

# PLEASANT LIVING

A Magazine for the Chesapeake Bay and River Country



SINCE 1989

*Complimentary*

JULY / AUGUST 2013

**Ditchley House Ghosts**

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**Shades of Green**

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*Fithian's Journal*



Sandra Page

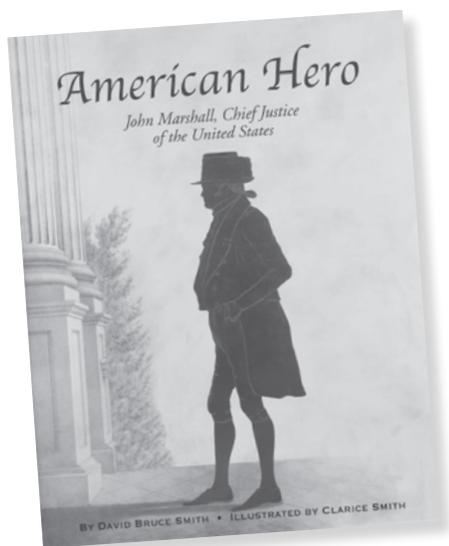


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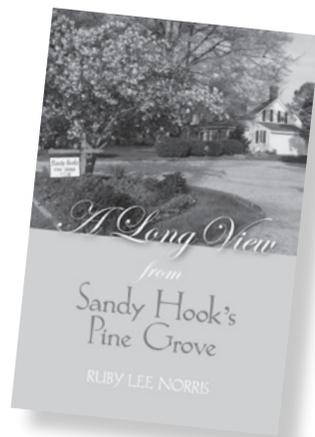
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# PLEASANT LIVING

A Magazine for the Chesapeake Bay and River Country



SINCE 1989

Volume 27, Number 4

July / August 2013

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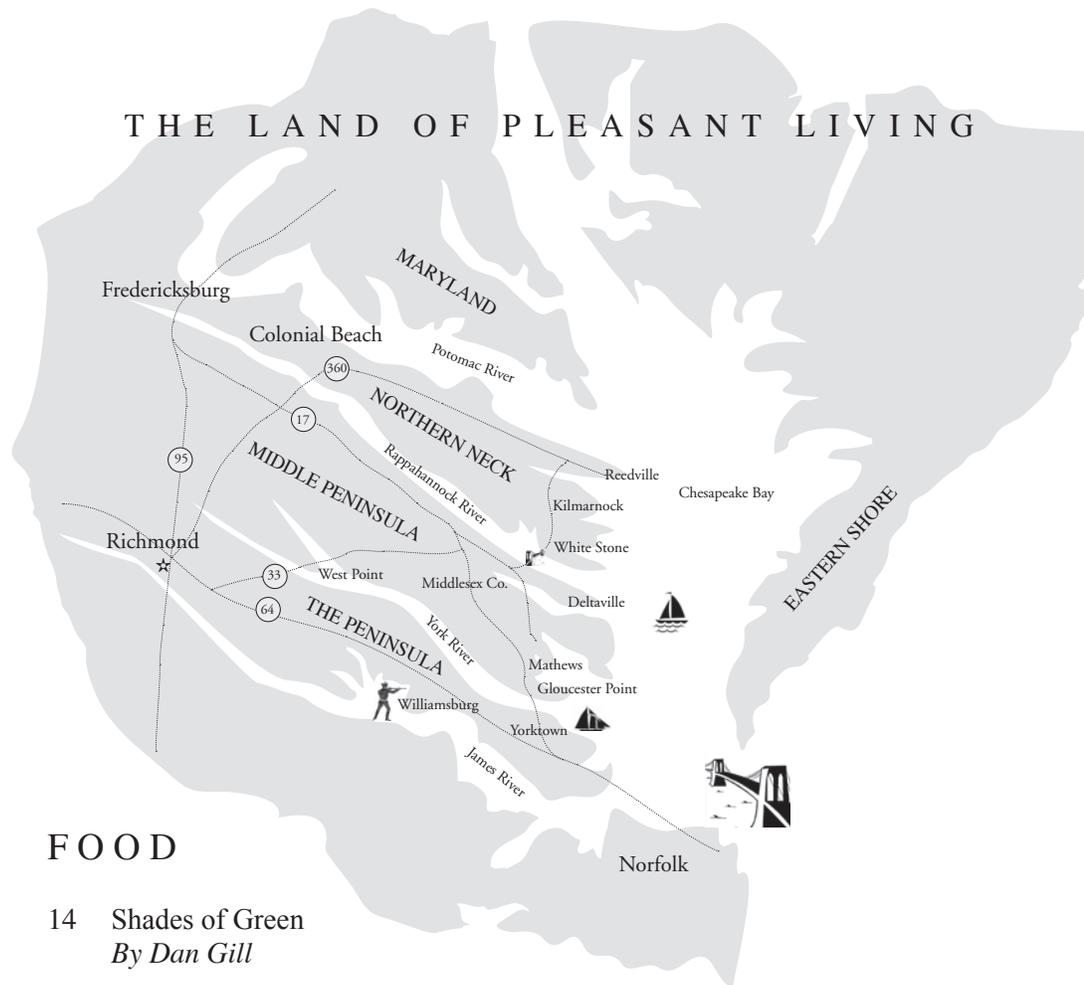
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## Telling the Stories

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Every issue, I'm faced with the blank page and how to fill it—the nemesis of every writer—and this time, I asked myself a question: what drew me to start publishing a magazine about rural Virginia, specifically the Northern Neck, twenty-five years ago? What is it that drives a writer to write, a farmer to plant, a waterman to fish the waters? Life, circumstances and the need to make a living drive us to choose a vocation, but it's much more than this. I remember the chill of possibility and fresh youthful energy that pushed me on when the future of a magazine here was bleak and bordering on hopeless. Perhaps it's about fulfilling a dream or a destiny? I think it's still more.

When I first laid eyes on this area, driving down Route 360 through Heathsville on a dark night in 1973, I thought I had come to the end of the earth. The ribbon of road spun out endlessly before me as in Theodore Roethke's poem, *The Far Field*. I was "driving alone, without luggage, out a long peninsula" towards infinity, and at the time, coming from the intensity of Atlanta, it felt like the most remote, most obscure place on the planet. In the light of the next day, however, I found a miniature Eden in Annie Laurie's and Hobart's garden—tomatoes red and heavy on the vine, soil rich enough to eat, and a way of life and land so new and abundant to me, I knew I had to record it. I had come home.

Green landscape, deep forests, farms and rivers needed to be recorded. A generation of Northern Neckers—now mostly gone—needed to tell their stories, pass on their heritage, skills, legends and personal histories before they disappeared or were forgotten. My work was clear and set out before me like a feast. I just needed a medium, an instrument to express it.

As Bill Moyers has said it, journalists enjoy a license to be educated in public. We can spend our days in the continual pursuit of ideas and adult education. This has been one of the many pleasures of my work in publishing this little magazine.

We do our best to continue to fulfill the original intent of *Pleasant Living*: to tell the stories that capture the mythology of River Country—the love stories, the beauty, rituals of the seasons, the sense of community and business, the ghosts of the past lurking in the historic buildings and churches restored for posterity, and in the culture, land, water and people. Although this culture has been diluted over the last twenty-five years, it's still alive in the collective memory. With your help in finding the stories, we'll continue to tell them. *pl*



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**Dan Gill**, owns and operates 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.

**Gwen Keane**, was born and raised in the Northern Neck of Virginia. As a child, growing up in the small community of Ditchley, she explored the surrounding nature and wildlife. Gwen is a graduate of Trinity University in Washington, D.C. and Georgetown University. In 2003, she retired from federal service and returned to the Northern Neck, where she lives with her husband and pets.

**Thea Marshall**, is a professional writer, broadcaster, actor, and producer. She writes and broadcasts original commentaries on and about the people, places, history, culture and current issues relating to the Northern Neck for National Public Radio's Richmond/Northern Neck stations, WCVE/WCNV. She is the author of *Neck Tales*, published in 2009.

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**Ruby Lee Norris**, a retired educator, was a charter member of the Chesapeake Writer's Club and an active member of the Garden Club of the Middle Peninsula. The garden at her pre-Civil War planter's home is designated a National Wildlife Habitat. She passed away in March 2012.

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**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.

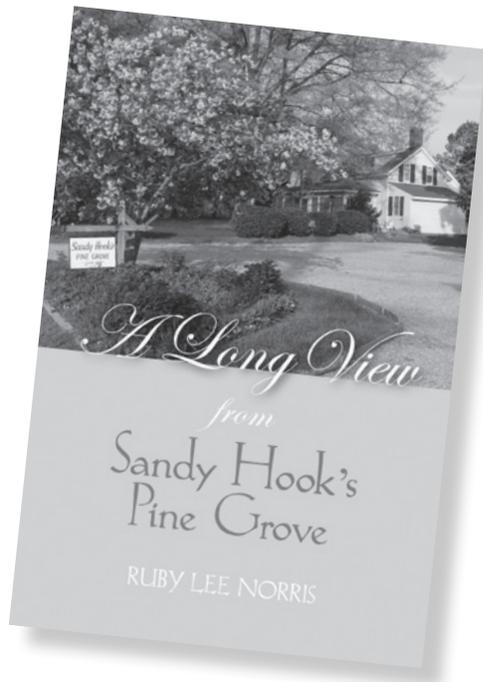
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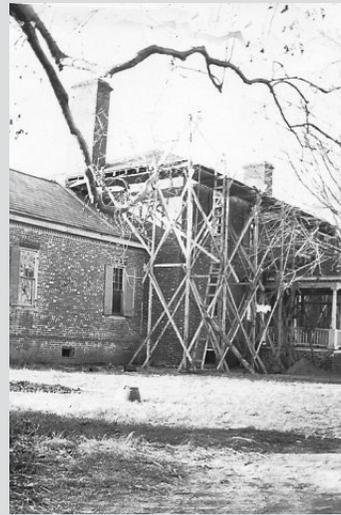
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# THE DITCHLEY HOUSE GHOSTS

By Gwen Keane

*Ditchley House was built in 1762 for Richard Lee's great grandson, Kendall Lee. The site was approximately 300 acres, defined by Prentice and Dividing Creeks. In 1840, the Virginia plantation house was expanded; a wing added bedrooms, and in 1935 a matching wing added a kitchen. Ditchley house remained in the Richard Lee family until 1789 when it was sold to James Ball, a nephew of Kendall Lee's son. Around 1920 it was sold to Cora Lee Carter Keane, a descendent of the Lee family, my great grandmother, and the mother of Carter Martin Keane.*



**M**y grandparents, Carter Keane and his wife Emily Detrick Keane, moved from Philadelphia to Ditchley House to care for his ailing mother, Cora Keane. In 1932, after my great grandmother died, the house and surrounding property were inherited by her three children.

The asking price for the estate was \$25,000. Jessie Ball duPont, who had been raised in Balls Neck on Dividing Creek, the third wife of Alfred I. duPont, purchased the estate from the Keane family for \$18,000.

After the estate sold, a long-term business relationship developed between my grandfather, Carter Keane, and Jessie Ball duPont. In 1935, he oversaw the restoration of Ditchley House, and the addition of a wing. Until his death in 1967, he continued to take care of the local duPont business, which included Ditchley House and the community water system that was provided by Mrs. DuPont at no cost to all Ditchley residents.

Bobbi Gaskins and I grew up together in Ditchley. We rarely

wore shoes in the summer and walked barefoot when playing on oyster shell piles or walking down lanes covered in oyster shells. Cuts and bruises were discussed and shared daily, as if we were having show-and-tell time at school. We believed ourselves to be adventuresome while roaming freely throughout the community. What we didn't know was Bobbi's mother and grandma always kept a close eye on us. A single yell of "Bob-bi" or a whistle for me got our attention and we headed home.

One year Santa Claus brought us identical key, ball-bearing roller skates. Roller skating became our favorite past time after we discovered the large paved area at the Ditchley House caretaker's home. To get there, we skated on the hard surfaced road in Ditchley, jumped a ditch, and continued skating on a narrow brick pathway that merged into the long brick driveway of Ditchley House.

Although we were adventuresome, we were not brave little girls. Maybe that is why the memory of seeing the ghost is as vivid today as it was more than fifty years ago. It had been a fun afternoon of skating, when we realized it was time to head home. In front of Ditchley House, we stopped to tighten our skates. Both Bobbi and I happened to look up at the same window, where a woman with long black hair and an expressionless face stood

*left: Oil painting of Ditchley by artist Margaret Freeman  
Above right: Photo taken in 1935 during 1935 renovations of Ditchley*

*Grandma tried to console us by saying she had seen the ghost many times,  
and that she wouldn't harm us. A ghost!*

holding a vase in her hands.

I asked Bobbi what it was. Always the leader, she said we should run.

Frightened, we fell several times before we got home. Our legs were covered in blood and our knees skinned. We yelled for Grandma as we ran into the house. She heard our voices and the noise of our skates as we tried to walk across the hardwood floors. Through lots of sobs, we told her our story.

Grandma tried to console us by saying she had seen the ghost many times, and that she wouldn't harm us. A ghost! We were horrified, although I had heard about ghosts all during my childhood. Grandma used to tell stories about the ghosts at Bushfield, her family's plantation, and her remembrances of the ghosts at Ditchley House. She always became very serious when she talked about them.

Convinced that ghosts lived in Ditchley House, Grandma said the experiences were so frequent, no one paid any attention to them. In the upstairs "Blue Room," the bed covers were often pulled off during the night. Visiting family members would insist on staying in another bedroom. But this didn't shield them from the sound of chains being dragged on the stairway in the middle of the night. Whenever the noise was investigated, it stopped.

Grandma spoke of the night she and my grandfather returned home from the Holly Ball and waited in the parlor for their daughter, Esther Lee, to come in with her date. They heard the front door open and slam shut, and the sound of footsteps running upstairs. Granddaddy went into the hallway and yelled for Esther Lee. When no one answered, he went upstairs and opened the door to the empty Blue Room. Later that night, when Esther Lee came home, they asked if she had returned earlier in the evening. When she said no, it didn't surprise anyone.

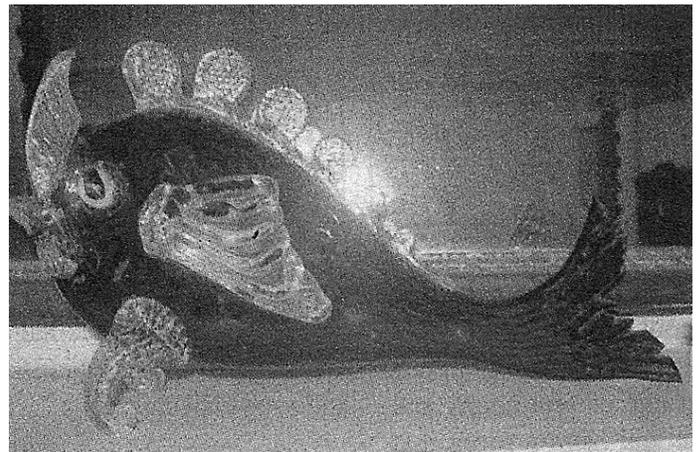
Because of the ancestral relationship to the Lee family, I felt a connection to Ditchley House and to Mrs. duPont, who was often referred to as Cousin Jesse. I used to accompany my grandparents on the long trips to Nemours, the famous DuPont estate in Wilmington, Delaware, where Granddaddy met with Mrs. duPont and established a schedule for her future visits to Ditchley House.

The year before Bobbi and I encountered the ghost, I sat in the car with Granddaddy in front of Ditchley House awaiting the arrival of Mrs. duPont. I watched the large black limo move slowly up the winding driveway, and park in front of the old Georgian plantation house. Mrs. duPont, dressed in a full-length mink coat, exited the limo. At first I only noticed her coat, but my attention quickly diverted to the chauffeur, who began removing hatboxes and luggage from the trunk. Granddaddy had said her visit would be short, but to me, a short visit meant a change of clean underwear and a playsuit stuffed into a paper grocery bag.

Invited to sit in the parlor, I sat and waited while Granddaddy met with Mrs. duPont. In the room, amongst the many antiques, tapestries and large oil paintings, I noticed a beautiful object on

the mantle. It was a red, glass fish. The object, being out of my reach, allowed me to adhere to the "no touch" rule I had been taught.

More than fifty years would pass before Bobbi, who lived in North Carolina, and I, who lived in Washington, D.C., would attend the bi-annual Dividing Creek Association community picnic and be offered an official tour of Ditchley House. On the waterside of the house, the tables were lined up and covered with dishes of food while people mingled and talked. There were only a few people present that I remembered from childhood. The



other smiling faces belonged to strangers. Finally, the line began to form for the house tour. While standing in line, a conversation ignited between Bobbi and me about the day we had seen the ghost. Standing close to us was the wife of the caretaker, who shared her own ghost story. She and her little girl had gone into Ditchley House and just as they were leaving, the ghost of a woman briefly appeared at the foot of the stairs. Needless to say, they left.

At the start of the tour, I felt like someone on a mission. I wanted to know if I would still think of the red fish as being beautiful. Once in the parlor, I expected to find the red fish on the mantle. My eyes carefully examined all of the room's contents, but to my disappointment, the red fish was absent. Later I found it on the mantle upstairs in the Blue Room. Yes, the fish of Murano glass was still beautiful, but I wondered who had moved it.

Several months later I met the caretaker and asked him if he had ever seen any ghosts. He said no but recalled the day some electricians were working in the kitchen, when a little boy dressed in colonial clothes appeared in the doorway. They packed up their tools and left. I shared my red fish story with him and he informed me the red fish had recently fallen off the mantle and was broken, but he had saved the pieces. He thought the vibration from an airplane must have caused the fish to fall. Of course, he may have been right, yet maybe Grandma was right in believing ghosts live on at Ditchley House. *pl*



## RIVER'S INN RESTAURANT AND CRAB DECK

*Feasting on Gloucester's Finest Fare*

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By Nuala Galbari; Photos by David L. Justis

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Seated in a corner chair on the Crab Deck at River's Inn Restaurant earlier this week, I had to admit this was an idyllic setting. Sipping freshly-brewed coffee on a temperate morning, while listening to the pleasing sounds of the yachts gently pulling on their ties, the Bay breezes dancing playfully around—what could be more enticing? The kitchen door would periodically swing open, permitting delightful aromas to waft in my direction and mingle with the sea air. I observed the friendly boat owners performing their morning duties on deck, some making their way to the restaurant for an early lunch; others enjoying refreshments on the Crab Deck.

Even to those among us who are not mariners, there is an undeniable attraction to the vessels, the Bay and ocean—as though a call to our deep subconscious and to return to our aquatic natures and the healthful and invigorating effects of the sea.

The River's Inn restaurant is situated in a prime location at the stunning Yacht Haven Marina at Gloucester Point. Views of the expansive harbor offer guests a constantly changing palette as small and large vessels arrive and depart their moorings and fishing boats slip quietly out of the harbor to begin their work. What a pleasure, indeed, is life around boats.

As the Water Rat observed, in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, "Believe me, my young friend, there is *nothing*—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. Simply messing . . ."

The next best thing, then, is to lunch or dine at River's Inn Restaurant. Guests may choose casual outdoor dining at the Crab Deck, or the smart, relaxed dining within the fresh, light, maritime décor where the atmosphere is elegant, yet unpretentious and the staff is thoughtful and attentive.

Your crisp, white table linen will soon form the canvas for colorful plates, as foraged salad leaves and herbs combine with the finest seafood, meat or vegetarian

selections, sourced from trusted and sustainable local suppliers.

Gloucester native and Johnson & Wales graduate, Chef Robert Sturgeon, has grown up in kitchens since early childhood, first working in his family's restaurant and later, refining his knowledge and skills at culinary arts establishments and fine restaurants. Chef 'Bobbi', as he is known locally, works with River's Inn management to create an extensive menu that focuses on fresh local selections, some with a Cajun influence. A wide range of national and international varietal wines and beers is offered, and a scrumptious dessert selection will tempt the most discerning guest.

The restaurant's general manager, Jason Kinter, and manager, Eric Sabo, both ex-U.S. Navy and hospitality management professionals, bring knowledge, experience and a strong creative flair to the restaurant and ensure your dining experience is pleasing, or your private event is refined in every detail. They each demonstrate a great passion for hospitality. Jason, working with Chef Sturgeon, assists in the creation of



a traditional wine, herb and butter Creole broth, served with a toasted baquette. Of course, She Crab Soup and Chicken with Andouille Sausage Gumbo are specialties. Jason notes, “We are also working on lighter menu selections for summer entrees, and will offer heart-healthy, non-fried selections to our guests. For example, we plan to include a Guinea Clam Chowder that is neither cream nor tomato based, and the addition of Vichysois and Gazpacho soups will add a refreshing edge to our menus.”

Seasoned entrees include Hand Cut Filet Mignon, Ahi Tuna, Creole Crab Cakes, Chicken Marsala, Fire Roasted Oysters, Baby Shrimp and Calamari. Forthcoming dishes will include Crab Royale (crab devilled eggs) and a rather decadent Crisfield Crab Burger, with green pepper, celery, onion, cheese, Worcestershire Sauce, lemon and pepper seasoning and grated Parmesan—the ‘grand dish’ for crab lovers, I would suspect.

The restaurant also caters to vegetarian guests who may choose from a selection of

fresh salads, steamed or sautéed vegetables with potato, or stuffed Portabello mushrooms with baby spinach, grilled zucchini, eggplant and Beef Steak tomato, drizzled with balsamic glaze. There is something on the menu to entice every palette.

Restaurant owner, Daniel Bacot, and his management team are mariners, divers and environmentalists—all fully cognizant of the challenges of sustaining healthy crab and fish populations within the Chesapeake Bay and coastal regions. By carefully choosing and working with licensed suppliers, they help ensure the future health of the region’s waters, support local and organic farmers, and ultimately, provide outstanding cuisine to their customers. The River’s Inn sets enviable standards on many levels.

The River’s Inn Restaurant is open Wednesdays through Sundays from 11:00 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. It offers two distinct dining experiences and live entertainment on the Crab Deck. For reservations and information, please call 804-642-9942. *pl*

new menus, manages the various aspects of the restaurant and carefully employs staff members who genuinely serve with their hearts. Eric combines innovative sourcing with good management, working with local and organic suppliers and with licensed and approved fishermen to ensure the highest quality produce.

All seafood and meat produce served at the River’s Inn is fully traceable from local sources, including vessels, harbors and markets, and the restaurant’s staff is highly trained in all aspects of food safety. The restaurant combines its focus on suppliers who follow natural, traditional processes with professional preparation and presentation of cuisine to offer guests a fine dining experience.

While seasonal changes create varying menu offerings, you will find much to tempt the palate on any day. Appetizers may include Sarah Creek Fire Roasted Oysters with Parmesan and Romano Cheeses, and Jalapeno Poppers—seeded Jalapenos, stuffed with cream cheese and crab meat. Or, you may try the New Orleans Style Barbequed Shrimp—shrimp steamed in



**R**iver's Inn is a smart, casual restaurant offering two distinctive dining experiences, charming views across the picturesque Yacht Haven Marina, and live entertainment. Fine, locally-sourced produce is one reason why River's Inn is popular with its clientele. Seafood, meat and vegetarian dishes are prepared, from scratch, with flair and integrity offering clientele an exceptional dining event.



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# A Sweet Symphony of Flowers

## *The Gloucester Florist*

By Nuala Galbari; Photo by David L. Justis

There is nothing to be said that cannot be said with flowers, and we often overlook their importance in our lives. Flowers bring joy at celebrations, they cheer when one needs a little sunshine, they bring solace during sad times, they lighten a room, they say “I love you”, or “I’m sorry”, or “Welcome Home!” Alone, or in a luscious symphonic blend, flowers often speak volumes on our behalf. Flowers, in their eloquence and beauty, remind us of the fragility and brevity of life; in boldness, they say, “You are here today! Celebrate Life!”

Millions of people visit botanic gardens every year to commune with and learn about flowers, blooms, plants and shrubs. Equally popular to visitors, are formal or estate gardens and cottage gardens. Try as we may, many of us have neither the time nor knowledge, nor even the patience to create beautiful and ecologically inviting gardens, and we turn to our local experts for assistance—the nearest garden center or our local professional florist.

The florist’s shop can be a place to simply pick up a bouquet or even just a single rose, or it can be a center you visit often to learn about native species, exotic blooms or new varieties. Most of all, you don’t need an occasion for flowers—they always add beauty, fragrance and joy to your day.

Of course, flowers can also be part of great celebrations in the home. When Britain’s Prince William married Catherine Middleton

in 2011, we celebrated with good friends at our home. Breakfast was rather early that morning and none of us was quite awake at the five o’clock hour when the wedding coverage commenced. There to greet us, in the early hours, along with the delightful aroma of French coffee and Eggs Benedict, bouquets of pink carnations interspersed with delicate green fern adorned the white linen-covered breakfast table, creating a fresh light scent and luscious color. Yet often a single flower can set the mood for a wine and cheese evening or simply a quiet evening at home. Every day is an occasion for flowers, whether you give the gift of a hand bouquet to a friend or even bring a small arrangement on to your yacht to grace your table.

If you live in Gloucester, or are just passing through, you can visit The Gloucester Florist, where owner Kim Walthall and her professional floral designers will be delighted to make recommendations for your personal bouquet or event, and also provide new ideas and enhance your arrangement with the exotic and unusual flower or bloom.

I grew up in Ireland’s temperate climate and our extensive gardens around the Edwardian house were peppered with huge, luscious hydrangea varieties. My father used to walk with me among the hydrangea when I was a little four-year-old tyke; I have always revered this bloom, and it reminds me of my early days when

I rode my tricycle around the garden paths in Cultra, Co. Down, with my protective golden Labrador at my side. The gorgeous hydrangea is as comfortable in a wedding bouquet as it is floating on leaves in water, in a crystal bowl as a centerpiece. The hardy bloom is so cheerful and can be perfectly paired with other blooms, flowers or greens to adorn any fine table arrangement, or simply placed in a large jug on a wooden country kitchen table with just as much aplomb! There are approximately twenty-three species of hydrangea with only five species widely cultivated in the United States—the most popular being *Hydrangea macrophylla*.

Have you ever driven across the Appalachian Mountains on a warm spring day and admired the plethora of wild flora growing among its highlands? The abundant colors and varieties literally stopped us in our tracks one day and we left the car for a little to admire acres of their convivial faces, blowing gently in harmonic breezes. The Virginia Department of Conservation's website can provide information on wild flower pilgrimages within the state and encourages you to celebrate our native flora. While I love

to see them in their natural habitats, they are so uplifting and cheering in a bouquet or on your table. Kim's wild flower selections are grown in Gloucester and Essex, Virginia and her designers can create stunning bouquets for all occasions.

Then, there is the pure white lisianthus, *Eustoma Grandiflorum*, a genus of three species in the family *Gentianaceae*, a flower that has a rose-like or peony quality and grows in the southern United States, Mexico, the Caribbean and northern South America. Lysianthus, known by other names such as prairie gentian, Texas bluebell and lira de San Pedro, are gentian-like bell-shaped flowers whose petals continue to open gradually, thus providing good longevity in indoor arrangements. While being a popular ornamental and indoor plant, its richly colored cut flower varieties—particularly the deep purple shades—are highly desirable at weddings.

The exclusive sophie pink rose is a stunning beauty from Ecuador and is known for its lengthy vase life. The rose has become a favorite for bridal bouquets. The sophie rose is also available in pink, white and

yellow and an arrangement can be excellent for baby showers, among other celebrations.

Quite the best time to give flowers is for no occasion at all—a specially selected bouquet or simply a few flowers will surprise and delight a family member or friend, or someone who needs a little cheering up. Delicate flowers or hearty blooms may be accompanied by a teddy bear, some candles, pottery, or even a china teacup and saucer—the latter, perhaps, with botanical decoration.

And, if you find you need a little 'floral education', you can stop by The Gloucester Florist, where Kim and her floral designers will be delighted to provide information on the latest design trends or new varieties of flower or bloom, from the honest, native wild flower to the exotic selections from Hawaii and beyond.

The Gloucester Florist offers design consultations at its premises or in your home, for all occasions. They are located at 2336 York Crossing Drive, Hayes, Virginia 23072 (on Highway 17, at York River Crossing Shops). For more information, please call 804.642.4555 or 800.551.6336, or visit [www.gloucesterflorist.com](http://www.gloucesterflorist.com). *pl*



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# A “Language of Gossip”

*Author Jody Rathgeb on Island Life*

By Sydnor Newman



**I**n Jody Rathgeb’s novel *Fish-Eye Lens*, “booze, gossip, and sex” reign supreme on an island where, as rum flows and relationships falter, surprising truths are revealed to a young documentarian who arrives in paradise with her own emotional baggage.

The novel, recently released by Belle Isle Books, is in part inspired by Rathgeb’s own life experiences as an “islander.” After working as a journalist for sixteen years, Rathgeb moved with her husband, Tom, to Turks and Caicos where, in 1998, they began construction on a retirement home.

“We did it slowly,” says Rathgeb, “the island way.”

By 2001 the house was finished, but the plan to stay on the island didn’t stick.

“My husband flunked retirement the first time around,” she jokes of their five years in North Caicos.

Though they moved back to the U.S. and settled in Richmond, Virginia, Rathgeb has never really left the islands. She returns to

Turks and Caicos often throughout the year—staying for about a month each time—and otherwise gets her fill of paradise through her weekly blog, “An island life/a writing life.”

And she has plenty of experience with dual lives, for when it comes to the cultural differences between American and island life, Rathgeb can attest, “There are lots!” Island life is “a very personal way of life...islands are surrounded by water—people are in each other’s faces a lot,” she says.

As Rathgeb dubs it, theirs is a “language of gossip.”

This language is reflected in her book, which is written in the style of a documentary transcript. Each chapter is an interview with one of the very candid, often humorous island residents, as the book’s protagonist tries to root out the real story of how the community came together to oust a greedy developer intent on paving paradise.

Says Rathgeb, “You can hear a story a zillion ways depending on who you’re talking to.”

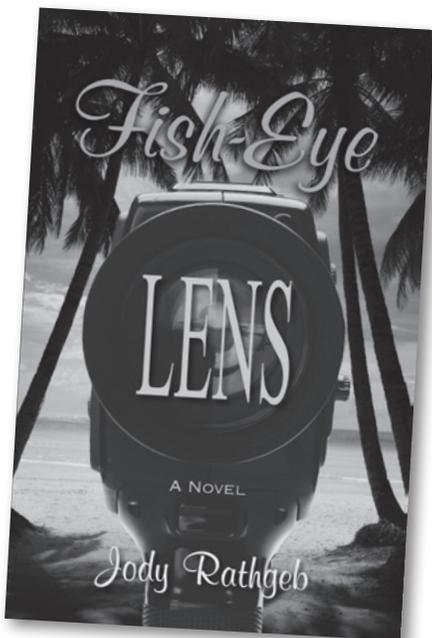
So when it comes to her characters, Rathgeb gives them strong ties to both the islands and the U.S. to make up for the cultural divide.

"I was easing my way into an island voice," she says of this decision. "I wanted the mixture. I wanted [to convey] the way people do blend there."

Rathgeb's writing is often featured in *Times of the Islands*, a Turks and Caicos magazine. She has also written many short stories about island life. Most recently, she took part in National Novel Writing Month, an annual event that challenges people to write 50,000 words of a novel in the month of November.

*Fish-Eye Lens* is Rathgeb's first novel. In addition to being an entertaining read, its colorful portrayal of island community and its nod to environmental preservation will stick with readers long after they put it down. Rathgeb hopes her book will remind visitors to paradise that "there is a life already there."

Rathgeb and her husband hope to return to this life in the future and plan on ultimately retiring for at least six months a year to North Caicos, where island life and its "language of gossip" can continue to inspire her writing. *pl*



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Fiction

## A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

By Ruby Lee Norris

We walked inside the moss-covered brick wall,  
paused to see the winter sun  
cast white light over weather-beaten tombs,  
felt a soft wind move  
across the walk and through the rugged oaks.  
The twittering of a wren  
and the caw-caw of a crow calling  
shattered the stillness that pervaded  
this churchyard where ancient tombs  
surround the time-worn brick colonial church.

"It reminds me of Stoke Poges.  
Have you been there?"

George, my new Yankee friend asked.  
In his ubiquitous tartan tie, navy blazer and beige pants,  
he stepped aside for couples walking along the brick path  
leading to the arched double white doors into the sanctuary.  
Now we heard faint notes of the organ prelude.  
We followed other worshippers into the sanctuary.  
I led George to the fourth row instead of the seventh  
where Vernon, my deceased, and I had sat for years.

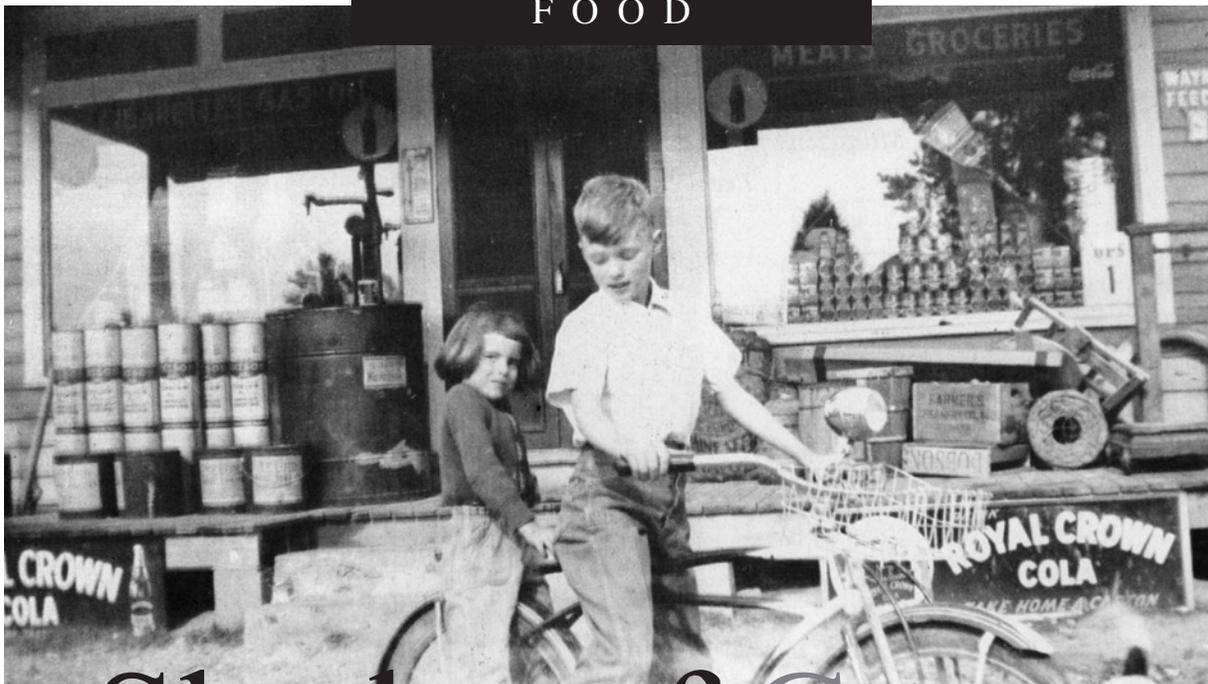
Through the arched clear glass windows,  
we saw the silhouettes of bare trees  
tower over ancient raised graves.  
make free form patterns against the sky.  
We kneeled to pray and George whispered,  
"I didn't know a place like this existed."  
During the service as we sang the appointed hymns,  
followed the liturgical form through the scriptures,  
I thought intermittently that  
I had always known that a place like this existed.

I wondered how George, who had, thus far,  
dodged conversations about anything  
that "sounds like religion, to me"  
would adapt to "church on Sunday."  
Faltering through the liturgy,  
George needed my guidance.  
He didn't even know the doxology by heart!

Departing, we shook hands with Scott, our rector,  
and discovered that he and George had grown up  
in the same area near Vermillion, Ohio, on Lake Erie.

We held up the line of parishioners  
greeting the rector after service  
as George talked to Scott—not about the content of the sermon,  
but the lunch gang at McGarrity's on Lake Erie.  
"Come to lunch on Wednesday," I invited Scott.  
"You two can talk about Vermillion then."

We drove home through the clear winter light  
marveling at the coincidences life throws our way,  
when a Buckeye engineer from Ohio could listen  
to a sermon by a Buckeye rector at Christ Church in Virginia.



# Shades of Green

By Dan Gill, Ethno-Gastronomist

As many of you are aware, we are moving *Something Different* from the old country store in downtown Pinetree, known for decades as Green's Store, to an even older store in the middle of Urbanna, known for those same decades as the Green Front Grocery. More recently it has been home to several restaurants, including Awful Arthur's and Shuckers. The building has just as much charm as our old store, but there will be more room for seating. We have completely remodeled the inside and plan to extend our hours to serve dinner. We will close the Pinetree store after the weekend of the Fourth of July and will open in Urbanna on the 17<sup>th</sup>, if all goes according to plan. We will keep the ambiance and character of the old store as far as possible, including the butcher-block tables and milk-crate seats for our regular customers, but we will also have tables and chairs for normal people. As a result of the hectic process of remodeling and moving, I was unable to finish my planned article on pimento cheese and dusted off this story about the evolution of country stores and how they related to "town" stores such as the Green Front. Even though we will miss the old store and there will be some adjustments, this will be a good move for our business and for our customers.

Ride out through the countryside just about anywhere in Virginia, and you will find the remnants of old country stores. Easy to recognize, they are modest clapboard structures with an open porch roof facing the road. Hardly any still fill their original role of serving the daily needs of small rural communities. Most are abandoned or have been converted to antique shops or some semblance of the original store geared to attract tourists. Most were built between 1900 and 1930 toward the end of the horse

and buggy era and into the time when automobiles were still a luxury and travel was an adventure. In those days, and on into the fifties, the country store was the heart and hub of each little community of farmers, watermen and workers within walking distance. It served as a combination post office, gas station, community center, candy shop, meat market, grocery store, hardware store and snack bar.

In the days of dirt roads and horse carts, there were always benches and front steps in the shade of the porch roof where folks could sit, watch the world go by and exchange pleasantries with passing neighbors. The pace was slower then, so they could have a tolerable conversation just going by. That is one reason many country folk still wave even if they don't know you. Another is they are afraid you may be related. The overhang was also used to suspend small game to "ripen," but that was before my time.

Even into the fifties, a trip to town was a major undertaking so folks did their main grocery shopping for the week on Saturday. While the wife was shopping at the Green Front or Park Place grocery stores, the husband hung out at Max Hibbles service station and the kids went to the Rappanna movie theater – if they had 25¢ for admission and a nickel for a coke. Local stores had to fill all of the daily needs for the rest of the week.

In the country, supper was ready promptly at 5:30. After supper, the men gathered at the store (pronounced sto – as in "let's go sto") to discuss matters of historical, social and philosophical import. In other words, they sat around the pot-bellied stove on upended drink cases, chewing tobacco, drinking soda pop and telling whoppers. Kids fortunate enough to sit around the periphery received an education in local and world affairs, weather, local history and life in general from a unique perspective.

Bob Green's store was typical though slightly larger than most because Bob and his family lived upstairs. I remember it

well. As a kid in the fifties, I often walked or rode my fat-tired Schwinn bike two miles to Bob's store to buy penny candy. On the left side, behind the worn pine counter, there were shelves to the ceiling displaying gum-boots, brogan shoes, work clothes, straw hats, gloves, oyster knives and other necessities. Toward the back there were cubbyholes for mail and a drawer for stamps. In the very back, there was a large cooler with wooden doors where locally grown beef and pork was hung until Bob cut them to order on a massive wooden butcher block just like our tables. The deli case was on the right side. In addition to local seafood and meat, there were hot dogs and cloth-wrapped bologna. On the counter, there was a large wheel of cheddar called hoop or rat cheese, and scales to weigh stuff, which sometimes included the proprietor's thumb. Now, I don't know

that Bob ever "thumbed the scales," but my grandmother in the Northern Neck often said that she had "bought old man Jim several times over." On shelves behind the deli there were groceries, breads and canned goods, including sardines, Vienna sausages, saltines and pork and beans for a quick lunch in the fields or on the water.

Bob spent most of his time on a stool behind the front counter where he could keep an eye on the whole store and look out of the window to see who was passing by or needed to pump gasoline. Special things were kept in this corner of the store: the candy case was built into the counter with a glass top—just at eye level but out of the reach of kids. Behind the counter were pocketknives, chewing tobacco, cigarettes and some hardware. Bob kept some fireworks under the counter, including cherry bombs and other explosive devices

that are illegal now. In those days, there was a two-cent deposit on drink bottles redeemed when returned. They were then sent to the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Urbanna to be washed and refilled. We kept a sharp lookout along the road because each bottle was worth 2 BB Bats or Mary Janes.

There was little in the way of "self service," only a drink box and an ice cream freezer. Bob shuffled along behind the counters pulling stuff off of the shelves and adding everything up on a paper bag. As with most country stores, Bob ran it by himself and was open every day except Sunday for about fifty years. If he needed a break or things got busy, he would call to his wife upstairs to come down and give him a hand.

After Bob retired, the store changed hands several times and evolved into more of a convenience store with a drink and beer cooler covering one whole wall, grocery shelves in the center and a small deli area for sandwiches. We transformed it into Something Different, specializing in fine Neanderthal cuisine (meat, fire, good!). *pl*

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## KEEPING THE "CIVIL" IN CIVILIZATION

*By Scott Duprey*

I was sitting at the kitchen table when the dog started barking. I looked out the window and noticed a Westmoreland County deputy's car coming through the gate. I immediately took a mental inventory of every law I'd ever broken, including all traffic violations. I couldn't think of a fine or court cost that I hadn't paid. Had my good neighbor filed a complaint against me? I had already been warned once about loud and excessive yodeling. I met the deputy as he walked up to the house. With a broad smile, he bid me good day while handing me a notice for jury duty.

The closest I had ever come to being on a jury was reading the play *Twelve Angry Men*. That's the one where the jurors all get at each other's throats because they can't come to a unanimous decision. I don't ever foresee that problem occurring in Westmoreland. Most folks I know "go along to get along."

I was very excited when the big day finally arrived. I was

convinced that I would be an excellent juror. I can process information quickly and accurately while remaining fair and objective and listen to both sides of an issue. I also know all about body language and other nuances of communication, such as the Pinocchio Syndrome. I learned from my wife, who has a lot of experience, how to tell when someone (that would be me) isn't telling "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." I consider jury duty an integral part of helping to keep the "civil" in civilization. I was absolutely confident that the scales of justice would be safe in my hands. After all, I am a Libra.

When I walked into the courthouse, I was met by two deputies, who again bid me good day with broad smiles. The first thing they did was have me sign a ledger then placed a numbered badge around my neck. They instructed me not to address myself or others by name, only by number. I was then escorted into the small room adjacent to the courtroom where they had all the other prospective jurors corralled. As I entered

the room, I immediately recognized many friends and acquaintances, several of whom I hadn't seen in years. In fact, I hadn't seen #4 in over twenty years! I remembered #10 as a former student. I avoided #6 because I thought I still owed him money. The whole room was a-buzz with long, lost friends. It was a regular reunion. Many used the year of their high school graduation as a reference point. It didn't take long before common dates were identified and a whole litany of names began. The inevitable question was then asked: "Whatever happened to Bubba?"

After spending some time waiting and getting reacquainted, a deputy instructed us to all line up by number. This really caused a lot of confusion. When the deputy came back in about ten minutes, we weren't any closer to being lined up by number than the first time he asked. I think it was just a test to see how well we all worked together. The deputy wasn't impressed. As I noticed his hand was resting on his pepper spray, I moved with more deliberation to find my correct place in line.

They finally marched us into the courtroom, and when we were all seated, the commonwealth's attorney, who looked like a young history professor, rose and referred to us as "gatekeepers." He then asked us if we knew why the Great Wall of China was built, which really caught me off guard. First, I had trouble finding my correct place in line, and now I had no idea why the Great Wall of China was built. I was beginning to think that I just wasn't smart enough to be on a jury. I had no idea what the question had to do with the impending trial, but I was eager to be on the jury, so I didn't ask any questions for fear of being "struck"—no, not physically.

You see, the judge had to "strike the jury," which was when he and the attorneys asked us if we knew or were

related to the defendant, if we knew anybody with whom the defendant was related, if we had ever been impacted by a violent crime, or if any one of us could for any reason whatsoever not hear the evidence presented and render a fair and unbiased verdict. Prospective juror #23 raised her numbered badge after almost every question. I think that she just wanted to get struck. Prospective juror #33 told the judge that he couldn't serve that particular day because it was almost freezing outside and he was in the heating and plumbing business and had customers who were without heat. The judge said that the gentleman could be struck but was lucky because that excuse wouldn't fly in the summer.

Even though I wasn't struck, I figured it was still a gamble whether or not I would serve on the jury because they brought out a basket of poker chips. It

all came down to the deputy holding the basket above by head. If I drew a blue chip, I had to go home. If I drew a white chip, I could stay, help ensure that justice was served, find out why the Great Wall of China was built, as well as whatever happened to Bubba.

Long story short, I ended up drawing a blue chip, so I had to go home. The Great Wall of China was built to keep out the barbarians, and Bubba moved to California, got one of those sex operations, and changed her name to Bubbles.

All things considered, I guess it was just as well that I didn't draw a white chip. As I rose reluctantly to leave, I walked by the defendant and could tell, just by looking at him, that he was guilty.

Serving on jury duty and keeping the barbarians out of the kingdom: All part of living the good life. *pl*

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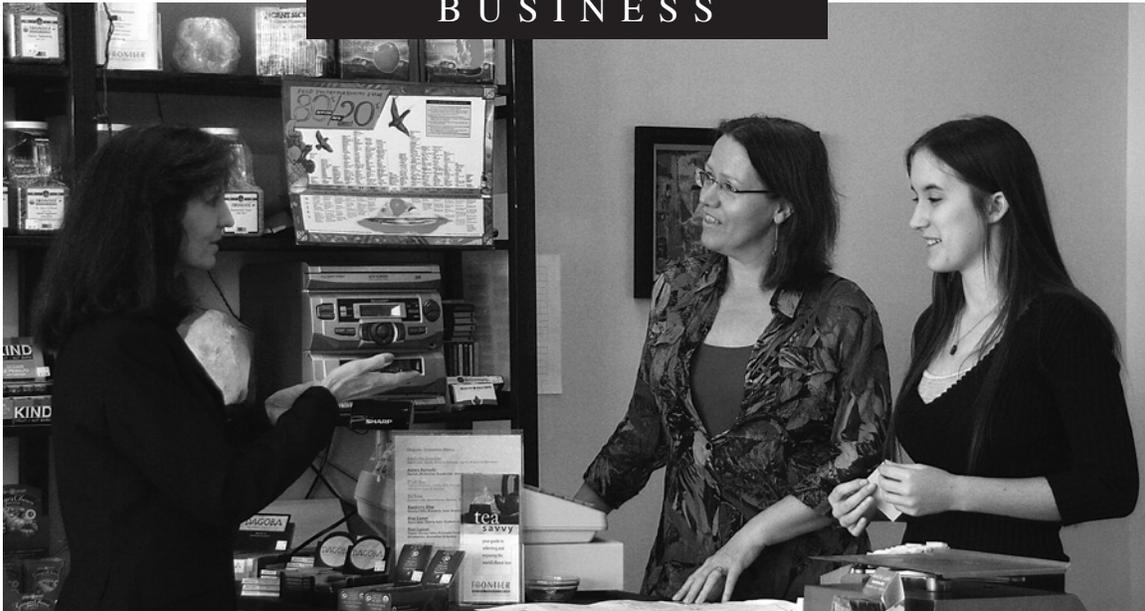
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By Toril Oien Eller

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### Safety is Key

All our products are from companies that have a long history of safety and quality, and we don't carry any questionable products. There are some weight-loss products on the market that simply aren't safe, and we will not risk our customers' well being for any price.

### Holistic Health

At Healthy Solutions, we feel that everyone should be in charge of their own health and make use of all available options. Western medicine has many amazing tools and saves lives every day, but it doesn't concern itself much with maintaining wellness. Traditional or alternative medicine focuses on preserving wellness and preventing illness. We offer a number of modalities that can help the body function at its best, from vitamins, organic foods, and natural remedies to massage, reflexology, yoga, and exercise classes.

It's not necessary to change your entire lifestyle immediately. We can help you identify key factors in your life that may cause harm, and help you replace them with better habits, one by one, over time. Getting healthy should not cause you stress and anxiety!

### Weight Loss

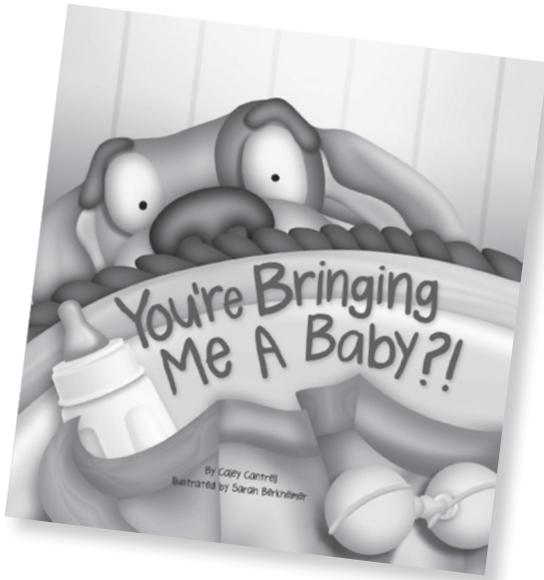
This is one of our most frequent requests—'something' to lose weight. There are many options, and we usually ask some questions to find out why an individual is struggling, and what their goal is. Sometimes we don't even recommend a product before they have seen their doctor, because some medical conditions can make it difficult to lose weight. There are natural alternatives to help, for instance a sluggish thyroid, but it's important to first have the knowledge that a blood test can give.

### Stress

Anxiety, depression and stress are all too common. There are many natural remedies that can provide immediate relief, but it is also important to take steps to manage your daily pressures better. Yoga is a powerful body-mind technique that can be adapted to any fitness level and has numerous physical and mental benefits. We hold classes twice weekly. Regular massage lowers blood pressure and stress hormones, and we offer a subscription that makes it affordable to get regular massages. Reflexology can help with stress and pain, and recent research has shown it to be very beneficial for cancer patients undergoing treatment.

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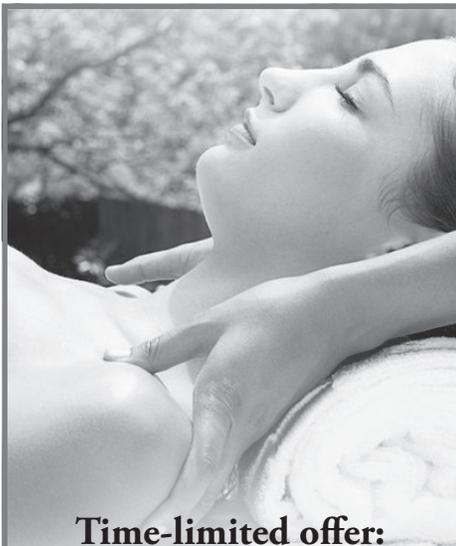
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# The 21<sup>st</sup> Horse Shoe Curve *Benevolent Association's Annual Fundraiser*

By Scott Duprey

I was recently invited back to call the live auction at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Horse Shoe Curve Benevolent Association's Annual Fundraiser, short for, "It's time to get together again, drink some beer, listen to country music, and make some moolah for the Blue Ridge Fire and Rescue." I believe it's an American thing.

It occurred to me while traveling to the fundraiser that Americans have huge helping hands. Call it what you want; I call it united, self-reliant, rugged and resilient. I call it, "community." I call it "American." And the Bluemont community, off Harry Byrd Highway (Rte. 7), between Winchester and Leesburg, have it all in red, white, and blue spades.

Bluemont, in general, and "the curve," specifically, consists of good ole all-American rednecks who take adversity by the ear and a measure of pride by NOT calling 911, and of old hippies who have carved out their own colorful, country lives by hand: mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, welders, heavy machine operators, small business owners—all known inclusively as "farmers."

This year's fundraiser featured several raffles offering among other things a .22 long barrel pistol and locally-made quilts. Dozens of homemade cakes, pies, and cookies were also for sale.

Outside, kids stood in line for rides on fire trucks while the annual firemen and "the curve" crew competed in the annual tug-of-war. When it was the kids' turn, one red-headed chap about five

with a red fireman's hat over his eyes, pulled for all he was worth. Unfortunately for his team, he was facing the wrong direction and was pulling against them.

Folks mingled all day with beer or tea in hand. Conversations could be overheard—mostly about the 3Gs: gardens (how one or the other tomato is more resilient to drought and bugs than another); guns (how folks there aren't fretting about the government limiting ammo because they reload their own); and government (how Uncle Sam has, surreptitiously, turned into "Aunt Samantha"), all the while keeping a wary eye on the silent auction tables and strolling over intermittently to up their bids.

Inside, a smorgasbord of barbecue, baked beans, hot dogs, corn on the cob, homemade bread, a variety of salads and an array of dessert were all available for a donation. Most ate at tables next to the bar where an old sign announced: "If you're drinking to forget, please pay in advance."

I love benefit auctions. They're so ...beneficial. What I love most is that all the items are donated, and, rather than folks holding back and bidding low, they bid high, bidding from their hearts, rather than their heads. Case in point: one of the more interesting items that was up for auction was a group photo purported to be of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Wyatt Earp, Morgan Earp, Bat Masterson, Teddy Roosevelt, "Liver Eating" Jack Johnston (the original Jeremiah Johnson,) and Judge Leroy Bean (The Hanging Judge), all standing together with several others on the

porch at Hunter's Hot Springs in Montana, dated 1866. I told the folks before I began the bidding that I had considerable reservations as to the photo's authenticity. That all those good guys and bad guys all ended up together at the same time at the same place seemed mighty suspicious to me. Nonetheless, the successful bidder paid a hefty price for the photo, obviously not caring whether or not it was a fake.

By the end of the day, the local country band had finally run out of tunes. Many who started the day lingered to help clean up, fold tables, and retreat back to the bar and begin to plan for next year's event.

Pulling out from my parking spot at the Curve, I spied a bumper sticker: "Keep America Strong. Be American," which, in my book, says it all for the folks in the Bluemont community. *pl*

## It went for What?!

(at the fundraiser)

A Gund bear valued at \$40 went for \$151.

A stuffed bunny valued at \$10 brought \$60.

A homemade bottle of lemonchello (priceless) brought \$60.

A homemade Christmas ornament brought \$90.

A chicken garden ornament made of a variety of garden tools brought \$80.

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## OCTAGENIARIANS ON A BLIND DATE

By Ruby Lee Norris

*Dianne Jordan of Gloucester recently discovered this poem among other pieces written by Ruby Lee and passed it on to us for publication. Ruby Lee's new book, A Long View from Sandy Hook's Pine Grove, was published in 2012 and is available for purchase from [www.pleasantlivingmagazine.com/books](http://www.pleasantlivingmagazine.com/books) or by calling 804.644.3090. Ruby Lee passed away in March 2012.*

"Tell me about that blind date," Betty asked. Betty is one of my Mary Washington sisters and one of my Garden Club sponsors. We fell silent as shadows from the pine trees, growing tall and angular on her creek bank, were making patterns on her oriental rug. The trees sheltered us as we laughed out loud thinking of two old folks on a blind date.

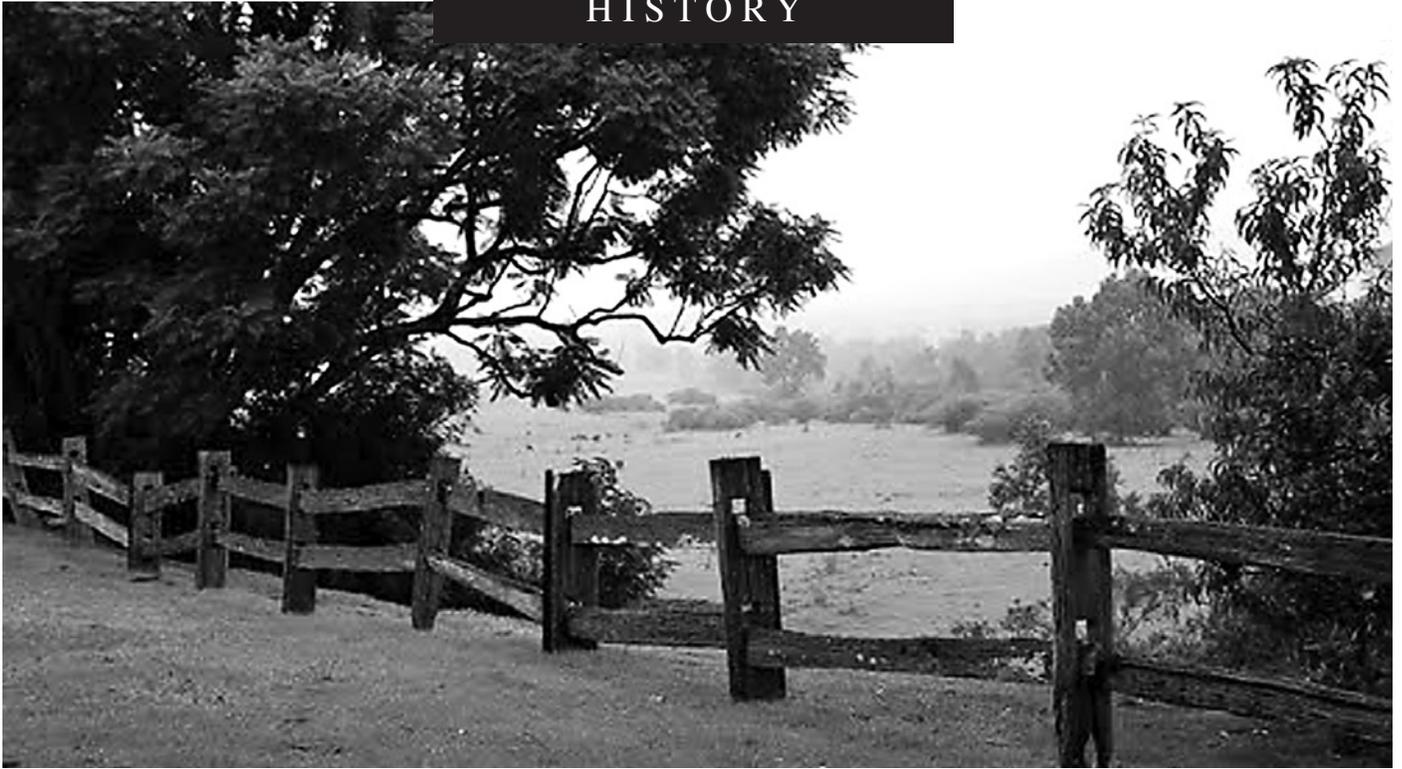
"Betty, after I succumbed to George's urbane voice, inviting me to lunch after exercise class, I had second thoughts but decided it was, after all, a free lunch."

Deliberately, I arrived at 12:02—two minutes late. I drove in a wide circle to get a glimpse of him. Mary, his matchmaker daughter, had given him my telephone number and encouraged this date. She told me that he had "those English features." English features like Sir Laurence Olivier or Winston Churchill, I wondered? How had she described my "Southern features?" Scarlet O'Hara, perhaps? Mainly, I wondered about what on earth an Ohio buckeye sailor-electrical engineer and a retired Virginia educator-gardener would talk about over a crab cake lunch at the Bluefin.

Mary said that he wrote a weekly column for his Vermillion hometown paper. I wrote a gardening column for a regional magazine. With that thought, I took courage, parked the car far away enough to see a slender man dressed in a tan suit with a plaid tartan tie, standing near the front door of the restaurant. Stepping toward me, he said, "Ruby Lee Norris, I presume?" "George Wakefield?" I replied, Touching my elbow, he guided me toward the front door.

Later he told me that on his way to meet me he wondered what in the hell he had gotten himself into? He said that while he was waiting, an old lady in a big 1990 Chrysler drove up parked in a handicap space, got out with a cane and walked toward him.

When I arrived in my new Oldsmobile, without a cane, he breathed a sigh of relief. Secretly, I chuckled and thought that my plan to arrive two minutes late paid better dividends than I had planned. *pl*



## A Look Into *Fithian's Journal*

By Thea Marshall

Just when you think you know a thing or two about long-ago life on the Northern Neck, something pops up on the radar screen to give yet another insight into our past. For me, it was Philip Vickers Fithian and his journal.

Reading the journal, I became aware that his observations are invaluable to understanding the men and women who were this country's first elite class. How could I have been so ignorant for so long about this forever young man, forever young because he died too early. The journal he kept from 1773 to 1774 documents his life as a plantation tutor on the eighteenth century plantation and manor house of Robert Carter III, Nomini Hall in Westmoreland County. The journal includes tantalizing observations and conclusions, sometimes wrong, and insightful details of everyday life in a part of the colony totally unfamiliar to him.

A farmer's son and Princeton student in need of money to continue his studies for the ministry, Fithian was recruited for the tutoring job in 1773 by the then President of Princeton. He accepted, reluctantly. He was very close to his family and the New Jersey land, and above all else, he was in love with his "dearest Laura," and so he stipulated that it would be for only one year. That time frame would enable him to earn some money and get

back to his studies for the ministry in New Jersey, and to Laura.

The wealthy Virginia plantation owners of the time had an enormous respect for education, and while many of the gentry sent their children back to England for their education, some like Carter preferred having education come to them. According to the editor of *Fithian's Journal*, the planters were "determined they should not return to barbarism in the wilderness." Fithian's students on the Carter plantation would range in age from five to seventeen—five daughters, two sons and a nephew—and Fithian was expected to teach Latin, Greek, sums, and literature. He would be joined by the visiting dancing, music and riding teachers, all working hard to educate the children and "hold barbarism at bay."

We learn from his journal that plantation life was not all bucolic. There were parties and dances and lots of visiting back and forth between plantations. While he may not have particularly enjoyed these merriments (his religious background taught him to frown on dancing "and such"), permission to use Carter's library far outweighed any distaste he might feel for all this frivolous behavior. It might seem a small thing to be permitted to use the manor library, but this was no ordinary library. This impressive room was so filled with the great books of the time, that it was

*Through his journal we also get a rare kind of "onsite" look at slavery on eighteenth century plantations*

said that Thomas Jefferson coveted the collection. One can imagine Fithian's delight at being able to savor, in his spare time, of course, this feast of learning.

The journal also reflects Fithian's strict Presbyterian background in other ways. About Southern manners, he was impressed; about church manners, he was not. The men, according to Fithian, seemed to take Sundays and religion less seriously than folks back home in New Jersey. As a matter of fact, these Southern gentlemen gathered at the church, talked business together (on Sunday!), and frequently had to be called in to prayers.

He wrote about food (they ate lots of oysters) and fishing trips on Carter's schooner. Even their "habits of dress" didn't escape the young man's curious eyes and quick pen, though sometimes his pen outraced his good sense and led him to a few hilarious conclusions. The following is one of my favorite entries: "It is a custom among the Westmoreland ladies whenever they go from home, to muffle up their heads, and necks, leaving only a narrow passage for the eyes, in cotton or silk handkerchiefs; I was in distress for them when I first came into the colony, for every woman that I saw abroad I looked upon as ill either with the mumps or toothache." That they wrapped themselves in this way to keep the dust out of hair and face while going from place to place on horseback seemed not to have occurred to our educated young man.

His notes about the latest gossip and news, of which there was plenty, gives us a unique view into the lives of the wealthy plantation owners and their families. The dinner table, where the "who's who" of Northern Neck gentry, including Richard and Frances Lightfoot Lee, might gather, was his primary source. It was "news central," and who said what to whom was recorded in his journal. And, oh, the talk: it was eclectic and educated and might flit from philosophy, science

and astronomy, to marriage, widowhood, politics and war.

One can imagine the excitement of the conversation, since Fithian's year at the plantation, 1773 to 1774, was a year filled with extraordinary happenings that became centerpieces of table talk. In one entry dated June 1774 he wrote: "Virginians are warm and active in support of the colonies." Another instance was when the Virginia House of Burgesses declared that June 1 was to be a "solemn day of fasting and prayer" in silent protest to the Boston Port Act, the British proclamation that led to the Boston Tea Party. Fithian wrote in his journal that Colonel Carter instructed the household to ignore the protest. This led Fithian to wonder in his journal if perhaps "Carter was a Courtier"—that is, if Carter was unsympathetic to rebellious thinking (he was not).

Through his journal we also get a rare kind of "onsite" look at slavery on eighteenth century plantations. In a letter to his dear friend Laura, for whom he was dreadfully homesick and later married, he wrote, "The ill treatment which this unhappy part of mankind receives here would almost justify them in any desperate attempt for gaining that civility and plenty which, though denied them, is here commonly bestowed on horses." It was

some solace to him to learn, during long conversations with Mrs. Carter, that she too was unhappy with slavery.

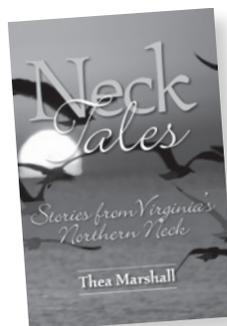
Reading the journal is like spending the day with the family from "got up early" to "went to bed about eleven," and all the happenings in between. If you are at all interested in Virginia history, Philip Vickers Fithian's journal provides an intriguing look back to the long-ago Northern Neck. *pl*

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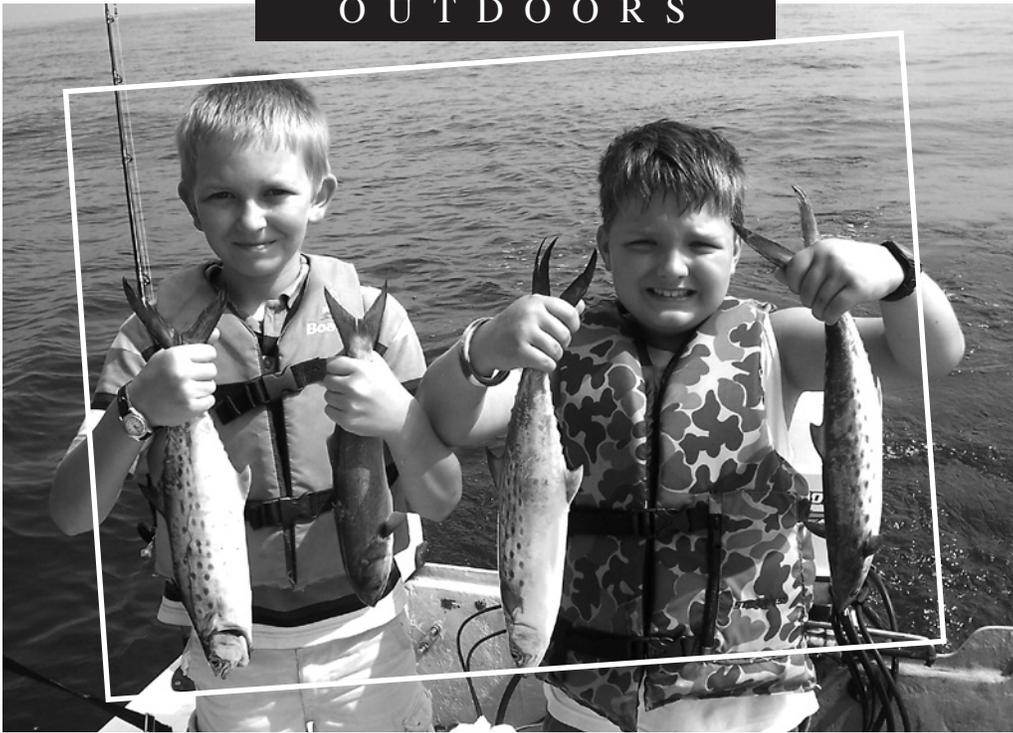


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## SPANISH MACKEREL ROCK VIRGINIA WATERS

*Anglers should have some frantic action this summer*

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Story and Photo by Steve Scala

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It wouldn't be summertime on Virginia's Chesapeake Bay without that warm weather finned transient speedster, the Spanish mackerel. By late June of each year, I begin wondering when this sleek streamlined fish will enter the Lower Chesapeake Bay. With a sweeping left turn into the bay between Cape Henry and Cape Charles from the Atlantic Ocean, this popular game fish makes its way up the estuary in pursuit of anchovies and shiner minnows. These favorite food sources move fast, and so does the Spanish mackerel. The famous cliché, *here today, gone tomorrow* may seem to apply to mackerel but usually there is another wave of baitfish schools and pursuing predators close behind and soon to pass through the very same waters. You can cover a lot of water looking for or chasing Spanish mackerel, depending on how the shiners they are chasing react.

Some fast, fun and sometimes frantic action should be had by many anglers and charterboat customers on Chesapeake Bay this summer. Skill, patience and judgment often are combined and come into play when trying to vector an interception course with a school of Spanish mackerel. Skilled anglers get their fast moving trolled baits close enough to get the fishes' attention without causing the schools to sound or scatter. The most significant variable remains following the lead that the shiner baitfish provides. If they head inshore or towards the channel, that's where the mackerel will follow. Learning how to recognize the distinct ripple and wave actions that shiner minnows make can be an important lead to determining where to get your lines

overboard and fishing. This time of year, if you come upon a school of shiners, it is likely a school of Spanish mackerel will be nearby and heading your way.

Rod and reels and fishing tackle for Spanish mackerel is a unique combination of sturdy trolling gear, monofilament line with enough endurance to resist the nicks and cuts of the mackerel's teeth, yet not so strong and thick that it spooks the fish. Planers in #1 and 3 sizes that keep the lures and leader beneath the surface while trolling are popular hardware for mackerel trolling. Once the fish hits the lure, the planer trips and lets the angler enjoy the direct fight with the fish instead of the steady drag and tug of a heavy weight. The faster trolling speeds of six knots for most boats make planers a popular option. Small Drones, Clark Spoons and Crippled Alewives that mimic small baitfish like shiner minnows are good choices for mackerel trolling lures.

Anglers who enjoy competition for a good cause should check out the Lancaster Little League & Youth Clubs' annual Spanish mackerel tournament that takes place in Chesapeake Bay waters near Kilmarnock, Virginia. Fishing competition this summer takes place on August 24, 2013 and invites anglers of all ages to participate. Added this year, is the Travis Smith Special Angler Award, for anglers with special needs. Visit the website at [www.chesapeakeboatbasin.com](http://www.chesapeakeboatbasin.com) or call 804-724-9279 for information.

*pl*

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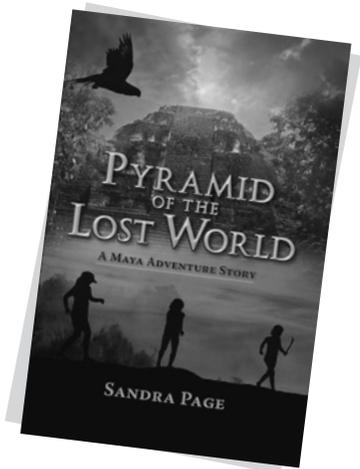
# Sandra Page

*Exploring the Mayans*

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By Caroline Robey

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**S**andra Page is the author of *Pyramid of the Lost World*, a novel for young readers published by Brandylane Publishers. This is the first book in a series about two young girls experiencing the culture of ancient civilizations. Last month, the Georgia Writer’s Association announced that Sandra won the Georgia Author of the Year Award in the children’s category for *Pyramid*.

“As a history major, the past has always intrigued me,” says Sandra, but the Mayan culture in particular caught her interest. This interest first began when she traveled to Guatemala and Mexico with her parents and visited the sites of several Mayan cities. “Everything was so different—the beautifully embroidered garments, the food, the terrain...It was thrilling,” she remembers. But what really pulled her in was the unique culture she was experiencing for the first time.

“I was astonished at how much the Mayans accomplished hundreds of years ago... with stone tools and without the use of

the wheel or beasts of burden,” Sandra recalls of her first impression of the people. She was intrigued by all the knowledge they had. But the thing that she could not let go was the mystery surrounding the civilization’s swift downfall.

Why did the Mayans disappear?

“By the time the Spaniards arrived in the sixteenth century, the great cities were deserted and covered by jungle. As a young child, I was intrigued by the mystery of their decline,” Sandra explains. This is part of the reason her book is written for middle-school age children. “At this age, you can still find children who are fascinated by a mystery, and they love a good story.” Sandra also loves books written for this age group, as it was her favorite age to teach. “I didn’t want the book to have a romantic element that so many young adult books do, but they are old enough that I can be upfront about certain issues,” she says—including theft and losing a job.

Sandra became inspired to turn her love for this culture into a book when her daughter became interested in the Mayans as

well. Her daughter was able to spend six summers in Belize at different Mayan sites. "I was so excited for her to have this wonderful opportunity," Sandra says. She believes that all children should have an opportunity similar to this one. *Pyramid of the Lost World* gives children a taste of a culture they cannot visit on their own. Her goal is to bring knowledge and a desire to learn more about the Mayan culture to young children.

From her experience as a teacher, Sandra sees that children are being taught history "from a European perspective that can be very limiting." When she taught American history, she always included a lesson on the Mayans as well. "I thought it was important for students to understand that there were advanced civilizations in the Americas long before the Europeans came, and that the Mayans had many accomplishments at a time when much of Europe was in the Dark Ages." She wants children to experience history in a different context.

Desiring a change in her life, and always looking for a new opportunity to challenge herself, Sandra became a lawyer after ten years of teaching. Writing *Pyramid of the Lost World* was another new and challenging project for her.

How to begin writing a book was a struggle. "I'm sure no one else's process is like mine," Sandra jokes of her writing process. She starts out making a list of things she wants to incorporate to bring the book alive, such as colors, trees, birds and smells. She finds the main thread of the book and then outlines almost half. "I know how it ends," she says, "but I'm unsure of the middle, so I just start writing." Sandra finds a base for the book, but the rest is a product of what has come before. The characters dictate themselves and often change drastically from draft to draft.

One such event that was dictated by the story yet inspired by a real Mayan artifact is the cave drawing of a girl ball-player. While the drawing in the cave is fictional, statues were found at a Mayan

site depicting female ball players. Sandra believes that adding the drawing was not only important to the plot, but also to the story. Children "often don't learn about the role of girls in sports in different cultures," she says. It was important for Sandra to include this figure in the story so that readers understand that females did play a part in physical activities and even sacrifices in Mayan culture.

Sandra's second book in her Lost World series is titled *Island of the Lost World*. This time, the girls explore a Greek Island and a Minoan site—a culture even older than the Mayans. One of the girls goes missing and may have been kidnapped, and a mysterious cult thought to be extinct is suspected of the crime. The girls must try and find her!

"The Maya were our American ancestors, and we should be proud of their accomplishments," Sandra says about the goal of this book. It will provoke children to marvel at and unearth the mystery that continues to unfold. *pl*

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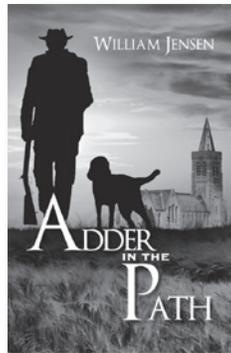
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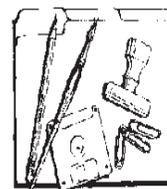
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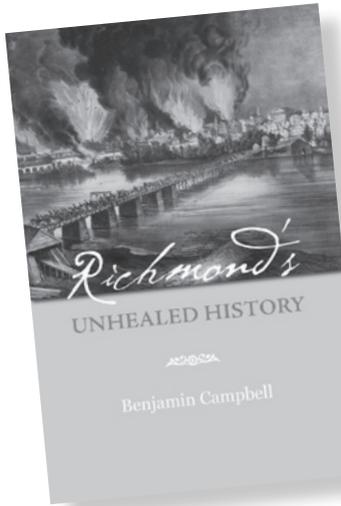
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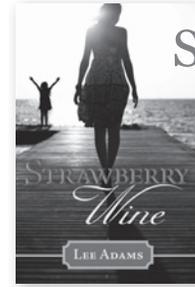


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### About the Author

A native of Arlington, Virginia, the Rev. Benjamin P. Campbell studied political science and political economy at Williams College in Massachusetts, and studied theology as a Rhodes Scholar at the Queen's College in Oxford. He received a Master's in Divinity and an honorary Doctorate in Divinity from the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. He has ministered to three Episcopal churches, and served as Communications Director and subsequently Program Director of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. In 1987, he became Pastoral Director of Richmond Hill, an ecumenical Christian community and retreat center on Church Hill in Richmond.



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