$2.00 FRIENDLY NEWS... GOOD NEWS -- THANKS FOR EIGHT GREAT YEARS!

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MIDDLEBROOK, VA
PERMIT NO. 5

MAILED 7/31/02 FROM
MIDDLEBROOK, VA

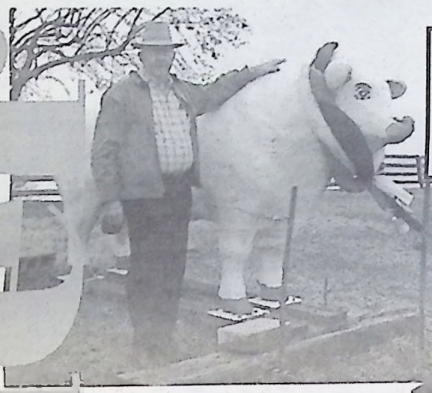
Augusta Country

Down on the farm
Page 10

Summer 2002 Vol. 9, Issue 8

P.O. Box 51, Middlebrook, Va. 24459

summer 2002

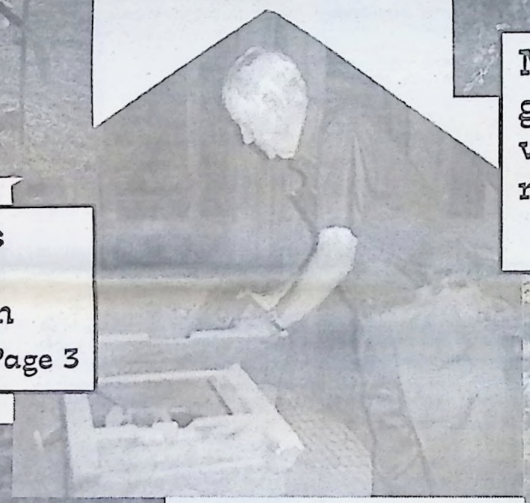


Draft family pioneered 'new' breed in Virginia

Page 8

Mt. Solon woman grows tasty vegetables with new technique

Page 11

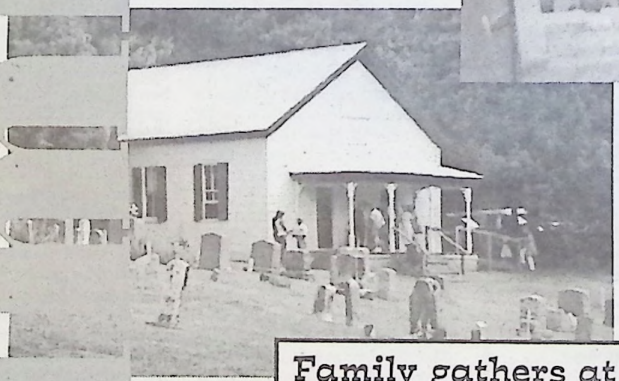


Restoring mill is long journey for Churchville man

Page 3

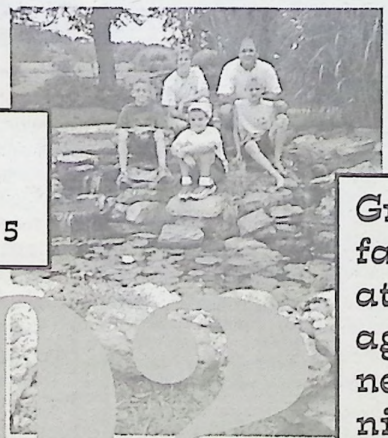
Walk a mile in these shoes

Pages 14 & 18



Family gathers at chapel for reunion

Page 5



Greenville family right at home in agriculture's newest niche

Page 6

Teens from near and far gather in New Hope

By SHERRIL ODOM

NEW HOPE — Contingents of excited teenagers from Russia and New York joined local youth July 20 at New Hope United Methodist Church to play, listen to music and fellowship. At first glance, no one could tell that they were not a group of neighborhood kids playing together. Some sat in groups talking and giggling; some kicked a ball in the air; while others tried to touch the heavens with their feet while swinging.

Only upon close observation did their uttered words sound different. Still, language didn't prove to be a barrier — laughing, playing and eating are understood universally.

What brought this assorted group together?

According to New Hope's pastor Doug Gunsalus, the Virginia Conference of United Methodist Churches enjoys a "special" relationship with Russia. The Methodist churches have been raising funds to send missionaries into Russia in order to build churches for years. In the last 10 years alone, over 100 Methodist churches have been constructed.

Currently the churches are raising money to build a church in Stavropol, Russia, where some of the visiting Russian teens live.

Vova Kandaurov, a 15-year-old from Stavropol, spoke of his school and his favorite subjects — music, sports and, of course, religion. Kandaurov stated that after graduating from high school, he would continue on to college, but was unsure what he wanted to study.

Sounds like a typical 15-year-old boy to me.

Kandaurov stated that 80 percent of all teens in Russia attend college. He remarked that college tuition is much more affordable for families there than in the United States.

Helen Morse, a member of the New Hope congregation, reminisced about the two times she visited Russia. "The people there appear so reserved, but once you get to know them, they are very open and warm-hearted," she said.

She and her cohorts conduct a "ministry of presence." They go around providing love and support for children in orphanages, schools and social services organizations. They try to teach Jesus' love through actions that speak louder than words.

While in the area, the Russian youth stayed in homes of church members. They visited Grand Caverns and gathered at the church for a picnic. During Sunday morning worship services at the New Hope church, the youth sang Russian hymns, then translated them into their English versions. Later on Sunday, the Russian contingent departed for a week of church camp in Keezletown.

While the Russian troop was en route from New York, where their plane touched down from Europe, Rev. Gunsalus received a phone call from another group of teenagers en route from New York.

These youngsters were heading to the Red Bird Missionary Conference in Kentucky, and were in need of a place to lay their heads for the night.

When asked if they were going to stay with local families like the Russian youth, Pastor Diane E. Prentice of Nanticoke United Methodist Church replied that all they needed was a little floor space. She and her entourage were going to bunk on the church floor for the night.

What began as an evening for the New Hope church to entertain international visitors became a time when the local community served host to out-of-state travelers as well. Although their visit was only for a brief time, the event provided the opportunity for teens to learn about their world neighbors, both near and far. —

Teens from Stavropol, Russia, gather on the lawn at New Hope United Methodist Church. Funds are being raised to build a Methodist church in Stavropol. The youth recently visited the area and spent time with families from the New Hope church.

Photo by Sherril Odom

Augusta Country

is published 11 times each year by
See-KWA! Publishing
P.O. Box 51
Middlebrook, Va. 24459
Subscription rate: $16 per year

Publisher & editor — Betty Jo Hamilton
Associate publisher & editor — Nancy Sorrells
Sales associate — Leslie Scheffel

Staff writers

Jenifer Bradford
Mollie Bryan
Jean H. Brydge
Marlene Condon
Betty Gatewood
Mark Gatewood
Vera Hailey
Betty Jo Hamilton
Roberta Hamlin
Penny Plemmons
Deborah Sensabaugh
Sue Simmons
Nancy Sorrells

Contributing writer

Sherril Odom

Call 540/885-0266
for publication information.
Email: goodnews@rica.net

Please recycle

'That's all, folks!'

To quote Porky Pig from the classic Merry Melody cartoons, "That's all, folks!"

It's time for *Augusta Country* to close up shop. We've been publishing for eight years, brought you 88 issues, including two calendar/almanacs, but the time has come to close the curtain on this endeavor.

If we demonstrated nothing else in the last eight years, we proved that *Augusta Country* is the greatest place on earth to call home. Folks who live up and down the valley have known this for a long time, so any good news we published was no surprise to folks who read it in these pages. Wanting to share the stories of the people of Augusta country was the impetus for starting this newspaper... news magazine... whatever you'd like to call it. And we were successful in doing this in each issue that we published.

There are many more stories to be told, and that — sadly — is the part we will miss the most — spreading the good news of Augusta country near and far.

Subscribers and advertisers have been a valued part of *Augusta Country's* operation. We appreciate your support of the newspaper by reading it or using it to promote your business.

Churches, organizations and individuals who have invited us to record their events and stories extended hospitality to staff in the highest fashion. *Augusta Country* staff were welcomed to many events and made to feel right at home with whatever was going on. We appreciate the good will you displayed by including us in your events.

On a personal level, I would like to note that I have had the incredible privilege of working with the finest staff of writers and advertising associates who pooled their efforts to make each issue of *Augusta Country* truly unique, imaginative and entertaining. *My gratitude to them for their work is immeasurable.*

Also on a personal level, the moral support I have received from family and friends has been a primary motivator in keeping me focused on *Augusta Country's* operation. I am indebted to many individuals who often encouraged me in this endeavor.

As *Augusta Country* closes up shop, there are a number of logistical matters which need to be handled. If you recently ordered a subscription or renewed your subscription, your account will be pro rated and you will receive a refund on your account. However, due to the cost of mailing and processing, refunds of less than $2 will not be made. It will take some time to close out the books, so I ask that you extend *Augusta Country* one final courtesy in permitting us sufficient time to resolve financial obligations. It is hoped that this can be managed within the next 90 days and certainly no later than the end of the 2002 calendar year. Your patience with our bookkeeping will be appreciated.

In parting — to subscribers, advertisers, staff, family and friends — I have just two final and insufficient words:

Thank you.

Betty Jo Hamilton
Publisher & Editor

Subscribers!!!
Tell your friends they can find *Augusta Country* at one of the following retail outlets.

Waynesboro --
Kroger, U.S. 250W
Churchville Grocery
Staunton --
Kroger
Young Hardware
The Bookstack
Once Upon A Time
Driver Bros. Greenhouse
Augusta Co-op --
Staunton
Craigsville --
Texaco, IGA
Rosen's Garage --
Middlebrook
Buffalo Gap --
Junction Convenience

Churchville's Hanger bringing mill back to life

By NANCY SORRELLS

CHURCHVILLE — When J. Brown Hanger was a young boy growing up in Arbor Hill, mills were common in the Augusta countryside. Most farmers grew wheat and corn. Dozens of gristmills along the area's creeks and rivers ensured that no farmer had to travel more than a few miles to turn his grain into flour or meal.

Today the local mill has almost faded from the scene. Until recently there were no operating mills in Augusta County. Now there are two within a short distance of one another. In Churchville, the Bear Mill again has a turning water wheel thanks to the dedication of Bill Bear. His mill uses waterpower to operate woodworking machinery.

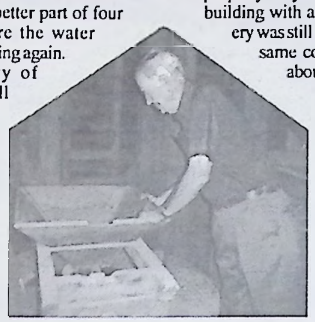
And, just east of Churchville, Hanger has spent more than 35 years bringing the Mapleton gristmill back to life. It has been a labor of love, and one that's important to him because he believes the preservation of the local rural culture is important.

"When I was a boy, we primarily took our wheat to White Star Mill in Staunton," recalled Hanger, who was the youngest of nine children. "But I remember one year during the Depression that my dad had 1,000 bushels of wheat and White Star was offering 45 cents a bushel. So we hauled it to Swoope which was offering 47 cents," he said. Hauling the grain the extra distance put an additional $20 in the family coffers and the extra work was no problem for the Hanger children.

"I could handle a team of horses when I was 12," Hanger remembered. During those early days, the Middlebrook Road was a toll road and hauling produce along the road meant paying a toll. "There was a toll gate close to Staunton. A black man named Peter Page ran the store there and the toll gate. He would drop a pole off the porch and across the road to stop people and make sure they paid."

When Hanger grew up, he remained in the area as a businessman and owned Southern Electric for many years. In the 1960s the family bought the Mapleton Mill property. They tore down the old house and built back a home of salvaged materials. At the same time Hanger began eyeing the mill as a restoration project. Little did he know that it would be the better part of four decades before the water wheel was turning again.

The history of Mapleton Mill stretches back to the mid-19th century when Jacob Hanger built a three-story gristmill with a basement, office, and one of the fanciest outhouses imaginable. The latter, a shed which jutted out over the water, was a one-seater that opened up over the water. The waste dropped into the water and was carried away by the stream.



J. Brown Hanger works in the mill near his home in Churchville.
Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Ironically, Jacob Hanger was a distant relative of the current owner; both share a common ancestor in the German-speaking immigrant, Frederick Hanger, who settled in the Valley in the 18th century. Jacob Hanger's daughter married a Huff and for about a century the mill was operated by Hangers or Huffs. It was not until the 1940s that milling operations ceased.

When Brown Hanger purchased the property 20 years later, the mill building with all of its machinery was still salvageable. The same could not be said about the mill wheel.

"The mill building was not bad although there was a tremendous amount of dirt because the windows had broken out and the birds had gotten in. Most of the machinery was still in the mill: the screenings, a flour bolting device, two sets of stones, and the fans. However the water wheel was badly rusted out," he explained.

"I started working on the mill right away," Hanger explained of those early restoration efforts. "I put the office back on, but I put an A roof on instead of a shed roof because it would do better in the snow," Hanger noted.

He also painstakingly laid the stonework around the mill, including an arched bridge. His stonework and brickwork around the outbuildings and yard display quite a high level of skill, especially the vaulted brick arch in the blacksmith shop across the drive from the mill.

"It took me two years to lay the stone, but I enjoyed it. Maybe the enjoyment I get from laying the stonework is the German in me," he said.

He also put in new windows and stained the whole mill building while climbing up and around the scaffolding built to gain access to the tall structure. And, he jacked the whole structure up and put in new timbers.

One after another little projects have been checked off Hanger's list of things that needed to be done before the mill was operating again. In order for the overshot wheel to turn once more, a source of water had to be reestablished.

Hanger holds what remains of the mill's original conveyor belt.
Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Crews prepare to place the two sections of water wheel at Mapleton Mill. The wheel was restored in Dayton and transported to the site near Churchville.
Photo by Earl Downs

Originally Jacob Hanger brought water about 3,000 feet along an open mill race that came in front and under the driveway in a wooden culvert.

"Back then there was a wooden forebay to control the water by a lever that came out of the mill. With that lever they could control the speed and force of the wheel," Hanger explained.

He soon realized that the 19th-century system of procuring water for the mill was not practical, so he devised a new plan. He put a 5,000 gallon tank underground. That tank would be fed by a spring which emanates from under the mill and flows by gravity into the tank. Using a 4 1/2 horsepower motor, Hanger recirculates the water and pumps it over the wheel. With this system, 650 gallons a minute can be called upon to run the wheel. Hanger can control the flow of the water with a valve he had installed.

See *MILL*, page 4

Restoring the new wheel to Mapleton Mill concludes one phase of the rehabilitation process.
Photo by Nancy Sorrells

Yesterday once more

Haines Chapel built on land from Hight family

By VERA HAILEY

In 1835, George Hight gave land on the Nelson-Rockbridge County line to be used for a Methodist church and burial ground. The South Mountain Meeting House was constructed on the 2 1/2-acre plot. Later the congregation built a church about two miles southeast. Services were discontinued due to poor attendance.

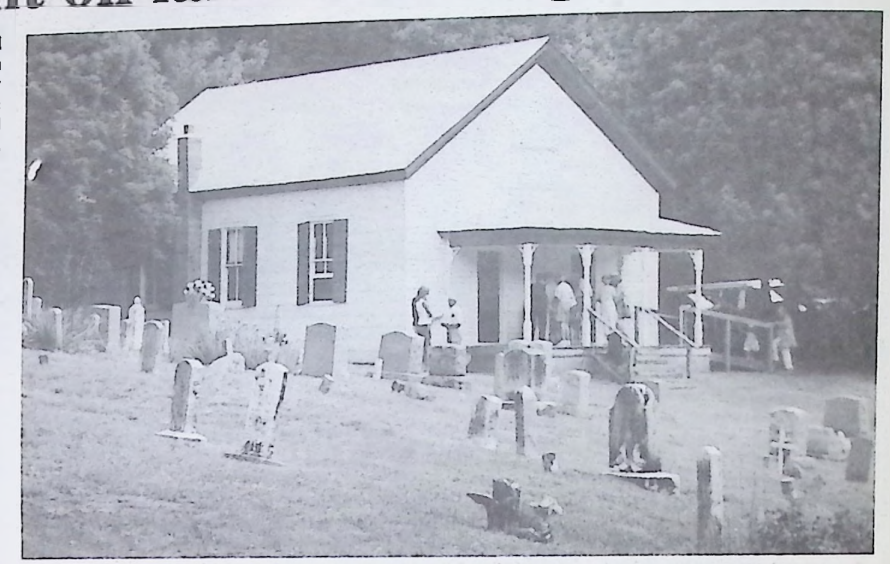
In 1911, William J. Hite and David F. Fauber, grandsons of George Hight, spearheaded the effort to erect a new building at the first location. The original church was moved back and some lumber from it was used for the new construction. A 1914 dedication service was led by the Rev. Dr. Haines, and the name was changed to Haines Chapel. Services were held for many years, but according to George Hight descendant Carol Hite Harlow, "As young people of the mountain moved away to work and the elders died, church services were again discontinued."

For 10 years during and after the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway, access to the church and cemetery was almost impossible. In 1957, a group that included many descendants of George Hight made plans to renovate the building and clean up the grounds. Since then, family members of those buried in the cemetery have kept the property in good repair.

Many of the cemetery markers bear the same names — Fitzgerald, Bradley, Ramsey, Falls, Bartley, Hite, Cash, Seaman, Allen, Campbell and Fauber.

"The hillside cemetery is truly beautiful and so peaceful, with old, almost unreadable stones, field stones with no name... granite and marble stones all marking the final resting place of so many mountain people and folks who just love the area... It is truly sacred ground," Harlow expressed.

Since 1962, the building has only been used for Easter sunrise services and an occasional wedding or funeral. Anyone with a connection to or interest in Haines Chapel is invited to attend the annual homecoming in September on the Sunday after Labor Day. —



In 1835 George Hight gave land on the Nelson-Rockbridge County line for the construction of a Methodist church. South Mountain Meeting House was constructed there, then later another church -- Haines Chapel -- was built on the same site.

Photo by Vera Hailey

South Mountain Meeting House became Haines Chapel

By VERA HAILEY

George Hight is the Revolutionary War veteran who donated land for a Methodist church that became Haines Chapel.

According to the vestry book and register of Saint Peter's Parish of New Kent and James City Counties (1664-1786), John Hight and his wife had four sons baptized in the 1680s. One of these sons, also named John, lived in King and Queen County, where his son George was born in 1755. The family moved to Albemarle County and then to a part of Amherst County that became Nelson.

The History of the John Hight Family of Nelson County by Mary Hight Creasy and Aldwin Hight was published in 1979. It tells the story of George Hight, who enlisted in Captain Cadwallander Jones' Dragoons in 1777, where he remained for the duration of the Revolutionary War. Despite being wounded and left for dead in a battle near Hackensack, N.J., George survived to be taken prisoner while on a march in South Carolina. He was imprisoned on a ship at Charleston and sent to Jamestown with others in exchange for British soldiers. He re-joined the cavalry and continued to serve until after the war.

George married Lovia Lunsford in 1782. According to great-great-great granddaughter, Carol Hite Harlow, "They settled in the Blue Ridge Mountains and were the parents of nine children. In 1826 George purchased, at auction, 1,146 acres of land at nearby Vesuvius, which was close to South Mountain in Rockbridge County where he was living by then. He kept this land for 11 years and sold it to some enterprising businessmen who developed an iron ore furnace. George owned other property on South Mountain. Some of it is still owned by his descendants today."

In 1837 George donated land for a Methodist church and cemetery on South Mountain. The church was first known as the South Mountain Meeting House, but the name was changed to Haines Chapel. According to descendant Esther Noel Atkinson, family tradition states that George slept in the church the first night after completion as a way of dedication.

George died in 1839 and was buried in the cemetery on the land that he had donated. Descendants of George, who spell their surname Hite, gather at Haines Chapel in September for the annual homecoming. —

•Mill

Continued from page 3

Once the water system was installed, there remained but one hurdle before the mill machinery could creak into action once again — the wheel. Of course, there aren't many people around who can repair a mill wheel. Enter Silver Lake Welding from Dayton. Hanger had been impressed with some service Fred Shenk's company had provided a few years ago, so he approached Shenk about taking on the wheel project.

"They didn't want any part of it," Hanger remembers with a laugh. Finally he convinced them to give it a try, so a crew from Silver Lake Welding arrived in Churchville. In order to remove the 10-foot-wide, six-foot-high wheel, it was cut in half and hauled on a tractor trailer to Dayton.

All spring the men labored. They made a circular rack and built the wheel back in a circle. However, they did not rejoin the two halves until they had been returned to Churchville. There, Silver Lake set up a crane to lift the wheel halves into place. In early July the wheel was made whole again as the Silver Lake crew put the finishing touches of rivets and welding into place.

When you got right down to it, Hanger said, the only thing left from the old wheel was the band on the outside. "There are 3,000 rivets and 160 bolts in the axle," Hanger noted.

Although water now flows across the wheel and the machinery can once more move freely, many more years of restoration work on the interior machinery remains. Originally wagons would pull up to the side of the mill opposite the wheel and grain would be hauled to the top floor where it was screened and moved below for grinding. Then the wheat returned as flour where it was separated by degrees of quality. The complicated machinery leaves no doubt that Hanger will have his hands full for many years yet to come. But one day, maybe, the Monitor Dustless Receiving Separator which was patented in New York in 1898 will be fully functional again.

Much of Hanger's renewed interest in restoring the mill, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places a few years ago, is because it was something that interested his late wife, Mildred, who passed away in September. "She would have liked to see that wheel turn again," he said.

"Mills were once the center of the community. People voted there and they came and got their wheat, and corn and buckwheat ground. And mills always had a little bit of money. They would take one-eighth of your grain as a toll if you couldn't pay cash and then the millers would sell that flour," Hanger explained.

Even though the heyday of the mill is long gone, Hanger enjoys the idea of bringing a little bit of the area's past to life once again. "I always wanted to fix it up and I've always been interested in preservation," he said. —

Fauber family gathers for annual reunion

By VERA HAILEY

On South Mountain, on the Nelson-Rockbridge County line, a small white clapboard church sits in a grove near the Blue Ridge Parkway. Haines Chapel, which no longer houses an active congregation, is a destination for the Fauber family during their annual two-day gathering.

In June, family members from all over Virginia and other states gathered at Haines Chapel for a Sunday morning service. The one-room country church was filled to capacity. The quaint sanctuary, constructed of wood -- from the floor, ceiling and walls to the straight back pews -- was the perfect setting for family reminiscence.

Wilson Fauber of Staunton prompted those gathered to visualize what it must have been like for German-speaking ancestor Valentine Faber to leave Europe with his family in 1767. The ocean voyage was harsh, and the ships were often over-crowded, under-supplied and unsanitary. This difficult decision required faith, determination and will. "They would never have set out without faith," said Fauber.

Valentine's full name was Johann Valentine Faber. He was born in 1723, the son of Johann Phillip Valentin Faber and Maria Christine Anna Conrad, in a region of present-day Germany that is known as the Palatinate. Valentine, along with his wife and seven children (Jacob, Christian, Valentine, Peter, John, Susannah, and Magdalena) sailed to Philadelphia aboard the ship Minerva. From the passenger log: "October 29, 1767.The Foreigners whose names under-written, imported in the Ship Minerva, John Spurrier, Master, from Rotterdam (Holland) and the last from Cowes (England), did this day take and subscribe the usual qualifications... Vallendien Faber, Christian Faber, Vallendien Faber, Jacob Faber."

The Fabers lived in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania before migrating to Virginia - first in Shenandoah County and then in Augusta County.

After the morning service, the Faubers met at the Spottswood Community Center for lunch. Name tags helped jog memories as long lost cousins got reacquainted and close relatives shared the latest news. It was a time for sharing photo albums and socializing.

> **Faber is an occupational name from the Latin word faber meaning "a smith." Faber is the Latin form of the surname Smith. A faber was a workman — literally, one who made things.**
>
> From *These Names of Ours*
> by A.W. Dellquest

Although surname spellings differed, all the assembled Faubers claim descent from the same European family. The name was originally spelled Faber, but was changed over the years by different branches to include Fauber, Fauver, Fawver, Favre and Fawber. It has been said that Valentine himself changed the spelling of the name from Faber to Fauber to preserve the pronunciation.

Many out-of-town Faubers had arrived on Saturday and stayed overnight in a block of rooms reserved for them at a local motel. Sylvia Steele Echols of Virginia Beach led a cemetery tour at Haines Chapel in the afternoon, and a dinner was held in a private room at the motel.

Members of the Fauber family gathered at Haines Chapel on the Nelson-Rockbridge County line for their annual family reunion in June. The chapel does not have an active congregation but is maintained as it existed for many years. The chapel's interior includes oil lamps on the walls and an oil lamp chandelier. Photo by Vera Hailey

Echols and Joan Guthrie of Charleston, W.Va., explained that many family stories survived the years because of the late Mary Green Bell Creed of California, who wrote letters to her cousins in Covington in the 1960s filled with stories about her Fauber family of Virginia. Mary learned the family lore from her aunt, Sallie Fauber, the great-great granddaughter of the immigrant, Valentine.

> **The 18th-century exodus of German-speaking people from Europe was massive — it is estimated that 70,000-80,000 were in Pennsylvania by 1750.**

One such tale involves the passage to America. According to Mary, the family packed a supply of food for the voyage and cooked on the deck. A female passenger had the habit of putting her teakettle on their fire before they had a chance to cook. Per the family legend, the Faber brothers got fed up and threw her kettle into the sea.

According to Guthrie, the late Katherine Bushman of Staunton did much research on the Fauber family. The genealogical files were donated to the Library of Virginia in Richmond and are accessible to the public.

Henry and Martha Conner came to the gathering from their home in Faber, a village in Nelson County. Located 25 miles south of Charlottesville, Faber was named for John William Fauber, a landowner and prosperous businessman. According to Martha Conner, whose maiden name was Fauber, the town postmark changed over the years. It was first known as Fauber Mills, but was shortened to Faber. For reasons unknown, the postmark was Orlando from 1882-1884.

From the Fabers who left behind all they knew to brave the dangerous ocean voyage, there remains a powerful attachment of their descendants. Though many dispersed from the Shenandoah Valley, the annual reunion ensures the continuation of the family connection. —

Valley authors' book published by church foundation

IRVINGTON, Va. - Fifteen individuals and families who lived and worked in colonial Virginia in the early 18th century are portrayed in *People in Profile: Christ Church Parish, 1720 - 1750*. Publication of the new book by authors Katharine Brown of Staunton and Nancy Sorrells of Greenville was announced recently by the Foundation for Historic Christ Church.

In the book's forward, foundation executive director Bob Cornelius writes, "A rhythm and pattern of life orbited around Christ Church in its earliest days. A mosaic of diverse souls struggled, prospered, failed, succeeded. Some acquired land and chattel. Some were indentured servants or slaves, having little or nothing to call their own. The stuff of life was accumulated, documented, used, abandoned, or passed on to heirs. Imprints were left on public records.

"By examining court records, deeds, diaries, inventories, patents, processioners returns, rent rolls, wills and other primary sources, much has been learned about the people of Christ Church Parish in the first half of the 18th century," Cornelius wrote. "On these pages a representative sample of Parish residents are profiled. Through the profiles a sense of the circumstances, stratification and tempo of society in the parish emerges."

The profiles encompass wealthy landowners, a manumitted slave, an indentured servant, three women, a clergyman, "middling sorts," hard scrabble families, a mariner, an overseer, a carpenter and a tailor. The book opens with Edwin Conway, "...an excellent example of the planter gentry who brought English institutions and values to Virginia." It closes with James Gordon, also part of the planter elite, but markedly distinguished from his peers by his "dissenting" views and advocacy and support of the nascent Presbyterian church in Virginia. In between Conway and Gordon, among others, fall the stories of Robert Biscoe, indentured servant and author; James Wright, manumitted slave; the Lawson family, "middling sorts" representing stability and continuity in colonial life; the tailor Robert Anderson, a landless tradesman; John Bell, rector of Christ Church from 1711 to 1743; and, Priscilla Palmer Reeves, whose story, if fully told, would be the stuff of a good novel.

The profiles are based on the research of the foundation's Parish Profile Committee. The committee, composed of trained volunteers, poured over a vast assemblage of primary resources, identifying and documenting the people of the Parish, their origins, occupations, possessions, relationships and other notable circumstances.

The project benefited considerably from the resources and assistance of the Lancaster County Clerk's Office, repository of Lancaster County records dating from 1651, and the Mary Ball Washington Museum.

The foundation is deeply appreciative of the confidence and encouragement of the trustees and staff of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. A grant given by the duPont Fund financed the Parish Profile Project, publication of this book and its three companion volumes.

People In Profile may purchased at the Christ Church Museum Shop or ordered by sending $10 to FHCC, P.O. Box 24, Irvington, Va. 22480. —

Water gardening is agriculture's newest niche

By MOLLIE BRYAN

GREENVILLE — Horticulture profits have almost doubled since 1990 making horticulture the fifth largest commodity in the state of Virginia just below broilers, cattle, milk, and turkeys. This year, the Department of Agriculture is gearing up for a comprehensive survey on the horticulture industry.

But it doesn't take a survey to see the droves of people in almost any garden shop. According to Keith and Tish Folsom, owners of Springdale Water Gardens, they were completely surprised by the growth in their specialty products. Water gardening represents one of the newest agriculture niche enterprises in the state.

"We planned to have this kind of small, cottage industry-like business. The growth has absolutely astounded us," says Keith.

When the couple first purchased the farm in 1988, they lived there in a white clapboard house surrounded by lily ponds, water gardens, and soon, greenhouses. Before they knew it, they had to find another place to live.

"There just got to be too many people traipsing through to really comfortably live here," says Tish. In 1989 when they planted their first crop of water lilies, the Folsoms really had no idea where this venture would lead them. They harvested in 1993. It usually takes about three to four years of growth before the first crop of water lilies can be harvested.

Water gardening has become a family business for the Folsoms -- (from left) Andrew, Tish, Kayla, Keith, and Ben.
Photo by Nancy Sorrells

The couple dug their ponds, took care of them, and fed the lilies. They use tablets that are a food made especially for aquatic plants.

"Even if it was cold, windy, and nasty, we had to be taking care of those plants and ponds," Keith says.

Now, along with their outside ponds, they have five greenhouses that have little ponds inside. The plants prefer warm water. The use of the greenhouses allows the Folsoms to grow and sell all year long.

The Folsoms had never really thought they would see the day that places like WalMart and Home Depot would carry the kinds of specialty products they do — water gardening paraphernalia of all kinds — but it has worked out for them.

"What happens is they usually end up coming to us. Once people get involved in water gardening they generally want to enlarge what they have or they have questions that the folks at WalMart can't answer. So it benefits us," says Keith.

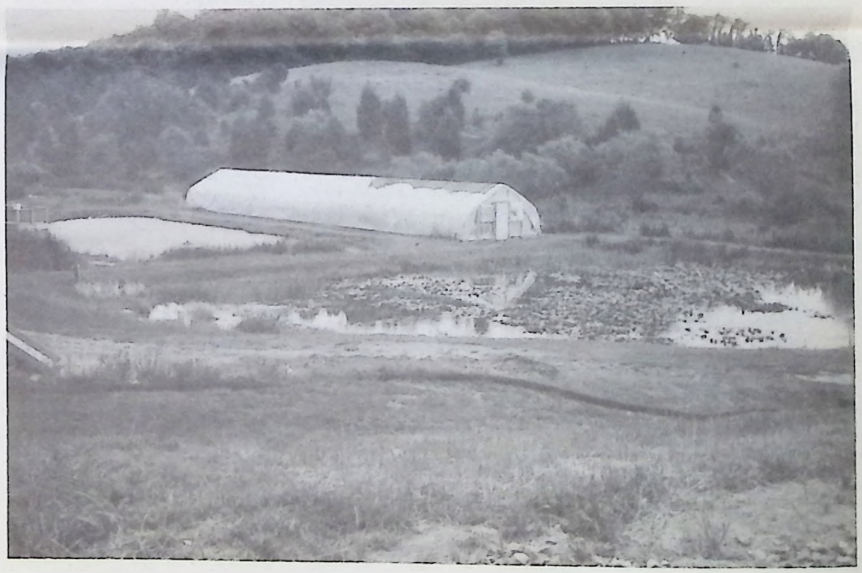
The Folsoms enjoy sharing their expertise — they offer workshops and seminars at Springdale; they also speak at garden clubs and colleges.

"I think the kind of marketing we do contributes to our success, and I notice that the industry as a whole has gotten to be more aggressive with marketing," says Keith.

See *WATER*, page 7

Koi fish are among some of the aquatic creatures offered by Springdale Water Gardens.
Photo by Mollie Bryan

Water gardening takes a variety of shapes and forms -- from in-ground ponds and waterfalls to free-standing container gardens with fountains like this one.
Photo by Mollie Bryan



The Folsoms' farm in southern Augusta County features numerous greenhouses and ponds where a variety of water plants are grown.
Photo by Mollie Bryan

Chuck Yeager still a W. Va. country boy at heart

By NANCY SORRELLS

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — There's one thing that certainly can be said about Chuck Yeager — he hasn't let fame and fortune put one speck of polish on his rural West Virginia upbringing. And I'm sure that's just the way the 79-year-old pilot — a World War II ace and the first man in the world to go faster than the speed of sound — would like it to stay.

At a recent outdoor writers' conference in Charleston, W.Va., I had the opportunity to meet Yeager who flew in from his home in California to talk about his native state and regale conference attendees with his hunting, fishing, and flying stories. He addressed the group formally as the keynote speaker, but hung around informally at meals and hospitality events. It was easy to spot the retired brigadier general. One only had to look for a clump of people. Peel about the crowd and at the center was Yeager.

Growing up in the hollows of Lincoln County meant Yeager had to hunt and fish to help put food on the table. By the time he was six he was hunting with a .22 rifle and he soon knew about deflection shooting and how to lead his moving quarry. Having superior eyesight didn't hurt either.

His boyhood included the Boy Scouts and tagging along with his father, who drilled for natural gas. From his dad he learned how to handle plastic explosives and how to rebuild combustion engines. "I could overhaul engines by the time I was 12. I enjoyed internal combustion engines and I started working on car engines," he remembers.

As for formal schooling he gave it mixed reviews. "I was in the third grade before I figured out that it wasn't 'A' for awful and 'F' for fine," he joked to a group. "Actually I got straight As in things I liked, like geometry and typing, but I struggled in English, literature, and history."

In September of 1941, when he was 18 years old, the young man from the hills of West Virginia enlisted in the Army Air Corps. The United States was not yet at war, and Yeager had never flown. In fact, he joined not out of any desire to leave the ground in an airplane, but because he wanted to work on airplane engines. Initially he had very little interest in flying, but that quickly changed.

Chuck Yeager, far left, chats with participants at an outdoor writers' conference held recently in West Virginia, Yeager's home state. Photo by Nancy Sorrells

"Soon I noticed that the pilots dressed better than the mechanics, their fingers were not all skinned up, and they always had good looking girls on their arms," said Yeager. His interest was piqued at about the same time the Army Air Corps was experiencing a shortage of volunteer pilots. Because of the shortfall, the army lowered its standards from two years of college and at least 20 years of age to 18 and a high school diploma.

Yeager wasted no time. On Dec. 4, 1941 he took his pilot physical and entered the Flying Sergeants program. "They looked at you and if you were warm, you passed," he said of his entrance into a whole new world. Until then, he had never been flying and his first flight left him with more than a few doubts.

"I got sick all over the back seat," he said. "I was thinking, 'Yeager, you've made a hell of a mistake!'"

Little did he know that he would soon combine the skills of his youth with his newly acquired aviation skills and soar to fame. "There is no such thing as a natural born pilot," Yeager explained. By 1943 he was in England as a fighter pilot, flying P-51 Mustangs. "That was seat-of-your-pants flying," he said, with little or no instrumentation and plenty of dogfights with the enemy. The pilots who were most successful in shooting down the enemy were those young men, like Yeager, who had learned to hunt as kids.

"Eleven percent of the pilots shot down 90 percent of the enemy airplanes. Almost without exception those pilots were raised as rural kids who had instinctive knowledge about deflection shooting," he explained.

In March of 1944, while on his eighth combat mission, Yeager was himself shot down over France. "I fooled around in France for two months showing them how to use plastic explosives which was something my father had taught me," he said. Eventually he escaped and was soon back in the air.

On Oct. 12, 1944, he became an ace, which means he had shot down five enemy planes. In typical Yeager fashion, he became an ace in one day, downing five German planes with only 150 rounds of ammunition. All told he flew 64 combat missions in the war.

"There is no morality in war," he said. "You fight to win. Someone once asked me which was my favorite plane and I said, 'the one that kills the best with the least amount of threat to me.' That's my job. Somebody has to do it. It's that simple."

While Yeager's accomplishments during the war were impressive, they were no more or less heroic than hundreds of other American soldiers. After the war, however, is a different story. Little did he realize that choosing to make the Air Force a career and entering test pilot school in 1946 would be worthy of a movie which came to be called *The Right Stuff*.

Yeager says that he was a good fit as a test pilot because he possessed a combination of mechanical and flying skills. The pilots were testing the Bell X-1 - rocket airplanes - and Yeager could fly a machine, push it for all it was worth and talk with the engineers about ways to tweak the plane.

In 1946 and 1947 the men were pushing the outside edge of the envelope as far as speed. No one had ever traveled at Mach 1 before. That's the speed of sound — about 700 mph. In fact there was wild speculation of what would happen when the human body traveled faster than the speed of sound. Some thought the plane and the pilot would fly apart when they hit the mythical barrier.

Together Yeager and the engineers toyed with the horizontal stabilizers on the rocket planes as they inched closer and closer to the barrier. Then on Oct. 27, 1947 the stage was set. But the outlook for a record on that day was not good. Yeager had to be helped into the test plane because of broken ribs suffered in a horseback riding accident a few days before.

Despite his physical limitations, however, this test was the one. As he broke the barrier at 45,000 feet, the first-ever manmade sonic boom was heard. Amazing to many was the fact that Yeager survived intact. "I'm still wearing my ears and nothing else fell off, neither," he crackled on the radio after achieving Mach 1.

Six years later, on Dec. 12, 1953, he set a new speed record when he achieved Mach 2.4. By the time he retired in 1975 he had been appointed commandant of the Aerospace Research Pilots School (1961), flown a Lockheed F-104 to an altitude record of 108,000 feet (1963), commanded an F-4 fighter squadron in Vietnam (1966), been promoted to brigadier general (1968), named defense representative to Pakistan (1971), and was enshrined in the Aviation Hall of Fame. A year after he retired he was presented with the peacetime Congressional Medal of Honor. In 1985 he was given the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Not bad for a backwoods boy from West Virginia. Since his retirement, he continues to work as a consultant at Edwards Air Force Base. He has now flown more than 200 different military aircraft. He also manages to hunt and fish across much of the world. "I've hunted in just about every state in the United States," he said. "And I'm still able to scrounge a few young squirrels." Legends abound of his eagle eye when it comes to hunting. One story even has it that he once used his slingshot and four rocks he grabbed from the trail to knock four ruffed grouse off a log.

When you come right down to it, though, Yeager is still a country boy at heart. When he told a room filled with hundreds of outdoor writers that he still enjoyed the cornbread, buttermilk, and leather britches his sister, who still lives in West Virginia, makes, I couldn't help but smile. I doubted if a dozen people in the room knew that leather britches were dried up old string beans that had to be soaked in water to make them palatable enough to eat. Leather britches were once a way for poor rural folk to preserve beans for winter eating even if they had no way to can or freeze the vegetables. It's not something a world famous Californian need worry about.

Not many minutes later I had an opportunity to speak to the general. While others asked him about flying and hunting and fishing, I simply asked how he was able to get leather britches in California. "I make them myself," he said. "I just dry them on a screen at home." Just goes to show that you can take a boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy. —

Water

Continued from page 6

Springdale hosts many field trips throughout the spring and fall. This year, they have had 800 children visit and each child gets a catalog and brochure to take home to parents. "It works. We just had two different customers in here today who said their child was here on a field trip."

The Folsoms are gearing up for even more popularity of water gardening. Tish points out that the U.S. market is not even close to what the European market is. "I think the figures are that seven to 10 percent of American households have some type of water garden; in Europe, it's something like 24 percent. So we have a long way to go."

With Tish's background in business and Keith's in water plants, the couple is poised for even more growth. They now have 18 employees (in the summer months) and they have eight full-time, year-round employees. In addition to their on-site business which, along with the ponds filled with lilies, has a barn-shop filled with supplies for ponds or fountains, Springdale Water Gardens also does mail-order with its catalog and web site venues. They also sell wholesale to garden shops and landscapers. —

Stuarts Draft's Kindig family paved way for Charolais breed in Virginia

By NANCY SORRELLS

STUARTS DRAFT — If you live in southern Augusta County chances are, that while traveling U.S. 340 between Stuarts Draft and Waynesboro, you have glanced up to see the big white fiberglass bull on a hill overlooking the road. At Christmas the bull might have a wreath around its neck. These days his head is patriotically encircled with red, white and blue ribbons. For most of the year, the bull stands like a statue, which of course he is, high up on the bank, but during the summer he's been known to go for a ride in a pickup bed during the Stuarts Draft firemen's parade.

The story of the bull is a fascinating one: it goes back to a hard freeze in 1959, a rambling journey to Texas, and a smart choice in Oregon. Ultimately, it also goes back to Earl Kindig and his family.

The Kindigs have been living in the Stuarts Draft area since the early 1800s when Earl Kindig's forbears migrated from Pennsylvania. Earl, the son of John and Mabel Rimel Kindig, was born in Stuarts Draft. His father was a farmer and a livestock dealer.

Many of Earl's early memories are associated with the agricultural practices of the time. *"I remember hearing more about the drought of 1930 than I do about the big depression.* My dad told me that one of his first chores in the morning during the summer of 1930 was going to the woods every morning and cutting several trees so the cows would have something to eat that day. They would eat the leaves. There were a few big grade A dairy farms in our community. But for the most part there were small farms that had five to 10 milk cows that they used to produce veal calves and B grade milk or they separated their milk and sold cream. The skim milk was carried back to the barn to feed the hogs," remembered Earl.

"These days we pay a premium for that low fat milk," he noted ironically of the hog feed from 70 years ago.

Sometime in the early 20th century, tile block silos which could be filled with silage for cattle were introduced to the area. Earl's father told him about one of their hired men who mixed the mud for the tile blocks. That hired man was particularly frustrated with the local men laying the block.

"Every batch of mud he'd send up would either be too thick or too thin according to the men working. When they finished up they told the gentleman mixing the mud that if they ever had another silo to build they would have to call him to mix the mud. The gentleman told them, `I hope I never see any of you again on this side of eternity!'"

Earl's father, John, had a little more entrepreneurial spirit than many of his contemporaries. He parlayed his Model A 1932 Ford truck with dual wheels and a cattle rack into a thriving livestock business.

"The neighbors would look to him to bring them a young bull to breed their dairy cows with. They didn't care too much what kind of bull. After several years they would call him back and say, 'Mister John, I wish you'd come and get this old big bull, he's getting a little bit mean. And would you bring me another one when you come to get him?'" Earl remembered.

Some of the Kinmont Charolais cowherd

The result was his father would drop off a 700 or 800-pound bull and pick up a 1,600-pound bull.

John Kindig also supplemented his farm business with a contract cattle business. He would put cattle out onto farms in October and let the farmers fatten them on silage and grain for three or four months.

After the cattle were fattened he went back around through several counties and picked up the cattle, paying 2.5 cents more per pound than he had put them out at.

The favorite type of cattle during Earl's youth was a blue roan steer, which was really just a Shorthorn-Angus cross. They tended to put on weight better than some of the other breeds and brought more money because they were heavier.

For years the cattle he picked up were shipped out on the railroad, either from Stuarts Draft, Lyndhurst or Weyers Cave, to the stockyard in Baltimore.

"One of the things my father loved to do when he wasn't so busy was to go to Waynesboro on Sunday night after he had sent cattle to Baltimore. He would board the passenger train there and at 9 o'clock on Monday morning he would be at the stockyard ready to see his cattle sold. Even though trailer trucks were available and freight was a little cheaper, he still liked to patronize the railroad," he recalled.

All that came to a screeching halt after one incident. "One time he shipped two loads of cattle from Stuarts Draft on Friday and he went to Baltimore on Monday. When he entered the hotel, one of the brokers in Baltimore asked him if he was planning on buying some feeders. He said, 'No, I don't think so, I just like to come up and see my cattle sold.' The broker said, 'You don't have any cattle here.' Well much to his disappointment the cattle were unhooked somewhere during the transfer from one rail company to another and they failed to get picked up. The rule was if the cattle didn't reach their destination in 40 hours then they had to be unloaded and fed and rested and watered so they were unloaded in Maryland and didn't make it for the Monday sale. My dad was really disappointed with the service he got from the railroad that time. That was the last time we ever loaded cattle on the railroad. They always went on trucks from there on."

In the summer the farmers in the Stuarts Draft area had a beef club as a means of having fresh meat because they had no freezers. "During the early summer months we'd start up and every two weeks one of the beef club members would take an animal to be butchered and cut up and divide it between the members," he recalled.

It was only natural that the Kindig men would gravitate toward farming as they reached adulthood. Earl was running a farm and keeping a few milk cows to help pay the bills. His brother, Lyle, was in the orchard business. Two things happened in 1959 which would change the course of their farming.

In September of 1959, John Kindig passed away suddenly, leaving a prosperous cattle business that needed tending. "At the time of his death, our dad had about 1,000 cattle he had purchased placed around in the neighboring counties and West Virginia. This put me in the cattle business real fast — a little faster than I really wanted to be, but since he had bought the cattle, I felt I was obligated to pick them up."

Even before their father's death, however, a hard spring freeze had killed all the fruit in Lyle's orchard. He was forced to take a job with a local building company to make ends meet. That fall some of the men he worked with invited Lyle on a duck hunt in New Jersey. While there he saw some Charolais-Hereford cross calves and pronounced them the largest for their age that he'd ever seen.

It was not long before Lyle returned to New Jersey and came home with a 7/8ths Charolais bull. This bull was probably the first Charolais in Virginia. Once that bull's calves started coming, he made quite a stir. One of the neighbors heard there were some purebred Charolais in Texas and asked Lyle to drive the Kindig's truck to Texas to haul some Charolais cattle he planned to buy.

The white Charolais originated in the mountains of France. However, most of the early 20th-century Charolais in the United States were descended from a group smuggled across the Mexican border into Texas during the 1930s.

Lyle and the neighbor started south on their road trip between Christmas and New Year's Day. According to Lyle, the closer they got to Texas the higher the broomsedge grew. Their journey soon led them to the middle of nowhere near Clarksville, Texas.

See *KINDIG*, page 9

Earl Kindig holds two bull calves born and bred from the Kinmont herd.

Photos courtesy Kindig family

•Kindig

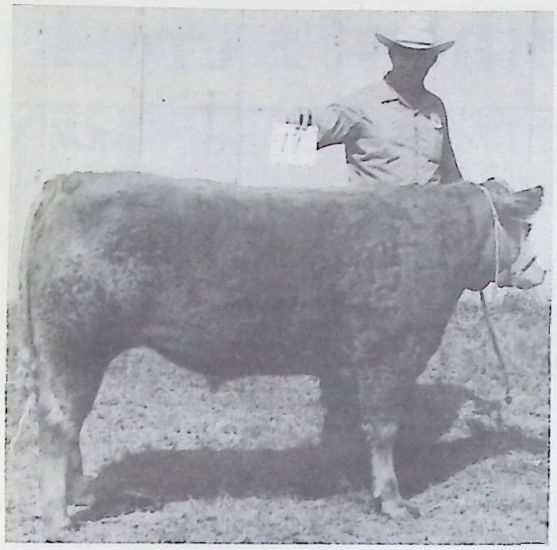
Continued from page 8

Eventually they found the Rafter S ranch and the Charolais cattle they were seeking. The neighbor was disappointed with the rough-looking range cattle they found, but he bought a few after Lyle decided to purchase two heifers and a purebred bull.

"So they had a pretty good load of cattle coming back. After they got back from the trip to Texas, our neighbor got on the telephone and called a breeder in Chillicothe, Missouri and bought six Charolais heifers and one purebred bull, sight unseen. When they came they were fat and fine and had long hair and were just what he was looking for. They sure did make those Texas heifers look crummy. Down the road though, those cattle calved together and every fall when he would wean his calves the most outstanding calves were out of those Texas heifers."

And with that the Kindigs were in the Charolais business. Actually they were Charolais pioneers in Virginia. This new breed differed from the more traditional breeds in a number of ways. For one thing their disposition is different. "You can't drive them, but they'll follow, so we learned to call cattle," explained Earl with a laugh. "The Charolais were noted for their growth and the fact that they put on more meat than fat. We sold freezer beef. People wanted it because we fed with hay and grain but the meat had less fat," he explained.

As their herd moved toward being totally Charolais, the Kindigs were faced with having to register their animals in 1966, which meant



This Charolais-cross steer bred by Kinmont Farm was the Grand Champion carcass steer at the Virginia State Fair in 1966.

giving them names. "We had three calves to register and I thought, 'Wouldn't this be awful if we had 100 calves and we had to sit around and give each one a name?' My sister finally came up with the idea of naming our farm Kinmont, and attaching a numbering system to the farm name. The name Kinmont comes from Kin for Kindig and mont because the Charolais come from the mountains of France. With this system we never had to think of another name," he said.

The herd developed by the Kindigs soon gained quite a reputation in the Virginia BCIA feedtest program. In 1967, two Kinmont bulls were tested at the Virginia feeder station. The animals surpassed all expectations. One weighed 1,200 pounds and one was 1,300 pounds at one year of age. For that age, the station had never had an animal even reach 900 pounds before the Kinmont animals arrived.

"This was the thing that would wake up people to realize what the Charolais breed could do," Earl explained. The next few years saw plenty of grand champion carcass awards come their way on the local and state level.

The final piece of the puzzle fell into place in 1970 when Earl and his son James Lee traveled to Oregon with the hopes of finding a good bull. They were looking for a polled bull, one that was born without horns. Commercial cattlemen don't like horns for a number of reasons: dehorning puts the animals through a surgical procedure, horned cattle run the risk of catching a horn in the barn, and horns bruise animals in shipping and the bruises show up on the carcass.

Almost all Charolais are naturally horned and most Angus will be born polled. The Kindigs had to find a purebred Charolais developed through a crossbreeding program with some Angus blood — one that had retained the polled gene. So they took a trip to Oregon to look over a herd out there.

"Because we had all horned cows, we really needed to search for an outstanding bull that had a lot of polled ancestry," remembered Earl. They struck a deal with the owner of the ranch out west that they could have the first pick of young bulls. So on the Fourth of July they headed west. Their first impressions of the conformation of the calves was disappointing, but after looking over the calves for sale they were told to wander around the ranch and enjoy themselves.

"We came to this one field between the house and the road and we happened to see this one bull calf that looked really outstanding. That little calf was standing like he was in a show. We came in for lunch and asked about the pedigree of that calf. The rancher looked him up and said, 'This calf has as many polled ancestors as any animal I have, but you don't want this animal because he's too young.'"

The Kindigs looked around again and decided that ACR Alfalfa John 075, who was only six weeks old, was their choice. They also purchased a couple of heifers and an older bull. They used the older bull for a year and then took him away. After that the "Poller Bull," as they nicknamed him, was their breeder of choice. As it turned out, he was a homozygous polled bull which meant his offspring would always be polled.

"That bull never sired a horned calf. That was a lucky day when my son and I picked that bull out. It was a shot in the dark, but in the long run it paid off. He put us on the map," said Earl.

The Poller Bull's offspring began to attract a lot of attention. Some of his heifers began bringing prices of $1,200 or $1,300 in the early 1970s. A Kinmont heifer at a sale in Pennsylvania commanded $8,000.

One rancher who really took notice of the Kinmont polled Charolais had a farm in Connecticut and another in Arkansas. He paid top dollar for a half interest in the Kindigs' Poller Bull in order to get his semen. Two-and-a-half years later a quarter of that half interest was sold. The argument has been made that the Poller Bull has influenced the American Charolais breed more than any other animal. Without a doubt that statement is true in Virginia.

The "Poller Bull" was purchased by the Kindig family of Stuarts Draft in 1970. The bull distinguished the family's herd of Charolais cattle by never producing any offspring with horns.

As the years passed, the entire Kindig family became deeply committed to promoting the Charolais breed. In 1975, Earl and Betty's daughter, Lucy, became the first Charolais Virginia Queen. She went on to be named the national queen. Four out of five years either James Lee or Lucy exhibited animals which claimed grand champion honors at the Augusta County 4-H and FFA Fat Stock Show. In 1978 the Virginia Charolais Association gave Earl the Mr. Charolais Promotion Award. Two years later Betty became the first and only woman to receive the Mr. Charolais Promotion Award.

Earl has been no stranger to national recognition by his peers. In 1984 he received the American International Charolais Association's Seedstock Producer Award. That was followed by the Allen K. Randolph Cattleman of the Year Award. In 2001 the Kindigs were recognized for their "pioneering and enthusiastic efforts in promoting the Charolais breed."

So that takes us back to the big fiberglass bull in the Kindigs' front yard. It seems that the Virginia Charolais Association owned a similar bull years ago and that bull made the rounds between members of the group. When the Kindigs had it, the bull became enough of a community landmark that people missed it when it was moved to the home of another member. So the Kindigs decided to get one of their own. "We've had it 10 years or so now," explained Earl and Betty. "Sometimes our real live big bull comes and paws the ground up in front of the fiberglass one," they said with a chuckle.

It's fitting that a big white bull should stand sentry at Kinmont Farm. Ask any beef cattle farmer today and they will tell you how intertwined the names Kindig, Kinmont and Charolais really are. It wasn't something that the Kindig family planned, but they had the agricultural and business sense to snap up an opportunity and enthusiastically run with it. Now the Kindigs are transitioning the farm to the next generation. The herd has been downsized and the farm is being rented to a neighbor.

Earl can't help but reflect on the chain of events that took him from being a small family farm operator to being a nationally-known breeder.

"We got into the Charolais business by accident and we got to go to Texas; you might say we hitchhiked our way to Texas," he said. Forty years later, he can glance out his farmhouse window and see a fiberglass bull standing still and proud, a symbol of the legacy he leaves for the next generation of breeders. —

Up the creek without a creek

DOWN ON THE FARM

BY

BETTY JO HAMILTON

Down on the farm we're thinking it's hard to put into words what is happening. My usual tendency for levity and wit seems to have withered with everything else in the ongoing drought.

Admittedly, writing about the farm sometimes is a catharsis for me. However, recording events as they unfold is anything but cathartic at present. It is painful to face decisions that must be made, necessary though they may be. It is no less painful to confront the reality that even more difficult decisions may lie ahead.

I suppose it can be said that all a farmer's hopes and dreams can be realized in a single drop of rain. On a farm, rain is money. In fact, sometimes rain is better than money. For all the hard work and money we invest in crops and livestock, there can be little gain if it doesn't rain. And that is what has been happening — or not happening (rain, that is) since late last summer — or three years ago, if you really want to get technical.

If you aren't intimately connected with farming, you probably don't give much thought to precipitation or lack thereof. Countless days of "beautiful weather" — days and days of clear, sunny skies — are good. There's never the inconvenience of a planned event cancelled or postponed due to inclement conditions. Few of us complained this past winter when there were no snowstorms with which to contend. Augusta County schools made it through the year without taking a single snow day — something that hasn't happened for almost 20 years. We didn't give much thought to how the lack of snowfall was affecting groundwater or surface water.

We thought we'd seen what a drought was three years ago. The summer of 1999 was proclaimed the driest summer since the dustbowl conditions of the 1930s. The two years between '99 and present were only marginal from a precipitation standpoint. Crop production in 2000 and '01 was only average even though rainfall was not. One statistic I have heard quoted is that over a three-year period — from '99 through '01 — we missed an entire year's worth of precipitation. Add to that the disastrously low precipitation from the winter of '01 and matters only became worse. April and May of '02 proved a respite from dry conditions, but by the end of May, it seemed all chances of rain were beginning to dim. And it's not just the lack of typical rainfall which has hurt.

We consider floods to be a bad thing. Certainly they can result in great loss of life and property damage. But we probably don't consider what floods do for groundwater reserves. We haven't had a major flood since Hurricane Fran came through in September 1996. Fran dropped 9-11 inches of rain on the area in a 24-hour period and flooding surpassed levels not seen in possibly 100 years. Six years have elapsed since Fran's visit to the area. While there has been some minor flash flooding due to heavy localized downpours, we have not seen flooding on a scale that a hurricane brings and, therefore, the groundwater levels have not been infused from the vast runoff associated with this type of flooding.

Likewise, our winters have been mild. We don't consider what benefit winter weather conditions are to the soil. Freezing and thawing draws moisture deep into the soil. Freezing of the soil and changes in soil temperature enable soil to hold moisture long into the spring and early summer. When there isn't precipitation in the winter months and when the temperature doesn't stay low enough for long periods this affects the way the soil holds moisture into the growing season.

Some folks have asked me if I think our climate is changing. "Is it the greenhouse effect?" they ask. Others pose the question, "Have we damaged the environment so that our atmosphere doesn't work right anymore?" I don't know the answers to these questions and I suspect if you convened a roomful of scientists and asked them these questions you would get a roomful of answers that would take several years to sort out. All I know about the weather is what Will Rogers said: "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it."

I do know that lack of precipitation can put farmers out of business. And if farmers are going out of business or if they have to curtail their production, you can bet you will begin to see some differences when you go to through the grocery store checkout line.

What makes this drought even more painful for farmers is that right now — when farmers are selling livestock because they do not have feed and water to support it — market prices are plummeting. The week before the Fourth of July, market lamb prices dropped $10 per hundredweight. From mid-June to mid-July, dressed cattle prices dropped almost $20 per hundredweight. The hog market has had only a few glimmers of strength since it collapsed a few years ago. There couldn't be a worse time for the forced sale of livestock.

And because the past two growing seasons have been only marginal, farmers have been unable to increase their feed stores. Many farmers fed livestock during the drought of '99 and that feed has not been replaced. Every day livestock is fed now means one less day in the winter it can be fed. And if market conditions are bad now, it's reasonable not to expect much in the way of a mid-winter improvement.

Ironically, having enough feed for livestock has become secondary to having enough water for livestock. We're seeing the bottoms of creeks that we've never seen before, not just in my lifetime, but my parents' lifetimes too. Springs that have never "gone dry" are now non-existent. You can't drive a country mile without seeing a backhoe at work putting down waterlines, a well rig drilling for water or a farmer hauling water to livestock.

In mid-June we lost a piece of pasture because the creek simply stopped running. There was very little pasture left on that farm by then anyway. We were days away from moving the cattle for lack of pasture. The decision to move them was hastened by the lack of a fresh water source. We moved them to pasture that was no improvement from a feed standpoint, but did offer some water. But because we were only moving them upstream from where their previous water source went dry, we couldn't count on being able to support their needs for any length of time. Ultimately, 35 of these cattle were sent to market 90 days ahead of time and 120 pounds short of their usual market weights.

We watched the creek that provides water to the farm grow more and more shallow each day and made arrangements to put in troughs which would draw off the well at the farm. We ran 2,100 feet of underground waterline and installed three 600-gallon tanks to provide livestock with water. As God is my witness, I will never rely on surface water again.

We watched the winter wheat crop virtually fail. Dry conditions last fall and through the winter prevented wheat from growing properly in its formative stages. Many people didn't waste time and money harvesting their wheat and simply mowed it. Those who did harvest, reported yields of 15 bushels per acre — 60-100 bushels an acre is typical in a year with average rainfall. No wheat means no feed for sheep through the winter and no feed for lambing ewes in the spring. Minus 30 ewes that were sold for breeding purposes, the entire spring flock — some 230 animals — were shipped to market. Twenty years of hard work gone in the time it takes to load a pot belly trailer. And that doesn't take into account the monetary loss associated with selling lambs which had not yet reached their finished market weights.

The day we had scheduled to send the sheep to market was the day of the "miracle" rain. The rain that fell overnight on a Saturday and through the day on Sunday provided a solid one inch of precipitation. No forecasters called for the rain. It just seemed to come out of nowhere. It happened that the rain fell the night before we were to load the sheep to send them to market. To add insult to injury, the pasture became so sloppy from the rain that we had to pull the tractor and trailer in and out in order to load the sheep.

Through the notoriously dry dog days of summer, scattered storms provided some relief in the form of varying amounts of rainfall the week after the Fourth. If your corn was in Mint Spring, it might have received almost two inches of rain the second week in July. If your corn was in Middlebrook, it might have received 3/4-inch of rain. With the prospects of a substantial corn crop dwindling, on the heels of a hay crop that only yielded half to 2/3 of its usual output, keeping 100 cows and calves through the winter would be impossible. We shipped 33 cow/calf pairs 100 miles north hoping that market — where rainfall has been more abun-

See *DROUGHT*, page 12

Prolonged drought conditions have forced farmers to cut herd sizes. We sent 33 cow/calf pairs to market in mid-July in order to stretch winter feed stores. Water supplies have become critical on many Shenandoah Valley farms due to the lack of precipitation over the past four years.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rain rainrainrain

In case you're wondering what this is all about, we need some rain.

-- This message brought to you by farmers everywhere

rain rain rain rain

Mt. Solon woman diversifies farm operation with hydroponics

By SUE SIMMONS

Robin Ulmer is living a dream.

As a wife and stay-home-mother of four, she has managed to turn an activity she enjoys into a for-profit venture.

Robin raises hydroponic greenhouse tomatoes and cucumbers.

"You have to work five months in the greenhouse before you ever sell a tomato," Ulmer says. Her comment is a cautionary one for enthusiastic but naive entrepreneurs.

To grow hydroponic and/or greenhouse produce such as hers, "you just can't go down to the farm co-op and buy some plants. You have to start from special seed developed specifically for those conditions," she adds. "The five-month wait is rough."

Robin first became interested in hydroponics in high school. As a student at an area Christian school, she decided to raise green beans hydroponically for a science fair project.

"They died by the day of the fair," Ulmer laughs. As a matter-of-fact, she raised two ill-fated crops. A judge visited her home in advance of the fair and was very impressed by her results. But, because the plants were not living the day of the judging, the man couldn't give her credit even for what appeared to be a good effort.

Robin and her husband Alan needed a farm business that would supplement and diversify their farm and his carpenter's income, as well as one that would fit the needs of caring for four children at home. They began looking around for a second-hand greenhouse.

The one they found just happened to have a hydroponic set-up. "The man we bought it from got us started with the beginning stages," Robin explains. "The rest we picked up from books and from companies that supply hydro-gardens." The Ulmers learned well. The first year, their supply could not meet the demand. They took their profit and invested in a second greenhouse.

The new greenhouse is home to "Trust" variety tomatoes. The old structure is now the "cucumber house" where burpless European cucumbers — "Discover" variety — are grown. Robin would eventually like to raise color peppers.

Now in their third year of business with sales of between 20 and 60 pounds of tomatoes weekly, Robin has all she can do to supply her customers at the Staunton-Augusta Farmers' Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

"I will not raise tomatoes for sale this winter," she states, adding that area restaurants are not willing to pay her $2.50 a pound (off-season) price. Even though customers repeatedly recommend her product and because not enough of her regular customers make the long trek to her Mt. Solon farm, the enterprise can't pay for itself in off-season months.

Tending her greenhouse crops requires 10 to 12 hours a week to maintain the plants and about 5 hours of picking in the peak season. Huge fans circulate air through the greenhouse and a computerized feeding system assures that the plants are neither over- nor underfed. Two beehives on posts above the plants are necessary for pollination.

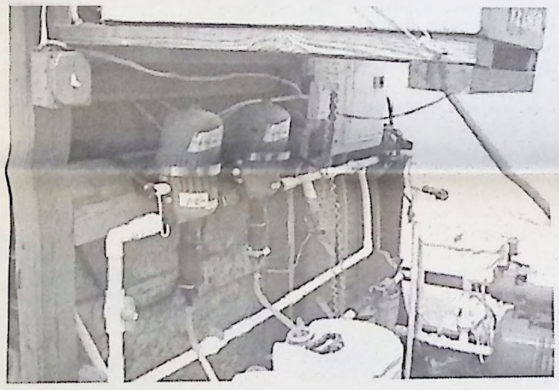
"These plants are very unforgiving," Robin says as she stands among tomato plants that are 18 feet tall, growing in a peat moss medium kept wet with soaker hoses.

A large garden, grape arbor, and raspberry patch behind the house serves the families needs, but Robin is clearly pleased and proud of her hydroponics enterprise.

"I really like selling the produce. I like meeting people. And it's flexible," she says, smiling. It's very peaceful work."

It's a dream job. —

Justin Ulmer enjoys one of the tomatoes grown hydroponically by his mom, Robin. Photos by Sue Simmons



This pump feeds the water-based growing system in the Ulmers' greenhouse.

Beehives in the greenhouses provide pollination necessary to grow vegetables indoors.

Multipurpose dill relaxes, lulls

Down to Earth

By Mollie Bryan

It is said that dill will protect you from witches and the evil eye. I don't know about that, but I think it has one of the best aromas I have ever smelled — so fresh and relaxing. Evidently, I am not the only one who thinks this — the name "dill" comes from the Norse for "to lull" and was once used to induce sleep. And the famed herbalist Culpeper has this to say about dill:

"Mercury has the dominion of this plant, and therefore to be sure it strengthens the brain... It stays the hiccough, [when] boiled in wine, and [then] smelled [after] being tied in a cloth. The seed is of more use than the leaves, and more effectual to digest raw and vicious humours, and is used in medicines that serve to expel wind, and the pains proceeding therefrom..."

Dill's history goes back even further to the gardens of ancient Athens and Rome. Fragrant dill garlands crowned war heroes on their return home. Aromatic wreaths of the yellow flowers hung in Roman banquet halls. Today, dill is mostly known throughout the world for culinary purposes, though herbalists still use the herb to calm stomachs, to increase a nursing mother's milk, and to whet the appetite.

One of my favorite ways to use dill is to mix it in plain yogurt (preferably homemade); a friend of mine will sometimes add mustard to this mixture and tells me it's good. I also really like dill bread.

Dill freezes well; just snip it and put it in a freezer bag and you are set. It does not blacken the way basil will in the freezer.

Of course, when most Americans think of dill, we think of pickles — one of my favorite treats. I found this interesting quote about making pickles. "Gather the tops of the ripest dill and cover the bottom of the vessel, and lay a layer of Cucumbers and another of Dill till you have filled the vessel within a handful of the top. Then take as much water as you think will fill the vessel and mix it with salt and a quarter of a pound of allom to a gallon of water and poure it on them and press them down with a stone on them and keep them covered close. For that use I think the water will be best boyl'd and cold, which will keep longer sweet, or if you like not this pickle, doe it with water, salt and white wine vinegar, or (if you please) pour the water and salt on them scalding hot which will make them ready to use the sooner." (From *Receipt Book of Joseph Cooper, Cook to Charles I, 1640.*)

While doing research about dill, I noted that it grows in India, Asia, Europe and Africa.

Considerable quantities of dill fruit are imported from India and Japan. Indian dill is grown in the Indies under the name of "soyah," its fruit and leaves being used for flavoring pickles. Its fruits are narrower and more convex than American dill; it has paler, more distinct ridges and narrower wings. The oils from both Japanese and Indian dill differ from our dill oil, in having a higher specific gravity (0.948 to 0.968), which is ascribed to the presence of dill apiol, and in containing much less carvone. It should not be substituted for the official oil.

African dill oil is produced from plants grown from English imported seed. The fruits are slightly larger than the English fruits and a little more pale in color — their odor closely resembling the English. The yield of oil is slightly larger than that of English fruits. It is considered that if the fruits can be produced in Cape Colony, they should form a most useful source of supply.

Dill is certainly a pretty plant to watch. Its delicate yellow flowers branch out on long stems and pick up any movement in the breeze, almost like a dance. —

Farmers' Market invites public to enter 'tomato growing' contest

VERONA — The Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market has announced its annual tomato growing contest will be expanded to include the general public. The first contest in 2001 was limited to participating farmers with the market organization. The keen competition resulted in a behemoth tomato from Fort Defiance grower Susan Randall. The monster tomato weighed almost three pounds.

"This has been a lot of fun for our growers associated with the farmers' market," said Jeff Ishee, market manager. "It was so much fun, we decided to open it up to all residents of Staunton, Waynesboro and Augusta County."

The rules are straightforward according to Ishee who said, "This is designed to be a fun contest and to see essentially who can grow the biggest tomato." Prizes will be awarded on Sept. 4 at the official weigh-in, which will take place at the Wednesday afternoon location of the farmers' market in Verona. Participants do not have to pre-register. For more information, call the farmers' market at 332-3802.

Rules include:

1. All residents of Staunton, Waynesboro and Augusta County are eligible to enter this contest. No pre-registration is necessary. Participating growers of the Staunton/Augusta Farmers' Market are also eligible regardless of residence.

2. Each person may enter one tomato in the competition.

3. There is one division: ages 14 -104

4. The tomato submitted for judging must be grown by the person bringing it in. No "absentee growers" please. Any variety of tomato is eligible.

5. The tomato will be judged by one factor only... weight. Ugliness (of either the tomato or the grower) will not be a consideration in determining the winner. It's very simple — the heaviest tomato wins! Electronic scales will be used to judge the entries.

6. In case of a tie with identical weights, the tomato with the largest measurable circumference wins.

7. The tomato submitted for judging may not contain birdshot, metal slugs, tire weights, injections of any fluid, or any other substance unnatural to a regular, normal, homegrown tomato. And, oh yes, the entire stem must be removed prior to weigh-in.

Judging will occur at 5 p.m., Sept. 4 at the market location in Verona (Augusta County Government Center Market Dock). There will be an informal award ceremony immediately following. May the best 'mater win!

First Prize: $3 in gold coins, a pair of farmers' market coffee mugs, and a handshake with a big old, hearty "Atta boy."

Second Prize: $2 in gold coins, a farmers' market ball cap and a handshake with a sincere "Aawwlmost!"

Third Prize: $1 in gold coin... and a consoling pat on the back. —

Drought

Continued from page 10

dant than here — might attract buyers for these cattle. Picking out these cow/calf pairs to sell can only be described as agonizing. I couldn't bring myself to see them sold. I didn't make the 100-mile trip the day of the sale. I called the stockyard and listened via a telephone line hooked through to the auctioneer as the cattle were sold. It took 15 minutes to sell the 33 pairs of cows and calves. A quarter-century of hard work gone in the span of a quarter-hour.

I will be the first to admit that I personalize the farm way too much. I recognized some time ago that I had developed what might be characterized as an unhealthy perspective on the importance of the farm to me on a personal level. I convinced myself that I had made some significant strides in distancing myself from the farm or rather severing the umbilical cord between myself and the farm with the farm being the organism which supported and nurtured my existence. There obviously are inherent dangers in defining oneself through what is, essentially, an occupation. I can rationalize myself into catatonia over these decisions and they are still no easier to accept. That bald guy on Oprah would have a field day with me and my farm psyche.

Essentially what has been done is to cut the sheep flock by 75 percent and the cowherd by 30 percent. In order for us to hold these levels through the winter months, it has to start raining and keep raining. We need regrowth in pastures to carry the livestock through the remainder of the summer, through the fall and into the early winter before we must begin feeding. We need enough rain to harvest a 60 percent corn crop and some second cutting hay. Obviously, we need enough rain to replenish groundwater reserves so there will be ample water for livestock now and through the winter.

There have been many occasions on the farm when nature has challenged us. We have been up the creek without a paddle before. This is the first time we've been up the creek without a creek. At least when we're up the creek without a paddle we can let the current carry us along until we get to a spot where we can make it to shore. Just now though we'll have to wait for Mother Nature to send us some water, get the stream flowing again, and start floating us along on another journey down on the farm. —

That green space we call a lawn

In the Garden

By Jenifer Bradford

Lawn (n): Space, usually level, covered with grass, and kept smoothly mown, as near a house or in a public park. The front lawn is the most universal feature of American residential landscaping.

Nearly every garden has a lawn. It sets off flowerbeds, separates different areas, provides a soft place to walk or sit, and invokes a feeling of coolness, greenness, and calm. Even a small lawn can make a big impact and become a centerpiece.

Lawns don't have to be composed of grass. Moss grows much better in the shade. Sometimes creeping herbs such as thyme or chamomile are used. Sometimes groundcovers make a good substitute such as mondo grass or liriope with stepping stones as pathways.

Different grasses grow in the south (Bermuda, zoysia, St. Augustine, centipede, and buffalo) than in the north (tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass). Most of us in Virginia favor cool-season grasses such as fescues and bluegrass because they remain relatively green in the winter. They become dormant during hot, dry summers (left unwatered), but recover in the fall as the heat dissipates and rain returns.

Lawn maintenance can be reduced by using wide mowing edges (brick, stone, or mulch); by cultivating a meadow (allowing grasses, native species, and introducing wildflowers to grow tall and cutting once each year in early spring); by developing woodlands and shady areas; and by expanding decks and patios, building wide paths, and by expanding borders of flowers and shrubs.

However, most of us choose to cultivate a small swath or sward of green, or several small lawns, sometimes just as a walkway.

A handsome lawn doesn't have to take hours of labor (unless you have to cut acres and acres). For many gardeners some basics and the right timing will produce the desired effect.

Test your soil; use the right seed; keep those noxious weeds under control; check for diseases and insects; fertilize at the proper time; keep your lawnmower sharp; cut at the right height; keep edges clipped or cut with a spade; de-thatch each fall if needed; reseed bare patches each fall; use curved edges if possible.

Fall is the best time to reseed a lawn, start a new lawn, or to fertilize existing lawns.

Soil tests are essential to maintain proper pH levels. Grass prefers a range of 5.8 to 6.5. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service provides kits, instructions, and testing.

New beds require good site preparation. The soil needs to be friable and stone-free.

Staunton sits on limestone (which grass loves), but other acidic areas may need liming (50 pounds of lime per 1,000 square feet is the norm).

Compost or other granular fertilizer can be tilled into a seedbed. Use a fertilizer containing a "WIN" (water insoluble nitrogen) factor. A WIN factor of 50 percent is ideal.

When reseeding select a high quality tall fescue turf type seed. There are many improved varieties. A shady area requires a fine fescue such as creeping red or chewnings type. Use certified, weedfree seed.

New seedbeds need to be lightly mulched and irrigated frequently.

Established lawns should be fertilized between Aug. 15 through November. Use a 4-1-2 ratio (4 parts nitrogen to 1 part phosphate to 2 parts potash). The numbers are on the bag.

Do not fertilize in the spring: This leads to excess leaf growth and loss of root mass.

Let clippings remain on the lawn when possible. They are a source of organic matter, and decompose rapidly.

Reel mowers are the preferred type of lawnmower. The blades cut beautifully (when kept sharp) and leave those attractive alternate bands as the mower is reversed with each turn. A hand-pushed reel mower is ideal for a small lawn and makes no annoying noise or odor.

Similarly a few pesky weeds can be dug up by hand. Larger areas need a chemical control.

A brief lawn care calendar follows:

Sept. — Aerate, fertilize, and overseed. De-thatch if needed.

Oct. — Fertilize. Rake and save leaves for mulch or compost.

Nov. — Apply winter broadleaf control. Fertilize.

Mar. — Apply pre-emergent crabgrass control. Lime if needed.

Apr. — Test soil. Lime if needed. Apply summer broadleaf control.

May — Lime if needed. Apply second crabgrass pre-emergent.

Thus, in these dog days of summer, we should look over our grasslands, enjoy their softness underfoot, and relish their texture and function. Imagine what our world would be like without them, natural or manicured. What would our animals feed on down on the farm? No golf either. —

~~ Garden tips for late summer ~~

I've been reading various gardening newsletters and articles recently as a respite to working outdoors (this is late June as I write). I wanted to pass along several news items that may be of interest as you sit back and relax.

— The popular flower carpet roses, so useful when massed as a groundcover, and almost maintenance free, now come in pink, white, apple blossom, red, and coral — new this year. Look for the pink pots at your local garden center.

— The *Phlox Paniculata* group was named the perennial plant of 2002. The mildew-resistant David variety was spotted growing in the Brandywine Conservancy garden in Chadds Ford, Pa., in 1987 by two horticulturists. It was propagated by Richard Simons at his Bluemont Nurseries in Monkton, Md., and named after the husband of F.A. Mooberry.

— Jackson & Perkins has introduced a ruby-red hybrid tea, the first of three new roses, to celebrate Habitat for Humanity's 25th year of building homes for needy families.

— Fossil remains have been found in northeast China of a primitive, aquatic flowering plant (progenitor of today's water lilies) that dates back over 125 million years. These fossil remains appear to be the oldest flowering plant known to man.

— Since Jan. 22 the USDA has tightened up regulations for importing seeds to the United States. A phytosanitary certificate must now accompany all seed orders. New regulations are being proposed to reduce the importation of invasive plant species called the "Draft Action Plan for the Noxious Weed Program." Stricter importation legislation intends to curb the dramatic spread of invasive alien plants such as *Lythrum salicaria* (purple loosestrife). Readers please do not grow Lythrum, destroy any existing plants, and discourage others from growing it.

Meanwhile, back in the garden, here are a few tips for late summer:

— Keep the garden well watered.

— Continue deadheading and cleaning up old, dying foliage.

— Cut back leggy annuals and perennials and feed with a liquid fertilizer to promote fall growth.

— Weed thoroughly.

— Plant fall vegetables. Transplant greens, broccoli, and cauliflower. Sow seeds of greens, lettuce, English and snow peas, spinach, beets, and turnips.

— Cut back and fertilize hybrid roses. Apply fungicide as necessary.

— Cut German iris leaves into fan shapes (1 foot high) and clean up base debris.

— Pull up dead stalks and leaves from daylilies. Cut off seedheads.

— Trim vines.

— Deadhead buddlias and crape myrtles to encourage new blooms.

— Buy cushion mums early to get the best selections. Use them to replace spent annuals.

— Freshen up window boxes and planters by pulling out old annuals and adding fall flowers or more greenery.

— Catch the season-end sales at garden centers. Perennials and shrubs are good bargains. Give them a good prune, fertilize, and water well to settle in.

— Look for other season-end bargains such as hoses, tools, and statuary.

— Keep bird baths and fountains clean and filled.

— Rake up early leaves.

— Prune evergreens.

— Spray scale insects with oil emulsion.

— Turn the compost pile. Water well.

— Divide perennials.

— Clean up dropped fruit.

Staunton Church of the Brethren to host Archbold

Staunton Church of the Brethren and Evangelist Phill Carlos Archbold will be holding a revival Sept. 29 through Oct. 2. Services begin on Sunday, Sept. 29, at the 11 a.m. service and continue that evening and each evening at 7 p.m. through Oct. 2.

A native of Panama, Archbold was educated in the canal zone, Jamaica, and the United States. He became a Christian at age 9 during a mission revival and was licensed to the youth ministry at age 17. After graduating from Clarksville Seminary in Tennessee, Archbold became a United States citizen and served his country in Vietnam as a staff secretary to General William Westmoreland.

The Evangelist first visited the First Church of the Brethren Brooklyn in 1967 where he observed Love Feast and made an instant decision to join that church.

Archbold became that church's associate pastor in 1970 and continues to serve in that capacity. He has been recognized by *Group Magazine* as Youth Leader of the Year for his work addressing the needs of youth living in poverty in the area surrounding the church.

A Brooklyn youth noted, "He was a leader not by words but by action. He literally became my spiritual father."

He served as the moderator of the Church of the Brethren's Annual Conference in 2001.

A strong advocate of evangelism, Archbold calls on Christians to make a commitment to a life of radical discipleship. "Faith Under Construction" will be theme he develops during his week at Staunton Church of the Brethren.

The public is invited to attend these services. On Oct. 2, a Love Feast will be held at 6 p.m. and the church service will begin at 7:30. Anyone wishing to participate or attend Love Feast is invited. Call Staunton Church of the Brethren at 886-8655 for information. —

Schoolhouse News

Summer walking: The teacher takes a walk or two

From the teacher's desk

By Betty Gatewood

After one of my health screenings about 10 years ago, my doctor suggested that I begin walking because I had high cholesterol. She said to pick a nice, safe route and walk as often as I could. "Swing those arms and walk until you sweat some!" Our weekends were pretty active with hiking, birdwatching, gardening, mowing, etc., but I needed to do something more.

On weekends, I often added a three-mile walk around the area, and on school mornings, I used to get up about 5 a.m. to walk in the neighborhood. I'd walk for 30 minutes or so, then I'd be home in time for My Husband the Taxonomist to go off to work about 6 a.m. I would feel so smug that I had done my exercising before my day of mothering and teaching. It was a pretty good plan.

On my weekend walks, I'd plan my teaching day and my next unit. I'd come up with really creative ideas, and I'd figure out how to tackle problems. My weekday walking was often devoted to thinking of daily duties as I walked in the early morning darkness. On one particular dark February morning about 5:30 a.m., a loose neighborhood dog bit me on the left hip as I walked past his house. This big black dog that barked once and with the next breath dug into me was "Teddy Bear." (HUMPH!) His family paid for my day off from school and my doctor bills and royally broke my reverie! That is a story for another time — actually, it is one I tell my students about because there is a pet responsibility and rabies information opportunity there. But I digress. Back to the benefits of walking.

Betty Gatewood pauses along the trail at the intersection of Road Hollow and Shenandoah Mountain trails on a recent outing.

Photo by Mark Gatewood

When you read this in late summer, I hope that I've been able to stay with my summer solution to an exercise regimen. I still have higher cholesterol than I should, and I've picked up a few extra annoying pounds in the last few years. Sometimes during the school year I talk myself into going to town to take an aerobics class, run on the treadmill or do some machines at the Y. There are always people there who inspire you to stick with the plan — some are those beautiful bodies, and some are those not-so-beautiful bodies who need to be there.

The Y plan is hard to stick to for me because it requires an extra 30-40 minutes of travel time to and from the Y after school, but sometimes I do it. I have done laps on our nature trail some lighted mornings, but it would only take one sleepy encounter with a skunk in the darkness to make me once again adjust my plan.

So last summer, two friends who walk as part of their weight loss program, invited me to join them for their 6 a.m. laps around the local church and cemetery. They had figured that four laps make just about three miles and they could do it in about an hour. This schedule during the summer works, and it makes me get up and get going early. It is a social and healthy activity time for us too, because during our jaunts, we also solve the world's problems and share personal trivia.

There are obvious health benefits to doing this. We all know that we need to do at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week. It is good for our muscles, bones, heart and relieving stress. Doing such a weight-bearing exercise as walking is supposed to reduce (delay?) the possibility of osteoporosis. According to the "walking website," http://walking.about.com, which is full of equipment, schedules, diet/recipes, technique and support information, "Walking is a great, natural way to achieve daily physical activity... the goal is to have you walking comfortably for 30 minutes to an hour, the level recommended to help prevent heart disease, type II diabetes, breast and colon cancer." Those future benefits are undeniable, but I benefit immediately by reveling and noticing the rhythms of the natural world in the early morning.

Six o'clock can be cool and foggy, chilly and clear, or hazy and steamy. But we do know that our hour of walking is the coolest we'll see until the next 6 a.m. Usually on the far end of the first loop, we gaze at the bright orange orb of the summer sun rising in the east. Some mornings we see the moon setting in the west as the sun rises in the east. That is super cool. At home in the evening, when we are busy watering flowers or gardens, we savor the sunset. I enjoy seeing the complete cycle of the summer skies and couldn't do it unless I was hooked into this early morning jaunt.

When we walk that early in the morning, we get to experience some wildlife that goes unseen during most of the day. Rabbits, squirrels, and an occasional opossum might saunter by. But the birds are really waking up and that's where my focus is. Bluebirds, robins, jays, wrens, chimney swifts, meadowlarks, crows, cardinals, sparrows, and orioles are supremely busy getting their tasks done in the coolness as they fly overhead or hop among the tombstones and plantings looking for food. Some mornings, I get gross and analyze the animal droppings along the loop — "...yep, there's opossum scat! Or is that raccoon, maybe skunk."

See *WALK*, page 15

Betty Gatewood works in the "kitchen" along the trail in Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area. When she wasn't busy with food preparation, Betty spent some time in the Sexton Cabin area birdwatching for warblers.

Photo by Mark Gatewood

RHS FCCLA participates in national meeting

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — "Get Informed, Get Involved, Get Connected" was the theme of the National Leadership Meeting of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. The weeklong conference held recently in Minneapolis was attended by 5,000 youth and adults from across the country, involving the 154-member Virginia delegation. Motivational speakers, workshops, exhibits, displays, and election of national officers provided the means for active conference involvement.

Riverheads members took part in STAR Event competition (Students Taking Action with Recognition). Jessica Roadcap and Leslie Truxell presented in Community Service, earning a silver medal. Their manual told of projects involving Community Child Care Center and New Directions. Jessica is the daughter of Cindy Barnett of Greenville and will attend Blue Ridge Community College in the fall. Leslie is the daughter of Dianne Buxton of Mint Spring and is 2003 chapter first vice president.

In the Focus on Children event, Sarah Bernier created a display and script related to teaching young children about stranger danger awareness which earned a gold medal. Sarah is a 2002 RHS graduate, will attend Eastern Mennonite University, and is the daughter of Dave and Martha Bernier of Raphine.

Carla Snow, 2003 chapter president, was awarded a gold medal for her Illustrated Talk competition. The speech with posters related facts on melanoma cancer and told how FCCLA members can get involved in the fight against cancer.

In the Chapter Showcase event, Lauren McGehee and Maggie Gilstrap, brought home a gold medal, portraying the variety of projects and activities conducted by the chapter during the 2002 school year. Lauren is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John McGehee and Maggie is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Benny Gilstrap of Stuarts Draft. Both members will be chapter officers for the coming school year.

Heather Higgins, daughter of Robert and Wanda Higgins of Greenville and Lauren Davis, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Davis of Staunton, entered the Interpersonal Communication Event, discussing various techniques used to spread the message of breaking the code of silence in STOP the Violence program. This presentation earned a gold medal for these 2003 chapter officers.

As members attended workshops during the conference, special emphasis was placed on four national programs — Families First, Student Body, Financial Fitness, and FACTS (Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety). Members took part in Destination Outreach Community Service project, where over 167,000 minutes were donated in phone cards to be sent to United States military service personnel.

The Riverheads members were accompanied by Kathleen Buchanan, adviser. During the conference she served as Virginia Adviser-to-Adviser coordinator and was awarded the Adviser Mentor recognition. While in Minneapolis, the City of Lakes, participants took part in a guided bus tour, traveled to Adventure Fair, visited St. Paul, shopped at Mall of America, and took part in a Mississippi River paddleboat ride. The Riverheads delegation would like to thank the families, chapter members, community groups, and school administration that made the national meeting experience possible. —

Riverheads FCCLA chapter members display STAR Event medals earned recently during National Conference. Standing L to R: Heather Higgins, Lauren Davis, Lauren McGehee, Sarah Bernier, and Leslie Truxell. Kneeling L to R: Carla Snow, Jessica Roadcap, and Maggie Gilstrap.

Photo courtesy RHS FCCLA

RHS team wins state contest

BLACKSBURG -- The Riverheads High School FFA livestock judging team placed first in competition during the State FFA Convention held June 24-27 at Virginia Tech.

Team members included Jonathan Coleman, Cole Heizer, Garrett Irvine, and Jake Leonard.

Heizer was high overall individual in the contest. Coleman was ninth high individual.

Heizer is the son of Bill and Suzanne Heizer of Middlebrook. Coleman is the son of J.R. and Betty Coleman of Arbor Hill. Irvine is the son of Carl and Janice Irvine of Walkers Creek. Leonard is the son of Sam and Luann Leonard of Haytie.

The team advances to competition at the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky., in October. ---

The Riverheads FFA livestock judging team placed first in state competition held recently in Blacksburg. Team members pictured at left include (from left) Jonathan Coleman, Cole Heizer, Garrett Irvine, and Jake Leonard.

Photo courtesy RHS FFA

◦Walk

Continued from page 14

By the end of the fourth loop, we are ready to head home for some nourishment, so after we polish off another half loop, we slow our pace and head back to the cars. Homeward bound we go, because work or summer chores awaits us all. But we feel smug and virtuous for having completed our walking before we face the work day. We also feel refreshed for connecting with each other by sharing our daily thoughts and concerns.

My Husband the Taxonomist and I often walk, hike, bird-watch, and botanize together. Now that Betsy, our daughter, is pretty self-sufficient for a day or so, we decided it was time to push the overnight hiking thing a little more. Over the Father's Day Weekend, we renewed our relationship with exercising in a wilderness setting by backpacking again. We decided to do a little tame backpack trip into Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area just to refresh and test ourselves, and also to see how our dated equipment would hold up.

See *WEEKEND*, page 17

The Hitching Post

Patience needed to teach good behavior, break bad habits

Q: I have a problem with my horse. When I lead him he gets pushy. Sometimes he tries to run me over. How can I get him to lead correctly with good manners?

There are a couple of reasons why a horse would push a handler around while leading. Let's look at some of the different ideas and then try to work out a solution that suits your situation.

Many times a young horse will try to have body contact with a handler because of its age. If you watch a young foal walking beside a mare you will see it make constant contact with its mother. It is this contact which gives the foal a feeling of security. When starting to train a young foal to lead, the handler has to teach it to walk at a safe distance. If taught properly the foal will not crowd or make body contact with its handler. This is part of good ground manners.

Let's keep in mind the foal's behavior in looking at older horses. Often horses that are scared will adopt this first instinct to make body contact for a sense of security. Sometimes there are horses that become so frightened that they literally try to crawl on top of their handlers. How the handler reacts to this situation can either correct the problem or allow it to get worse. The horse should have its unacceptable behavior corrected immediately. A horse should have good behavior in spite of its fear. A horse with good ground manners should not overreact to situations. This is the most fundamental part of its training.

If this doesn't correct the problem, we can progress into the next reason why a horse would have poor ground manners. If a horse has been allowed either through neglectful training during the first stages or through improper handling at a later date to have developed a problem, it is possible this problem has become habitual. This means a more difficult challenge for you. You will have to work to replace the poor behavior with correct behavior. And habits are sometimes hard to break.

Your first goal will be to create a positive picture in your mind of what you want. Picture yourself leading your horse correctly. The second part of your training process will be to understand some of the root causes that set the stage for this behavior such as the ones discussed earlier.

Remember the horse needed a sense of security. Building trust and confidence should be part of the picture. Next to consider is to actually make the horse perform the act and then reward the good behavior constantly. This will reinforce a new habit. I can give a familiar example of teaching with this method. When a trainer teaches a puppy to sit many times, the trainer will have to push down on the puppy's hind end to create the results. The trainer actually has to force the puppy to perform the act. Finally, depending upon the puppy's willingness to learn and intelligence, the puppy starts to sit on command. It is much the same with horses only on a bigger scale. Sometimes a trainer will have to force the horse to behave in order to teach it to behave.

In teaching your horse not to crowd, you will have to reassure it to build its confidence and sense of security. You will also have to be prepared to force good behavior. And finally, you will have to encourage this good behavior until it replaces the old habits.

Take it from the Horse's Mouth, teaching a horse proper behavior is only difficult in the beginning. After a while it does get easier. —

I.B. Hoofinit says goodbye

By CHRIS MARRS

I started this feature column in 1996 with the first I.B. Hoofinit. Since then I have answered questions on horse behavior, training issues, nutrition, and health issues. I have had the pleasure of working with Betty Jo Hamilton and learning a great deal about the publishing industry. It was also a privilege to have the support and encouragement from many professionals in the horse industry in the development of this column.

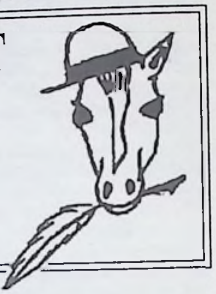
I will be relocating to Cape Cod, Mass., where I originally came from. It is with bittersweet emotions that I am writing my last article for *Augusta Country*. I will miss Betty Jo and wish to thank her for giving me my first big break as an "equine journalist." I also want to thank all the professional horse men and women who supported my work through the last six years. I am looking forward to relocating back home where I will be close to family and childhood friends. It is my hometown and I will be pursuing a career in writing children's books.

It is with sadness that I leave *Augusta Country* as a columnist, but it is with great happiness that I look forward to going home and being with my family who I have missed very much over the past 12 years living here.

Take it from the Horse's Mouth, saying goodbye is the end of one phase of my career, but also the beginning of the next one. Thank you all for your support and encouragement which gave me the confidence I needed to start a dream that is really only beginning. —

Thank you Chris for your contributions to Augusta Country. *You and "I.B." will be missed. Good luck and happy trails. —bjh*

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 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.

Here, there, & everywhere

Middlebrook High School Class of '42 holds 60th reunion

MIDDLEBROOK — The Middlebrook High School Class of 1942 held its 60th reunion June 30.

Class members opened their reunion by gathering for worship at Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church. The class held its baccalaureate service at Mt. Tabor in 1942. The 2002 worship service included hymns used in the 1942 baccalaureate service. Hymns sung were "Holy, Holy, Holy," "Feast of Victory," "Take My Life, that I May Be" and "Lead On, O King Eternal!" The offertory anthem, also used in the 1942 baccalaureate service, was "God Bless Our Native Land."

Flowers in the sanctuary during the Sunday morning worship service were given by the Class of 1942 in memory of deceased class members including Elizabeth Berry Bartley, Elsie Benson Buchanan, Randolph B. Glover, Dorothy Bartley Holt, Frances Spitler Simmons, Donald B. Swisher, William A. Tolley Jr. and Elizabeth Glover Whitesell.

Other class members include Elizabeth Ott Brooks, Rebecca Wiseman Eutsler, Joel W. Hamilton, Blair B. Hanger, Jr., Irene Zimmerman Howdyshell, Ora Thompson Lotts, Mae McCray McIntosh, Ruby Lucas Rosen, Wayne G. Shultz, Wallace A. Strickler, Doris Baylor Tolley, Robert S. Yeago, Jr. and Sadie Smiley Yount. MHS faculty member Anne Kelly Bowman also joined the reunion.

Following worship services, class members and guests gathered at Evers Family Restaurant in Mt. Crawford for an afternoon of fellowship and reminiscing. Photographs from the 1940s through the present were shared by classmates and friends. —

Middlebrook High School Class of 1942 held its 60th reunion June 30. Classmates attending included (from left) Robert S. Yeago, Jr., Joel W. Hamilton, Blair B. Hanger, Jr., Wallace A. Strickler, Ruby Lucas Rosen, Irene Zimmerman Howdyshell, and Wayne G. Shultz.

Photo courtesy MHS Class of '42

New Hope FCE fills summer with events

NEW HOPE — The New Hope Family Community Educators held a cultural arts exhibit in June at New Hope United Methodist Church.

The club celebrated Family Day May 15 by having activities with club members' families. Twenty-one books for newborns were donated to Augusta Medical Center in recognition of Family Day.

In May, 11 members enjoyed a tour of "Point of Honor," George Cabell's mansion on the James River in Lynchburg, and The National D-Day Memorial in Bedford.

Judy Grove, president, informed members that State Conference registration is due by Sept. 1. Yearbook update pages were given to each member.

Five members had exhibits at the Greater Shenandoah Valley Fair: Nellie Flora, Linda Howdyshell, Helen Stogdale, Bettye Randolph and Judy Grove. Judging in the Junior Homemaking Department was Mrs. Grove.

Thank you notes were received from the 4-H campers whom the club helped send to camp. Members sold over 100 quilt donation tickets to help with state conference expenses and $26 was collected for ACWW global project of digging a well in India.

The study of the month was Mt. Solon mill built on Mossy Creek about 1826.

Jean Critzer gave a program on "Nutrition." She gave each member a food label and a slide rule fat food finder card. She showed how to calculate the percent of calories from fat by using this card label.

The club held its family picnic July 22 at Middle River Church of the Brethren picnic shelter.

Results of the cultural arts exhibit, judged by Pat Ewers, included 21 first place entries which will be judged in the cultural arts exhibit at state conference in September.

New Hope members were recognized as follows for their cultural arts entries.

Machine sewn applique — Helen Stogdale, first; Christmas Crafts — Jean Critzer, first; Linda Howdyshell, second; Adult clothing — Helen Stogdale, first; Children's clothing — Helen Stogdale, first; Counted cross stitch — Joan Blackburn, first; Pencil drawing — Lena Mahone, first; Crafty creatures — Bettye Randolph, first; Judy Grove, second; Embroidery pillow cases — Helen Braunworth, first; Embroidery wallhanging — Joan Blackburn, first; Embroidery pillow — Helen Stogdale, first; Silk flower arranging — Linda Howdyshell, first; Greeting cards — Judy Grove, first; Jewelry — Judy Grove, first; Helen Stogdale, second; Hand knitted clothing — Jean Critzer, first; Water color painting — Lena Mahone, first; Pressed flowers — Judy Grove, first; Hand-sewn quilting — Bettye Randolph, first; Machine-sewn quilting — Helen Stogdale, first; Hand-sewn smocking — Helen Stogdale, first; Poem writing — Lena Mahone, first; Puzzle writing — Lena Mahone, first.

Categories not recognized at state level: Hand-sewn patchwork pillows — Lena Mahone, first; Bettye Randolph, second; Helen Stogdale, third; Doilies — Linda Howdyshell, first. —

◦Weekend

Continued from page 15

Connection from the past: on the day before we left, we were loading up our backpacks and found my Long Trail journal from June 14-25, 1974, when we hiked 100 miles of Vermont's Long Trail along the crest of the Green Mountains. The Long Trail is concurrent with the Appalachian Trail for those 100 miles.

Journal entry from Tuesday, June 25, 1974, Killington, Vt.:

"Going uphill I never have any great thoughts. Going downhill or on even terrain, I frequently have pretty good ideas about how to make dinner different, what to get at the store to give variety to our trail menus, or what all to put into a tub of laundry someday. Not great thoughts, but constructive thoughts and I'm beginning to be able to use my time wisely as I walk."

On the day we discovered the journal, it had been 28 years ago to the day that we had begun that hiking odyssey. Pretty incredible timing. That was an amazing two weeks of doing that 100 miles — lots of time and distance for exercising, observing wildlife, and creative contemplation. Our recent trip to Ramsey's Draft was good, too. We did well, our equipment was fine, we talked about purchasing a third car, we botanized, we birded and... began planning our next trip, probably a three-day August trip in Dolly Sods Wilderness Area.

When we walk, hike or backpack, My Husband the Taxonimist and I don't chatter on and on like some folks do. We talk when we need to, but often our time is spent hiking quietly. That habit has rewarded us with some pretty cool wildlife sightings. Owls: Last weekend we came upon three barred owls at Ramsey's Draft. Songbirds: There was such a flurry

See SONGBIRDS, page 20

Country Crossroads

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin

August 2002

Dear Maude,

This past month has gone by too slowly for me even though there is so much Congress needs to get done before they adjourn. A great deal of legislation is usually taken care of during July, as they rush to get ready for their August break. But these days it seems that almost all the talk on the Hill is about the stock market or the folks who are misbehaving.

In the latter category, fellow members of Congress of course have always been fair game, but now accountants and CEOs and the questions about who gets the blame for all the problems some of the very big businesses seem to be experiencing can be added. It must be that sinking feeling in the pit of everyone's 401K plans that has captured their attention. People are being just a bit less extravagant these days, wandering about with worried looks on their faces. Recently, I have seen some meticulously suited sorts bringing their lunch from home, and that is most certainly not a usual sight.

Even I feel the need to conserve a bit and watch how much I spend. Why just last week I was invited to a little outdoor party and decided, after trying on some of last year's little numbers that no longer seemed to fit too well, that I would treat myself to a bright new something to wear. I dashed down to Connecticut Avenue to see what I could find (for, truly, I had not been shopping for several weeks) only to be faced with things that simply did not suit my personality or the occasion. The dresses were either long sleeved dark somber things or else to the floor and covered with sequins — not exactly right for an outside cookout. Finally I found this nice little bright orange and yellow dress with little straps and a short, swingy skirt. Just the thing, I said to myself until I looked at the price tag — $498, marked down from $750. Now, that seemed a bit like overdoing it. I said to myself that perhaps it was just a few dollars too many for something to wear while standing outside and eating hot dogs and hamburgers. So I went on back home and dug out last year's dresses one more time. What I wore was still a bit tighter than I would have liked, but perhaps I had better take off a bit of weight from the body rather than a big chunk of it from my bank account.

I must tell you that I may have finally found a man I can love. Just a couple of weeks ago, the boss sent me to a retirement reception for someone with whom both of us had worked many times. It was a wonderful party — not too many people, great food, lots of old friends. Then all of a sudden — there he was. Not exactly tall, but with great big blue eyes that flashed. The first thing I noticed was this crowd of people always around him, so I decided it was time for me to go investigate. I'll tell you the guy really has charm and great manners. In addition to those big blue eyes he has a red mouth that lights up as he talks and he runs around on four little wheels. He is a robot! Somehow he never steps on your toes like the two-footed kind of partygoer. It was my first encounter up close with such a creature and I was amazed. No matter what you said to him, he had a charming, witty and very polite response for you. We kept trying to think of things to say that would trip him up, but we never succeeded. He always had a ready answer. It was the most intelligent conversation I have had with anyone in months. Now, if I could just get the folks that own him to program his computer so he would call me for a dinner date!

Of course, not all Washington conversation is about corporate misdoings, as we always have the never ending upcoming elections. Right now what we are hearing about mostly are reports of the polls as well as how much money has been raised by one candidate or the other. If the polls rate a candidate high enough and that candidate raises more money than his opponent, it is then assumed that the first candidate will win. What if, just for once, we let the pollsters choose? Could we then be spared all those speeches? What about those promises that candidates make and then have to make up excuses when they don't keep them? Sure, we might end up with folks we did not know all that much about, but then, I'm not so sure that we know all that much about the ones we have now. And if, instead of spending their campaign funds on all those television ads we have to watch, they could just dump said money into a fund, we might be able to pay off the national debt. But there I go dreaming again. No politician would ever go for such a thing. They have been practicing some of those speeches for years, and if I think that I will get by with an election year minus all those fundraisers and speeches and fundraisers and promises and more fundraisers, then I most certainly am doing some serious dreaming! Why not let that wonderful and charming robot run for office!! It is obvious that I have been here too long without a break! However, knowing that in just a week or two I will be home for a visit, keeps me going. Start getting those fresh vegetables ready for me now.

Love to all, LuLu

Hikers clear out cobwebs in Ramsey's Draft

"This is the best Father's Day breakfast I've ever had," I said. It was instant mocha latte, soupy instant oatmeal in a stainless steel cup, and... but I'm getting ahead of my story.

Earlier this spring, My Wife the Biology Teacher said she'd like to go backpacking again. I was glad to hear that. We'd done a lot of backpacking in our early married years, before responsible jobs and a child intervened. Now that child is old enough to accept — no, relish — a weekend with us gone. And with our 30th wedding anniversary coming up in June, what better time to return to one of our old pastimes?

On a rainy afternoon in May, I got our equipment out of the closet. When we bought this stuff in the 1970s, it was state-of-the-art. Now, some would call it museum-quality. I hated the thought of some trail whippersnapper looking at my gear and saying something like "Dude! Is that stuff old?" Our tent is a good example of how the backpacking industry has grown over the years. When we bought it, it was one of two models offered by the manufacturer. Now I see in the catalogs at least nine models by this same company, ranging from a claustrophobic one-person tent to four-person expedition tents.

Mark Gatewood at the Sexton cabin slab and chimney in Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area.

Photo by Betty Gatewood

The only real deficiency in our equipment was in the stove department. When we started backpacking, the standard was an elegant little creation in brass called a SVEA 123. Nowadays, liquid fuel stoves have little pumps to pressurize the fuel. The SVEA had a much more interesting system. To start the stove, you poured a few ounces of fuel into a depression on the top of the tank and set it ablaze. This heated the tank and vaporized the fuel so you could open the valve and light the stove. As you can imagine, there are times when you'd rather not have this uncontrolled open blaze going on — like when you have to cook inside your tent in bad weather. Our little SVEA was quirky in some other ways, too, so it got a one-way trip to the dumpster and we went shopping for a new stove. I wanted mealtime simplicity, so we settled on a model that uses pressurized fuel canisters. It was made by a top manufacturer, it was the lightest in weight of the bunch and — here's a switch — it was among the lowest priced.

All we needed now was a route, and I selected a loop in the Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area. The trail had everything we needed — a moderate climb for a sense of accomplishment, some good views from the high sections and a good selection of campsites. The distance was short — pride prevents me from saying just how short — and the pace would be leisurely.

Mark Gatewood on the trail in Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area.

Photo by Betty Gatewood

Getting out

By Mark Gatewood

Ramsey's Draft is a major destination for mid-Atlantic region hikers and you can expect to see license plates in the parking area from Maryland and D.C.; there was even a car from Wisconsin when we arrived for our walk. We met a couple from Richmond in the parking lot and prevailed on them to do the obligatory trailhead photo with our camera. We reciprocated the favor by taking a picture of them with their digital camera and then we were off.

We didn't get far before we were stopped by our first nature appreciation moment — a cluster of birds along the trail had me digging into the Biology Teacher's backpack to get her binoculars. We saw worm-eating warblers and something else that we couldn't identify —somebody had left the bird guide at home to save on weight!. And that's kind of how it went, walking-wise. We stopped about every hour for some high-calorie snacks, plus whatever bird or plant required

See *CAMPING*, page 19

The joys of back to nature

By JEAN H. BRYDGE

Lee and I were sitting around doing nothing one Saturday afternoon and one of us in an insane moment said, "Wouldn't it be fun to go camping!"

Well, the fact that we didn't have a tent, a camper, a sleeping bag or a motorhome did not deter us for a moment. We had a Dodge Dart wagon with "almost" room enough in the back for us to sleep and that seemed to fill the bill. I knew it was going to be fun, just didn't know it would be something to tell our friends about!

We grabbed some food, drinks, blankets and charcoal. Packed the car, got a jacket in case we got chilly and we were off (in more ways than one!). Arrived at our destination without mishap and parked close enough to the creek to hear it running while we slept.

After a delicious supper, we explored some woods and hiking trails until time to go to bed. Now, going to bed in itself turned out to be a chore. There was room to sleep in the Dodge Dart but like families when five kids slept in a bed, the whole group had to be going in the same direction. When we finally got crunched into position, I remembered *I hadn't locked the car doors so I crawled* over the seats, trying not to step on Lee's face, and crawled back. Then we had to get positioned all over again. By this time, Lee was becoming somewhat disenchanted with camping but muttered something about "We can sleep late in the morning."

It was wonderful listening to the gurgling of the creek and hearing the crickets and I slept like a baby all night. I had just gotten to the part about sleeping late, when the first ray of dawn broke through the car window. I opened my eyes a tiny crack and I was looking into an enormous black face with shiny eyes scrunched flat against my window.

It wasn't light enough to recognize anything but was light enough to know that whatever was at my window didn't belong there. I didn't want this "thing" to know I was frightened so I tried inconspicuously to awaken Lee. I nudged him gently which didn't work, then I stuck an elbow in his ribs which didn't work and finally yelled, "Lee, wake up! There is something coming in my window!"

He jumped up hitting his head on the door handle, exclaiming, "Where is it? Where is it?"

I pointed because I knew whatever it was would eat us alive. He looked at me in disgust while rubbing his sore head and said in that tone of voice husbands achieve when their wife has done something stupid, "For Pete's sake, Jean. It's just cows."

I looked again and sure enough it looked like cows. Three Angus, in fact, which had strayed in from a nearby field to see what was invading their pasture. They might have looked like cows to him but to me they looked like Dodge Dart eating monsters.

****

I've heard stories from friends about camping trips which left them with shattered dreams. Instead of campfires and lazing in a hammock, they had wet tents, overheated cars and all the nuisances which turn relaxation into a nightmare. I have been properly sympathetic. At least I thought I had, that is, until I had experienced my very own camping nightmare.

The advertisement read like you wouldn't believe! "Paradise Island - everything a body could wish for: fishing, swimming, boating, hiking - the works." We said, "Man, that's for us."

Driving there, I kept picturing myself reeling in a flounder and throwing it in the frying pan for supper. Couldn't wait! We kept mentioning the fact that the campground was probably booked up but reassured each other if we were really lucky there might have been a cancellation.

My very first suspicion that all was not as advertised was when we pulled into the campground and I would have been hard-pressed to slide an idea between the campsites. The owner was in the office counting his money. Suspicion number 2 was when he said just ride around until you find a site which looks empty and take it. I could envision someone returning in the middle of the night, finding us occupying their site and getting very indignant.

Puzzled, I asked, " But don't you know which ones are already occupied?"

He looked at me rather vaguely and replied, "Mostly." Right then I knew we were in trouble.

We wandered around, found a site and watched people watching us. We didn't realize a new arrival broke the monotony. After our elation diminished over getting a site, we discovered we were suffocating. It was so hot if you set the Coleman stoves outside they lit themselves. The dust was so heavy I thought everyone had a fantastic tan — until they took a shower. The only breeze that came through all day was one that had taken the wrong road and turned around at the site next to us.

When the first swarm of flies descended, I thought it was a plague of locusts. Frantically, I grabbed a newspaper but there were so many flies they sat on the end of the newspaper and laughed at me. They had come to visit because of the three-day-old garbage which had collected at the campground in 95-degree heat. It was a potent aroma!

That place was so miserable, there was an oil spill a few feet offshore and it went the other way. We sought the "broad expanse of beach" in vain. After looking and looking, we finally discovered some little kid had covered it up with his sand bucket.

Fishing consisted of wading through a mud puddle, throwing a fishing line over a fence into about two inches of water and getting tangled up in scrap on the bottom. I could catch more fish in my bathtub.

We spent the night because we were too far from civilization to go anywhere else but you better believe as the first rays of sun crawled into Paradise Lost, we crawled out!

As we rode by the office, the manager was still counting his money and we knew why. The minute he had enough, he was leaving Paradise also - he didn't want to stay one dollar longer than he had to! —

Homemade ice cream doesn't have to be a chore

If you do not own an ice cream machine, you might want to think about buying one. My hubby bought me an Oster "Quick-Freeze Ice Cream Maker" several years ago and I have not ever wanted to buy ice cream at the grocery store again.

Many folks do not realize how good homemade ice cream can be because people are under the mistaken impression that homemade ice cream should be eaten on the spot. Indeed, many country fairs and some fruit stands make ice cream and sell it while it still retains a somewhat liquid or "soft" consistency.

But ice cream is best when it is hardened, just as it is when you buy it at the grocer's. The trick to making great ice cream is to use a great recipe and to allow the ice cream time to harden in the freezer instead of eating it right away.

Many recipes for vanilla ice cream contain eggs (this is usually referred to as "French" vanilla) which gives the ice cream a creamier (and fattier) consistency. These recipes usually require cooking and cooling of the egg mixture (known as a custard) before you can even begin to think about making the vanilla ice cream.

But my Oster machine came with an egg-less recipe for the best vanilla-flavored ice cream that I have ever had. Because I do not have to cook a custard first and cool it down to go into the ice cream machine, I can easily whip up a quart and a half of ice cream within an hour of deciding to make it — assuming I have all of the ingredients at hand, of course!

Cooking made easy

By Marlene Condon

So I thought I would share with you this wonderful recipe because vanilla is the basic flavor that goes so well with just about everything. I am also providing two variations of this recipe that are also quite good after being allowed time to completely harden. Homemade ice cream will keep very well for a few months inside a "real" freezer if kept tightly sealed.

Easy Vanilla Ice Cream

NOTE: Before starting to make the ice cream, get out clean plastic freezer containers in a one-quart and a one-pint size. Each container should have a tight-fitting snap-on lid. Place on counter with a spoonula (a plastic spatula with curved edges that is used like a mixing spoon) or some other large spoon for guiding the soft ice cream out of the ice cream machine canister into the storage freezer containers as quickly as possible. Also have a paper towel available for wiping the plastic containers before placing them into the freezer, and dated labels to stick onto the containers.

Combine with a mixing spoon in ice cream canister until sugar is completely dissolved (the graininess will disappear):

2 cups whipping cream
2 cups half and half
(NOT LOW FAT)
1 cup granulated white sugar
1 Tbsp. REAL vanilla extract
(NOT IMITATION)

Freeze according to manufacturer's directions. When done, transfer the soft ice cream into the freezer containers as quickly as possible. Wipe top edges (and sides, if necessary) of containers with a paper towel and snap lids on. Place the dated containers into a freezer for several hours (preferably at least eight hours) to completely harden.

To make chocolate chip ice cream, add 2/3 cup of miniature chocolate chips just before the ice cream has reached the desired consistency (see manufacturer's directions).

To make cinnamon ice cream, which is great for use with warm apple desserts (not for eating by itself), use the same amount of whipping cream, half and half, and sugar as for the vanilla ice cream. However, mix in only 1 1/2 teaspoons of vanilla extract and add 1 tablespoon of ground cinnamon. —

•Camping

Continued from page 18

our attention. This was a pleasant departure from our early days, when miles counted more than anything else.

We walked up the Road Hollow Trail to the Shenandoah Mountain Trail. So far the terrain had been dry and shaley and didn't furnish much variety in plants or birds. After about a mile on the Shenandoah Mountain Trail, we turned down Jerry's Run Trail, and what a change! Little damp seepy places came together to form a trickling stream. Ferns and grasses lined the trail and the word "lush" came into our vocabulary.

Some of you will probably know what we found next. We stepped across a creek and up a slight incline onto an acre of grassy meadow with scattered large pines. At the highest part of the grassy area was a concrete slab and a stone chimney. This was the site of the Sexton Cabin, a former Potomac Appalachian Trail Club shelter. Built sometime in the 1930s, the shelter was removed when Ramsey's Draft became a wilderness

See *SHELTER*, page 20

Bandits provides happy alternative to Bijou fare

FLICK FLAK

A movie review by Hannah's mom, Sue Simmons

If it's just too hot to drag yourself down to the Bijou, you might try renting *Bandits* for your home viewing pleasure.

Directed by Barry Levinson (*Rain Man, Sleepers, Wag the Dog,* TV's *Homicide Life on the Streets*) and written by Harley Peyton (TV's *Moon over Miami* and *Twin Peaks*), *Bandits* is a sophisticated, subtle comedy that combines the unlikely team of Bruce Willis and Billy Bob Thornton with the extraordinarily talented Cate Blanchett.

This is an *Odd Couple* type story. Joe Blake (played by Willis: *Die Hard, Sixth Sense*) is strong, confident, and a tad cynical. Terry Collins (Thornton: *Sling Blade, Monster's Ball*) is neurotic, compassionate, and compulsive. The two are buddies in the Big House.

Then one day Blake escapes in a cement truck and springs his unwilling and unwitting pal in the process. After eluding the law, they make plans to go to Mexico, buy a bar, and go straight. But of course they need money for their venture so they turn to the only thing they know how to do — rob banks.

Armed with a yellow marker as their only weapon, the two hatch a plot that will keep everyone safe. They enter the bank manager's house the night before and then, they all go to the bank before it opens for the loot.

This earns them fame as the "Sleepover" Bandits when the tabloid TV show Criminals at Large does an expose` on them. In the meantime, a minor car accident entangles Blake and Collins with Kate Miller (Blanchett: *Elizabeth R*), an unstable, frustrated housewife. Seeing the two criminals as her ticket to a more exciting life, she goes on the lamb with them. The sexier, stronger Blake makes his romantic move but this isn't a predictable movie. Kate realizes that together Blake and Collins make the perfect man. Of course, swirling behind the robberies, getaways, and romance is the assumption by Kate's husband and the police that she has been kidnapped.

Who will Kate choose? Can they continue to elude the law? Will the trio ever make it to Mexico?

Willis and Thornton are terrific together. Willis' comedic ability is a given. While I am no fan of Thornton, I will admit to being pleasantly surprised by his performance — his timing and delivery are impeccable. Blanchett, perhaps one of the most talented actresses around, is a bit over the top as the frustrated housewife. But she doesn't shirk from unflattering scenes. Her time on the screen with Thornton are the best — each seems to bring something out in the other. That the movie is too long, belaboring too many scenes, is the only criticism.

Hannah's mom gives *Bandits* three bananas. At the end of a long, hot day, take a shower, put on something comfy, pour yourself some Churchville Chardonnay (lemonade and club soda) and pop *Bandits* into the VCR. *Bandits* provides a good escape for a warm summer night when nothing else suits. The film is rated PG for adult theme and some violence. —

◦Shelter

Continued from page 19

area. Prior to that, the area of "Jerry's Clearing" had held a house and barn built by Jerry Hodges. Chronology gets a bit foggy, but this seems to have been in the early 1800s. Hodges had cleared the land, including the "high knob," for grazing and planted Lombardy poplars and apple trees, none of which were evident when we visited.

It was a thoroughly lovely spot, but what nailed us in place were the birds. In contrast to the surrounding dry woods, "Jerry's Clearing" was an oasis and it was hopping with birds. The Biology Teacher tracked down a buzzy three-note call and found black-throated blue warblers, male and female, in the laurel surrounding the clearing. Our best sighting was a mousy little bird working its way up the trunk of one of the pines in the clearing. It was brownish and mottled, like the pine bark and if we hadn't just happened to look, we would have missed him. It was a brown creeper, a bird better known to most birders in our area as a winter visitor. Here, it might be a breeding bird. The brown creeper makes its living by climbing — creeping — up tree trunks using its tiny down-curved beak to tweezer insects from crevices in the bark. When it gets as high as it can, it flies to the base of another tree and starts up again.

The Biology Teacher and I hadn't discussed plans for the night's campsite, but the Sexton Cabin was starting to look like the place. I had one reservation: the site was only about 2 1/2 miles of easy walking from U.S. 250 at the Confederate Breastworks. I had visions of being descended upon by a troop of scouts or some cooler-toting party animals, but none of that happened. Three pairs of hikers came through and they all kept going but by then we had pitched our tent in a commanding location at the top of the clearing. We had the place to ourselves!

I had carried on a running debate with myself about the need to hang our food out of reach of bears. If we were in the national park, there would be no question. Protected bears there regard hikers as walking caterers and proper food storage is the law. Here though, in the national forest, the bears are hunted and the Bambi ethic — "Man is in the forest!" — might give the bears a healthier perspective on their relations with humans. In the end, I hung our food. I had plenty of nylon cord and I hate nocturnal surprises.

Actually, a strange thing happened. At about six o'clock, the woods went silent. There was no evening song from wood thrushes or anything else. There wasn't an animal sound of any kind until about 4 a.m. when some deer came by, giving that nasal snort which, if you aren't expecting it or don't know what it is, will lift you about three feet off the ground. "What's that?" hissed The Biology Teacher from the depths of her sleeping bag. "Deer," I said. "There's a trail on the other side of the creek." Then a barred owl tuned up with a few rounds of its characteristic "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all?" That was it for night visitors.

Everything written about Ramsey's Draft mentions the beautiful old-growth hemlocks. Now the literature is being revised to describe the destruction of those hemlocks by the hemlock woolly adelgid. Sad to say, it seems to be true. We saw many huge old hemlocks which were devoid of needles. Smaller trees showed characteristic flecks of white on their boughs that identify the woolly adelgid.

The hemlock woolly adelgid is a scale insect. If you're a gardener, that tells it all: a little bag-shaped bug with a piercing mouth that sucks the life out of plants. But there's more. The hemlock woolly adelgid is native to Japan. It was first reported on western hemlock in the Pacific Northwest in 1924. Its first report in the eastern United States was from Maymont Park in Richmond in 1954 — a real horticultural coup for the Old Dominion! It has since spread into our mountains and north into Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Rhode Island. It has no natural enemies and here's the real kicker — the females are parthenogenetic. That means they've mastered the art of reproducing without males and, in the insect world, that's the keys to the kingdom. Each adult can produce 50 to 300 eggs in its lifetime. Because there is no practical way to chemically treat large forested areas, it looks like the hemlock woolly adelgid is here to stay.

But the woolly adelgid may not be the only thing going on with the hemlocks. Researchers at Penn State claim something else is happening. They cite a hemlock decline being brought about by a host of strangely named insect pests. The hemlock woolly adelgid is just the most visible culprit.

Wind, deer, birds even people can spread the woolly adelgid. The "wool" is a white waxy substance exuded by the insect and it's sticky. I can easily imagine it sticking to a hiker's clothing or pack as he passes through low hemlock foliage. And they're not just in the mountains. I've had woolly adelgids on a hemlock at the museum where I work; two years of spraying with dormant oils have not discouraged it. So there goes hemlock as a landscape tree.

The American chestnut was gone from the scene before I ever set foot in the woods, victim of an introduced pest. It looks like the hemlock will go in my lifetime. If the hemlock goes, our mountain forests will lose a major player in species diversity and ecosystem stability. The dense shade beneath a stand of hemlocks creates a unique microclimate where the temperature can be as much as 15 degrees Fahrenheit below that of the surrounding hardwood forest. This creates habitat for northern plant species such as Canada mayflower and starflower, which are found in the mountains of New England. Every time we visit Ramsey's Draft, we see Blackburnian warblers, fiery-colored little birds said to frequent hemlocks in the Appalachians. What will they do when the hemlocks are gone? Life will go on, I guess, but some things will be different. Between foreign terrorists and foreign insect pests, I could use a little isolationism right now.

Because our walk out was short and downhill, we took Sunday morning at our leisure. There was time for that Father's Day breakfast, and the Biology Teacher, who thinks of everything at times like this, even packed in a gift and a card. She had time to get out paints and a sketch pad to capture Jerry's Clearing in watercolor. We packed up and left late in the morning, descending the lush Jerry's Run Trail to Ramsey's Draft. Too soon, the trailhead kiosk and parking lot came into view. "Did you know we were that close?" asked the Biology Teacher. "Let's turn around and go back!" It sounded good to me, too, but we had things to do at home. We did it, though; we backpacked Ramsey's Draft. Our equipment held up and we survived. We're already planning our next trip. —

◦Songbirds

Continued from page 17

of activity near the Sexton cabin clearing that we both got "warbler necks" straining to see them. Porcupines, raccoons, opossum, and skunks: These are interesting critters as they waddle along the trail, but we always give them plenty of room due to their reputation for being potentially hazardous in a variety of ways. Deer: These silent and elegant animals are frequently seen, but they are always pleasing to the eye. Bear: As we were hiking along the Furnace Mountain trail in Shenandoah National Park last year, a young bear was ambling along our trail ahead of us. If it did sense us, it was unconcerned as it turned and disappeared up through the blueberry and laurel bushes. Years ago when we were investigating the aftermath of a forest fire in Yosemite National Park, we were startled when a mother bear grunted ahead of us and then we saw her two cubs scooting up a slender tree to get out of our way! We did a course correction to give them space!

So the benefits of walking are physical AND psychological. I'd like to tell you that my cholesterol is way down, but I can't. I think it is my metabolism at my age that keeps it so high. I can say that walking along with watching my food intake have enabled me to lose a few pounds. Walking is healthy for the body and the spirit. It's a time for exercising, for socializing, for thinking, and for nature appreciation. Gary Snyder in his essay, "The Etiquette of Freedom" from his book, *The Practice of the Wild,* says it best: "Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to humankind. Walking is the exact balance of spirit and humility." We need to walk. It is the fount of self-discovery and the great leveler. So, get out there and walk, hike, or backpack. The rewards are great and you'll be glad you did it for yourself. —