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A Magazine for the Chesapeake Bay and River Country



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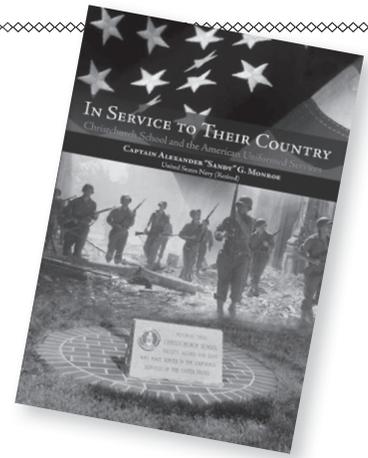
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SINCE 1989

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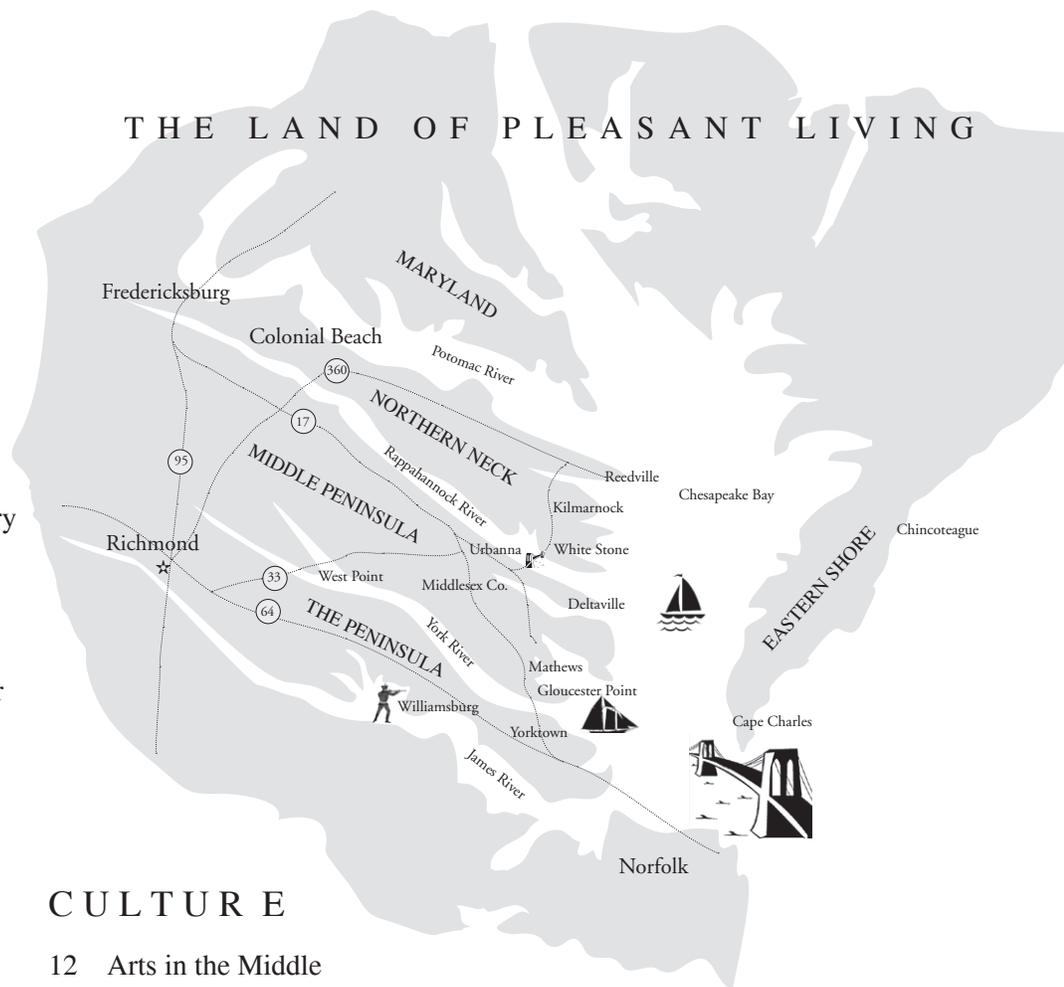
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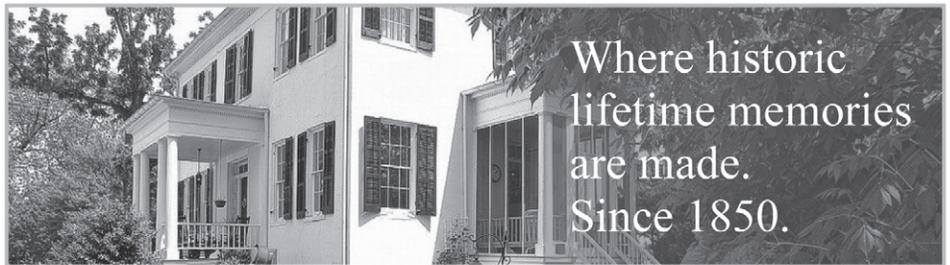
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Dad's Jacket



These past few weeks during the snow and frigid February days and nights, we've retreated like most folks we know, huddling by the fire, and wearing long underwear to bed. It's been a long time since I've experienced cold like this, but I remember a night in 1997 when winter got the best of me, almost.

What my kids, my wife and I still call the "farm" was an old farmhouse in Alfonso in the suburbs of Lively, Virginia, where I lived with my family back in the late eighties and nineties. Neighboring landowners had wiped out the trees on both sides of us for crops, so the wind and rain beat a path across the fields in every season, and in winter, it was a fifty-yard-wide snow tunnel.

It was February, the moon was dark, and the snow had come down heavy all day, drifting across Route 600 and the fields and overflowing the ditches. The whole world seemed white that night, and the cold blew through the car doors on the way home. I knew my old car wouldn't make it up the lane, so I drove hard into a snowdrift at the end of the lane just enough to get off the road. The snow was over the wheels, so I knew I was stuck for good. I had picked up groceries on the way—three paper grocery bags, no handles—so now the challenge was getting to the house with the bags and my briefcase, which, luckily, had a strap. A journey of fifty yards in the snow begins with a single step—and so I struck off, putting one foot in front of the other in almost one-foot drifts, balancing the bags, wincing from the wind, and watching the house take shape and come into view. I had left the porch light on, but now it was dark. I had lost power. I believe it was in the single digits that night, and the power must have been down all day, because it had to be twenty in the house—and now dark—but I managed to get through the night with a good flashlight, nice blankets and a good friend.

When my father had visited a year or so earlier, he noticed I didn't have a winter coat, and insisted on buying me a cheap, fairly ugly, black, nylon shell, heavily polyester-filled Army-Navy jacket, which to this day, has got to be the warmest coat I've ever owned. Now dad's jacket is a very old friend indeed, who has kept me (and my wife) warm on the coldest nights and days for many winters, and amazingly, it's still like new. When I wear it, I remember that night on the farm when the power was out and the wood was wet—and I needed a good friend. *pl*

Editor/Publisher

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CARROLL MELVIN SMITH

A Giant Among Virginia Watermen

After 66 years on the water, one of the great Virginia watermen is still working and still telling it like it is.

By Timothy Thompson / Photo by John Henley

The Virginia watermen of the Chesapeake Bay during the past 100 years, specifically the once numerous, muscle-bound oystermen and clambers aboard their deadrisers, are legendary around the world. Their pioneering fisherman skills, industrious work ethic and undaunted stamina in all weather have made them a breed apart.

The waters of the Chesapeake and its tributaries were once filled with oystermen and clambers. From the 1920s to the 1960s, hundreds of deadrisers with patent and shaft tongs loaded their sturdy boats with the bounty of the bay region. Among the great watermen of this era until today, one has risen to the pinnacle of

his historic profession as the epitome of the native nautical cowboy of Virginia waters.

Without much debate, Carroll Melvin Smith is the oldest working oystermen and clammer in Virginia, and one of only a handful of patent tongs, and at 76, he has not retired from working all year round. "They used to call me inhuman," he says without self-importance, then adds. "I like to work. I get my work done." As proof of his work ethic, he claims one-day records in the area for oyster bushels caught (157) and clams harvested (23,000). They might be state records.

To stand before his still formidable 6' 2" frame, and to shake his massive right hand, is to be in the presence of one of the great Virginia watermen. Still spry on stilt-

like legs, he casts a long shadow, and his size-12 shoes will never be filled. His large, handsome face, though wrinkled somewhat by time, seems invigorated by a life spent on the water. Large green eyes still twinkle, and they are always calmly leveled at you without judgment. He is as good-natured and jovial a man as you'll ever meet.

Not only prodigious and respected, he is also a pioneer watermen. When engine-powered patent tongs came into use after manual winches in the mid-1900s, Carroll Melvin, like a lot of watermen, developed his own equipment. In his garage, he built an oak foot pedal and mechanical control to more efficiently lift and drop the patent tongs, to take more "licks" per day. He can jump start a deadrise in the middle of

the bay. He can also perform the rare skill of “sculling”—pushing a deadrise through the water using only a single oar off the back of the boat in a figure 8 “sculling” movement. In fact, he once sculled a deadrise one mile across the bay after his boat was disabled—an amazing feat for any man.

Raised Up from the Water

True to his watery roots, Carroll Melvin's ancestors came from the Eastern Shore. His father, Kay, was born and bred on Gwynn's Island, a dorsal fin-shaped isle on the bay, south of Deltaville. The island is connected to the mainland via a drawbridge over Milford Haven, a narrow open harbor off Hills Bay at the mouth of the Piankatank River. Off this harbor lies Barn Creek, where Kay became a waterman and raised his family.

Milford Haven teemed with workboats and their catch and the sounds of customers, fishermen and boat builders. Carroll Melvin grew up on the water, and from a very young age, learned what it meant to be a waterman. He liked to hang around the general store to listen to the elder watermen—“the older heads”—tell stories. He remembers his walks along the shore with his grandfather where grade school classes in marine ecology. “I think I was born in the water,” he muses.

Though his father Kay was only medium height, he was strong and became one of the best watermen of his time. Except he was different from every other waterman: he was born blind in his left eye. Perhaps sensing that his father could use help, Carroll Melvin began to work with him full-time in the summer and after school at the still wet-behind-the-ears age of ten. The only son had become his father's other eye. He was a boy doing a man's work, paying taxes at the ripe age of fourteen.

Father and son spent weekdays in the summer down in Hampton clamming from their deadrise, the *Alice W.* They worked all day and into the night, slept on the boat and returned home on Friday. Kay often brought the car down, too. At night in the smoke-filled taverns, Kay had a beer while his young co-pilot sat bolt upright on a barstool with a cold Coca-Cola, feeling like he was part of the brotherhood of watermen he hoped to one day join.

One late September Friday afternoon in Hampton, when Carroll Melvin was only about thirteen, Kay turned to his al-

ways eager son and said, “I'll drive the car home. You take the boat back.” On his first test, the teen waterman brought the deadrise home safe, yet other trips would prove to be more perilous.

Another trip started with fare skies, but “the wind broke down” (blew hard). Darkness came, and waves crashed over the pilot house. Frantically, the young sailor switched between steering and pumping because he was too small to do both at the same time. Normally a four-hour trip, it became an eight-hour, white-knuckled ordeal.

But once again he brought the *Alice W.* home safe. After the boat was tied up, the father consoled his exhausted teen, who had burst into tears on the bank. Kay knew his son knew that he was being brought up hard. And he was passing every test.

Another time while they were fishing a mile out from Hampton, Kay asked his son, still only fourteen, to pull on a wire with pliers to fix the hoist mechanism as his dad looked on. In a flash, the pliers slipped and the wire whipped. Around the rigging it snapped lacerating Kay across his only good right eye. Blood flew everywhere. In shock, Carroll Melvin had the sense to wave at a nearby waterman, Jack Rowe, a neighbor from Gwynn's Island.

They raced to the shore and Jack sped off with Kay in his car to the hospital. Out on the shore that night, the son waited, full of guilt that he had caused the accident. His dad's future hung in doubt. Carroll Melvin then began to work with Jack in the day and visited his dad every night. After three weeks of treatment, miraculously and by the grace of God, Kay's right eye healed back to normal. Back on his feet, Kay and his first mate went back to work—working even harder to make up for lost time.

Besides Kay's eye accident, Carroll Melvin or his father never had a serious incident on the water. Kay lived to be eighty-four and fished until he was seventy, and Carroll Melvin was always there to help him. After Kay passed, his son would sometimes cover up his left eye when out on the water to see what it was like for his beloved Daddy. “I made the choice to be a waterman,” Carroll Melvin explains emphatically, “I wanted to do it. If you don't love it, you won't make it.”

When he turned eighteen in 1956, Carroll Melvin married Norma and raised three boys—Carroll, Jr., Roger and David on Milford Haven. Soon thereafter he

acquired his first deadrise, *Miss Norma*. By 1958, however, shellfish diseases and pollution began to decimate the oyster and clam beds. To survive, he had to find healthier waters. For the next thirty-odd years he moved to the ocean side of the Eastern Shore around Chincoteague to live and work most of the year. But he always kept his base on Barn Creek. After his divorce from Norma, his boat became his home and moneymaker during a solo period.

For the past fifteen years, he has fished all year out of Milford Haven where he lives across the inlet from his boyhood home in a cozy watermen's rancher with Barbara, his second wife of twenty-three years.

Out back at the end of his pier sit two of the most beautiful deadrises on the bay. A gorgeous rare, all-wooden working skiff is tied up nearby. In 1970, Carroll Melvin bought the deadrise he owns now, *Three Sons*. His son David's deadrise is named *Third Son*, reflecting the bonds of their family. No one takes better care of their boats than the Smiths. They brim with pride, and rightly so. The deadrises are essentially floating, working museums, where they work and live.

A Waterman's Perspective on Life

When telling a story, Carroll's speech can assume a rhyming quality like watermen's poetry. His folksy, melodic voice rolls like fluid off his tongue. His rural, Tidewater accent is mixed with a Southern drawl and punctuated with words like “aboot” (about) and “oot” (out) and “booshell” (bushel). When he says “she,” he could be talking about his boat, the water, or the sea's bounty. Or perhaps his wife, Barbara. In other words, like a good waterman, he has always shown respect for Mother Nature.

A waterman sees the world from the water like the way the earth was formed, not by roads, intersections, buildings and neon. From this immersed view, they directly feel the pulse of the planet.

He lives life by the four seasons and the fishing seasons, not by a clock or time sheet. Dates, understandably, can be hard to pinpoint. Time is a measure that does not fit the watermen's life, only the arc of the sun. For decades, Carroll Melvin's life has followed a circular path—patent tonging for oysters from December to February, followed by shaft tonging into March.

Refurbish the boat in the spring for clamming and crabbing all summer. In the fall the boat is refurbished again for oyster season.

In addition to his greatness, or because of it, Carroll Melvin has a powerful homespun philosophy about life. Thoughts on life are rooted and summarized in common sense, such as "You can learn something new every day, even if you don't want to" or "The problem with the world today is people got too much book sense." These are not just words to him. Though he takes his work very seriously, he is easy with a laugh, loves to tell a story and hear a good story, and always enjoys talking about the water.

He knows the waters of the bay region literally like the back of his hand—the whole bay, all the lower tidal rivers and the oceanside of the Eastern Shore, including every inlet and creek where catch grows and where there are dead zones. Plus he knows every oyster spot on the open water—rather where they used to be. He represents an immense skill set—strength, agility, navigation skills, geographic knowledge, marine science know-how, and the ability to shift between fishing methods and seasons.

The Chesapeake Bay watermen were once the soul of the Virginia bay region. Carroll Melvin is the embodiment of that waterman. Now he has become an anachronism.

Everyone from the state to the non-profits to the Facebook pages writes about the waterman, our at-risk folk hero, and the need to save the Bay to save him. If people were ever to come face-to-face with Carroll Melvin, the giant waterman from beautiful Gwynn's Island and heard his story, they might move heaven and earth to save our troubled waters.

Bonds & Faith in a Waterman's Family

He has based his whole life on Gwynn's Island, in the heart of the Virginia bay country. A waterman's dock and home is his safe harbor and his exudes warmth, charm and history. The family is a tightly knit unit, all working together and doing what needs to be done as if by instinct.

Barbara, a true waterman's wife, who lost her first husband to drowning and whose son is a tugboat pilot, is the calm in the storm and a restaurant-qual-

ity cook. And she has earned Carroll Melvin's approval. Carroll Melvin was raised in a church-going family and has remained a quiet but devoted Christian all his life, as has Barbara. Proof of his faith that life is a blessing, he says with emphasis: "Every day. Ev-e-ry day, when I got back to the dock, no matter what I had caught, I thanked the good Lord."

Of his three sons, the eldest son Carroll, Jr., is recently retired from the department of transportation and now a waterman by default. Roger operates cranes at the shipyard in Newport News. David, who is built like Kay, has been a waterman for thirty years. Like his beloved dad, being a waterman is part of his soul.

Still Fishing & Still Telling It Like It Is.

Carroll Melvin retains his genuine love and passion for being a waterman. "If he ain't working, he ain't happy," David, his youngest son, has observed. He has been slowed a bit by double knee replacement surgery last year after decades on his feet

and hauling heavy loads. Like mind over matter, at seventy-six no less, he worked the whole summer even though one knee swelled up at times. "Watermen never retire," Barbara gently admits.

Fishermen have always dreamed of the big catch—real or mythical. When his son was young, Kay use to tell Carroll Melvin to look for the "merry maid" (mermaid) or box of treasure when the tongs emptied on deck. Carroll Melvin never found the mother lode, but his faith found everlasting love and support in his family, of which life can offer no greater gift.

Carroll Melvin's humble yet noble life, his family and his deadrise represent a signature moment in Virginia history, one we must cherish as long as we can. He is willing and he's still fishing, but not catching much. Meanwhile, the arc of his sun is angling toward the horizon. Without regret, Carroll Melvin adds an exclamation point, "I wouldn't change a thing." *pl*

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TROUBLED WATERS

(Part II)

Little collaboration or results by major stakeholders – the feds, state, businesses, agriculture or non-profits – is slowly ruining our waterways

By Timothy Thompson

Friends of the Rappahannock Stand Up

One non-profit group with a track record of results is the Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) based in Fredericksburg with a satellite office in Tappahannock. Since 1985, FOR has focused on the upper Rappahannock above and below Fredericksburg, where they are based, with great success. Looking to expand their mission, FOR brought Richard Moncure aboard as their Tidal Rappahannock River Steward in January 2011.

Based in Tappahannock, Moncure is the lone, independent person defending the lower section of the largest state river from Fredericksburg to the Bay. No small task, but Moncure is undaunted. He is not a man who stands still often nor has time for small talk. A kinetic energy and rapid-fire verbal delivery reveal a native anxious about the river and his readiness to take action, as if it were a personal matter.

Passionate about the challenges the River Country faces, Moncure believes coalition building is the key to a healthier river. He has established alliances with oyster farmers, businesses, land conservancies, schools and non-profits. In his work, Moncure preaches FOR's core mission

of advocacy, restoration and education, and is even-handed about controversial topics. Raised in the Stratford Hall area in and on the Potomac River, Moncure is a water rat from his youth. He has a natural gusto about his marine mission in life. Growing up in his family seafood restaurant business, he knows firsthand the importance of a healthy regional seafood economy—"from fisherman to fork."

After college, Moncure did a Peace Corps stint in Africa then returned to the family seafood business. He then worked in the aquaculture field before running his own seafood market. Now living in Simonson with his family of "water people," Moncure keeps a close eye and a finger on the pulse of the region's waterways and seafood industry. A licensed waterman and soon-to-be certified captain, he intimately knows the waters and lands of the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula.

Evidence of Moncure's wide-ranging efforts cover the walls of his FOR office tucked into a marina building on the water. Maps, and graphs visualize progress and issues. Just outside the door his weathered SUV awaits, and down on the river his outboard river steward boat sits in its slip ready for launch, Batman-style.



Even when standing still, Moncure appears to be in motion, whether on land or water. As he works to restore the lower Rappahannock and collaborates with oyster farmers as part of his effort, you might say he is a man who in his mid-thirties has the river and the world—literally—as his oyster.

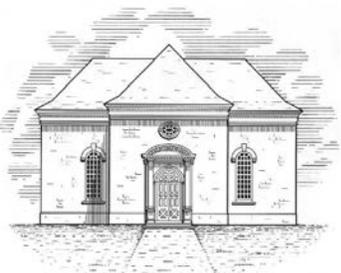
Oysters Rebound

The Virginia oyster industry was decimated by pollution in the 1980s. Starting in the early 1990s, the traditional oyster businesses and now

oyster farmers started to bring back the Virginia oyster through aquaculture and wild, seeded oyster beds. Today, premium Virginia oysters raised by aquatic farmers are putting the state back on the shellfish map and raising awareness about the plight of the Rappahannock and the bay.

As most river and Bay folks know, an adult oyster can filter fifty gallons of river water per day—gobbling up algae and removing dirt and nitrogen pollution, like a mini water-treatment plant. Their revival holds huge potential to heal our waters. But is it too late? To

have an impact, hundreds of millions of oysters are needed. In response, a wide range of traditional oyster houses and new-age oyster farmers welcome the challenge, and their operations are doing immense good for the health of our state waters. Moncure has been keen to identify oyster farming as a key to help raise the profile of the Rappahannock. He is working intimately with these new-age watermen or “aqua-preneurs.” Ironically, just as pollution decimated the oysters, these same crustaceans are on the front lines of restoring water quality. Most importantly, perhaps,



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As most river and Bay folks know, an adult oyster can filter fifty gallons of river water per day...

they offer a viable, long-term solution based on the ecology of the bay and rivers. (see *New-Age Watermen* article page 14)

Although oyster farming is still mostly a cottage industry, any and all oyster growth is vital to rehabilitating the Rappahannock and bay. To further enhance the comeback of the oyster industry, the state is poised to launch the Virginia Oyster Trail in early 2016 to promote the re-emergence of our mostly “human-made” mollusks.

A New Threat from Fracking?

Beyond the optimism of the new oyster revolution, there is now a new menace on the horizon that may only compound water pollution issues: fracking. Driven once again by an appetite for cheap energy and growth for growth's sake, the controversial practice of fracking is being pursued irrespective of the risks.

Earlier this year it was revealed—and broadcast by Moncure after he attended county commission meetings—that 80,000 acres of land have been leased in the Northern Neck for fracking. The oil extraction method sweeping the country injects water and chemicals into the earth to force out oil and natural gas. It requires untold amounts of water, which then becomes contaminated waste. Fracking is already suspected of polluting aquifers in other states even though energy companies profess it a safe process. In response to what he believes is a misguided notion, Moncure replies, “You cannot easily heal an aquifer or a river after it is poisoned by dangerous chemicals. Our local economies could take a major hit if that were to happen.”

In addition to the threats to water quality, Moncure also sees the results of human indifference to

the environment, like evidence of a crime being committed: endless trash accumulations in and along the river. To combat the problem, he regularly leads clean ups along the river. Sadly and ironically, one of the biggest sources of trash is fishermen.

To date, Moncure has accomplished measurable results and is building relationships with the touch of a proactive diplomat. His days and often his evenings are filled with water trips, meetings, articles to read and write, emails, and conference calls. Through it all, Moncure glides ahead through the choppy waters. Most impressively, he has recruited volunteer water quality monitors to gather better real-time data about conditions. As a result, he has already identified dead zones as far up the Rappahannock as Tappahannock. FOR's independent, objective information is critical to alerting the public about the facts, particularly since cutbacks to state environmental agencies have hampered their ability to collect data. In mid-November 2014, Moncure hosted a FOR event in Topping—with oysters served, of course—to provide educational information to a range of river advocates and stakeholders, including oyster farmers, businesses and land owners.

Regarding the ecological problems he fears, Moncure tells the truth without any sign of resignation. “Pollution is the unseen evil. Like a ticking time bomb we cannot hear or see. And it’s been ticking since the 1970s. Time will tell, but time is short.”

At the end of the day, the Rappahannock, the Bay and regional waterways face one force that perhaps cannot be stopped: the endless march of growth and the environmental degradation it causes. If allowed to continue unabated, our regional

waterways may one day soon become permanent dead zones devoid of micro- and macroscopic organic growth. Hence, aquatic life will likely degrade and the economic means of many river and Bay businesses, and people will be in jeopardy.

At What Cost to Civilization?

As River Country residents try to comprehend the extent and pernicious nature of water pollution, the truth is beginning to bite. In reality, we live in a billion-year-old ecosystem perfected over time. Ignoring the gravity of science, humans have chosen instead to impose their ideas on the environment as if to know better. Just one problem. Mother Nature always has the last word, as the earth is showing us with the effects of climate change, a related topic that further threatens the River Country.

Though our state waterways are degrading, there are bright spots. Record eagle flocks on the Rappahannock and large heron rookeries on the James in Richmond are encouraging, as is blue crab production in the Bay. Such feel-good stories, however, suggest that wildlife and marine life are simply tolerating the effects of pollution—as long as they can.

Wherever you live in the River Country, there is water nearby. And that water is, if you will, in people's blood. Families, relations, livelihoods and recreation are often tied to the water. Being connected to the water is to be entwined in the rhythms of the season and the cycles of life. For many, the river is a powerful biblical symbol of life's journey. The pollution of such a powerful life force and bountiful source of sustenance and beauty would be an epic tragedy. If one day it is too late to revive our waters and we wonder

how this could have happened, we will realize that humans have been undone by their own hand. We will have fouled our own nest.

The Rappahannock River's name is derived from an Algonquian Indian word meaning "quick rising waters." For generations, the rising and falling of the tides of our ancient waters has sustained life for centuries. Today, in less than a generation, an invisible, slow-motion, rising tide of pollution and environmental problems could alter our once pristine waterways with dangerous and long-lasting consequences. Have we passed the tipping point? *pl*

We welcome readers' input on this topic. Write us at pleasantlivingmag@gmail.com.

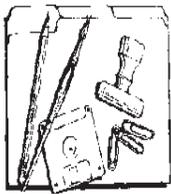
Friends of the Rappahannock contact information: Tapphannock, VA office, 804 443-3448. Fredericksburg office, 540 373-3448. www.riverfriends.org

The Rappahannock River was recently featured in an award-winning film, Rappahannock: The Story of an Historic and Beautiful River and Its People. DVD copies can be ordered through the Friends of the Rappahannock (www.riverfriends.org). Rappahannock received an award from the RVA Environmental Film Festival in Richmond, Virginia in 2015.

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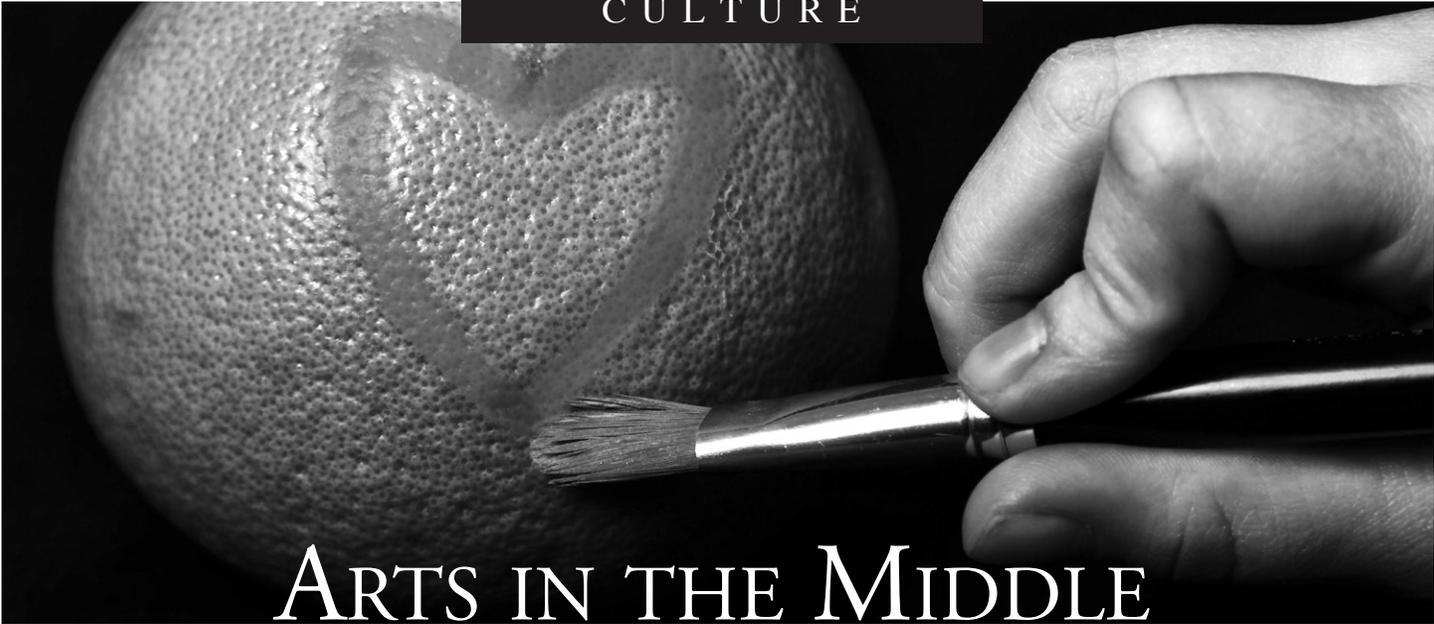
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ARTS IN THE MIDDLE

Arts, Crafts, and Artists Come to Urbanna

Submitted by Gloucester Parks, Recreation and Tourism

The inaugural “Arts in the Middle” art and craft festival is well on its way to a spring event in the Middle Peninsula.

The Middle Peninsula festival, presented by Gloucester Arts on Main (GAMI) will be May 30-31, the weekend after Memorial Day, on Old Virginia Road, just west of Urbanna.

“Our goals are to provide area residents with an enjoyable weekend, provide exposure for artists, and introduce more visitors to our beautiful area,” said Celane Roden, AIM team coordinator.

Primary funding for AIM is from the Virginia Commission for the Arts through Middlesex County and Town of Urbanna. Major support is also from the County itself, Art on the Half Shell, the Urbanna Business Association (UBA) and individual donors. Bethpage Campground owner Walt Hurley is providing Hewick as the site.

AIM volunteers organized for recruiting artists, judging art submissions, selecting musicians, evaluating news media outlets for attracting visitors to the area, supplying food and drink, and creating an inclusive AIM web site. Additional websites and e-blast sources catering to artists were recruited to alert Virginia, Maryland and DC artists to the show.

Artists seeking their own paid show tent sites (If their work is deemed acceptable by art jurors) have until February 15th to submit their materials via artsinthemiddle.com. “Operating an outdoor show is quite expensive,” said Kate Van Dyke chair of GAMI, “so the artists’ payments are vital.”

AIM was chosen by national Art Fair Insiders Radio as

“A New Show that Looks Good” and invited Roden to participate in an hour-long live podcast (That podcast can be heard at <http://www.artfairinsiders.com/artfairpodcasts> “

“We are thrilled to receive this praise and encouragement,” volunteer Carol King said after the podcast aired.

Plans for location of artists’ tents, parking, security, safety, hospitality, shuttles to Urbanna, and more have been drawn up for the location. “It is amazing the breadth of responsibilities and activities necessary for a major outdoor event,” said Kathy Swinehart, team leader for logistics.

An area artist who has shown at dozens of juried art shows calls Hewick, “A great draw for artists and the public with its beautiful grounds, shading oaks, and safe parking. As Conrad Hilton said, start with a good location.”

The road to AIM began last year when the County and Urbanna requested grants from the Virginia Commission for the Arts for an arts festival in our area. The goal: that the area can build on the successes of previous years of Art on the Half Shell, shows at the Deltaville Maritime Museum, Gloucester Courthouse, and other local events.

Middlesex and Urbanna were awarded stimulus grants requiring additional equal contributions and involvement by an active non-profit arts group, GAMI. The County, Half Shell, the UBA and individual art supporters responded with cash donations.

For more information, visit www.artsinthemiddle.com

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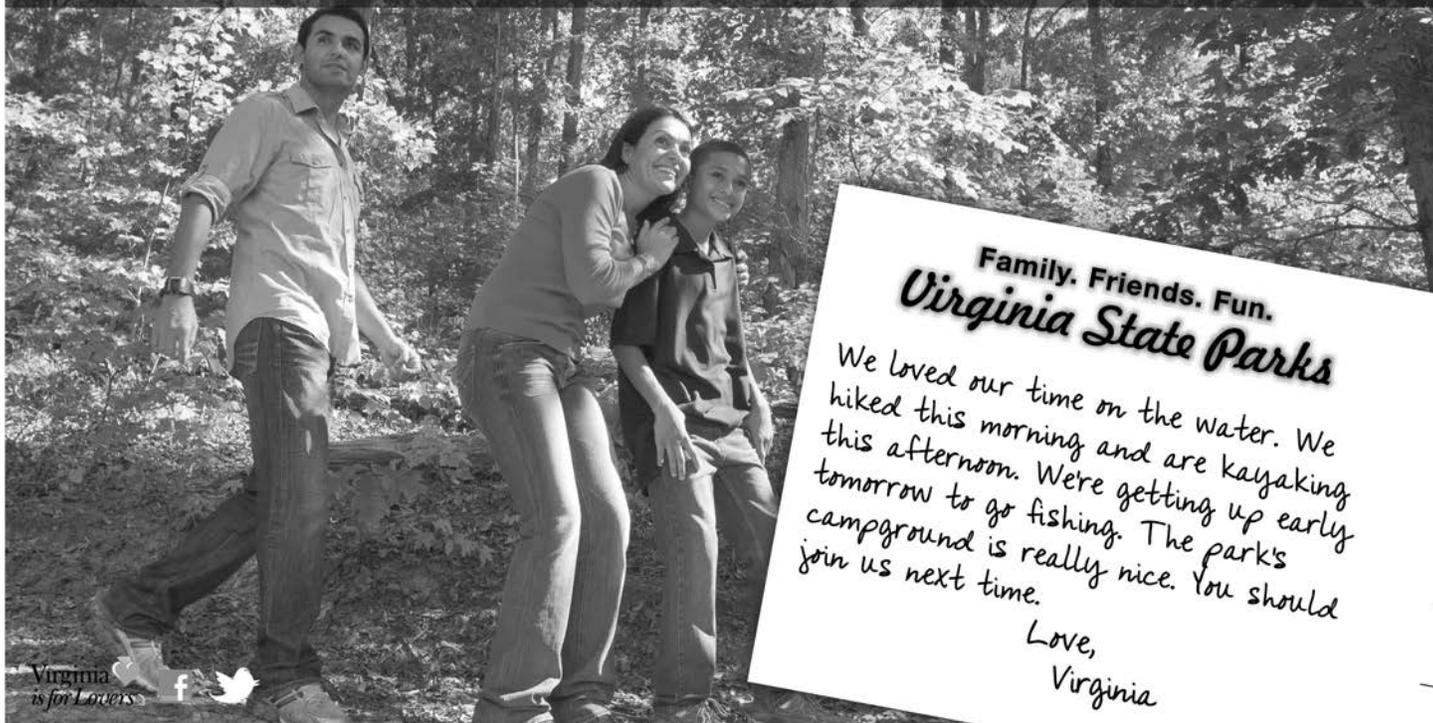


www.artsinthemiddle.com

AIM is presented by Gloucester Arts on Main with funding from the VA Commission for the Arts, Middlesex County, the Art on the Half Shell Festival Foundation, Urbanna Business Association and support from the Town of Urbanna and a growing list of friends of the arts in the surrounding communities. AIM logo design by Ken Rygh.

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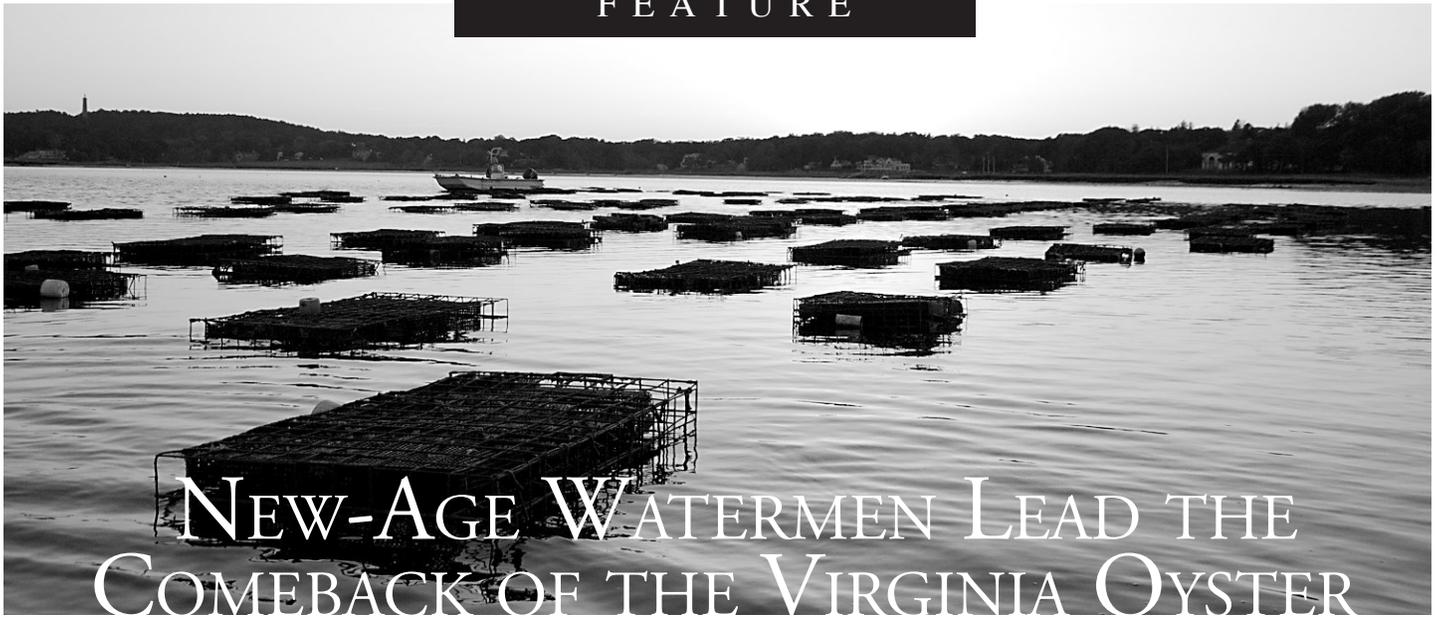
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NEW-AGE WATERMEN LEAD THE COMEBACK OF THE VIRGINIA OYSTER

Part II

(see our January/February 2015 issue for Part I)

Aqua-preneurs and marine scientists are staging a rebound of our state mollusk and growing a sustainable economy that can also help heal our waters

By Timothy Thompson

The Oyster Seed Aqua-preneur

Inside a white, windowless building at Callis Wharf on idyllic Gwynn's Island, the pulse of the comeback of the Virginia oyster beats. There amid a crowded maze of large containers, pumps, filters, and pipes, a marine scientist turned aqua-preneur, oversees his giant aquarium, a new-age, marine factory producing live oyster seed by the millions.

Mike Congrove of Oyster Seed Holdings (OSH) looks like your picture of a savvy, young marine scientist: bearded, longish hair, rugged, handsome, and whip-smart with a preternatural calm. "Oyster farming is essentially the practical application of science—on a large scale," says Congrove. Making oyster seed full-time since 2009, he continues to endlessly learn the vagaries of the process and the organism. In turn, he implements changes each new growing season to increase quality and efficiency.

As he tweaks and adjusts his processes, his independence gives him a freedom to improvise. With that comes a steady diet of problem-solving issues and kinks in the aquarium. But he usually knows how to fix things. He designed the system.

OSH produces oyster seed both for cage-grown oysters for

the half-shell market as well as for private, wild, oyster farm beds. His strategy was very specific, "I first wanted to make the highest quality seed possible, and then increase the quantity." Without high quality seed, oyster farming will wither. No seed, no industry. No tasty oysters.

Oyster seed is the lifeblood of the industry, which makes Congrove's success all the more significant. Each year, oyster farmers use his and other oyster seed to try to figure out how to best farm-raise oysters, based on a range of complex parameters such as water, location, geology, and salinity. In short, Congrove has, for now, cracked the code of oyster seed production in a big way for the benefit of many.

OSH supplies oyster seeds to meet the growing state and East Coast demand. Despite all the risks of his enterprise, a facility that was designed to produce thirty million seeds per year will create 100 million seeds in 2014. OSH's product, but also the value of Congrove's cumulative knowledge to oyster farmers, is immense.

A Hampton Roads native and Old Dominion University and VIMS, Congrove worked as a graduate assistant with Stan Allen,

Speaking of oysters, you can't turn around these days in a bay or river town without hearing about, yep, oysters.

the oyster seed guru, gaining inestimable knowledge and hands-on experience.

Taking on risk uncommon for a young scientist, he has unexpectedly become a highly-valued businessman. There is no oyster farming manual. Only the timeless and tireless American Edisonian ethic practiced by inventors from Whitney to Ford to Jobs—innovate, test, learn, adjust. Repeat.

Congrove has been called a “savior” and “gifted.” Heady words for a humble, almost serene new-age oysterman managing—and personally fixing—a challenging yet successful independent hatchery system. Like many in the business, he seems fulfilled knowing his work has bigger value than him or his company.

Old Guard Meets the New Guard

An extraordinary example of long-time oyster competitors collaborating to better survive and welcome new ideas, is found in the Northern Neck. There, in the face of oyster sourcing issues in the early 2000s, Ronnie Bevans of Bevans Oyster in Kinsale, established 1966, and Lake Cowart of Cowart Seafood, Lottsburg, established 1949, decided to jointly hire a field-trained, marine scientist to implement and run separate oyster aquaculture operations for each company—and share the salary. Pretty smart. But who would—or could—take it on?

In 2005, into this challenge stepped A. J. Erskine, a very bright and already seasoned, masters-degreed marine scientist from New England. There were differences in age, culture and language, but in just a few years the Bevans, Cowart and Erskine have successfully established separate oyster farming operations, and an oyster hatchery for each, and both companies are growing. In fact, Bevans

has even become the biggest “shucker & packer” on the East Coast. Through Erskine's oyster-smart efforts, they have also revived long dormant, wild oyster beds and return every spent oyster shell to the water to build reefs.

A team player who appears competitive by nature in a positive way, Erskine has a calm and intelligent intensity. It personifies his broad and deep grasp of the complexities of the oyster aquaculture business, and one capable of overseeing two separate but related operations. Influential but even-handed, he is an active and valued participant on committees and boards and known as a consensus builder. Virginians are very fortunate to have Erskine in our oyster farming industry.

The Paul Bunyan of Oyster Farming

Broad-shouldered, bearded and cheerfully grungy after a day tending to his aquaculture farm, Mike Sledd of Windmill Point Oyster Co. in White Stone strikes one as a young Paul Bunyan of oyster farming. Basically self-taught and farming full-time since 2011, he has an uncommon gusto and downright love for oysters. His passion has been further fueled by recently learning that his grandfather once had oyster grounds on the Rappahannock. Considered a boutique oyster farm, Windmill Point Oyster Co. produces about 70,000 oysters per year and sells through wholesalers, and to restaurants and consumers, and conducts special events such as at the Trump Winery in November.

Sledd takes great pride in his passion for oystering and Windmill Point Oyster's place in the community. He also advocates consumption of the oyster as being “all about the oyster,” meaning don't put too much on it. If you do, try

one of their recipes that adds new flavor such as pesto but lets the oyster shine.

Sledd keeps a stack of oyster books beside his easy chair and can spout shellfish facts. For example, he likes to point out that the oyster is the only animal eaten alive. Such knowledge and understanding of the oyster will no doubt ensure his success.

Like an historic waterman, Sledd applies a work ethic—“sun to sun,” and he has established friendships with two older watermen who like to hang out with him and tinker with the oysters and talk oysters.

Further evidence of thriving oyster businesses both native and transplant, include fourth-generation Kellum Seafood in Weems, Virginia. After oysters nearly collapsed in the 1980s, Kellum, along with Bevans Oyster and Cowart Seafood, kept the pulse going. Their perseverance eventually led to the re-emergence of our native Virginia oyster, largely through oyster farming. Today, Kellum, led by great grandson Tommy, himself a highly regarded oyster veteran, is harvesting both aquaculture oysters and seeded as well as wild oyster beds. They are also conducting oyster reef restoration with The Nature Conservancy.

Down next to Gwynn's Island, the owner of Sea Farms, Ron Sopko, has quietly been an industrious player regionally and nationally buying and selling oysters and clams, as well as fish, since the late 1980s. Growing up on Long Island, Sopko became a waterman right out of high school hand-tonging mussels and bull-raking clam. Sensing opportunity in warmer, more southern waters, he launched Sea Farms in 1987 and has become a respected and reputable seafood dealer, and just as hyper-productive as he was as a waterman.

The Coming Virginia Oyster Trail

The impetus for the coming Virginia Oyster Trail (VOT) came from multiple fronts—the growth of oyster farming, tourism potential, and a once-in-a-century opportunity to revive the legendary Virginia oyster. The actual seed of the idea came from Joni Carter of Irvington, whose vision she doggedly promoted to the state until they saw the light.

As a result of all this momentum, the Virginia Tourism Commission (VTC) is developing the Virginia Oyster Trail (VOT) for roll-out in early 2016. They have a solid track record for implementing a tourism trail business model as they have with trails related to wine, beer, art and music. Unlike other trails, however, the VOT is contextual to the region as the oyster is interwoven into the history, commerce, people, places, recipes, stories and lore. The state understands this.

The VOT is currently taking an “inventory of oyster assets” to learn how to build a successful trail that is integrated into the region, not rolled-out in a package without input and collaboration. The VOT will be a tourism driving trail, but on a bigger scale it is to promote the state as the “Oyster Capital of the East Coast” and the premier provider of farm-raised oysters.

Hope on the Half Shell

After a long slog out of a damaging recession, the bay and river country are hungry for an economic shot in the arm, or at least a confidence booster. The growth of the VOT and oyster farming, and its related growth, will be slow but steady. The good news: oyster farming, unlike a foul fossil-fuel operation such as fracking, is sustainable. This forward thinking strategy is in place both on the private and the public side, and everyone—from the oyster farmer to the wholesaler to the retailer to state agencies—is working hard to make it all wildly successful. In reference to the boom days of oystering in the late 1800s, John Vigliotta exclaims, “Maybe it's like history repeating itself again.” Let's hope we get it right this time.

Oyster farming is not a silver economic

or ecological bullet, but it and the VOT are solid cornerstones for the state and private business to build a sustainable economic foundation that will spawn more investment activity.

A fitting snapshot of a Virginia oyster farmer's values is found in their referral to the semi-trucks hauling oysters south or to fielding phone calls from Texas and Louisiana about oysters and farming, “They helped us when we needed it, so we want to help them now.”

Where else in business do you hear such a story of reciprocal American collaboration and support? Perhaps its because of their connection to shellfish or the water, or some innate responsibility to do the right thing.

Speaking of oysters, you can't turn around these days in a bay or river town without hearing about, yep, oysters. Let's stake pride in that. Something is definitely in the air—or in the water. It's a good thing for the local economy and for our water-connected communities—a bigger,

common, indigenous purpose. Let's all pull together on this. The environment would appreciate it.

Any business, group or individual who wants to bring themselves and their “oyster assets” to the attention of the Virginia Oyster Trail for consideration, visit their website—www.virginiaoystertrail.com. Scroll down on the left and click on the link titled Download the Getting Started Document.

The Oyster Book

For anyone looking to read the definitive book on the oyster, we recommend *The Big Oyster, History on the Half Shell*, by Mark Kurlansky (2007), referred, of course, by an old oyster farmer.

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Bob Green's Store

By Dan Gill

This article appeared in the November/December 2005 issue of PL. Dan Gill, renaissance farmer and owner of Something Different in Urbanna, wrote his column for PL for ten years, contributing his homespun, knowledgeable commentary on food, history and life. He passed away in October 2014.

Ride out through the countryside just about anywhere in Virginia, and you'll 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 era 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 was always a bench and front steps in the shade of the porch roof, where folks could sit to watch the world go by (the world was much more personal then) and exchange pleasantries with passing neighbors. The pace was slow, so they could have a tolerable conversation just in passing.

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 on Saturday. 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 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 an unusual perspective.

Bob Green’s store (formerly Something Different Country Store and Deli), was typical, though slightly larger than most because Bob and his family lived upstairs. I remember it well. As a kid in the ‘50s, I often walked or rode my fat-tired Schwinn bike two miles to the 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 chopping block, or ground them into fresh sausage or hamburger. 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 sharp cheddar called “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 bread, groceries 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. In those days, there was a two-cent deposit on drink bottles so we kept a sharp lookout along the road. 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 mostly 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 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. About three years ago (2002, actually), we transformed it into Something Different,

specializing in fine Nuevo-Neanderthal cuisine (meat, fire, good!). We do the barbecue, smoked turkey, smoked meats and salmon using traditional methods: they are dry-rubbed or brined rather than sauced. Just about everything is homemade, including breads, desserts, soups and sides. We make an authentic she-crab soup with crab roe and sherry, my mothers “no-filler” crab cakes and local soft crabs. Like Bob, we grind and bag our own country sausage and, at certain times of the year, we have our own grass-fed beef. If you are looking for Something Different, come on by. We are just North of Urbanna (now downtown). *pl*

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Searching for the Blue Cat

Spring Thaw Beckons Whisker-Fishing

Story and Photo by Steve Scala



After a long, cold and snowy-sleet-filled winter, there is plenty of pent up angling pressure to be released across Virginia waters. From the mountain fed pristine streams, rambling rock-filled rivers and the wide tidal tributaries of Chesapeake Bay, rod n' reel action is starting to unwind. Those fortunate enough to have access to the upper tidal tributaries may find some yellow perch action in waters so "skinny," you have to sneak up on a bankside sit-down spot to keep from spooking the fish. The ever popular "Yellow-Neds" are among the first early spring species to cooperate. All that is needed is stealth, patience, a small rod n' reel, minnows or grass shrimp. No terminal tackle needed, just a small sharp hook and maybe a bobber. Catchable numbers of yellow perch have waned during the past few decades, but the deeper downstream waters of these same tributaries may hold some white perch that are just stirring. Fresh bloodworms or frozen grass shrimp are good choices with just enough weight to hold bottom.

Just getting out there for the first few times after being inside the past couple of months is something to be grateful for, but so is catching a few fish. If your other angling options

fail to provide what you need, don't forget to pursue one of Virginia's most populous and somewhat popular species, the catfish. Channel Cats and Bullheads have been centuries old standbys for those fishing Commonwealth waters, and during the past 30 (+) years they have been joined by a Southern Mississippi River cousin, the Blue Catfish. This huge whiskered fish can exceed 100 pounds and has been glad to make much of Virginia's tidal tributaries its long term home. Brought here on purpose and with all good intentions from the Mississippi River Basin sometime during the 1970s, this species of catfish may have upset the proverbial applecart. Its size is matched and in concert with a voracious predator appetite which increases along with its size

Experienced trophy blue cat anglers will use whole large mud shad and even live lined white perch to catch large catfish. Angling for these river beasts requires sturdy tackle rod n' reels, which sometimes resemble the trolling rigs used for stripers or walleyes. The larger blue cats can be finicky and cautious when they first pick up bait, and being patient enough to set the hook only after they really have it in their mouth, can be a test in itself. Early spring catfish tactics require the bait to be suspended a few inches off the bottom. Along

with enough weight to keep it there, the hook requires a long enough leader to let the bait float with the movement of the current. A two- to three-foot leader also allows a large blue catfish to take the bait in its mouth without feeling the resistance of the sinker.

The cold early spring waters of the James, Rappahannock and York Rivers compel big feeding Blue Catfish to cruise the shallower edges outside of the channel depths. Further up the York past West Point, the downstream waters of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers are also good early spring angling locales. Anglers who can put their baited rigs a few yards into the shallow side of deep river currents are in the game when it comes to hooking up with big Blue Catfish. Sunken obstructions such as trees and boulder piles attract other fish that blue catfish prey on, so these areas can be good fishing spots. *pl*

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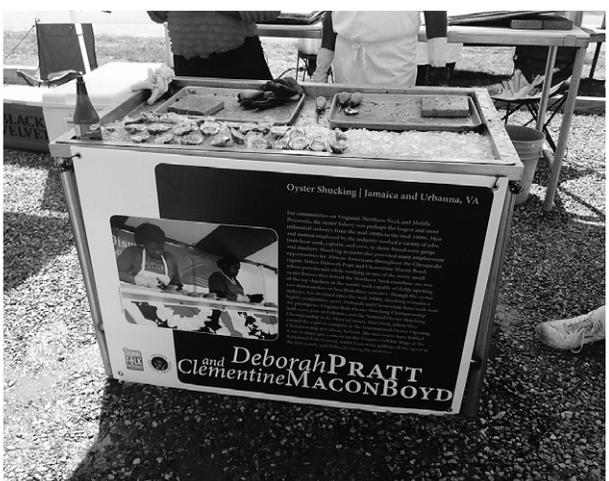
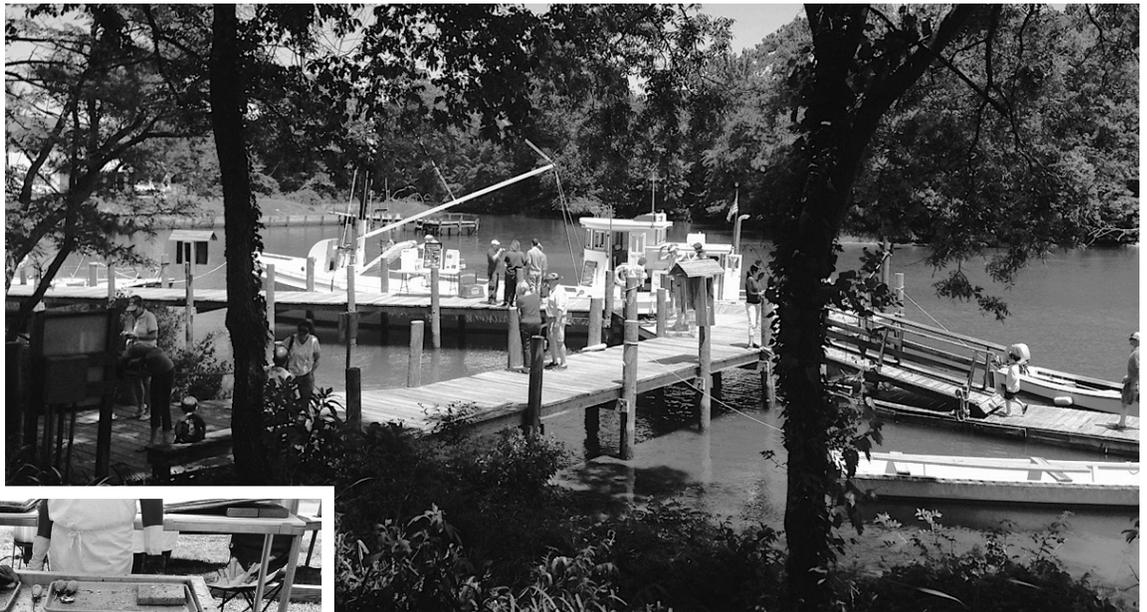


Deltaville Seafood Festival Food, Live Music, Baseball and Shopping

Saturday May 23, 2015 Memorial Weekend, 9am to 9pm

Deltaville's Memorial Day Seafood Festival is truly a celebration of life on the waterfront. Experience a wide variety of outstanding fresh local seafood from participating "mini-restaurants." Shop and browse exceptional distinctive artisans and fine crafters vendors—and take advantage of the one-of-a-kind works from Deltaville's quaint village.

Enjoy a spring day and evening fest filled with family fun and entertainment. Waterfront activities at the Deltaville Maritime Museum include loaner SUP paddle-boards and kayaks, but feel free to bring your own. Rides are offered for free aboard the Explorer along with tours of the restored "FD Crockett" buy boat from the Chesapeake Bay's glory days. Deltaville's Mariner's Museum offers displays and activities for the whole family from 11:00 am - 2:00 pm.



(Photos and story provided by Gloucester Parks, Recreation and Tourism)

Want even more... here's what's happening in the village: there will be a raw bar featuring National Oyster Shucking Champion Deborah Pratt and her sister Clementine Macon Boyd, sponsored by www.vaoystercountry.com. The Rappahannock Railroaders will have their wonderful locomotive and train display on Ballpark Rd. The

Deltas Baseball Game starts at 2:00 pm, also on Ballpark Rd. Marvel at the Antique Boat Show. Swim free all day at the Deltaville pool and enjoy snow cones for sale from the Deltaville Sharks Swim Team. Also check out the free Child ID Program at the Masonic Lodge.

And of course there will be live music to entertain while you eat

and shop! Eight-time Grammy nominated Bobby Messano will be performing at the Mariner's Museum in the evening. All proceeds go to the Deltaville Community Association who maintains the recreational area and the Deltaville Community Center. For more information, visit www.deltavilleseafoodfestival.com, or check us out on Facebook. *pl*

SEASONAL SPRING RECIPES—YUM!

Compiled by Alyssa Brew

With the lingering chill of winter still in the air, it's hard to believe spring is just a few short weeks away. But believe it or not, we will soon begin to see the first buds, blooms, and blossoms of the new season of rebirth! Our region of Virginia brings *with* spring a delicious medley of tastes and flavors, such as asparagus, cabbage, ham, strawberries, and spinach, to name a few. And with Easter and spring break right around the corner, here are just a few ideas from previous issues of PL to get your menu into the swing of spring!

Coleslaw

Ingredients

1 cup heavy cream
 1/3 cup white or rice vinegar
 ½ cup sugar
 1 tsp. salt
 ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)
 1 ½ lbs. shredded cabbage- green, savoy or red (or a mixture of these)

Directions

Whisk 1st four (or five) ingredients in a bowl, and set aside until salt and sugar are dissolved. Then refrigerate for 30 minutes. Pour over shredded cabbage, mix well and refrigerate for 2 hours before serving.

Optional: thinly sliced red onion, scallions, shallots, and/or grated carrot may be added.

Recipe courtesy Alyssa Brew

Spring Spinach Salad

Ingredients

¼ pound fresh spinach
 1/8 pound oyster mushrooms
 ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
 1 navel orange, peeled and cut into ½ inch cubes
 ½ small red onion
 ¼ cup walnut pieces

Balsamic Dressing

3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
 3 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
 1 tsp. granulated sugar

Directions

Thoroughly wash and dry spinach, tearing leaves into bite-size pieces, and discarding stems. Toss with all remaining ingredients and serve with balsamic dressing.

To prepare balsamic dressing, combine all ingredients and mix well.

Recipe courtesy of William Barnhardt, Willaby's, White Stone from April/May 1996

Spring Vegetable Garland

Ingredients

1 pound asparagus, trimmed, stems and tips cut into 1-inch pieces
 ½ pound snow peas, ends trimmed
 1 ½ cups fresh peas
 ½ pound carrots, peeled and cut diagonally into 1/4 -inch thick pieces
 4 tbsp. butter or margarine
 ¼ tsp. dried thyme, crumbled
 ¼ tsp. dried rosemary
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Blanch asparagus stems in large pot of boiling salted water until almost tender-crisp, about 2 minutes. Add tips, and cook 1 minute. Using slotted spoon, transfer to bowl filled with ice and water. To same boiling water, add snow peas and cook about 30 seconds. Transfer to bowl with asparagus for cooling. Add fresh peas to boiling water and cook 1 minute. Transfer with slotted spoon to bowl of cooling vegetables. Finally, add carrots to boiling water and cook about 8 minutes or just until tender. Drain well and put in bowl with other vegetables and cool. Drain vegetables well and pat dry with paper towels. (can be prepared

1 day ahead up to this step. Cover and refrigerate until ready to sauté.) Melt butter or margarine in large heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add blanched vegetables and sauté until heated through, about 4 minutes. Mix in herbs, season with salt and pepper and serve.

from May/June 1991

Strawberry/Rhubarb Shortcake

Ingredients

2 baked 9-inch rounds yellow cake
3 cups whipped cream, divided
Strawberry/Rhubarb compote (recipe below)
1 pint fresh strawberries
Confectioner's sugar

Strawberry/Rhubarb Compote
4 cups (1/2 inch thick) rhubarb slices (about 1 generous pound, cut)
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tbsp. water
1 (16-ounce) package frozen, sliced, sweetened strawberries, thawed
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. nutmeg

Directions

Split each cake round into two layers using serrated knife. Place one cake layer, cut side up, on platter. Spread with 1/4 cup compote and 1 cup whipped cream. Repeat, layering with two more cake layers, compote and whipped cream. Top with last cake layer, cut side down. Cover cake and chill 1 hour. (Can be prepared 6 hours ahead; keep refrigerated.) Dust with confectioner's sugar. Arrange fresh berries atop cake. Serve, spooning some of the remaining compote over each slice.

To make compote, combine rhubarb, sugar and water in heavy saucepan. Bring just to boil, reduce heat, cover and cook just until rhubarb is tender (about 5 minutes). Remove from heat, mix in berries, sweeten to taste is necessary and add vanilla and nutmeg. Chill until cold.

from May/June 1993

"New" Potato Salad

Ingredients

3 pounds small red skin new potatoes
4 1/2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tbsp. grated lemon zest
2 tsp. Dijon-style mustard
2 tsp. finely minced garlic
1 1/2 tsp. white wine vinegar
1/2 - 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp. coarse salt
Freshly ground pepper to taste
2 tbsp. chopped fresh flat leaf Italian parsley
1 tbsp. snipped fresh chives
Optional: 2 or 3 thinly sliced spring onions

Directions

Place the potatoes in a large pot of salted water. Bring to a boil; cook until potatoes are just tender, about 20 minutes. Drain, cool slightly and cut into 1/2 slices. Do not peel. Place in a bowl.

In a small bowl, make dressing: whisk together lemon juice, zest, mustard, garlic and vinegar. Slowly drizzle in oil, whisking constantly until thickened. Add salt and pepper, stir in herbs.

While potatoes are still a bit warm, pour dressing on top, 1/2 cup at a time, reserving about a 1/2 cup. Let rest at least one hour for flavors to blend. (The potatoes will absorb the dressing, so add extra just before serving, if necessary.) Adjust seasonings. Serve at room temperature.

Recipe Courtesy of Alyssa Brew



Stuffed Cabbage

1/2 cup uncooked rice
1 egg
1 onion, chopped
1 pound ground beef
Salt and black pepper to taste
1 head cabbage
1 can tomato sauce

Directions

Cook rice in boiling water until partly done. Mix in egg, onion, ground beef and spices; set aside. Separate cabbage leaves and boil in salted water until tender. Cool. Take big spoonfuls of meat mixture and put in center of cabbage leaf and roll. Fasten with toothpicks. Place in baking dish and pour tomato sauce over cabbages. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

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Celebrating Life and Fighting Cancer

Second Annual RE Strong Run Benefits VCU Massey Cancer Center

By Gabe Boudali

This spring, community members will gather at historic Hewick Plantation in Urbanna, Virginia to participate in a fundraising event celebrating the life of Ruth Ellen Hurley, known affectionately as “R.E.” Registration is now open for the 2nd Annual RE Strong Run on April 25, a day promoting good health and local support for cancer research. Participants will have the choice of three distances to take part in: a 1-mile family fun run, as well as 5K and 10K courses around downtown Urbanna’s charming waterfront. Following these events, a festival is scheduled at Hewick Plantation with live entertainment, regional cuisine, children’s activities and more.

The first RE Strong Run in 2014 took place in Ms Hurley’s honor and raised more than \$30,000 for cancer research. Nearly 300 members of the community came together for the inaugural event, which was organized by Susan Silver, Joyce Eanes and Karen Lowe of Urbanna. This year, organizers aim

to raise \$50,000 or more, generating extended awareness and support for VCU Massey Cancer Center, where Ms. Hurley received much of her treatment for breast cancer.

Ms Hurley, a native of Virginia, grew up under the tutelage of her family’s award-winning local camp-resort business and remained an integral part of the company until her death in January 2014. She attended both Chesapeake Academy and York Academy before going on to earn her B.A. in elementary education from Lynchburg College and worked as an educator for special needs children in the Middlesex County school system. In addition to serving on the Board of Trustees for Ware Academy in Gloucester, and as a patron of the Garden Club of Virginia, she was a dedicated mother and an admired member of the community.

According to research conducted in 2011 by the Virginia Department of Health, cancer is the second leading cause of death (after heart disease) in the United States. Breast cancer

The first RE Strong Run in 2014 took place in Ms Hurley's honor and raised more than \$30,000 for cancer research.

is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers, and the second leading cause of cancer death among women in the United States. VCU's Massey Cancer Center remains a nationally recognized institution leading the way in cancer research. Currently the center is conducting over ten clinical trials to discover new strategies, and to improve the overall effectiveness of current treatment methods.

Within the Massey Cancer Center, a group of leading physicians directs the Breast Health Center, a team conducting clinical research specifically for breast cancer treatment. These doctors offer a few simple breast health tips, which

they recommend for cancer prevention and risk reduction. Aside from regular mammography exams, women should know their family history, complete regular breast self-exams, maintain a healthy weight, eat a diet high in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, and exercise regularly.

Institutions like the Massey Cancer Center rely on the philanthropy of the general public, and there can be no better way to support the fight against cancer than by gathering with fellow community members for a day of fitness and fun during the RE Strong Run. Those planning to participate in the RE Strong Run in April can join the Massey

Challenge and further the cause for healthy living. The Massey Challenge comprises a host of fundraising events culminating in the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k in Richmond on March 28. In 2014 more than 3,000 people joined the Massey Challenge and raised over \$450,000. Anyone interested in these events and VCU Massey Cancer Center can start a fundraising team at run4massey.org.

To participate in the RE Strong Run, donate funds when registering online or send donations to RE Strong Run, PO Box 178, Urbanna, Virginia 23175. To find registration and course details, visit restrongrun.com. *pl*

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