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SINCE 1989

Volume 28, Number 6

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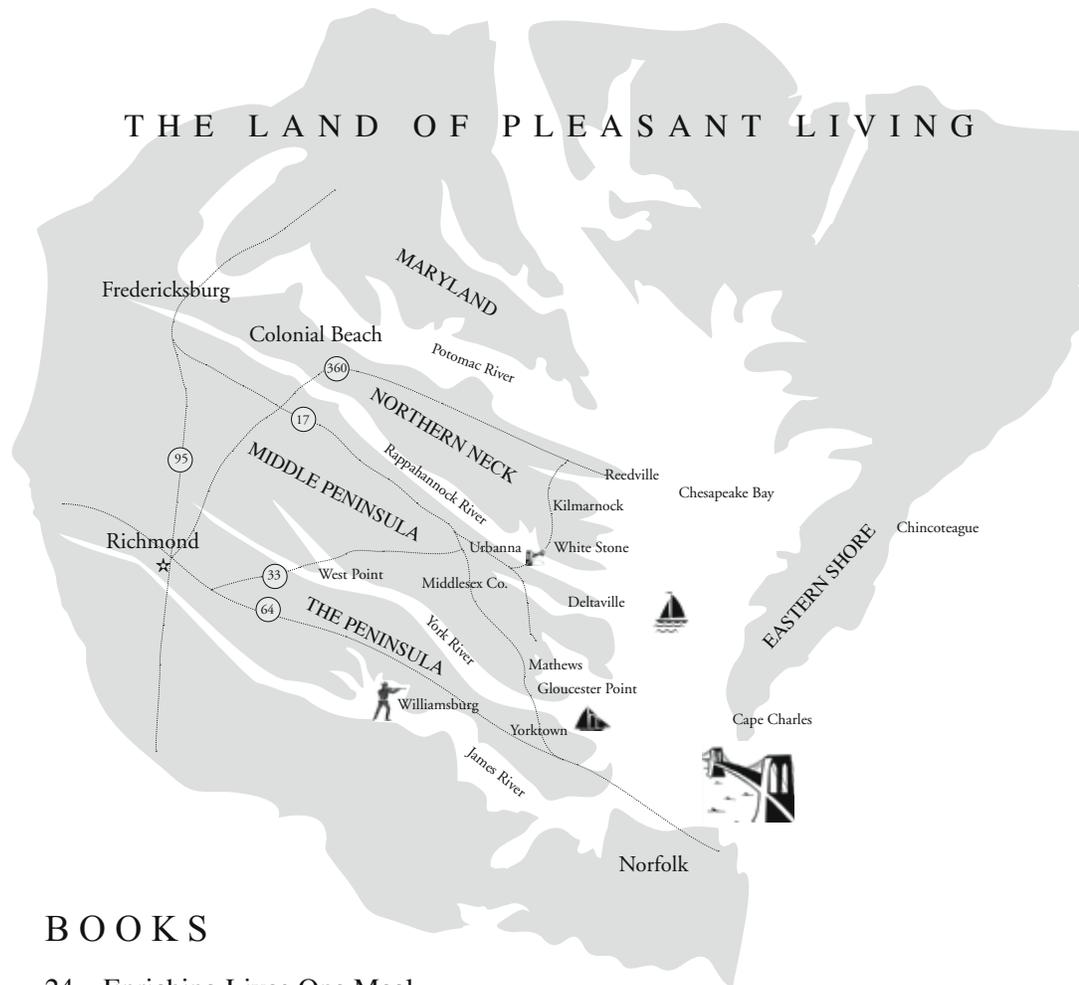
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Illustrated by Nancy Cecere LeBlanc

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL



A Gentleman and a Scholar

“... Death will come, always out of season. . .”
—Big Elk

Every man—perhaps some more than others—hopes for his share of immortality, and although I didn't ask him this question, I think Dan Gill thought about this often. Sitting with him many times at restaurants in Richmond, we would talk about his upcoming story for PL, about the book he had in the planning, and about his farm—but the topic that most commonly dominated the conversation was *food*, his greatest passion. Often during these conversations over lunch, for a moment he would fall silent, and although it was impossible to read Dan's mind, my intuition told me he was thinking about how he could recreate or incorporate the flavors of the Lebanese or Thai or Mexican dish he was eating into a new recipe. Researching, testing, and *living* food were simply in his DNA.

PL readers who read his regular column know well that Dan was a farmer; they also know he was the consummate gastronomic explorer, experimentalist and historian—a man with an adventurous curiosity for the unusual, and at the same time, an encyclopedic knowledge of the chemistry of food, a topic he wrote about often. When not online researching a new idea for his cultural cuisine, as he termed it, he was at work creating a new dish for the restaurant in his test kitchen or holding court with his patrons, offering them a taste of his latest masterpiece.

Those of us who had the pleasure of enjoying his cuisine at Something Different in Urbanna were blessed by the experience, but we were also blessed by Dan's brilliance, his warm, playful personality, and by his love for people.

Writing about Dan in the past tense is oddly incongruous because he lives on—in his work, his family, and in the stories he shared in this magazine and elsewhere—stories that are sure to have a life of their own.

My father had a phrase he used rarely and only for men for whom he had a great deal of admiration and respect. If he was alive and knew Dan, he would have said, “Dan Gill—he was a gentleman and a scholar.” *pl*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. H. Paul'.

Editor/Publisher

We will be publishing a profile of Dan in our January/February 2015 issue, and we invite readers to share their remembrances of him for this issue. You can send to PL, 5 S. 1st St., Richmond, VA 23219 or to pleasantlivingmag@gmail.com. We intend to print as many recollections as space allows.

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Dan Gill owned and operated Something Different Country Store and Deli in downtown Urbanna, Virginia. In addition to being a master of barbeque, he's a writer and food historian. Dan passed away October 9, 2014.

Jim Gullickson is an intern at PL. He's a Virginia native and is currently studying at Virginia Commonwealth University. When he isn't in the office, Jim is hard at work making music with friends.

John Henley has been a professional photographer since 1985 and has received worldwide acclaim. He has recently finished a book, *Richmond, Virginia: A Photographic Portrait*, which will be released in the Spring of 2015. His studio is located in Richmond's Old Manchester.

Carolyn H. Jett has been researching and writing about the history and genealogy of the Northern Neck since settling in her husband's native Northumberland County in 1976. She is a dedicated volunteer, and past president, at the Mary Ball Washington Museum & Library in Lancaster and the author of several articles and books including *Lancaster County, Virginia, Where the River Meets the Bay*.

David L. Justis, M.D., an avid photographer and emergency physician at Riverside Walter Reed Hospital, has written articles for various medical journals, Time, QST and World Radio and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. He lives in Wicomico, Virginia.

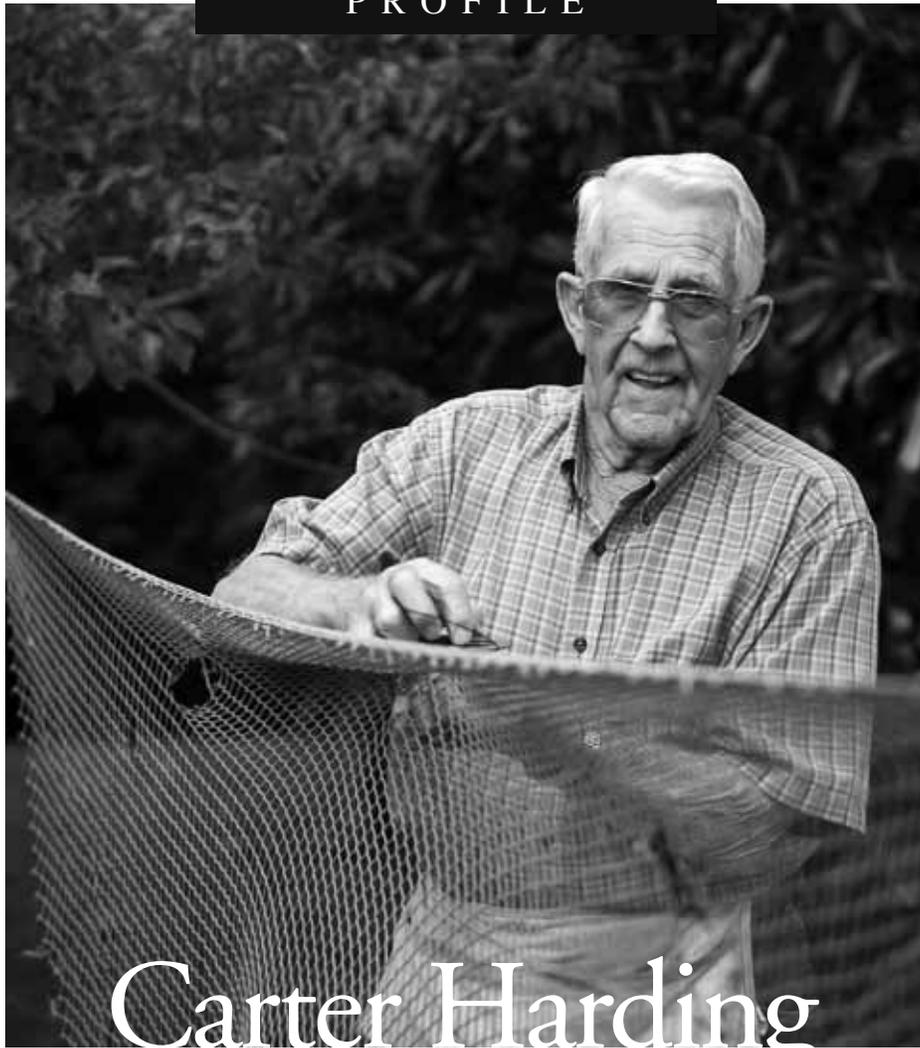
Steve Scala has spent his entire life in Southern Maryland and the Northern Neck, where his family roots go back to the 1600s. Along with his family, Steve spends much of his time on the waters, and in the fields and woods of the lower Northern Neck.

Robert Teagle is the education director & curator at the Foundation for Historic Christ Church in Weems. He earned his B.A. in history from the College of William and Mary and M.A. in American history from Virginia Tech. He lives in Gloucester County with his wife and children, who describe him as a "history nerd."



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Carter Harding

Family Man, Fisherman, Mender of Nets

By Robert Pruett / Photos by John Henley

Watch Carter Harding mend a fishing net, and you'll witness a craft that's been practiced by cultures across the globe for thousands of years. When a man has the know-how, it's as if the netting needle has a mind of its own and knows the way, and there's no doubt Carter has the touch. He's been mending nets since he was nine years old, and at eighty-five, he continues to practice this ancient art. He's a part of a long and honorable heritage, and in my mind's eye, I could see the long line of fishermen who have gone before him down through history, and I think they were smiling.

When I ask him about the knots

he's using and who taught him, he says without hesitation, "My father. I was raised down around Ball's Neck, down on the Bay at the mouth of the Wicomico River. My father had a farm, and I helped on the farm as a boy. We had horses then and raised corn and soybeans and a lot of tomatoes. Then he got in the fishing business. He was in the haul seine business back in the 40s when the war started. Father started me as a young man," he says. A seine, Carter explains, is a long net that circles schools of fish. Fishermen tie one end to the bank and run it out into the river, then pull it back to the shore with the boat or sometimes by hand, and then wind it in.

Carter happened to have a piece of a net in his back yard in Kilmarnock, so he could give us a demonstration. He cut a small hole in the net, so he could 'mend it up'. "This is a small hole," he points. "I've seen holes as long as this yard. When they set the big nets, they circle an acre and a half. Not unusual to work two to three days on one hole. Sometimes you have to put big patches in." The nets were white and made of cotton back in his day and had to be tarred in a tar kettle to make them stronger and more durable. Nowadays they use a plastic material for nets.

After serving in the Navy during the Korean War, Carter worked on the

The art

of the net



menhaden boats out of Reedville for twenty-five or thirty years and “retired” ten or twelve years ago. “I wanted something to do, so they have a net house over there to mend all the nets for the boats, and I worked there half a day for ten years, I guess. I didn’t want to sit around and do nothing,” he says.

It’s very clear that he’s not a do-nothing sort of guy. Folks around Kilmarnock know Carter as the man who walks five times around Walmart every day for exercise, and he says he’s been walking and lifting weights for twenty-odd years. It shows. He’s obviously strong, and after eight-and-a-half decades, he looks the picture of health and doesn’t miss a beat. “You gotta keep yourself in good shape,” he says. I don’t know for certain, but my guess is that his strength and conditioning started early and have something to do with pulling nets, picking tomatoes as a boy for 2 ½ cents a bucket, oystering, and climbing masts.

When he first started on the menhaden boats, Carter

explains that he was a dry boatsman. A dry boat was eight to ten feet long and had oars. He, the captain or mate would watch for fish, then Carter would go down the mast, get in the dry boat and row with the school of fish until they got the purse boats down to set the nets. “When the fish got near, you’d spot ‘em out with your oars, and the purse boats would set the net around you. The fish didn’t move that fast. I could row along with them. You could see them whippin’, and sometimes there was a reddish color or whitish or grayish color, depending on how deep they are. I’ve seen schools of fish a quarter mile long. You could set three or four nets in it, and when you got done, the school would look just like it did when you started. That’s how big the school was.”

Carter stands and nimbly manipulates the needle in and out of the net as we talk and the photographer shoots his picture. His hands are thick and calloused but dexterous, and his movements are fast and complex. He makes it look simple.

*"I left home Sunday night and didn't get home until Friday night.
We'd go up north to New York and down south to Carolina..."*

I ask him what it was like working on the menhaden boats, and he says it meant getting up at 2:30 in the morning and staying up all day. "I left home Sunday night and didn't get home until Friday night. We'd go up north to New York and down south to Carolina, and some weeks I don't think I got twenty hours of sleep. . . You were in competition with the other boats—like you were playing baseball—trying to get ahead of the next one, so you could be top boat. I wanted to catch as many fish as we could. For right many years, we were high boat. Accommodations weren't that good, but you always had plenty to eat." Carter hesitates, then remembers, "You saw some beautiful sites. . . When you'd go around these schools of fish, they'd hit

the net and blow the net up in the air all white all around."

In addition to mending nets, exercising to stay in shape, and spending time with his wife, Lois Virginia, two children, three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, Carter builds boats piece-by-piece—model boats, that is. He showed us one that he carved out of a sill and another model where he had made the keel, put the deadrise on, then turned it over and put the ribs in her, "just like you'd build a boat," he says. "I found out that when you get aggravated and something goes wrong there, you want to put it down right then because you'll make a mistake. When you make a mistake on that, you can't correct it." His models are beautiful and clearly built

by a careful and skilled hand.

Standing in Carter Harding's backyard this day, I was again reminded of all the generations of men who have made their life on the water and how these men have contributed to all of us and to our history. Some people will say I'm idealistic, even foolish, to say that mending nets by hand is romantic, but I argue that all of the folklore of the sea is poetic and colorful, and that mending nets, albeit repetitive hard work and probably often disagreeable, is part of it. If you have even a tiny poetic heart, there's something heartening and soulful about a man like Carter who continues to practice an art so it can live on, at least for one more generation. *pl*

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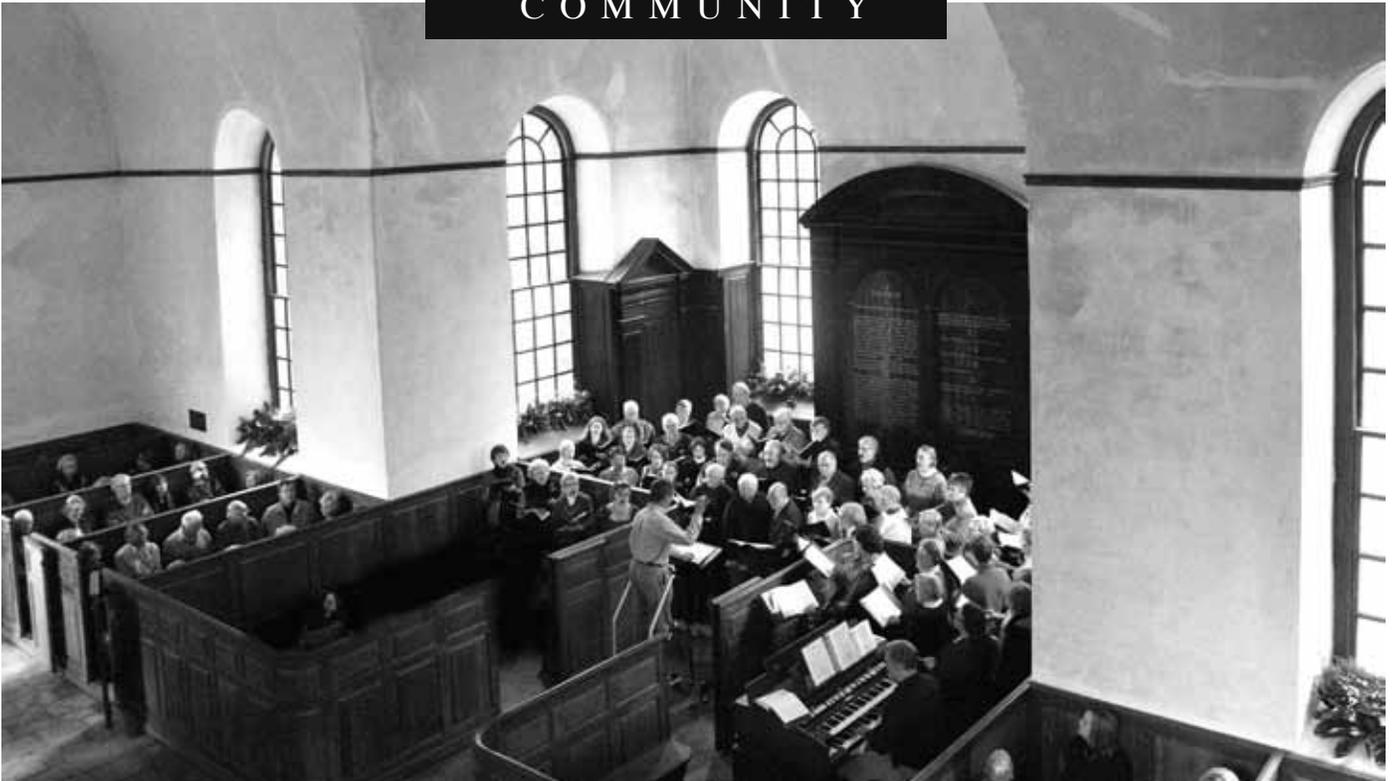


Left to right: Wayne Farrar, Audie Cornish, Craig Carper, Fred Child, Terry Gross, Thea Marshall

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Sounds of the Season

The Holly and The Ivy at Historic Christ Church

By Robert Teagle

Photos provided courtesy of Historic Christ Church

What began over a decade ago as a small gathering of Historic Christ Church volunteers has grown into a holiday favorite on the Northern Neck. On the first Monday of December at 3:30 p.m., the community comes together for Historic Christ Church's "The Holly & The Ivy," a seasonal songfest of music and carols that takes place in the 1735 church. Volunteers from the Foundation for Historic Christ Church (FHCC) spend the week before the event gathering greens, making wreaths and decorating the church to create a beautifully "greened" setting inside the National Historic Landmark building.

The event began in December 2002 when FHCC's Executive Director Bob Cornelius invited volunteers to participate in a Christmas carol sing to celebrate the season and take in the beautiful greenery they had created in the church. Perhaps two dozen or so volunteers and their friends joined Bob that day. They gathered at the crossing by the triple-deck pulpit, where Bob led them a cappella through traditional carols such as "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

and "Silent Night." The event continued a cappella for the next few years, and by 2005 more than forty-five volunteers and friends turned out to sing their favorite Christmas carols inside Christ Church.

In 2007, the "carol sing" took on a new name and a new direction when Camille Bennett, who became FHCC's executive director after Cornelius retired, invited the Chesapeake Chorale to headline "The Holly & The Ivy." Joined by master of ceremonies Robert "King" Carter, as portrayed by Colonial Williamsburg professional re-enactor Steve Holloway, more than 200 people braved the cold that year to enjoy a stirring program from the Chesapeake Chorale, including a duet by Hennie McGonegal and Allan Whitaker.

Since then the Chesapeake Chorale and other community musical groups have performed at "The Holly & The Ivy," filling the historic church with the sounds of the season. The Lancaster High School Brass Ensemble, the Christchurch School choir, and Michelle Lybarger and Bruce Burgess from the Steptoe Brass have all brought their distinctive sounds to Historic Christ Church.



2011: *The Chesapeake Chorale performs at "The Holly & The Ivy" in Historic Christ Church in 2011*

2013: *The audience joins The Chesapeake Chorale (in large pews and aisle to right) in song at the 2013 "The Holly & The Ivy" at Historic Christ Church*

2007 also marked the first time attendees were asked to contribute two items to the local food bank as the "admission" price for this free community program. Volunteers collected more than twenty-five bags of food destined for food banks in Lancaster and Northumberland counties in that first year. Large trash cans and plastic bins stationed by the church doors now overflow with these items in what has become a special component to this annual event.

In 2009 "The Holly & The Ivy" moved from its traditional Thursday date to the first Monday in December. This year that day is December 8th, with a start time of 3:30 p.m. Historic Christ Church invites the community to participate in this special event. Following the caroling there will be refreshments of holiday treats, hot chocolate and hot cider served in the Bayne Center near the church. For more information, visit christchurch1735.org or contact the Foundation office at 438.6855. *pl*

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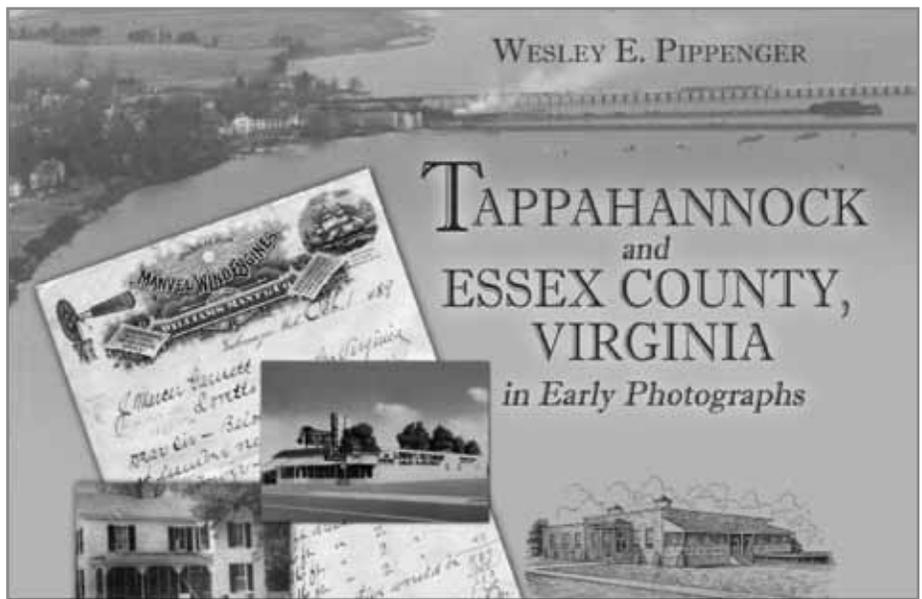
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The Mississippi Delta and the Hot Tamale Trail

Part II—Memphis

Story and Photos By Dan Gill, Ethno-Gastronomist

We regret that this second part of Dan Gill's Mississippi Delta article is being published posthumously, as Dan passed away suddenly on October 9, 2014. We will miss him deeply. His ruminations and esoterica have appeared in PL since 2005, and we will continue to reprint selected work in forthcoming issues. Watch our January/February issue for a profile of this memorable writer and gastronomic explorer.

I crossed the Mississippi from Memphis into West Memphis late Friday afternoon expecting to see endless urban sprawl, but instead I found endless green fields of fertile farmland. The city of West Memphis is a little down river and very industrial. My campground is across the levee and railroad tracks and right on the river, and I can watch the long rafts of barges being pushed up and down the river day and night from my window.

I took a cab into Memphis to experience Saturday night on Beale Street—one of those adventures that everyone should experience—once. My evening started several blocks away at Charles Vergo's Rendezvous Restaurant—one of the iconic barbecue restaurants that define Memphis-style. The entrance is down a side alley across from the Peabody Hotel. Inside is a cavernous restaurant—basement dining, main floor waiting area and bar surrounded by a mezzanine with more tables. Autographed celebrity pictures, memorabilia and local history line the walls everywhere. The place is packed upstairs and down, and there is at least a half-hour wait for a table; party names are announced over a loud PA system when tables are ready. This is more of a money mill than a barbecue joint, but there is a jukebox downstairs loaded with Memphis blues and Elvis. Here I discovered Ghost River Golden Ale. Ghost River Brewing Co. is located only a few blocks south of Beale, and their beers are featured in practically every restaurant in Memphis. Their

Golden Ale is mellow and malty with a refreshing bright finish. I ordered the pork ribs and brisket combo for \$19.95, and it came with small cups of slaw and baked beans. The slaw was chopped very fine and was too vinegary for me, but the beans were dark and richly flavored. The ribs were heavily coated with a dry rub that was necessarily heavy on paprika. They were a little underdone with more tug to get the meat off of the bone than I am used to (the perfect competition rib requires a little tug to pull the meat from the bone, but it should separate cleanly; we cook ours just a little north of fall-apart. The connective tissue should be completely dissolved, they should separate easily from the bone but should not be mushy). The ribs were fairly good, but I thought they were a little on the dry side. Same with the brisket, which had been cooked a little too hot and there was some char (not caramelized bark) on the outside. They were also a little dry and tough by our standards.

The pits and assembly area is at one end of the lower level, and there are four large pits built into the wall with double steel

Photos top of page: View from campground just across the road from my trailer.



A gastro-pub in Memphis featured on Diners, Drives-ins & Dives, SOB was a must-stop.

doors and the firebox under. They cook on lump charcoal from Royal Oak started with lighter fluid—no wood. I also heard later that they cook everything early and hold it all day, which could account for the less-than-desirable texture. Though a required experience for any BBQist visiting Memphis for the first time I would only give them three stars and will not return.

By 9:00 Beale Street was in full swing and I was hot and thirsty. At 5:00 every day the Memphis police cordon off about five blocks of Beale Street where the bars, clubs, restaurants and outdoor bands play mostly Memphis blues. Beer and liquor is everywhere, and you can drink and dance in the streets. On Friday and Saturday nights the security is higher than normal and everyone is IDed and screened with metal detectors before entering. After waiting in a long line for about twenty minutes, I finally got to the gate only to discover that my Leatherman is considered to be a weapon and I would have to discard it to get in. I was not about to throw away my tool so I left to consider my options. I found an all-night parking garage a couple of blocks away that had an attendant and talked her into holding my Leatherman until I returned. After another half-hour wait I got back to the gate and realized that I also had a small knife in my pocket. Since we had to empty our pockets and hold everything metal in our hands, I was able to palm the knife under my phone and got in.

By now I am really hot and thirsty. There were thousands of people, mostly young and black, in various stages of inebriation (some fall-down drunk) filling the street and bars. Music came from

every doorway. I first tried to get into BB Kings, but after waiting in line for awhile, I found that they had a \$10 cover, BB wasn't playing and I wanted to see the rest of the happenings. Practically all of the bars that had live music also charged a cover. I could have gotten a drink from the street-side bars and wandered around with it, but I really wanted to sit down and hear some music, and most bars will not let you in with an outside drink. I finally sought refuge in Coyote Ugly. Big mistake. The place was seedy and full of drunks (more so than the norm). The canned music was so loud that it was painful. Scantly clad women dancing on the bar did nothing for me under the circumstances (so superficial), therefore, I left drink-less. I finally got to the end of the cordoned off area, where Sweetie Pies is going to be eventually, and discovered a nice newly opened restaurant-bar next door, The Blue Note, that was not too crowded. They had a band, two-for-\$5.00-margaritas and no cover. I could also leave my stuff on the table, take my drink outside in my sock feet to have a smoke, listen to the band across the street and watch the street dancing. I parked myself for the rest of the evening then called my cab, walked back to retrieve my Leatherman and leave a tip, and headed back to the trailer. I didn't get to bed until 4:00 and spent a large part of Sunday recovering.

By Sunday afternoon I felt comfortable riding my bike across the river to see some more of Memphis. I went to Gus's World-Famous Fried Chicken for a snack-lunch. The chicken was outstanding—well seasoned, crispy and moist. Even better were the fried green tomatoes, which were

done perfectly and not yuppy-fied. I then went to the Peabody to watch the 5:00 duck march (see Part I in the September/October issue of PL for an explanation of this event).

After tooling around Memphis for a while I went to South of Beale for dinner. Billed as a gastro-pub and featured on *Diners, Drive-ins & Dives*, SOB was a must-stop. (With our full bar, specialty drinks and beers and the way we upscale downscale food, we qualify as a gastro-pub, too.) They start with a small bowl of their seasoned popcorn, which was good but not stellar. They are known for their duck fried rice appetizer, with good reason. The DFR was quite good and flavorful, but it was hard to find the duck. I liked the flavor of the homemade Chinese 5-spice seasoning. This is catfish country, and though it is not their specialty, it was really good. The tartar sauce had way too much mayonnaise and the cocktail sauce was blah as it lacked horseradish. Overall the experience was good and I think I would give them a five. *pl*

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A LABOR OF LOVE

The Animal Welfare League of the Northern Neck

By Alyssa Brew

By now, everyone knows that the River Country is full of people with huge hearts, and the Animal Welfare League of the Northern Neck (AWL as they have come to be known locally) is living proof. Founded in 1965, the AWL of the Northern Neck is funded by private donations, fundraisers, membership fees, and a few grants. There is also a thrift shop in Kilmarnock, which serves as their office and is stocked with donations, such as antiques and clothing, both new and used, housewares, pet items, books, jewelry and much, much more. All of the sales from the thrift store go towards needs of animals. They receive absolutely no state or local funding for their efforts.

Although the main mission of the AWL is to provide spay and neuter programs to prevent overpopulation of local dogs and cats, one of their primary missions is to educate the public about respect, compassion, and humaneness for all animals, relieve suffering of animals, prevent cruelty to animals, provide veterinary services, and seek quality homes for surrendered, strays or unwanted pets. Over the past seven years, fundraising, donations, memberships, and revenue from the thrift shop have provided over \$971,000.00 for animal care and their vet costs, and AWL is proud to say that the majority of these funds went to local veterinarians. The AWL of the Northern Neck also provides free spay/neuter certificates to all three of the local animal

shelters, including Lancaster, Northumberland, and Westmoreland Counties. This same assistance is provided to Wendy's Feline Friends in Colonial Beach, Virginia. Every animal adopted from one of these three shelters and the feline sanctuary is given a free certificate, which can be redeemed by the new owner to have their new pet sterilized by a vet of their choice.

Not only does the AWL provide free sterilization; they also provide shots to dogs and cats who are owned by permanent residents receiving government assistance in the four counties they serve, as well as free spay-neuter services for feral cats if the public humanely traps them, returns the animals to the wild and continues to feed them. And for those who do not fall into the previously mentioned categories, the AWL will provide spay-neuter co-payment plans. They even reach out to those folks who put it off with an annual offer of a 50/50 spay/neuter rebate, where the pet owner will be reimbursed up to 50% of the sterilization charge, not to exceed \$50 per pet. (This program will be advertised in the newspaper with more details when the time comes).

Their generosity doesn't stop there. In the past the AWL of the Northern Neck has provided financial assistance during national disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and Sandy Animal Rescue organizations, as well as for other projects.

How would any of this be possible without dedicated volunteers? It would not! Although there are not many volunteers, there are a few but faithful who work long hours to make everything happen. More volunteers and foster parents are constantly in need, and even one day a month can make a difference in the lives of many pets and also in the volunteer's life.

None of this would be possible without dedicated volunteers and foster parents who work long and hard to find loving and permanent homes for the animals. The adoption process is lengthy, but ensures the perfect home for the pet and makes sure the prospective owner is a perfect fit as well. A home inspection is performed, and the person's vet is contacted if they have owned previous pets. Afterward, there is a two-week trial adoption where the individual or family is contacted every couple of days to see how the pet and the family are adjusting. This is the purpose of a two-week trial adoption.

The largest fundraiser of the year is their annual Dog Gone Show held in October at the Irvington Commons. They just celebrated its 14th year! Previously, dog statues have been painted and auctioned off, and there is an annual Cat Photo Contest as well as silent auctions when valuable gifts are donated to the charity. Gunther's Gourmet Salsa is sold at their thrift shop even though the AWL no longer attends the Irvington Farmers Market.

To find out more about the AWL of the Northern Neck, such as adoptions, volunteering, making a donation, or to find out about their next fundraising event, please visit them at www.animalwelfareleagueofthenorthernneck.org, call 804.435.0822, or stop by the Kilmarnock office/thrift store located at 75 South Main Street, Kilmarnock, VA 22482. You might be blessed with a new four-legged creature who will change your life! *pl*



'Tyler' was rescued from the Lancaster Animal Shelter in August, and for some reason his "forever" family hasn't come along to find him. He's a great dog, perfect size, not too large or small, heartworm negative, current on all of his shots, already neutered, and he gets along well with other dogs! If interested in taking Tyler home, call Joyce Page, 804-462-0091.

Our thanks to the great AWL staff.
Photo of Tyler provided courtesy of the AWL.

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STRIPERS ON THE TIDEWATER HORIZON

Watching the Seasonal Transition

Story and Photo by Steve Scala

Late fall in Virginia's Tidewater is striper time, and nobody knows it better than the many anglers who ply estuary waters from the Maryland line to the mouth of Chesapeake Bay at Cape Charles. Watching the seasonal transition that occurs between late summer and the end of October, the guessing game of tactics and fishing locales begins to narrow, especially as mid-November approaches. The shiner minnows or bay anchovies are long gone, and with them, most of the roving predator species that compete with striped bass in foraging on bait. As schools of larger menhaden become more predominant than the smaller "peanut bunkers," it's time for the big stripers to arrive in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay for their annual early winter feed. Charterboat captains and anglers will be matching their lures to the size and appearance of the larger menhaden that the big stripers roam bay waters to feed on. Both the eastern and western channel edges will be favored trolling locales, and experienced eyes will be watching for signs of big fish in pursuit of menhaden schools. Figure out the movement of baitfish and you have a pretty good equation for catching big late fall striped bass.

Over the decades and especially since the resurgence and recovery of striped bass as a popular game fish, downriggers have become popular hardware for striper trolling in November and December. Often these big marauding fish, including some that exceed forty pounds and forty inches in length, will cruise at depths between the upper water column and the channel depths. As pods of menhaden move from one thermal

layer depth to another, big feeding stripers will follow them. Downriggers allow lures to be trolled at set point depths, keeping the lure and leader where the fish are, with large drop sinker weights. Once the fish hits, the leader line is released from the heavy downrigger line and only the weight and strength of the fish is on the rod and reel.

It wouldn't be November without the annual Casey Neal Rogers (CNR) Memorial Rockfish Tournament. This popular fundraiser takes place in what is often the epicenter of late November striped bass action in Virginia's Middle Chesapeake Bay Region. Tournament central on Saturday November 22, 2014 will be Smith Point Marina, near Reedville, Virginia. Along with enjoying some of the best striped bass angling competition available, those who enter the tournament have the chance to win some substantial prize money. Proceeds gained from the fishing tournament go to the CNR Scholarship fund, which awards eligible Northumberland County High School students with funding to attend college.

All tournament information and the registration form for entry into the November 22, 2014 CNR Rockfish Tournament can be found by visiting, www.cnrtournament.com or by calling 804-453-7507. While at the CNR Tournament website, check out the winners and fish sizes from the 2013 competition and also from previous years. The Chesapeake Bay waters within close proximity of where the fish are checked in remains a popular historic location for big late fall stripers. *pl*

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Traditional Tastes of a Northern Neck Christmas

By Carolyn H. Jett

This essay is adapted from the author's longer article, "Traditional Christmas in the Northern Neck," published in *Echoes of Yesteryear: Mary Ball Washington Museum and Library Occasional Papers Series, Volume 2* (2014).

Family and friends are at the heart of holiday traditions, but what is it that brings them together? One answer is food. In this essay, I share some reflections on how cooking, baking, eating, and entertaining contributed to Christmas celebrations, including traditions of my own family, in the Northern Neck in the mid-1900s.

A typical Christmas dinner featured the likes of salt-cured ham, oysters stewed in their own liquid seasoned with salt pork drippings, candied sweet potatoes, bitter turnip greens, and a generous sampling of the bounty that had been gleaned from gardens in season and preserved in glass Mason jars. In

the week before Christmas, at least two evenings were set aside for what were called "Christmas dinings." These were typically held on consecutive evenings so that some of the traditional foods could be cooked in double amounts and used for both meals. Christmas dinings were usually family oriented, with the husband's family served one evening and the wife's family the next.

A fresh ham, in addition to the salt-cured one, was often on the menu. The annual butchering of hogs involved two or three days of intense labor. The date could not be set in advance, as it depended on the weather. The temperature had to be above freezing and under fifty degrees. This ham would either be lightly salted daily for a week or two, or immersed in brine for a week or so. There was also fresh sausage seasoned with salt, sage, and black pepper, and stuffed into long muslin bags and hung in the meat house to cure. To serve, the cook took a sharp knife and

cut through the bag, then peeled the bag away from each slice before frying it.

Fresh liver pudding was a traditional dish in my husband's family. In my opinion, no pâté in the world could compare to the taste! As long as Mama Jett was alive, it was not Christmas without her succulent liver pudding for breakfast with two fried eggs and a clabber biscuit topped with home-churned sour cream butter and a generous dollop of peach or strawberry preserves. Other families felt that Christmas morning breakfast must include a certain oyster casserole made of two layers of alternating broken Uneeda Biscuits and large oysters in a buttered dish. Over the two layers, the cook poured half-and-half cream, dotted it with butter, baked it, and served it hot from the oven.

Christmas decorating was tied to food, too. After trimming the tree, families would enjoy popcorn and hot chocolate, or perhaps a taffy pull. When the ornaments came out of storage, so

did the crèche, special candleholders, and the Christmas candy dishes. In my husband's childhood home, the candy dishes were shaped like oversized pears with the top half of the pear as the cover. One was filled with chocolate drops and the other with pastel-colored coconut bonbons. A smaller dish held hard candy and a tall covered jar held peppermint sticks. A special treat for the children was to roll an orange on a table or countertop until it was completely soft, then cut a hole in the end and insert a peppermint stick. Holding the orange gently, so as not to lose any of the juice, one sucked on the peppermint until inner holes developed and the orange juice came through the candy stick. This involved a lot of work, but it was well worth it!

Once the house was decorated, the cake baking began. There would be a fruitcake or applesauce cake, a coconut cake, and the universal favorite, called a chocolate cake. The chocolate cake consisted of six to eight thin layers of yellow cake put together with boiled



from the Collection of the Mary Ball Washington Museum & Library

chocolate icing. It was usually a sponge cake or a 1-2-3-4 cake, so named for its simple number of ingredients and their ratios (see recipe). This cake was very rich and was served in thin slices on the best china. Cakes were often stored in lard tins sealed around the top with tape, which was removed to take the cakes out for serving and carefully replaced when they were returned to the tins.

During the holidays, people enjoyed many visits to, and from, friends, relatives, and neighbors. My husband's mother kept a notebook with the names of everyone who had come through her doors from the first of December through New Year's Day. When guests arrived, they "oohed and aahed" over the tree and decorations, caught up on the news, and then were proudly served slices of cake with freshly-made coffee, eggnog, or sweet wine that had been made in the summer and carefully stored until Christmas.

Food was, and still is, an important way for people to connect with each other during the Christmas season. Food also connects us to our past and passes traditions from generation to generation. Just one bite of a particular dish can evoke powerful memories. What does your favorite holiday food tradition mean to you? *pl*

Recipe for Traditional 1-2-3-4 Cake

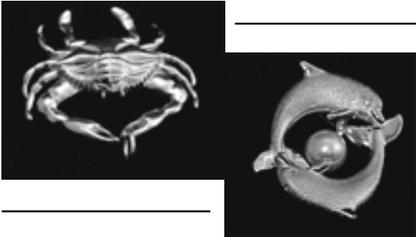
- 1 cup butter
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 cups unsifted, unbleached flour
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 3 tsp. vanilla flavoring
(or 2 tsp. lemon extract and 1 tsp. vanilla flavoring)
- 4th tsp. salt

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour tube pan.

Cream butter and sugar until very light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Combine flour, baking powder, and salt in separate bowl. Beginning and ending with flour mixture, alternately fold in flour mixture and milk to other ingredients. Add flavoring.

Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for one hour. Cool on cooling rack for 20 minutes, then turn out of pan. Let cool completely.

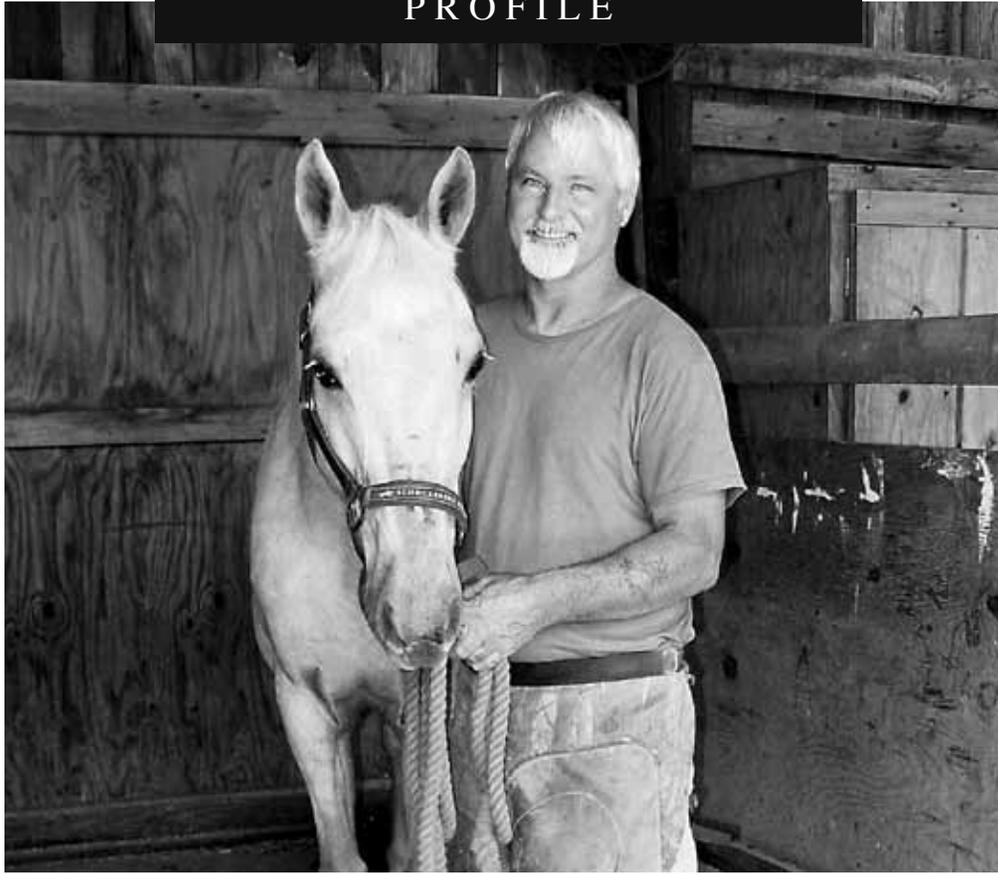
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THE ART AND SCIENCE OF THE FARRIER

An Ancient Craft

By Nuala Galbari / Photos by David L. Justis

Images of the blacksmith's forge fire on a crisp winter's morning still bring forth some of the happiest memories of my childhood. I was only five when my father introduced me to the owner of our local horse riding school, and before I knew it, I was lifted onto a large, grey gelding named Old Paddy, a most trustworthy Irish Draft, who gently carried my little frame around, taking good care of me.

Every week, parents and children would visit the forge after riding lessons; we loved to watch the 'smithy' (as he was then called) at his work, to hear the merry sounds of the hammer and anvil, and to observe him finishing and shaping the horseshoes, while we warmed ourselves near the forge fire. We were fascinated by the craftsmanship and the speed at which he worked to create perfect shoes for each horse. In those days, our horses worked on the roads much of the time, as groups of riders made their way to fields or tracks. All the horses had become accustomed to working on concrete, through traffic situations and traffic lights along the route. This city stable was populated with aging, but still healthy horses, many of whom had seen hard work in other careers before working at the riding school. Their lives were better at the riding school, with only three days' work per week, and four days to run and frolic in large pastures. However on the three days, much of

their work was on hard surfaces and their shoes needed frequent change. The full-time farrier at this establishment cared for all thirty horses, and when he wasn't shoeing or trimming, he was making farm or farrier tools; he always seemed to be well occupied, and his forge was a welcoming place for everyone.

While farriery is an ancient craft, dating to the Etruscans around 400 B.C., modern farriery has evolved from a skilled craft into a science, requiring a high level of education and training. The farrier must have a sound knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the horse's lower limb and the internal structures of the hoof; he must determine foot care plans, produce horseshoe-making tools, apply and remove horseshoes and assess the horse's gait, as well as trim and dress hooves and handle and control his equine charges. Studies have demonstrated that over seventy-nine per cent of all a horse's problems occur from the knee down, many in the hoof. The farrier requires a high degree of knowledge and skill, often working alongside the equine veterinarian, to determine and correct hoof problems. In short, the farrier must have knowledge of a wide range of subjects.

A farrier's education and training may take more than four years, and up to seven years to attain the level of master farrier. In the United States, upon graduation from a certified course,



a student can become an apprentice or certified farrier. Generally after one year, the student can move up to Journeyman I, and after three years he can attain the level of Journeyman II.

Historically, the work of the blacksmith and the farrier is synonymous. In Colonial America and prior to the Industrial Revolution in Europe, the work included fabricating tools and shoeing horses. Today, most farriers specialize in horse shoeing, including diagnosis of hoof conditions and corrective care and shoeing.

Local farrier, David George, grew up with and owned Tennessee Walking Horses, studied at the Kentucky Horseshoeing School and developed much of his expertise on the job. A certified farrier who covers Smithfield, Virginia Beach and York County, he has provided services to competitive stables and racetracks, in addition to private farms. I asked him what he would like horse owners to know about the care of their horses' hooves.

"Owners should consider what is in the best interest of their horses. In Virginia, I see many issues related to grass and wet conditions. If your horse is standing in wet grass or mud for days, it can adversely impact his hooves. It's a good idea to stall your horse for a day during wet conditions, to allow his feet to dry out completely."

George adds, "Above all, practice good management of your horse's feet

by cleaning and inspecting the hooves regularly, and by ensuring your horse gets consistent trims or shoeing. When a horse's feet are correctly trimmed or shod, the horse will be fluid in his movement, and will feel and perform well. Infection, pressure and imbalanced hooves can cause health and behavioral issues in horses."

There is a mystique and a romance to the profession of farriery. After all, the art and science is often handed down through the generations, although new students enter the profession every year. The concept of horse shoeing was imported into Europe from Asia around the 10th Century although the Etruscans were known to have fashioned a leather shoe for horses around 400 BC. Horse shoes were being mass-produced by the 12th century, although most were made from iron, rather than the steel or aluminum used today. From the medieval period to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars and beyond, where man and horse charged into battle, the farrier has been an important (if often overlooked) figure in history. Farriers tend to horses at national shows such as the Rolex Three Day Event, or Altech Equestrian Games, they staff or travel to racetracks; or they may journey internationally to cover professional competitions such as the Olympics. In addition to hoof care and shoeing for special events, they can create rehabilitative or prosthetic shoes to help

horses recover from injury.

Over nine million horses in the United States—youngsters, pleasure horses, competitive horses, farm and working breeds and equine friends that have retired—require regular farriery to keep them healthy and sound. Farriers represent about 3.5% of the approximately 700,000 people involved in the U.S. horse industry, and the demand for highly skilled farriers is strong. According to the American Farriers Association, over ten percent of today's farriers are women and their numbers are growing, despite the fact that it is a physically demanding job.

Here's to the more than 25,000 professional farriers in the U.S. who care for our horses and are dedicated to their health and wellbeing. Whether on the home farm, at centers for rescued horses, taking care of miniatures, burros and all their other charges, our farriers work with their hearts and strive to continually improve their timeless craft.

Farriery is one of the world's oldest professions and its future outlook is certainly healthy. For more information on farrier schools, apprenticeships and certification, contact The American Farrier's Association, Lexington, Kentucky. Tel.: 859.233.7411. Website: info@americanfarriers.org. *pl*



Coleman's Crossing

A Unique Arts & Crafts Styled Community

By Nuala Galbari; Photo by David L. Justis

Coleman's Crossing is coming of age. The handsome Arts & Crafts styled community is now entering its fourth building phase, and the homes are welcoming new families, professionals and active retirees, forming a friendly and vibrant neighborhood. The popularity of the new homes to both first time and seasoned buyers has created an accelerated building plan that will include a commercial center, situated to the north of the townhomes; construction of the new center will commence in spring, 2015.

Realtor, JoElle Harvey, explains, "What we aim to create is a commercial community that reflects Riverwalk appeal, with landscaped walkways from the residential area, a small park area with fountains, and congenial shopping and dining where our residents and guests can enjoy their leisure time."

This year, Coleman's Crossing saw the completion of a new community center that features a gas fireplace

with a comfortable seating area, a small library, and a beautifully designed open kitchen, together with striking furnishings, where residents and their guests can enjoy sharing various activities, participating in event evenings or meeting their book club members. The community center also offers an exercise room and an outdoor swimming pool. The addition of the commercial center will add another dimension to the convenience and pleasure of living in the Hayes community.

"With over seventeen spacious models to choose from, owners can select ranch style or two-story villas, and a limited number of one-bedroom homes will be available next year." JoElle adds, "We are excited about the plans and look forward to welcoming new homeowners to our community."

Coleman's Crossing also invites homeowners with small pets. In fact, the community has been designed to be pet-friendly, with lovely walkways, landscaped and shaded areas to please their animal friends. Each home

includes a private, fenced garden and covered patio area at the rear.

Residents can walk to the grocery store and pharmacy, and medical and dental offices are located close by. Unique art galleries, historic centers, shops and cinemas are within a few miles, and Historic Yorktown and Riverwalk are located within ten minutes' drive of the community.

Coleman's Crossing offers dramatically designed homes, styled to your taste, within a vibrant and friendly community. For more information or to visit the townhomes, please contact JoElle Harvey, at 804.694.7557 or visit ColemanCrossing.com. They are located at 7027 Coleman's Crossing Drive, Hayes, VA 23072, and are open Tuesday-Friday, 10-5, Saturday, 12-5. *pl*



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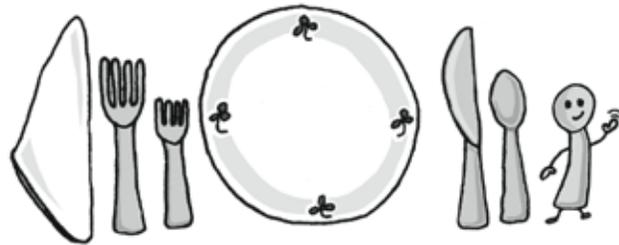
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ENRICHING LIVES ONE MEAL AT A TIME

AUTHOR GINGER PHILBRICK'S QUEST FOR POLITENESS

By Jim Gullickson



Nearly twenty years ago, Ginger Philbrick came across an article in her collegiate alumni magazine about a woman who taught etiquette to youth from her own home. Reading about her fellow alumna, says Philbrick, energized her to consider starting a new career. “I immediately knew that teaching manners was something I was interested in, so I began reading everything I could get my hands on about how to get it.”

This enthusiasm, along with Philbrick’s love for working with people—especially youth—led to the development of *Because You Are Polite...*, a successful etiquette business. Since 1993, Philbrick has offered an extensive suite of services, from teaching luncheon lessons in her home in White Stone to outreach efforts with groups like schools, libraries, cotillions, the Boy Scouts, and even the Virginia Senate Page Program. Seeking new ways to reach audiences, Philbrick created and authored the *Because You Are Polite* book series, a collection of manner-polishing titles aimed at children and teens. The latest addition to the series is *Because You Are Polite at the Dining Table*, a children’s picture book from publisher Belle Isle Books in Richmond. In this cheerful tale, young readers (and their parents) are guided through the different scenarios that may occur while attending a dinner as a guest. Guided by playful rhymes and featuring fun illustrations of a helpful Spoon, the

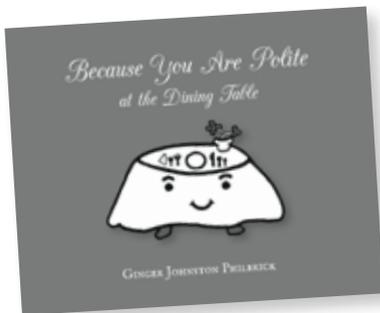
author reminds readers of the polite and respectful way to impress during mealtime.

Philbrick’s inspiration to become involved in teaching manners, both as an instructor and author, was prompted by her concern over a weakening sense of respect in academic and social settings. “Young people lose advantage when they lack good manners and respect,” Philbrick states. “These skills give kids a leg up, leading to success and more opportunities. It’s often the polite child who gets the carrot.”

One of the biggest challenges Philbrick faces is getting today’s youth interested in learning proper etiquette. Notably, however, the author’s youngest learners are often the easiest to engage. “I’m always surprised at how much elementary school-age children are interested in learning manners. They tend to enjoy learning about the small details and are eager to please,” Philbrick remarks. She finds that teenagers—and sometimes even adults—end up being the hardest to reach. “With them, I call proper manners ‘people skills,’” Philbrick says, stressing the importance of knowing how to navigate social situations and make a good first impression, skills that are quite useful in the ‘real world.’ One tool she finds particularly valuable is the ability to give a proper handshake. “It’s usually one of the first things we do when we meet someone and it makes a lasting impression.”

When it comes to etiquette, the individual details, like remembering precisely which utensil to use for a specific course at dinner, are building blocks toward a greater goal. According to Philbrick, the lasting message she wants students of all ages to take away from her teachings and the *Because You Are Polite* books is an awareness that “good manners make life easier and more comfortable for all,” and that “our lives are enriched by understanding how to behave in all types of situations and environments.”

The ending of *Because You Are Polite at the Dining Table* is a fine reflection of the author’s true aim. After the conclusion of the book’s central meal, the host invites readers back to dine again because, as Philbrick puts it, “When you are polite, you get asked out at night or for luncheon, the zoo, or to help fly a kite. It’s a wonderful thing that can happen all right, and all because *you are so very polite!*” pl



Because You Are Polite at the Dining Table is a playful reminder of the dos and don'ts of dining with others. From practicing patience to being gracious about trying new foods, the advice of etiquette guide Ginger Philbrick is relevant to dinner guests of all ages. Find out how good manners can open doors to new friendships and inspire new experiences!

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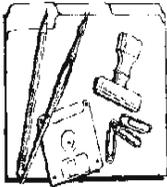
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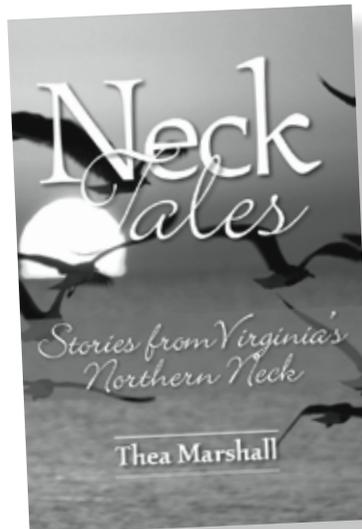


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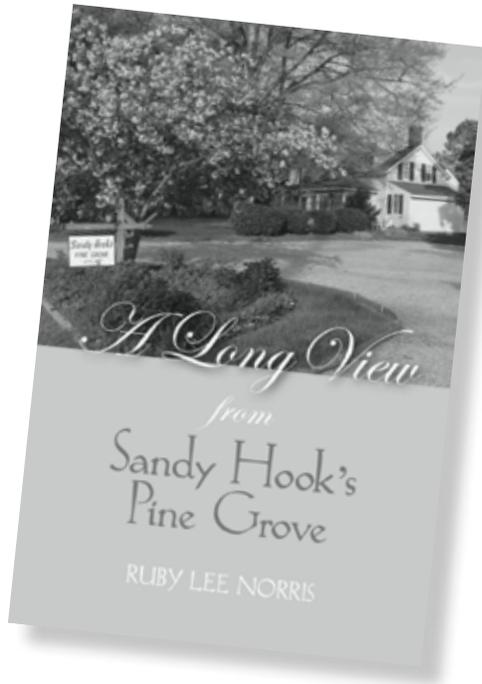
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