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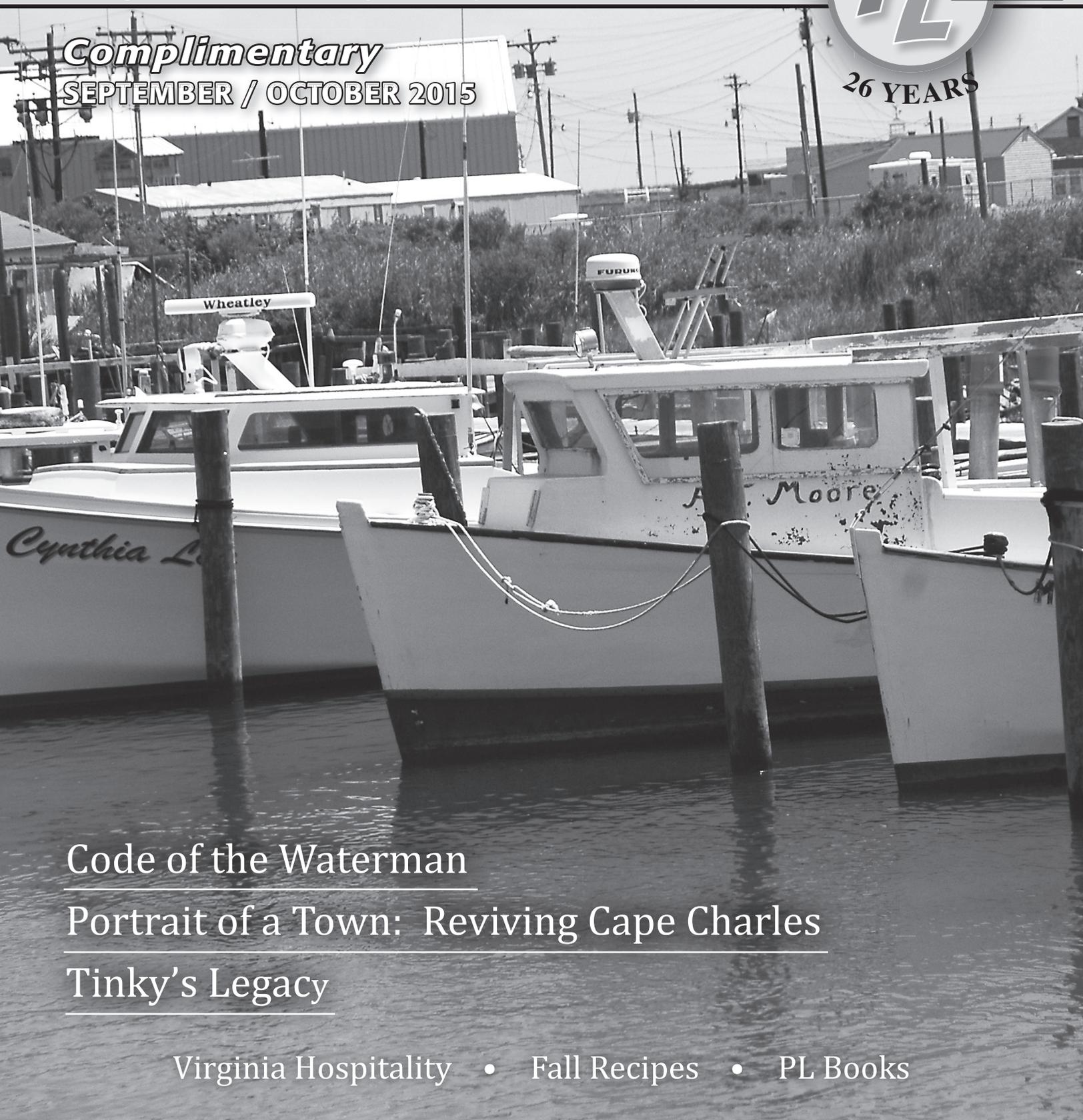
A Magazine for the Chesapeake Bay and River Country



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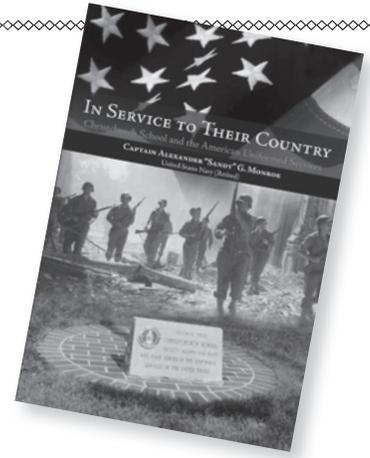
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Volume 29, Number 5

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2015

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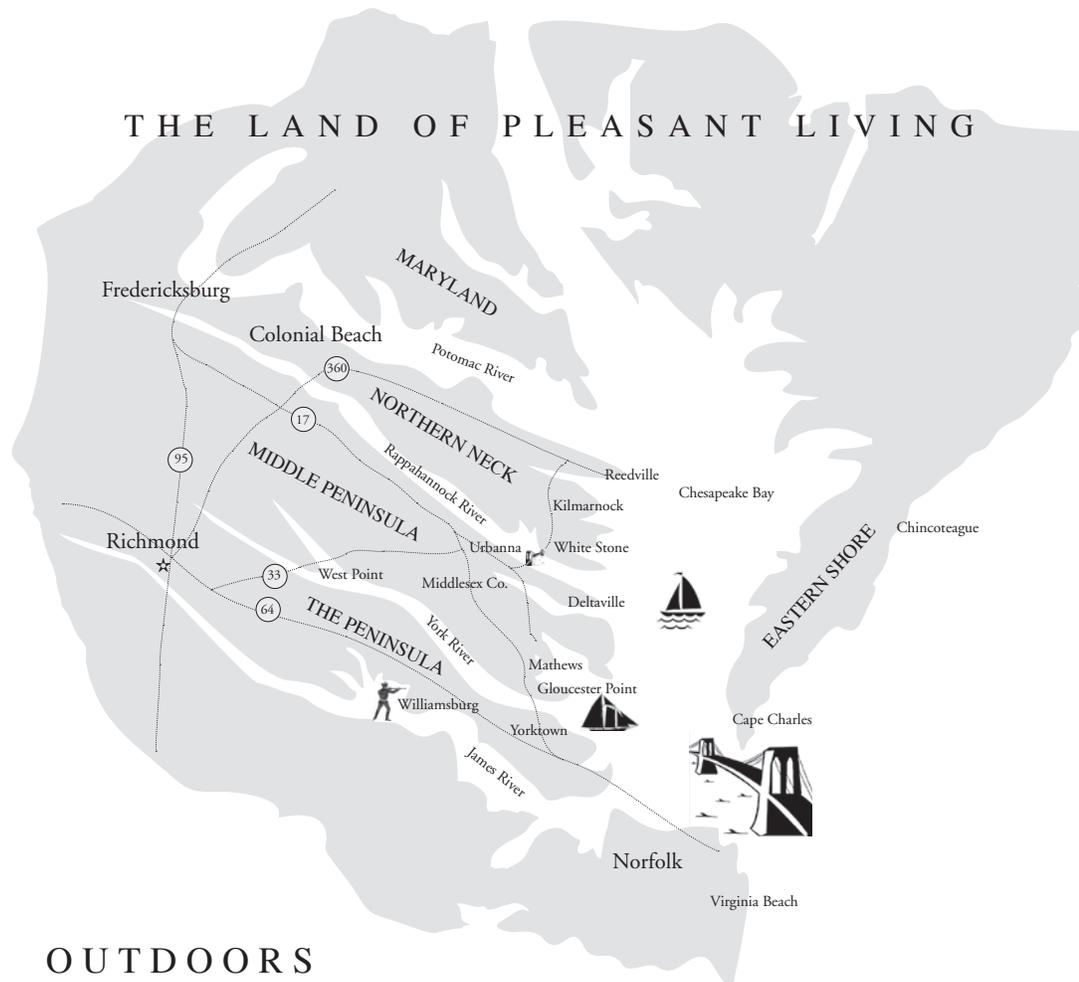
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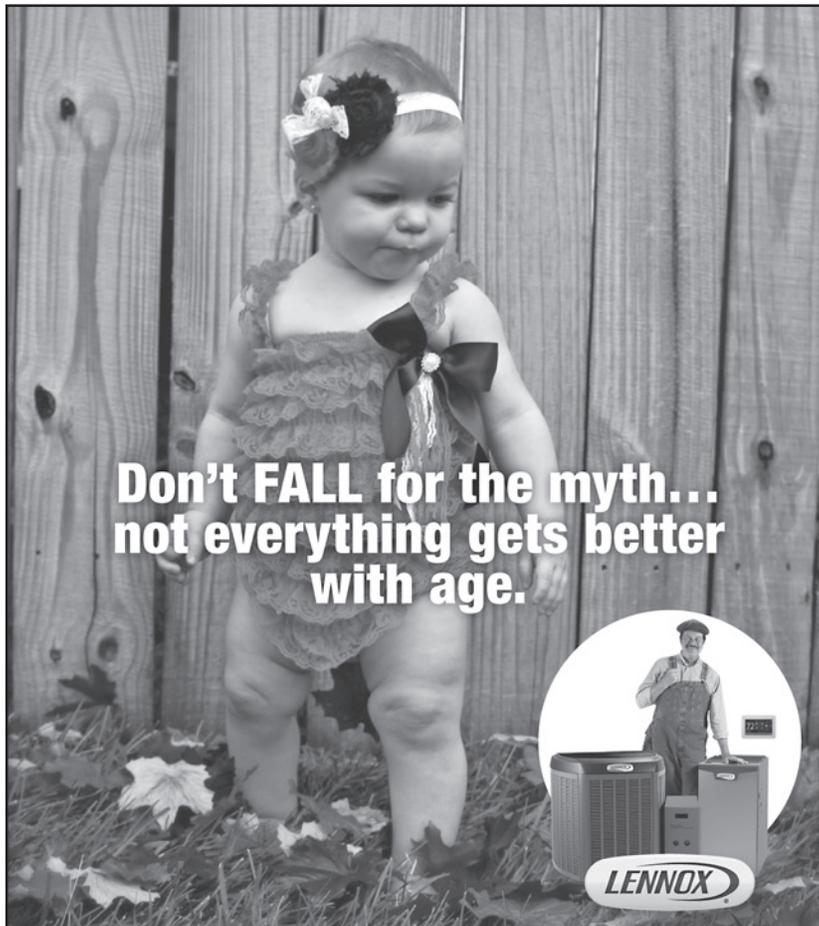
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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Learning to Listen

When I was a child, I would lie in bed or look up at the sky and listen to the stars twinkling. It wasn't until much later that I learned that that twinkling sound was actually crickets making their nightly calls. Even now, at night when I'm in that place between waking and sleeping and I hear crickets singing, a part of me still thinks that maybe it's the stars.

When I first moved to the Northern Neck in the 1980s, I quickly learned that sounds in the country are quite different from the city, and that they are sometimes disconcerting. One night, I woke to a strange and unsettling clatter coming from the backyard near the garden. It was windy and a storm was brewing, and looking out the window, I saw nothing but the dark silhouettes of trees bending with the wind. The clatter continued, and it was very near. After a few nervous minutes, I woke my wife to let her know we might have a burglar outside. Having grown up in the house, perhaps she might recognize the sound, or at least know where her father kept the shotgun. In fact, she did recognize the noise. Her dad had wrapped a tin pie plate around the birdhouse post to keep the snakes from going up the post after the hatchlings, and the wind was blowing the plate. She laughed and chalked it up to my city ignorance. I mean, what does a city boy know about country ingenuity to prevent snakes from climbing up posts after birds.

After we moved to our own place outside Lively, Virginia, I quickly learned a lot about the sounds of the country night. Living with the hum of urban life for so many years, I discovered how loud quiet can be when your neighbors are wheat and cornfields instead of row houses—when all you can hear is the creak of the stair treads or an occasional car passing on Route 600. After a while, after I settled into the quieter life and learned to listen, I could hear the rich symphony of sounds that play every day in the country. I heard the paper sound that wind makes when it blows through the corn in the late summer when it's ready for harvest. I became accustomed to the repeated thumps of black walnuts falling from the trees at night, the very quick slice of sound bats make when chasing mosquitoes in the dark, and the distinct voice of the big owl that lived in the back woods. I knew the occasional labored mooing of a cow giving birth in the far field, and the difference between a combine and a tractor when the engine starts.

I continued having the occasional stirring of fear in the dark over the almost twenty years I lived on our small farm in Alfonso, but it was most often the unexpected human sounds that triggered that feeling. It wasn't long before I became a bit of a connoisseur of country sounds. I began to feel at home in what had been a foreign land and came to know the rich audible beauty of nature.



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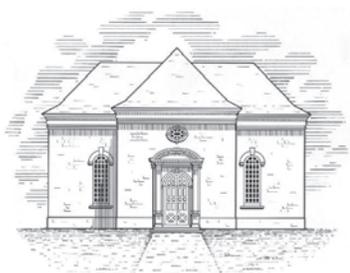
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Ellis Washington Robinson, circa.1950



John "Sonny" Robinson

Photos courtesy of Laura Dictado

CODE of the Watermen

By John "Sonny" Robinson

When a young person first leaves home, it can be a traumatic event in any family's life. However, when that home and family are united with the sea, the lure of the sea never ends. So it was and is with me.

While attending the Newport News Shipyard Apprentice School in Newport News, Virginia, I could hardly wait to purchase my first used car to make the 180-mile round trip home to Solomons Island, Maryland, every chance I could. It was during one of these weekend visits that my dad wanted to take a break from work and spend the day together fishing.

My father owned two boats—a small cabin cruiser and his favorite, a converted speedboat. The speedboat was once used as a whiskey runner across the Great Lakes to Canada. This boat reminds me of a modern day "cigarette boat"—18 feet long, five feet wide, with a double door hatch to the engine similar to the very popular Chris-Craft. Unfortunately, the hull below the water line was covered with a layer of copper sheeting for protection from the lake ice. The sheeting added weight and slowed the speed of the boat somewhat, but could not be removed due to poor condition of the wood hull underneath.

The unnamed boat was so unique that most all the

local watermen recognized it, but cared less that it was the fastest inboard on the river. The boat had been stripped of most luxuries, including windshield, padded seats, navigation equipment and ship-to-shore communication. It was used by my dad as transportation to and from his job at the Patuxent (PAX) River Naval Air Station Boathouse across the river, and occasionally on the weekend for fishing.

On this October Saturday in 1956, neither of us thought much about needing anything extra but a container for the striped bass we hoped to catch. As we departed the dock, dad told mother to plan dinner about 4 p.m., our normal dinnertime. How wrong that thought turned out to be. The

increase in wind speed and wave size. It was not the best day to be on the Bay in a small boat with only a twelve-inch freeboard.

Dad piloted the boat north into the wind toward Cove Point Lighthouse, one of the deepest points on the western shoreline, known for large rockfish catches. We each chose a lure we hoped would be a lucky one, added a small piece of pork rind and strung fifty feet of monofilament across the rocky bottom. The lighthouse point jutting out into the bay, created a breakwater from the waves, a semi-calm area in which dad kept circling. Making runs up and down the underwater ledge, we only boated one 3-pound fish in two hours, so dad decided to call it a day.

We had to attempt a tow in the worst possible conditions.

We constructed a towrope bridle from anchor rope and attached one end to their bow and the other end to our engine foundation. Dad was afraid our transom could not take the pounding. Thus started a treacherous four-mile journey at the rate of one mile per hour, which we weren't sure we would complete.

Only a seasoned waterman like my father could have accomplished all that transpired during the next three hours. The towrope was not long enough to keep the yacht from crashing down dangerously close to our small boat each time it crested a large wave. We could not maneuver

The Chesapeake Bay is a magnet that stretches from Pennsylvania south to the Virginia Capes.

uncertainty of changing events while on the water can happen at any time.

The Chesapeake Bay is a magnet that stretches from Pennsylvania south to the Virginia Capes. It is a magnificent body of water that provides access to an abundant and diverse supply of sea life, a transportation route for many types of sea craft, a playground for generations of weekend warriors, and a living for daily working watermen.

On this Saturday, it was our goal to enjoy a day on the water and with some skill and luck, catch a few Rock (striped bass). As we emerged from Solomons quiet harbor into the Patuxent River, no other boats were visible. This was a sure sign that we needed to proceed approximately two miles to the mouth of the river where it unites with the bay at Drum Point Light. As we entered the Chesapeake, it was not hard to feel

As we reeled in our lines, my father noticed a large cabin cruiser about a quarter mile out into the center of the Bay. Two people were waving towels to attract our attention. It's not unusual for people to have trouble on the water. Generally, they are weekenders not prepared or knowledgeable about their equipment. With no other boats in sight, we headed out into the rougher water toward the boat. It was dead in the water and rolling side to side with each passing wave. As we approached, we observed it to be a yacht about thirty-six feet long with four feet of dead rise. With the wave height now running at three feet, our little run-about was no match for the task at hand. We maneuvered as close as possible to inquire as to the problem. Their only answer was, "We need a tow." On the water, there is no option.

in close to shore for fear of losing the tow in the shallow surf. There was no additional communication from the yacht as we continued toward Drum Point Lighthouse. Three hours later, we rounded the point and entered the relatively calmer water and safety of the Patuxent River. It was now five-thirty and with darkness descending, we knew my mother's nerves would be on edge. It was not normal for us to be so late.

Ten minutes later, our luck changed. Two island charter boats familiar to us, suddenly appeared, returning after a day's charter. Realizing our situation, the captain of the nearest boat volunteered to take over the tow. We gladly accepted and headed home to a warmed-over meal. As we entered the harbor at Solomons, an ambulance with red lights bright in the darkened sky, was sitting at the town marina dock.



Dad made mention that someone must have been hurt as we continued up St. John's Creek to our dock.

Thirty minutes later during dinner, the phone rang. It was the captain of the charter boat that had taken over the tow. He proceeded to tell my father that the owner/captain of the yacht had suffered a heart attack. None of the other three people on board knew what to do. He went on to say that our actions had saved the man's life. The ambulance and crew we saw at the marina had been waiting for him to arrive to administer aid. He also told my dad that he had given the family my father's name and phone number. He said he would probably receive some kind of communication from the family for our efforts.

We never heard from the family or learned the fate of their captain. It didn't make any difference. We would do it again because it's the code of the watermen. *pl*



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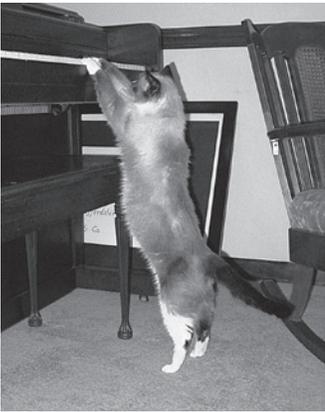
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Tinky's Legacy

By Nuala C. Galbari / Photos by David L. Justis, M.D.

A few days ago, I decided to have a gardening day, if only to attack the overrun Virginia Creeper and the invasive English Ivy along with the trimming of some shrubs that had chosen to join their neighbors, forming a hedge. As I worked around the edge of the woodland, I needed to tackle the animal memorial garden where my cat Tinky is buried, his white wooden marker having become rather faded and in need of attention.

While there, I paused to remember my feline friend with affection and took a moment to consider this angelic gift and how he had blessed my life for over seventeen years.

Tinky, a Siamese Snowshoe, was born on Senator Daschle's farm in South Dakota, a little stray who had wandered in one cold November day, weak and thin with a respiratory infection. I had been seeking a kitten for a friend who had recently lost her old cat and when my veterinarian called to say there was a kitten in need of a home, I asked her to make arrangements to transport him to the clinic for me. Tinky was less than three months of age, and what I didn't know at the time was that he would be flown to Minneapolis via Mesaba Airlink, his medicines packed with him, to arrive the following night.

It was a snow-covered November evening when he arrived at the cottage, kept warm in layers of small blanketing, in his carrier. Senator Daschle's niece delivered him, and when I unzipped the carrier, two cerulean blue eyes stared up at me,

the little tyke purring loudly with a raspy voice. I was lost from the moment I saw him and I confess to the fact that I didn't want to part with him. My friend arrived the next day and when she looked at him she said, "What happened to him?" I told her he had escaped one night on the farm and the family searched for him in the cold but he couldn't be located. With temperatures plummeting to -10F, they feared he would not survive. The following morning, he was discovered sleeping with a calf in the barn, his life apparently having been spared by the warmth of the companion animal, although he was scraped, had some missing fur and had lost the tip of his tail to frostbite. He looked rather frightful, and my friend smiled and said, "Perhaps you can keep him? Thank you for the offer."

After my friend left, I felt so relieved. I realized that she was looking for a cat that would match her sofa, something along Persian lines with a pedigree. I called the veterinarian the next morning and told her Tinky would stay with us, and I wrote to Senator Daschle and advised that the kitten had a new home. The senator's family had plans to travel south for the winter, and they had been very concerned about the kitten, ensuring he had veterinary treatment for his respiratory ailments.

Tinky required several veterinary visits and was placed on bubble gum-flavored antibiotics for about two weeks to clear the infection. Each night, I would tuck him into his basket, put

a nightlight and the radiator on for him, and sing him to sleep. It took months to bring him back to good health, and soon he began to grow stronger.

At only three months of age, Tinky would sit on my knee and watch me play piano—always purring along. On some days, I would take one paw and touch the keyboard, pressing it lightly to the key. He would purr even louder. He quickly learned to communicate little requests through music, and music seemed to be a joy in his life. I would often pick him up and dance with him; he would purr loudly in my ear, his paws pressed firmly into my shoulder.

In 2005, we moved to Virginia and Tinky traveled with his friend, a rehabilitated crow named Reginald, from Minneapolis to Gloucester. Each night during the journey, we would stop at a hotel and smuggle the two guests in quietly. Once inside the room or suite, Tinky would tear around with his customary aplomb, bouncing off the walls, sliding over tables, and knocking things down, releasing all the energy before he dozed off; he made himself quite at home in the hotels along the route. He was never a stickler for perfect grooming—especially on the relocation trip—and always seemed to miss a few of the white patches. His paws betrayed his love of running wild in the garden and getting into mud, leaves and spider webs. Life was too full of excitement. He had better things to do than sit and wash all day like common cats; he was a combination of pirate and intellectual snob.

Once settled in Gloucester, he spared no time in discovering the new piano and he was soon giving concerts to friends, reveling in the applause he received for his mini-etudes. A gathering of friends would only need to sit down quietly and say, Tinky, give us a tune! With each round of applause, Tinky would gather enthusiasm. He didn't walk on the piano like most cats; he stood on his two hind legs, stretched away up and placed both

paws on the keyboard, usually playing first with his right paw, then with his left. I taught him to strike the keys in a clean manner by withholding applause if he struck two keys at the same time. It wasn't long before he would work his way up an octave, and then hit some bass notes with the left paw, at the end. He always attempted his own version of perfection, having grown up on Mozart.

Another passion of Tinky's was Dame Judy Dench. Well known for her warm, affectionate voice, Dame Judy had a wonderful effect on Tinky, and on PBS BritCom nights, he would take off at an energetic gallop around the house, coat fully fluffed with excitement, until he was completely out of steam. He also loved Masterpiece evenings, and would jump up and position himself on a knee for *Downton Abbey*.

Tinky also loved loblolly pines, and he had a particular tree he loved to climb to about six or seven feet, before descending backwards and then flipping sideways onto the ground. Autumn was his favorite season, and he would dive into a wheelbarrow of leaves, or bury himself in a leaf pile on the ground, waiting to spring out and pounce as I walked by. He was naughty and always learned how to escape in wet weather, snow, or on a summer's night when the crickets were serenading in full chorus. He was a brave little cat and feared nothing.

Tinky would welcome any cat that arrived at the house, and he always took care of newcomers. One day a new Red Point Siamese arrived, adopted from nearby friends, Bob and Ray. The new infant, three months of age, was named by all four of us: Henry Henkel Harpo Beauregard Booth. Tinky took young Henry in paw, and together with another Siamese, named Bianco, the two taught the little tyke to defend himself, play and learn a little music. By now, we had added a second piano and while I never took Henry near it, Tinky became his teacher and Henry learned to communicate his

wishes through music. There was a code of course: A few notes pressed carefully and slowly usually meant a desire to be fed promptly; part of an octave played loudly, signified that they wanted to go outside, and a longer session with more keys involved often seemed to mean they wanted attention or just wanted to play. Failure on the part of humans to respond to their requests translated to a much louder concert that could not be ignored.

During the day or when we were out, Tinky always listened to WHRO 90.3, and I think he picked up a few cues from the station. He was a feline musicologist in his own way.

He left us in his sleep one afternoon, while I read *The Wind in the Willows* to him, and my friend Dr. Barbara King helped to keep him company. He slipped into a coma and died quietly on his favorite chair at age seventeen. He had lived every day to its fullest potential.

He was buried in our memorial garden, beside his friend, Reginald the Crow, who lived to the grand age of twenty-one years. A small statue of St. Francis guards his grave and a plaque is inscribed with the timeless words of Robert Burns:

Grow old with me

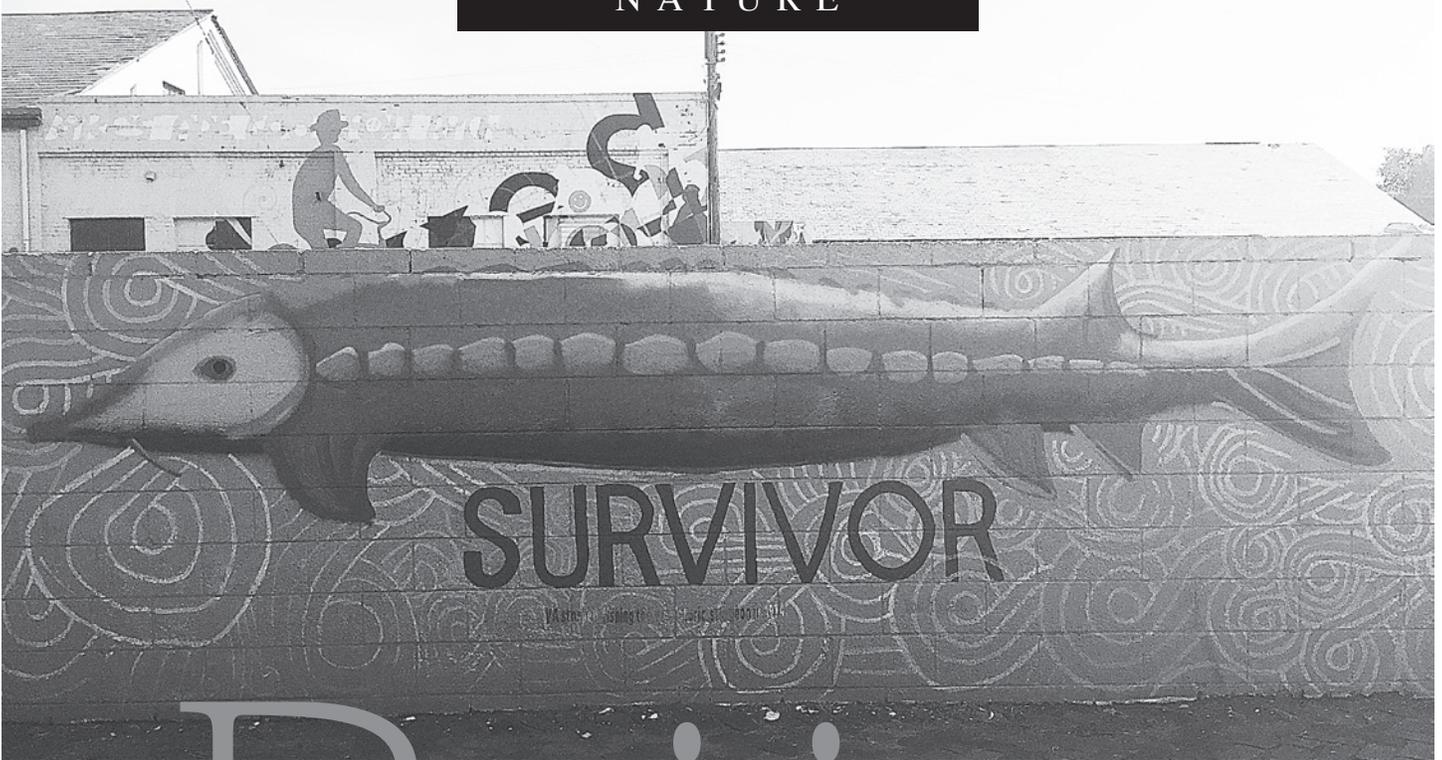
The best is yet to be...

Tinky's legacy reminds us daily to love life, laugh, nurture our wild sides, try anything, escape when we possibly can and never stop playing music.

Before he traveled on, he trained Henry to play piano. Henry plays almost as well as he did, if not quite so often, yet Tinky took something with him—a love of performing in front of his human family. In this respect he was unique.

He is in our hearts daily. I miss dancing with him, his bright blue eyes, his cheeky personality, his courage, and the fact that he put up with so much and never complained.

We still hear him playing piano, and every time Henry puts his paws on the keyboard, we smile. *pl*



Reviving the STURGEON

Story and Photo by Madeline Baxter

While dinosaurs are known to be extinct, a prehistoric monster still swims in the winding waters of the James River. Threatened, and decreasing in numbers, the Atlantic Sturgeon remains one of the oldest fish still living in North America, with a lifespan ranging up to sixty years. Over the past few decades, circumstances have been working against this historic fish. In the Virginia area, over-fishing, habitat alteration, and pollution have all been factors working together to diminish the sturgeon population in the James River and Chesapeake Bay. The fish's size, ranging up to 14 feet in length and 800 pounds, make it a hefty prize for

ambitious fishermen, but the environmental and historic impact of its extinction would be significant.

As it takes quite a long time for the fish to repopulate (with a lengthy spawning interval of every one to five years), the sturgeon's numbers have been on decline since the 1800s. The decline escalated until February 2012, when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service listed the fish as an endangered species. However, this claim did little to assist in the revitalization of the species, as the only management done was restricting the parameters of catching these sturgeons.

Like much of Virginia, the sturgeon has a unique

history of its own. Its abundance in the James River during the colonial settlement gained it the title of the “founding fish” of Jamestown. Because the settlers were familiar with the sturgeon species that lived in the Thames River in England, they were equipped with the knowledge of how to catch and cook the sturgeon, and this knowledge allowed the colonists to survive, especially during the period known as “The Starving Time” in 1609-10. The settlers also documented that the sturgeon was culturally significant to the local Native American tribes of that time. As a rite of passage to manhood, the young men of the local tribes would hold onto the backs of sturgeon and ride.

So what can we do to stay the disappearance of the sturgeon population in Virginia’s waterways? Thankfully, a Richmond group is willing to fight for the revival of Virginia’s founding fish. The Envision the James Project invites communities and individuals to help sustain and improve the natural quality of the James River and its surroundings. Through its efforts, this organization has partnered with researchers from Virginia Commonwealth University to revitalize the population of the sturgeon in the James River and Chesapeake Bay. These research activities include tracking the sturgeon’s moving patterns, the restoration of spawning and nursery habitats, as well as the in-depth research of threats to sturgeon mortality.

Alongside these scientific efforts, the sturgeon’s situation has sparked artistic activism as well. A cement

wall at Cary and Robinson streets in Richmond, displays the work of local artists who have spoken out about Virginia’s ecological issues. Brightly colored maps and info graphics pop out of the cement, speaking statistical facts on the James River’s and Virginia Watershed’s environmental qualities. Most striking is the massive and detailed painting of an Atlantic Sturgeon, bold and loud, with the caption “SURVIVOR.” In much smaller letters reads the sentence, “VA stopped fishing prehistoric sturgeon in 1974,” highlighting the state’s efforts to assist in the protection of the fish.

So what can we do to help the sturgeon’s rebirth in the James? The Envision the James project seems to be the most inclusive project

anyone seeking to assist in this project. By becoming a member of this community, opportunities for learning more about the many efforts of restoring the James become available, as well as being able to connect with the many people already out in the field. To join in the fight for sturgeon revival, and take part in your environmental community, visit the Envision the James project online at www.envisionthejames.org/join. *pl*

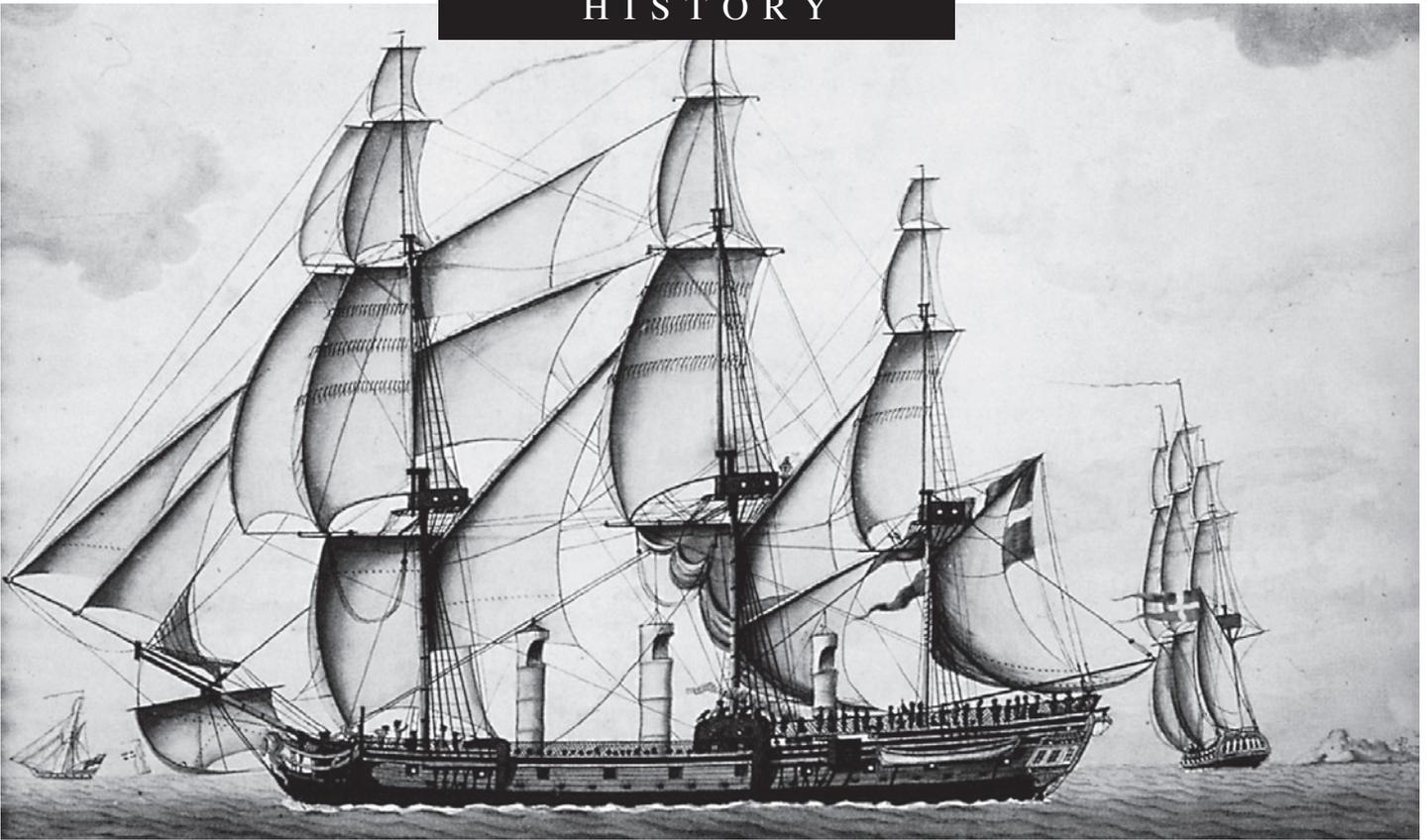


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The Blue Coat S C H O O L

By Thea Marshall

What possible relationship could an English school for impoverished children and orphans have with the Northern Neck? Well, imagine the great Virginia plantation owners of the eighteenth century in need of labor and an English school, founded and funded by a slave ship owner, turning out youngsters who could read, write and “do accounts.” Many of these newly literate orphans

were sold and sent to the New World as indentured servants, sometimes on ships carrying slaves. A match made in...? Well, certainly not heaven.

What happened to those youngsters when their service was completed? Did they try to return home to England? Traces of most of them have indeed been lost to history, but there are exceptions, Robert Biscoe being one of them, and he

was quite an exception. I learned about him in the Christ Church Foundation’s book, *People in Profile*, researched by foundation volunteers. It details the lives of some of the folks living in Christ Church parish in Lancaster County from 1720 to 1750.

Biscoe was apparently sold to the wealthiest of all the planters in Lancaster County and beyond. It’s likely the ship carrying Biscoe and others landed

at Robert “King” Carter’s dock in Lancaster County. Biscoe would have been about fourteen. He had spent four years at Blondell’s Christ’s Hospital—not a hospital at all, but the school known as the Blue Coat School—in Liverpool. In its earliest days, the school was said to be a source for literate laborers who could be sold and sent wherever they were needed, particularly to the colonies. Biscoe would have worn a uniform for those four years—a blue coat, thus the school’s nickname. Why blue? It was the Tudor color of alms giving and charity.

As an indentured servant, Robert Biscoe worked for Carter, doing his bookkeeping, even becoming a confidant of sorts. It’s not clear why he was so highly regarded, but he must have been. One year before his

seven-year service ended, he and a buddy, another indentured servant, stole some hogsheads of tobacco and went off, most likely to start their own merchant business. It was a short-lived adventure. He was captured and brought back to the Carter plantation, but his punishment was unusually light: an additional year of service to Carter.

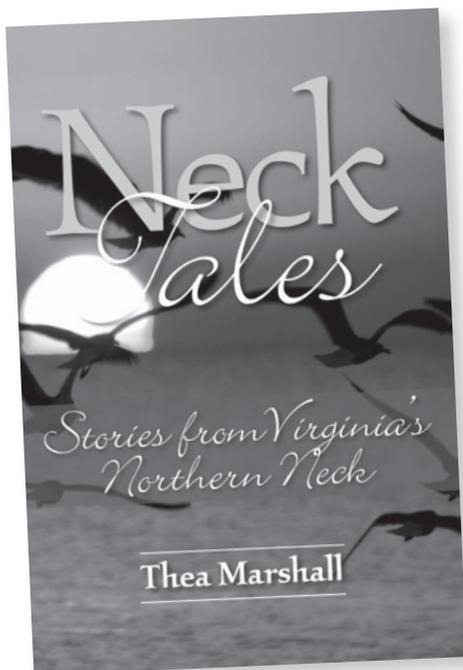
When he was finally a free man, he did become a bona fide merchant, and along the way, he married into a prominent family, purchased land, and yes, he employed both indentured servants and a slave or two. And, he wrote and had published an astonishing little book about ledger keeping and currency, apparently of use to other merchants. This unusual talent can certainly be attributed to his education

at the Blue Coat School.

Amazingly, (to me) the Blue Coat School and many sister blue coat schools are still going strong as boarding schools for boys and girls in England, and the schools are said to be known for the quality education they provide to thousands of young people. It’s nice to think that perhaps some of them have found their way, as free and curious travelers, to a very different Northern Neck. *pl*



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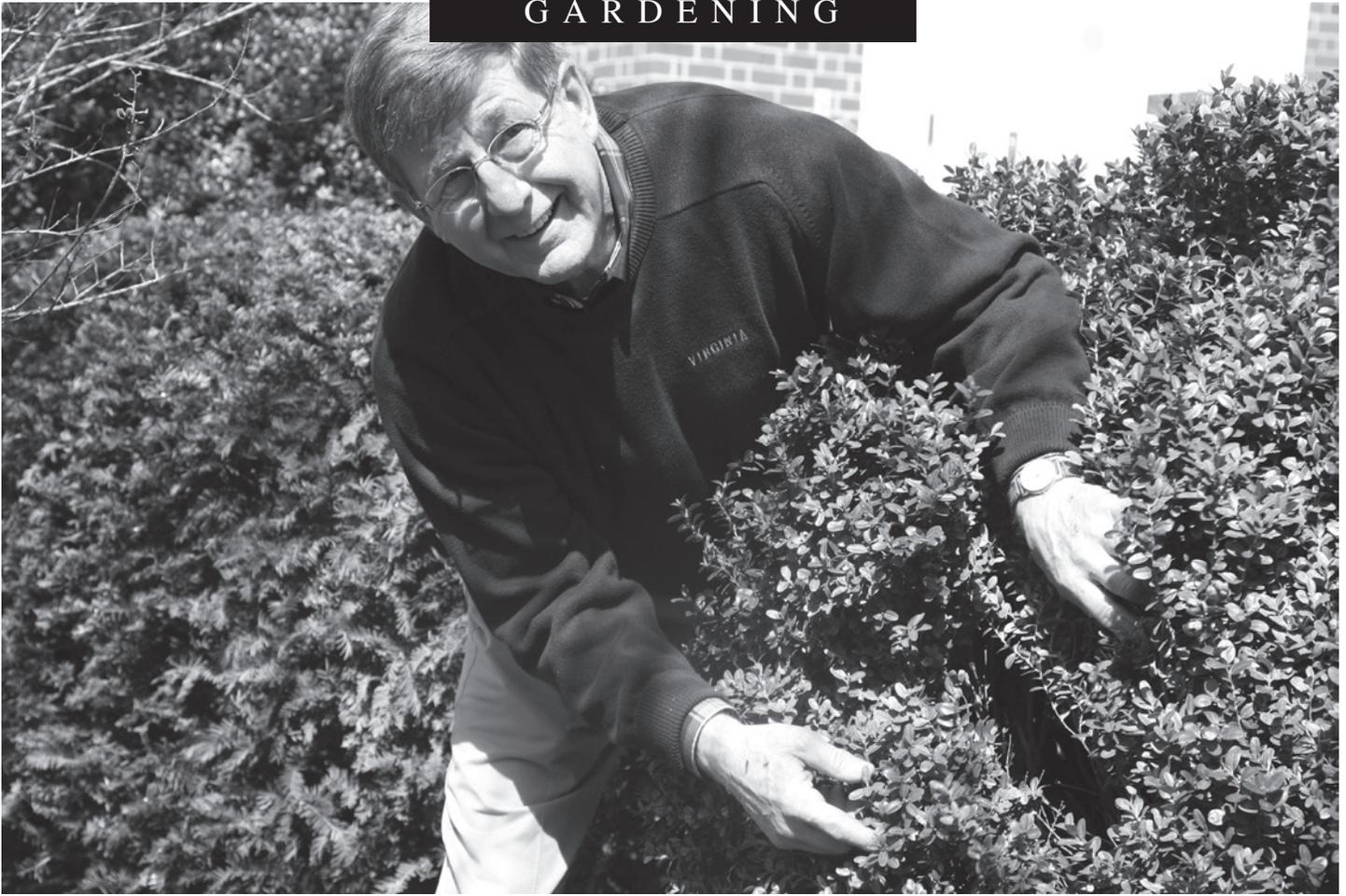
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“If anyone is qualified to write about Virginia’s Northern Neck, it is Thea Marshall. *Neck Tales* is a compelling, valuable, literate and enriching contribution to the cultural history of the Neck.”

— Roger Mudd, former anchor, CBS News

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Dr. Boxwood Tells All

Fall Planting, Care, and Maintenance

By Stephen Southall

Fall is the time to plant

Boxwood need as much time as possible for good root development before the heat and dryness of the next summer. For this reason, fall is the most optimal time to plant since the boxwood have from September to May before they are stressed by the heat. For this very reason, spring is not the best time to plant. You will not see any plant/leaf growth after planting in the fall, but anytime the weather is moderate, roots will be developing and preparing for spring growth.

One of the most important things you can do to insure the health of your existing or soon to be planted boxwood is to get a professional soil analysis and pH test from Virginia Tech. Boxwood grow best in a neutral soil with a pH

between 6.5 and 7.2. Lime often has to be added, but the soil test will determine that and will specify the quantity. Adding supplements of any kind to your soil without a soil analysis is like taking medicine without a physician's diagnosis. I will be glad to send you a soil testing kit free of charge if you will email me your request.

An ideal schedule is to get the analysis done first and then work the suggested supplements into the soil before planting. Lime takes a long time to work its way down into the soil, which is why it is best to be mixed with soil before planting. An analysis is just as important in working with established plants. pH is often the reason for off coloring and bronzing. With established plants, the lime cannot be worked into the

soil because the roots of boxwood are very close to the surface and working it in will destroy roots, which is never a good thing to do. Simply spread the lime evenly around the boxwood bed and within the plant itself.

Boxwoods should be planted only in well-drained soils because they do not like wet feet. Too much water has killed just as many boxwood as drought has. Never plant them near downspouts, under the drip line of a roof without gutters, or in any area that stays wet. Boxwoods will grow in locations ranging from full sun, to partial shade, to full shade, and they will exhibit different growing habits in these varied conditions. Heavy shade will contribute to a more loose structured plant, and full sun will tend to make them tighter.

When planting, dig the hole larger around than the root ball of the plant, but not deeper. Digging too deep means adding soil to the hole and that may allow the plant to sink. Boxwood should be planted high to foster good drainage. Incorporate good soil around the root ball and use a strong jet spray nozzle on the end of a garden hose to drive water down around the roots. This will create a "muck," which eliminates any air pockets. This method is much preferred to stepping on the soil to pack it. When the area dries out the next day you will see that the soil is very well packed. Check at this time to determine if more soil is needed.

Checking soil moisture after planting and during dry spells is very important. When considering whether to water, always follow the "get on your knees" rule. That is, get on your knees and dig in the area around the plants with either your hand or a garden trowel to determine the amount of moisture in the soil. It does not make sense to water soil that is already sufficiently wet. On the other hand, if it is hard and/or dry, then, by all means, water. Regular

deep watering is much more beneficial than more frequent, light watering. Thorough watering, which moistens the entire root ball and surrounding soil, encourages development of a healthy root system. After the initial watering during planting, check the soil moisture once every week or two. Typically, very little watering is required during the fall.

Fall is great for cleaning

Often the insides of plants become clogged with dead leaves and other debris between the branches. During wet weather conditions this debris can remain damp for long periods of time, fostering fungus and other diseases. Some of the larger accumulations are best picked out by hand, but they are easily cleaned by using a strong jet spray nozzle. Simply jet spray the plant from all different angles and directions

to blow out the debris. Cleaning allows air to freely circulate within the plant, keeping it dry and healthy.

Questions and Correspondence

For more detailed information on various boxwood topics visit www.englishboxwoods.com Please feel free to contact me with questions about your individual boxwood needs.

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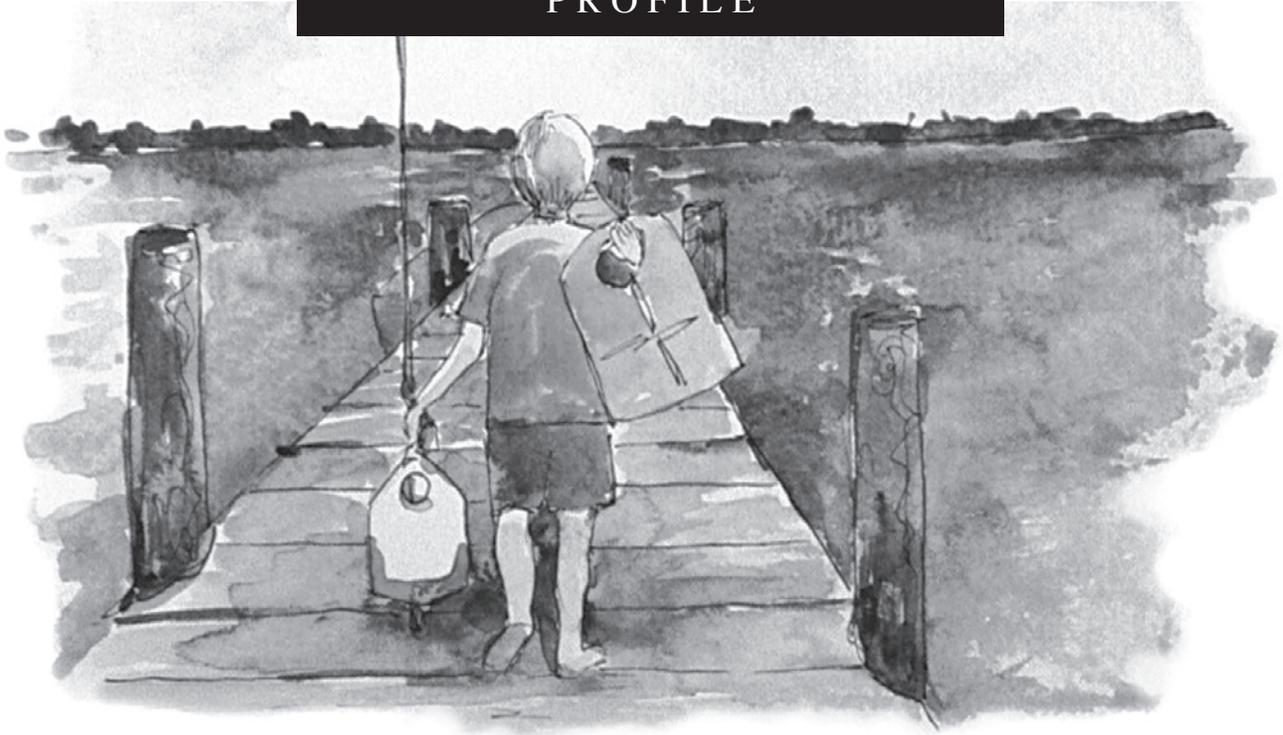
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A Labor of Love

Pea Soup and the Seafood Feast

By Grace Ball / Illustrations by Laura Craig

For first-time author Anna Burger, reflecting on the experience of writing her debut children's book, *Pea Soup and the Seafood Feast*, can best be described as a labor of love. It was Burger's deep love for her friends and family, paired with an unshakeable sense of nostalgia for times past, that was the catalyst to the writing of her first book. Her writing desk, situated in front of a window, overlooked the dock behind her house that floats on Onancock Creek. "When I was sitting there with writers' block, I looked around me and thought, 'what could I write about?'" and that's precisely when it hit her. Burger gazed at the scene before her and realized that the

answer was as simple as her childhood days, spent on the water with her father and grandfather, learning how to fish and crab, all the while gaining a unique love for the water that would connect the three of them for years to come. Burger states matter-of-factly, "Every writer has heard, 'write what you know,' and that's exactly what I started with."

In the spirit of writing what she knows, when it came time to find an illustrator for her project, she immediately called upon artist Laura Craig, a long-time friend. After all, Burger had known Craig since they were small children growing up in the same coastal town. Craig, who hadn't thought of herself as an illustrator

"until this particular moment" says, "I was motivated by my friendship with Anna, honestly...and I just thought it would be such a fun and sweet project. It's sort of a romantic idea, too—a children's book illustrator." And with that, Burger and Craig became partners on a quest to convey the same love for marine life that they gained as children. According to Craig, their "lives have intersected and diverged through the years," but both Burger and Craig seem to agree that this particular moment of intersection is a very special one.

Pea Soup and the Seafood Feast tells the story of young Jack, as he journeys out on a boat, intent on catching the makings of a seafood feast. He has decided that he simply

cannot stomach even one bowl of the pea soup his mother has prepared for dinner. As Jack embarks on his adventure, he keeps his grandfather's teachings and previous instruction about boating and fishing in mind. He catches a flounder, a spot, a clam, and not one but six blue crabs, a true cross-section of the rich marine life found on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Craig vividly illustrates each of these creatures, using watercolor as her medium of choice. She says she wants the images she created to help young readers understand and see the beauty of this marine life that she and Burger know so well.

As Jack encounters one creature after another, he reflects on the true splendor, singularity, and importance of each, and decides that he cannot bear to take any back home with him to eat. However, Burger wants to be clear, "I certainly think it's important to be aware of the creatures and their environment, but I never wanted to convey that it's wrong to eat seafood. I eat seafood. I'm from a community where a lot of people are watermen and participate in aqua-culture. That's not the message of the book." Rather, it seems evident that Burger's intention was for her young audience to receive a message about the importance of understanding aquatic life and appreciating the natural wonders that one can find living in or visiting any coastal community.

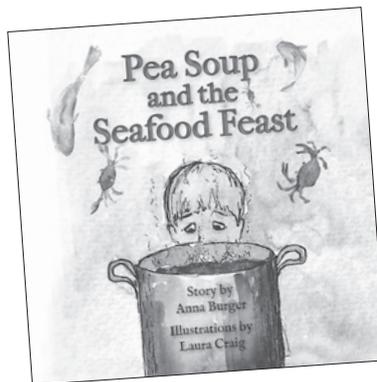
Indeed, one of Burger's main purposes in writing *Pea Soup and the Seafood Feast* was to convey how an appreciation for something as beautiful and vast as the marine world can strengthen and even create ties between generations. Burger uses her current proximity to the water to create memories with her own young son, much like the memories her father and grandfather created with her when she was a child. She says, "We go out in the yard and we will catch little minnows in our minnow pond and catch crabs on the docks, and I'll show him how the crab moves and what's out there." Burger knows how impactful creating those memories has been in her own life, and she intends to



do the same with her little one. And now, the love and appreciation that she has for the water will be forever memorialized in her book.

From the inspiration behind her story, to the decision to ask her longtime friend Laura Craig to illustrate her book, Burger certainly seems to be motivated by love above all—her love for her family and her love for

the water. "My grandfather, who I dedicated this book to, is no longer living, and the reaction, specifically from family members, has been that he would be really proud of it, and happy that the activities he did with me have made such an impression on my life all these years later." No doubt a most meaningful reaction to the lovely tribute that Anna Burger has written. *pl*



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Pea Soup and the Seafood Feast

By Anna Burger
 Illustrations by Laura Craig

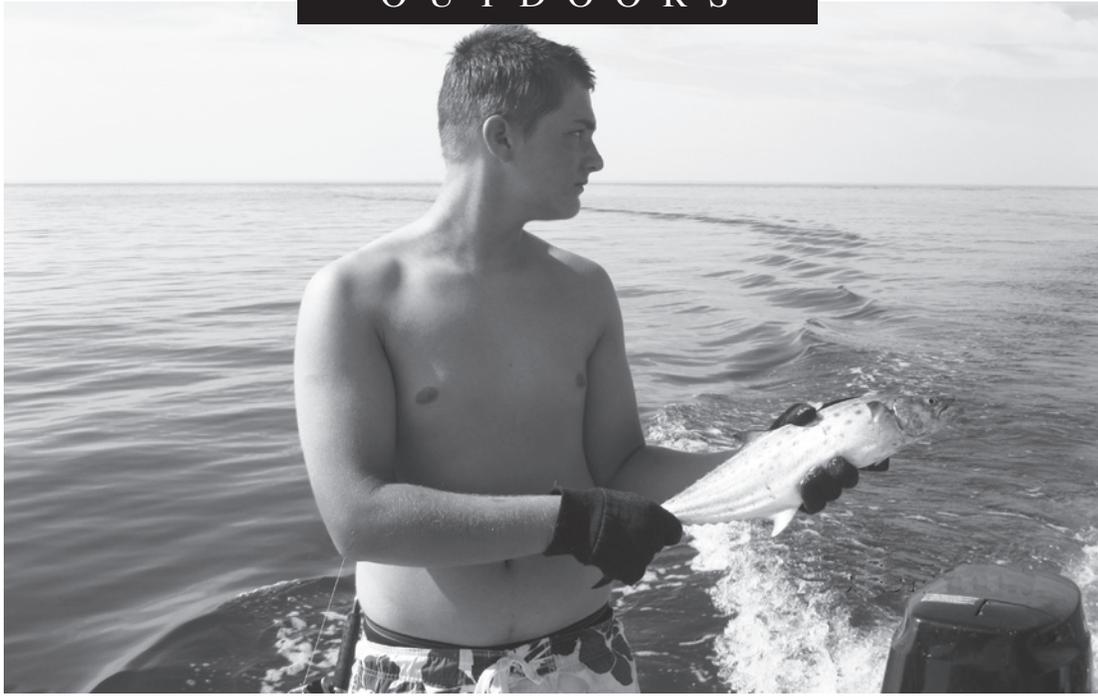
When his mother tells him they're having pea soup for dinner, Jack wonders how he'll survive. Then he comes up with a plan: he'll catch his own seafood feast instead! Relying on skills learned from his grandfather, the resourceful boy embarks on a seaside adventure, casting for fish, digging for clams, and setting traps for blue crabs. In the process he learns that the only thing better than a basket full of crabs or a bucket full of clams is a heart full of appreciation for the natural wonders of the bay.

"Anna Burger captures that sweet moment in life when we, like Jack, recognize our kinship to other creatures."

— Jackie Urbanovic, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Duck Soup*

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Travis Scala with a Spanish mackerel he caught in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay during the 2015 summer season.

FALL FISHING IN HIGH GEAR

Especially for stripers, mackerel and bluefish

Story and Photo by Steve Scala

Another summer season is in our rear view mirrors, and with it, some great memories. For some of us, there were a few angling lessons or tricks of the trade learned. The latter should not be stored away until next June as one of the most exciting and sometimes frenzied fishing times are during the months of September and October. Migratory fish, including the ever popular Spanish mackerel and bluefish, will be very much on the move during September and October as they feed their way south and through the main stem Chesapeake Bay towards its confluence with the Atlantic Ocean. Striped bass will be in the mix as well, and during September, those fishing in Maryland and Potomac River waters have the opportunity to keep stripers that are at least 20 inches in length. Once the 2015, fall Virginia striped bass season reopens on October 4, the entire Chesapeake Bay tidal watershed will be able to enjoy catch and keep striper opportunities.

One of the more exciting fishing experiences I look forward to in September is happening upon a mixed school of

stripers, mackerel and bluefish. Competition for the baitfish biomass at this time of year can bring all three of these species together in a surface action feeding frenzy. Shiner minnows or bay anchovies have their own seasonal pattern for gathering together as moving schools and therefore moving targets, for the predator bluefish, mackerel and stripers. It is ironic that sometimes having too many schools of baitfish within close proximity can make it hard for the fish you want to catch to even see your lures. The same tactic for working a more limited area of baitfish and feeding mackerel and blues can be used when there is an abundance of food for feeding predator fish. Troll the lines around the outside of the baitfish schools and feeding fish so that the lures slip inside of the concentration of baitfish, mackerel, blues or stripers. Always avoid taking the boat through schools of bait or feeding fish.

The fishing tackle that worked so well during late summer is still in play for the next two months, when pursuing Spanish mackerel, bluefish or striped bass. Because schools of shiner minnows move so quickly, the mackerel and blues will be

pursuing them at a pace that requires faster trolling speeds. To accommodate this, using planers in #1 and #2 sizes are a good choice, to keep monofilament leaders and lures at depths more likely to hold mackerel and blues. While striped bass are thought to travel at a slower pace than mackerel, if they happen to be after the same baitfish biomass, they may also be caught this time of year while trolling at a faster speed. In-line trolling weights can also be used instead of planers, but the planers are handy, efficient hardware for trolling this time of year.

Match your choice of lures to the baitfish being pursued by Spanish mackerel, bluefish and striped bass. Shiners or bay anchovies are small fish, so Clark, Drone and the smaller crippled alewives and Tony Acettas are the best options. Those that come in different colors and mirror-back reflectors can be trolled on different lines to see which ones the fish prefer. *p/*

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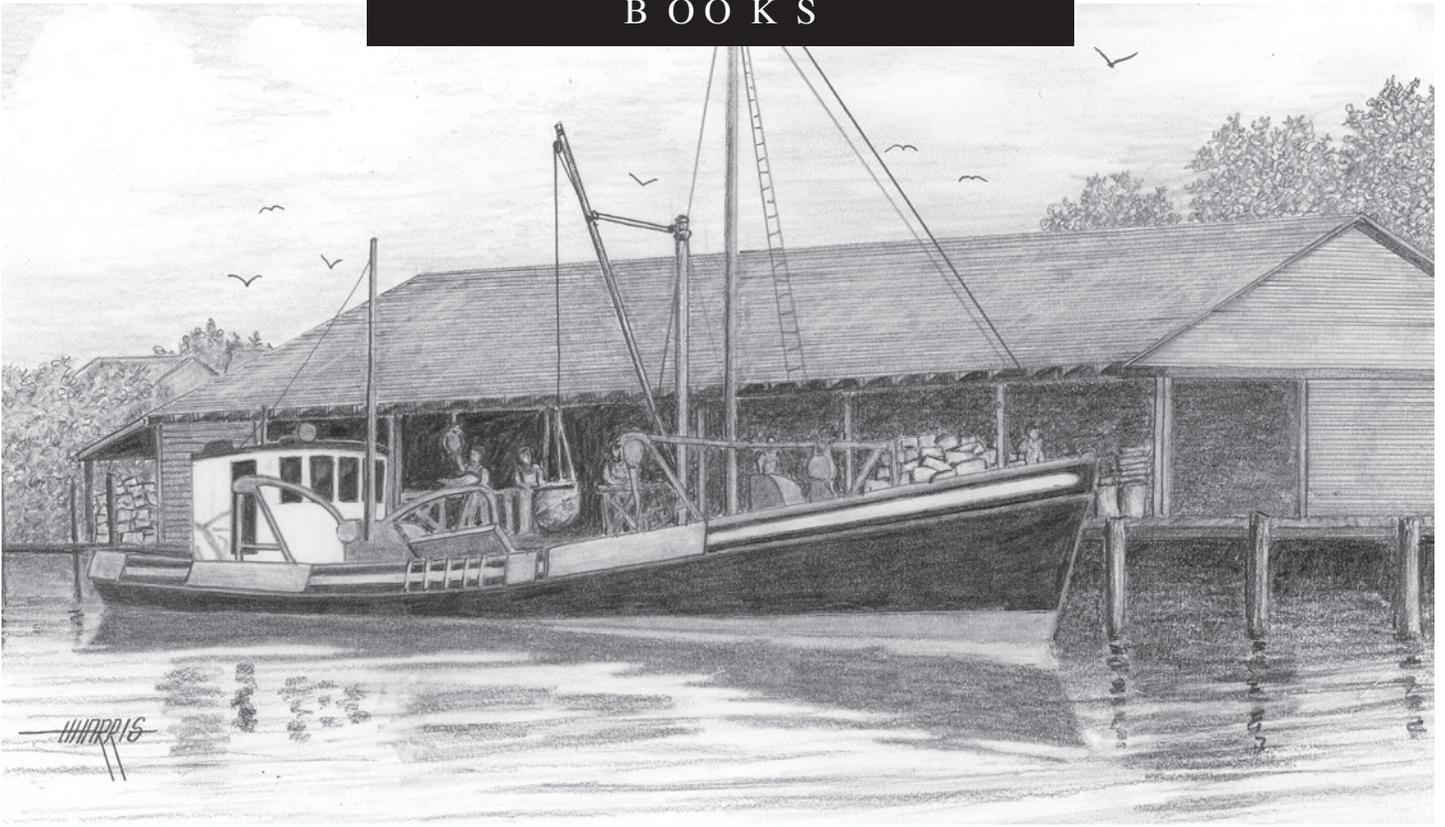
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Reviving the Heartbeat of Cape Charles

Author Patricia Parsons takes us back to simpler times

By Tracy Akers

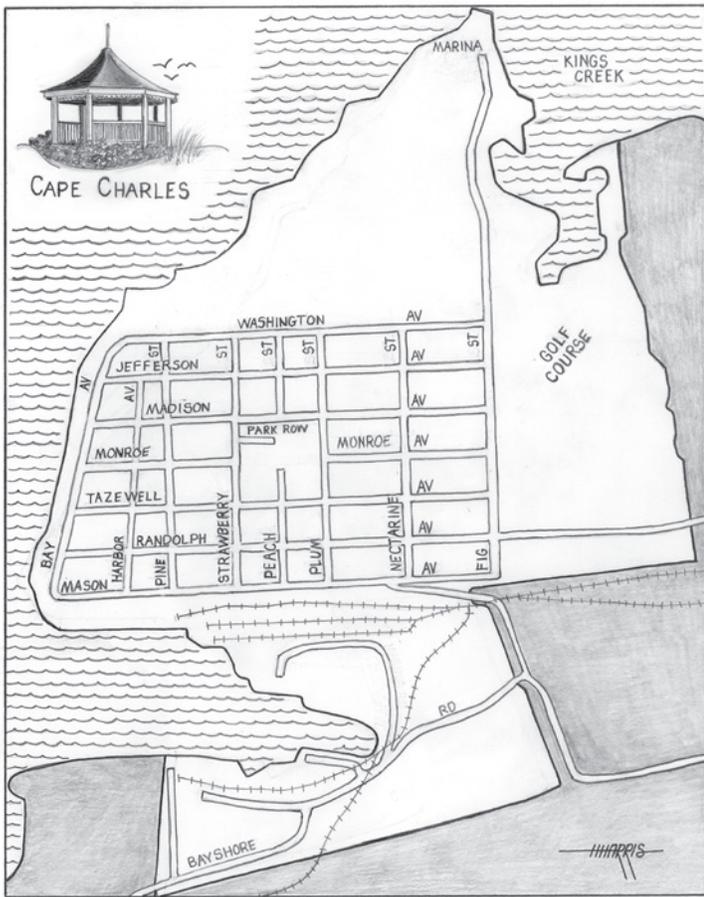
Two years—that's how long it took author Patricia Joyce Parsons to dig into the history of her hometown. Accounts of life in Cape Charles, Virginia during the mid-twentieth century were not easy to find outside of her own mind while she was writing her memoir. She thumbed her way through museum documents, and spent hours searching through microfilm of old newspapers to verify the accuracy of incidents she remembered from her childhood, Parsons says. The last few generations had to seek employment away from Cape Charles when the

Pennsylvania Railroad's Philadelphia to Norfolk line shut down its headquarters there after World War II. They took a big block of the area's history with them. As a result, most archival material about Cape Charles and the Eastern Shore of Virginia stops in the 1930s.

Her memoir, *Portrait of a Town: Cape Charles, 1940—1960*, is the only one like it on the market today. Through a collection of 33 vignettes, recently published by Pleasant Living Books, Parsons invites us to take a peek at life in Cape Charles during its glory days. She gives readers a recount of the town

she still calls home, while managing to depict vivid images of her life as a little girl growing up in the country—one with beautiful beaches, vibrant colors, succulent food—mixed with hard times. With every vignette, Parsons brings to light the lifestyle of Cape Charles that existed before the railroad ceased to be the major driver of the economy on the Eastern Shore.

Parsons grew up hearing the whistle of the Eastern Shore's railroad, while her natural playground became stomping grounds for World War II wartime efforts. Like many of the town's residents,

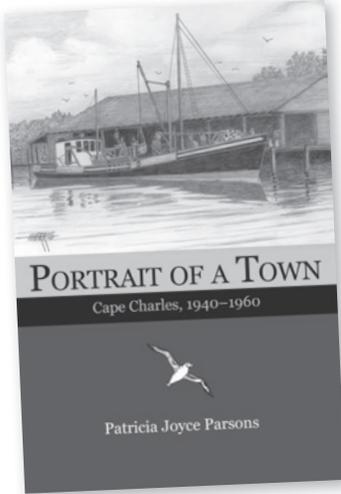


one with
beautiful
beaches,
vibrant colors,
succulent food,
mixed with
hard times.

Illustrations by Hugh Harris

Parsons left the shore when the post-war period started to take the heartbeat out of her town. She now resides in Richmond.

The natural beauty of Cape Charles is evident from the beginning of the book to the very end, and the process of delving into her past allowed Parsons to experience her childhood all over again. She not only created this opportunity for herself; she also created a nostalgic environment for her readers. “It made me feel young again,” she smiles, “to be calling up those old memories. And another wonderful thing about it is once the book came out it was connecting with other people who had grown up there.” Locals, as well as non-locals, have reached out to her. “Everybody who’s gotten back to me picked some facet of the book that spoke to them,” Parsons says. Her email inbox tends to overflow with messages from locals and non-locals alike, and she even receives phone calls from her readers. “One man who called me had





Portrait of a Town takes the reader on a nostalgic, invigorating journey through Cape Charles from a child’s-eye-view—from playing in a swamp, to jumping off the railroad’s coal chute, to fishing the barrier islands that line Virginia’s oceanfront. In this collection of vignettes, Patricia Parsons portrays life in Cape Charles during World War II and beyond, from the 1940s to the 1950s.

“In *Portrait of a Town*, Pat Parsons reflects with warm nostalgia on her experiences growing up in a lovely and proud Victorian bayside village on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Her delightful portrayal of daily life during WWII, and of Cape Charles’s struggle to survive the changing times, provide valuable insight into the history of the area.”

— John M. Barber, Fellow, American Society of Marine Artists

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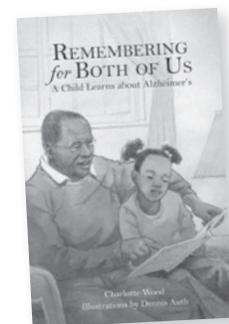
grown up in the nearby town of Eastville, and he told me, “I was nine years old when I used to start taking my boat out on the inlet near my home.’ People would let their children do that in those days,” she laughs, “I’m not sure I would, but I did it myself.” Parsons says another reader “whose family grew up over there, wrote me and said ‘While I was reading *Portrait of a Town*, I felt like I could taste my Eastern Shore grandmother’s sweet potato biscuits.’”

She admits that Cape Charles declined greatly at one point. Stores on the main street were boarded up, and big beautiful homes were divided into apartments. The “heartbeat of the town, the large railroad and ferry complex, had been torn down, taking part of the town’s soul with it.” Without the railroad and ferries connecting the town to Norfolk, those stores and homes would never have been erected in the first place.

Parsons is positive, though. People have started to see the beauty again. Now the houses are being restored, the tourist

industry is in full swing and the shops are open for business. The town boasts two beautiful marinas. There are several excellent restaurants. Kayak tours can take you on a birdwatching expedition or to a vineyard for a wine tasting, “and the fishing is fabulous. You can either fish the Bay or go out into the ocean or cast a line off the pier. Or just enjoy the beach.”

As an author, Parsons wants her readers to recognize the true beauty of Cape Charles as well as its history, but there’s something else she’s aiming for---and it’s rather simple. “I just want them to feel happy as they read it. That it made them feel good. There is so much negativity being directed at us now. This book is not going to win a Pulitzer Prize, but if it makes people happy for a couple hours—that’s fine.” “I think it’s going to be alright. Maybe I’ll write about Richmond next, I have some good stories there!” *pl*



REMEMBERING for BOTH OF US

A Child Learns about Alzheimer's

By Charlotte Wood
Illustrations by Dennis Auth

Tasha loves her grandfather, and she knows that PaPa loves her. But lately, PaPa has begun to forget things. He’s often confused and upset. Sometimes, he doesn’t even recognize his own family. How can Tasha’s grandmother help her see that while PaPa is changing, his love for Tasha has not?

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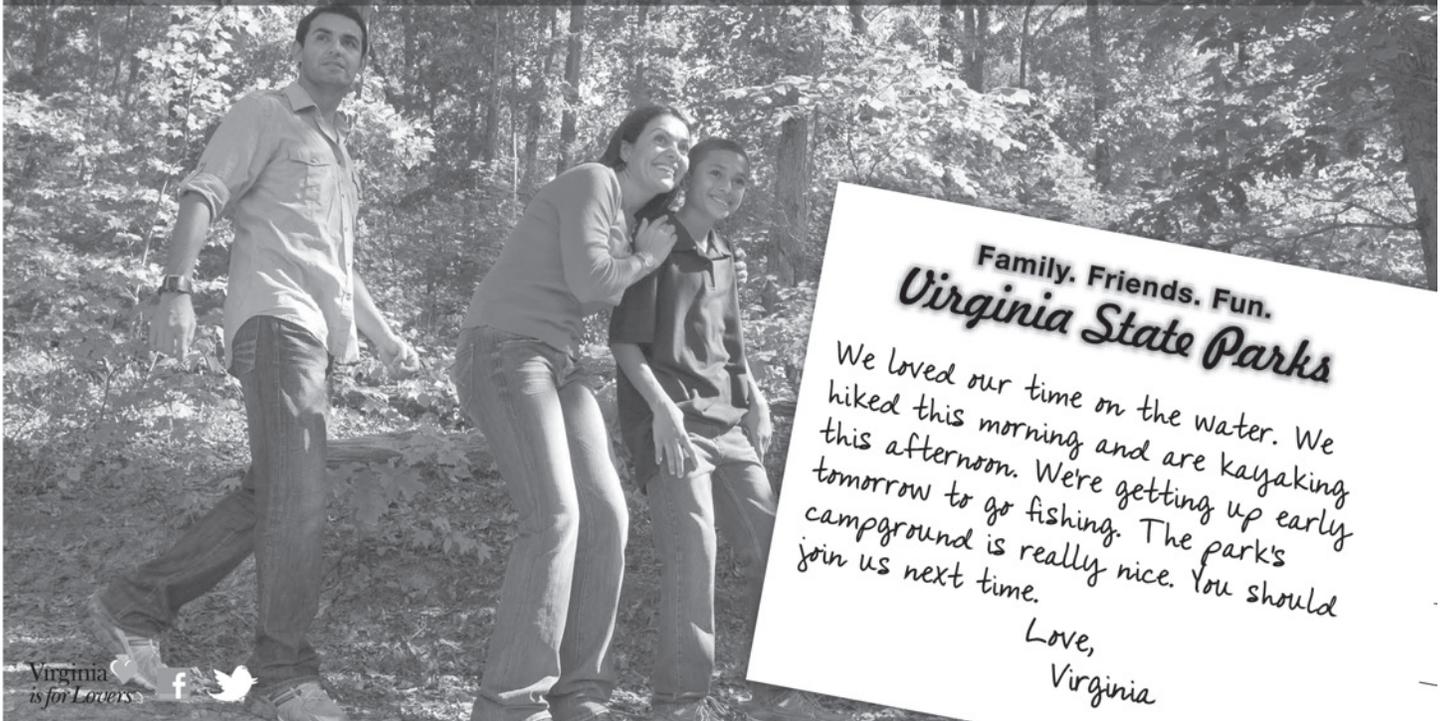
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from the PL recipe collection

Assembled by Alyssa Brew

I can hardly be-“leaf” it’s autumn already! Whether that means back to school, football, or spending these soon-to-come brisk days outdoors or in, following are some recipes you are bound to fall for! There is one for everyone—from appetizers and chili for the big game, to in-season favorites such as rockfish, delicious Virginia apples, scrumptious desserts, and even a fun snack from your Halloween pumpkin! What’s more is that fall means the weather is perfect to grill out or in. So take your pick and try out these tricks and treats!

Salsa Dip

2 (15-ounce) cans black beans, drained
 2 cups salsa
 1 green pepper, finely chopped
 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped
 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and chopped
 2 chile peppers, seeded and chopped
 6 green onions, chopped
 1 small can chopped black olives
 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 ½ cup cilantro, chopped
 1 cup sour cream

Mash beans in large bowl. Add all other ingredients except sour cream; stir to blend.

Cover and refrigerate salsa for 1 hour. Spoon a portion of salsa into small dish; top with dollop of sour cream.

Serve with raw vegetables or tortilla chips.

from December/January 1998/99

Party Mix

1½ cups corn-and-rice cereal
 1 cup toasted oat cereal
 2 cups thin pretzel sticks
 2 cups cheese-flavored snack crackers
 ½ pound mixed nuts
 4 tablespoons margarine
 ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
 ¼ teaspoon celery salt

Preheat oven to 250°. Combine cereals, pretzels, crackers, and nuts in a 13- x 9-inch pan. Melt margarine and stir in Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder and celery salt. Pour margarine mixture over cereal in pan and lightly mix. Bake 30 minutes.

from April/May 1995

Hot Vegetarian Chili

¾ cup olive oil, divided
 2 medium zucchini, cut into ½-inch cubes
 2 medium yellow onions, cut into ½-inch cubes
 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 1 large sweet red pepper, cored and cut into ½-inch cubes
 1 large sweet green pepper, cored and cut into ½-inch cubes
 1 small eggplant, peeled and diced (optional)
 1 (35-ounce) can plum tomatoes
 1½ pounds fresh ripe plum tomatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
 1 (15½-ounce) can kidney beans, rinsed under cold water and drained
 1 (16-ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 1 tablespoon ground cumin
 1 tablespoon dried basil
 1 tablespoon dried oregano
 1 teaspoon salt (to taste)
 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
 ½ cup chopped parsley (Italian preferred)
 Sour cream
 Grated Monterey Jack cheese
 Sliced green onions

Heat ½ cup olive oil in large skillet over medium heat. Add zucchini and sauté just until tender. Remove zucchini to large casserole or Dutch oven.

Add remaining ¼ cup oil to skillet over low heat. Add onions, garlic, peppers and eggplant. Sauté until wilted, about 10 minutes. Add to casserole along with oil.

Place casserole over low heat. Add undrained canned tomatoes, fresh tomatoes, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, chili powder, cumin, basil, oregano, salt, pepper and parsley. Cook uncovered 30 to 45 minutes, stirring often. Adjust seasonings to taste.

Garnish with sour cream, cheese and green onions. Serve immediately. Serves 8.

from September/October 1991

Chili-Bits Cornbread

1 cup milk
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1½ cups yellow cornmeal
¾ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup granulated sugar
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup margarine, melted and cooled
2 eggs
1 (5-ounce) can chopped mild green chiles

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease 9-inch baking dish. In large bowl, combine milk and lemon juice. In medium bowl, combine cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking soda and salt; mix well.

Stir in melted butter and eggs to milk mixture; beat with mixer on low speed until well blended.

Stir in chilies. Slowly add cornmeal mixture a little at a time to milk batter until blended and smooth. Pour batter into baking dish; bake for 20 to 30 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool to room temperature then cut into squares.

from March/April 1992

Marinated Beef Kabobs

¼ cup vegetable oil
4 tablespoons cider vinegar
2 teaspoons celery salt
2 teaspoons onion salt
1 clove garlic, crushed
1½ teaspoons oregano
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 pounds boneless shoulder, top round or sirloin tip beef
12 medium mushroom caps
2 green peppers, cubed
Cherry tomatoes
2 onions, cubed

Combine oil, vinegar, salts, garlic, oregano and pepper in saucepan. Heat to boiling and cool.

Cut meat into 1½-inch cubes and add to marinade for 4 to 6 hours, turning occasionally.

Alternate meat, mushrooms and vegetables on skewers and cook 10 to 20 minutes.

from September/October 1992

Parmesan Bass

1 pound bass (or rockfish) fillets
2 tablespoons bread crumbs
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon chopped basil leaves
1 teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon pepper
Olive oil

Preheat oven to 500°. Spray baking pan with nonstick coating. Mix bread crumbs, cheese, basil, paprika and pepper and place on small plate.

Brush fillets with olive oil and roll in crumb mixture until coated on all sides.

Bake for 10 minutes or until fish flakes easily with fork.

from October/November 1998

Baked Sweet Potatoes and Apples

6 medium sweet potatoes, cooked, pared, and sliced
4 medium tart cooking apples, cored, peeled and sliced into rings
½ cup or more firmly packed brown sugar
½ cup coarsely chopped or whole pecans (optional)
4 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
½ teaspoon mace

1 teaspoon salt, or to taste

Butter a 2½-quart casserole and arrange ingredients in two layers in order listed. Cover tightly and bake at 350° for about 1 hour.

Serves 8.

from Fall 1990

Apple Cider Salad

Leaf lettuce
Fresh spinach
Iceberg lettuce, or other greens
1 green pepper, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1 small summer squash or zucchini, sliced
1 small onion, sliced (optional)

Dressing:

¼ cup apple juice concentrate, thawed
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons shredded apple
3 tablespoons sour cream
2 tablespoons mild prepared mustard
2 tablespoons water
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
Salt and black pepper to taste

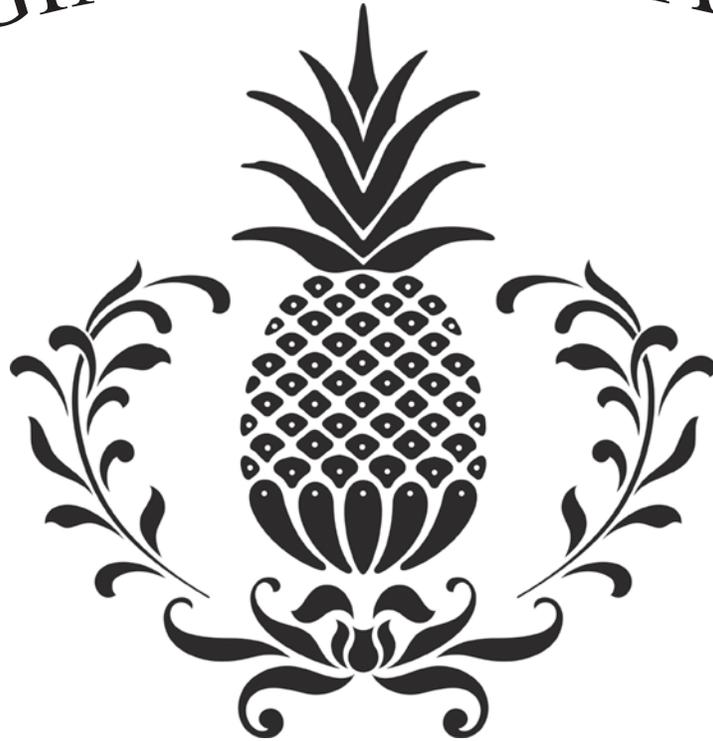
Wash, dry and gently tear salad greens into bite-size pieces. Toss vegetables together.

Mix all dressing ingredients together and pour over vegetables.

Garnish with onion rings.

from August/September 1995

VIRGINIA HOSPITALITY



This article appeared in our September/October 2005 issue. Dan Gill's ruminations and esoterica appeared in PL for ten years beginning in 2005, and we will continue to reprint selected work in forthcoming issues. Dan passed away in October 2014.

By Dan Gill

Virginia has been noted for hospitality since early colonial days. Plantations were far apart and there were few taverns or ordinaries. Worthy travelers were welcomed to the homes of planters and gentlemen to visit and enjoy the hosts' generosity. Most of Virginia society were either related or had a common political, social or religious connection. Rather than the six degrees of separation typical of modern encounters, there was normally only one or two. A stranger with a modicum of social skills, could sail into Virginia, make a few select acquaintances, and then travel the state staying in the best homes and partaking of the best food, drink and companionship. After King Charles I lost his head, many

expatriate Cavaliers found refuge and hospitality in Virginia. In 1649, Colonel Henry Norwood wrote of his reception in York County: "It fell out at that time that Captain Wormeley (of His Majesty's Council) had guests in his house feasting and carousing, that were lately come from England, and most of them my intimate acquaintance . . . Using the common freedom of the country, I thrust myself amongst Captain Wormeley's guests in crossing the creek and had a kind reception from them all, which answered (if not exceeded) my expectations."

Wormeley soon moved his quarters to Rosegill in (now) Middlesex County, where his son, Ralph II, continued the established traditions. The French Huguenot, Durand,

chronicled some of the goings-on at Rosegill, which included all-night card games and prodigious quantities of wine, cider and beer. Durand found the wine so strong that he diluted his with water and remarked that the Governor (Lord Howard of Effingham) and Wormeley laughed at him as they took theirs straight and still managed to keep an even keel.

Traditions of Virginia hospitality changed little over the next two hundred and fifty years. Out of necessity and custom, people were prepared to entertain visitors at any time and without notice. My father was raised in the Northern Neck at the end of the horse and buggy era. When his mother got the notion to go “callin’,” she would hitch Old May to the buggy and set off down the road, such as it was. Short trips meant dinner (the large noon meal in those days), a few hours to visit, and the trip home before dark. On longer trips, she was expected to spend the night, and had little choice. Growing up on the farm, our family was always prepared to receive guests. All meals were hot and home cooked, and there was no problem to set another place or two. Feed salesmen, for example, knew that they needed to make their business call around 10:00 to be invited to lunch.

By the 1960s, the rules had changed a little bit. Even if one visited a friend or relative close to a meal or was in the position to spend the night, there were civil conventions to be observed. The potential host was required to extend an invitation to just about anyone. The potential guest was required to decline the first offer. The second offer was not obligatory and indicated that the host would graciously tolerate the intrusion,

should you be crude enough to accept at that point. The third offer indicated that the host was serious and may even enjoy the company. The guest was then obligated to accept unless there was a good reason not to. Even relatives, however, were expected to observe the three-day rule, regardless of how insistent the host may be.

Afternoon social visits were commonplace. Friends dropped by frequently for cocktails and invariably were invited to dinner. Appetizers were always on hand or could be prepared quickly.

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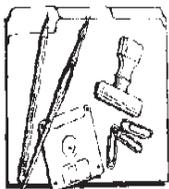
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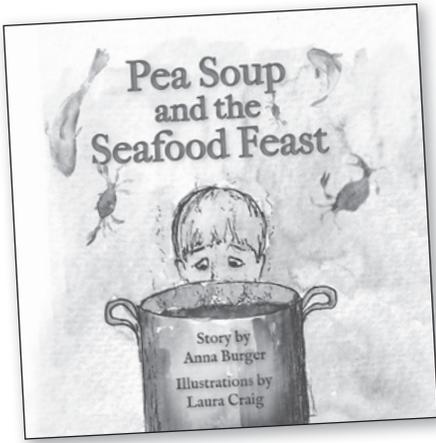
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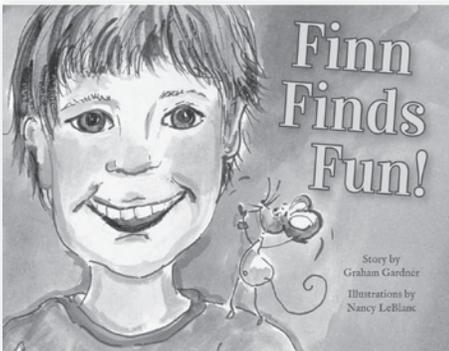


Story by Anna Burger • Illustrations by Laura Craig

When his mother tells him they're having pea soup for dinner, Jack wonders how he'll survive. Then he comes up with a plan: he'll catch his own seafood feast instead! Relying on skills learned from his grandfather, the resourceful boy embarks on a seaside adventure, casting for fish, digging for clams, and setting traps for blue crabs. In the process he learns that the only thing better than a basket full of crabs or a bucket full of clams is a heart full of appreciation for the natural wonders of the bay. With playful prose and vivid watercolor illustrations, *Pea Soup and the Seafood Feast* teaches readers to value and sustain their environment with gratitude for life's little gifts.

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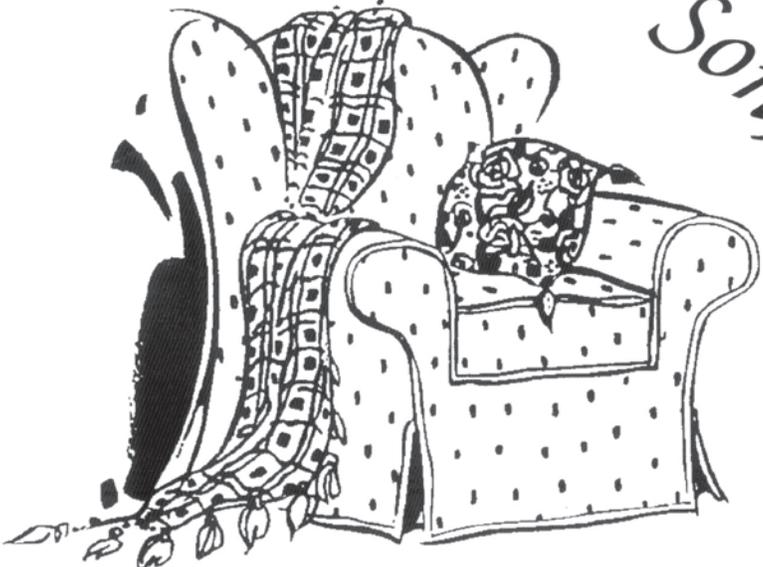
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