

VOICES OF LAUREL



FREE
SPRING 2024
VOL. 4, NO. 2

A JOURNALISTIC COLLECTIVE FOR LAUREL, MARYLAND



John Brady: From WWII Hero
to Laurel City Council
PAGE 10

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	4	TOM DERNOGA	16	RICHARD FRIEND	25
		From the Office of Council Member Tom Dernoga		Father's Day Hits Different	
CITY BEAT	5	MARK J. STOUT, Ph.D.	17	JACK CARR	26
A Roundup of Local News		Howard County U.S. Colored Troops and Enlistment Bounties		Summertime Log Raft	
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS	6	ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI and KEVIN LEONARD	18	LAUREL NOIR	28
		Citizen's Military Training Camp		1989: The Weight of Murder	
COVER STORY	10	WAYNE DAVIS	20	RICK MCGILL	30
John Brady: From WWII Hero to Laurel City Council		Saga of Whiskey Bottom Road		Tales From the Laurel Police Department	
DIANNE MEZZANOTTE	12	KEVIN LEONARD	21	LAUREL ARCHAEOLOGY	32
Historic Laurel Park Faces Uncertain Future		History Crumbs		Car Shows	
DIANNE MEZZANOTTE	14	KEVIN LEONARD	22	OBITUARIES	34
First Laurel Light Award		Combining Art and Sports: Model Maker Bruce Genther		PERRY KOONS	39
SOUTH LAUREL CIVIC ASSOCIATION	15	JIM CLASH	24	My Hometown	
This Could Also Happen to Your Neighborhood		All in a Day's Work			

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What's New With The Laurel History Boys



2024 SPRING
BOOK FAIR

APRIL 28th
Oliver's
531 Main Street
3-5 PM

Meet and greet the first ever collection of Laurel published authors, some of whom are Laurel High School graduates! All books will be available for sale. Already own a copy? Bring it to have the authors sign it!



Spring Book Fair Celebrating LHS Graduate Authors

The Laurel History Boys are sponsoring a Spring Book Fair. At this free event, all are invited to meet and greet the first ever collection of Laurel published authors, some of whom are Laurel High School graduates: Kevin Leonard (Class of 1972), Jim Clash (Class of 1973), and Michelle Paris (Class of 1981). Richard Friend and Jeff Krulik, also from The Laurel History Boys, and father and son authors Wayne and Nathan Davis, who wrote *Hidden History of Howard County*, will also be on hand. Books by all the authors will be available to purchase, including The Laurel History Boys' new *Capital Centre* book. (Plus Capital Centre tote bags and stickers!) If you've already bought a book, bring your copy to have the authors sign it! You can also purchase our books through our website: laurelhistory.com/shop.

April 28 at Oliver's Old Towne Tavern, 531 Main Street, 3-5 PM, FREE.

Grants and Donations

Thank you to Kathie Peterson, Janet Willis, Jerry Sachs, and James Bowman for their monetary donations to *Voices of Laurel*. We are grateful.

Main Street Festival

We will be at our traditional spot in front of Oliver's for the Main Street Festival on May 11. Please stop by and say hello! It will be another opportunity to purchase our books in person.

Help with UMD Published Report

University of Maryland students in the Historic Preservation Studio Workshop published a report on the old Ellicott City Jail. The students contacted Kevin as part of their archival research on the social and architectural history of the historic jail after finding some of his old articles on the Internet. Kevin then provided dozens of archival files and photos to supplement their research. The report creates a Historic

Context Study for The Old Ellicott City Jail, also known as the Howard County Jail. It documents the history, including important events and people involved with the various aspects of the jail. The report can be downloaded from <https://go.umd.edu/3Vy5oOn>.

Upcoming Presentations

- On June 14, Kevin will present "The History of the Capital Centre." The Capital Centre arena opened in Landover in 1973 and for the next 25 years was one of the top arenas in the country. Kevin, one of the authors (with Rich and Jeff) of the new book, *Capital Centre: A Retrospective*, will describe how the arena came to be and tell backstage stories from sports to concerts by major performers in every genre. North Laurel Community Center, 11 AM, FREE.



AUDREY BARNES MEDIA

Where's Audrey?

Abrupt Replacement of City's Longtime Communications Director Raises Questions

Anyone who attended the City of Laurel's Sixth Meeting of the Mayor and City Council on March 25th may have been asking themselves what happened to Audrey Barnes, the Director of Communications? I know I did. I also know a few things were of concern for me with the agenda item seeking confirmation on the appointment of a new director.

Firstly, why wasn't Audrey Barnes reappointed to her position? Ms. Barnes, a native Laurel resident, had served the city for more than a decade. At the time of her appointment, she was recognized for her years of experience and professionalism in the field of communication. What could Ms. Barnes possibly have done to warrant the way in which the city terminated her services? I made inquiries with both of my ward council members and the council member at-large, for which no definitive response was given. Even after sharing with them the despicable manner and handling of her separation with the city I had been informed of, crickets could be heard.

Secondly, there seemed to have been a rush to appoint a new director. Upon reviewing meeting minutes and notes on the city's page, the first mention for the need to appoint a director was on the agenda for the meeting. When speaking to that item during the meeting, it was only mentioned that the council had received a copy of Ms. Natalie Williams' résumé. No additional information regarding Ms. Williams and her experience or accomplishments were given prior to a confirmation vote. It was during the vote that one of the councilmen had asked the question if Ms. Williams was present—she was sitting in the front row while the council unanimously confirmed her appointment. Witnessing all of this gave me pause. What level of due diligence did the council perform prior to confirmation? Had any of the council members posed questions of the candidate or vetted the candidacy in any way? Was their decision solely based on a résumé? If so, have we learned nothing from George Santos? Better yet, have we learned nothing from the confirmation of David Crawford, our former, disgraced police chief sentenced to eight life sentences? Had the council done its own vetting with respect to Mr. Crawford, they would have learned that the Prince George's County Police Department questioned his integrity when seeking reference prior to appointment. That could have been a dodged bullet. Instead, Laurel continues to be forever tethered to his demise.

Lastly, Laurel residents should have confidence that our council are not just rubber stamps. We need assurance that they are indeed acting on behalf of their constituents and not at the will of our City Mayor.

— Georgena Ifill

City Seems Poised to Bust Union

Hiring of High-Priced Law Firm to Negotiate With DPW Union is Concerning

Mayor Sydnor, Councilpersons Kole, Johnson, Clark, Dewalt and Mills:

Recently I signed a petition requesting that the City of Laurel negotiate "in good faith" with the City of Laurel's Department of Public Works (DPW) workforce.

I am aware that in 2023, the DPW employees won the right to unionize to negotiate for wages. It is my understanding that the DPW employees began negotiations in January, but after just five meetings, the city declared an impasse, and negotiations ended.

I also know that the city has hired a high-profile law firm, Jackson Lewis, to negotiate on behalf of the city. This concerns me for two reasons:

1. Why would the city hire a high-profile law firm for these negotiations when bargaining efforts such as this can be obtained from both the State and Federal governments FOR FREE? I seriously doubt that Jackson Lewis is providing their services pro bono. Their consultation rate runs between \$350 and \$500 per hour. As a taxpayer, I am concerned about the cost of this endeavor—perhaps there is a large sum of funds set aside for this? (I doubt it.) You, the Mayor, and the City Council members are supposed to be good stewards of our tax dollars. This effort seems extremely frivolous to me.
2. The City agreed to grant the DPW employees the right to unionize and to negotiate their wages. WHY did the city hire a law firm such as Jackson Lewis to negotiate on its behalf? It is well known that Jackson Lewis is a large corporation specializing in, among other things, "Union-busting." They are hired to either dismantle or prevent labor unions. Their clients have been Google, Amazon, colleges, and universities. Even though the City Council and the former Mayor unanimously approved the unionization of the DPW employees, it appears to me that the Council now does not agree with this decision. This seems to be a HUGE credibility issue for the City.

I am just expressing my opinion, but I am sure that many are in agreement with me.

— Katharine Peterson | 30-year city resident

The views expressed in letters to the editor do not purport to reflect the views or opinions of Voices of Laurel or The Laurel History Boys, Inc.

Letters can be submitted to

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The Laurel History Boys, Inc.
P.O. Box 759
Laurel, MD 20725

City Beat

A roundup of local events and announcements, compiled by *Voices of Laurel* staff

Shake-up at City Hall

Mayor Keith Sydnor has begun to shape his staff at the Joe Robison Municipal Center. Communications Director Audrey Barnes was let go and Department of Public Works Director Brian Lee resigned. The new Director of Public Works is Tim Miller. Natalie Williams was nominated and confirmed as Barnes' replacement at the March 25th City Council meeting.

DPW Union Update

Prior to last Fall's elections, the City Council approved legislation that allowed the city's Department of Public Works (DPW) employees to unionize. The next step was for the city and DPW to negotiate a contract, which began in mid-January. To represent them in the negotiations, the city hired the law firm Jackson Lewis, which is a curious choice since Mayor Keith Sydnor is on the record for supporting unions.

"Jackson Lewis is a key player in the union avoidance industry," Fred Feinstein, former general counsel at the National Labor Relations Board told the *New York Times*. "This kind of aggressive anti-union campaign is not unusual."

Also, according to LaborLab, a nonprofit watchdog organization, "Jackson Lewis is a law firm that has earned a reputation as a leading union busting firm, representing employers in labor disputes, lawsuits, and other matters related to unions. The firm has been accused of using aggressive tactics to intimidate and undermine unions, including engaging in surveillance, spreading misinformation, and even firing workers who seek to organize."

After a series of meetings since mid-January, the city (and Jackson Lewis) declared the negotiations to be at an "impasse." According to section. 13-13(b) of the City Code, which was updated after the council passed the legislation, the "Impasse procedure" reads:

If after a reasonable period of negotiation over the terms of a memorandum of understanding a dispute exists between the employer and the certified employee organization by January 1 of the year following the year in which negotiations were initiated, then the negotiations may be extended to no later than February 1. Should any such dispute not be resolved by February 1, shall be deemed that an impasse has been reached, at which time the matters in dispute shall be presented jointly by the parties in writing to the mayor and city council for hearing and resolution.

Mayor Sydnor and the city's Public Information Office did not respond to questions emailed to them by *Voices of Laurel*.

Laurel Track Star Aiming for Olympics

Stanford University track star Juliette Whittaker (pictured) was featured in *Sports Illustrated's* "Faces in the Crowd." Whittaker grew up in Laurel



COURTESY OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY

and graduated from Mount De Sales Academy in Catonsville before accepting an athletic scholarship to Stanford. She broke numerous state track records in high school and was considered the number 1 recruit in the nation. Her freshman year at Stanford, Whittaker won the Pac-12 conference title in the 800 in 2:01.19, which ranks No. 5 in Stanford history, and also anchored the Cardinal distance medley relay team to a win at the Penn Relays last spring. She is considered to be a contender for the 2024 U.S. Summer Olympics team.

[Source: *Sports Illustrated*]

Swing into Spring with the American Rosie the Riveter Association

Get *In the Mood* and Swing into Spring with a 1940s musical presentation performed by Rearview Mirror, Saturday, April 27, from 1:30–2:30 PM at the First United Methodist Church, 424 Main Street. Sponsored by the Laurel Chapter of the American Rosie the Riveter Association, this free event will take you back in time to the songs of the era of World War II when the Rosies joined the workforce on the home front to help the war effort. Doors open at 1 PM. Light refreshments served. Handicapped accessible. For questions, contact Pat, 240-762-3895.

The mission of Laurel ARRA, one of two chapters in Maryland, is to preserve the history and legacy of the Rosies, and to educate the public about their contributions during WWII. Their service to the country was invaluable in winning WWII, having produced 296,429 airplanes, 102,351 tanks and guns, 87,620 warships, 47 tons of artillery shells, and 44 billion rounds of small arms ammunition. The Rosies' long-overdue recognition was realized on April 10, 2024, when they were collectively awarded the Congressional Gold Medal at a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol. The medal will be on display at the National Museum of American History.

[Source: Laurel Chapter of the ARRA]

First Annual CDL Book Club Trucking Show and Job Fair

The First Annual CDL Book Club Trucking Show and Job Fair was held on March 9. CDL Book Club owner and Laurel City Councilmember Jeff Mills hosted the fair, which featured vendors, huge trucks on display, and seminars. Trucking companies were present to interview prospective drivers and some jobs were offered on the spot. The seminars, some of which were tied to Women's History Month, featured Councilmember Kyla Clark and a variety of speakers discussing, among other topics, the U.S. Army, tax preparation, and women's services offered in the area.

[Source: Laurel City Councilmember Jeff Mills]

Businesses To and From Savage Mill

Main Street will miss the popular More Than Java Café, which has relocated to nearby Savage Mill. You can find them in the New Weave Building. Coincidentally, one of their new neighbors and a longtime Savage Mill favorite, Sweet Cascades Chocolatier has opened a new location on Main Street. They now have a space within Rainbow Florist.

Fishing at Laurel Lake

Laurel Lake has recently been restocked with Golden and Rainbow Trout and is open for fishing. While anyone with a fishing pole can partake, you'll need a valid fishing license if you're 16 or older.

[Source: City of Laurel Parks & Recreation]

Former Raquetball Club Building Named for Moe

Originally constructed in 1979 and opened as the Laurel Racquetball Club, the building at 204 Fort Meade Road was purchased by the City of Laurel in 2020 for \$2.4 million and redeveloped into the Laurel Multiservice Center—a facility where residents of the Greater Laurel area can obtain a variety of human services, as well as utilize short-term housing during times of transition. A resolution was passed 4–1 by the City Council in late January to rename the facility in honor of former Mayor Craig A. Moe.

Coming Next Issue: Oldtown Neighborhood Column!

In this issue we debut our North Laurel neighborhood column, written by Angie Latham Kozlowski. Beginning in our next issue (Summer 2024) we will provide complete coverage of all the surrounding areas with the debut of our Oldtown neighborhood column, which will be written by a newcomer to our staff, Caitlin Lewis. Caitlin can be reached at oldtownvoices@gmail.com. As always, we invite input from readers for news, announcements, and events in your neighborhood. Our neighborhood correspondents want to hear from you!

North Laurel

Local news covering the North Laurel and Scaggsville areas



BY ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI | HOCOVOICES@GMAIL.COM



RICHARD FRIEND

Proposed Changes to Commuter Bus Service

The Maryland Department of Transportation is accepting written testimony regarding the proposed changes to Commuter Bus Service until Monday, April 29. For a listing of proposed route changes and modifications that are to begin on July 1, 2024, visit: <https://www.mta.maryland.gov/commuter-bus2024>. Written testimony should be emailed to: hearingcomments@mdot.maryland.gov.

Howard County Looking for Election Judges

Must be 16 or older and a registered voter in Maryland. We're looking for people who are ready for a rewarding 15-hour day, can work outside their home precinct, are able to sit and stand for extended periods, and have proficiency in English. Some positions may require lifting items weighing between 10 to 25 lbs. Sign up today and be a part of this crucial democratic process! Learn more at <http://tinyurl.com/ElectionJudge24>.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Yard Trim Curbside Collections and Household Hazardous Waste Saturdays at the Landfill to resume April 1.

Howard County Group of the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club is hosting its first hike of the season. Join a hike on the Wincopin Trail on Vollmerhausen Road on April 21 at 11:00 am. We will be looking for signs of Spring and enjoying the outdoors. This hike will take about 2 hours and is approximately 3 miles. Any questions? Email Pat Soffen at patricia.soffen@gmail.com. Registration required.

Youth Poet Laureate

Applications are now being accepted for Howard County's first Youth Poet Laureate position. The Office of County Executive Calvin Ball, the Howard County Arts Council, and the Howard County Poetry & Literature Society (HoCoPoLitSo) created Howard County's Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate program to amplify the power of youth

expression, celebrate community, and promote literacy and literary arts in Howard County.

The Youth Poet Laureate will act as an ambassador for literacy, arts, and youth expression in our community. They will demonstrate a passion for poetry and its power to connect our communities through local public readings and participation in civic events. Applications are open through May 30, 2024. To learn more, visit: howardcountymd.gov/News030424.

Teen Club at North Laurel Community Center

Meetings are from 4:30-6:30 pm every first and third Wednesday of the month. Teens in grades 6-11 are invited to hang out with friends, play games, and participate in fun activities. Did we mention the free pizza? Info: Teia Templeton, 410-313-4674 or ntempleton@howardcountymd.gov.

Hammond Park Stingrays Summer Swim Team Season

Registration for the team opens in mid-April. Please keep in mind that per our league rules, all swim team members must be members of the pool.

Attention Writers

We are looking for a volunteer community writer for this North Laurel column.

Have news, events, or neighborhood happenings to share? Send it to Angie at HoCoVoices@gmail.com.

==

Angie Latham Kozlowski is a staff writer and member of the Board of Directors for the Laurel History Boys. In addition to her investigative reporting, her articles frequently spotlight Howard County.

South Laurel

Local news covering Laurel Lakes, Victoria Falls, Oakcrest, Montpelier, and the Route 197 corridor



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE | SOUTHLAURELVOICES@GMAIL.COM

Drama at the Beltsville Fire Department

A few years ago, a health scare in our family required a call to 9-1-1. When the ambulance showed up on our street in the Oakcrest neighborhood, it wasn't from one of the Laurel fire stations, but rather from Beltsville. This was not an unusual occurrence: fire stations often cover calls in other geographic "boxes," particularly at times when many calls come in at once, or when a fire or other emergency requires a larger response than the local stations are able to provide.

So, when it was announced in January that the Beltsville Volunteer Fire Station 831 planned to pull all of its career—or paid—staff from the station and reassign them elsewhere in the county, many South Laurel residents were among those who protested the move. According to various news reports, 20 of the station's 38 firefighters are career firefighters and the other 18 are volunteers. The volunteer firefighters, as well as the public, reacted quickly to the news, pointing out that removing more than half of the station's firefighters would threaten public safety by increasing response time and leaning more heavily on neighboring stations—including those in Laurel—to cover emergency calls.

Some questioned the reason given by Prince George's County Fire Chief Tiffany Green for the move—namely, unsafe conditions at the station. A special inspection in December reportedly had found that dangerous diesel fumes, electrical issues, and sewage problems threatened the health of the firefighters. But some of the firefighters pointed out that the station had undergone an inspection in October 2023, with no critical issues cited. The situation also raised the obvious question of why, if the station was unsafe, was the county waiting two months before removing the careerists? And why would the volunteer firefighters still be expected to operate out of a supposedly unsafe building? Reporters from the *Beltsville News* reviewed the special inspection report and concluded that the county's claims that the building was uninhabitable were exaggerated. They also dug into Prince George's County capital improvement

plans going several years back and found that Beltsville Station 831 was not listed as needing improvements. Things didn't seem to add up—and the public noticed. Buoyed by a social media blitz, constituents called and emailed Fire Chief Green and Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks to express their dismay over the situation. At a late-January meeting on the issue, over 200 people showed up to demand transparency and an assurance that the station would remain fully staffed.

A few weeks later, Green announced that the career firefighters would remain at the Beltsville station. A county public safety representative credited the public's response as the reason the original decision was reversed. It was announced at that time that three trailers would be brought to the site to serve as temporary housing for both career and volunteer firefighters until the safety issues at the building are resolved.

For now, at least, Beltsville and South Laurel residents can rely on Station 831 to remain fully staffed. But questions still remain about the situation, especially the seemingly contradictory information from county officials, so it's something we all should stay informed about. For me, personally, it was nice to see change actually happen as a result of the public showing up to make their voices heard—especially after covering the rent stabilization issue in Laurel over the last two years.

"Shakespeare in the Parks" Coming to Montpelier in July

Exciting news for local theater and Shakespeare fans! The Arts and Cultural Heritage Division of the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission will present an outdoor performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at Montpelier House Museum on Friday, July 12, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Newly appointed Artistic Director Randy Snight will direct the 90-minute presentation. The event is free, but attendees should bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit on; picnic dinners may also be brought to the event.



MARSHALL WILCOX

CAVA is Latest Addition to Laurel Food Scene

It seems like it has taken forever since the first rumors started about a CAVA coming to Laurel Lakes, but the restaurant is finally open and getting rave reviews. I'm a huge CAVA fan, having frequented the one in Columbia with my BFF for years. For those not familiar, CAVA serves "Mediterranean-inspired" food in a casual setting: order at the front and build your bowl as you move down the line. A large selection of grains, greens, proteins, veggies, and dips and sauces means that you can choose from about a million (give or take) combos. Or you can go with the suggested bowls created by CAVA chefs, featuring in-season produce. Whether you're a vegetarian, a meat lover, or on a specialized diet like the Keto or Atkins plans, it's easy to build a delicious meal that meets your dietary needs.

CAVA prides itself on giving back to the communities where its restaurants are located. According to the corporate website, a Community Day is held just prior to the opening of each new location, at which customers can eat for free

and are encouraged to donate toward a local cause; the company matches those donations up to \$1,000 and has raised nearly \$500,000 in donations since 2019. The Laurel Lakes restaurant earmarked its donations for Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services (LARS), and also donated unused food from the employee training period to Food Rescue US—Howard County.

With Amigos, Checkers, and now CAVA all opening within a short walk of my house, I foresee a lot of great meals in my immediate future. Guess I'd better get back on the treadmill.

I'd love to hear from South Laurel residents! Send me your story ideas or tell me about an upcoming event—a neighborhood yard sale, a from-home business venture, a milestone birthday or anniversary, or a family celebration.

Diane Mezzanotte holds a Journalism degree from Penn State University. She retired from the Department of Defense in 2019, following a 34-year career.

West Laurel

Local news covering the West Laurel and Burtonsville areas



BY ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI



Green Bin Food Scrap Collection Program for West Laurel Residents of Howard County

As of last November, an additional 7,860 households in Emerson and Kings Contrivance became eligible to join their neighbors in the Feed the Green Bin food scrap curbside collection program, according to the Howard County Bureau of Environmental Services. Residents in the newly expanded area can visit <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/bureau-environmental-services/feed-green-bin> for more information about the program and to sign up to participate.

There are many benefits to this program, including reduced impact on our landfill, reduced methane emissions from decomposing food waste, and reduced use of garbage disposals to get rid of food waste. Using garbage disposals for food waste costs the county almost 10 times more to remove the waste at the treatment plants, while in-home sorting of the food waste into the green bin for curbside collection creates rich compost, a useful soil amendment, that can be used to return nutrients to gardens.

Feeding the green bin is easy and offers the added benefit of a year-round collection that includes yard waste.

Longtime users of the service cite establishing a system for storing the smelliest food waste as one of the keys for successfully sticking with the service. Many keep a small paper bag in the freezer to hold the offending waste until the night before the bin goes out to the curb for pick up.

Other strategies include wrapping the scraps in newspaper or storing them in a reusable plastic container that can be kept

in the refrigerator or freezer and emptied into the green bin the night before collection day.

Certified compostable bags, which can be purchased online, and paper bags can be used for food scraps. However, no plastic bags will be accepted. Properly bagged food scraps must be placed in the county supplied green bin for collection not left on the curb.

The county accepts a number of items for recycling that go beyond the traditional fruits, vegetables, and coffee grounds. Greasy cardboard pizza boxes, meat, fish, shellfish (including bones) can also be tossed into the green bin. The county's website has information about what is acceptable and what is not.

Howard County was the first county in the Mid-Atlantic to start collecting food scraps and yard trim together for composting with its pilot program in ElkrIDGE and Ellicott City in 2010, according to their website. The program has grown to include seven collection routes and seven Howard County Public Schools, to date.

Ginny Geis will return next issue.

Angie Latham Kozlowski is a staff writer and member of the Board of Directors for the Laurel History Boys. In addition to her investigative reporting, her articles frequently spotlight Howard County.

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A JOURNALISTIC COLLECTIVE FOR LAUREL, MARYLAND

Russett/Maryland City

Local news covering the Russett and Maryland City areas



BY BRENDA ZEIGLER-RILEY | RUSSETT.MDCINFO@GMAIL.COM



Local "The Voice" contestant Elyscia Jefferson.

Former Russett Resident Vies for Recording Contract on *The Voice*

Elyscia Jefferson, a former Russett resident and an Anne Arundel County School System graduate, debuted on NBC's *The Voice* in March during the blind audition stage. Twenty-year-old Elyscia is the daughter of Elliot and Schnelle Jefferson and the niece of former North County High School principal Eric Jefferson. A listening party was held at Keystone Korner Jazz Club in Baltimore before her big day, where Elyscia debuted some original tunes and classics like "Can't Help Falling in Love."

The Voice auditions take place over two weeks. According to Elyscia, "You have an opportunity to learn so much during that period. It's an experience that I will always remember." She says, "I'm just following my dreams and passion and hope I can lift people." She cites her roots in the church as the most significant influence on her music, and says she is inspired by artists like Michael Jackson, Beyonce, Brandy, and others.

At the auditions, Elyscia was one of hundreds of contestants vying for the \$100,000 cash prize and an opportunity to land a recording contract with some of the

country's biggest music stars. Elyscia wooed the judges with her rendition of Michael Jackson's "(PYT) Pretty Young Thing," with multiple judges enthusiastic about working with her on their team, to prepare for the next round of the competition. Elyscia chose country artist Reba McEntire as her mentor. McEntire, the only female judge on the panel, commented that she was "thrilled to death to get Elyscia on my team...what a talent."

Elyscia's journey on *The Voice* ended on the March 26th episode, but this talented singer is poised for greater things to come.

Russett in the Running for New Aquatic Center

The Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks has been surveying sites for a new indoor aquatics facility, and the Russett/Maryland City area is a contender. In 2017, The Department of Recreation and Parks determined that indoor swim facilities were deficient and identified a need to construct an aquatics/swim center facility located on the county's western side; that project has since been labeled the "West County Swim Center," or WCSC. The property under consideration for the facility in the 20724 area is the

Bacontown Board of Education property at Woodland and Whiskey Bottom Roads. The proposed center will be the county's third indoor aquatics facility, joining the Arundel Olympic Swim Center on Riva Road in Annapolis and the North Arundel Aquatic Center on Crain Highway in Glen Burnie.

The Land Preservation, Park, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) set forth the project initiative and is currently conducting feasibility studies for four proposed sites. In addition to the Bacontown site, three locations near Meade High School are being considered: Provinces Park, Rockenbach Road, and 26th Street in Ft. Meade.

A weighted criterion is used to evaluate each site, taking into consideration factors such as location, traffic, site analysis, parking, utilities, relationship to existing amenities, expansion, building drainage, building redesign, time frame, and project cost. The Bacontown site's overall score was the second highest, but it was also projected to be the most expensive location to develop.

Under the current plans, the WCSC facility will be approximately 60,000 square feet in area and include a 50-meter competition pool to support Anne Arundel High School swimming programs, regional competitions, and swim meets. Other amenities will include:

- 20 lane/50 meter course competition pool
- permanent spectator seating area
- 4-lane warm-up lap pool
- 2,450-square foot recreation pool with built-in play equipment
- water slides
- lazy river
- kiddie pool w/ "zero beach" entry
- 20-person indoor hot tub
- locker rooms
- party rooms
- CPR & lifeguard training classroom
- outdoor splash pad

The rec side of the center will be open for regular public use. The proposed cost is \$5 for children and seniors, and \$7 for adults.

A recent response to my query regarding an update is that "The West County Swim Center is still in the design phase, as the final location for the pool has yet to be

selected. Civil site design will commence once a site is selected, incorporating a traffic study, environmental review, and integration planning for the chosen community. The Department of Recreation and Parks has recently resumed public engagement for the site selection phase and aims to provide a recommendation immediately. The Department of Recreation and Parks remains committed to continuing public involvement, including feedback, throughout the process."

Upcoming Russett Library Events

Light and Shadows: Ages 6–10. Did the eclipse pique your curiosity? Explore activities about light and shadows. Dress appropriately for possible outdoor experiments. (April 13, 10:30–11:30 AM)

Bad Art Night at the Library: Ages 11 to Adult. Leave your talent at home and join us in creating utter "disaster pieces." Participants will use recycled craft materials and their creativity (or lack thereof) to create the worst piece of art they can imagine. We'll end with a bad art exhibition and voting, with prizes for the best of the worst! (April 25, 6:30 PM. Registration open beginning at 10 AM on April 11.)

Puzzle Party: Preschool ages 0–5. Join us as we listen to a story, create puzzle crafts, and solve fun puzzles. (May 7, 6:30 PM)

Fizz, Pop, Boom!: Ages 6–10. The Science Guys of Baltimore will spookily present exciting bubbling potions, chemical reactions, and explosions as we explore the states of matter! (May 11, 10:30 AM)

For more information on any of the above programs, or to learn about more of the library's many services and offerings, go to their website: <https://www.aacpl.net/services/maryland-city-at-russett>.

Brenda Zeigler-Riley is a 15-year resident of Russett, a retired educator, and entrepreneur with a marketing, public relations, and fundraising background. Please send information on Russett/Maryland City (historical pieces, stories from first responders, hometown memories, resident profiles, etc.) to russett.mdcinfo@gmail.com.

John Brady: From WWII Hero to Laurel City Council



BY KEVIN LEONARD



COURTESY OF JACK BRADY

John Brady (front row, second from left) was a decorated WWII veteran with a storied career that included flying with the legendary Bloody Hundredth bombing unit and time spent as a Nazi prisoner of war. Later, as a Laurel resident, he served three terms on the City Council.

In the Winter 2023 issue of *Voices of Laurel*, I profiled Roy Gilmore, former Chief of the Laurel Police Department. His story was unusual in that few people in Laurel knew he was a decorated hero from the Vietnam War.

A similar story has surfaced about John Brady, another Laurel war hero. The similarity in the stories is that very few people in Laurel knew about his heroics, either. The difference is that Brady served in World War II as a bomber pilot. He was captured after a crash and spent time in a POW camp, and after the war settled in Laurel where he went on to serve on the City Council.

Brady is one of the true characters portrayed in the recent miniseries *Masters*

of the Air, from producers Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. Representatives from the production company interviewed Brady's son, Jack (a 1966 Laurel High graduate), and his sister, Susan (class of 1964), for information about their father, who passed away on Dec. 31, 1999. I also interviewed Jack for this story.

Before the War

Brady grew up in Victor, NY, in the frigid upstate region, where his family owned a hardware store. Music was his passion and Brady became a professional saxophone player during high school, a talent that came in handy later during his internment as a prisoner of war. He also started dating his future wife,

Esther, in high school.

He graduated from Ithaca College in 1941 and took a job as a high school music teacher. But after only a few months on the job, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and Brady joined the thousands of young American men looking to join the military.

He wanted to fly and initially tried to enlist with the Navy, but he was rejected because of flat feet. As son Jack remembers the story, Brady was told by the Navy recruiter to try the Army Air Corps because, "The Army will take anybody."

The Army did accept him, in part because he was a college graduate, and he underwent a rigorous selection process.

Applicants were screened to determine whether they fit the profile for fighter pilots or bomber pilots. Jack told me the Army "got it right with my father. Because your crew was your family. You were responsible for nine other men on a ten-man B-17. A fighter pilot is by himself."

Brady justified the Army's faith in his responsibility before he even left for Europe. During a training exercise in April 1943, a large contingent of bombers bound for California became scattered across the country. Brady's B-17 ran out of fuel somewhere over Utah, so he landed the plane in a potato field in the middle of nowhere. As Jack recounted the story: "He's got his crew. He's responsible for getting them back to base. He goes to the bank in this little town, meets with the bank president, and says 'I need 'X' amount of money to get a bus back to our base.'" The bank paid for the bus.

WWII

Brady flew with the Eighth Air Force's 100th Bomb Group, commonly referred to as the "Bloody Hundredth," as they conducted bombing raids over Nazi-occupied Germany. In May 1943, after seven months of training, the 100th Bomb Group was sent to Thorpe Abbots Air Base in England.

Their nickname was earned right from the start. Just one month after arriving in England, the 100th flew its first combat mission, which resulted in the loss of three crews. By mid-October, 27 of the original 35 crews were lost.

The Army Air Corps' strategy for bombing Germany centered on the B-17. The Army believed the B-17 could defend itself against enemy fighters while dropping bombs on precise targets. American fighter planes protected the bombers part of the way but lacked the range to accompany the bombers to their targets and back. Left unprotected, the bombers flew in large tight formations designed to ensure safety in numbers.

Even with heavy losses and questionable results early on, the



In this April 1969 Laurel News Leader photo, the Mayor and City Council listen attentively. (From left): Ronald Davies, Henry Schlosser, John Brady, Mayor Merrill Harrison, Leo Wilson, and Robert Kluckhuhn.

Army sent more than 1,000 bombers to Germany over a seven-day period in October 1943, culminating in a bombing raid targeted for Munster, Germany.

Brady was the lead pilot for the Munster raid. But the bombers in formation encountered waves of attacks from the Luftwaffe, the German air force. In his book *Masters of the Air*, Donald L. Miller describes what happened:

Brady's lead plane was hit first. Flying in the glass-enclosed nose [of the bomber directly behind Brady's], Frank Murphy saw a horrendous fiery explosion directly underneath Brady's plane, and watched in silent horror as the wounded Fortress went into a sickening dive, trailing black smoke and fuel. ... While Brady struggled to keep his ship level so the crew would have a "platform" from which to jump, [co-pilot] Egan supervised the "abandon ship" maneuver. As he began speaking on the interphone, the plane burst into flames. ... Then Egan and Brady put the bomber on automatic pilot and scrambled back to the open bomb bay. Standing on the precariously narrow catwalk that separated the two main compartments of the bomb bay, Egan looked down at the ground and shouted, "Go ahead, Brady. I'm the senior man on board." But Brady wanted to be last; it was his ship and crew. "We prattled some more," said Egan, "when the nicest spaced holes you ever did see, a row about six inches below our feet, appeared along the entire length of the bomb bay door. They were thirty caliber punctuation marks, and I say, 'I'll see you Brady,' step out, count one, and pull the ripcord..."

By the end of the week, the Eighth had lost 148 bombers and 1,500 men either killed or captured.

Prisoner of War

Brady and other survivors of the crashed bomber fleet were taken prisoner and sent to Stalag Luft III, a prisoner of war camp for Allied airmen run by the Luftwaffe.

Brady later told Jack about being interrogated at the camp. He recalled that if a prisoner declined to answer questions, the Nazi would say, "oh, you went to Victor Elementary School from the year 'that-to-that.'" Brady told Jack, "They knew more about me than I knew about me."

During the war, Brady's future wife, Esther, volunteered with the Red Cross Motor Corps. She would meet the troop ships at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and take the injured to hospitals in an ambulance.

The POWs organized a band, called the Sagan Serenaders. Brady was first saxophone.

Stalag Luft III was the site of a mass escape through a tunnel dug by POWs, which was the basis of the 1963 film *The Great Escape*. In March 1944, 76 Allied airmen escaped. Hollywood's version contained some fiction, but, as depicted in the movie, the Germans recaptured all but three of the escapees and shot 50 of them.

The escape happened through one of three tunnels that were dug by the POWs. The camp band, the Sagan Serenaders, would play certain songs to warn other buildings when the guards were coming. And they would increase the volume to drown out the digging underground.

The POWs at Stalag Luft III were liberated in January 1945.

For his service during World War II, Brady was awarded the Silver Star, Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Three Oak Leaf Cluster.

Masters of the Air

The miniseries is based on Miller's book of the same name. Brady figures prominently in a few episodes.

Episode 1 portrays one of Brady's more harrowing—and true—moments as a bomber pilot. His B-17 gets separated from the rest of the bomber group heading to Thorpe Abbots when his navigator gets airsick and neglects his duty. Brady and his copilot descend from the clouds in England (they thought) but quickly reverse course when anti-aircraft fire greets them.

"That's France!" yells an exasperated Brady, portrayed by actor Ben Radcliffe.

The navigator recovers and sets them on the course to Thorpe Abbots, but during their descent, one of the landing gears won't deploy. Brady then orders the other landing gear to be pulled up and makes a belly crash landing on the grass next to the runway.

In an interview with *Avenue* magazine, Radcliffe said, "This story is incredible. It's unfathomable, what these men went through."

In episode 5, the Munster raid is depicted, with Brady and Egan parachuting out of the doomed B-17. It also explains why Major Egan was in the copilot's seat.

In episode 6, Egan undergoes an interrogation at the POW camp that mirrors exactly what Brady described to his son.

Move to Laurel

Just six months after being liberated and leaving the Army, Brady and Esther were married.

But before that, Brady had one more responsibility for his former crew. According to Jack, one of his father's crew died when the plane was shot down over Munster.

"Right after the war, when they got back, my father and his co-pilot got on a

train and went to Oklahoma, where the gentleman's family was from, to meet with them. That's being the captain of the crew."

Like thousands of other veterans, Brady came to Washington because that's where most of the post-war jobs were. After working for IBM for a while (his business card reads "JD Brady, Electric Writing Division"), he left to return to his roots—hardware. He was a salesman for Barber and Ross Hardware, which was located on Rhode Island Avenue.

By 1948, Brady and Esther had moved to Laurel and bought a house on the corner of Carroll and Fifth Streets. Jack recalled that, while growing up, Carroll Street was all dirt.

In 1966, Brady ran successfully for a seat on Laurel's City Council. In all of his campaigns for the City Council (he served three terms, one term as Council President), Brady never traded on his experiences and heroics during the war. Any reference to candidate Brady in the *News Leader* only mentioned (sometimes) "served in the Army Air Forces during World War two."

According to Jack, his father got into local politics because: "He was a man of service. Because that was what he did in the war. He also experienced the International Red Cross. What they did for POWs was enormously significant. My sister has a wad of Air Posts, from my mother to my father. That's how he found out that his father died."

Jack's sister Susan echoed this sentiment in a message to us while I was interviewing Jack: "He always signed up to be the vice something or the assistant something, and within a year, the number one person would retire and he got sucked in. He was head of the PTA and he was president of the Rotary Club."

Brady was also the Headquarters Chairman of the Laurel Centennial Corporation, the corporate entity created to stage the elaborate, week-long Laurel celebration in 1970, as well as a past president of the Laurel Boys & Girls Club.

During his tenure, the City Council had to grapple with some serious situations in Laurel, such as damaging floods, increased Ku Klux Klan activity in the area, the opening of the Stanley Library, and unprecedented growth of the Laurel area. Brady was instrumental in creating Laurel's Department of Parks and Rec.

The housing and roads situations that accompanied the expansive growth of



LAUREL HISTORY BOYS COLLECTION

Betting Against the Odds: Historic Laurel Park Faces Uncertain Future



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE

Sweeping changes may be on the horizon for thoroughbred racing in Maryland, and the Laurel Park Racetrack is slated to play an integral part. Short-term plans for the track seem optimistic—and even exciting—with the announcement that the Preakness Stakes will likely be moved to Laurel temporarily. But the long-term prognosis is still unclear, leading many residents to wonder if another cherished Laurel venue will soon disappear.

Laurel Park's Storied History

Laurel Park has a long and illustrious history, having contributed heavily to the success and notoriety of Maryland's thoroughbred racing. Maryland is believed to have introduced thoroughbred racing to the colonies with the 1743 establishment of the Maryland Jockey Club, the first of its kind. Most races took place at fairgrounds or makeshift tracks, until Pimlico Racetrack was opened in 1870 as the state's first formal thoroughbred racing venue.

Forty years later, three "miler" tracks opened: Laurel Park in 1911, followed by Havre de Grace in 1912, and Bowie Racecourse in 1914. That was in the heyday of horse racing, when crowds in the thousands flocked

to see legendary horses such as War Admiral, Man O'War, and Seabiscuit. Originally, Laurel Park was run by the "Laurel Four-County Fair," before a New York businessman named James Butler bought the track and began offering races regularly. Together with his general manager—famed racing promoter Colonel Matt Winn (they were credited with making the Kentucky Derby an internationally known race)—Butler put Laurel Park on the map by hosting several "match races," one-on-one contests between champion thoroughbreds that offered pots of up to \$20,000, a staggering amount at the time.

After Butler died, the Maryland Jockey Club purchased the track in 1947 with hopes of moving the Preakness Stakes from Pimlico to Laurel. But the Maryland Legislature voted against it, and the track was sold to Baltimore industrialist Morris Schapiro. His son, John, took the reins as general manager and made major upgrades in the 1950s: the name was changed to Laurel Race Course; a new clubhouse was built and the grandstand was remodeled; both the main track and the turf track were lengthened, in part to better accommodate the prestigious Washington, D.C. International. That annual race, held at Laurel from

1952 to 1995, pitted the world's best thoroughbreds against each other in a mile-and-a-half contest on turf, drawing celebrities and world leaders to the spectacle.

In the mid-1960s, the grandstand was enclosed in glass to accommodate winter racing. Air conditioning was added in 1984 when Laurel was awarded the state's summer races—the same year that the track was sold to Frank De Francis and his partners, Robert and Tommy Manfuso. Perhaps the ownership surname best known to Laurel residents of today, the De Francis era was one of modernization. Most notable was the 1985 unveiling of the \$2-million Sports Palace, lauded as a game-changer for racing and duplicated soon thereafter in many other tracks around the country. *Sports Illustrated* featured the high-tech facility in a September 1986 article, describing its computerized handicapping system, video library of past races, and a big-screen theater and four mini theaters where patrons could watch major sporting events as well as live race coverage. A few years later, the addition of inter-track betting marked another industry first for Laurel and was credited—ironically, given recent turn of events—with helping to increase support for racing at Pimlico.

Frank De Francis went on to purchase Pimlico as

(Opposite): Detail from a circa 1915 postcard showing the homestretch at Laurel Park. The historic racetrack opened in 1911, and despite significant renovations in recent years, plans to move the Preakness Stakes from Pimlico to Laurel appear to have failed—a development that could spell the end for the legendary venue.

(Right): The 147th Preakness at Pimlico in 2022.

well. He died in 1989, leaving his youngest son, Joseph, to serve as president of both Laurel and Pimlico. Under Joe's leadership, the racing facility was renamed to the original Laurel Park, and modernizations continued. Off-track betting was introduced to Maryland racing, all the tracks underwent massive improvements, and the clubhouse was given bigger screens and technology upgrades. Having surpassed Pimlico in size and yearly attendance, Laurel Park enjoyed some of its most profitable years in the mid-90s before revenues started the downward trend that continues to this day. Following several attempts to find a buyer, De Francis announced in 2002 that both Laurel and Pimlico would be sold to Canada-based Magna Entertainment, owned by Austrian-born Frank Stronach, who had been steadily buying tracks across the U.S. for several years. Determined to undo what he described as “decades of mismanagement” of U.S. tracks, Stronach's efforts to modernize, promote, and reinvigorate thoroughbred racing have not been all that successful. Magna was dissolved in 2000 and the Stronach Group rebranded in 2020 as 1/ST. The organization still owns Pimlico and Laurel Park, but now the fate of both tracks is tied to pending legislation and the outcome of talks between 1/ST and the State of Maryland.

Trouble in the Homestretch

The troubled state of Maryland's thoroughbred racing industry has been a point of discussion for years. The topic took center stage during the 2008 statewide campaign to legalize slot-machine gambling. As bettors flocked to neighboring states like Delaware, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania to try their hand at the legalized one-armed bandits co-located with horse-racing tracks, Maryland's own tracks took a major hit in attendance. Tracks in these nearby states were pouring some of the gambling profits into racing purses; higher payouts drew even more people to those venues. Arguing that the only way to keep Marylanders' gambling money in-state and to save the floundering thoroughbred industry was to legalize slot machines, lobbyists for track owners and thoroughbred farms succeeding in getting the measure on the ballot in 2008. They found an ally in newly elected governor Martin O'Malley, who had voiced support for legalized slots during his 2006 campaign and continued to cite the plan as necessary to save horse racing in Maryland. Voters responded by approving the move, with a 59-percent majority voting “yes” to legalized slots.

Unlike the stereotypical short-term life of campaign promises, the vows to direct a percentage of gambling profits to help save the state's storied horseracing industry actually have been honored. Legalized gambling has grown in the state since 2008, adding table games and online betting to the mix, resulting

in a boon for the state's coffers. Gambling revenues now mark the fourth-largest source of the state's income, behind corporate, individual, and sales taxes, respectively, according to the Maryland Comptroller's Office. In 2023, the Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Agency's annual report cited a profit of over \$1.5 billion from legalized gambling for that fiscal year, with \$92.1 million given to the thoroughbred industry.

Yet, despite the influx of funding, both Laurel and Pimlico have consistently lost money for the past decade, following a nationwide trend that has seen many tracks suffer annual losses in the tens of millions. The general public's interest in the sport has waned, as people are drawn instead to competing sports such as the NFL or NASCAR, and at-home entertainment options like video games and streaming entertainment. Gamblers no longer have to drive to a track to place bets, with many local OTB venues and even online apps that provide wager-from-home convenience.

In addition, a wave of horse deaths at tracks around the country in 2023 placed scrutiny on track conditions and brought out animal-rights protests. This included Laurel Park, where a cluster of deaths occurred in November 2021 and April 2023, leading to a temporary halt in racing for investigations. While some track improvements and maintenance changes were recommended as preventative measures, ultimately the horse deaths at Laurel, which occurred alarmingly close together, were determined to fall within the norms of the industry—Laurel and similar size tracks reportedly average 30 horse deaths a year.

All these factors have led state and local legislatures, sportscasters, columnists, the public, and even horse-racing insiders to question just how much more public money should continue to go toward what appears to be a troubled, dying industry. Debates began over the fate of both Pimlico and Laurel Park: Should plans continue to upgrade both facilities? Should Pimlico be closed and all racing moved to Laurel? Should the upgrade funding be directed toward Pimlico, which would then host all Maryland thoroughbred racing, with Laurel serving as a training facility? Or would it be more cost-effective to close Laurel and sell the land?

An Ending Still Unwritten

A 2022 in-depth report by the Maryland Stadium Authority evaluated the state of both facilities to help answer those and many other questions. The report cited the need for major repairs at Laurel Park, where some of the original 1911 buildings are still in use, horse stables are not up to standards, and staff housing is inadequate. The surrounding wetlands were deemed problematic for new construction, although a parcel of land off Brock Bridge Road was believed to be suitable for potential expansion. Citing Laurel's strong middle-class economy and centralized location between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, the report theorized that Laurel Park might be the better bet, over Pimlico, to serve as the state's premier thoroughbred racing facility.



MARYLAND GOVPICS

However, less than two years later, the opposite conclusion was reached by the newly formed Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority. In a January 2024 report to the General Assembly, the MTROA advocated a \$440-million modernization of Pimlico, to include year-round racing, a new hotel, and a 2,000-car parking garage. This plan seems to be on track, with the mid-March announcement that 1/ST would donate Pimlico to the State of Maryland and with the subsequent introduction of a bill to the Maryland General Assembly to fund the renovation project, which could begin as early as this summer. As of press time, the stated plan calls for the Preakness Stakes to be held at Pimlico, as usual, during renovations in 2024 and 2025; however, the 2026 Preakness would be shifted to Laurel Park—for just that one time, assuming the Pimlico renovations are completed on schedule.

What, then, lies ahead for Laurel Park after its time in the spotlight? The mid-March announcement gave no prognosis, and in fact it did not include Laurel on the list of sites that could potentially become training tracks, as had previously been theorized. In covering the announcement, local newspapers and TV stations almost unanimously took the angle of “Laurel Racetrack's Days are Numbered.” Stories centered on whether Laurel could still be converted to a training facility or closed altogether when the Pimlico rebuild is complete. *The Washington Post* speculated that 1/ST would “most likely sell or redevelop Laurel Park for other uses.” Of course, the proposed plan still has to be approved by the General Assembly, whose legislative session is set to end on April 8. That's just a few weeks before the running of the 149th Preakness at Pimlico.

Seemingly lost in the coverage is a “buried lede” for local residents: the fact that the Preakness will be run in Laurel in 2 years. Having such a world-renowned event right here in Laurel could spell a boon for local businesses and bring a lot of excitement to the area. And if racing at Laurel Park ultimately is shut down, at least the famous venue will have gone out with a bang by hosting one of the most important events in the Sport of Kings.

Brenda Zeigler-Riley contributed to this article.



Diane Mezzanotte holds a Journalism degree from Penn State University. She retired from the Department of Defense in 2019, following a 34-year career.



JOHN KOZLOWSKI

Laurel History Boys board members Richard Friend, Kevin Leonard, Diane Mezzanotte, Angie Kozlowski, Jeff Krulik, and Pete Lewnes presented Ruth Walls (holding award) with the inaugural Voices of Laurel Laurel Light Award for her immeasurable contributions to the Laurel community. Two more awards will be issued this year (coinciding with our Summer and Fall editions) before becoming annual.

Ruth Walls is First Laurel Light Award Recipient



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE

The *Voices of Laurel* team is pleased to announce that Ruth Walls is the first recipient of our “Laurel Light” award, created to recognize Laurel citizens (Laurelites) who make our community a better place by shining their light on it.

If you’re a Laurel resident, you probably know Ruth Walls. Or, maybe you don’t—which is the way she would prefer it. One of the people who nominated her noted that Ruth would likely be “horrified” to get public recognition; another nomination said that Ruth is “humble enough to deny that she is great.” A longtime Old Town resident and a nurse by profession, Ruth has become known as a tireless advocate for community members who

“fall through the gaps of the system” and face harsh realities such as homelessness, addiction, or food insecurity, to name just a few. Her nonprofit organization, the *Patrons for Peace Project, Inc.*, has helped numerous individuals by stepping them through the application process for social security benefits, driving them to doctors’ appointments, modifying their homes to be wheelchair-accessible, and so much more.

“Ruth is constantly on the phone assisting people,” said one nomination. Another cited her ability to find “creative, out-of-the-box solutions” for those in complicated situations and adds that Ruth is called upon frequently to help out, having become known throughout

Laurel for her commitment to the health and welfare of its residents. “She will go to any extreme to advocate for those in need within the greater Laurel community.” In the last few years, Ruth spoke several times at City Council meetings, testifying to the need for legislated rent stabilization, unionization rights for City workers, and the creation of a no-kill animal shelter to serve Laurel.

Upon learning of her selection for the award, Ruth responded: “While I am very honored to be selected for this recognition, it is important for everyone to know that this award should be shared with the many people and organizations who make my mission possible. I am

hesitant to compile a list for fear I would leave someone out accidentally, and some individuals prefer to remain anonymous. Often, there are many moving parts in situations in which *Patrons for Peace Project, Inc.* gets involved. So please know that this is not a one-woman show! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the help, support, professional opinions, referrals, discounts, and donations of time, talent, and financial assistance. Without it my mission would not be possible. You know who you are....”

Congratulations, Ruth, and thank you for serving as a true beacon of light for the Laurel community.



COMMUNITY

This Could Also Happen to Your Neighborhood

BY MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH LAUREL CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Over two decades ago, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) was enacted to shield certain societal segments from unfair bias. While commendably serving its intended function, RLUIPA has occasionally been subverted by religious institutions to justify, with impunity, unfair and, at times, illegal harassment and harm of law-abiding citizens. A notable instance occurred last year with the Giac Son Buddhist Temple in South Laurel (on Rt 197 just east of Snowden Road), when the Prince George's County Planning Board appeared to change course after the temple strongly raised RLUIPA, and rapidly approved the temple's requested exemptions and their application to greatly expand.

Initially, when this temple began nearly a decade ago, we neighbors were open and welcoming, particularly those among us with Buddhist heritage who associate Buddhism with thoughtfulness, caring, and deep respect for harmony and nature. However, the temple's subsequent conduct has proven the antithesis of these values and been a blight on our community's tranquility and environmental integrity.

Early-on, two of us neighbors approached the monk while he was illegally removing a decades-old stormwater management berm and clearing the roots from many old-growth trees the temple had illegally removed without a grading permit. Our trying to kindly explain the value of that berm and those trees in stormwater mitigation was met with hostility, with the monk physically threatening us with a pickaxe. Unsurprisingly, the temple's removal of that critical berm, as well as of their trees and forest cover, replacing with packed crushed stone to create a parking lot, directly led to massive flooding of four of us neighbors' properties and houses—with damages in excess of \$100,000.

Furthermore, for many years the temple has broadcast amplified noise—including chants, moans, karaoke, and bands—often morning to evening, and incredibly loud. Using a county-calibrated sound meter, this noise has routinely been measured at over ten thousand times the permitted sound amplitude (over 105 dB at the temple's property line, with 65 dB the maximal permissible, and each 10 dB being 10-fold higher amplitude). That hellishly loud noise has not only been extremely disturbing to our previously tranquil community but poses a severe medical threat to a special needs child in our community, inducing seizures, despite attempting to shield him from the noise with closed windows and sound-blocking devices. Other neighbors suffering from PTSD have found their symptoms exacerbated by the noise, further impacting their well-being. Yet the temple's representative responded to noise complaints



The Buddha, that for multiple years had sat on a large swath of land that the temple had illegally “appropriated” from a South Laurel Civic Association member, cleared of its previous old-growth trees, covered with gravel, and used for religious ceremonies. [This is one of many images on the temple's Facebook page.]

by saying that we neighbors should be appreciative of their broadcasting, as it is to drive out the evil that they determined lives in our neighborhood. Might he mean the members of our diverse community?

Another highly unneighborly action by the temple has been having the outflow from a large sink, which for years they have used to illegally prepare food for sale, flow directly onto the ground and into the property of one of us neighbors, where it has attracted infestations of vermin and mosquitos. Exacerbating this blight, temple personnel have emptied their cooking remnants (not only food but also cooked bones and shells) into the backyard of another neighbor—possibly explaining the mysterious death of two of her beloved dogs.

Shockingly, the temple also unilaterally “appropriated” about 8,000 square feet of that latter neighbor's property and some additional land from the former neighbor's property, cleared its old growth trees, laid gravel and pavers, erected a 15-foot-tall Buddha statue and a fence. For years, they have used that appropriated property for religious services as well as for parking. Ten months ago, the temple's official plans even publicly acknowledged this was an “incursion,” but not until eight months after that did they finally remove the Buddha statue, and still now, they have not repaired our land but instead

continue to use it as their parking lot.

Patrons of the temple also routinely walk through and litter on, even park on, our nearby properties. Other infractions by the temple include several years ago expanding their current house far in excess of what their approved building plans permitted. Regrettably, the county's extremely lackadaisical approach to enforcing their laws pertaining to the above-described matters, despite our numerous complaints over the years to 311, 911, the Department of Permitting, Inspection and Enforcement (DPIE), and the police, likely emboldened the temple's actions.

With this background of unneighborly and illegal activities, last year the temple applied to construct a large new sanctuary. In fact, their submitted plans reveal the building to be much larger than their text claims—so large that a subdivision plan would be required. Additionally, their building application shows their intent to place a large fraction of the trees they are required to plant (including to replace the many thousands of square feet of trees they illegally took down) within the berm of a requisite stormwater facility—a practice forbidden by county instructions,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

From the Office of Council Member Tom Dernoga



BY TOM DERNOGA | PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER



Council Member Tom Dernoga with Laurel residents, high school students Ms. Aisha Mbaye and Ms. Fatoumata Barry, who joined the District 1 Team for a "shadow day."

Free Tax Assistance

Are you searching for no-cost tax assistance in your vicinity? There are organizations dedicated to free tax preparation in Maryland, catering to individuals who need help with their taxes. Eligibility may be subject to income guidelines. To locate nearby agencies, dial 211 or explore the 211 Maryland resource database for free tax assistance options. Community groups, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), and the American Association of Retired Persons

AARP Tax-Aide offers free tax preparation by IRS-certified volunteers to anyone of any age, especially persons aged 50 and older or who cannot afford paid service. Tax-Aide in the Laurel Area is located at Laurel Armory, 422 Montgomery Street, on Wednesdays through April 10, 2024, from 9:30 AM through 2:00 PM, by appointment only. Call 240-473-2955 on Monday or Tuesday evenings from 6:00 PM until 9:00 PM to schedule an appointment.

For state taxes exclusively, local assistance can also be sought through the CASH Campaign of Maryland or the Comptroller of Maryland. Exercise caution and rely on reputable sources

when seeking free tax assistance, as scams are prevalent during the tax season. Feel free to go here to search for Maryland resources near you: <https://bit.ly/3T42FKU>.

Primary Election 2024

We encourage everyone to exercise their right to vote. For the 2024 Presidential Primary Election, the advanced deadline to register to vote and update your information is Tuesday, April 23, 2024. For the 2024 Primary Election, you can vote in person during early voting, on election day, or by mail-in ballot. During early voting, go to an early voting center in the county. All early voting centers are open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM from Thursday, May 2, through Thursday, May 9, including Saturday and Sunday. The list of early voting centers will be posted when available here: <https://bit.ly/3T5FBez>

Become an Election Judge

Are you 17 (or a 16-year-old who can demonstrate your willingness to serve) or older? Are you a registered voter in Maryland? Physically and mentally able to work at least a 15-hour day? Are

you willing to work outside your home precinct? Can you sit and stand for an extended period and speak, read, and write English? If you answered yes to all the questions above, then you may qualify to become an Election Judge. For the Election Judge application, please visit <https://bit.ly/3OQSuXI>.

Join our District 1 eNewsletter here:

<https://bit.ly/D1eNewsletterOptIn>. We will email you about twice a month to provide you with updates on local happenings and, on occasion, alert you to important county news.

Join our District 1 Senior Living Newsletter List

Take advantage of resources, local activities, and events for seniors. Sign up for our monthly senior email newsletter: <https://bit.ly/D1SeniorNewsletterOptIn>.

Contact Us

Please keep in touch. Email us at councildistrict1@co.pg.md.us or call 301-952-3887. Se habla español. On parle français. Follow us on Facebook, X, Threads, and Instagram: @TomDernogaD1.

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HISTORY

Howard County U.S. Colored Troops and Enlistment Bounties



BY MARK J. STOUT, Ph.D.

When South Carolina began the bombardment of federal forces at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, the greatest conflict to ever occur on U.S. soil began. By the summer of 1861, Congress authorized the recruitment of 500,000 soldiers to suppress the rebellion, which later ballooned to over 700,000. Although a considerable number, many of these men eventually deserted and went back home. Needing support personnel, Congress passed the Confiscation Act in July 1862 to allow the government to seize land and property of disloyal citizens (primarily in the Confederacy). Enslaved people—still considered property by the government—could now be utilized as cooks, wagon drivers, and general laborers for the Union army.

Shortly thereafter, Congress passed the Militia Act. This allowed the president to use both free and former enslaved blacks to serve in the military in any capacity. Fearing public opinion from the border states, including Maryland, as well as Union men who were not supportive of emancipation, the employment of Blacks in the military was limited to supporting jobs. In essence, both acts served as precursors to the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. The proclamation and executive order by Abraham Lincoln famously freed all enslaved people from the 10 states fighting for the Confederacy and opened the door for military service.

On May 22, 1863, the War Department issued General Order 143, which established the Bureau of Colored Troops (USCT). While some of these men and women continued to provide support duties, new regiments of Black men were actively recruited to serve in combat units, albeit with White officers. Heavy troop losses in the preceding years necessitated the service of Black men in these fighting units. Overall, nearly 180,000 soldiers served in the USCT. These men were often sent into the most challenging battle situations, leading to a much higher casualty rate than among the White troops.

Here in Howard County, Ellicott City (Ellicott Mills) became a hotbed for Union recruiters for the USCT. Over 60 soldiers served, with many fighting in two of the war's bloodiest battles: the Siege of Petersburg and the Battle of the Crater. While some of these men were free, there were many former enslaved men who served for the Union. To boost numbers, both the federal government and the states offered "enlistment bounties" to encourage enslavers to manumit men to serve. In Maryland, these bounties (typically \$100) were paid by the state to the owners upon freeing these men to serve in the USCT. Seeing that Maryland would likely emancipate all enslaved people once a new Constitution was ratified in the fall of 1864, several plantation owners in Howard County took advantage of the bounty.

Albert G. Warfield

Names of Slaves	No.	Age	Sex	Physique	Health	Value for Enlistment	Accepted	James M. Brown	Compensation from State
Collen Bowie	1	20	male	Healthy	Life				
Oliver Smith	2	46	female						
Henry Bond	3	30	male						
Laura Bond	4	15	female						
Samuel Hall	5	35	male						\$100

DEED OF MANUMISSION AND RELEASE OF SERVICE.

Whereas my slave Samuel Hall has enlisted in the service of the United States: now, in consideration thereof, I, Albert G. Warfield, of Howard county, State of Maryland, do hereby, in consideration of said enlistment, manumit, set free, and release the above-named Samuel Hall from all service due me; his freedom to commence from the 26th March 1864, the date of his enlistment as aforesaid in the thirty-ninth Regiment of Colored Troops in the service of the United States.

Witness my hand and seal, this twenty-second day of August, 1865.

Albert G. Warfield

WITNESS:
Ranben Warfield

In 1868, the State of Maryland directed each county to develop a list of all enslaved people prior to the state's emancipation in 1864 to potentially facilitate reparations for the enslavers (this never happened). Often called the "Slave Ledgers," these lists recorded important information about each enslaved person. One column indicated if the enslaved men enlisted in the USCT, and if the enslaver was compensated.

Above, see a section of the ledger of Albert G. Warfield, and below see the manumission document for Samuel Hall.

Albert G. Warfield freed Hall—retroactively it appears—to serve in the Union army. While the document states that Hall's freedom was granted on March 26, 1864, the date that Warfield reportedly signed was August 22, 1865. Conceivably, this was done to allow Warfield to collect compensation.



"Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship."

— Frederick Douglas

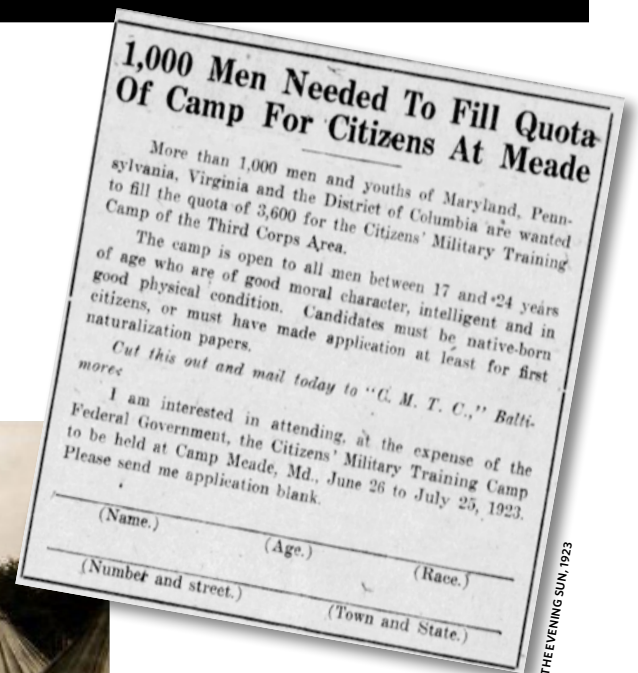
A new exhibit at the Museum of Howard County History about the USCT is now on display. It is situated next to the Confederate Memorial and highlights the fact that these enslaved men were manumitted at the courthouse just a few steps from the museum. The memorial was placed in front of the very same courthouse over 80 years after the Civil War ended and 70 years after the 14th Amendment was ratified. It was removed in 2017 by County Executive Allan Kittleman and given to the museum as a part of the Civil War display.

Mark J. Stout is the Executive Director of the Howard County Historical Society. He spent the previous 33 years in the Howard County Public School System in a variety of roles.

Readying to be Ready: Citizen's Military Training Camp



BY ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI AND KEVIN LEONARD



Post War: A Renewed Focus on Preparedness

In the first election following the World War, Warren G. Harding was elected president. Harding was an avid proponent of voluntary military training and was widely reported promoting his intention to develop a comprehensive system for training at least 100,000 men each year.

Congress had set forth a pathway for voluntary military service in the National Defense Act and amended by the Reorganization Act of 1920. The War Department would conduct twelve Citizen Military Training Camps throughout the United States beginning in the summer of 1921.

Captain George W. Hinman, Jr. wrote in his essay on the subject that President Harding's "conviction being that the first essential of a military program is to strengthen the reserve through voluntary training." Harding was promoting the training and was looking at the civilians as an addition to the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and to act as "feeders" for the skeleton reserve in the nine corps areas established under the National Defense Act.

In June of 1921, *The Washington Herald* published a White House statement from President Harding that urged young men to attend the voluntary training, saying:

"I hope every young man who can arrange it, will attend one the of citizen military training camps to be conducted this summer by way of the War Department in each of the nine army corps areas. In this way he will increase his worth to the nation and obtain individual benefits of priceless value to himself and to the community in which he lives."

In August 1921, a free summer camp for young White men between the ages of 16 and 35 selected from around the country was held at Camp Meade and eleven other military installations nationwide. The Citizens' Military Training Camp (CMTC) offered instruction in a variety of subjects and military physical training, all led by Army instructors. Attendees were supplied with uniforms and equipment, free transportation to and from the camp, and, if necessary, use of on-site medical and dental personnel.

In offering the camps, the Army hoped that the selected campers would "become sufficiently interested to affiliate with the National Guard or Organized Reserve when they return to their homes"

but "attendance at the camp involves absolutely no obligation, moral or legal, to perform any further military service," according to the *Laurel Leader*.

In that first year, Camp Meade expected 1,200 selectees from the District of Columbia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland to be a part of the first CMTC.

"CMTC camps were a month long and Camp Meade, later Fort Meade, was one of about 50 Army posts nationally that hosted a CMTC program each summer from 1921 to 1940," wrote Barbara Taylor in the book *Fort George. G. Meade, The First 100 Years*.

Delayed By WWI

The origins of the CMTC began before World War I when Army Chief of Staff

General Leonard Wood assigned three officers (including Captain Douglas MacArthur) in 1913 to come up with a plan for a volunteer summer camp. Two camp locations were offered in the first year, with the number doubling to four the next year, 1914. With war in Europe rapidly gaining steam, by 1915 "the idea of military preparedness to take on a new urgency" became a reality, according to Donald M. Kington in his book *Forgotten Summers, The Story of the Citizens' Military Training Camps, 1921-1940*.

The final camp was held in 1916. Although plans for a camp in 1917 were underway, "in April, however, the nation declared war against Germany, wiping out any possibility of summer camps for volunteer civilians," according to Kington.

CMTC Launched

The details regarding the establishment and maintenance of the training camps were being placed directly under the control of the Corps Area commanders, who were also responsible for the recruitment campaigns.

Initially, the idea was to offer a three-year program with the first year designated the “Red” year, advancing to the second “White” year, and finishing with the final “Blue” year. After completing three years of camps, attendees were qualified to become second lieutenants in the Officers’ Reserve Corps. For the inaugural 1921 year, only Red-year camps were offered.

Camp Meade, as part of the Third Corps area, drew its candidates from Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia.

The numbers of White, educated males who responded to the robust recruiting in 1921 led to a large number of candidate applications, many of which were not selected for a camp. The low acceptance rate caused bitterness and resentment among those rejected, as well as those civic leaders who helped with the recruiting effort, Kington found.

The next year, Congress gave the War Department enough money to more than double the attendance and the training site locations. As Kington observed, “The low response to recruiting in 1922 in one way seems to have been beneficial: only a few applicants were rejected, most of whom were turned down for physical or age reasons.”

In August of 1922, the camps overall received an enthusiastic endorsement from President Harding, who addressed the CMTC students of Camp Meade, along with General Pershing, and representatives of Congress, who were at the White House to greet the students following their march down Pennsylvania Avenue and around to the White House. The dignitaries also gave a flattering welcome to the students, according to the *Army and Navy Journal*.

In 1923, several changes to the overall CMTC program structure took place. Kington wrote, “The number of branches offered for training was reduced from nine to six.” Reviewing the first two years of the program resulted in “the biggest change and enhancement: the addition of a fourth year of training, adding the Basic course to the Red, White, and Blue courses.”

Army and Navy Journal highlighted railroad support of the recruiting effort in August of 1924, saying: “The great

railway co-operators have naturally contributed much to camp publicity; many printed attractive posters and not only distributed them to each railroad station but furnished application blanks to their agents.”

The War Department support and congressional funding for the CMTCs continued. Each year more applicants were accepted. Additional camps were added to keep up with demand. In March of 1927, an announcement from Major General Douglas MacArthur, U.S.A. Headquarters, Third Corps Area, Baltimore, Maryland, stated that it had become necessary to assign population quotas to the various counties, and to follow the “first come, first served” rule in appraisal of applications.

The entire quota for Prince George’s County was to be twenty-one. The announcement continued, “In past years, Camp Meade, Maryland, has been one of the largest camps for this purpose but will be supplanted [*sic*] by other military stations in the Third Corps Area.

Citizen Military Training for Blacks

As uneven enrollment in the camps continued, efforts were made to give certain jurisdictions additional time to recruit from their area before losing their slots to areas that received more qualified applicants than they could accept. However, Blacks were never part of the equation.

In fact, throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s, Black men struggled to access CMTC training. As Black historian Dr. Krewasky A. Salter, COL United States Army (Ret.) wrote in *The Story of Black Military Officers 1861–1948*:

“The two decades immediately following World War I dealt black Americans who had been, or desired to become, officers in the United States Regular Army a devastating blow. Although they were used indiscriminately on the frontlines during the main offensives in 1918, fought and led heroically for democracy and initially were welcomed home as heroes, they soon found that their services were no longer wanted.”

In May of 1935, the *Washington Tribune* reported that Major Charles Demonet, Chairman of the Procurement Committee of the CMTC for the District, denied that plans for a CMTC for “area colored boys” had been abandoned, and that he hoped sufficient interest in the training will enable opening a camp next summer. In response, the *Tribune* noted, District Board of Education member

Charles H. Houston, who had initially voiced concerns that the project had been discarded, vowed to “continue to fight for participation of Negro citizens in all phases of army life.”

In July 1936, *The Washington Times* reported that more than 200 Black youths were expected to enroll in the “colored” Citizens’ Military Training Camp set to open at Fort Howard, Maryland, the next week.

Salter wrote that, “[t]he first CMTC ‘for members of the Race’ opened at Ft. Howard, Maryland, 8 July 1936. According to Arthur Fearing, a member of that first all-black CMTC, there was a CMTC at nearby Fort Meade, Maryland, but since blacks were not allowed there, Lieutenant Colonel West A. Hamilton, of the local National Guard, pushed for and received permission from the War Department to organize a camp for blacks at Fort Howard. It was there that Fearing earned his commission in 1938.”

Despite obstacles to admission to the CMTC for Blacks, which included unpublished requirements for minimum numbers of applicants and lack of publicly available information as to how and where to apply, Salter noted that a handful of Black applicants were accepted and went to camps, but that they would be sent home upon arrival because “a mistake had been made.”

Another avenue to military training would become available to Black men. In the Third Corps Area, Ft. Howard had already opened to Black men through the Civilian Conservation Corps. In his tome, *Fighting for Hope: African American Troops of the 93rd Infantry Division in World War II and Postwar America*, History Professor Robert F. Jefferson wrote that, “when approximately 226 men between 18 and 25 years of age poured into Fort Howard, Maryland, during the spring of 1933, they received extensive training in military discipline under the watchful eyes of army officers.” According to Jefferson, they were trained for two weeks and then the “recruits marched off to reserve station camps deep in the Maryland forest.”

Once able to enroll in the CMTC camps, Black recruits were put through the “physical and mental rigors of military training.” Jefferson wrote that, “CMTC training was very popular among Black youths in the Third and Ninth Corps areas.” He said, “Most of the youths who attended the CMTC noticed the collective spirit that emanated throughout the camp.”

Beginning of the End

The CMTC almost met its end in 1934, when, according to Kington, the “lame-duck Hoover administration’s proposed budget for the 1934 fiscal year (for camps held in 1933) cut CMTC’s funding in half—down to a lean \$1 million.” This led the War Department to cut the numbers of candidates accepted to the camps. However, the Army managed to keep the program running.

Kington observed, “[t]hat the number of scheduled camps remained almost the same in both 1933 and 1934 as in past years defies explanation.” Then, likely buoyed by national and international events, the CMTC would receive \$2 million for the 1935 camps, Kington observed.

In what would be the final CMTC camps, *The Daily Mail* of Hagerstown, Maryland, reported on June 12, 1940, that “applications for CMTC enrollment in the [Third] corps area have reached 7,652—with the quota to be filled set at 4,325.” At that time, Maryland and Virginia had not filled their quota, the District of Columbia was filled, and every Pennsylvania district received more applications than they had vacancies, according to *The Daily Mail*.

Camps would open on July 5th. The posts offering camps and their numbers of recruits were: Fort George G. Meade, Md. (Infantry-Signal Corps), 3000; Fort Hoyle, Md., (Field Artillery), 700; Fort Monroe, Va., (Coast Artillery), 225; Fort Belvoir, Va., (Cavalry), 150; and Fort Howard, Md., (Negro Infantry), 250.

In an unceremonious announcement made by the War Department and reported by various newspapers in the early months of 1941, the CMTC camps would be suspended for that summer, so that the facilities and resources could be focused on the training of combatant forces.

In Kington’s extensive research that included outreach to nearly 200 former CMTC alumni, he noted that, “[as] popular and well publicized as CMTC appears to have been during its 20-year life, it still suffered a degree of obscurity and longed for a clearer identity.” And the jury still appears to be out on its overall benefit to the country. However, he noted that, “When presented with the favorable memories and strong endorsements of hundreds of men who were there, it is difficult not to join them in believing CMTC was something special.”

Hidden History in North Laurel

The Saga of Whiskey Bottom Road



BY WAYNE DAVIS



Photos from the Baltimore Sun (above) in 1955 and The Evening Sun (top right) in 1953 document the drama of Whiskey Bottom Road residents who felt strongly about the naming of their road.



climaxed several years ago when the bullet-ridden body of one-time gangster Hunter Lewis was found at the end of the road.”

The hyperbole about this terrible area, along with a petition by local resident and attorney William O. Skeels, who

insisted on renaming the road Patuxent Drive, convinced Howard County Board of County Commissioners member Charles E. Miller that the majority wanted the name change. Therefore, the last meeting of the Commissioners on November 21, 1950, after losing their re-election earlier in the month, decided that Whiskey Bottom Road must be replaced by the name Patuxent Drive.

But some residents, like Thomas A. Sulkie, didn't want the name changed and charged that the County Commissioners who were just voted out of office should not have made such a change during their lame duck session. The word “Whiskey” is of an honorable Galic origin meaning “water of life,” but the name “Patuxent” was “derived from the language of savage Indians,” said Sulkie. He also lamented he didn't understand why the name of nearby Scaggsville (listed as “Scraggsville” in the Sun) “didn't get a higher priority for a name change.”

Poetic Responses

The *Laurel News Leader* on November 23, 1950 had a front-page article titled “So-Called Whiskey Bottom Road Officially Named ‘Patuxent Drive.’” In response to this notice, the next week's edition of the *News Leader* had a lengthy and somewhat poetic front-page article written by “anonymous” titled “The Passing of Whiskey Bottom Road,” and on its third page was a poem, “Epitaph for a Name.” Mr. Sulkie, a poet and former book and poetry editor of the *New York Times*, was likely the author of both. Here is an excerpt from “Epitaph for a Name.”

*Tread softly, stranger, for here is laid
To rest a name which men held dear,
Poor Whiskey Bottom is no more!
So, for her passing, shed a tear.
For Whiskey Bottom was a name
That brave men loved to hear,
Only the politician paled
And quaked with a fearful fear.*

North Laurel has some amazing history. We will focus this time on its most famous, or infamous, road—Whiskey Bottom.

Whiskey Bottom Road has existed for over 125 years and for much of its existence it was known as Old Annapolis Road. The road currently extends just over two miles from the border of Anne Arundel County at Laurel Racetrack to just past its crossing of Stephens Road. It was shown going from Montgomery Road in Highland (current Route 108) close to Annapolis in 1794's Maryland map. This is why it is referred to in the 1878 Hopkins Atlas as “Old Annapolis Road,” and the part that became Route 216 was called Laurel Road because instead of continuing east to Anne Arundel County, it turned south to Laurel and Prince Georges County.

The path and name of the road wasn't always clear, sometimes being called All Saints or Sandy Bottom Road. A 1988 property plat confused it with Stephens Road, but this was an obvious error since Stephens, as well as Whiskey Bottom, accurately appeared on the 1961

Prescriptive Roads map for Howard County. This wasn't the only time it was confused with Stephens Road. The first mention found of the name Whiskey Bottom Road was in 1891, but was actually Stephens Road, when it was reported that Henry A. Penny, Jr. was “awarded a contract for the masonry of a bridge over Hammond's branch, on the Whiskey Bottom Road” (*Baltimore Sun*). Stephens Road connects Whiskey Bottom and Gorman Roads while crossing Hammond Branch.

Renaming the Road

In 1950, some local residents expressed their dislike for the name of the road and petitioned the county commissioners to change it to “Patuxent Drive.” Legend holds that the newly paved road got its name from a murdered bootlegger who was abandoned along its stretches” or that it was a meeting place for bootleggers that during Prohibition operated stills in the woods between the road and Hammond Branch. The *Baltimore Sun* reported that Whiskey Bottom Road's “shady past

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

HISTORY

History Crumbs



BY KEVIN LEONARD

These short bits of history tend to pile up as I do more research on various topics. Unless otherwise credited, all quotes are from the *Laurel Leader*.

1873

An ordinance was adopted that prohibited the obstruction of sidewalks by shooting marbles. Fines ranged from \$1 to \$5.

1877

A complaint was received regarding “persons or boys swimming in the Patuxent River opposite their houses in a nude condition.” The bailiff was instructed to warn them to discontinue the practice and to arrest all who disregarded the warning.

1890

After the Civil War, former slaves and freeborn Blacks began to populate the Grove, Laurel’s historic African American section of the town, which was settled amid a large grove of oak trees. Residents Frank and Sarah Carter started St. Mark’s Methodist Episcopal Church in their home on Church St. (now 8th St.) in 1890 with 28 parishioners. St. Mark’s became, and continues to be, the heart of the Black community in Laurel. When the church outgrew its home, it moved to a donated dance hall, which was placed on greased logs and pulled by horses to the church’s current location on 8th Street. It served as St. Mark’s until 1910, when major renovation increased capacity to 75. But by 1920 the congregation had swelled to overcapacity, so the building was sold. Once again, a team of horses pulled it across the street, where it became the Abraham Lodge. The new church on the site, which still stands today, was completed in 1923.

1905

In June, an advice column that briefly ran in the *Leader* published this touching exchange:

Dear Sir, Will you please inform me, through the column of your paper, how a young lady can get rid of a persistent and tiresome caller without openly telling him so. (Signed) M.G.E.

Answer—You are in a bad fix, the only suggestions that we could offer are the following—First, plead other engagements. Next is to act natural, so horribly natural that anybody but a born idiot would take the hint. That failing, try palming him off on your family. Then give away his flowers and insist upon your small brother gobbling up his chocolate creams under his very nose. Next, abuse him. Then make appointments with him and take pains not to keep them. Give his dances to someone else. Shut yourself up in your room and refuse to see him and the desired result is generally accomplished, even where all other methods have failed. If he still comes, you can either ask your father to hit him on the head with an ax or you can ask him why he doesn’t get married, so he will have some place to spend his evenings. Then he will either propose or quit. If he proposes, you can refuse him, and he is sure to come no more—at least for a while.

1918

In May, “the first military funeral in this neighborhood” was held at St. Mary’s Catholic Church for “the first of our boys in this vicinity to die in the line of duty.” The deceased was Vincent Beall of Jessup, who was burned to death at Fort Omaha when an observation balloon exploded and set a building on fire. “Arrangements were made to inter the remains at Laurel in order to give him a military funeral, which was easier, owing to the proximity of Camp Laurel.”

1926

In November, the *Leader* editorialized: “Where do we go tonight?” remarks the modern sophisticated girl when the young man comes around to call. The good old days when the girls entertained the boys by sitting in the parlor and turning over the family photograph album or playing duets on the piano are no more.



(Above): The former Keller’s/Knapp’s News Stand sits vacant in 2003, some eight years after being sold. Despite a modest exterior facelift, the building was demolished in 2006. (Below): A flyer advertising “The Laurel 100 Story” from 1970.

That was a good cheap way of paying attention, but the modern young woman demands that the young man spend something more than the evening. Which is hard on impecunious youth.

And the expense of showing attention to the girls, particularly in cities of considerable size, constantly increases. Formerly it was considered enough to take a girl to some show, but now she often expects that her hungry voids shall be filled by a late supper afterwards. But if the boys did not spend the money on these girls, they might spend it on themselves in ways not preferable.

1948

In December, a man wanted for a series of holdups led police on an hour-long chase starting in Baltimore and winding through Baltimore, Howard, and Montgomery counties before escaping on foot when his stolen car crashed near Laurel. According to the *Baltimore Sun*, more than 200 city, state, and county police were deployed in an unsuccessful manhunt after the crash. Maynard Bowman, whose farm was about a mile from the crash site, told police he saw a man walking near his chicken coops around 11:00 pm. When he asked what he was doing, the man said he was on his way home. “That made Mr. Bowman suspicious because there were no houses in the

direction in which the man was walking.” The suspect was never found.

1970

The year 1970 marked the 100th anniversary of Laurel’s incorporation as a municipality. Civic leaders, businesses, and hundreds of local citizens took part in the Laurel Centennial celebration. In an extraordinary display of community involvement, Laurel’s eight day centennial celebration kicked off with a parade, was managed by a Who’s Who of the Laurel business community, staged events in every corner of the city, raised tens of thousands of dollars



from local businesses who lined up to sign checks and be sponsors, and, most impressively, produced a massive stage play about Laurel’s history at the Laurel Race Course that included a cast of almost 400 residents.

2006

The rickety Knapp’s News Stand, a Main Street icon for decades, was demolished to make way for the Revere Bank building.

LAUREL HISTORY BOYS COLLECTION



BABE RUTH BIRTHPLACE & MUSEUM

An architectural model of Memorial Stadium, built by late Laurel resident Bruce Genter using over 1,500 pieces of balsa wood and mat board, is in the collection of the Babe Ruth Birthplace & Museum.

Combining Art and Sports in a Lifelong Passion

Laurel Resident Was a Prolific Stadium Model Maker



BY KEVIN LEONARD

Last year, while The Laurel History Boys were doing research for our book on the history of the Capital Centre, we were given a tour of the holdings in storage at Hornbake Library at the University of Maryland. On the way out, I stopped to admire an intricate, scale model of Cole Field House. It was an amazing model, with a portion of the roof cut away to see inside, which was even more detailed than the outside. Someone did a considerable amount of work to get exactly the right number of rows and seats surrounding the fabled basketball court. It was perfect in every way.

When I saw the attached small plaque with the model's information, I did a double-take:

This scratch model of Cole Field House was constructed exclusively for the Babe Ruth Birthplace and Museum in scale of

1 inch equals 30 feet by Bruce A. Genter of Laurel, Maryland in 2004.

Who is Bruce Genter? We'd never heard of him. The discovery of the Cole Field House model started a months-long search. What I found was an extraordinary craftsman, sports designer, and serious collector of Baltimore sports memorabilia. I also found out, unfortunately, that Genter had passed away in 2021, at the age of 71.

Uniform and Logo Designs

Genter designed and recreated sports uniforms and team logos:

- Before it discontinued varsity sports in 1983, the University of Baltimore used his logo design on uniforms.
- According to the *Baltimore Sun*, Genter is "responsible for the Orioles'

experiment with an all-orange uniform in the early 1970s."

- In 1994, Orioles owner Peter Angelos and a few other billionaires were competing to buy the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and move them to Baltimore to replace the Colts. The *Sun* optimistically sponsored a name-the-team contest in anticipation of the Buccaneers relocating and being re-named. Besides submitting the name "Baltimore Clippers" for the team, Genter took the additional step of designing a helmet logo. "The stylized ship logo comes from a design previously used by the city to promote the Inner Harbor," Genter told the *Sun*.
- Over the years, he submitted uniform designs for consideration for the Washington Redskins when the team was considering changing its name, and

the USA Baseball team, also known as Team USA, which plays in international competition.

- He also had a complete collection of every Orioles uniform worn by the team between 1954 and 2004. Some of the uniforms he recreated from photographs.

Stadium/Arena Models

His Cole Field House model was originally built for an exhibit at the Babe Ruth Birthplace & Museum, which is located just a couple of blocks from Camden Yards. In an interview with Mike Gibbons, the Director Emeritus & Historian of the museum, he told me that Genter was closely involved with the Babe Ruth Museum, serving on their Board of Directors and assisting with numerous exhibits.

After Gibbons gave me a tour of the museum, we gingerly navigated the very narrow, circular staircase in the house where Ruth was born in 1895 down to the basement. Gibbons showed me three other models constructed by Genter that he donated to the museum. Besides being more examples of extraordinary, accurate craftsmanship, the models were a history lesson.

The first model was Baltimore Municipal Stadium, built in 1922 for football, which stood on the same 33rd Street location before Memorial Stadium was built. All Baltimore fans remember that Memorial Stadium was horseshoe-shaped, with the open end facing away from 33rd Street. But the precursor, the Baltimore Municipal Stadium, was the opposite. Also horseshoe-shaped, the original stadium's open end faced 33rd Street. An interesting historical detail gleaned from Genter's model is that minor league baseball teams played there. That meant a very short left field fence. (The major league Orioles didn't begin play in Baltimore until 1954.) Up until 1944, the Baltimore Orioles of the International League played at Oriole Park, located at Greenmount Avenue and 29th Street. But that stadium burned down in 1944 and the minor-league Orioles moved into Baltimore Municipal Stadium.

The second model Gibbons showed me was Memorial Stadium. Genter's plaque on this model read:

This model of Memorial Stadium was hand crafted using over 1,500 individually shaped and glued pieces. The stadium model was constructed using balsa wood and mat board and required over a year to complete. All pieces were then hand painted to reflect the wonderful character of the home of the Baltimore Orioles. The scale of the model is 1 inch = 45 feet.

He even faithfully recreated the 33rd Street façade with its lettered message.

The final model was of Bugle Field, providing another history lesson. Bugle Field opened in 1910. The two primary teams to play there were from the Negro Leagues, the Baltimore Black Sox and the Baltimore Elite Giants. Bugle Field was located just across the city line on Edison Highway. In 1949 the stadium was torn down.

Genter also constructed models of other stadiums:

- His Yankee Stadium model was donated to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1986, where it sits in storage. Representatives from the Hall of Fame told me there are no plans to exhibit it.

- The Boston Sports Institute
- Camden Yards
- Frank Perdue Stadium in Salisbury, Maryland

A popular postcard sold in Baltimore gift shops in the 1990s was a photo taken by Genter of Camden Yards under construction. He took the photo from high above in one of the high rises beyond centerfield.

Personal Life

Although I was able to find these remarkable examples of his work, I didn't find much about Genter's personal life. What I really wanted to find out was how and where he learned to make these amazingly precise and accurate models.

Genter lived in Laurel from 1986 until his death in 2021. He was a "senior marketing associate at Legg Mason in Baltimore," according to the *Sun*. Gibbons, who knew him fairly well through his work with the Babe Ruth Museum, said "The museum was important to him." Gibbons described Genter as "a huge sports fan and local sports historian."

A photo of Genter from the *Sun* in 1993 showed him and a friend, Darby Waters, in Orioles jerseys at the BaseBall Gala held at Camden Yards. Waters, now Darby Moyer, was able to shed some light on Genter. They attended Towson High School and Towson University together. She remembered Genter as having a high interest in art—painting, building, and graphic design.

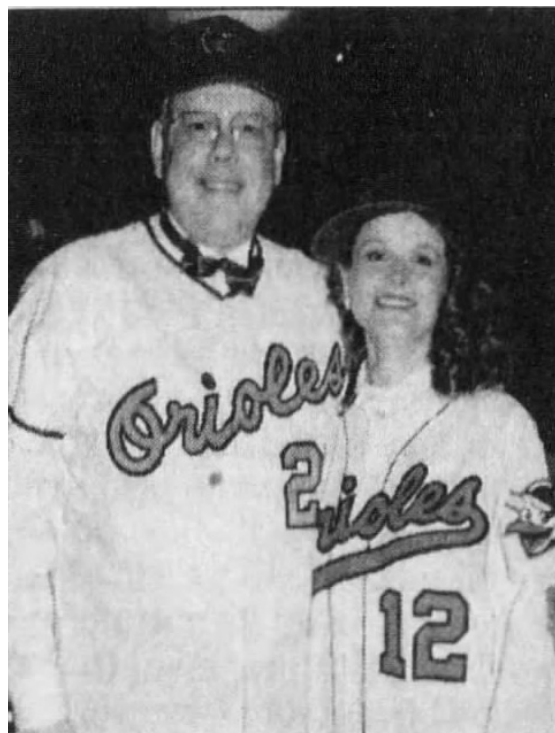
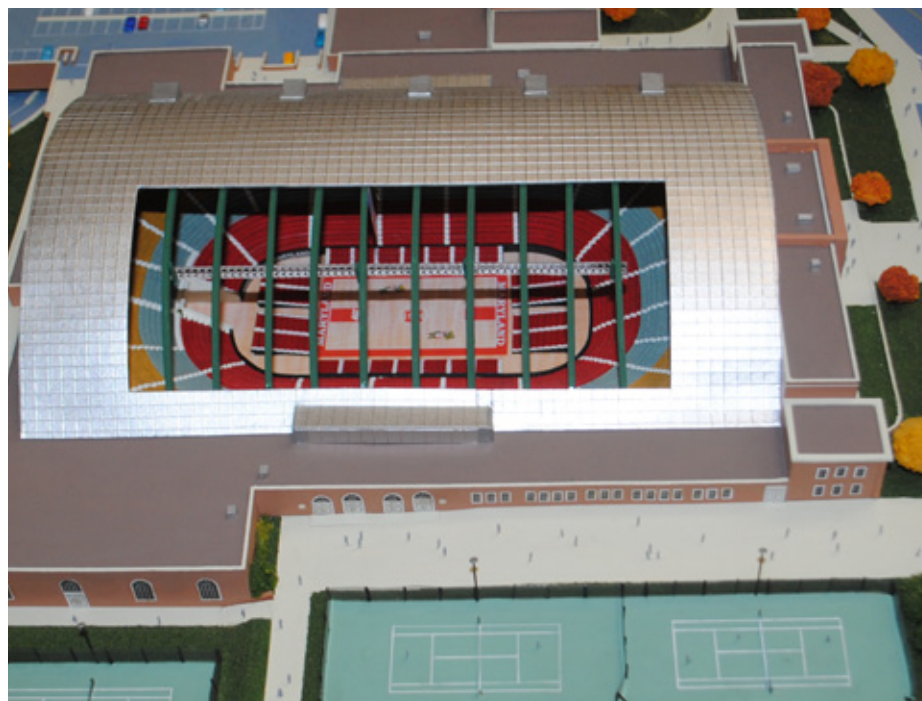
He was also a sports fanatic. During high school he started working at the Brooks Robinson Sporting Goods store and stayed for almost a decade. In Doug Wilson's biography, *Brooks: The Biography of Brooks Robinson*, Genter is quoted as saying, "Brooks Robinson was the greatest gentleman I've ever met. ... He was very down-to-earth. He understood who he was and would go out of his way to be nice. But he had no concept of the aura that surrounded him." Genter also, for a time, sold concessions at Camden Yards.

So, it's no surprise that his two passions were art and sports. He managed to combine them—quite successfully—in his various pursuits.

Kevin Leonard is a founding member of the Laurel History Boys and a two-time winner of the Maryland Delaware District of Columbia Press Association Journalism Award.



KEVIN LEONARD



(Above): Bruce Genter's meticulous architectural model of Cole Fieldhouse, now in the collection of the University of Maryland.

(Left and below): Bruce Genter and classmate Darby Waters Moyer in 1993, and Genter at one of his last high school reunions before his death in 2021.





Riding On 60-Ft Waves, Flipping a Jet Ski... All in a Day's Work



BY JIM CLASH

Jim Clash (above left) takes a ride on a jet ski with international big wave explorer and world record setter Garrett McNamara in Nazare

About an hour and a half north of Lisbon, Portugal, by bus, lies the small coastal town of Nazare. Most people have never heard of the place, but surfers know it. Nazare consistently sees the world's biggest waves, sometimes breaking at over 80 feet during the peak season from October through March.

In 2011, Garrett McNamara put Nazare on the map when he rode a 78-foot-high wave there, the photo and video of which went viral internationally. His world record stood for six years until Brazilian Rodrigo Koxa broke it, riding a wave of 80 feet. Then, in 2020, the current record of 86 feet was set by German Sebastian Steudtner.

Why are the waves so big at Nazare? A deep underwater channel feeds its north beach, Praia do Norte, with powerful swells traveling long distances from storms in the Atlantic Ocean. The topography of the bottom near the shoreline is shaped in such a way as to amplify and refract those swells, often causing them to unite, doubling or even tripling their sizes when they break.

I'm not a surfer, but water has always intrigued me. As a child, I took swimming lessons at Laurel Pool, then taught myself how to dive and perform stunts off the high board there. I didn't come out unscathed, hitting both my head and shin on the board, the second accident requiring 42 stitches. In college, I worked as a lifeguard at Laurel Pool, and as manager at the Larchdale Woods Apartments pool.

Fast-forward half a century to last year when, for *Forbes*, I interviewed McNamara about his acclaimed HBO series, *The 100 Foot Wave*. At the end of our chat, I casually asked if I met him in Nazare, would he take me out on his tow-in jet ski to ride the giant waves. McNamara said yes, surprisingly, and the rest, well, is the stuff of this story.

Mother Nature is fickle, and there is never any guarantee of good or bad weather, nor of big or small waves. In fact, Nazare saw no giant wave days, an unusual occurrence, in the October 2022–March 2023 season. That said, Brazilian surfer Marcio Freire was killed there in January 2023 in medium-sized waves, so Nazare

can be dangerous no matter what size the swells are.

To coincide with McNamara's arrival, I arrived in Nazare on October 22. The wave forecast for the following week was mostly small-to-medium, except the 27th and 28th, when giant waves were supposed to barrel in, so I had time beforehand to shed my jet lag and explore the town.

At dinner on the 26th with another well-known big wave surfer, Andrew "Cotty" Cotton (he had towed McNamara into his world record ride in 2011), and Cotton's significant other, the French pro skier Justine Blanc, it was decided that we would attempt our jet ski wave pilgrimage very early on the 28th. According to Blanc, that morning looked to have the biggest swells and the least wind.

The plan was for my photographer, Carlos Toro, to ride on Cotton's jet ski, staying close to and filming me on McNamara's. Toro and Cotton were also there in the event that our machine had mechanical problems. Theoretically, with enough time, McNamara and I could abandon our compromised jet ski, and hold onto the sled at the back of theirs.

When my alarm went off at 6 a.m. the morning of the 28th, I could hear the heavy crashes of waves from my Airbnb, almost a mile from shore. I guess the forecasters had been accurate. The primordial sound gave me goosebumps.

When we met up at 7:30 a.m., Cotton and McNamara gave me a wet suit and life jacket, then we all headed down to the harbor to gas up the jet skis. Once in the water, the rough chop on the beach south of Nazare's lighthouse was surprisingly large, eclipsing 10 feet. This is the beach where tourists usually swim. Not today, even if it was summer.

While seated just behind McNamara on the jet ski, my only other point of contact was a single strap directly in front of me. I held on tight with both hands, trying to keep my balance. The vehicle violently rocked side-to-side, and up-and-down, like a bucking

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

Father's Day Hits Different



BY RICHARD FRIEND

Father's Day hits a bit differently for those of us whose fathers have sadly passed on. My dad, Al Friend, passed away in 2018—which has somehow been six years ago already.

I think about him often, and even more so on holidays or on his birthday, of course. I find myself reflecting most on simple moments from my childhood, and am sometimes surprised at how my memories of those moments have changed through the lens of adulthood.

I think of those countless evenings in the 1980s when I was growing up at Steward Manor Apartments. My friends and I would spend every waning moment of daylight at the basketball court behind Morris Drive. None of us wore watches or had any inclination of what the actual time was—we were just supposed to get home before dark. Darkness, of course, is subjective; and let's face it—it never *really* got dark at the basketball court, what with all those lamp posts and all. If I hadn't gone home by the time those lights came on, my dad would soon appear around that corner, shouting, "Richie! Time to go!" It was never an angry shout—just a non-negotiable request that I stop playing and head home with him right at that moment.

In hindsight, it was probably something he'd experienced with his own father growing up in rural Swanton, Maryland in the 1950s, and something that countless kids experience regardless of where they grew up or which generation they're from. Admittedly, at the time, seeing him come around that corner was never a welcome sight for me. I always wanted to stay out longer. And I remember often wondering, enviously, how much longer my friends got to stay out after I'd left.

While I was aware of the other kids' situations at home, (most of them were living in single-parent households with only their moms) I never really dwelled on it while we were growing up. But I do think about that more as an adult, especially when those friends comment on it while reminiscing about our youth. Nearly every one of my closest childhood friends—friends I'm incredibly blessed to still be in touch with today—frequently recall the memory of my dad walking down to the basketball court to tell me it was time to go home. But they had a much different perspective than I did. "You have no idea how jealous we were," one of them told me, "that you had a dad who cared enough to do that." As a child, it had never occurred to me that something that had seemed almost like a punishment to me had been viewed so differently by everyone else. And it was powerful to hear and realize that.

My dad worked as a counter sales clerk at an electrical supply warehouse on Okie Street, NE in the Ivy City neighborhood of Washington, DC. It was—and still is—a very industrial part of town, but it's a lot more gentrified than it was in those days. As a young boy, I remember worrying when he was a few minutes late coming home. The heavy traffic along New York Avenue and the B/W Parkway didn't play into my thinking; my mind always went to the worse case scenarios. I'd heard the stories he'd told my mom about things that had happened there—like the time his coworker, Kenny Proctor, was robbed at the BP gas station just up the street. After taking his wallet, the man shot Kenny in the face. He survived, thankfully, but I remember begging my dad to make sure he only stopped at gas stations in Laurel from that point on.

The warehouse where he'd worked made a distinct impression on me as a youngster. I'd gone with him once on a "Take Your Kid to Work Day" assignment when I was in first or second grade, and I can still picture that entire place vividly in my mind—the long sales counter in front, the old warehouse loft in back... I even remember the unrepeatably dirty limerick I spotted on one of the bathroom walls that day.

Not long afterwards, another school project entailed drawing a picture of where you wanted to work when you grew up. Some kids drew doctors' offices, the space shuttle, and at least one drew the White House. Figuring I'd work there myself when I was old enough, I drew that warehouse. When my teacher saw it, a look of concern came over her face. She probably thought the dusty, cobwebbed nook full of cardboard boxes—dimly-lit by a single bare lightbulb—was something out of a crime scene. "Richard... What *is* this place, exactly?" she asked. When I explained, she offered the very first piece of career advice I ever received. "Well, you draw very well. I'm thinking maybe you ought to go into something more... *artistic* in nature." (I'm a graphic designer today, so she was right).

Not long after I'd started writing my Lost Laurel blog in 2012, I received a note from a reader who recognized my name. More specifically, he remembered my dad. He explained that he'd worked with my dad in DC in the early 1980s, and since he lived in Maryland City at the time, he



RICHARD FRIEND

Al Friend, the author's father, in 1985.

and my dad would frequently carpool together. He shared a memory of the dreaded inventory they had to do every year—it was long, difficult work, but it paid substantial overtime. "I remember your dad said he was going to buy you a video game with the extra money he made that year." That explains how my parents were able to buy my Atari 2600, which, at \$200 in the early 1980s, was the equivalent of about \$450 in today's dollars. It was a lot of money for their modest single income, and I'd never known that it was my dad's idea. I'm so grateful that I got to relay that story to him years before he passed, and to let him know how much it meant to me.

The company he'd worked for changed hands in the mid-1980s from DHE Electric to Eck Supply, Co., and by the end of the decade they'd started laying people off—including my dad. That turned out to be fortuitous, though, when he ended up taking a job at Dominion Electric, right here in Laurel on Cherry Lane. After decades of long commutes in gridlock traffic, he could finally get to and from work in a matter of minutes.

The old warehouse building in DC is now home to an award-winning craft distillery, and there's something uniquely special about enjoying a glass of their bourbon every now and then, knowing that it was made right there where my dad once worked. It's almost like having a drink with him, one more time. And it's a reminder that if you're lucky enough to still have parents in your life, cherish those moments. All of them.



Richard Friend is a founding member of The Laurel History Boys, and creator of LostLaurel.com.

Summertime Log Raft



BY JACK CARR

Sometimes, back then, the summer was really hot. Even the dogs, normally running, barking, and protecting our house from who knows what, were laying in the cool shade of the back porch. It was one of those hot and muggy Maryland days when the temperature is nearly 100 degrees, and the humidity is over 90 percent. A blue haze hung in the air that obscured everything in the distance except for the occasional mirage that radiated off the surface of the road creating lakes full of water.

Anyway, it was hot, and I had to find something to do, or I would inevitably be put to work doing some tedium like mowing the grass or weeding the front walk or worse yet, cleaning up my room! All the choices were bad and no telling what treachery my mother had for me to do around the house. So, I decided to go to my buddy Bob's house quickly as possible.

Going to Bob's house was just up the street, about 100 yards away at the top of the hill. I called out to my mother that I was leaving then took off out the front door; screen door slamming behind me, not a hesitation on waiting for a response. I sprinted the 100 yards to his house, bound up his porch stairs, and knocked on the door.

Bob's mother answered the door. She looked at me sweating in the heat and let me inside. "Are you okay," she asked? "You're gonna give yourself a heat stroke out there if you don't slow down." Everyone on the street knew I ran most of the time wherever I went.

Bob's mom was a very nice lady and would always ask if I wanted a drink when I visited. I was hardly a visitor, I spent most of my time at Bob's house tramping in and out.

She always had crates full of Shasta soda singletons that were strays from broken crates. She had grape, orange, cola, root beer, ginger ale, lemon-lime, and other sorts of sodas. Bob taught me how to mix sodas into what was called a "Graveyard." I never knew if it was because it was my favorite mix or if it just sounded cool, but I loved them. I mixed one and took it up to Bob's room.

Bob was lying on his bed. I sat at his desk and asked him what he wanted to do today. He said that he just wanted to melt and get it over with. His house had no air conditioning, like most at that time.

I said that I wanted to go to the creek and walk around. The creek is what we called Walker's Branch, which flowed into the Patuxent River and went God-knows-where as far as we were concerned.

Bob thought that it was a great idea and got out of bed. Before we made it to the door Bob's mom caught us and told us that she made peanut butter and jelly on toast sandwiches. Toast? PB&J on toast? She gave us a glass of milk and the sandwiches, and I took a bite. I think the toast was the best addition to a perfect sandwich that I had ever eaten. I found my new favorite sandwich that day and she always made me toasted PB&J sandwiches from then on.

After we had finished lunch, Bob and I ran out of the house slamming the screen door behind us. It was so quiet in those days. You would hear someone's door slam from anywhere up and down my street and know whose door it was. We ran out of the house and headed to the creek with Bob's mother calling out to Bob, not to get wet. Now, what was the fun in that? Going to the creek and not getting wet? Getting wet was the whole idea. Didn't she know how hot it was? She must have misunderstood what we were going to do.

Normally, the run to the creek took about five minutes but we gave up the ghost in the heat pretty quickly, and the pace became a slow drag into the woods surrounding the creek. So, we walked to the creek, sat down on our favorite rock, took off our shoes, and put our feet into the cool, refreshing water.

The water was so clear that you could see the little minnows swimming below

our feet. The rock, in contrast, was hot from being fricasseed in the sun, and there was no shade coming off a branchless old tree to protect the rock from the sun. The creek was a wonderous place; old and untouched, bordered by trees, some with roots hanging in the water and drinking up the colors of the woods. It was amazing in the fall when the leaves were changing colors to yellows, reds, and oranges; and ice would form in thin sheets along the cuts and curves of the creek bed. But today it was hot, even down in the creek's little valley, but not as hot as the top of the hill.

We didn't stay on that rock too much longer before we decided to go exploring along the creek. We would rock-hop along the creek to see how far we could go before we fell in or had to go to shore.

Bob, understandably, would be hesitant to get wet but staying dry was about as likely as not sweating in the summer sun. So, soaked, we carried on down the creek toward the Patuxent River.

The river was a different story than the creek. It could be deep or shallow, wide or narrow, and flowed fast enough to sweep you down river if you didn't keep your footing. It was more exciting and wilder than the creek could ever be.

Where the creek emptied into the river was a small delta just big enough for the two of us to stand on and not get wet. The river ran slow and smooth and was perfect for skipping stones. That little delta always had the best skipping stones on the entirety of the river. We would spend hours finding perfect stones and skipping them along the river's smooth surface.

Skipping stones inevitably leads to throwing larger stones. We would put the stones like a shotput as far out into the running water as we could and brag about how much stronger we were as the distance increased. Finally, the heat would hit us again and the water would sing its Siren's song begging us in.

Sometimes swimming would sound so good that one of us would just jump in. You know what I found out? A pocket watch isn't waterproof; at least mine wasn't. It looked like a full fish tank through the crystal front and would never work again. I knew I would end up at Keller's News Stand to buy another for \$2.50. Nonetheless, we were in the water now and there was only one direction to go: upriver.

The dam was a couple of miles upriver. The dam (officially the Howard Duckett Dam) was maintained by the water agency, and they didn't like young boys poking around the base of their dam, but there we were.

It was huge. I have no idea how much water it held back, but it was a lot. It looked ominous when we stood at the base of it. The cool thing about the dam was that sometimes the dam releases water out of a two-foot pipe, shoots across the base of the behemoth, hits a concrete wall on the opposite side of the river, and sprays up into the air from 50 to 100 feet, causing the most beautiful rainbows imaginable. It was truly a magic place for us.

But today we were on the hunt. We were looking for a fallen tree. Not just any old fallen tree but one that was older than the age of the forest itself, and along the river. It couldn't be rotten or falling apart, or be too far up the bank to be rolled down into the water. You see, the trees would normally be about 1½ to 2 feet in diameter and any number of yards long, and were heavy having to be coaxed around the other trees as it rolled down the steep bank. We would use levers (saplings that had been cut for this job) to keep the log moving and circumnavigate obstacles. We would inevitably get the log launched and afloat.

The goal of this endeavor was to get the log into the river to use it as a raft and ride it to town around Laurel's Main Street. The end of Ninth Street actually, at the swimming pool to be exact. None of that truly mattered to us, really; we just wanted an adventure and were going to make it happen.

Launching a log into a rocky river isn't as easy as it seems. It was a job for applied physics and the use of leverage. The sapling poles worked great for this and then after the heavy work is done the levers turned into paddles for guiding the log raft through the rapids and the shallows. The launch is a very delicate matter. One false move while mounting the log, and you were swimming after it instead of riding it. We got the log into the water with a splash and pulled it close to the bank so it could receive its passengers: us.

We climbed aboard the newly launched vessel, pushed away from the shore, and off we went. The river ran slow during the first part of the journey. But we were moving, and the cool water felt so good while we rinsed our arms to get off the dirt and debris that clung to us from the launching ordeal.

We were just moseying along the river. The river was a peaceful place, we almost never saw another person along the bank, much less on a log in the river. There were deer, squirrels, foxes, rabbits, and birds to see along the banks. The quiet rippling of the water was hypnotizing as we floated down the river.

All good things must come to an end and the work was about to kick in. A shallow straight in the water, only ankle deep but wide, that was coming up. As you can imagine, a log raft drafts a bit too much in shallow water for holding onto the log with your legs, much like riding bareback on a horse. And most of the time horses aren't trying to roll over on you. As you can guess, the shallow water doesn't give enough room to stay on the log without crushing your leg, as proven by prior experiences. We slid off and walked behind the log raft as it came to rest on the sluice-box rock striations in the riverbed.

The levers helped the process move along, but not so much. Necessity is the mother of invention and we got smarter as we conquered the river tasks: we turned the log sideways and let hydraulics roll it down river. As simple as that. NO. Never—I said never—get in front of the log while it is rolling in the river! It will squash you like dough under a rolling pin. It's very funny to see happen, but very dangerous and we knew it. But God protects fools and children, and luckily nothing bad happened when we found that out.

We walked upstream of the log, stumbling along the jagged rocky bottom until the log was afloat again. A little spurring and cussing would get it going again and off we went guiding the log straight down the river and not sideways anymore.

The next leg of the trip was a little trickier than the first part. There were giant boulders to avoid in the fast-moving water. We were old hands at this part of the journey and would only rub against the boulders without turning ourselves over and swimming for a bit. We guided the log raft through the boulders with the poles and nifty footwork. It was great fun and took a bit of teamwork in the faster current.

Further on, the river never slowed and became narrower and faster. It was so fast in places that if you fell into the water, which was only waist deep, you had to swim hard to get to your feet or you would just have to go with the flow until it slowed a bit, which was fun too.

The quiet serenity of the start of our trek wasn't there anymore and the roar of rapids let us know that the "fun" was about to begin.

The rapids were only about 150 yards long and the water swelled then eddied around the boulders so much that it didn't leave a straight path for a long log raft to go, and we were quickly approaching them. Luckily, we weren't going backwards as we had done in the past.

The thing that was most exciting about this part of the ride wasn't the speed or the whoopsie woos, it was the danger. The amount of adventure is directly proportional to the danger there is to your person, and this was not safe by any means.

So, we ventured on toward imminent doom if you played your hand wrong. As I was saying before, if you fell off, you weren't getting back on and you weren't going to get to your feet this time, meaning you had to swim faster than the log so you wouldn't get smooshed between a rock and the log. So, we were in a tough spot once we entered the rapids.

As we entered the slot, the log immediately thumped against the first boulder, which was unavoidable because of how we had to navigate the log through. Bob cursed and almost fell off the back of the log, which would have left me alone on the front. The person in the front pulls the log along with the pole and the person in the back guides the log through, much like canoeing. Losing Bob would have left me in an unguidable dilemma.

Safety is important and technique is crucial. While in the rapids you keep from

straddling the log, for pushing and pulling with your legs on the surface of the water is vital to avoid getting your leg caught between a rock and the log's crushing potential. Yep, as it turns out a friend of mine came with us on a log raft and never quite got the hang of river log raft etiquette. We told him to keep his legs up in the rapids, but he must have missed that point. It only cost him a nifty bruise, eight stitches, and a rock imbedded in his leg that the hospital had to pull out. That must have hurt, but kids don't notice these kinds of details when they are not the ones crying. Besides it was cool!

Meantime in the rapids, the log is bumping and grinding against the boulders and is nearly unguidable. When in the clutches of the rapids the log jammed, stuck in place, panic can set in quickly if you don't figure out a solution for this type of event tout de suite. The water rises on the upstream side of the log and eddies form on the downstream side, which throws off your balance. Much less, the sudden jerk of the stop sends you lurching forward. I've always imagined that the bumping and jerking and spinning and swaying of the log must be like riding a rodeo bull, but I don't know.

So, there we were, jammed up in the rapids. The log raft was a little longer than it should have been and couldn't make the slide between three rocks. We were pushing for all our worth. The log had enough water pushing from behind it to move it over the boulders. The tricky part lay before us and that was not as exciting...it was scary.

In the direct path of the log was a small waterfall only about four feet wide and with two giant boulders on each side. Getting through this obstacle is like threading a giant needle. The falls were only about three or four feet high, but it might as well be Niagara Falls for us. Our log would surely pass halfway through and teeter-totter as it exited. We were goners this time! I was sure of it. We hit those falls and the log stopped between those boulders with such ferocity that it threw me like a diver from a diving-board straight into the river, head-first. Bob was left alone on the back of the log as it turned counterclockwise in the clutches of the falls. As luck would have it, Bob rode that log like a champion PBA rodeo rider right through the falls and to a personal favorite adventure story that lives on to this day.

After the falls there is really nothing to see as far as woods and nature go, just the backside of Main Street and slow running water that passes over old spillways for mills that used to make textiles and shoes for Civil War soldiers. I didn't have much interest in all of that "old" stuff since I was so young and saw it every day. We passed it by without a single thought. We abandoned our high adventure at the bottom of 9th Street at nearly dusk and set off for the safety of our own living rooms and television sets.

Bob was worried about the trouble he would get in when he got home and was wet. He would blame it on me no doubt and that was okay.

It took some time to get back to our street. The cool of a summer evening was setting in, making our wet clothes feel chilly while they chafed us as we walked. Neither of us complained though, not a word. We didn't say much on the way home anyway, each contemplating the day's adventure.

I stepped onto the flagstone walk that led to my porch. We smiled at each other and gave a friendly wave. I reached into my pocket to pull out my watch. The hands hadn't moved a second from when I jumped into the river. It struck me, as I looked at the watch, how time passes even without the permission of a watch. How miniscule hands on a pocket watch don't really matter to a summertime log raft one hot summer day.

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Jack Carr was born and raised in Laurel. He graduated from Goddard College in 2009 and has since been published as a short story writer and a poet in Crosstimbers, The Pitkin Review, and Open Minds Quarterly. He taught at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and San Antonio College. He lives in San Antonio, TX with his wife and four children.

Laurel Noir is a series focused on historic crimes and the darker underside of our hometown.



The Weight of Murder

1989



BY RICHARD FRIEND

Every so often—and especially in a small town like Laurel—someone mentions a name from the past that rings a bell. Maybe it’s someone you vaguely knew, or hadn’t thought about in ages. A few weeks ago, I saw the name “Phillip Clements” in the *Washington Post*, and had a flashback.

That name had also rang a bell way back in January 1989, when I was in my junior year at Meade Senior High. Friends had asked if I’d heard about Clements in the news. He was a former classmate who’d recently dropped out of Laurel High. When we were both freshmen at Laurel, I had several classes with him. In fact, he’d been assigned the seat beside me in Mr. Flynn’s geography class one semester. While I can’t say that we were friends, I remembered Clements being a friendly enough guy, and certainly not someone capable of doing what they said he’d done that day 35 years ago. And what they said he’d done was as horrific as anything you could imagine—he’d murdered three people and seriously injured two others in Laurel, bludgeoning an entire family with a barbell in order to steal \$300 to feed a crack cocaine habit.

It happened in apartment 813, a ground floor unit at 13903 Briarwood Drive in the Fox Rest complex. The

apartment was the bustling home of Kathryn Gatlin, a 64-year-old grandmother. Two of her six adult children—45-year-old John Barowski and Nancy Barowski, 41, also resided there, along with Nancy’s 14-year-old son, Donald Hughes. Neighbors said there was always a steady stream of friends and family coming and going from the Gatlin home. One of them, occasionally, was Clements himself. He had actually even lived with them from time to time while previously dating Gatlin’s granddaughter, Angie.

Nancy was living with her mother temporarily while she raised her young son, and John was developmentally disabled. He had a custodial job at the nearby 7-Eleven. By all accounts, Kathryn Gatlin was the type of person who “wouldn’t hesitate to take somebody in,” according to *The Washington Post*. Which is what she did when Clements was having trouble at home with his own family—an increasingly common occurrence as his drug addiction grew. At 13, Clements had gone to live with his father, who was “largely absent” according to defense attorney Chandler Towns. He was already heavily into alcohol and marijuana, and by the time he’d dropped out of school in 10th grade, the 17-year-old was addicted to crack cocaine.

Clements had spent Friday night, January 20, 1989

getting high on crack, PCP, and other illicit drugs. That Saturday morning, January 21st, he went to the Gatlin apartment hoping to get money for more drugs, one way or another. Police reports stated that he knew there would be cash on hand because the family typically did their grocery shopping over the weekend. Gatlin was home that morning, along with John, Nancy, Donald, and another of Gatlin’s daughters, 36-year-old Toni Adams. Clements, allegedly still intoxicated from the previous night, initially asked Gatlin for money before there were any signs of violence. She made breakfast for Clements, but refused to give him any money.

Clements soon followed Mrs. Gatlin to the back room, where, moments later, Adams heard her mother crying out, “Somebody help me.” Adams then witnessed a horrific scene—Clements had begun bludgeoning everyone, savagely beating the family members in the head with a heavy barbell pole. Only Adams and her nephew survived, despite both being critically injured in the attack. The young boy would later describe in court how he’d been playing a video game when he too heard screams. Moments later, Clements was upon him. “He moved my hands out of the way so he could beat me some more.”

(Opposite): Phillip Clements' freshman photo from the 1987 Laurel High School Rambler yearbook. Increasingly addicted to drugs and alcohol, Clements would drop out during his sophomore year. On January 21, 1989, he viciously bludgeoned a family of five—killing three—at Fox Rest Apartments with a barbell pole in an effort to steal money to buy crack cocaine. He's likely to be released from prison by 2029.

Chillingly, Clements never said a word over the course of the vicious attack. With the entire family incapacitated, he proceeded to steal cash from Gatlin's bedroom and from the women's purses before fleeing in Adams' car. He then drove to purchase the crack cocaine.

Less than three hours later, Clements would be arrested at his father's house on Holly Street in the Oakcrest neighborhood—a house that no longer stands. The reality of what he'd done had apparently begun to set in, and Clements himself called Prince George's County Police. A recorded conversation with the dispatcher reveals that Clements thought he had “killed five people.” On the tape, he can be heard admitting that he was addicted to crack and was considering killing himself. “I don't know what happened,” he said. “I just did it. I just killed them.”

Police responding to the Fox Rest apartment had to break the door down to enter the crime scene. There they discovered the bodies of John and Nancy, already dead. Mrs. Gatlin was still alive, but succumbed to her injuries nearly two weeks later. Toni and Donald were transported to Prince George's Hospital Center where they faced a long, difficult recovery.

Clements, charged with three counts of first-degree murder and two counts of attempted murder, opted to be tried by a judge rather than a jury. After a three-day trial, it took judge Robert Woods all of 15 minutes to find him guilty. Woods, almost at a loss for words, spoke to Clements. “As I was going over the testimony and through the evidence in trying to reach a decision, I wanted to be able to say something. But the enormity of the crimes themselves silences me. The only thing I can say is if there ever was an example of what drugs can do to the youth of our country—or to anyone—this is an example.” On September 11th, Clements was sentenced to the maximum five consecutive life terms in prison.

Three Decades Later, Early Release Looms

In 2019, Clements had his sentence reduced to 65 years after the Supreme Court ruled that his original punishment of life for crimes committed as a juvenile was illegal. In 2023, the now 52-year-old Clements requested a hearing for reconsideration of that sentence, as well, in hopes of achieving an even earlier release. Both his public defender and prosecutors supported resentencing him to time served with supervised probation, based on good behavior and his age at the time of the murders. Prince George's County Circuit Court Judge Cathy Serrette wasn't willing to go quite that far, and instead ordered his sentence reduced to 55 years.

Based on Maryland law, Clements, who has now served 35 years in prison, could actually be released by 2029 with continued good behavior. Family members of the victims were understandably upset at the prospect of Clements ever walking free again. Donald Hughes was among those present at the hearing, and recalled the horrific attack he experienced as a child from someone he'd once considered a friend. “This guy had no mercy on me or my family after we had mercy on him.”

Clements has been sober for more than two decades,

has had no violent infractions, and received his high school diploma—all of which likely seemed impossible to him while he was growing up in Laurel. He has been seen by a clinical psychologist who deemed him a low risk to public safety.

A joint recommendation from prosecutors and defense counsel to have Clements be released to a notable reentry program in North Carolina—one which would have helped him secure employment and have access to long-term support—was denied by North Carolina officials, who refused to accept Clements on probation because he has no family members in that state. An alternative supervised reentry plan offered in Maryland, which includes mental health and substance abuse treatment services, will instead be a requirement for at least a year upon his release.

In addition to supervised probation for five years, Clements will not be allowed to have any contact with the victims' family. He'll also have to pay nearly \$15,000 in restitution—for the three funerals, gravestones, and burial sites of the victims. Any violation of those terms, or any new crimes he may commit, could instantly reinstate the life portion of his original sentence.

Clements had written to Judge Serrette, noting that he has taken advantage of every program to improve himself available while he's been in prison. “My biggest fear is that I get out much older and everyone has passed away,” he wrote. Of the family he once had, only his mother is still alive. Saying “It's a very daunting reality,” he wrote that she is “all I have left in this world.”

At his resentencing hearing last November, Clements turned to face the victims' family in court—family members whose emotional and psychological pain is still fresh today. Victims whose bodies still bear the scars from the vicious barbell attack. They undoubtedly still see in Clements the 17-year-old who so profoundly altered their lives—the boy responsible for the closed-casket funerals of three of their innocent loved ones. They remain united in protesting any early release. Mrs. Gatlin's granddaughter whom Clements had dated was there, too. She asked the judge to keep the man who “destroyed” her family from ever being released. “We're not the same group of people and we never will be,” she said.

Looking at them, Clements apologized and said, “No words can atone for what happened.” He spoke of the guilt and shame he lives with, but insisted that he has found worth in his life throughout his time in prison, vowing to never stop “trying for redemption.”

Preparing to write this column, I briefly considered writing to or visiting Phillip Clements in person at the Maryland Correctional Institution in Hagerstown. Not that he would even remember me, I would be interested to interview him and hear his perspective. I thought better of it after reading the words he closed with in his apology to the family that day. “Hopefully after today you'll never see me or hear my name again.”

==

Richard Friend is a founding member of *The Laurel History Boys*, and creator of *LostLaurel.com*.



The apartment building and unit today show no indication of the horror that took place before Clements exited that tragic morning. From here, he commandeered one of the victims' cars, purchased crack cocaine with the stolen money, and then reported what he'd done to Prince George's County Police.



“We had a guy...”

Tales From the Laurel Police Department



BY RICK MCGILL

This continuing series is an uncomplicated string of personal war stories from my time at a small municipal police department between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., told without a lot of extravagant details; just the facts, ma'am. Other cops will appreciate the bare-bones setups of my individual anecdotes. But I do try to explain some of the procedures for the general public who has little understanding of why we do some of the things we do.

The men and women I worked with are the finest you will find in any police agency anywhere. Some have since retired or moved on to other agencies, and some are still there fighting the good fight. Hopefully, this bit of sucking up will make up for any inconsistencies in my memory of the events in which some of these great guys made an appearance. They will no doubt recognize their own first names and possibly the fictitious names of some of our less-than-law-abiding customers.

So grab yourself a cup of java or crack open a beer and get comfortable. You're in a room full of cops talking shop. And the attitudes, sometimes smart-ass, sometimes despairing, that go with it. In our town, on my shift, this was policing in the last decades of the 20th century.

Radar. Gotta love it. (Sound familiar? Yes. But this is a different one.)

Sgt. Phil Pollack was my radar instructor when I learned the intricacies of Doppler radar and the joys of traffic statistics. You see, we don't have a quota of tickets to write every month. That is a misconception of the speeding public who find themselves in the unenviable position at the side of road while I try to explain how I know with scientific certainty exactly how fast they were driving.

When I was a slick-sleeve (meaning not yet a PFC) we were all getting certified as radar operators in order to encourage people to obey the speed limit through positive reinforcement. Our very presence along the roadside with a radar lowered drivers' average speed and therefore reduced the number of traffic accidents: the true purpose of radar's existence. Generation of State revenue was only a bonus.

Sgt. Pollack told us, “A radar operator is never cold nor wet. Nor hungry or thirsty.” Meaning, “Don't be dumb and run radar in the rain and snow. There are plenty of nice-weather days to get your stats.” Oh, it also means, “Run radar across from the 7-11 at 7th and Gorman because they'll give you free Slurpees.” Okay, that last part I have no idea if it's true.

But in order to maintain proficiency in the technical operation of the instrument we had to document a certain number of hours per month that we worked radar and reduced traffic accidents and produced State revenue. You may recall from previous articles, police work is most enjoyable when it's a team effort. Besides, it's easier and safer when backup is right there. So on days that didn't start off busy, and, say, the morning was dragging on, someone would come over the radio and tell the squad he or she would be setting up at such-and-such a location if anyone wanted some tickets.

A note about traffic tickets. Like I said, we don't have a quota. But the lieutenant will let you know if you're not writing enough. He's heard it all before:

“So how many do you want, LT? Just give me a number.”

The LT isn't falling for that number crap. It's a lure to bring no end of citizen complaints when the officer tells everyone he stops to complain to the lieutenant “cuz he told me I have to write X number this month.”

“Don't give me that ‘number’ crap, McGill. I'm just telling you Division wants to see more stats. Capisce?”

Now when it comes to radar tickets, everyone likes to write for someone else. In other words, PFC Ed or PFC Don writes for me when I work radar because I'm the “charging officer” on the ticket and I'm the one who testifies in court. The officer who wrote the ticket doesn't have to appear in court but he gets the stat for the ticket. Nobody likes going to court, except maybe for the overtime. But everybody likes good ticket stats. *Capisce?*

So, it's a quiet day and someone will pull their cruiser up on the grass across from the 7-11 at 7th & Gorman (is that even still there?) or along Cherry Lane somewhere. We all had our favorites. You raise your trunk lid so oncoming traffic can't see your light bar. Hang the radar on its bracket outside the car window or use the laser radar handheld. Everyone sets their ticket books and Slurpees out on the car hood and we're in business.

Radar operator calls out to whoever is next at bat, “56 in a 30. Red compact, lane 1.” Our guy steps out and flags down the latest catch and does his thing. As long as you have guys in the bull pen you can rake them in all day long. Sgt. Phil should have added, “A radar operator never gets writer's cramp.”

Where I live now, the deputies just don't do stationary radar. Maybe because our almost only paved road has a speed limit of 70 MPH and I can't convince them to step out in front of a car breaking that one.

I just saw a shoplifting video on the news tonight where people were running out of a store carrying armloads of clothing on hangers. We had a few calls like that at the big stores like TJ Maxx or The Hecht Co. Of course, they were long gone by the time we arrived, but we would suggest to the complainants at the store that if they turn alternating hangers backwards on the clothing racks it would slow the culprits down and maybe we'd have a chance at catching them. They always thought that was a great idea. I don't recall they ever did it, though.

Then again, nowadays it doesn't seem like society wants them to get caught. Don't get me started. So I guess the suggestion never caught on. But I'd watch pay-per-view to see that shoplifting video.

Parking tickets are the garnish to well-rounded patrol activity. Like I've said before, some guys don't care much for traffic enforcement, which I suppose includes parking tickets, but they do it to show they've had a productive night. The bosses like to know you're out there snooping everywhere on midnight shift and parking tickets are a great way to do just that. Easy stats.

Early on, the fines were \$5.00 for almost all parking violations and I assume most of them got paid without too much complaint. Come home late and there's no place to park, “ya takes your chances and ya pays ya tickets.” The person still had the right to take the case to court and play Perry Mason for a \$5 ticket but

generally the tickets produced revenue for the city—unlike traffic tickets where the fines go directly to the state of Maryland.

But then the powers that be decided to try and fatten up that revenue stream and they raised the fines. Oh, I get it, times change. Prices go up on everything. But statistically I believe the amount of tickets that got paid probably went down as people were less inclined to part with \$50, or even \$250 for parking in a handicap space. And more people were willing to go to court to dispute the high fines, which meant the city was paying court overtime for the officer to appear in court, which offset most of the fine IF the person lost his case and had to pay. But it was a citizen's right to dispute the charge.

I had a guy in court on a parking ticket I wrote on Arbory Way. When his case was called, he insisted I had no jurisdiction to write tickets there because according to him it was in Howard County. Judge Francis Borelli turned to me and said he was pretty sure I knew my town and I said, "Yes, sir, Your Honor, Arbory is in Laurel, well within Prince George's County."

The judge turned back to the defendant and asked him if he would like to change his plea, to which he replied he did not, and he again insisted he lived in Howard County and paid Howard County taxes on his townhouse on Arbory Way.

The judge and I were both smiling by this point and Borelli said, "Okay, sir. I'm going to continue this case and you'll get another notice to appear. At that time, you will bring me your tax bill from Howard County showing your address on Arbory Way. If you do, I'll dismiss this ticket. If you fail to bring such documentation, I will find you guilty and you can pay your fine." I never got summoned for the return case, but he probably had an "aha moment" when checked his tax records.

Sounds perfectly fair. That's why they call them Judges.

A police cruiser is a "Mobile Observation Platform" capable of sustaining human life in harsh environments in all temperatures and all weathers. As such, we take great pride in the professional appearance of our assigned vehicle. Most of us, I had to hitch a ride with one of our guys to pick up my car at the city lot after some repairs and the floor of his front passenger seat was so full of trash there was nowhere to put my feet. Not trash—garbage: apple cores, banana peels, food wrappers, report drafts. Maybe that was just a bad day. But that's one end of the scale.

At the other end were cars that were always spotless and ready for a parade. I was somewhere in the middle. Keeping trash at a minimum was easy. But a white car is tough to keep clean. The city had a contract with Laurel Car Wash at the shopping center and you could keep your car pretty clean, as many times a day as necessary, including the interior. But on the midnight shift or when the car wash was closed, we had a hose at the station that could get most of the mud and winter salt off.

White cars are also notorious for showing every ding and paint chip. If you don't cover them, they start to rust and then they *really* stand out. Luckily, the city also had a contract for White-Out and since we almost never made mistakes in our paperwork requiring correction fluid, there was a ready supply of white touch-up paint in the squad room. Of course, it wasn't an exact match, but it was close enough and it kept the rust at bay. Those of us with older cars, my 1983 Caprice included, did the best we could but up close the car had a unique texture to the finish.

When I was finally issued a new car, the Chevy Lumina, I had a clean slate to begin again. I even kept it waxed. I'd park at the back of Ivy Hill Cemetery and do a door. Go back on patrol for a while, come back and do another door. Do the trunk. The hood. And so on.

It's not all fun and games and chasin' bad guys. There's always time for some MOP maintenance.

The makeup of the department has changed a lot over the years. From the original town constable—one guy responsible for all maybe twenty square blocks to our current mechanized/computerized high-efficiency guardians of peace and justice. Okay, that last part sounds a little full of ourselves, but there are times...

MY department, however, stopped somewhat short of "computerized," though what I wouldn't have given for a computer terminal in my cruiser. Roll through an apartment complex on midnights, run every license plate and dream of how many stolen cars or tags I'd recover, or unregistered vehicles with improper tags, or warrants on people at a new address. The possibilities are endless. And I'm sure the young bucks of today are doing exactly that. And more.

But back to the makeup of the department. When I started in the late 70s we had three patrol areas, Beats 1, 2, and 3. A normal uniform patrol squad was two or three officers plus a supervisor who was a corporal. There were only two sergeants, and one was in charge of the detective bureau. A lieutenant reined herd and reported to the chief, Robert M. Kaiser.

As we grew there were more officers on the line and a lieutenant ran the patrol division. Another lieutenant commanded the Criminal Investigations Division. Patrol squads were still under the supervision of corporals for a time, until the city could be convinced the work and responsibility was worth a sergeant's pay. Somewhere in there they also realized there should be a captain above the lieutenants to act as deputy chief. Hell, they probably have majors and colonels and field marshals by now.

By this time, we had four patrol areas meaning there were usually four beat officers plus a corporal and a sergeant on each of five squads. There were three K-9 officers who worked a different schedule but were under the command of the shift sergeant. The squads were named for their radio calls or vice-versa, Adam, Baker, Charlie, David, and Edward. Each beat officer's radio call was his squad letter followed by his assigned beat. Adam-1 was the Beat 1 guy and so on.

Each squad had its own identity, which is not to say they weren't all excellent at what they did but sometimes a squad would have, say, guys who were more interested in traffic statistics than criminal cases, or just the opposite. Neither one is a bad thing. And no one outside the "family" would even notice because we all did the job 100%. But internally you could see the stats and hear the banter. The guys would do what was asked but some just enjoyed one more than the other.

Identity. I don't recall the other squads' having mottos or monikers, but my Squad E called themselves the "Screamin' E-Men." PFC Laurie came up with that one, I believe. PCS Tom even made coffee cups emblazoned with the department patch on one side and personalized with our names and "Screamin E-Men" on the other side. I still have mine. When he first heard it, PFC Don said he was really glad we weren't C squad.

It's been 23 years, so I suspect things have changed. More officers, surely. More beats, probably. They may no longer even stand roll call anymore at the start of a shift—maybe they do it by Zoom. But I don't want to know what it's like now. That was the makeup when was in. And it's the makeup of the department I'll always remember. The one I wake up to in the middle of the night dreaming I'm about to start roll call or reaching for the microphone in my cruiser to take a call.

Not every police report ends with the initial description of the basic events. When there's a probability of additional supplementary reports the typical closing line of the report narrative is, "Investigation to continue." I hope these anecdotes haven't offended too many readers of this venture from The Laurel History Boys. And hopefully there will be more to come. Thanks for your time.

Investigation to continue...

Rick McGill grew up in Laurel and worked at the Laurel Police Department from 1977 to 2001. He authored two history books: Brass Buttons & Gun Leather, A History of the Laurel Police Department (soon to be in its 4th printing), and History of the North Tract, An Anne Arundel Time Capsule. In 2001 he retired to Montana and worked as a military security contractor for Blackwater Worldwide making 12 deployments to Iraq and Pakistan from 2004 to 2010. He is now a Reserve Deputy Sheriff in Montana.

Car Shows




BY PETE LEWNES

With spring here and summer soon upon us, now is the time to uncover that classic car, hot rod, or motorcycle and enjoy the weather cruising. The year was 1965 when the late John R. Syme had a vision and formed the Laurel Lions Club Auto Show and swap meet. With about 200 antique automobiles and vendors, the two-day weekend event was held on the grounds at Laurel Race Course. Through the years, the event moved to various locations within the city, including McCullough Field, Laurel Shopping Center, Laurel Lakes, and the Municipal Center at City Hall. Sadly, with very little attendance, monies, participants, and sponsor support, it came to an abrupt end around 2015. Today, in memory of those days, every Sunday morning at the Burtonsville Shopping Center (weather permitting) a gathering of cars and enthusiasts get together to hang out. Also, every year in mid-to-late August, Mike Templeton along with the American Legion Post 60 hold its annual show on Marr Field. This year they celebrate their 10th anniversary in doing so. Relive and support the glory days (non-electric) with Martha & I as we present some artifacts from either our attendance at these events or collecting over the years.



LAUREL LIONS CLUB
JOHN R. SYME MEMORIAL

19th Annual Auto Show



1983

FREESTATE STREET RODS, INC.—CHESAPEAKE REGION

26th Annual Auto Show
LAUREL, MARYLAND LIONS CLUB



John R. Syme Memorial

August 25, 1980 *Laurel Race Course*

1965 - 31st Annual - 1995

Laurel Lions Auto Show




John R. Syme Memorial
Street Survivors of MD - Chesapeake Region

LAUREL LIONS CLUB
John R. Syme Memorial

20th Annual Auto Show



1984

FREESTATE STREET RODS, INC.—CHESAPEAKE REGION

LAUREL LIONS CLUB AUTO SHOW
1965 — 28TH ANNUAL — 1992
John R. Syme Memorial



CHRYSLER TOWN & COUNTRY
Chesapeake Region Street Survivors of Maryland

1965 - 32nd Annual - 1996

Laurel Lions Auto Show




John R. Syme Memorial
Street Survivors of MD - Chesapeake Region

LAUREL LIONS CLUB
23rd Annual Auto Show!



August 23, 1987

LAUREL LIONS CLUB AUTO SHOW
1965 — 29TH ANNUAL — 1993
John R. Syme Memorial



1932 CADILLAC V16 SPORT PHAETON
Chesapeake Region Street Survivors of Maryland

LAUREL LIONS CLUB
35th ANNUAL JOHN R. SYME MEMORIAL

1965  1997




AUTO SHOW, FLEA MARKET, AUCTION
CHESAPEAKE REGION STREET SURVIVORS OF MD.

LAUREL LIONS CLUB AUTO SHOW
1965 — 27TH ANNUAL — 1991
John R. Syme Memorial



1952 KAISER MANHATTAN
Chesapeake Region Vintage Tin of Maryland

Laurel Center
Antique Automobile Meet



JULY 24, 1982

Laurel Centre
LAUREL, MARYLAND





CHESAPEAKE REGION A.A.C.A.




ANTIQUÉ AUTOMOBILE SHOW

Antique Car Show



LAUREL SHOPPING CENTER



SATURDAY OCTOBER 3rd, 1987

25th Silver Anniversary 25th Special
LAUREL, MARYLAND LIONS CLUB



John R. Syme Memorial

August 26, 1989 *Laurel Race Course*

OBITUARIES

Because *Voices of Laurel* is a quarterly publication, obituaries are compiled over the course of each issue every three months. We do our best to include as many published notices as possible, and there is no charge for inclusion. Send obituaries with a photo to laurelhistoryboys@gmail.com.

John Edward Bowen, 85

John (Jack) Edward Bowen, aged 85, of Hilo, HI, peacefully passed away on December 7, 2023. Born on October 11, 1938, in Washington DC, he spent his formative

years in Laurel. John was a beloved husband, father, and esteemed member of the first responder community.

Educated at Laurel High School, John continued his studies at Western Maryland College and the University of Maryland, College Park. In 1965, he brought his wife and young family to Hawaii to embark on his career with C. Brewer and Co. His talents were quickly recognized, leading him to become a researcher at the University of Hawaii, School of Tropical Agriculture. Throughout his professional journey, he focused extensively on sugar cane, leaving an indelible mark through his well-known and respected contributions that will continue to influence future generations.

Beyond his professional achievements, John had a diverse range of interests and talents. He served as a firefighter with the College Park Fire Department and later became a Haz-Mat Trainer, dedicating his expertise to training firefighters in Hawaii and worldwide. John's creativity extended to his passion for photography, capturing beautiful moments that are cherished by all who knew him. He skillfully combined his knowledge of the sugar industry and his photographic skills to document the sugar plantation way of life, preserving its essence in powerful images that will endure for generations.

John is survived by his devoted wife, Anne Bowen, and his cherished daughters, Maureen Figueira, and her husband Norbert, as well as Denise Marjarum and her late husband Adam, all of Pennsylvania. His enduring love extends to eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren, who will carry forward the warmth, wisdom, and humor that he shared with them.

While we mourn the loss of John, we also remember and honor the life of his son, Bruce Bowen, a fellow first responder who preceded him in death.

Gary Michael Ertter, 66

Lovingly written by family members for Gary Michael Ertter, 66, who died in January of this year in his home in Laurel, where he had lived for 64 of those years.

Gary was born on October 25, 1957 to parents Louella (Amtower) and Jim Ertter and older siblings Ken, Keith, and Cecelia. Younger siblings Bruce, Tim, and Lisa joined the family later. Gary was the middle child of seven.

Gary spent most of his life living in Laurel. He attended St. Mary of the Mills elementary school through 8th grade, was an altar boy at St. Mary's Church with brother Keith, had a paper route in West Laurel for many years, and spent many hours exploring the creeks and woods that surrounded his home. As a kid his claim to fame was that he looked so much like Will Robinson (Danger, Will Robinson) (Billy Mumy) that he was treated like royalty by the popular kids on the Laurel High School bus that we had to ride to get to St. Mary's. Gary graduated from Laurel High with the class of 1975.

He was employed with the Prince George's County School System as a Building Equipment Operator, proudly retiring in December 2021 after an astonishing 40 years of service. He nurtured his interests in science, achieving his AS degree from Montgomery Community College, Takoma Park Campus, then working weekends as a lab tech at Shady Grove Medical Center and Washington Adventist Hospital, retiring in late 2022 after 30 years.

Gary loved playing guitar and singing songs at open mics in the area. He was a talented musician, always willing to set the key and lead the family in song. He enjoyed camping in the mountains of Western Maryland, particularly Green Ridge State Forest, where he would test his fishing skills, feign to hunt, and 'be one with nature.' Always one for watching and feeding birds, bunnies, and local deer, he lived simply. He just didn't have many needs for material things, and had great respect

for, and interest in, simple nature.

Gary always took good care of his mother, Louella, especially after his father passed (late 2008), stopping by every day to check on her and share a story and a treat. He enjoyed deeply those thoughtful moments of care and connection with his mom as the gentle (and confirmed favorite!) son that he was.

One thing you could set your watch by were his regular long walks back to the Rocky Gorge Reservoir via Supplee Lane across the street from home. He would forage for wild mushrooms, cooking his own creations and family recipes. We counted on Gary to bring old-fashioned eggnog (as described in a previous *Voices of Laurel* article) to every Christmas gathering, being considerate to bring batches for various ages (minors) and various tastes (not minors).

Gary enjoyed sharing his knowledge of cars, music, nutrition, and the outdoors with anyone who was interested or asked him a question. He fixed many a car through the years and taught others how to do minor repairs and maintenance. One of Gary's favorite ways to connect with some of us was to share a song that he had discovered that made him happy. Some of us can't avoid a deep smile as we recall the times that 'Gar' insisted that we look up, and play over and over, for both while on the phone, some odd tune that made him joyful. Gary had good taste in music that genuinely made him (and others who were fortunate enough to get a call/text) happy. The family so appreciated that we could always count on Gary to lead our family in Christmas carols, and most importantly, perfectly harmonize the '5 Golden Rings', It was an endeavor, but Gary pulled it off. He had such a warm singing voice. It was noticed by the camp counselor's way back in the 1960's when he went to Laurel summer camp off of Avondale Rd. in Laurel with his sister, Ce. Kumbaya became a family request way too often, and singing became moments of peaceful connection enjoyed by all.

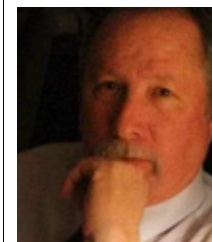
Though he spent hours dreaming, and now planning for it, he did not get to buy his retirement cabin in the hills of Western Maryland, close to where his grandparents lived their young lives.

He was preceded in death by his beloved father and mother, Jim and Lou, and baby brother Tim. He is survived by his loving brothers Ken, Keith, & Bruce, and sisters Cecelia Stanton and Lisa (husband Robert Childress). Gary is fondly remembered by his nephews David, Allen, & Richie Stanton for his tips on fishing, hunting & cooking, explaining the importance of safety, and those snazzy new socks for

Christmas. Both of his nieces, Amanda & Cynthia, and nephews Ben & Joel (Father Tim Ertter) enjoyed Gary's interest in their accomplishments and those stories about their dad, Tim. Nephews Philip, Sam, & Jonah Childress especially enjoyed Gary's jokes and family stories about their mom, Lisa.

Always ready to extend a helping hand or a sympathetic ear, he touched many lives with his open-hearted nature, generosity, and gentle spirit.

A celebration of Gary's life will be held in June. Friends and family are invited to contact Cecelia at ce42day@yahoo.com to get on a list to be notified for details once established, and we invite you to leave a long story, thought, and memory here: donaldsonlaurel.com/obituary/Gary-Ertter

John Samuel Leizear, 70

John Samuel Leizear, 70, a former resident of Laurel, passed away on January 1, 2024, in Cape Coral Florida. He was born in Riverdale, Maryland on August 14, 1953,

to the late Charles Clayton Leizear and Lucille Mae Leizear. Johnny joined the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department in 1969 where he loved serving his community alongside his firefighter Brothers. He graduated from Laurel High School in 1972. Johnny started his career as Customer Service Representative with Washington Wilbert Vault Works in 1976, after a dedicated career of 35 years he retired in 2011.

Following his retirement, Johnny and his wife Laura relocated to Cape Coral, Florida to enjoy their retirement in 2013 where he loved the outdoors, the beach, fishing, bowling, kayaking, gardening, live music, traveling, watching sports, Nascar, and most of all, spending time with his family and grandchildren. Johnny had a heart of gold and a passion for life he loved his fur babies. He was known for taking the long way around town to sightsee.

He is survived by his loving wife of 25 years, Laura Leizear, son John Leizear (Lara), daughters Wendy Risk (Glen) and Stephanie Jones (Cordell), stepchildren Karen Spalding (Jeff), Jamie Burton, Ryan Burton (Clarissa), and Angie Lyon (Gary), 13 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his brothers, Ronald Leizear and Joe Leizear and sisters, Carol Jean Essex, Cheryl Sappington, Patty Doubledee,

Deborah Haggerty, Donna Kidwell and several nieces and nephews. Johnny was preceded in death by Charles Leizear and Mother Lucille Leizear, and 3 brothers Carnell Ray Ritchie, Charles Clayton Leizear Jr, and James W. Collins.

A celebration Of Life will be held on May 11, 2024, at the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department at 2 PM. The family kindly requests that any charitable donations be made to the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department. Please join us in honoring the life of John Samuel Leizear (Sam)—a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather who will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Pauline Ritter, 85



Pauline Ritter, aged 85, of Cairo, WV departed this life on Saturday, February 24, 2024 at Pineview Center, Harrisville, WV.

She was born Friday, May 13, 1938 in Roane Mountain, Carter County Tennessee, the second child of Issac Winslow Hill and Lillie McKinney Hill. In 1952, her family left the mountains of Tennessee to resettle in Maryland where her father hoped to find work. She remained there much of her life, marrying and raising four boys. The family spent time residing in Bowie, Laurel, and Upper Marlboro. In 1992 she moved to Smithville, West Virginia where she purchased her own home. Over the years, Pauline was a loving and caring homemaker. She also served as a caregiver in Queens, NY for several years. On occasion, she attended the Hughes River Presbyterian Church of Cairo, WV.

She is survived by her sons, Steve Ritter (Diana) of Cairo, WV; Jerry Ritter (Sherry) of Augusta, WV; David Ritter (Leslie) of Parkersburg, WV, and Mark Ritter (Sherry) of Dellslow, WV; her loving grandchildren, Clayton, Jeremy, David Jr., Michelle, Paul, Nathan, and her many loving great grandchildren.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Edward Allan Ritter on June 5, 2006; infant son, Edward Anthony Ritter; granddaughter, Bobbie, and her nine siblings, Howard, Louise, Trula, Homer, Arnild, Orville, Ethel, Douglas, and Norman.

She was a woman of strength and perseverance and faced adversity and the many trials in her life with determination and resolve. Her children and

grandchildren were the most important things to her. She loved animals, especially her little dog Snookie. She also loved cornbread, trips to the thrift store, and rides in the car “sightseeing.”

Online condolences may be expressed to the family at www.mcculloughraiguel.com

John Witmer , 88



It is with deep sadness and broken hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved father John Paul “Jack” Witmer. Jack passed away peacefully at his

home in Laurel, MD on January 28, 2024, surrounded by his five daughters. Jack was born to Lillian Cecilia Witmer and Paul James Witmer in Washington, DC on December 29, 1935. They moved to Laurel in September 1939, just shy of his fourth birthday.

Jack was an energetic child who battled asthma but that did not keep him from playing his favorite sports. In his early years he worked as a pin setter at the old Laurel Bowling alley and went on to play in a bowling league as a young adult. Jack attended Saint Mary of the Mills Catholic School until eighth grade then transferred to the old Laurel High School where he graduated in 1954. During his high school years, he was an avid and skilled baseball and basketball player. Students gave him the nickname “Az” and would chant it from the bleachers whenever he would have to sit out for a break due to his asthma. Jack also loved to dance. Even winning dance contests in his early years.

After graduating high school Jack went on to work for the NSA for six years. First at Arlington Hall then at Fort Meade until August of 1962. He played for the NSA Sparks baseball team during his time there. He also worked part-time at Giant Food during his NSA years. He decided that a desk job was not for him, so he left that behind and started a new career. He then moved on to be a manager at Jumbo Food and finally moved on to be a head night stocker at Safeway in 1972 where he eventually retired from in 2002 after 41 years of service combined. Jack was also a Real Estate Agent in Laurel part-time for many years before retiring.

Jack loved conversation and had a memory that never ceased to amaze anyone who knew him. He could talk for hours about history, sports, old city of Laurel stories, current events or just about

anything. A “gift to gab” that he passed on to his daughters. Jack loved traveling, watching sports (The Redskins, The Washington Nationals, The Washington Capitals and the Wizards, just to name a few), listening to music, watching his favorite sports show- The Sports Junkies, and spending time with family. Jack also loved being at his beach house and spending time with his neighbors, both in Laurel and at his OCMD home.

Jack is survived by his brother Dennis Witmer and Sister-In Law, Pat Witmer and his four nieces and nephews. Jack is also survived by his five daughters: Terry (Richard) Giddings, Kim Witmer, Lisa Kreis, Taimi McKay and Tracy (Nick) Totaro. Jack leaves behind a dozen grandchildren; Casie Giddings, Westley Giddings, Destinee Kreis, Luke Kreis, Jesse Kreis (Katie), Jenna McKay (Rob), Jordan McKay (Lindy), Kellen McKay (Jess) Courtney McKay (Kevin) Gianna (Anthony) Parenti, Daniella Totaro and Dominic Totaro. Jack is also survived by four great-grandchildren: Baine McKay, Reign Kreis, Ripley Kreis and Pepper Musisko. Jack was so proud of each of them. Jack is also survived by Jack Kreis and Ricky McKay.

Jack was preceded in death by his mother and father, Lillian Witmer and Paul Witmer and by our loving mother, Norma Smith Witmer and former Mother-In-Law Regina Smith.

Memorial donations may be made in Jack’s honor to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 6704 Hagerstown, MD 21741.

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Cover Story CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Laurel at the time saw Brady push for mixed use as opposed to garden apartments. “We don’t want to be a bedroom community,” he told the *News Leader*. Similarly, when plans for the interchange between Route 198 and the new I-95 were unveiled in the mid-60s, Brady predicted the traffic through Laurel would create an “intolerable situation.” He faulted the State Roads Commission for ignoring the city’s initial proposal to route I-95 traffic down Contee Road and around Laurel completely.

“This is an example of government becoming so thick and so layered that things go on and nothing can be done about it,” he told the *News Leader*.

When he announced in 1972 that he would not run for reelection, Brady said, “I’ve served for three terms and it’s a good idea to have new people to come on the council on a regular basis. After a time, you lose your inspiration and so you should step aside to let others try their new ideas.”

His wartime experience also affected his attitude toward war itself. He went to anti-war demonstrations during the Vietnam War. When Jack considered enlisting in the mid-1960s, Brady told his son, “You don’t have to do this. I already did it.”

As Jack put it, “He was a thoughtful person who had an experience, who dropped bombs on civilians. That was never discussed. But what do you think was in his head? He was a good man. He had to do bad things and he did them well.”

Premiere at Andrews

This past January, Joint Base Andrews held a premiere of the miniseries’ first episode. Attending were the cast and production team of *Masters of the Air*, along with World War II veterans, Department of the Air Force senior leaders, and service men and women.

Jack and his family were invited to represent his father. Also attending was 101-year-old retired Air Force Maj. John “Lucky” Luckadoo, the only surviving B-17 pilot in the 100th Bomber Group.

Luckadoo brought tears to Jack’s eyes when he approached him at the reception and said, “You look just like Brady.”

“What a sweet thing to say to me,” said Jack.

Kirk Saduski, another producer for *Masters of the Air*, as well as *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific*, addressed the reception and said, “It is too awful to contemplate a world in which the Allies didn’t win WWII.”

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Kevin Leonard is a founding member of the Laurel History Boys and a two-time winner of the Maryland Delaware District of Columbia Press Association Journalism Award.

Buddhist Temple CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

since tree roots degrade a berm’s integrity. Their application also requested approval to take down their last two specimen trees; however, the temple had already illegally taken these trees down months earlier, ironically on Earth Day. They argued that the trees’ roots had been compacted; however, that was due to the temple’s previous illegal grading and graveling of the surrounding land.

Furthermore, the temple failed to have their property surveyed by a licensed surveyor and thus their plans incorrectly presented the property boundaries with yet another neighbor, other than the one mentioned above. Accounting for those correct boundaries substantially increases the lot coverage of the temple’s intended development and contributes to it being well over the maximally permitted 50%. Despite those and other issues that we neighbors raised, after the temple’s lawyer strongly called out the specter of RLUIPA, the Planning Board appeared to change course and quickly approved the temple’s plan and multiple requests for exemptions.

Later last fall, after reviewing the Planning Board’s decision and appeals that were filed about it, the District Council (which is the County Council wearing different hats) agreed to consider this application. Fortunately, at their hearing in January, the District Council was much more attentive to the irregularities

of the temple’s plan, as well as to the rights of us neighbors, than the Planning Board had been, even though the temple’s lawyer again called out RLUIPA. When she explicitly stated that the temple personnel feel that they are suffering religious discrimination from us neighbors, both Council Chair Jolene Ivey and At-Large Councilman Calvin Hawkins said they had seen no evidence of that. People’s Zoning Council, Stan Brown, very eloquently summarized many of the temple’s above-described infractions of the county’s law, both in their actions and in their plans, and he noted remedies the temple would need to do to comply with county regulations. These actions included filing a subdivision plan or substantially reducing the size of the intended building, as well as getting an approved stormwater plan that meets county regulations. Eventually the application was remanded to the Planning Board, which hopefully will take the county’s regulations more seriously than the last time. Also, Council Chair Ivey got the temple’s agreement to stop the amplified outdoor broadcasting, starting immediately. What a blessing for the neighborhood!

Another big positive is that unlike in past years, when the complaints about the noise, cooking run-off, etc., that we filed to 311 and DPIE seemed to have minimal effect, now an excellent DPIE officer is working hard to assure that the temple follows county

laws. All of us neighbors certainly hope that the temple will start abiding by the county’s laws for noise, food sales, run-off, property boundaries, etc., which are meant to provide fairness, peace, and safety for all. It certainly would be wonderful if everyone could start living in harmony.

However, there are still issues. The temple’s most recent service for the Lunar New Year again involved cooking in their unlicensed garage kitchen and illegally selling food, with their attendees parking on our properties and trespassing through our yards. Also, we just learned that after the neighbor into whose backyard the temple had been dumping their cooking remnants eventually convinced the monk to cease that practice, rather than starting to healthfully dispose of the coming remnants into the compost that the County picks up weekly, they instead just moved the location to instead dump it behind the barn of another neighbor, despite the County Health Department saying it is strictly illegal to dump cooking residue on the ground.

It remains to be seen whether matters will resolve so that the neighborhood can return to a peaceful existence. Our collective experience underscores the complex dynamics of RLUIPA’s implementation and its potential for exploitation, highlighting the ongoing struggle for balance between religious freedom and community rights.

Whiskey Bottom Road

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

Tried in the Court of Public Opinion

Sulkie and like-minded residents persisted, even as some of their neighbors noted their embarrassment when others found out they lived on Whiskey Bottom Road. Mrs. Edward Kennedy was amused at the attempt to change the road name that was about “a hundred years old.” She said, according to an elderly resident, it was named for “the famous Maryland rye whiskey” distilled near the original Laurel railroad tracks (*The Sun*). Mrs. Kennedy was right about two things: the name of the road had been in use since at least 1891 and Maryland rye whiskey was a very famous brand before prohibition.

In reply to Mr. Skeels’ editorializing in the *News Leader*, Mr. Sulkie directly addressed his neighbor in an Open Letter on December 14, 1950 in the same paper. His poetic form still present, he wrote:

*Bill,
The good News Leader reached my table,
Just after breakfast, so when I was able
To down the last pint of my morning brandy
(I always keep a demijohn right handy)
I read your charming letter with attention
And found you quite a genius at invention,
As well as history, morals, and circumvention
Of facts, But then your deep solicitude
About our children touched me, so a mood
Of soothing kindness settled on my brow
Which I shall attempt to capture now.*

His clever poem continued down the full column of the page and more and leaves me not quite sure if Mr. Skeels would be amused or just irritated and sore.

On January 23, 1951, the new Board of County Commissioners recently voted into office ruled that the road had no official name and put the question of its name back to the residents. Mr. Edward Kennedy, representing those residents wishing to keep the original name, stated that the petition by those wanting Patuxent Drive had only four names on it. Mr. Skeels insisted that his group had the most signatures and, therefore, it should be Patuxent Drive. Former Commissioner Charles Miller implied that the previous Commission believed the majority wanted the name change, but some of those

people changed their minds.

Trying to sway public opinion, on February 1, 1951, Mr. Skeels wrote an article in both the *Ellicott City Times* and the *News Leader* claiming victory and that the name was changed to Patuxent Drive. Apparently, he was correct, but it would take another three years to make it momentarily official as the Board of County Commissioners decided that Whiskey Bottom Road would be no more, and it would be called Patuxent Drive between Route 1 and Scaggsville in April 1954. The old Whiskey Bottom signs would come down and Patuxent Drive would be the name on their replacements.

Mr. Skeels, a World War I veteran born in Iowa and a prominent attorney, had purchased land in 1948 along Whiskey Bottom Road, so he should have known its name. But his deed showed the land was along Old Annapolis Road. If he didn’t know the common name of the road, he must have been annoyed to learn of it.

But the saga continued! Mr. Sulkie was persistent and posted street signs for Whiskey Bottom Road. When Mr. Skeels filed a lawsuit claiming the signs were a violation of zoning laws, Mr. Sulkie claimed they were “historical monuments” to the road. The Board of County Commissioners soon decided that “They do not consider the action of their predecessors valid” because a 30-day notice to change the name was not provided as required. The Maryland State Roads Commission then decided that their earlier decision was therefore also not valid (since they really did not have jurisdiction on the matter) and they promptly removed the Patuxent Drive signs the next day. Whiskey Bottom Road survived and is alive and well today thanks to persistent neighbors and a poet.

Whiskey Bottom School Renamed

Detailed records have not yet been found but over 45 years later, some residents were successful in renaming the Whiskey Bottom Elementary School to Laurel Woods. Enlisting children to fight your battles seems to be the solution in this case as who would want a child to go to a school named for a hard liquor, or the word “bottom”? The fifth graders pushing this change preferred the names “Laurel Park” or “Snowden Manor” after a

racetrack or a plantation house—interesting choices.

Although approved by the school board in 1972 a “school naming committee” decided in June 1990 that since children at the school requested the name be changed then they would oblige. It was later announced that there would be public hearings on the name change but nothing more about Whiskey Bottom Road Elementary School was mentioned in the school board meeting minutes after the name change in June of 1990. This was one decision that would be final.

Origin of the Name

So, what is the true origin of the name? We know it had nothing to do with prohibition since the name pre-dates that era. Perhaps it is true that smaller stills were operating in the woods between the road and Hammond Branch—this would be a plausible explanation. Laurel historian John Calder heard of one more story of the origin of Whiskey Bottom Road’s name. He wrote that “the generally accepted by somewhat imaginative explanation of the term is that in a bygone era there was a commercial distillery...whose product, packaged in bulbous wooden barrels, was rolled rather than carted to an indefinitely located railroad loading platform,” similar to the tobacco hogsheads and their rolling roads.

To refute this story, Calder noted that “there is no recollection or record of any commercial distillery that ever operated in the Laurel area on Whiskey Bottom Road or elsewhere. ... Illegal stills were in business in the river bottomlands on Laurel’s northern perimeter during the periods of Local Option decades before the Volstead Act to enforce prohibition was passed over President Wilson’s veto in 1919.”

We may never know the true origin of the naming of this historic road, or when it began, but Calder gives us as plausible an explanation as currently exists.

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Jet Ski CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

bronco, as we made our way to the north beach where the really big surf lurked.

And boy, was it big. The waves, as we approached from the side, resembled giant snow-capped peaks gliding across the ocean. When we entered the heaviest surf area, McNamara wasted no time. He quickly pulled alongside a 40-footer as it was ready to break. I had never seen anything like it up so close and personal – a pulsating four-story apartment building. Cotton and Toros kept their distance for safety reasons.

I looked around. Tons of other waves were breaking, too. I yelled at McNamara to saddle up to something taller, if possible. He asked if I was serious. I said yes, and off we went. He is a wild man. When we found a swell that was in the 60-foot range, McNamara actually pulled up on top and rode along the horizontal length of the crest just before it broke. He screamed at me to look down, to my right.

Time stopped. What I saw was surreal: A precipitous drop to the bottom of a vertical wall of greenish blue. I could have dropped a quarter, and it would have skipped six stories down the wave face into the ocean. It's a view I'll never forget. McNamara then veered the ski left, toward the water behind the breaking wave, so as not to get sucked up into the barrel and taken over the falls.

Then things got crazy. Suddenly, the ski tipped when I leaned too far left, the same way McNamara was leaning, and we were catapulted into the ocean. Luckily, the heavy machine stayed near us, floating on its side, and our life jackets kept us afloat. McNamara immediately tried to right the thing, but to no avail. So I swam over and helped him rock the ski toward us. After a few back-and-forths, it flipped into an upright position.

With urgency, McNamara jumped on, fired up the ski and yelled at me to hang on to the sled at the back rather than try to board. Seconds were precious, and we had to high-tail it out of there before the next set of monster waves were upon us. A scary minute seemed like an hour, I can tell you.

When we were safely back in the harbor a few minutes later, McNamara confided that he had chosen the last wave in our set of four to ride the top of. That gave us time if something unforeseen happened, like the jet ski flipping. Had there been another giant wave directly following the one we had capsized behind, and Nazare is unpredictable, I might not be writing this.

In McNamara's garage, we took showers to remove the salt water, then enjoyed espressos from his gourmet coffeemaker. We laughed and high-fived each other, but each of us knew how easily the experience that morning could have gone south. What if water had gone into the engine intake, and the jet ski hadn't restarted? Or if McNamara or myself had been knocked unconscious? Or if the ski had simply floated away from us?

McNamara said that he's ridden so many big waves that often he feels little to no adrenaline rush these days while doing so. When the ski flipped, he confessed, he definitely felt the chemical kick in. God was watching out for us, I guess.

Thankfully, the only casualty was my glasses, which flew off when we were tossed into the water, and must now be in God-knows-how-many-pieces at the bottom of Nazare's deep channel.

The ocean has tremendous power, and, at Praia do Norte, it's to be particularly respected. So are the brave folks like Cotton and McNamara who choose to surf it. Both have been seriously injured at Nazare but keep coming back. Having experienced the top of such monsters on a jet ski myself, I can only imagine what these guys feel surfing down the face.

Of all of my extreme adventures, and there have been quite a few, this has to rank in the top five. Never before have I felt as awed by, and afraid of, nature at the same time—not on the summit of the Matterhorn, in the vacuum at the edge of space 84,000 feet up in a supersonic MiG-25, chasing tornadoes, or at the frigid South Pole.

For this one, I was thankful for the swimming and lifeguarding skills I had acquired in Laurel. Whether they made a physical difference, I'm not sure, but they did give me enough confidence not to panic in a dangerous situation.

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Jim Clash immerses himself in extreme adventures for Forbes magazine. He graduated from Laurel High School in 1973. His latest book is Amplified: Interviews With Icons of Rock 'n' Roll.

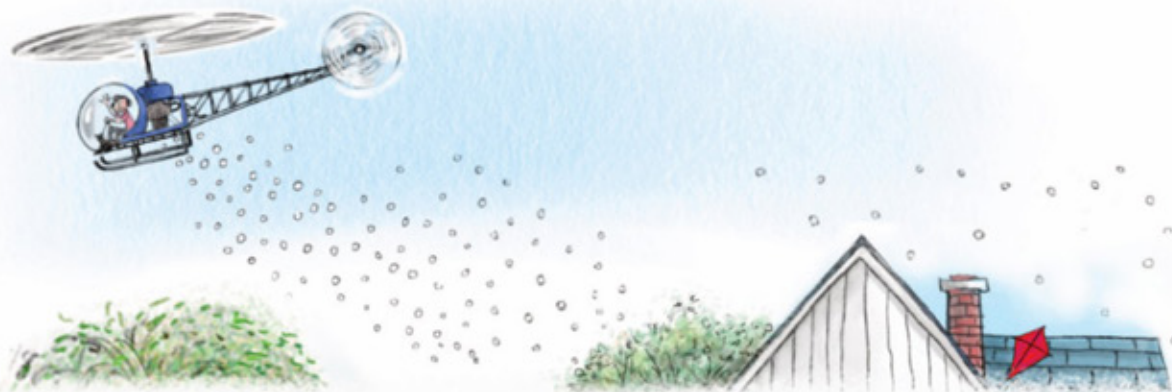
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Perry Koons, a writer and illustrator, will be releasing The Kid From 5th Street Creek later this year. It is a collection of treasured memories from his childhood on Fifth Street in Laurel. His children's books are available at Amazon.com, and you can see more of his work on Facebook and Instagram @KOONSPERRY, and on Pinterest @perrykoons.



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