Next was Skidmore, where Jim Todd had built a camp in the 19th century. "He was born in Missouri in 1803. He came east in a straight line to Brushy Fork. There he found a place that was flat with good water," he said.

Mose remembered Charlie Clinedinst bringing cattle in to the large, 50-acre sod at Skidmore.

Then there was the Little River area where John Jackson Howdyshell had a camp. "There was a world of sods in Little River," said Mose.

One could leave the Little River camp and enter the Briery Branch grazing area. "Bob Long had a camp up there and kept cattle. He was quite a bear hunter. I saw him kill his 50th bear. He had nine sons and seven daughters."

Next on the map was Hone Quarry where the finest razor hones were once quarried. "Stewart Kiracofe and Mr. Wine ran that camp. It was good grazing in there."

"At the top of Shenandoah Mountain was one of the longest sods, Click's Hacking. Mr. Click cut out the brush there to encourage grass. He built a cabin, built a box for the spring and he joined in with Wilmer Kiracofe and Mr. Wine who had the top of the Shenandoah Mountain called Low Gimlet.

Sometime around World War II, the practice of sending cattle up to the sods to roam freely for the summer disappeared. Today only the oldtimers retain a memory of those days when cattle were belled and, for half a dollar, were released in the woods for the summer. —

•Mustangs

Continued from page 8

gion, we passed over the Mt. Home seeding area — 1,800 acres of wildfire-burned land which now bloomed with the yellow flowers of senecio, the purples of lupines, and the pinks of primrose. The seeding program was designed to provide forage for elk and horses. At Ripgut Spring we saw another 800 acres that had been reseeded.

The BLM folks and private groups have been working to help the wild horses and elk in the area, but the ever-increasing horse population makes other control methods, like the adoption program, necessary. Otherwise, erosion problems develop from overgrazing, animals begin to encroach on private lands, and herd health suffers because of a poor diet.

Sulphur horses are rounded up every third year, but the annual herd increase is 20 percent making that solution alone a losing battle. Experiments are being conducted with contraceptives as a way to limit the population.

By late morning we were on the top of a10,000-foot mountain. As the crow flies we were 60 miles from the nearest hint of civilization. As we looked west, we peered into Nevada. Besides a few dusty vehicle tracks on the landscape, the only other sign of man that we could see in the entire 360 degrees of landscape was a small hunting camp far, far below us.

From the rocky outcrop on the mountain top we watched through binoculars as a dozen or so horses on the next ridge went through their group dynamics. We could pick out the lead stallion as he guarded his herd and scanned for danger. We saw the lead mare take control and establish a pecking order for those wanting to eat the snow located in a swale, and we watched the horses jockey for the opportunity to get at the snow and satisfy their need for water.

See *HERD*, page 13

Mr. Budding invents the lawnmower

By JENIFER BRADFORD

Have you ever wondered about the origins of our modern-day lawnmowers as you cut a smooth swath of green velvet around your property? Do we take for granted our reel, rotary, electric, gas, push, or riding mowers? We have a machine for everyone.

In the beginning grassy meadows were cropped by hoofed animals such as sheep. In England wealthy landowners reserved a closely-cut lawn around their homes. The only tool available was the scythe. It took three skilled men with scythes an entire day to cut an acre of turf. Separating the cut and the natural turf was a ha-ha, in essence a sunken barrier or ditch, with the trimmed lawn and mansion set above the rolling pasture below. From the mansion the view was unrestricted, but the ha-ha served to define the two landscapes

and kept out the grazing animals from the cultivated garden.

Once the grass was cut, lawn women would brush and gather up the shorn grass. A laborious and expensive task. So there would be NO lawn for the ordinary citizen who would fill the small plot of land around his home with flowers, fruit, herbs, and vegetables, and thus the cottage style of gardening was born.

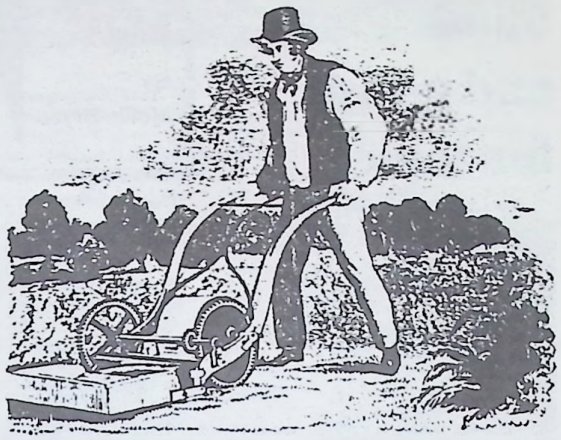
After the Industrial Revolution and the beginning of the Victorian era in the 19th century, small villa gardeners could not accommodate large grassy lawns nor maintain them.

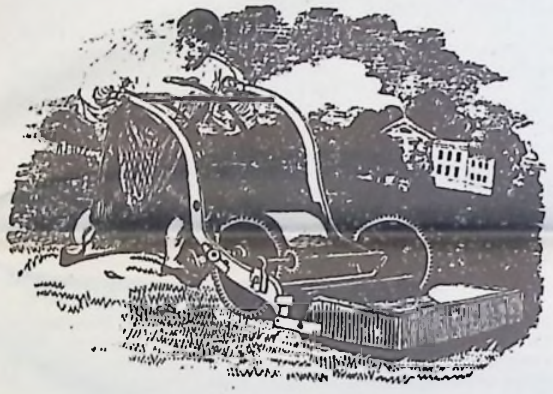
Fortunately an ingenious machine foreman working at a textile factory in Stroud, Gloucestershire, wondered if the same principles that ran the machines that trimmed the pile of the cloth could be applied to cutting a lawn. Edwin Beard Budding (1796-1846), of whom little is known personally, developed his idea, and signed articles of agreement with John Ferrabee, an engineer, to cover finance costs to make a machine for "cropping or shearing the vegetable surface of lawns, grass plots, or pleasure grounds." The patent is dated Aug. 31, 1830.

Ransomes of Ipswich produced the first lawnmowers at their factory in 1832. Two models were offered. The smaller model cost seven guineas (7 pound, 7 shillings) and was advertised for "a gentleman who wishes to use it himself." The larger model cost 10 guineas and was "preferably for workmen."

Budding's grass shearing machine was used at the Zoological Gardens according to a full page ad in Mechanics Magazine on Aug. 25, 1832. Later ads depicted better dressed and more elegant operators of the mower.

Budding claimed that cutting grass was "an amusing, useful, and healthy exercise." The modern-day lawnmower had been invented but Budding received little fame or fortune. His pushmower was heavy and had a spiral-bladed cylinder, a





grassbox, a small front roller, a large back roller, and a curved handle.

By 1840 it was felt that the mowing machines couldn't be operated by ladies unless they had the strength to use one (*Instructions in Gardening for Ladies* by Mrs. Jane Loudon), but within a year her *Ladies Companion to the Flower Garden* was more welcoming and said mowing was "an excellent exercise to the arms and every part of the body." In Beeton's *Dictionary of Gardening* in the 1870s lawnmowers were described as "useful machines fast supplanting the scythe both on large and small lawns."

Many improvements and patents were developed over a period of years but horses were still needed to pull large mowers — the original horse power. A pony-driven model came out in 1842 and by 1850 30- to 40-inch models were pulled by leather-booted horses.

Eventually a steam-driven lawnmower was invented in 1893. The first motor mowers were invented early in the 20th century. However, most home gardeners still used a reel pushmower.

Our inexpensive power-driven rotary mowers, riding mowers, and the like are quite recent improvements. A single man or woman can cut 2-3 inches of grass (height) in seconds. We even have mowers that plug into electrical outlets for bijou lawns setting off OUR cottage gardens. Not only do we have modern machines but we have power not dreamed of by our ancestors. But, as Edwin Budding might ask, "Can they cut like the traditional reel mowers of old?" —

°Herd

Continued from page 12

Then we moved over to the herd's ridgetop for a closer look. Four bachelor males, outcasts from the herd but without enough confidence yet to seek their own way in the pine and juniper country that is their home, were running the ridge.

The teenage equines were curious about the visitors to their mountain and they popped up over the ridge to stare. They moved a little closer and we moved a little closer, each studying the other. All was silent except the howl of the wind in our ears. It was a magic moment. For a few minutes in time nothing else in the world mattered. There we stood, equines and humans, each peering into the other's world. And then the moment was gone and the four young horses broke into a gallop and ran like the wind, across the ridge, down, down among the wildflowers and grasses and through the pine trees until they were out of sight.

By the time the day was over and we were deposited back at our hotel it was well into the afternoon. But I had the answers to the questions I had wondered about just a few months earlier. I now knew what the world of those horses was like. I also knew why the adoption program was so important. Without it, the life of the wild mustang was in grave danger.

Since the program began in 1973, 170,000 wild horses and burros have been adopted. Even though several thousand animals are adopted every year, the program has not kept pace with the 20 percent reproduction rate of the range horses. Today there are 43,000 wild horses and 7,000 burros in 10 western states with the largest herds living in Nevada.

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

Coursing through the veins of each wild mustang and burro is a part of America's history. The adoption program allows the wild mustang and burro to remain free and healthy on the range while simultaneously allowing Americans across the nation to bring home a piece of that legend with their own horse or burro. To learn more about adopting a wild horse or burro, go to www.adoptahorse.blm.gov —

This terrain, seen from a 10,000-foot mountaintop, is typical of the land in which the Sulphur herds live. Although they are not discernible in the photo, a herd of horses stood at the top of the ridge in the background.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Spring brings dandelions and a taste for tonics

Down to Earth
By Mollie Bryan

When I think of the spring equinox, I think of the earth beginning to give birth. I can almost feel the life as it begins in the soil. My mind also turns to my mom and her spring cleaning and my great grandma and her spring tonics.

I wish I had paid more attention to what she put in her tonics, but like most young people I just assumed I would never care to know such things. I do remember the dandelions. She ate them every spring — before the buds would come out. She made salads with them and yes even tonics — of spring bitters, which is what she called them. In case you didn't know, dandelion flowers are edible and have a slightly bitter taste. The greens, when picked young, are tender and good in salad. Sautéed with garlic, onion or lemon juice, the greens make a great spinach substitute. And they contain calcium, phosphorus, vitamin A and C.

My great grandma was on to something. Even today herbalists use dandelions as one of the principle "bitters" in concoctions to balance the immune system, as well as for specific ailments, such as premenstrual syndrome, congestive heart failure, and indigestion.

Along with its supposed medicinal value, the culinary attributes of the dandelion are becoming more and more popular. Look closely at some of the fancy salad greens in your local health food store. Some people are paying about $6 a pound for a mixture that contains the dandelion leaf. Because the greens have become so popular, some catalogs are now carrying dandelion seeds.

Here is a mixture for dandelion salad from the *Book of Herb Cookery* called "Spring Salad." Mix young dandelion leaves, young sorrel, nasturtium, tarragon, burnet, upland cress, oil, vinegar, and chives.

It is important to pick dandelion leaves while they are young. As the leaves mature, they become bitter.

Humans are not the only animal to enjoy the edible aspects of the dandelion. Birds — especially purple finches — love the seed. And the pollen drives bees crazy.

According to the *Herb Quarterly*, another use for dandelion is as a fertilizer: place a handful of dandelion leaves in a pint of cold water, bring it to a boil. Remove it from the heat and allow it to cool. Strain the liquid off. Dilute with 4 parts of water and a tablespoon of liquid soap (not dish detergent). *Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs* claims that in many parts of the world dandelion roots are roasted and used as a coffee substitute.

One more popular use of the dandelion is known — dandelion wine — something that my great grandma may have known about, but being in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, she probably never let the stuff come near her. (Her husband, on the other hand, used to meet with his friends on Sunday morning and have a drink or two — more fun than going to church, I guess. It must have been an interesting relationship)

Here are some other herbs popularity used in spring tonics:

Dill, good for digestive ailments and increasing fertility;

Rosemary, enhances and soothes the brain. It is also known to help memory.

Sage, good for the nerves, brains and all they affect. It also soothes the skin.

Lemon balm, induces longevity.

Peppermint, good for headaches and stomach problems

Chamomile, good for eyes, sleep problems, and the stomach.

If you are interested in trying an herbal spring tonic, here is a non-bitter recipe I found in the *Herb Quarterly*:

The "My-Nerves-Are-Shot Tonic"

1 cup crushed dill seed

1 cup sage leaves

See *TONIC*, page 18

These are a few of my favorite trees

In the Garden
By Jenifer Bradford

I was recently asked to prepare a program on Favorite Native Plants for a local garden club and the project has been quite rewarding. I enlisted the help of the former horticulturist (and a good friend up in Manassas) of the Virginia Native Plant Society. We selected many favorite natives, I did some research on each, and I ran the list by George Flint at the Village Garden Center to ensure that all would grow well in our area.

I thought that for the next three issues I would share with you recommended native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers for butterfly gardens. Here is the tree list:

Carolina Silverbell
Halesia tetraptera

A genus of five species of small deciduous trees and shrubs, this species is native to the eastern U.S. It has alternate toothed leaves and nodding white, bell-shaped flowers on slender branches on the underside. It blooms late April/early May and prefers organic, acid soils and full sun. Mature height: 30-40 feet. Yellow fall foliage.

Downy Serviceberry
Amelanchier arboreal, also *A. canadensis*

This has clusters of showy white flowers and alternate toothed leaves. Birds love the small, dark purple fruits. Mature height: 20-25 feet. It blooms for one week in mid to late April. The foliage turns deep red, yellow, and orange in the fall. Use this in informal groups. It is easy to cultivate but can get leaf rust, powdery mildew, and attract insects.

Franklinia
F. alatamaha

Franklinia is an historic tree once found on the banks of the Alatamaha River in Georgia in 1770 by John Bartram. A single species, it has not been seen in the wild since 1790. This spectacular tree measures 20-25' in height with multiple trunks. It blooms in late summer/early fall. Cup-shaped white petals enclose yellow stamens which emit a faint fragrance. Leaves turn orange, burgundy, and scarlet in fall. The tree has round, nutlike fruits. It grows in a sheltered place. It doesn't like wind but does like moist, acid, well-drained soils. You can buy as a small, container-grown tree which features alternate, simple, bright green spoon-shaped leaves.

Fringe Tree
Chionanthus virginicus

This is a multistemmed, shrubby tree. With a mature height of 15-20 feet, it is perfect for small gardens. In late spring it bursts to life when thin, white, drooping flower clusters emerge with its leaves. Females have small, bluish, black fruits. Its fall foliage is yellow. This tree prefers fertile, acid soil on the moist side. It will grow in full sun or partial shade. I highly recommend this tree.

Green Ash
Fraxinus pennsylvanica

This genus includes 65 species of large, fast-growing trees with opposite leaves, small flowers, and maple-like seeds. Plant this for the shade it will offer.

Green Hawthorn
Crataegus viridis

There are approximately 1,000 in this species of hardy, thorny trees and shrubs. The bark is greenish gray and it bears fruit heavily like crabapples. Foliage is reddish-orange in September and October. The fruits hang on this vase-shaped tree until January and February. Mature height: 20-35 feet. White flowers appear in mid-to-late May and it is in bloom for 7-10 days. Despite its showy appearance, it has an unpleasant scent. It likes full sun, normal soil types and gets rust. Winter King is a recommended cultivar. It will make an informal hedge. Hawthorn can often be seen in the English countryside.

Mountain Ash
Sorbus americans

This genus has 85 species. Leaves are divided and it puts forth clusters of white flowers. It bears red, orange, yellow fruits in the

See *TREES*, page 16

~~ Garden tips for April ~~

Gardeners are always looking for good buys and good sources for plants. Do you know about the greenhouses at the Valley Vocational Technical Center (Valley Vo-Tech) in Fishersville? Horticulture students under the guidance of Rebecca Downey and her assistants grow a wonderful array of plants to sell in the greenhouse complex.

The year begins with potted spring bulbs, cyclamen, ferns, and ivy topiaries, then moves onto Easter lilies, annuals, and hanging baskets, and closes with chrysanthemums, winter pansies, poinsettias, and indoor plants.

Regular hours are Monday-Friday, 9:30-11 a.m., and 12:30-2:30 p.m. during the Augusta County school year .

Directions: Take U.S. 250 east out of Staunton, turn left onto Woodrow Wilson Drive, turn right at the fork, drive behind the Tech Center, and park beside the greenhouses (entrance to the right).

Let us all support the students and encourage their efforts.

Mother Nature should be warming up our soils and temperatures this month. The gardening season can begin in earnest as we:

— Remove faded flowers from Easter lilies and other potted bulbs. Keep in indirect light until danger of frost is over. Then plant the bulbs outdoors (ideally in clumps) where they will bloom next year and the next according to the normal outdoor schedule.

— Acclimatize new plants that have been raised in greenhouses before they are settled into the ground.

— Ease into garden work and do a few exercises before you begin.

— Look for winter-killed limbs on shrubs and trees and prune once new growth starts.

— Snap off heads of early daffodils and tulips and other spring bloomers to force the bulbs' energy back into the bulbs.

— Start a new lawn from seed. April is one of the best times.

— Prune vines if you didn't do this in March.

— Check your soil to ensure that it is friable (not too wet or too cold) before you dig in it.

— Plant daylilies.

— Plant certain trees that prefer a spring start such as red maple, dogwood, tulip trees, hawthorn, and magnolias and shrubs such as cottoneaster, pieris, yew (and rhododendron and mountain laurel if you have acid soil).

See *TIPS*, page 19

Schoolhouse News

Orphan lamb remembered as little girl's best friend

By KIM McCRAY

Most children have a childhood pet, a special friend that no other animal will ever take the place of. For many kids, this pet is a cat or dog. For me, it was a sheep.

When I was a very little child, we always had sheep around, and I had played with many little lambs. Although I found them all quite cute, I never had been attached to any particular one. That is, until I was four and Dottie was born.

Dottie was born on a cold night, and immediately it became apparent that her mother had deserted her in favor of the other two lambs in the set of triplets. I remember distinctly Dad bringing Dottie inside and warming her by the heater, and her bleating, shaking with fright, and being barely able to stand up. Dad let me hold the bottle and feed her, and immediately I fell in love with her. We grew so close that Dad eventually gave in and told me that she could be mine, and that I was in charge of raising her. I had never been so excited! I immediately named her Dottie after the dark splotch on her back, and soon we were best friends.

Every day, I would run out with the pink bottle in my hand, and Dottie would come running, scoot under the fence, and meet me at the picnic table. We were definitely inseparable.

As Dottie grew and no longer needed to be fed from a bottle, we still remained close. If I was outside, she came charging toward me; her moist little nose and black-speckled body rubbing up against me. I had truly found a new best friend, and loved her like a sister.

Then came the time for the sheep to be sheared, and I watched with dismay as Dottie's trademark, her "dot" disappeared! I worried that without her signature characteristic, I wouldn't be able to recognize her anymore. Of course that wasn't a problem because wool or no wool, she still was the only sheep who would come charging toward me. She was the only sheep that, just by looking in her eyes, I could tell that she knew me, and that she cared for me, just as I cared for her.

By the time she was full-grown, she weighed a lot more then me, and was even a little taller than me, but she never intimidated me. The other sheep would knock me down, but never Dottie. She would just slowly stroll up, and stand beside me, breathing on the top of my head as I'd reach up and scratch her behind the ears.

Dottie was around for about three years after that, and throughout the entire time we remained close. Of course when Dad sold the entire flock, I was devastated, and it took me a long time to get over it. I still wonder what happened to Dottie, my favorite childhood pet. Although she is no doubt long gone by now, I like to think that she is still thriving — living a long happy life, and has had many little lambs to raise, all with special black spots. —

"Dottie," an orphan lamb, found a friend and caretaker in Kim McCray.

Photo courtesy Kim McCray

'Subs' emerge as unsung heroes of the classroom

From the teacher's desk

By Betty Gatewood

All teachers need the services of a *substitute teacher* at some time despite efforts to have perfect attendance. Most of us hope to "dodge the bullet" of getting the flu or a cold during the school year, but we acknowledge that these are occupational *hazards*. Most often we work through them — literally. Ask any teacher and she/he'll tell you of deciding to go to school at less than 100 percent energy/health level. But, there are some times that absences are just going to happen, or when they are necessary, unavoidable, or planned in advance such as family illness or an emergency, pregnancy leave, jury duty, or professional conferences. We are at the mercy of our principals and their sub list for carrying on our planned learning.

A substitute's diligence and willingness to work a day is so appreciated by teachers. Substitutes are often called late the night before needed, or most often, they are called in the early hours of the day when they are needed. By definition they know that they are sort of "on call," but that certainly doesn't mean that they are up at 5:30 waiting by the phone each morning ready to go. They do have lives too, and they have to drop everything to accommodate their call. They are our life-savers. I know it is a little unsettling to enter into an unfamiliar world of someone else's classroom full of students who sometimes think they know more than they do.

What's the subject? Topic? Grade level? Routine? Hall duty station? Lunch duty? Daily schedule? Discipline expectations? The concerns are overwhelming, but substitutes are willing to do just about anything we ask. What a challenging task it is to be a sub. That sub needs all the help we can give.

My former assistant principal, Bill Lobb, who is now principal of Beverley Manor Middle School, frequently emphasized that we have a "sub" folder in our desk with emergency lesson plans that could be conducted in unexpected absence. Fire and emergency drill information should also be in the folder. Seating charts and class lists should be nearby. More detailed lesson plans with answer keys, class times, locations, helpful student names, and details specific to the team and day would be ideal if possible.

Ideally a substitute lesson plan would be a bridge from the day a teacher was there to the day he/she will return, but sometimes an auxiliary lesson is appropriate. A trade magazine such as *Scholastic* magazine, or in my case, *Science World* magazine, that is high interest and easily administered with worksheet and answer key is a good solution. Usually I can find one issue with articles pertaining to a current or recent topic. General lesson plans from the teacher allow the substitute leeway to personalize and tailor-make the lesson of the day if needed. The more preparation and guidance we do as teachers, the more successful the day will be for the sub, students and us when we return.

When I decided that I wanted to re-enter teaching, I "got my foot in the door" by subbing a few days on my day off from my other job. One of my first subbing days was on a Saturday (!) when Augusta County Schools had to make up a snow day and decided to do it on a Saturday. My assignment was band class and the teacher had to be away all day at the district band competition, but only some students went with her. I "taught" the ones who hadn't gone. I had overprepared. I planned a lesson and took in my dulcimer and other stuff. Of course, they didn't think I knew anything, and as it turned out I didn't even get to do anything with it. I felt better having planned the day, but the teacher had planned a video and that was just what the kids needed after playing all morning in district competition. I learned MY lesson that day. Be prepared as a sub, but as a TEACHER, leave appropriate lessons for when you are gone. Another thing I learned from a former co-teacher, and I applied that day, was to use praise and rewards for good behavior. What kids will do for a smile or a Jolly Rancher! It can turn a potentially difficult class or situation into a learning experience and tolerable class time.

So parents, please note that your child's day is planned by the teacher AND the sub. The groundwork laid by that teacher during the year is the framework for the success of the sub's day. The way the sub deals with different situations around that framework is pretty much up to him but good subs plan for successful learning using tried-and-true methods. The students know very well how to act and how to handle a teacher's absence. To get a step ahead of some students' antics, it is sometimes wise to let them know they will have a sub if you know ahead of time. However, some students choose unwise conduct when they have a sub, and this is where the sub has to "go it alone" if someone obviously steps out of the expected parameters of good behavior. A sub must establish her/himself as the authority for the day and that rules apply to all and rules are for the benefit of learning. The establishment of mutual respect between the substitute and the students will make the day successful.

A substitute is considered according to his or her ability to work positively with children in a variety of situ-

See *SUBS*, page 17

The Hitching Post

Learning to train horses begins with solid foundation of basics

Q: I love horses and want to learn how to teach them. What do I need to know? How do I start?

— Wanting to learn

Begin with the basics. I'm going to assume that you are a beginner and don't know anything. That assumption is the safest way to approach the problem. Love for horses creates the desire to know more about us. We are large animals with the potential to do great harm to people. Many times we do not intend to hurt people, but people can be in the wrong place at the wrong time and accidents happen. The basics start with a good trainer who can teach you horse care, grooming, tacking, riding, and horsemanship. Finding a good instructor will help you get a good start in understanding horses.

Learning to work around us safely is the foundation of horsemanship. Part of the process will be to understand our behavior. We are defensive creatures. We have strong flight reactions. We are part of a herd system and like company. We often behave like two-year-old children. We can throw temper tantrums. We like to have our own way. We want what we want and get frustrated and angry if we are disciplined. When we throw our weight around we can be a handful to reckon with. This can intimidate you. But the truth is we need discipline. If we don't have discipline and manners we lose our value. It is the trainer's responsibility to keep manners and discipline on the horse. This is what makes the horse predictable and safe.

Two things that you will need to develop when working with horses is awareness and foresight. Awareness is an observant attitude. Paying attention at all times. Horses are large creatures that can react to many things. Good trainers pay attention to the environment, the horse's temperament, attitude, and what's going on that could affect the horse's behavior at any time. Foresight is the ability to know that what you do today will turn into what you get tomorrow. Foresight is an understanding that habits are not formed overnight. They are little things that turn into big things later. An example would be allowing a horse to get away with something for many days before correction takes place. Many times this happens because in the beginning it is only an annoyance. Or the trainer is too tired to try remedying it. Finally the behavior turns into a pattern that has to be changed. What could have been a little maintenance in the beginning turns into a major battle later.

The next part of teaching or training horses is communication. A good instructor will help you with this skill. Communicating is a big part of teaching. With horses it is a great deal of physical work. Body language and physical cues are part of the communication process. Horses are taught to respond to physical pressure. They are taught to move away from pressure.

Their natural instinct is to move into pressure. An example would be an unbroke-colt. Put a halter on him and his first reaction would be to pull backward. The pressure of the halter increases at the poll. The horse resists more by moving into the pressure. Training involves teaching the horse not to react by instinct, but to respond with trust. The horse learns to move away from the pressure and begins to lead. Over time a new behavior is being established as the horse is rewarded for changing its reaction.

I cannot finish without mentioning two more important virtues to work on — patience and persistence. Patience is important in working around horses because it sometimes takes us a while before we understand. If you do not have the patience to give us time to learn, you are in the wrong field. Horse training demands a great deal of patience. We learn through repetitions and time. Some things "click" sooner than others. Persistence is also important because you cannot give up easily. Training takes time and if you like instant success you will not be happy here. Horses have minds of their own. They may give in today only to try again tomorrow.

Be ready to argue your point on a daily basis with different horses. Some are just plain stubborn. They may gain the discipline you ask for, but their personalities don't change. Asking a horse to do one thing when it wants to do something else will always be a battle. How big the battle depends on how conditioned the horse becomes to giving in to your will.

Take it from the horse's mouth, you will be teaching horses every time you work around them. They learn from you. What you allow, the lines you draw, and the manners you enforce all add up to the discipline on your horse. Start with a good instructor and grow from there. —

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.

Trees

Continued from page 14

fall, is hardy and fast growing.

Pagoda Dogwood
Cornus alternifolia

A genus of 45 species, this has simple, opposite leaves. Its branches spread horizontally in tiers. It grows in the wild from Canada to Alabama and flowers in mid-to-late May. It has flat-topped clusters of white bracts, succeeded by blue-black berrylike fruits on pinkish-red stems. Fruits are not long lasting. It is a good substitute for *Cornus florida*, our eastern dogwood.

Pawpaw
Asimia triloba

This is a small multi-stemmed, understory tree with unusual flowers and large leaves. It can be cultivated as a single-trunked tree and reaches 15-20 feet in height. It has a pyramidal shape and grows in full sun. Flowers come in May. They are purple and waxy and come as the tree leafs out. The coarse 6-12-inch leaves turn yellow in the fall. It bears small, edible, greenish yellow fruits which have a banana-like flavor. It likes moist, fertile, slightly acid soil. Buy pawpaws balled and burlapped. They sucker. Cut off suckers with a sharp spade.

Redbud
Cercis canadensis

Rose-pink flowers appear in mid-to-late April before the heart-shaped leaves appear. Leaves are a bright yellow in the fall. Plant in partial shade. This is an understory tree and grows in the wild alongside dogwoods. It likes acid or alkaline, well-drained soil. Avoid mower damage and improper pruning cuts because these may provide opportunities for fungus to enter and cause cankers, a prime cause of branch dieback and death. Pealike pods (2-3" long) develop after the tree flowers. It usually develops into a multi-stemmed tree. A genus of seven species, there is a white cultivar, alba. 'Don Egolf' is a new cultivar.

Sassafras
S. albidum

Grow this on large country properties only, not in small gardens because this tree tends to sucker. However, sassafras can make an

See *SASSAFRAS*, page 19

Raphine couple rehab pony to champion status

By DEBORAH SENSABAUGH

RAPHINE — Fitz's Rare Spirit doesn't look like a rare anything this time of year. He's muddy from rolling in his pasture on Oakland Circle, bits of hay clinging to his shaggy face and ears, his fancy docked tail straggly.

But wait. Watch him trot across that same pasture and you'll get a hint of what he'll become summer when he's groomed and shiny and hitched to his four-wheel Canadian carriage. That's when his knees snap with hackney action and his legs hammer like pistons. That's when his head is up, eyes sparkling, tiny trimmed ears flicking. That's when he goes out to win.

Last year, Spirit impressed the judges during the American Saddlebred Association of Virginia show season. During that season, Spirit racked up enough points to earn first place in his division. He also garnered a first in the six-state Region 11 of ASHAV and a fifth place in the nation in the American Horse Show Association (now USA Equestrian).

All these ribbons and shiny pictures came about last season because Neal and Judy Robichaux took a chance. "One day, about three years ago, Irene York, who knows more about show ponies than just about anyone, gave us a call and said we had to get this pony she found," Neal says. Judy laughs as she continues the story. "So we bought him sight unseen and what a mess he was."

The fiery little pony had become someone's tax write-off, ending up at a therapeutic riding center. There he was a puzzle, totally unsuitable for that work. So he was turned out, ignored like a diamond covered with tar.

While Spirit languished at pasture, Judy continued her pleasure driving education with an older saddlebred mare who had been both an ASHAV and AHSA champion.

"I guess I started it all," Neal admits. "I got a heavy hackney pony and Judy fell in love with the breed."

"Right away, I said, 'Forget the saddlebred; I want a hackney,'" Judy said.

But when Spirit got off the trailer, Neal and Judy just shook their heads. "He was so skinny, we could count all his bones. It took us a year to get him back in shape."

Spirit settled in with the Neal's hackney, the aging saddlebred mare and a donkey adopted through the U.S. government's Bureau of Land Management program. And Judy and Neal fed and groomed and watched and waited.

"We bought Spirit because Irene knew there was something there," Judy said.

Meanwhile, Judy did her homework. She discovered the Fitz in Spirit's name stood for Fitzpatrick Farm, a legendary breeding facility. And his father was Apollo's Spirit, whose progeny have never been far from championship status.

A year passed, and Spirit began taking on the look of a great show pony. His next stop was Middlebrook area trainer Bill Heizer.

"I taught summer school for two years to be able to afford to put Spirit in training," Judy tells. "It's been a lot of work, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Under Heizer's tutelage, everything that Spirit had been came back. Finally, he was ready.

"I took lessons with him," Judy said of her and Spirit's progress, now together. "He's like a jet ski. You just push the throttle and he goes. I have to be careful. I can't drive him like I would a quarter horse. I've got to tweak the reins back and forth a little bit to let him know I'm there."

She sighs as she remembers Spirit's re-emergence from waif to contender. "He's really a BIG little pony."

Neal turned into the perfect horse show husband, a grooming

Judy Robichaux drives Fitz's Rare Spirit in a local horse show last summer.

Photo courtesy Judy Robichaux

rag never far from hand. "When you go to a show with a driving pony, you've got to load the cart onto the truck. Those bungee cords have to be arranged just so to hold it on. Then you hitch the trailer, and load the pony. At the show, it's reversed. You unload the pony, then you unhitch the trailer and unload the cart. It's labor intensive."

They also worked with Spirit's too short, too shelly hooves. "His feet were so short to begin with and they are shelly," Judy tells. "He's pretty much a natural goer, though. We use handmade shoes with only a quarter-inch pad in front. And I use a different bit on him."

Next came another challenge. Putting together a winning package for driving requires just the right vehicle or cart. Spirit looked O.K. in the usual two-wheel roadster, and a little better in a four-wheel bike cart, but the magic it would take to blow away all competition just wasn't there. Yet.

Judy was on a trip to Canada with local driver Lynn Hewitt, when she found just the right cart. Built to mimic the larger elegant carts pulled by fine harness horses, this cart had a detachable groom's seat, and with added carriage wheels looked like it was made for the pony.

At Heizer's stable everyone watched as the cart was tried on for size. Perfection. They were ready to win.

"It shouldn't have fit him that well. It is big for him, a little heavy, but for some reason it works. They belong together," Judy said.

Hackneys were bred in England in1760 as a result of Norfolk Trotter mares crossed with English thoroughbred foundation sires, closer to their Arabian roots. As local roads improved, farmers wanted elegant, trotting carriage and riding horses.

The nobility hunted and bred thoroughbreds which could run faster and jump higher, but the farmers kept to their trotting horses. Fifty years later, the hackneys were all the rage. And those muddy English roads contributed the docked tail style that makes Spirit a "cob-tailed hackney," Judy explains.

In the 1800s, while shops carried hackney horses and some ponies from England, the inevitable happened. Hackney ponies were born. By 1891, hackneys were being registered in the U.S.

"Last year, the third year since the bedraggled pony stepped off the trailer at the Robichaux farm, a champion emerged. We did 15 shows last year and brought home 18 first places," Judy said.

Those shows included the Spottswood Horse Show, of which Neal is co-chairman, and Rockbridge Regional Fair, the Monterey Horse Show (which recently added driving classes), the Bonnie Blue National (at which Spirit got third out of five) and the West Virginia State Fair.

"You should have seen us there," Neal remembered. "There's a hill going into the ring, and this cart is big for Spirit. We had to get behind it with loops and ease it down the hill behind him. Coming out, it was a real pull for him."

"On the other hand, the Virginia Horse Center is the most difficult. "The footing is the deepest," Judy says. "Spirit likes the harder tracks like at Elkton and Bridgewater, but he gets a little hairy at shows with banks on the rails. The sound echoes off there, and he doesn't like that. He can pull a jog cart, too, but the mud really flies back and I don't like that."

Spirit's eventual high point championship in ASHAV was awarded for pleasure pony driving while his fifth from USA Equestrian, along with the Region 11 championship, were in hackney pleasure.

The Robichauxs, members of the Shenandoah Valley Driving Club, have helped in the push to get carriage and driving classes added to many local shows.

This season, the Robichauxs will scale back, letting Spirit "just be a horse" more often.

"We've gotten about as big as we want to get," Judy said, "But we'll keep on with the local shows. We've worked hard to promote driving locally and with the Shenandoah Valley Driving Club. And the little horse has quite a following; people recognize him and look for him."

Now, the Robichauxs have more on their mantle than just the faded, old show picture that came with a broken pony that only needed a little care to become a champion. —

Subs

Continued from page 15

ations, discipline abilities, educational backgrounds, and personal demeanor as well as availability schedule.

So who are the subs? At every school there are some regulars and frequent substitutes. Often they are retired teachers or other professionals who want to keep themselves alert and contributing to society. Sometimes they are aspiring teachers wanting to give the profession a try or college students wanting to get a few bucks while they are home for break. Speaking of the money — it is not much for what they have to do. In Augusta County, sub pay is $50 a day! So it is something else that entices them — the experience, the stimulation, the camaraderie, and their dedication to education.

Substitute teachers do a marvelous job and often their work goes unheeded. They do perform the task of creating a learning bridge to the next day the classroom teacher is back. I wanted to share my thoughts and recognize their hard work, their expertise and their willingness to do our job in our absence. Hooray for subs — the unsung heroes of the classroom. Thank you for all you do! —

Country Crossroads

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin

March 2002

Dear Maude,

Needless to say, things are in a bit of a dither here in our Nation's capitol. Oh my, what has happened? CAMPAIGN REFORM! I'll not say a word about it, won't even mention the words. The boss has already had so much to say that all of us in the office are really rather tired of it.

So it's spring to the rescue. There probably is no lovelier city in the country in the springtime than Washington. The structure of the city's streets, with all those avenues and named and numbered streets and three- and five-sided blocks, are enough to drive even the most seasoned driver to distraction. But one thing is certain, they create lots of circles and little triangles which make such wonderful parks. And after Mrs. Johnson finished her beautification project, there was hardly a spot that was not beautifully planted.

But the parks are not the only areas that bring us joy. Even small trees, which struggle all year in their tiny allotted plots of ground between the sidewalks and the streets, burst into glory this time of the year. In addition, every office building has some sort of planting in front. Sometimes there are elaborate beds of bulbs all in a blaze of bloom. (I have so often wondered how it is that they can get 300 tulip or narcissus bulbs to bloom exactly at the same time.) Other buildings may have only large pots at the entrances with dwarf trees that have stood, unwatered and unnoticed throughout the winter. Somehow, even these trees burst into life this time of year. Often there will be little pansies that seem to sprout up around the roots. I also often wonder who plants all of those little *spots of unexpected plants. It cannot be a planned thing,* for often there will be only two or three daffodils all by themselves. No one is ever seen tending them. But there they are, proudly holding their bright little heads up in an effort to make us take ourselves a bit less seriously.

With that in mind, I decided that taking myself seriously would only be depressing, and what I needed, after all that unmentionable legislation, was a good shopping trip to get those two words above, which I am not going to talk about, out of my head. What better way than attempt to get one's wardrobe to match the gorgeous pastels of the daffodils and the flowering trees! With that thought in mind, I started out on a long lunchtime shopping spree. But there was just too much to do. I had to continue on my way home and again for the next several days. It is difficult to keep one's self looking spiffy these days. I really have been good lately. No, to be more truthful, I really have been good for a long time! Oh, but I made up for it this month. There were the usual receptions including one fundraiser which was designed for the young professionals with a very small amount of donation. Of course the boss sent me to that, and I had a great time because I knew almost everyone there. My good black suit (2 years old) with my lilac cashmere did just fine. But then a friend called.

"Hey, we're all going up to the Hill to do the round of St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Meet us at Bullfeather's at five, and we will go from there. Oh, and don't forget to wear green!"

Wear green? Oh dear! I had not a thing green that was presentable. So, off I went to see what I could find. Unfortunately, I had been so good about not shopping that my credit cards were paid off — well, mostly paid off, that is. So what was to stop me? Finding the right outfit, and the right green, was not easy at all, and by the time I was successful, the damage to my control had been done. The "let's buy!!" bug had bitten.

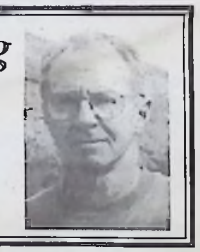
Having a great new green outfit is wonderful, but I do love those soft pinks and yellows and blues. That is what sent me off on those lunchtime excursions. It did not help that I knew that on one day there were to be two very important, shall we call them, social functions. The boss could not easily be at both. The National Republican Congressional Campaign Committee's annual dinner was on the calendar, as well as the 20th Annual Gourmet Gala which raises money for the March of Dimes. One of the Congressional wives convinced the boss that this was a very important function for him to support. I had my hopes that he would opt for the BIG dinner, which he tries never to miss, but was disappointed when he told me he wanted to attend the Gourmet Gala (where they have food prepared from the recipes of Cabinet secretaries and members of Congress - and even sometimes, those members do the cooking themselves.) He said that he would like for me to represent him at the Republican dinner. (Oh dear! It is a very dressy affair, so back out on the streets, to see what else I could find to add to my rather shabby wardrobe.)

So, you know what? I think I almost wish we were back to the days when they were fighting over, uh, fighting over... well, I know I said I would not mention those words... but fighting over campaign finance reform — with the boss going crazy and working me to death — it was a lot easier on my budget than all these new parties that now are going to be called by different names. And now that the shopping fever has struck, my credit card balance no longer will be anywhere near zero.

Give my love to everyone at home, and save me a piece of Easter ham!

LuLu

Phoebe brings cheer to March morning



Getting out

By Mark Gatewood

The Dog and I had just stepped outside on a mild, early March morning when I heard a raspy two-syllable call from somewhere down the road. As usually happens when it's a "first of the season," it took a few seconds to process the information, but I quickly pulled up my memory bank. It was the first phoebe of the year.

The sight and sound of the phoebe is probably familiar to all county residents, if only for the bird's habit of nesting on bridges and buildings. In fact, an early name for the phoebe was barn or bridge pewee. Appearance-wise, the phoebe is drab. It's nothing but shades of gray, darker above, lighter underneath. The harsh, emphatic "fee-bee!" call and proximity to buildings are good clues to identify the phoebe. If the bird is sitting on a perch and not singing, there's one give-away clue left: it constantly raises and lowers its tail while perched.

The phoebe belongs to the flycatcher family, along with the kingbird, a common roadside bird of summer in Augusta County, and a bunch of more obscure "little gray birds" whose similarities vex birders in the identification game. True to the name, flycatchers snap up flying insects on the wing. If a feeding flycatcher makes a catch close to you, you'll literally hear the "snap." Ligaments connect the upper and lower mandibles and act as springs to snap the bill shut when bird meets bug.

The feeding preferences of our common birds were the subject of some fairly high-profile scientific attention, beginning about 1885 and continuing through the 1930s. The goal was to quantify the effects of birds' feeding habits on agriculture. There was, for a time, a Department of Economic Ornithology within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Fortunately, the findings didn't just dwell on the negative aspects of crop damage. They also looked at the beneficial aspects of pest insect and weed control performed by some birds. In a bit of data twisting that only a government agency could perform, scientists even came up with monetary values for the "work" done by various species in pest control. It's easy to chuckle about these people sitting in their laboratories assigning values to sparrows, but the data they gathered on feeding habits has added greatly to our overall understanding of wildlife ecology.

So what's an insect-eating phoebe doing here in early March? Good question. His arrival date is right on target; this summer resident typically arrives in the area in early to mid-March. But the early bird pays a price. He may have to endure late cold snaps and snow and subsist on the left-over berries of poison ivy, sumac and sassafras until insects become available. The advantage of early arrival must lie in selection of territory and nest site and, ultimately, in reproductive success.

Every year, the coming of spring seems to be more important to me and I track the season's progress with a bit more urgency. Whatever his motives, the phoebe's return has brought a note of cheer to early spring. Right now, that's worth more to me than mosquito control. —

•Tonic

Continued from page 14

1 cup lemon balm leaves
1 cup peppermint leaves
1 cup chamomile flowers
2 cups lemon peel
2 cups lemon juice
6 cups honey.

(If using dried herbs instead of fresh, cut the quantities to 1/2 cup a piece.)

Add all ingredients except the lemon juice and honey to one gallon of boiling water and simmer for 10 minutes. Take the pot off the stove. When the herb-water mixture is cool, strain the herbs out and add the honey and lemon juice. Pour into jars and store in the refrigerator. Take 2 tablespoons of this tonic before every meal, and in a few weeks, you will notice an improvement in your mental strength and stamina. Enjoy! —

Time to renew? See page 2

Cattin' around

EDITOR'S NOTE: Names have been changed to protect the not-so-innocent.

By JEAN H. BRYDGE

Sarah and her sister, Betty, with Betty's two teenagers, Patty and Cheryl, were off on a big shopping spree. The trip from the Shenandoah Valley to Charlotte, N.C., was a nice spring drive and as they piled into Sarah's Cadillac, everyone was jubilant.

They admired the scenery, discussed Patty's upcoming graduation and spent a great deal of time discussing her prom dress. Cheryl had a recital the end of May and planned to buy a complete outfit even though there was some dissension between her and Betty over the color. Cheryl wanted pale blue and her mother preferred pale pink. After Sarah and Patty listened to the pros and cons for 25 miles, they suggested the discussion be dropped until they reached the shopping mall.

Traffic was extremely heavy so Sarah concentrated on driving. Suddenly a little black cat darted out of nowhere and it was impossible for Sarah to avoid it. Braking quickly, she pulled over and walked back to where the motionless cat lay in the road. She carried it to the side of the road but it wasn't breathing.

They looked for a house and Cheryl noticed a small shack back in the woods. Not comfortable with sending just one person to the shack, they decided to lock the car and all go.

Betty knocked on the door several times and eventually a tiny, elderly woman, who looked to be about 90, opened the door a crack. In a low, hoarse voice, she asked "What do you want?"

Sarah inquired, "Do you have a little black female cat?"

The lady replied, "Why do you want to know?"

Sarah said in her kindest voice, "A small cat ran in front of my car and I'm afraid she's dead."

The lady opened the door. "Come in."

The four of them entered the kitchen where there was a small wood cookstove, a table, five chairs and a radio. A wooden box beside the stove held three sticks of wood. Obviously, this lady lived frugally.

A coffee pot on the back of the stove produced an aroma of fresh perked coffee.

The lady said, "I'm Sophie Bronx and I just knew that cat was going to get killed. Have a cup of coffee and we'll talk about this."

After pouring the coffee and sitting down, Sophie said, "Last summer, I was hoeing in the garden and heard a faint noise. My hearing isn't as good as it used to be so I listened carefully and decided it was coming from some bushes. When I went to investigate, there was this little half-starved kitten who was hurt. I took her in the house, fed her and dressed her wounds but couldn't really afford to keep her.

"I have a hard time surviving but couldn't let that poor thing starve. I named her Wanderer because she wanders off for hours but it wasn't until recently that she started going in the road. I let her catch mice because I don't have enough to feed her but I've been afraid she'd get killed."

Silence in the room was broken when Sarah asked, "What do you want us to do with her?"

Sophie got tears in her eyes, then said softly, "Just take her away."

They thanked her for the coffee and Sarah unobtrusively handed the woman $25.

Sophie shook her head vigorously. "I don't want you to give me any money!"

Sarah reached over and gave Sophie a hug. " I know that but I will feel better. Please take it."

Reluctantly Sophie took the money murmuring softly she would buy groceries. When the four travelers got back to the car, they carefully put Wanderer in a plastic bag and placed her in the trunk.

Their whole excursion had just changed from a shopping trip to, "What do we do with a dead cat?"

Everyone regretted that Wanderer had been killed but Patty and Cheryl immediately got the giggles and Sarah and Betty got caught up in the laughter. Someone wondered out loud what story they would tell if a policeman stopped them. How would you explain a dead cat in a plastic bag in the trunk of your car? Of course the teenagers came up with many excuses some of which were so ridiculous that Sarah and Betty laughed so hard they almost had to stop the car.

Finally, a bit of sanity prevailed and they decided when they reached the mall, the girls would put the cat in a trash dumpster.

Upon their arrival, Sarah drove around looking for the trash deposits. Between the back of two buildings, they spotted what they were looking for. It was decided Sarah would park the car about 25 parking spaces away. Cheryl watched Patty carefully take the bag out of the trunk. Her first inclination was to carry it on her arms flat out in front of her body but then decided just to carry it by the handles.

As the girls made their way to the dumpster, Sarah and Betty watched in uncomfortable silence which suddenly turned to noisy disbelief as an unkempt bag snatcher rushed up behind the girls and grabbed the plastic bag. Patty and Cheryl stood in total astonishment as the bag snatcher ran about 50 feet and greedily opened the bag.

Seeing a dead, bloody cat, he fell to the cement in a dead faint. It knocked him unconscious and the bag dropped at his side.

A passing motorist spotted the robber on the ground, stopped, called 911, then asked Patty and Cheryl if they were all right.

Assuring the kind motorist they were fine, they turned and fled to the car. Breathlessly slipping into the back seat, Patty exclaimed, "Do you believe this?"

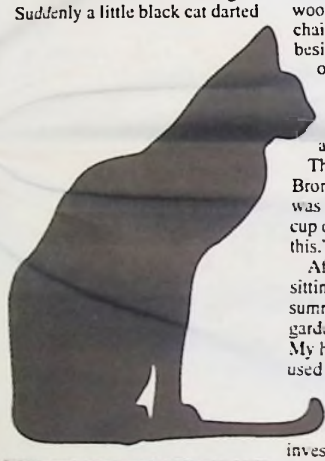
The ambulance entered the parking lot with roaring siren and flashing red lights. It raced toward the prostrate man, slammed on the brakes and the paramedics who leaped out quickly set about trying to revive the bag snatcher.

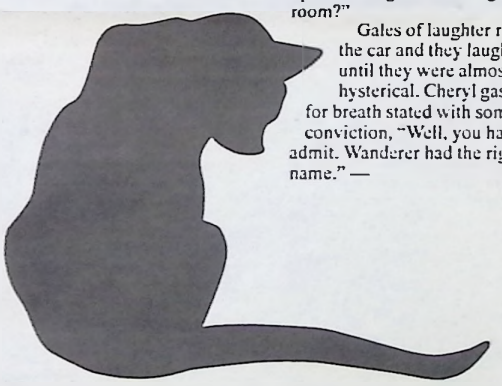
Even though the four women were concerned about his condition, they couldn't stop laughing. How a situation could be tragic and funny at the same time was hard to understand.

Finally the paramedics placed the would-be robber on a gurney and looked around for his personal possessions. Seeing only a plastic bag, they picked it up and carefully laid it on his chest. With that, they latched the doors and the ambulance roared away.

As the siren died in the distance, Patty innocently asked, "Can you imagine when they open that bag in the emergency room?"

Gales of laughter rocked the car and they laughed until they were almost hysterical. Cheryl gasping for breath stated with some conviction, "Well, you have to admit. Wanderer had the right name." —





•Sassafras

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attractive grove of small trees. It can grow to 60 feet. The genus includes three species. It has distinctive three-lobed leaves and good fall color. Leaves and twigs are aromatic when crushed. Roots were boiled by Native Americans and early settlers.

Sourwood
Oxydendrum arboretum

This is a single, slow growing species which can reach heights of 30 feet in gardens. I've only seen small specimens. It has narrow, pointed leaves which turn purple and scarlet in the fall. Late June brings long, drooping, 10-inch clusters of tiny, creamy-white bell-shaped flowers that bees love. Michael Dirr (arborist) likes this tree second only to the dogwood. It produces yellowish-green fruiting capsules. Main fall color appears in October. Buy young trees. It demands acid soil, perfect drainage, and organic soil. It likes full sun.

Sweetbay Magnolia
M. virginiana

This genus includes 85-plus specimens with alternative, dark green, leathery leaves. It has a subtle, sweet, lemon fragrance. The creamy, white flowers with 9-12 petals open over a 4-to 5-week-period in late May-early June. Cone-like fruits appear in August. The cones split open to reveal bright red seeds. This small, multi-stemmed tree grows to only 20 feet tall. Zones 8-9 are semi-evergreen and form larger trees. It tolerates wet soils, shade, and acid soils. Mulch this tree to keep roots cool and prevent disturbance. Prune out new stems at base. —

•Tips

Continued from page 14

— Prune spring-blooming shrubs after the flowers fade.

— Rake lawns of leaves, twigs, and debris.

— Cut the lawn once it is actively growing, not before. Grass tends to clump at first.

— Apply a pre-emergent weed killer to lawns.

— Reconnect outside hoses. Test for leaks.

— Watch for seedlings sprouting everywhere (maples and oaks in particular). Grub out wild onions. Look for other weeds and dig up.

— Plant clematis to climb up walls. They love alkaline (limey) soils.

— Turn your compost pile.

— Apply a top dressing of 10-10-10 to all beds. Scuff into the soil. Water.

— Remove most of the mulch from roses. Fertilize roses.

— Tidy up the herb bed. Try some new varieties and fill in empty spots.

— Take soil tests.

— Plan what new annuals you would like to enjoy this summer.

— Take photos. Fill in your garden log. Take a good breath. Spring is here. —

E.T. still full of intergalactic sparkle 20 years later

A movie review by Hannah's mom, Sue Simmons

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial was the first movie Hannah's mom took 5-year-old daughter Amanda to see. As a child given to fits of frustrated temper, I gave her one motherly admonition before the lights went down.

"You can't ask me any questions until the movie is over," I told her. I feared that too many questions would cause her (or me) to miss important plot developments. The last thing I wanted or needed was an angry child kicking the seat of the guy in front of her.

Amanda sat on the edge of her seat the entire movie, barely moving a muscle. When the movie ended and the lights went up, she turned to me, took a deep breath and let the questions roll.

Stephen Spielberg's *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* has been released to celebrate its 20th anniversary. An occasion like this demands a celebration. So I invited my friend, 7-year-old Jordan Brooks to accompany the "fam" (minus Amanda) to the movies.

For old time's sake, I gave Jordan the same set of orders — no questions. But I assured her that, no matter what happens in the story, everything turns out o.k. in the end.

For those of you who have been living on the moon since 1982 and are unfamiliar with the story, E.T. is an extra-terrestrial whose spaceship leaves him behind on earth. Stranded on the outskirts of Los Angeles, the creature is lured into suburbia by a trail of Reese's Pieces left by a little boy. The boy, Elliott — played unforgettably by Henry Thomas — is the classic middle child of a broken home. The alien establishes a telepathic link with the boy whereby Elliott experiences everything E.T. is experiencing. The boy soon takes his brother (Robert MacNaughton) and sister (Drew Barrymore) into his confidence and introduces them to the alien. The children come to love the ugly little creature. They try against all odds to help E.T. reconnect with his otherwordly space family, all under the noses of their unsuspecting mother (Dee Wallace) and an all-too-suspicious United States government agent (Peter Coyote).

As it turned out, my seven-year-old friend should have been the one to tell me, "No comments during the movie please!" I found myself giving her advance notice of famous scenes (when the children take E.T. out trick-or-treating and he sees Yoda; when Elliott and E.T. are airborne against the full moon; when the mother doesn't see the alien hiding among the piles of stuffed toys in the closet) or repeating famous lines — "E.T. phone home!"

On the way home I asked Jordan if she thought *E.T.* was just a good story or if it had deeper meaning. She said she thought it meant something else, but she wasn't sure what. I've always thought it was the Easter Story. Someone very strange and powerful shows up. That someone is compelling, wonderful, fearsome and maddening. He works a few miracles along the way. Some people are drawn to the strange creature while others just want to use him. There is life, death, resurrection and ascension — one day he has to return from whence he came but not without the assurance he will always be in the hearts and minds of those who love him.

Spielberg's genius runneth over in *E.T.* He has an uncanny ability to invest mundane suburban American life with meaning and importance. The entire movie is filmed from the perspective of a child. The only adult the viewer sees is the mother. Every other adult is filmed from the waist down and only at the end are they revealed.

E.T. the second time around doesn't disappoint. Two scenes cut out of the original movie have been added and one scene has been digitally altered to remove shotguns from the hands of government agents chasing the children through the neighborhood. Messianic symbolism aside, the film is as poignant and exciting as ever. It joins the ranks of movies like *The Wizard of Oz* — timeless and firmly etched on the imaginations and hearts of children and adults alike.

And if you have never seen it — what are you waiting for? The 40th anniversary? Buy yourself a bag of Reese's Pieces — like Jordan did — and go see this movie.

Drew Barrymore, then 7 years old, talks things over with E.T. in a scene from the 1982 movie. Barrymore told *Entertainment Weekly*, "I'd talk to him and knew he'd never tell my secrets. I believed in E.T. more than I did in Santa."

And, by the way, Hershey Chocolate Co. paid exactly $0 — that's right zero, zip, nada — to have Reese's Pieces in the film as E.T.'s candy of choice. M&M Mars was approached but passed because they were reluctant to have M&Ms associated with a "monster" movie. Following *E.T.*, sales of Reese's Pieces increased by 65 percent and Hershey put two plants on 24-hour production schedules to fulfill demand for alien-baiting edibles. All this according to *Entertainment Weekly's* March 29 issue.

Is it possible the aroma of roasted peanuts in Stuarts Draft might be enough to draw in some of E.T.'s intergalactic buddies? Thank E.T. and Mr. Spielberg, in part, for Augusta County's Hershey plant operation by going to see the movie again... and again.... and again... and again...

Hannah's mom and Jordan give E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial five bananas. The film is rated PG. ---

Store's promotion becomes family tradition

By BETH GREENAWALT

Several years ago, my husband brought me a present. Confused, I examined the tall shrink-wrapped maroon cup.

"See, look," he pointed to the calendar printed on the side. "On the highlighted days you get free refills. Inside are coupons for more refills, anytime. The guys on the crew all have one. They go over on breaks and fill up their cups."

So began our tradition of Wilco cups. Shuttling children back and forth, I often stopped at convenient points for hot chocolate, cappuccino, or soda. (Often I got gas at the same time, which should make the Wilco company happy too.)

"It's great," our children figured out. "You get to fill it when you buy it. Then, there are five free refill coupons inside, plus 46 free days on the calendar. And the rest of the time, it's only 39 cents a refill!"

For just $1.99, a great deal. The next year they all invested in Wilco cups for themselves. Hot chocolate, slushies, soda... "Do we have the Wilco cups?" became the cry each time we climbed in the car. Our children learned to read calendars and dates by making sure they didn't miss a free day. "Wilco" came to mean a miscellaneous drink found at Wilco. Usage: "Can we stop for a Wilco?" or "Do you want a Wilco?"

The infection spread. Our nephews got their own cups. Arguments broke out as to who owned which cup, and whose lid was chipped. Soon, everyone had to label theirs with permanent marker.

"I can't believe you let them get that stuff," my husband said. "Think of all the sugar!"

For years, we've tried to avoid junk food and have seldom indulged in sodas at home.

"You're the one that started it," I reminded him.

Driving back from Georgia last January, we pulled into a travel plaza in South Carolina.

"Wilco!" cried our kids with the eagerness they used to show for McDonald's playgrounds. "Let's see if they've got 2001 cups!"

When we left, each of us balanced a new cup, blue and gray this time. Refills have gone up to 49 cents each and free days down to 44, slushies no longer included. The plastic cups are more brittle. They're still only $1.99, though, each with six any-day free fills. So the Wilco tradition has continued. Our family is probably recognized at every Wilco between Lynchburg and Harrisonburg — no doubt with dread at some.

As on a trip last month. Five children filed into the gas station, most of them clutching refill cups. Before we left, we had two spills and our nephew bought their last calendar cup. The manager was patient; the worker who had to mop up soda and hot chocolate less so.(Just think how bad it would be without the snap-on lids!) All of us — especially the guy with the mop — sighed with relief when we finally left.

Recently we drove by a Wilco. A worker mounted on a cherry-picker was fastening up a big green sign. HESS. Another merger. Hess products have replaced Wilco's.

"Well, Uncle Jim will be happy," I said. For years he boycotted Wilco gas, convinced it ruined one of his cars.

"But will they have Wilco cups?" cried our daughter, tears in her voice. Yet another tradition threatened; the passing of an era looms.

"You know," our son said, "even if we couldn't get refills anymore — they're still nice cups." —