

VOICES OF LAUREL



FREE
SPRING 2026
VOL. 6, NO. 2

A JOURNALISTIC COLLECTIVE FOR LAUREL, MARYLAND



CELEBRATING  LAUREL PARK

More Than a Race Track

A look back at the history of Laurel Park as the iconic venue prepares to host the Preakness for the first time

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LEAD STORIES

What's New With The Laurel History Boys



Grants and Donations

Thank you to Joan Robison, Marion Hoekstra, Karl Ginter, Amanda Green, Bryan Castro, and James Bowman for their monetary donations. We are grateful—your support means a lot, and helps us cover increasing printing and website expenses.

We also received some interesting items from one of our readers. Former Laurel resident Dale Hall sent us two photos from the 1960s: one was the GMC dealer on Route 1 between the Turf Club and South Seas bars and the other a picture of Laurel Lake before development, taken by his grandmother, Edna Hall. The photos were featured on our Saturday photo of the week on our Facebook page.

City Honors

We were honored when Laurel Mayor Keith Sydnor issued an acknowledgment of our 10th anniversary as an organization and our fifth anniversary of publishing *Voices of Laurel*. When we first created The Laurel History Boys we had no idea things would progress to this point: writing three books (with more in the works), publishing a quarterly newspaper, and producing a wide variety of projects, all to fulfill our mission of bringing history to you. We have greatly benefited from the support of the community. Thank you!

Laurel History Boys' Day at the Races

Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 25 and join us at Laurel Park for our second *Voices of Laurel Day at the Races* event. The Laurel History Boys and *Voices of Laurel* team will be under the tent at trackside—join us to enjoy live thoroughbred racing up close, just one week before the Kentucky Derby and three weeks before the Preakness makes its historic debut at Laurel Park. This free event is open to all and provides an opportunity to mingle and learn about horse racing, betting, and the history of Laurel Park.

Wider Distribution for *Voices of Laurel*

The list of outlets where printed copies of our newspaper are available continues to grow! Every effort to replenish copies is made throughout the week, with our boxes receiving priority treatment.

Food Lion (Sandy Spring Road)*
 Food Lion (Montpelier)
 Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center
 Laurel-Beltsville Senior Center
 Laurel Branch Library
 Laurel Museum
 Laurel Post Office*
 Laurel Train Station*

Maryland City at Russett Library*
 Montpelier Arts Center
 North Laurel Community Center
 Oliver's Old Towne Tavern
 Robert J. DiPietro Community Center
 Savage Library
 Savage Post Office

**Voices of Laurel* newspaper box on site

Main Street Festival Update

Due to the rising cost to participate, we will not have our usual table at the Main Street Festival this May. We have greatly enjoyed meeting so many people over the years at the festival and we will miss it.

Upcoming Presentation

On May 21, Kevin Leonard will present "Failed Mega-projects," which describes the two mega-projects (the Great America theme park in the 1970s and the proposed Redskins stadium in the 1990s) that, had they come to fruition, would have changed the geographic and economic landscape of the Laurel area and Howard County forever. *North Laurel Community Center, 10:30 am. FREE.*

Laurel Light Award Call for Nominations

We are seeking nominations for our 2026 Laurel Light Award, which was created to recognize everyday people who make our community a better place. Launched in 2024, the annual award is selected by *Voices of Laurel* staff and Laurel History Boys, Inc. board members based on nominations received from the public.

Let us know who you'd like to nominate for the next Laurel Light Award:

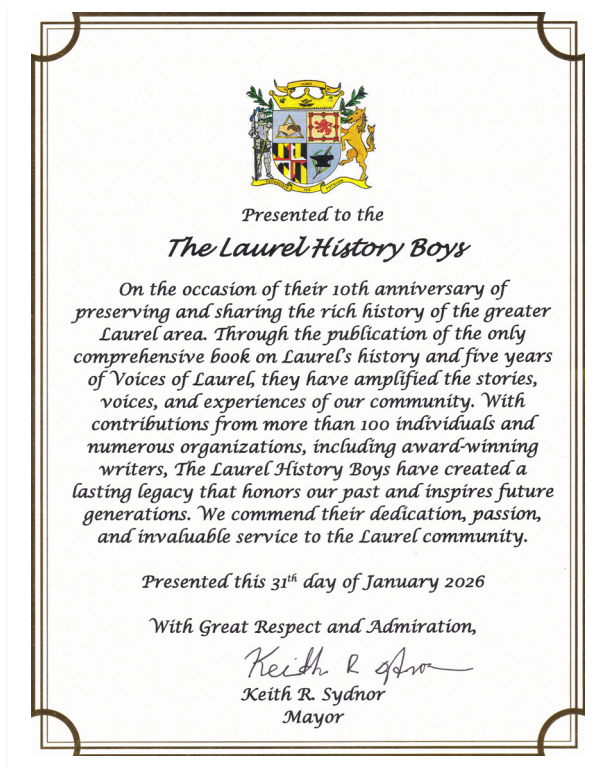
- Tell us what is special about this individual or business and the work they're doing.
- Explain how they are making a positive difference in our town.
- Be sure to include your name and contact information, as well as that of the person, organization, or business you're nominating.

The nominee does not have to be a current resident of the city, and anyone is eligible. Nominations can be submitted by messaging us directly, via email, or by traditional mail via the addresses below:

The Laurel History Boys, Inc.
 P.O. Box 759
 Laurel, MD 20725
 laurelhistoryboys@gmail.com

(Above Left): Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 25, and join us at Laurel Park for our second *Voices of Laurel Day at the Races* event! The Laurel History Boys and *Voices of Laurel* team will be under the tent at trackside—join us to enjoy live racing up close just one week before the Kentucky Derby and three weeks before the Preakness makes its historic debut at Laurel Park.

(Above right): Laurel Mayor Keith Sydnor issued an acknowledgment of The Laurel History Boys' 10th anniversary as an organization and fifth year of publishing *Voices of Laurel*.



City Beat

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

Former Police Chief Crawford Sentenced in Montgomery County

A Montgomery County judge sentenced former Laurel Police Chief David Crawford to 55 years in prison in mid-February 2026. Crawford pled guilty to two counts of first-degree arson and one count of second-degree arson for fires he started at the home of his stepson in 2016, 2017, and 2020.

Crawford, 74, of Ellicott City, was already serving a prison sentence for crimes committed in Howard County, for which he was sentenced to eight life terms and 75 additional years.

In 2021, Crawford was arrested and charged with setting 13 fires in houses, cars, and garages in Prince George's, Montgomery, Howard, Frederick, and Charles counties. His arsonist activities covered more than a decade; in addition to targeting family members, he also set fires at the homes of people he felt had wronged him in some way.

Crawford was Laurel's police chief from 2006 until 2010. He had previously served as police chief for District Heights and as a major in the Prince George's County Police Department.

For the full story of Crawford's crimes, see the Summer and Fall 2024 issues of *Voices of Laurel*. [voicesoflaurel.com/print-editions]

Laurel Cats, City Officials Partner with H.E.A.R.T. to Offer Mobile Veterinary Clinic

Laurel-area pet owners have a new resource for affordable veterinary care, thanks to the efforts of Laurel Cats, the City of Laurel, and H.E.A.R.T. (Helping Every Animal Receive Treatment, Inc.), an Annapolis-based organization whose goal is to reduce shelter intake and euthanasia by increasing community access to veterinary care.

On March 4, a grand opening was held for a mobile veterinary clinic that will provide low-cost spay and neuter services for both cats and dogs. The clinic will also offer other animal-health services, with a view toward reducing the overpopulation of pets in the Laurel area. The mobile clinic is housed in a vehicle parked at the Laurel Parks and Recreation maintenance facility located at 7705 Old Sandy Spring Road.

H.E.A.R.T. founder Robin Catlett noted that the Laurel-based unit is the first recurring clinic location for the new organization, and "exactly the kind of collaboration that strengthens our mission." Laurel Mayor Keith Sydnor lauded the project as "a powerful example of what can happen when compassion and collaboration come together." Also on hand at the opening ceremony was Laurel City Councilmember Jame Kole, who said, "I love animals, and I've seen firsthand how hard it can be for families to afford basic veterinary care. Helping connect Laurel Cats and H.E.A.R.T., Inc. with the City of Laurel was important to me because it gives pet owners a real, affordable option to care for their cats and dogs right here in our community."

Laurel Cats President Helen Woods stressed the need for the clinic: "For almost a year now, we have not had any low-cost veterinary options in Laurel available to pet owners. This has forced many working families to either ask Laurel Cats for help or go without care for their furry family members. This new clinic will restore affordable veterinary access to pet owners in and around Laurel." [Source: Press release from Laurel Cats]

City to Review Voting Wards for Potential Redistricting

The Laurel City Council voted at its March 23 meeting to form an advisory committee to consider the redistricting of voting wards. Generally, ward boundaries are reconsidered every 10 years, after the U.S. Census publishes its demographic findings. However, the robust development on Laurel's west side, by the I-95 interchange off Van Dusen Road, has added 500 residences to Ward 2, with more to be added prior to the next U.S. Census in 2030. The City Council felt that an off-cycle review is needed to ensure fairness and balance in Laurel's voting wards. The committee will consist of five people, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the council. The committee will study the demographic data, draw up a recommended redistricting map, and present its findings to the council within six months of appointment. Any approved ward boundary changes would take effect prior to the November 2027 general election.

Laurel High Students Protest ICE Presence

Laurel High School Students joined thousands across the country in protesting the methods being used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. LHS students walked out of the school over their lunchtime on February 9, carrying signs and walking down Cherry Lane to the Laurel Towne Center. The event occurred with the approval of school administrators and in coordination with Laurel Police, who blocked traffic to ensure a safe event.

Mills's Case Against Fellow Councilmember Dismissed in Court

In our Fall 2025 issue, we reported that City Councilman Jeffrey Mills had filed a criminal complaint against Councilman James Kole and his husband, Joshua, over an October incident in which one of Mills's campaign signs was removed. Although the sign was undamaged and put back into place, Mills continued with his case. In late February, however, the case was declared *nolle prosequi* in a Prince George's County court when the prosecuting office declined to prosecute. While not the same thing as an acquittal or a dropped case, a *nolle prosequi* action results in a dismissal of charges and an expungement of any arrests records. No arrests were made in connection with this case.



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PRESS RELEASE

Laurel Woman Caught in Nightmare Scenario Over Citizenship Status

The case of a Laurel woman made national headlines over the winter after she was detained by ICE over what her lawyers called an administrative error. Dulce Consuelo Diaz Morales, 22, (at left, with her son) was driving in Baltimore with her younger sister on December 14, 2025, when she was stopped by ICE and taken into custody, despite her and her sister's insistence that they are U.S. citizens. Diaz Morales was detained for 25 days, during which she was transferred

five times to ICE holding facilities in Louisiana, Texas, and New Jersey, sometimes sleeping on the floor. Meanwhile, her family and lawyers repeatedly provided the federal government with proof of her citizenship, including her Maryland birth certificate—she was born at Laurel Hospital—along with immunization records, school records, and sworn affidavits attesting to U.S. citizenship, all of which were verified by experts at Johns Hopkins University. However, federal authorities continued to claim that she is a Mexican citizen who entered the U.S. illegally in 2023.

Diaz Morales's lawyers maintain that she had been out of the country in 2023 and re-entered the U.S. during an emergency, without access to proper documentation—leading her to be erroneously labeled as an illegal immigrant and flagged for removal. Federal authorities disputed this claim, but did release Diaz Morales from ICE custody on January 7 on the condition that she wear an ankle monitor and remain under supervision, with regular check-ins at the Baltimore ICE office. Her next immigration hearing is scheduled for July, and U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's office is working to obtain a passport for her.

Apply for Renters Tax Credit 2026

The State of Maryland is offering a plan for some renters to receive a tax credit for 2026. If you missed the October 1, 2025, deadline for last year, consider applying this year. Eligibility to receive the credit is defined at the link below; however, the plan is based on "the relationship between rent and income." If you meet the qualifications, you may receive a credit of as much as \$1,000 paid directly by check from the state. For more information go to <https://dat.maryland.gov/realproperty/Pages/Renters%27-Tax-Credits.aspx>.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Oldtown

Local news covering the Oldtown area



BY CAITLIN LEWIS | OLDTOWNVOICES@GMAIL.COM



Laurel Cats held a grand opening celebration for its new mobile vet surgery service on March 4.

The Cat's Meow: Laurel Cats Builds on Success with New Way to Help Cat Owners

In 2012, Oldtown resident Helen Woods and a small group of volunteers saw a need in Laurel: the feral cat population was huge, with feral cat colonies all over Laurel, and the main method for dealing with the excess cats was euthanasia. Woods considers the housing crisis largely responsible for the large feral population, noting that when people lose their homes, their pets become homeless, too. She estimates there were around 2,000 stray cats in Laurel at the time.

Initially, Laurel Cats focused on catching feral cats and getting them spayed or neutered. Alley Cat Allies, a Bethesda-based animal protection organization, assisted in providing traps. Laurel Cats conducts an annual survey of the cat population in Laurel and has documented a 60-percent decline in the feline residents of Laurel. (Woods noted that Laurel Cats serves all of Laurel, not just the officially designated region inside Prince George's County.)

After five years of focusing solely on spaying and neutering, Laurel Cats launched a foster program for stray cats. Currently, over 100 active volunteers work with Laurel Cats. Woods says they

frequently receive calls regarding stray cats. The first step in their process is assessment: gathering enough information to make an educated guess about the ownership status of the cat. If the cat seems well-fed and appears infrequently, they surmise that it's probably a pet. If the cat comes very frequently and shows signs of hunger, they suspect it's either a stray or significantly separated from its owner.

After capturing the cat, a volunteer has the cat scanned to check for a microchip. If there is no microchip or if they cannot locate an owner, a volunteer from Laurel Cats fosters the cat. Depending on where the cat was found, Woods says they file a found report with one of the five area animal control centers (Howard, Anne Arundel, Montgomery, or Prince George's County, or the City of Laurel). Most of these centers require a hold of two weeks after filing a found report before the pet can be adopted. Howard County requires a 30-day hold.

When asked about any particularly memorable rescues, Woods recalled receiving multiple calls about a stray cat near City Hall. After capturing and scanning the cat, they were surprised to find that it had a microchip and belonged to a family in Olney. Woods suspected that

the family had dumped that cat, since it would be odd for a cat to have wandered so far away on its own. But upon calling the family, they discovered that the family did want the cat back and had not dumped it. However, the family had recently delivered a couch they were selling to an individual in Laurel. The cat, apparently, had stowed away in the sold couch without the family realizing it.

After fourteen years in existence, Laurel Cats rarely has to capture a feral cat, according to Woods. In fact, she would very much like the general public to know that Laurel Cats offers free spaying or neutering to all cats, not just strays. She's concerned that cat owners are not having their cats spayed or neutered, and what breeding now occurs in Laurel is mainly from domesticated cats.

Despite their success in humanely reducing the stray cat population in Laurel, Woods observes that the present economic circumstances are once again increasing the number of abandoned pets. A lack of affordable housing and a rise in the number of evictions has increased the number of pets wandering around Laurel. Laurel Cats does offer assistance to the community via a cat food pantry, but of late, Woods notes, the main requests for assistance are for monetary help with veterinarian bills. Costs for medical care are among the many services that have seen a significant increase in recent years, says Woods.

In answer to this increase in the cost of veterinary care, Laurel Cats is partnering with H.E.A.R.T. Inc (Helping Every Animal Receive Treatment, Inc.) and the City of Laurel Parks and Recreation Department to provide a mobile, low-cost vet surgery vehicle, located at the maintenance facility at 7705 Old Sandy Spring Road. The surgery will service both cats and dogs. A grand opening celebration was held on March 4.

Upcoming Plays at Laurel Mill Playhouse

The Laurel Mill Playhouse on Main Street will present *Assassins!* by Stephen Sondheim over four Spring weekends: April 3–4, 10–12, and 24–25, as well as May 1–3. On April 17 and 18, the Playhouse will host *The Music of Lennon & McCartney*. During

the last two weekends in May and the first weekend in June, the Playhouse will present *Dracula*, a play based on the novel by Bram Stoker.

Main Street Festival

The 42nd Annual Main Street Festival will take place from 9 am–4 pm on May 2. Interested in participating in the parade? Contact parade manager Jody Broughton at jodybroughton@botparade@gmail.com by April 23. Vendors can apply via the Laurel Board of Trade website: <https://laurelboardoftrade.org/main-street-festival>.



Notable Birthday

Longtime Oldtown resident Benjamin Stevick, a Special Olympian, is turning 38 on June 28th. Happy Birthday, Ben!

Caitlin Lewis holds a Master's Degree in Education from Covenant College. She worked as a high school English teacher both in the U.S. and Greece, but currently works at home raising her four children and writing her column.

North Laurel/Savage

Local news covering the North Laurel, Savage, and Scaggsville areas



BY ANGIE LATHAM KOZLOWSKI | HOCOVOICES@GMAIL.COM



Howard County Executive Calvin Ball holds a press conference to announce plans for mixed-income houses in North Laurel.

North Laurel is Home to Olympic Bobsledder

Bryan Sosoo (pictured below), a Laurel native, made his Olympic debut at the 2026 Winter Games in Italy as a push athlete in four-man bobsled. A 2014 graduate of Reservoir High School, Sosoo was a track standout at Monmouth University, winning three conference titles in the 60 meters before competing internationally in track and field. He joined the U.S. bobsled national team in 2024 after switching sports.

At this year's Winter Olympics, Sosoo was part of the U.S. team captained by Frank Del Duca; they finished in 12th place overall with a combined four-run time of 3:40.06, which was 2.49 seconds behind the gold medal-winning German team. The other U.S. team finished in 11th, less than half a second ahead of Sosoo's team, with a combined time of 3:39.94.



Howard County Joins Growing List of High Schools Offering Girl's Flag Football

Thanks to support from the Baltimore Ravens and the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks, all 12 Howard County Public School System high schools will participate in a newly added sport. "Girls Flag Football is rapidly growing in popularity, and we are excited to add it to our already outstanding athletics program for the 2026-2027 school year," indicated HCPSS Superintendent Bill Barnes. The girls flag football league will be run by the school system like other high school sports. The addition of the county's league clears the way for the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) to officially sanction the sport and establish recognized state championships. Recreation and Parks will offer flag football skills camps over the summer for girls aged 11 to 18.

To sign up for a camp, visit tinyurl.com/HCRP-GirlsFlagFootballCamp.

FILM Task Force Seeks to Entice Major Productions to Howard County

Howard County Executive Calvin Ball announced the formation of a new Film Industry and Location Marketing (FILM) Task Force. The 13-member FILM Task Force is made up of leaders in the arts and business sectors, with the charge

of developing a coordinated strategy to position Howard County as a leading film-ready jurisdiction in Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic region for major productions.

According to the county's website, since 2012, the Maryland Film Production Activity Tax Credit has generated a total economic impact of nearly \$1.5 billion, driven by 21 major productions, including *House of Cards*, *Veep*, *Lady in the Lake*, and *Special Ops: Lioness*. These projects have directly spent \$827 million in the state, hiring more than 1,000 Marylanders and utilizing thousands of local businesses per production. The task force will review background data and economic impact potential; identify and recommend policies, investments, partnerships, and processes that strengthen the County's attractiveness to film and television productions; expand economic opportunities for local businesses and workers; and elevate Howard County's unique historic, cultural, and natural assets as competitive filming locations.

Robert Neal Marshall, Task Force Co-Chair and actor, director, producer, and playwright, said, as an "Emmy Award-winning casting associate with Pat Moran on major productions filmed right here in Howard County—including *Game Change* and *Veep* for HBO—and through my own work as an independent casting director, producer, actor, and executive producer

of the Columbia Maryland Film Festival, I've seen firsthand the creative energy and vital economic impact that film brings to our community. Howard County has extraordinary potential for filmmakers of every scale, and I'm honored to bring my experience and passion for film to this important effort. I'm deeply grateful to County Executive Calvin Ball for the opportunity to serve, to his outstanding team, to Co-Chair Amanda Hof, and to our distinguished partners on this task force as we work together to build a vibrant future for film production in Howard County."

Howard County to Purchase Property in North Laurel for Mixed-Income Housing

As part of a planned mixed-income housing project, Howard County will purchase the property where the former Randy's California Inn has sat vacant for many years. According to county news releases, the county already owns the adjacent sites where an antique store and a mobile home park once operated. This additional land purchase will allow the county to add about 60 houses, 30 percent of which will be priced around \$300,000, below the area's \$500,000 average home price.

County Executive Calvin Ball also has drafted an amendment to change how the county funds affordable housing projects. His proposal would allow the use of bonds to pay for the developments, similar to the use of bonds to finance schools and road projects. He stressed the importance of providing affordable housing for working families: "Older adults on fixed incomes, teachers, nurses, first responders...[they] make our community function and thrive every day. And they deserve a place to live in the community which they serve."

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



The Laurel Manor Recreation Center in The Villages, Florida, is named after Laurel Park Racecourse.

The “Six Degrees of Laurel, Maryland”

Most of us are familiar with the social science theory called the “six degrees of separation.” (Think Kevin Bacon and that American Express commercial.) I have come to believe that there is also a “Six Degrees of Laurel” phenomenon, because I have made quite a few Laurel-adjacent connections in recent years while traveling. For instance, I took an art class in St. Petersburg, Florida, and discovered that the woman sitting next to me used to live in Avondale Apartments, right across the street from my home in the Oakcrest development. And then there was the glass blower in the German section of Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, who told me that he grew up in Laurel. He had a great story about cleaning out the coins twice a year from an apparatus at a dry-cleaning business a friend’s dad owned; I have since forgotten his name.

But perhaps the neatest Laurel connection occurred at the place from which I’m writing this column. Three years ago, I purchased a small home in

central Florida, at The Villages. It was mostly to escape the winter cold, and I must say that my health has definitely improved as a result. A self-governing municipality, The Villages comprises about 100 separate villages—kind of like Columbia on steroids. My village is called Tall Trees, and the nearest recreation center is called Laurel Manor. I thought it was a cool coincidence that something called Laurel was nearby, but it goes a bit deeper, as I soon found out.

I joined a knitting club that meets in nearby Pimlico Recreation Center, and my ladies book club sometimes meets at Churchill Downs Recreation Center. I noticed a street called Belmont Place, another called Del Mar Drive, and then Ascot Loop, Cheltenham Court.... This had to be more than coincidence.

A little research told me that parts of the northern area of the Villages were, indeed, named after horse-racing venues. Although there was no track called Tall Trees, I discovered that it was a common nickname for the famous Hialeah Race

Track in Florida, which was lined with very tall pine and palm trees.

You’ve probably figured out the punchline here: it turns out that the Laurel Manor Recreation Center in The Villages, Florida, is actually named after our very own Laurel Park! I get a little burst of joy and pride whenever I go there for activities; it gives me a connection to my Maryland home.

Revolutionary VP Studios To Convert Warehouse into Video Production Facility

In February, Laurel-based Revolutionary VP Studios announced the purchase of the former FloorMax warehouse on Mid-Atlantic Boulevard in South Laurel. The company will convert the 30,000-square-foot facility into a state-of-the-art video production studio that independent filmmakers will be able to rent for video shoots.

The company’s website says that the facility “will be one of the best virtual production facilities of its size in the world, purpose-built to support film, commercial, photography, and immersive events.” Modern tools such as CGI and LED technology will be available, making it possible to film scenes that otherwise would be challenging—for instance, replicating underwater scenarios or large-scale backdrops through the use of virtual reality tools. Filmmakers will be able to conduct their pre-production work, film shoots, and post-production editing and enhancements under one roof. Revolutionary VP Studios stated a goal of “re-establishing Maryland as a leader in filmmaking.”

Voices of Laurel first wrote about this exciting venture on our Facebook page, and comments were overwhelmingly positive, with some saying that a venture like this was needed in Maryland. For my part, I’m wondering if the next *Jurassic*

Park sequel could be created there, with its proximity to a certain dinosaur park just across Route 1.

Spring Events at Montpelier Historic Site and Museum

If you’re reading this before April 25, mark your calendar for two things: the *Voices of Laurel* Day at the Races (see page 13 for details), and the annual Montpelier Festival of Herbs, Teas, and the Arts. (You can do both if you go to Montpelier in the morning.) The festival features local artists, vendors, live music, tours of the museum, and other family-oriented fun. The festival will run rain or shine, from 10 am to 4 pm.

Two weeks later, on May 10, the Montpelier House Museum will offer a “Hidden Spaces Tour.” Participants will learn about the history and architecture of the former Snowden residence, explore hidden stairways, and discover other secrets of the building. Cost is \$10 for Prince George’s County residents and \$20 for non-residents; purchase tickets through the pgparks.com website. The event runs from 3:30 to 5:00 pm.

An exciting new exhibit will open on June 11 called “The African Odyssey Exhibition.” The exhibit will feature photography from Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Senegal, taken by Dr. Joanne Braxton of the Braxton Institute for Sustainability, Resiliency, and Joy. Dr. Braxton is a descendant of African people who were enslaved at Montpelier. Discovering “unexpected, very personal stories” on her journey, Dr. Braxton tried to capture what she saw and felt in Africa, to share with others and to honor her enslaved ancestors. The photo exhibition is open Thursdays through Sundays, June 11 to November 1, from 10–4 pm.



Diane Mezzanotte is a staff writer and member of the Board of Directors for The Laurel History Boys. In addition to covering Laurel city municipal news, she also reports on all things from South Laurel.

West Laurel

Local news covering the West Laurel and Burtonsville areas



BY VIRGINIA MAY GEIS | WESTLAURELVOICES@GMAIL.COM



The newly renovated Burger King in Burtonsville.

Nationwide Policy Actions Can Have Local and Personal Impacts

A recent action by the U.S. Government has hit close to home in West Laurel. The current administration sought to terminate the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 350,000 Haitian nationals living in the United States under protective status because of the dangerous situation in their home country. For decades, Haiti has been plagued with widespread, violent crime and atrocities across the country, resulting in a humanitarian disaster and leading to the deployment of several multinational forces since 1994 to help the Haitian Government improve the situation on the ground. For many years, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has deemed Haiti too dangerous for U.S. citizens to travel to but, at the same time, has declared the country safe enough to force Haitians living in the U.S. under TPS to return home. The protected status was originally set to expire as of February 3, but as of mid-March had gained at least a temporary reprieve when

a judge issued an order blocking the action. If TPS for Haitians is ultimately revoked, it would make it illegal for someone with this status to work in the United States.

How does this relate to West Laurel? Many of the 165,000 Haitians living in Maryland are in Montgomery County and the West Laurel area. They have been our neighbors, friends, and active community members for many years. My own family was hit particularly hard by the administration's actions. My adult disabled daughter had a very special woman as a caregiver who tackled every situation imaginable with a smile—this angel is Haitian and had protected status. She was in our country legally; however, because of her family's complicated immigration status—and her outright fear of any potential action by U.S. authorities—this gifted woman and her husband decided it would be better for their young family to move to Canada. We need to keep in mind that national actions, even when they seem to be far

remote, are impacting families in our community.

West Laurel Civic Association

The West Laurel Civic Association will hold a community yard sale on Saturday, June 6 from 8 am until 1 pm at the T. Howard Duckett Building. There will be 22 tables available to rent; the fee per parking spot is \$15 per spot, and \$5 to rent a table—first come, first served. Participants may bring their own tables and camp chairs. There may be a limited number of chairs available to borrow, so that will also be first come, first served. The event will take place rain or shine; in case of rain, the first 21 spaces will be inside. All others should bring a tent or umbrella. Get rid of your household items, appliances, games, puzzles, books, baby and kids items, candles, dishes, tools, and holiday ornaments! Contact Cassandra to sign up to be a seller: ctseckares@comcast.net

Burtonsville Burger King Reopens after Renovation

The Burger King in Burtonsville has reopened after undergoing major renovations to keep up with the rejuvenated Burtonsville Crossing. As the last remaining business from the old version of Burtonsville Crossing, it was time for a new look. The new BK has an updated interior and exterior, as well as two drive-thru lanes, but the menu is the same.

If you want to contact me, write to me at westlaurelvoices@gmail.com, and please call me Ginny.



Virginia May Geis is a native of Laurel and a graduate of Laurel High School, class of 1975. After a few decades away, she has been a Laurel resident again, since 2018.

Russett/Maryland City

Local news covering the Russett and Maryland City areas



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



BRENDA ZEIGLER-RILEY

Columnist Brenda Zeigler-Riley with Catherine's owner Donovan Vassell.

Catherine's Restaurant Draws Crowds to Corridor Marketplace

Have you ever had Italian-Caribbean food? I recently had dinner at Catherine's Restaurant, located in Corridor Marketplace. The restaurant was packed; however, my 6 pm reservation was honored. (I advise that reservations be made, especially if dining on weekends.)

The welcoming, curated atmosphere evoked memories of my fine dining experiences while vacationing in the Caribbean. The waitstaff was friendly and very attentive. The menu promised a "story of culture, creativity, and culinary connection." And according to Catherine's website, dishes are prepared "using fresh, locally sourced ingredients."

The appetizers, from the rich velvety cream of crab soup with lump crab meat, or the crispy calamari served with marinara sauce, to the island spice plantain chips served with mango

salsa and an avocado mousse, did not disappoint. One person in my party ordered the spaghetti alla vodka burrata and raved about the rich, house-made vodka cream sauce; another boasted about the savory red snapper with escovitch, a popular island-style, spicy, tangy Jamaican pickled vegetables. My grilled jerk chicken dinner with bold Jamaican spices, served with rice and peas, was delicious.

Donovan Vassell, the restaurant's owner, created a memorable and positive experience as he welcomed guests. Catherine's continues to receive rave reviews for its delicious food, good vibes, and live music. In my opinion, the sights, sounds, and delicious food are just what was needed in the area.

Russett Resident Dericka Francis Takes Humanitarian Efforts to Jamaica

Dericka Francis is a hero in every aspect of the word! She shared with me that she "likes helping people," which is a humble understatement.

When she heard that the island of Jamaica had been hit by hurricane Melissa in late October 2025 with devastating impact, Dericka began organizing and collecting canned goods, clothing, and other items to donate. On January 2, 2026, she and a small group, mainly funded by her, traveled to Jamaica to provide aid in person. She was in Jamaica for 10 days and visited Montego Bay, Negril, and the St. Elizabeth Parish.

When asked about her trip, Dericka said the people were very appreciative. Upon her group's arrival at St. Elizabeth Parish, the area most affected, "people expressed gratitude and requested provisions for neighbors who couldn't reach my location."

A native of Trinidad, Francis has been in the United States since she was nine years old. She grew up in New York and migrated to Maryland to attend college. For the past 30 years, she has called Maryland home and has lived in Russett for 20 years.

New Pavilion Makes Debut

Russett has added a new pavilion-type structure to provide a shaded area for residents to enjoy. It is located adjacent to the recently installed playground by the community pool.



BRENDA ZEIGLER-RILEY

Russett Library Offers Unique Programs for Spring

The Maryland City at Russett Library has some very special offerings coming up for people of all ages. Below are some highlights; for the full schedule, or for further information on events, go to <https://www.aacpl.net/services/maryland-city-at-russett>.

- **Meade High School Jazz Band Performance:** Celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month with live music performed by the talented students of the Meade High School Jazz Band. (April 25, 3–5 pm, all ages)
- **Babies in Bloom:** Babies from birth to 18 months, along with a caring adult, are welcome to enjoy songs, rhymes, and playtime while building early literacy skills. A great way to get to know other families in your community! (May 4 and 11, June 8 and 15, 10:30-11:30 am)
- **Cardio Drumming:** Come and try cardio drumming in this adults-only class. You can stand or sit while we tap, stretch, and move to music while drumming on large fitness balls. (April 30, 6:30–7 pm)
- **Worms Eat my Garbage!** In this installment of Science Saturdays, we'll explore the world of super-composting worms and learn how worms convert food waste into nutrient-rich compost. (May 9, 10:30–11:30 am, ages 6–10)
- **Pride Bracelets:** Create your own bead bracelet to get ready for Pride Month. All supplies will be provided—just bring yourself! (June 6, 2–3 pm, kids ages 6–18)
- **Juneteenth family celebration:** Learn about the history of Juneteenth through a story, and celebrate freedom, with family-friendly activities. (June 7, 6–7 pm, all ages)

Brenda Zeigler-Riley is a retired educator and entrepreneur with a marketing, public relations, and fundraising background.

CELEBRATING  LAUREL PARK

A Laurel Racetrack History Timeline

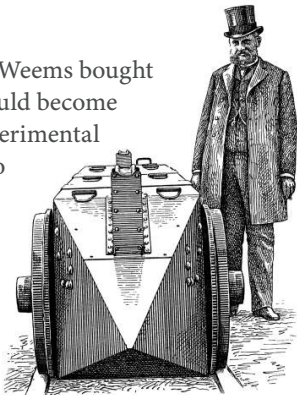


BY KEVIN LEONARD

When Laurel Park is converted into a training center in a year or two upon completion of the renovation at Pimlico, the racetrack's extraordinary history will come to a close. Over its 115-year existence, the track has seen numerous Triple Crown winners and for 43 years was host to the Washington, DC International, the most prestigious international race in the world.

Horse racing wasn't the only spectacular event that took place at the racetrack, as shown in the timeline below.

Mid-1880s Inventor David Weems bought the land that decades later would become the racetrack and built an experimental electric train track designed to move mail and newspapers. The train reached 120 miles an hour, but the structure collapsed under the strain. The company ceased the experiment for lack of funds.



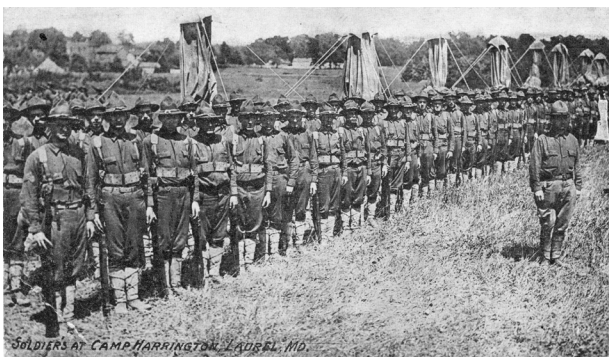
1910 The Four County Fair bought the land and constructed fairgrounds, which included a ½-mile dirt track for horse racing.

1911 The Maryland State Fair Association took over the property and enlarged the track to one mile. Horse racing began in October, and 5,000 fans attended opening day. Automobile races occasionally also took place.



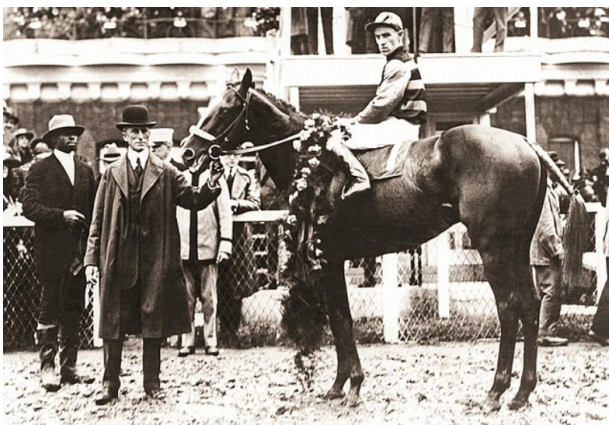
1911 Just one month after opening, a betting scandal was uncovered. Crooks inside the fairgrounds used signals to communicate race results to others outside the grounds. The results were then wired to New York, allowing bettors in other states to place wagers on winning horses.

1914 New York City grocery entrepreneur James Butler purchased the track.



1918 The infield was used by the Army as a training camp before deployment to France in World War I.

1918 Racing season was interrupted by the Spanish flu epidemic. The racetrack closed temporarily.



1919 Sir Barton—the first Triple Crown winner—ran at Laurel. He was not hailed as a Triple Crown winner because the feat had not been named when he swept the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont Stakes. “Triple Crown” began appearing in print about 1936.

1924 Fan favorite and local horse Mountain Rose broke down at Laurel and was euthanized. The horse was buried on the track grounds, the only horse so honored until 2017.

1937 Seabiscuit and Triple Crown winner War Admiral both won races at Laurel.

1938 Seabiscuit prepped at Laurel Park for his famous match race with War Admiral. Seabiscuit finished second in the Laurel Stakes.

1942 Triple Crown winner Whirlaway won at Laurel.

1947 The Maryland Jockey Club, owners of Pimlico and Timonium at the time, purchased Laurel with the idea of shifting the Pimlico dates to Laurel. But the plan was not approved by the Maryland Legislature.

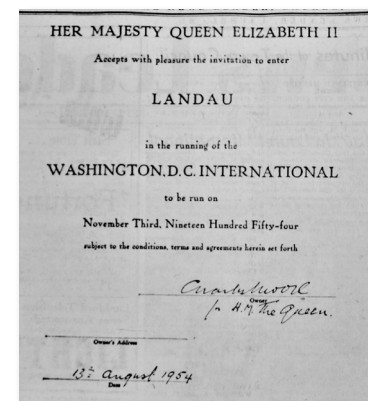


1950 Laurel was sold to Morris Schapiro and his son, John, who changed the track's name to Laurel Race Course and introduced the Washington, D.C. International, a race that featured the best horses from around the world.

1952 England's Wilwyn rallied from off the pace to win the inaugural running of the International.

1952 A life-size statue of Billy Barton, a champion racer and steeplechase jumper, was unveiled at Laurel, the first such statue at a Maryland track.

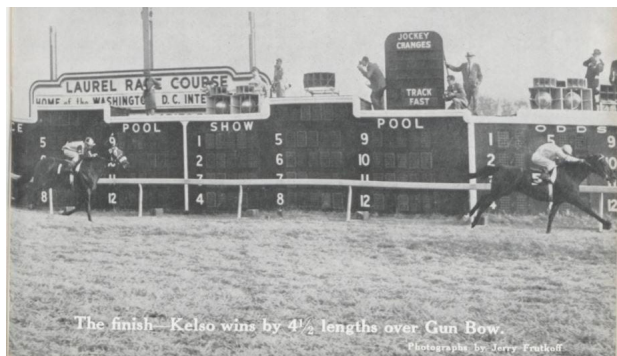
1954 Queen Elizabeth II entered her horse Landau in the third annual DC International. It marked the first time in racing history that the silks of the Royal Family appeared in America. Landau finished last.



1956 The first of four major floods to hit the racetrack occurred.

1957 In an effort to improve conditions for the DC International, Laurel lengthened its turf course from seven furlongs to one mile in 1959; simultaneously, the main track was extended from one mile to 1 1/8 mile.

1958 A record crowd of over 40,000 attended the DC International. Australia's Sailor's Guide won after U.S. entry Tudor Era was disqualified.



1964 Kelso, the only five-time Horse of the Year, won the D.C. International in his fourth attempt. Kelso had finished second in the three previous Internationals, all by less than a length.

1964 34 horses died in a barn fire started by a cigarette butt.

1967 The first Jockey Bowl was played, which pitted the Savage Boys Club 110-pound football team against a team composed of jockeys from Laurel Race Course. The jockeys enjoyed it so much that they played numerous games against local youth football teams for a few years.

1967 The first annual Washington/Baltimore Jazz Festival was held. The lineup of performers was an awesome group of legendary jazz musicians, including Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Woody Herman, Nina Simone, Dave Brubeck, Herbie Mann, and others. Around 25,000 fans attended the two-day event.

1968 Kathy Kusner was granted a jockey's license, the first female licensed jockey. To get the license, Kusner had to submit to a test of strength by demonstrating her ability to break from the starting gate at Laurel.



1968 The second annual jazz festival was held. The lineup was even better than the previous year: Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Herbie Mann, Thelonious Monk, Woody Herman, Count Basie Big Band, Joe Williams, Cannonball Adderly, and others. The second festival drew 31,000 fans.



1969 Laurel Park hosted a two-day rock festival that featured some of the biggest names of the time: Led Zeppelin, Sly & the Family Stone, Frank Zappa, Jeff Beck, Rod Stewart, and others.

1969 The third and final annual jazz festival was held. Returnees from previous Laurel festivals included Gillespie, Mann, Basie, and Adderly, joined by James Brown, Nancy Wilson, Sam and Dave, Roberta Flack, Buddy Rich, Ramsey Lewis, and others.

1970 Laurel's centennial celebration spanned eight days, and included a massive stage play about Laurel's history that included a cast of almost 400 residents. A 200-foot set was constructed at the site of the production, Laurel Race Track.



1971 The second of four major floods to hit the racetrack occurred.

1972 Triple Crown winner Secretariat won at Laurel.

1972 Hurricane Agnes caused the third of four major floods to hit the racetrack.

1975 The last of four major floods to hit the racetrack occurred.



1976 Elizabeth Taylor presented the winner's trophy at the DC International.

1976 Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew won at Laurel.

1977 Triple Crown winner Affirmed won at Laurel.

1978 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Spectacular Bid won at Laurel.



1983 Simon & Garfunkel performed in front of 25,000 fans at Laurel Park.

1984 Frank J. De Francis purchased the racetrack from Schapiro.

1985 Laurel Race Course opened the Sports Palace, the first of its kind in the horse racing world. It offered computerized handicapping and a video racing library in a setting that resembled a plush casino. The concept of the Sports Palace has been widely copied by other tracks.



1986 The Maryland Million, created by broadcaster Jim McKay, debuted at Laurel. The race, which was modeled after the Breeder's Cup, promoted the Maryland breeding industry.

1993 Washington Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke announced that he would build a new stadium on the grounds of Laurel Race Course, igniting a wave of protests even though local shops started selling "Laurel Redskins" t-shirts. After months of controversy, Anne Arundel County ruled that the property was too small for the proposed use.



1994 The track was officially renamed Laurel Park.

1995 The last running of the DC International took place.

1996 The Breeder's Cup replaced the DC International at Laurel Park.

2005 Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro won at Laurel.

2015 Parking and admission were made free to all patrons.

2026 The Preakness comes to Laurel.

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.

CELEBRATING  **LAUREL PARK**


Laurel Park Saved From Demolition

Site Will Host Significantly Scaled-Down Preakness in May



BY ANGIE LATHAM KOZLOWSKI

Hold on to your fancy hats and mind your bets, horse racing fans, big changes are again expected to impact Laurel Park. Following the ups and downs of the fate of Laurel's storied racetrack has become like a ride on a merry-go-round: up with the news of much needed renovations to both historic race tracks; down with the news of Laurel Park's closing and demolition; up with the news of the 151st running of the Preakness Stakes coming to Laurel; down with news of the drastic scaling down of that race; and up with the news that the state has now reached a tentative agreement to buy Laurel Park for use as Pimlico's training facility. No doubt there will be more to come, but here is what has happened and where things stand.

In the spring of 2024, the Maryland General Assembly passed a bill that focused investment in improving Pimlico's racing facilities and removed earlier funding set aside for upgrades to Laurel Park, thereby setting it up for permanent closure. The new bill put \$110 million toward the creation of a separate horse training facility. Several candidates for this training facility were considered. Shamrock Farm in Carroll County was selected in early 2025 by the Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority (MTROA). All parties began to look forward to a new era for the industry.

The state began conducting feasibility studies at Shamrock Farm to determine its use as Pimlico's training facility. As the state was conducting its due diligence with regard to Shamrock Farm, the owner of Laurel Park—1/ST Laurel, LLC, a subsidiary of The Stronach Group—began the process of seeking a change of zoning for their property for a residential and retail subdivision through Anne Arundel County. Meanwhile, the Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA) took over the responsibilities of the MTROA, which was dissolved.

For its part, 1/ST Laurel, LLC sought to reclassify the existing approximately 229.188 acres of land, that was split-zoned as W1 (Industrial) and OS (Open Space),

to a MXD-S (Mixed-Use-Suburban) zone, according to a May 2025 letter requesting the reclassification to the Zoning Division for Anne Arundel County from a 1/ST Laurel legal representative.

A Laurel Park Sketch Plan (an initial layout of the proposed project) also was submitted to the county on behalf of 1/ST Laurel, LLC. The plan noted that 1/ST Laurel planned a mix of housing options similar to that of the adjacent Paddock Pointe development in Howard County, as well as commercial uses, such as restaurants and retail.

Anne Arundel county departments began initial assessments of the property, based on the sketch plan, for use in a mixed-use capacity, pending formal receipt of approval at a zoning hearing scheduled for December of 2025. The county indicated that the land has considerable environmental constraints, including a 100-year floodplain, nontidal wetlands, and associated nondisturbance zones associated with its use under the proposed zoning change.

However, no hearing has been held. As of this writing, the Anne Arundel County website states that the hearing regarding the zoning change request, scheduled for December 11, 2025, has been postponed and has not been rescheduled at this time.

Also, over the summer months of 2025, the MSA began its due diligence with respect to the site chosen as Pimlico's training facility. It had gained right of entry to Shamrock Farm in March. However, by the end of the year, development of a horse training center at that location was deemed not a viable option due to unexpected environmental and cost constraints.

Change of Plans in 2026

With Shamrock Farm out, the MSA announced in January that "it has reached a tentative agreement with The Stronach Group to acquire Laurel Park for the purposes of redevelopment into a premier hub

for thoroughbred training in Maryland. The deal is projected to save roughly \$50 million and marks a strategic realignment of the State's plans to transform the Pimlico Race Course into the heart of statewide thoroughbred racing, build a world-class horse training center, and secure the future of Maryland's multi-billion-dollar horse racing industry."

Further, the MSA's webpage quotes Chairman Craig A. Thompson as saying that this "action marks the first step in writing the next chapter of Maryland's rich thoroughbred racing heritage," and that it "represents more than a planned acquisition—it represents the preservation of a storied racing facility. By pursuing Laurel Park as the home of Maryland's statewide training center, we are creating a path to secure the state's historic investments into Maryland's horse industry and develop the next generation of Triple Crown champions." The Maryland Jockey Club, recently formed as a nonprofit organization that operates under the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO), will continue to oversee daily operations at Laurel Park, and once completed, at Pimlico racetrack, under state ownership.

MSA is expected to convene a task force to determine Shamrock Farm's future, including potential use as horse rescue sanctuary space or for future recreational development, according to its website.

Scaled Down, Way Down

The Preakness Stakes brings tens of thousands of people to Pimlico every year to enjoy a day of horse racing and entertainment. The infield is known for its big party energy and younger crowd. This year, at Laurel Park, there will be no infield party. Tickets for the event are limited in number and high in price. *TheRacingBiz.com* reported in February that attendance for the Preakness Stakes will be capped at 4,800 people and that all tickets will be sold as two-day packages covering both Black-Eyed Susan Friday and Preakness Saturday.

The site further noted, "Of those, 1,000 will be general admission, with the rest divvied up among 'private luxury suites,' the 'turfside terrace,' and dining and simulcast areas." For comparison, The Racing Biz noted that in 2017 the Preakness Stakes reported a record crowd of 140,237 fans at Pimlico. Ticket sales began on February 25 with general admission tickets selling for \$246.

In addition to no infield ticket sales, the website also attributed the intimacy of this year's running of the Preakness to interior grandstand renovations started several years ago by 1/ST Racing that were halted prior to completion that left a "significant chunk of the grandstand without seats of any sort."

Kevin Leonard and Jeff Krulik contributed to this article.

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.



CELEBRATING  LAUREL PARK

Join Us for a Day at the Races, April 25



BY RICHARD FRIEND

The Laurel History Boys and *Voices of Laurel* team will be trackside at Laurel Park on Saturday, April 25 to host our second annual Day at the Races. This free event is open to everyone, and provides another opportunity for residents to see the historic venue and experience thoroughbred racing live and up close—while you still can.

With Laurel Park's future still not completely certain, one thing is sure—its days of being the active racetrack Laurel has known since 1911 will cease after Pimlico's renovations are complete. That's when Laurel Park is now scheduled to transition into a premier horse training facility. What that will ultimately mean in terms of public access, simulcast racing, and more remains to be seen.

In the meantime, the legendary track is primed for yet another historic event, as it's set to host its very first running of the Preakness at Laurel while Pimlico undergoes construction. And to help set the mood, we're excited to have our Day at the Races on April 25. That's just one week before the Kentucky Derby, which will run on May 2; and the Preakness arrives at Laurel Park just two weeks later on May 16. Join us under the tent at trackside starting at noon to learn the basics and to celebrate the rich history of Laurel Park.

This is a free, open event—while there won't be a formal presentation, guests are encouraged to mingle! Joining us will be Frank Vespe, founder of The Racing Biz—the independent voice for Mid-Atlantic thoroughbred racing and breeding, covering the sport, business, and personalities of the racing industry. Frank and others with racetrack knowledge will be available to answer questions and share insight.

Whether you're a regular at the track or a first-time visitor, it promises to be another fun Saturday afternoon. We hope to see you there!



LAUREL ARCHAEOLOGY

CELEBRATING  LAUREL PARK

Laurel Park Through the Years



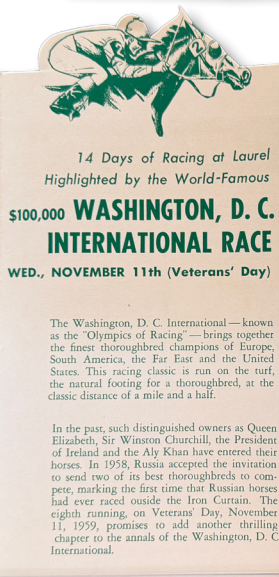
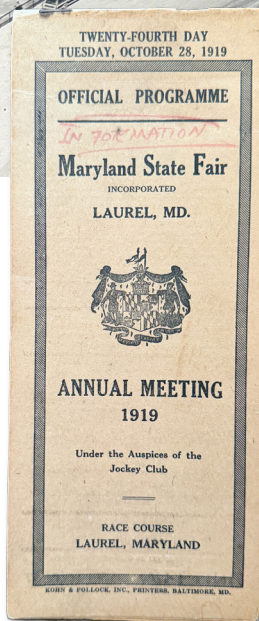
BY PETE LEWNES

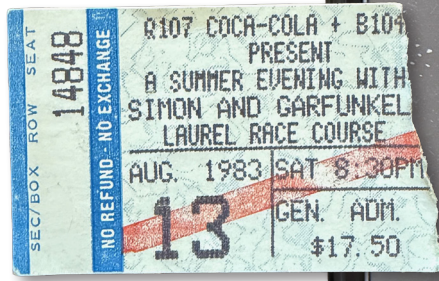
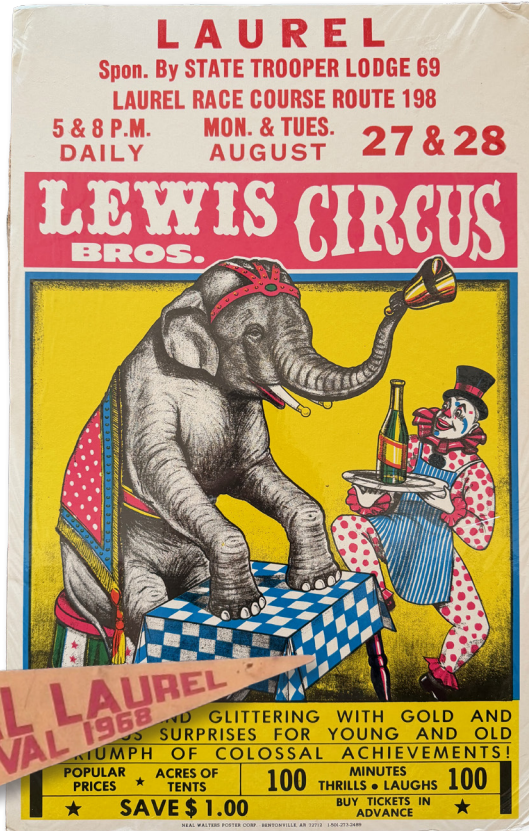
Laurel, once again, will soon lose another part of its rich history. In the near future, horse racing will cease operations here and Laurel Park will be reduced to a training facility only. My feelings are mixed on just how long that and the racing industry itself will exist in Maryland. Laurel, in my opinion, would have been a much better idea than Pimlico. The monies invested here in recent years have now to go to waste.

Laurel Park opened on October 2, 1911 and has served the community and dignitaries well over the years with horse racing along with many other events: auto shows, carnivals, circuses, the Laurel Pop and Jazz Festivals, concerts, and much more. At some point, it seems as if management ran out of ideas for added revenue. I feel that Pimlico will be no different; and if betting on the Preakness as a cure for revenue, good luck.

But Laurel certainly had some very good days. Here are a few pieces from our collection that remind us of what once was.

Pete Lewnes is a founding member of The Laurel History Boys, and a prolific collector of Laurel historical memorabilia from all eras.





Digging into the Data: What City Reporting Reveals About Crime

*Statistics Show Overall Decrease
in Incidents Within City*



BY HANNAH HOFFMAN

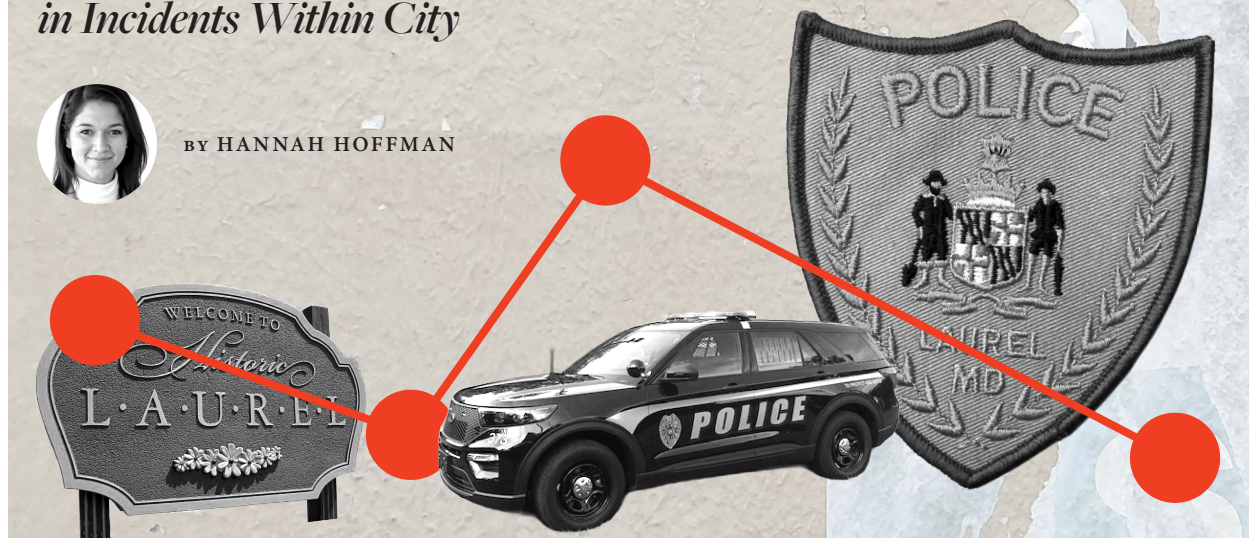


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD FRIEND

One morning in May 2023, Naomi Beech (whose name has been changed to protect her privacy) walked out of her Historic District home in the City of Laurel planning to commute to work just as she had done every other weekday. Instead, she opened the driver's side door of her Kia Seoul and was greeted with a vandalized interior and destroyed steering column. Neighborhood Ring camera footage showed a group of individuals attempting to steal several vehicles in the area that night.

"I'm fortunate they didn't steal the actual car, but the damage they did was significant and extremely costly." Beech remembers receiving local repair quotes in the thousands of dollars, with long wait periods to be serviced. "The shop said it would be weeks until it could be fixed. They said they had so many Kias in the queue from other attempted thefts and break-ins."

Unfortunately, Beech's experience was shared by several other city residents in 2023 and continued into 2024 and 2025. According to publicly accessible data from the Laurel Police Department (LPD), between 2023 and 2025 the city experienced 2,921 cases of "Theft/Larceny" and 779 cases of "Motor Vehicle Theft."

Voices of Laurel reviewed publicly available reports from the LPD and the State of Maryland to identify possible trends and patterns and to bring awareness to city residents about their community.

Visualizing any data provides an opportunity to seek additional insight into city events and activity. Understanding gained from this type of analysis can enable better strategic decision-making, leading to more meaningful community engagement and policy approach. Transparency across this process, including the data collected and responses deployed, keeps city residents informed and city officials accountable.

At a state level, the Governor's Office of Crime and Prevention provides the public with visibility into the data through their Public Safety Data Dashboard, hosted online. However, the most recent data available from the state is outdated, from 2024. Additionally, the presentation of incident data remains separate from the presentation of any policy or program-related response data. This makes it nearly impossible to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of tactics.

The LPD provides the public with updates on two primary platforms, the LPD website and social media. A few media outlets re-post the data within their own publications. Reporting by the LPD consists of a "Monthly Crime Report" that summarizes a single month's crime tally across four primary categories (Violent Crime, Property Crime, DUI Arrests, and Traffic Collisions) and nine subcategories. The LPD also provides a more detailed reporting view on their website in table format that shows a log of individual reports within a given month. Each row includes four fields: incident date, classification, location (intersection or block), and summary. These line-item reports also include a disclaimer that the report may not be inclusive of all incidents.

Voices of Laurel spent dozens of hours researching, collecting, curating, and analyzing data from the City of Laurel. In the process, several data discrepancies and errors were found throughout the LPD published reports.

When asked about the city's relationship with the LPD and deeper visibility into crime trends and resulting policy, Laurel City Councilman Adrian Simmons of Ward 1 says that the Council currently does not receive regular briefings from the police department, but that this does occur within the Executive Branch in weekly meetings. Council members

are often looped in by the LPD for higher profile incidents, but for normal coverage they track the same information made available to residents via social media and news outlets, plus what they hear from residents.

The Analysis

Data from the Maryland Governor's Office (2024) shows that among 24 cities within Prince George's County, Laurel has the third-highest crime rate at 5,186 crimes per 100,000 people (~5%), behind Landover Hills (~5.8%) and Fairmount Heights (~5.9%). When the data is reduced to show only Violent Crime (Assault, Murder, Rape, and Robbery), the City of Laurel drops to 16th place, demonstrating that most of Laurel's crime is Property Crime. Police Chief Russ Hamill, Deputy Chief of Police Mark Plazinski, and Major John Hamilton explained in a sit-down with *Voices of Laurel* that they are not fully confident in the results of these rankings by the state. They say that the LPD does its part to contribute complete information to the state for reporting purposes, but they cannot speak about the consistency and quality of data submitted by other police departments. One key example is the varying terminology used across different municipalities to classify crimes. When data is not "apples-to-apples," LPD says, the results in ranking may be misleading.

LPD monthly crime reports posted on their website and social media platforms aggregated and analyzed by *Voices of Laurel* determined that between 2023 and 2025, overall city crime decreased by 8.6%. Property Crimes accounted for 62% of total crime reports. Traffic Collisions and DUI Arrests together accounted for 31%, while Violent Crimes were just 7% of the total.

Data provided separately to *Voices of Laurel* by the LPD shows that Theft from Auto crime decreased by 36% over that same two-year period, while Shoplifting crime increased by 44%. Standard LPD reporting provided to the public and published on social media platforms does not distinguish between different theft-related crimes. Theft from Vehicle, Auto Theft, Shoplifting, and other types of theft-crime are all bundled into the monthly reporting category "Property Crime" and subcategory "Theft/Larceny."

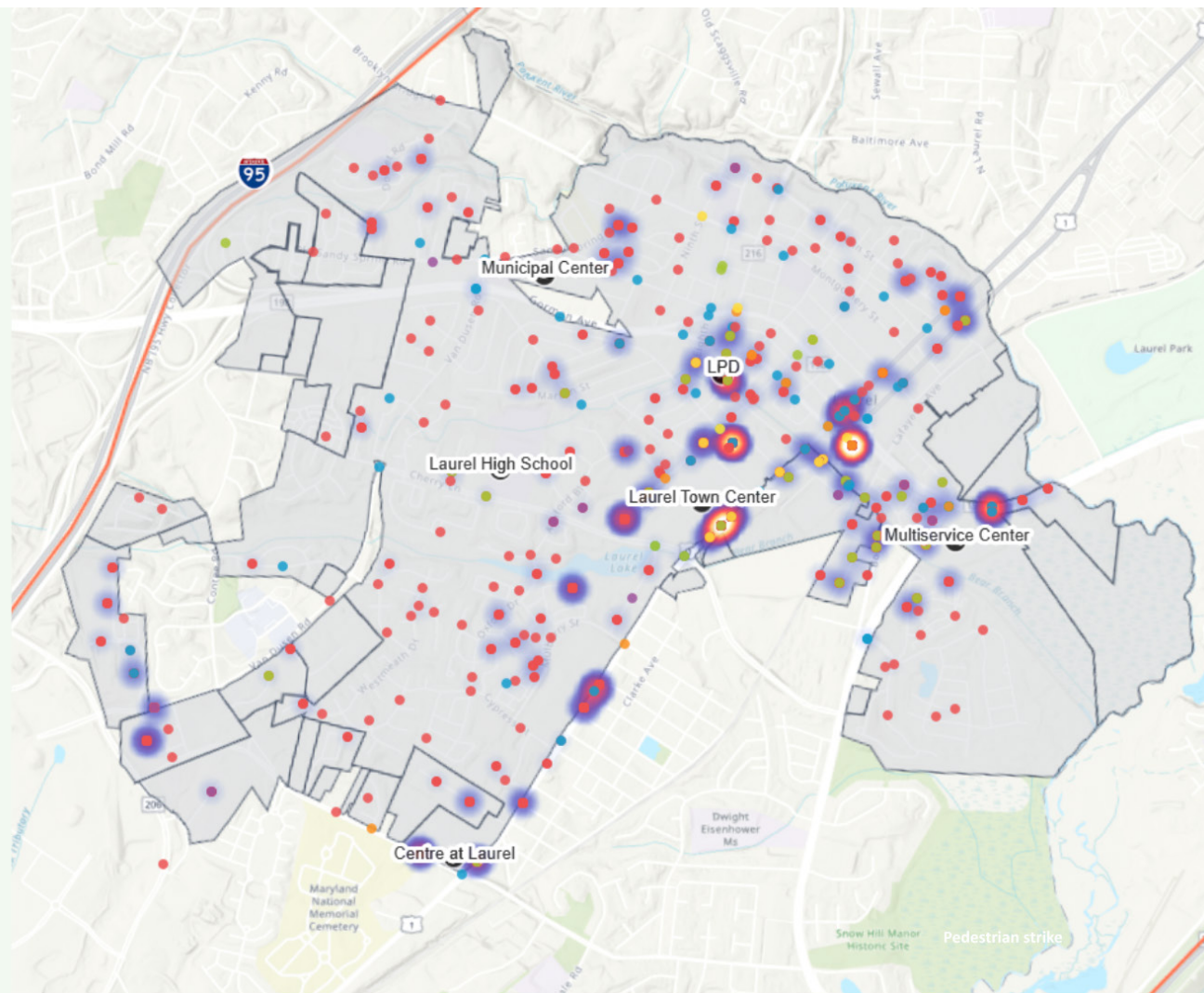
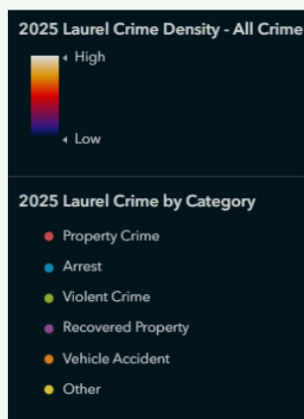
Policy & Response

In May 2023, the LPD began offering steering wheel locks to residents at no charge, prompted by the uptick in Kia and Hyundai thefts. The program, that is still active today, could be a contributing factor in the decline of total Motor Vehicle Thefts, which consistently declined year-over-year, falling 37% from 2023 (314 reports) to 2025 (199 reports).

The LPD says they are especially grateful to those in the community who have volunteered a substantial number of photos and video evidence from their home and business cameras by scanning a QR code posted through LPD online channels. The QR code is often promoted after a major crime event and directs users to the LPD Evidence Submission Portal, where they can anonymously submit information and content. After the crime spree in December 2025, multiple Laurel community members used the QR code system to submit evidence. In several recent incidents, this type of footage helped lead the LPD to critical arrests.

HANNAH HOFFMAN

Location data shows highest density of 2025 City of Laurel crime closest to Baltimore Avenue.



Data Sources

Laurel Police Department Crime Report (Detailed Line Item)

The data visualization above shows both the types of crimes and where they've been committed within the city, with the highest density occurring closest to Baltimore Avenue. You can see more of Hannah Hoffman's graphics that add context to the data within local crime reports in the digital edition of this article at [voicesoflaurel.com](https://www.voicesoflaurel.com).

When it comes to opinions about city speed and red-light cameras, city residents are not afraid to speak up, especially on social media. Some residents support the installation of cameras as they believe it deters speeding and reduces vehicle and pedestrian accidents. Others are concerned about the financial repercussions from the rising violation fees and question the effectiveness. More than 170 comments were posted on a June 2025 LPD social media post announcing three new speed cameras on Rt. 198 and Rt. 1. One person pointed out they didn't believe the cameras would make a difference: "...speed cameras are only about revenue, not safe roads." Another person wanted to see the data behind the decisions: "I would like to see a link to a website that shows where these cameras are posted [and] the study that was conducted in these 3 areas showing that speed was the primary contributing factor to car accidents or other incidents due to speed..."

Using data collected and curated by the Maryland Department of Transportation, the detailed line item reports from LPD, and lists provided by the LPD on locations of red-light and speed cameras, *Voices of Laurel's* analysis found that in 2025, 100% of pedestrian strikes reported by LPD and 74% of city crash reports were within the same 0.75 mile radius near Baltimore Avenue.

Chief Hamill, Deputy Chief Plazinski, and Major

Hamilton clarified the process that takes place in these instances. LPD will often hear feedback from the community about roadway safety. The department considers this feedback in combination with collision data when implementing any type of ticketing device or deterrent. They then work with city administrators to conduct a traffic study. If the results of the study determine an area to be unsafe or problematic, the city and LPD will partner to discuss the circumstances and implement an appropriate solution like speed cameras, red light cameras, speed bumps, etc.

The caption to the Facebook post informing residents of the new speed camera states, "This initiative aims to improve traffic safety and reduce speeding in our community." However, while this may be true, the LPD has not publicly communicated any evidence to support these claims. Providing additional context and background on the installation of these camera locations—for example, the collision data both prior to and after a camera is installed—could improve the community's understanding of these tactics. Dissemination of information like this may also lead certain residents to feel both more informed and confident that the city is investing in productive solutions and policy.

Hamill says that the LPD is concerned with every crime and crime victim within the city. "We conduct detailed analysis to determine how to deploy our measures to most positively affect our community. I believe LPD does a good job of working with our community, but we also believe we can always do better."

Simmons says that his goal as a member of the City Council is to advocate for Laurel residents on issues important to them, such as reducing crime levels and improving safety.

"For me, the enjoyable part of the job is being able to help people get to the bottom of whatever they're trying to figure out," he notes. In a follow-up email, Simmons writes, "I know the LPD is actively tracking and responding to trends they're seeing and would look forward to their analysis and understanding of what factors are at play and recommendations they have—if there's things we can do to help improve or shift the trend."



Hannah Hoffman is a Laurel resident of six years with a background in data and technology. For this article she spent dozens of hours collecting, researching, and mining through the data.

Hot Stuff from the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department



BY CARREEN KOUBEK AND MIKE SELLNER

Wreaths Across America

It is the mission of Wreaths Across America to “Remember the Fallen...Honor Those Who Serve...and Teach the Next Generation the Value of Freedom.” It is because of this mission that members of the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department are proud to be a small part of this worthy and heartwarming event.

On December 17, 2025, we joined millions of others in over 5,500 locations, and came together at Ivy Hill Cemetery to honor, remember, and teach future generations the unswerving dedication of our fallen veterans.



The service began at the Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center, where we placed wreaths at the entranceway for our fallen heroes, alongside individuals from all branches of our military and first responder organizations. Our representatives from the LVFD were President Vic Whipple and Corporate Secretary Mike Sellner, who is also a Navy veteran.

This solemn ceremony then held a processional from the Laurel Municipal Center to Ivy Hill Cemetery, where volunteers from the community placed wreaths at each veteran and first responder's gravesite, saying their names so they will never be forgotten.



Thank you to Laurel resident Lisa Wright, who organizes this event for Wreaths Across America, and to all the volunteers who participated to ensure those who served their country are remembered for generations to come.



Holiday Service for Others

On Dec 22, 2025, it was a privilege of the members from the LVFD Company 10 to join members from the Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad Company 49 and Laurel Police Department to participate in Laurel's 11th Annual Fill-A-Truck event.

Thanks to our community members and partnerships with local businesses (American Legion Post 60, Atlantic Union Bank, Bethany Community Church, Maximum Performance Physical Therapy, Mission BBQ, Fred Frederick Dealership, Academy Ford Dealership, and XPO Logistics), we were able to get enough donations to provide support to several families in the Laurel area, dropping off wrapped presents and food items to give local families a holiday season they would never forget.



Numerous pieces of emergency apparatus went on a procession through the City of Laurel, with Santa in tow, and delivered the holiday gifts with lights, sirens, and air horns announcing Santa's arrival. It was a joyous evening for both our first responders and recipients of your generous donations. Thank you to everyone involved; we look forward to providing this event to our Laurel community for years to come!

New Officers for 2026

President Vic Whipple, Chief Brian Cox, and the LVFD members are proud to announce that on January 9, members of the LVFD came together to vote, electing the following officers:

President – Vic Whipple
 Senior VP – Wes Burns
 Junior VP – Dove Robison
 Secretary – Mike Sellner
 Recording Secretary – Careen Koubek Allen
 Treasurer – Rosa Maher
 Financial Secretary – Janette Lovell
 Fire Chief – Brian Cox
 Deputy Chief – Dave Riley
 Truck Captain – Willie McCluney
 Engine Captain – Mike Falanga
 Engine Captain – Greg Masenheimer
 EMS Lieutenant – Riley Law
 3-year Trustee – Jim Codespote
 3-Year Trustee – John Fairall
 1-year Trustee – Simone McCumber
 1-year Trustee – Rick Bittinger

The LVFD membership would like to send its deepest appreciation to those who served in 2025.

January/February 2026 Calls for Service

In January and February of 2026, Fire and EMS LVFD members provided 1,060 calls for service.

As a volunteer organization, we consider it both a privilege and a responsibility to serve those in need, especially during some of the most challenging moments of your lives. We take this commitment seriously, so please stay safe, and remember that we are here for you whenever we are needed.

Become a Member

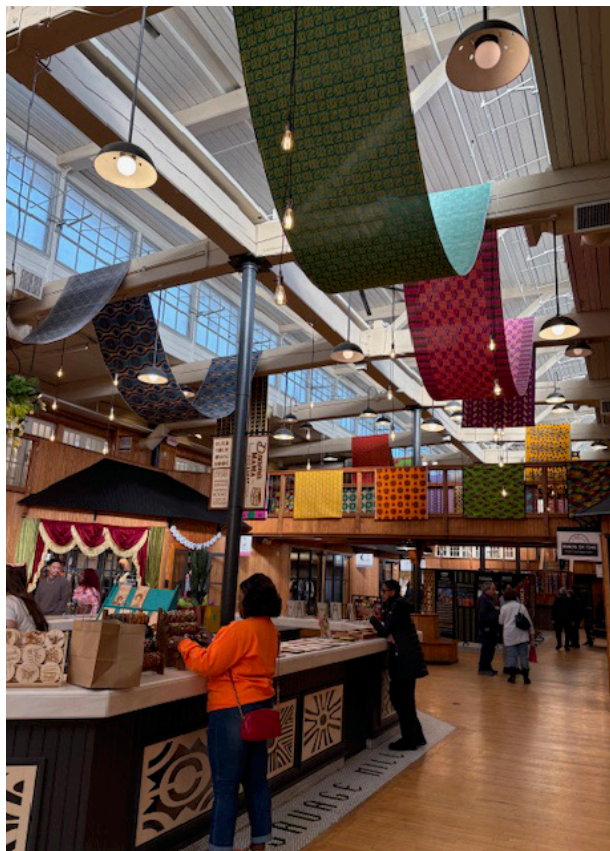
The Laurel Volunteer Fire Department is always looking for new members to allow for more station coverage and to help our community. If you are interested in becoming a member, please visit www.LaurelVFD.org/membership, and apply today! Our motto, “Service for Others,” is not just a tag line; it's a way of volunteering and giving back to our community!



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAUREL VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

COMMUNITY

ANGIE KOZLOWSKI



Studio Proprietress Shares Passion for Teaching, Fabric, and History



BY ANGIE LATHAM KOZLOWSKI

Leatha Leona Woods, the owner of Leona's Sewing Studio in Savage Mill, has been sewing nearly her entire life. She has also been drawn to learn about Africa for just as long. Her interest in Africa and African fabrics began when she was a preteen, thanks to her many visits to a bookmobile. She was also a budding seamstress in those years. She recalled that as a young girl, "I used to study Ethiopia a lot, and then the first person that I met to supply me with African fabric was Ethiopian."

Her interest in and early aptitude for sewing led her to be selected for a five-year commercial sewing program at a vocational high school. She continued to sew, making clothes for herself and taking on clients during her successful 35 years in corporate America that included a stint with the Department of Homeland Security.

But now, in "soft retirement," she has found herself doing what fulfills her. She loves teaching "her kids," and loves the grassroots nature of her business, being one that thrives on referrals. She says that her business model is teaching in a small, intimate setting with quite a bit of one-on-one attention, and a whole lot of fun.

Woods noted that her Ethiopian contact has been selling her fabrics since she was about 14 years old. As she became more interested in the different fabrics,

Leona grew closer to the suppliers, who, in turn, embraced her and began sharing the stories told by the fabrics. They relayed not just the stories of the fabrics themselves, but also where they originated and how they were made.

Woods uses African fabrics in her sewing classes, especially with those who are new to sewing. She says, "I love using it for teaching because it is such a very easy textile to work with," and because "[I] always want to find the easiest way for us to get you to where you need to be, because I want you to be hooked like me. I've been sewing for fifty years."

"Threads of Heritage" Exhibit

Seeking fulfillment not found in her 9-to-5 career, Woods opened Leona's Sewing Studio in Historic Savage Mill 11 years ago.

In the early 1800s, the Carding building was used for processing raw cotton, carding, spinning, and weaving. Underscoring her gratitude for being able to tell a new story—very different from the one that formed the early history of the mill, and not shying away from acknowledging the weightiness of her charge—Woods observed that she "intentionally came to the mill" knowing its history, but also knowing that she "could

reimagine my people in here another way." She described Savage Mill as "the perfect backdrop for me to work with cotton [fabrics], knowing that I am doing the work in the mill as it was intended," with the sewing studio.

Woods welcomed the opportunity to curate an exhibit for the mill, titled, "Threads of Heritage: African Print Fabrics & the Stories They Carry." Speaking with glowing praise for the supportive management and staff at Savage Mill, Woods says the idea to create the exhibit sprung up organically during a conversation in her studio with some of the mill team. As she rolled some African fabrics that had come in, she asked them if they knew that the fabrics tell stories. They did not know that about the African fabrics but thought they were beautiful and that it would be nice to display them. She was all for the idea.

That serendipitous conversation led to nearly one month of preparation for the exhibit's February 12 opening. The physical installation of the exhibit took about two days and required cranes to hang the fabrics from the ceiling rafters in the New Weave Commons building.

In describing what the exhibit meant to her, Woods said, "I'm just honored. Overwhelmed. Grateful."

Woods then read her opening night remarks:

There are journeys that begin long before we realize we are traveling. For me, this one began as a little girl stepping into a bookmobile. Each visit carried me into the continent of Africa through stories, images, and histories that stayed with me long after the doors closed. I returned there again and again, not knowing then that those early encounters would shape how I see fabric, culture and belonging.

Over time, African print fabric moved from inspiration to practice. As I grew into my craft as a dressmaker, these textiles became part of my design language and, eventually, the foundation through which I teach. This exhibition is not a performance, nor is it a personal showcase. It is an act of stewardship, made possible by the lived experiences of artisans, suppliers, and community members, many of whom come directly from the countries represented here. Their voices and generosity shape this work.

This story is also inseparable from the space we are standing in—Savage Mill, built in 1822, is tied to the history of cotton and to the enslaved people who bore that burden. Today we gather here in a place where our ancestors could not stand freely.




"Threads of Heritage: African Print Fabrics & the Stories They Carry" was one of nine featured events at the mill to honor Black history under the overall theme of "History Remembered: Futures Reclaimed." The vibrant exhibit featured colorful fabrics draped throughout New Weave Commons rafters, as well as display panels highlighting African fabrics, their history, and story vignettes. A community quilt was created during the exhibition, which ran through April 3, 2026.



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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Fred Frederick: In His Own Words



BY KEVIN LEONARD

Fred Frederick, who passed away in January, was a Laurel icon. Since he opened his Chrysler dealership in its present location on Route 1 in 1959, he was involved in more community efforts than probably anyone. When I interviewed him in his office in 2014, he had so many stories that my recorder's batteries ran out. As I tried to politely leave and slowly backed out of his office, he was yelling, "Wait! One more! I have one more!" Here are some highlights from that interview.

Taking Over the Dealership

Kevin Leonard: When did you come to Laurel?

Fred Frederick: When I got out of the Marine Corps, I went to work for Lustine Chevrolet and later the DeSoto/Plymouth franchise became available here. In 1959 I opened the DeSoto/Plymouth store.

KL: What's the history of the garage before you bought it?

FF: It used to be the Chevrolet dealership and then it was Davis Distributing, which was a beer distributor. That was the use prior to my purchasing it.

KL: It was built in the early 1900s, wasn't it?

FF: Yeah, it's glass tile. You don't see that anymore. Some of it is cinder block but the original building was

glass tile. When I purchased it, up in the attic there were doors for cars in the early 1930s—new.

KL: In the attic?

FF: In the attic. And fenders. You probably don't realize it, but back in the early '30s they shipped cars by rail and the dealer put them together.

KL: How many pieces would there have been?

FF: [laughs] I don't know—that was before my time. But I know they did that, and these were parts left over. The door panel, for example, was about an inch and a half thick and the glass was already in the door. So it was the whole door assembly. And the fenders—there was more metal in the fenders than in the whole side of a new car today.

Community Involvement

KL: When did you first start becoming involved in community affairs?

FF: Right after I came to Laurel.

KL: What were some of the things you were doing back then?

FF: We were the original Chamber of Commerce.

KL: Who do you mean by "we"?

FF: Bob Kluckhuhn; Colonel Phil Pope, the past commander of Fort Meade; John Sippel; Wolford Berman; and Melvin Berman.

KL: So, what else did you do as far as community affairs?

FF: Well, I was Chairman of the Laurel Regional Hospital and on the Hospital Commission for Prince Georges County. One thing I did as Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce—this was when Ted Agnew was governor—for the soldiers at Walter Reed and the hospital at Fort Meade, we had a day at the races for them. I put that thing together not realizing how big it was going to be. They have a place in front of the clubhouse seats—we had it filled with home-cooked food given to us by people in the community. It was so big we were out of control. Number 1, we had to rent trucks to get it all over there. We had funny money we gave to the soldiers. Plus, the people—the old hard-nosed betters that don't say hello, go to hell, nothing—would go down and give these guys a real ticket. Plus, we had all of these gifts that we auctioned off so that they could use the money. We had 60-some patients. They had buses converted into ambulances, bringing them in on stretchers, the whole thing. And the racetrack, who was a little reluctant to start with, they jumped right in and did whatever they could do to make it as good as it could be. That was a community effort.

“Open” Housing in the 1960s

KL: When you say “open” do you mean no discrimination?

FF: Yes. We delivered that to the Pentagon.

KL: What do you mean you “delivered to the Pentagon”?

FF: We went over and met with [Congressman] Wilbur Mills. Melvin Berman and I went to the Pentagon with all of our documentation to say that we could deliver almost 70 percent but there were some apartments and houses and some rooming houses where families owned it and we couldn't deliver those. But we could deliver 70 percent open. Wilbur Mills—we met with him at 10:00 in the morning at the Pentagon in his office. He's drunk. And spitting on my tie. He says, “Let me tell you something, Fred. You f*** with my troops and we will not only not frequent the city of Laurel, we'll wipe her right off the map.”

KL: He was a piece of work.

FF: He was a piece of work. And, as I recall, there were six two-to-four-star generals in the room. He was the head of the Armed Services Committee. And when he spit on my tie because he was sloppy drunk at 10:00 in the morning, I said, “Congressman, I am disappointed in you and what you stand for and I'm outta here.” And Mel Berman says, “Fred, let's get outta here.” We walked out with an officer and he's apologizing. I told him, “You know, I have always respected the military, but I have a lot of respect for you guys for putting up with that.”

KL: Do you think Laurel's housing boom in the 1960s was an attempt to placate Fort Meade?

FF: No, I think there was a demand for housing and that was what instigated that.

KL: So, what happened with the Fort Meade demand?

FF: Nothing really happened. Because it was the law everybody had to accept any applicant.

KL: But in terms of Laurel and Fort Meade, was anything ever formally resolved?

FF: No, it just kind of took its own course.

Political Office

KL: How come you never ran for office?

FF: I did. I ran as a Republican for county commissioner. Back then they had county commissioners.

KL: What year was that?

FF: Jeez, I don't even remember. Probably in the '60s.

KL: Did you ever have any aspirations to run for mayor or the city council?

FF: No. I don't know if you ever went to a city council meeting. It's torture. [laughs]

Laurel's Growth

KL: How well has the city managed its growth, from your historical perspective, since the '50s?

FF: Not very well. We had a project back in the early '60s that was an urban renewal project that would have rebuilt the city from the south side of Main Street to the river and from Route 1 to Fourth Street. There was to be a city hall in the center and a city square in the center. The jail would have been on the third floor, but the building would look like a two-story building. Somewhere there must still be the model of that. The last guy I remember that had it was Harry Hardingham.

KL: Did they actually build a model of it?

FF: Oh, yeah. A 4x8-foot model.

KL: Obviously that didn't come to fruition. What do you think would've happened for the city if it had?

FF: Well, it would have expanded the historical desirability of a small-town atmosphere. The racetrack, for example, agreed to build a museum.

KL: What happened to that?

FF: We didn't get the project off the ground.

Old Laurel Stories

KL: What was it like for all those years being next to the Laurel Hotel?

FF: The Laurel Hotel wasn't that bad. Nat Diven and his wife ran a restaurant in there. Now the hotel wasn't that great, but they ran a restaurant there and that was successful. Now the Osbon Hotel—story has it—the guy mixed cough syrup in a bathtub and sold it on the street; that was really alcohol.

KL: Everybody talks about the Laurel Hotel. They don't talk about the Osbon Hotel.

FF: Things are different. There was a department store on Main Street, and it was snowing and raining, and I went in to get a pair of boots. They had a potbelly stove to heat the place. The guy that owned the department store and the guy that was the Ford dealer were playing checkers. I said, “I need a pair of boots.” He said, “Go



upstairs, they're on the far side of the building.” I go up and get a pair of boots, and I go down and said, “Okay, I got 'em. Here, let me pay.” He said, “See that cash register over there? Put the money in the cash register.” These guys never stopped playing checkers. [laughs] The Outriders Diner—you could go to the Outriders Diner at 6:00 in the morning and get \$10 million worth of information. But they all had to chip in to buy a *Morning Telegraph*. [laughs] They were all broke, but they had \$10 million worth of racing tips. [laughs] There's a hundred stories about horse racing. You know of Hohman Poist? Well, Hohman Poist was also an engineer, and he built the buzzers that the jockeys would use on the backstretch—and then throw 'em away—that would shock the horse. He would go get those units and bring them back and rebuild them and sell them again to the trainers. [laughs] And I remember a guy that painted a horse—eyes, nose—so he'd look different than he really was. Of course, they all had a tattoo on their upper lip. There was always somebody. And that was big business. Back then at 5:00 you couldn't cross Route 1 because the races let out. The place was packed with people. So many stories. Did you know Dr. John Warren?

KL: I know the name.

FF: Do you remember Keller's News Stand?

KL: Sure.

FF: John was in the back. You could go into the back of Keller's News Stand and there was a pot with hot dogs boiling in it. So, the county is raiding the newsstand—the health people. Two guys came in with badges. “Everybody out—we're closing this place up.” They get back where Warren was and they said “Did you hear us? Everybody out.” And Dr. Warren says, “Who are you?” “We're the county health department.” Warren said, “Glad to meet you. I'm the city health officer. Now you guys get out.” He was sitting there eating a hot dog and reading the *Telegraph*. [laughs] Those stories go on and on.

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.



Troop 1250: A Scout Is Human



BY SHANE WALKER

A scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. This is the Law of Scouting, and it has been unchanged since William D. Boyce brought scouting to America in 1910 from England, where it was founded in 1907 by Lord Baden-Powell. Laurel's Troop 1250 has been around since 1963, when James Van Daniker was scoutmaster. If you want more scouting history, there is a merit badge for that.

In January 2026, I took over as the new scoutmaster of Troop 1250, chartered by Saint Mary of the Mills Catholic Church. Similar to becoming the librarian at my own Laurel Elementary, becoming the scoutmaster of the troop I was in as a youth feels quite satisfying.

The world has changed since I was a kid. There are merit badges for artificial intelligence and cybersecurity now, and there is an official position in the troop as the webmaster. Our flashlights are brighter, tents are lighter, and purifying water is easier than ever. Most of the changes have been to improve the scouting program and experience, but with change comes fear.

"They are adding a thirteenth point to the Law," a retired troop leader warned me. "A scout is human." This was, apparently, to prevent artificial intelligence from earning the esteemed Eagle rank. "Can you believe that?"

I could not believe it, and for good reason: the information came from an April Fool's article. Still, there are apps to help us identify plants just by scanning them with our phones. Software can analyze your rope-bridges to help you improve their design. It might even be possible for a program to help you develop a plan to finish the last thirty requirements you need to earn Eagle when you only have a year left. We *do* have better tools now.

But it wasn't Copilot that shoveled dirt at Laurel High school's baseball bullpens. I didn't see ChatGPT

with boots and bags over at Discovery Park picking up trash and returning that shopping cart to the Giant. There is an Eagle project coming up at Saint Nicholas' church—Gemini didn't sign the RSVP. Councilman Simmons provided the troop with a list of Laurel residents in need of being dug out during our recent winter event, and it was flesh and bone that broke the ice and cleared the walkways.

The world has changed, but not really. How can someone be helpful? How can someone be kind? What does it mean to do a good turn daily? One of our most recent Eagles said it best in his last meeting: "Scouting taught me a lot about being a good person, and I know that will help me for the rest of my life."

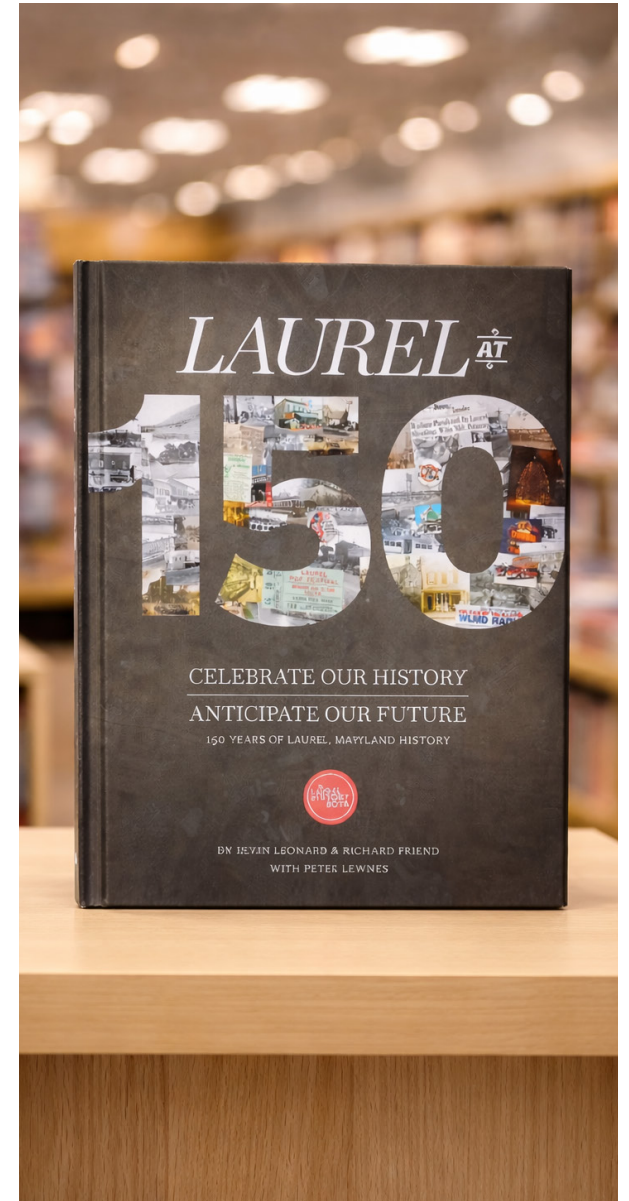
The scouts were fine before my tenure and they will be after. For my part, I want to walk through the Main Street Festival as a troop, trudge through the Patuxent River picking up trash along Riverfront Park, and backpack Montgomery Street until it turns into Riding Stable Road, just for practice. I want to double our numbers and wash cars in the church's parking lot to fund gear for another patrol. I want my son to be prepared for this changing world with unchanging virtues. More than anything, I want to try and leave this world a little better than I found it. A scout *is* human.

May the Great Scoutmaster of all Scouts be with us until we meet again.



Shane Walker is the Media Specialist at Laurel Elementary School. More than a lifetime resident in Laurel, he is a lifetime member of its greater community. As a writer, he focuses on inspiring harmony through diversity of thought.

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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*.

1816

There were four competing stagecoach lines running from Washington to Baltimore, through Laurel on the Washington Turnpike, which much later became Route 1. The six-hour trip cost \$6.

1911

In November, only a month after the Laurel Race Course opened, “a well organized effort by a band of notorious race track crooks to flim-flam better of other cities on the results of the Laurel races was unearthed.” Using hand signals and waving handkerchiefs, the gang flashed the race results to a series of crooks, with the final one having “arranged direct communication with New York, and from there the results could be dispersed to other cities fully an hour before the news could be sent through regular channels.”

1916

In March, James P. Curley, President of the Patuxent Bank in Laurel, announced that the bank “has, by appropriate action of the stockholders, gone into liquidation.”

1918

In January, after being given the Laurel Race Course for “war purposes,” the War Department began renovating some of the buildings to be used as a training facility for engineer units before shipping out to France. “The officers will use the club house for headquarters and the jockeys’ club house will be used as a hospital for the Engineer Corps. ... Pending complete camp arrangements, the men are sleeping in the old Cotton Mill.”

1920

In December, the Maryland Tobacco Growers Association advertised a “Grand

Rally Speaking and Band Concert” to “Liberate Tobacco” [whatever that meant]. The meeting was in Upper Marlboro and the ad stated, “Everybody Come Early, White and Colored.”

1923

In December, the Post Office Department notified Laurel’s Postmaster, Gustavus B. Timanus, that Laurel would soon be elevated to a “second-class office” as soon as all residents display house numbers and install mailboxes. A second-class office meant free carrier service delivering mail to residences. Previously, residents had to pick up their mail at the Post Office in the Patuxent Bank building.



1931

The Mid City Arena, a huge outdoor, wooden boxing arena, was built on what is now Wilbert Lane, just north of the point where Route 1 northbound and southbound converge in North Laurel. The arena could hold 10,000 fans and offered parking for 3,000 cars. From the start, attendance was dismal. It was sold in 1932 and renamed the Twin City Arena. For the second season in 1932, light heavyweight champion Maxie Robinson headlined, but only 2,000 fans showed up. Fight records show no activity after 1933 but, mysteriously, there are no newspaper articles describing its demise. Was it abandoned and left to rot? Was the enormous amount of wood used in its construction later repurposed for the war effort? No one seems to know.

1936

In April, the first full-color movie was shown at the Laurel Theater on Main Street. Sponsored by DeWilton H. Donaldson, a dealer for the National Electrical Supply Company, the technicolor film was the comedy *Three Women*.

1948

Laurel Raceway, the harness track renamed Freestate Raceway in 1979, on Route 1 south of Savage, hosted the Howard County Fair in 1948 and 1949. With the regular slate of harness races also running, the infield was transformed into a huge fairground with a circus atmosphere. The highlight of the fair at Laurel was an appearance by The Great Zacchini, known as The Human Cannonball. Hugo Zacchini was the head of a family of Italian daredevils. At the Howard County Fair at Laurel Raceway, Zacchini performed his signature act—being shot 200 feet over two Ferris wheels and landing in a net. In the late 1950s, when space travel became planned, Zacchini lobbied NASA to be its first astronaut. He claimed he was the only man experienced for space travel.



1967

The Laurel Police Department established a Detective Bureau for the first time.

1974

In March, the C&P Telephone Company in Laurel announced the first results from their Mobility Application Plan (MAP) program, which eliminated gender requirements for jobs. Through MAP, C&P recorded some firsts for the company: the first women installers, the first women “framehops,” and the first male clerk in the control center. The first female installer, 23-year-old Kathy Cole of Laurel, had a memorable first day on the job: “she encountered a dead man on the premises.” The man had apparently died of natural causes.

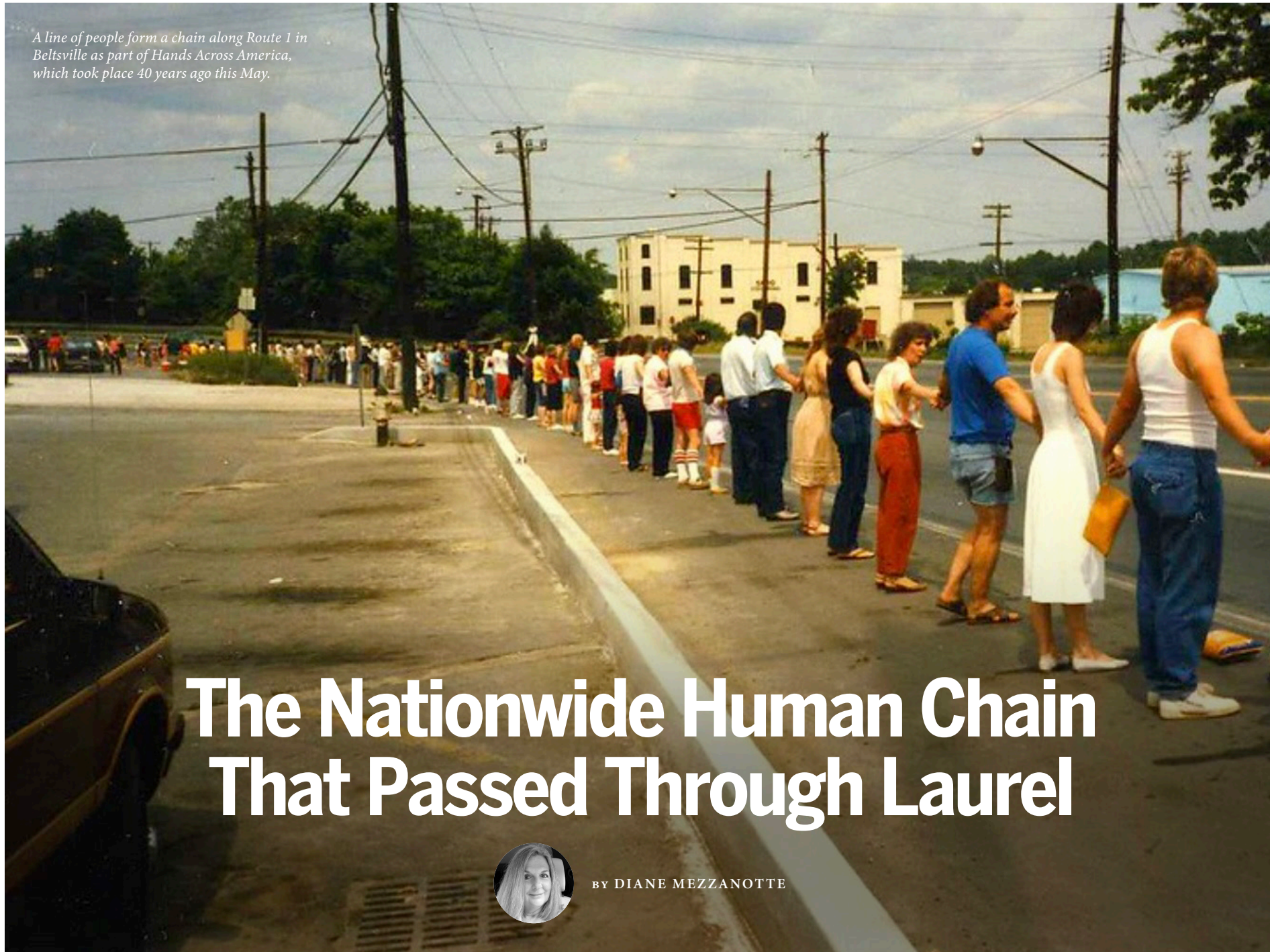


1995

Laurel High School graduate and master craftsman Jim Ladenburg started a project to build a model replica of the old Laurel Cotton Mill and the surrounding area. After years of work, Ladenburg, who does architectural furniture restoration, completed the old 9th Street Bridge and the building that currently houses the Laurel Historical Society. His attention to detail, for instance, extends to replicating the exact number of the bricks in each row and creating tiny authentic terra cotta rain gutters from the 1800s. Unfortunately, Ladenburg couldn’t find any interest in his amazing model with the city or the Laurel Historical Society and has since stopped work on it.

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.

A line of people form a chain along Route 1 in Beltsville as part of Hands Across America, which took place 40 years ago this May.



The Nationwide Human Chain That Passed Through Laurel



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE

This May 25th marks the 40th anniversary of one of the most iconic charitable events ever held: Hands Across America. The goal was to form a human chain stretching across the country to raise money to fight homelessness and hunger in the United States. Although skeptics called the idea impossible, the organizers were highly successful in their endeavor, notwithstanding a few gaps in the desert.

More than 150 miles of the human chain ran through Maryland, including a long stretch along Route 1 through College Park, Hyattsville, Beltsville, and Laurel. Some Laurel residents who participated in the event shared their memories with me—and we compared

notes, because I, too, took part in the event somewhere in the countryside of western Pennsylvania.

Building on the Success of “We are the World”

Hands Across America (HANDS) was the second massive charitable event organized by a non-governmental organization called USA for Africa. Its wildly successful “We Are the World” single and music video had launched in March 1985 and raised over \$80 million to help fight hunger in Africa. That helped to build momentum for a related event that July: the famous Live Aid concerts. Taking place over 16 hours at two venues—London’s Wembley Stadium

and Philadelphia’s JFK Stadium—the star-studded concerts were broadcast live around the world and raised over \$120 million for relief efforts in Africa.

Fresh off those events, USA for Africa launched HANDS in October 1985 to bring awareness to the homeless problem in the U.S. and to raise funds for hunger-related charities. Led by founding sponsor Coca-Cola, more than 70 corporations signed on to sponsor the event, joined by hundreds of churches, civic organizations, and media outlets who helped spread the word and enlist participants. Anyone wishing to reserve a spot in the line was asked to donate \$10; an official tee shirt to be worn during the event was available for an extra donation.

Celebrities could sponsor a mile of the route for \$13,200 (to cover the estimated 1,320 people needed per mile); music megastar Prince reportedly was the first to do so. A theme song was recorded—featuring relatively unknown singers Joe Cerisano and Sandy Farina, backed by the hugely popular band Toto—and a star-studded music video was launched in January to coincide with the Super Bowl.

After months of preparation and publicity, at 3 pm EDT on May 25, 1986, hundreds of radio stations across the country simultaneously played the event’s theme song as 5.4 million people held hands in a line stretching nationwide over 13 states, from New York City to Long Beach, California. The chain held for 15

minutes as participants sang along to the event's theme song, as well as "We Are the World" and "America the Beautiful," playing from boomboxes and car radios along the route.

Laurel Area Participants Remember
Beth Robinson, a lifelong Laurelite, remembers hearing about HANDS on local radio station WPGC. "They talked about it for weeks," she says. Intrigued by the idea, she purchased both the 45-rpm single and the official tee shirt and marked her calendar. "I remember my husband and I wanted it to be successful, but we weren't sure people would participate." They were proven wrong when they left their home around 1 pm on the day of the event to take their spot near the Laurel Mall. "We saw tons of people walking toward Route 1," Robinson remembers. "People had parked at the Montgomery Ward's lot, and everyone was lining up on the side of the road. People were playing music on their radios, and we all were hanging out." At the designated time of 3 pm, she says, "everyone grabbed hands. As far as you could see, up and down Route 1, hundreds of strangers held hands and rocked back and forth while they were singing. I thought it was so cool." She says she has vivid memories of the event and considers it one of the neatest things she has ever done. In terms of excitement, "I would liken it to when I saw Elvis Presley perform at Cole Field House at University of Maryland."

Nicole Scafone, who grew up in the Hyattsville-Beltsville corridor, also participated in HANDS. She was 11 at the time and heard about the event on the radio and from school friends at St. Jerome's. She and her family bought the tee shirts and the record and participated in it together. "We were given a spot when we registered," Scafone remembers. "We and other families from our block stood outside the childcare center at St. Jerome's. We waited on the sidewalks until it was time to move to the street. It was so crowded, all along Route 1, and the line was doubled up." She doesn't remember whether the reason behind the event made an impression on her at the time. "At 11, I was just excited to be doing something different like that. Fun was fun!"

Another longtime Laurel resident also remembers the event. Frank Sandor had just moved to Laurel in 1983. "I don't even know how I knew about it," Sandor says. "We didn't have the kind of media access we do now." He remembers that it was a sunny Sunday afternoon when he and his

Lyle Wolinsky sells wild summer fun. See B-1.

Laurel Leader Since 1897

VOL. 90, NO. 33 5-2000 LAUREL, MARYLAND, THURSDAY, MAY 29, 1986 3 SECTIONS 48 PAGES 50 CENTS

Office zoning passes
Residents lose 2-month battle

Elliott Finkelstein

The Mayor and City Council split their votes Tuesday night, but in the end approved a controversial zoning change that would allow townhouse office buildings at the edge of the Oak Grove subdivision.

The mayor and council voted 4-2 in favor of changing a 1 1/4-acre wooded lot along Seventh Street from its current R-55, or single family home designation, to O-B, or the office building zone.

The vote capped a two-month battle over the property in which scores of Oak Grove residents banded together to fight the



Staff photo by Doug Kasputin

Holding hands for hunger

They held hands and they sang, and for 15 minutes Sunday, they were 5 million people strong forming a human chain from coast to coast for HandsAcrossAmerica. They joined hands to raise money to fight hunger, young and old, tall and small. In the Laurel area, thousands of volunteers joined the ribbon of humanity that wound its way along Route 1, linking up with the rest of the country for one glorious moment.

A high-angle photo by Doug Kasputin on the cover of the May 29, 1986 edition of the Laurel Leader captures the line of attendees along Washington Boulevard in front of the Tastee Diner and what was at that time Herb's Carry-Out.

daughter, who was 3, made their way to their assigned spot along Route 1 by the California Inn. "I wanted my daughter to experience it," he says. "It came at a time when the world was coming together as a community, with Live Aid and 'We Are the World.' It was a very uplifting thing, a sort of kumbaya moment." He loved how people were singing together, and how unifying the experience was. To commemorate the event, Sandor picked up a rock and wrote "Hands Across America" and the date on it to keep as a memento.

HANDS Leaves a Legacy

Looking back on HANDS, it's hard to believe that an event of such magnitude was so effectively organized without the benefit of the Internet and social media. Overall, the human chain really did connect the country—both figuratively and literally. There were some gaps here and there, but people worked together to help the organizers find creative solutions wherever possible. Ranchers in New Mexico lined up their cattle to fill a gap; "Boats Across the Alleghany" bridged a river-driven gap in Pittsburgh; participants in sparsely populated areas used long ribbons and ropes to connect their segments; in New Jersey, public transit pulled over and had their riders fill any gaps they saw; and, here

in Maryland, a Maryland-based scuba diving group went underwater in the Susquehanna River to connect the line between Perryville and Havre de Grace when permission to use the Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge was denied.

All told, approximately 5.5 million people participated in HANDS and over \$36 million was donated—with the bulk of the donations coming from individual participants rather than corporations. After expenses, though, just \$15 million was left for hunger-related charities, leading to some criticism. Spokespeople from USA for Africa, however, considered the event a success, noting that \$15 million was a significant amount and that the event, along with Live Aid and "We Are the World," created a new sense of community and compassion that would continue into the future.

Robinson is a good example of that lasting effect. She credits HANDS for helping to raise awareness of hunger in America, which she notes is still a very real issue. "I especially get upset knowing that 60 percent of our military members E4 [rank] and below still rely on food stamps." While on lengthy work assignments overseas, Robinson and her husband helped servicemembers by collecting and distributing coupons for diapers, baby formula, and other

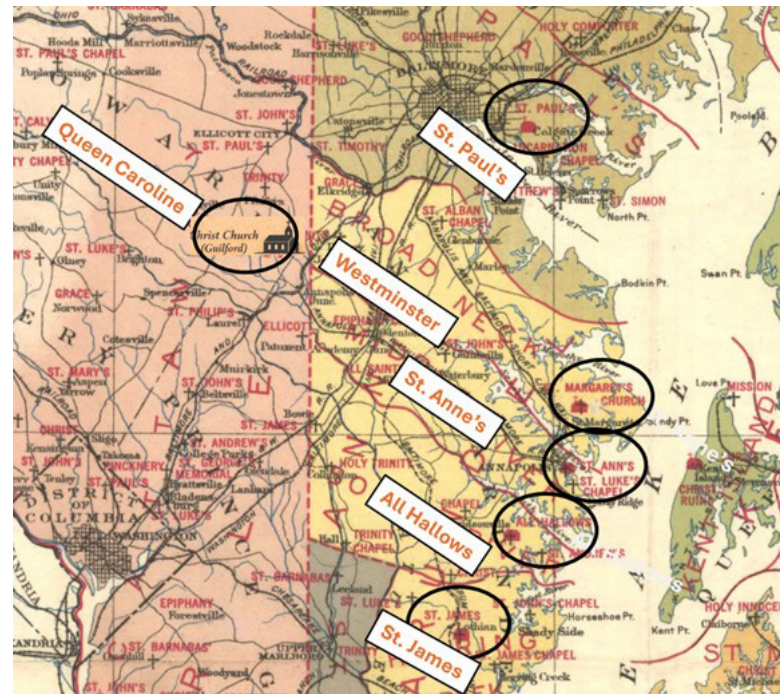
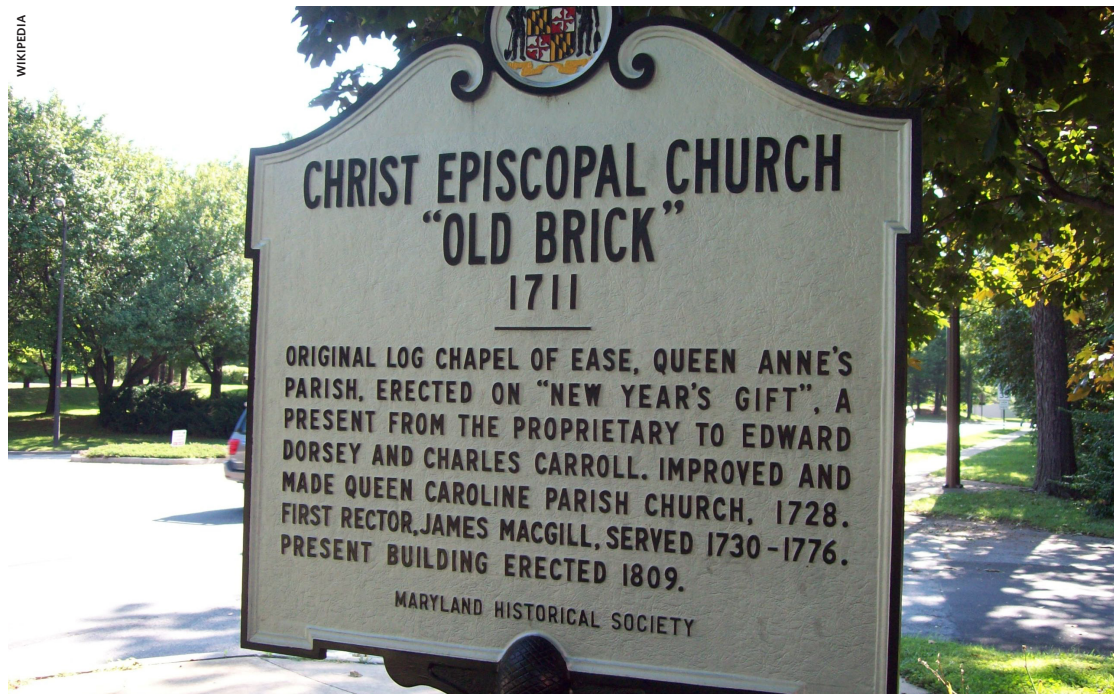
expensive necessities, to be used at the base's commissary.

A Gallup Poll taken a year after HANDS showed a huge increase in volunteer activities across the country, largely inspired by the groundswell of public support for the three events ("We Are the World," Live Aid, and HANDS). Prior to 1985, only about 14 percent of Americans had regularly donated their time, skills, or money to charitable causes; in 1987, that percentage leaped to 45 percent, per the Gallup poll. After that initial surge, the rate of volunteerism slowly decreased, but has consistently been reported as between 25 and 30 percent for the last 40 years, with a drastic but short-lived uptick immediately following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001.

Clearly, HANDS and its sister events did help to change the world. For many of us, it remains an indelible memory of a sunny day in May when the whole country joined hands.

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Diane Mezzanotte is a staff writer and member of the Board of Directors for The Laurel History Boys. In addition to covering Laurel city municipal news, she also reports on all things from South Laurel.



Christ Church and the Religious Landscape of Colonial Maryland



BY WAYNE DAVIS

The origins of Christ Episcopal Church in Columbia, Maryland—originally known as the Elk Ridge Church—are deeply entwined with the political, religious, and geographic transformations of colonial Maryland. This article investigates the complex development of Queen Caroline Parish, the ecclesiastical landscape that preceded it, and the socio-political context that shaped its creation in 1728.

The Establishment of the Anglican Church in Maryland

Maryland was founded in 1634 by Cecil Calvert (Lord Baltimore) as a haven for English Catholics, but from the beginning, the colony included a mix of religious groups, including Anglicans (members of the Church of England). For much of Maryland's early history, there was no established church, and religious tolerance, at least in theory, was part of the colony's founding principles. However, the 1688 Glorious Revolution in England, which resulted in the Protestant monarchy of William and Mary, had major repercussions in Maryland.

The Protestant Revolution of 1689 in Maryland was a bloodless coup that overthrew the Catholic proprietary government of Lord Baltimore. In 1692, the new Protestant-led assembly passed the "Act for the Service of Almighty God and the Establishment

of the Protestant Religion within this Province." This act created 30 Church of England parishes across Maryland, funded through local taxation.

The original four parishes, all without churches, within "Ann Arrundel" were: Herring Creek, South River, Middle Neck, and Broad Neck.

St. Anne's Parish, originally called Middle Neck Parish, established St. Anne's Church as the primary parish church, completed around 1700, and the parish took on the name of the church soon after. The same pattern is held for other parishes: South River became All-Hallows, Broad Neck became Westminister, and Herring Creek became St. James.

St. Anne's, being the parish church of Annapolis, the new colonial capital, was seen as the appropriate location to represent the official, royal presence of the Church of England in Maryland.

County Boundary Changes and Their Religious Impact (1698–1727)

In 1698, the upper portion of Anne Arundel County, including the lands along the Patuxent River and what is now modern-day Howard County, was temporarily transferred to Baltimore County jurisdiction. Yet the area remained remote from both the political seat in Baltimore and the parish seat of St. Paul's in Baltimore County.

During the nearly 30 years under Baltimore County's nominal control (1698–1727), the region's settlers lived in an ecclesiastical and administrative limbo. From a church perspective, the vestry of St. Paul's Parish was to offer meaningful oversight, deliver services, or collect taxes in this sparsely settled frontier. But it was remote from the southern part of this growing population. In 1727, the land was returned to Anne Arundel County. That transfer enabled the General Assembly to pass an act the following year (1728) formally establishing Queen Caroline Parish and explicitly recognizing the need for a dedicated parish to serve the frontier region between Annapolis and Baltimore.

The community in Elk Ridge had been dependent on traveling to St. Paul's Parish north of the Patapsco River near Baltimore, so an act was passed in 1728 "for Erecting a New Parish, out of that Part of St. Paul's Parish that lies in Anne-Arundel County, and out of All-Hallow's [formerly South River Parish] and St. Anne's Parishes in the said County."

Without coordination between counties and parishes, settlers could have been left without access to sacraments, poor relief, or the moral and social structure the Church of England was designed to provide.

Before Queen Caroline Parish was formally created, the Anglican community in the upper Patuxent region



had established a place of worship by 1711 called Elk Ridge Church as a satellite of St. Anne's Parish to serve this remote population. The Ridgely, Dorsey, and Hammond families found a home here, as they did at St. Anne's Church.

Administrative Hundreds

The concept of the "hundred" as an administrative unit in Maryland derived from English practice where a hundred traditionally represented an area that could provide one hundred men under arms or supported a hundred households. In Maryland since the mid-1600s, hundreds came to serve a similarly pragmatic purpose. Their primary functions included:

- Taxation Districts: Tax assessments were collected within each hundred.
- Militia Rolls and Muster Calls.
- Judicial Venues: Justices of the Peace presided over local courts within the hundreds, supported by sheriffs and constables.
- Religious Organization: Churchwardens and vestrymen often relied on the hundred structure to administer parish obligations.

In 1692, there were six hundreds in "Ann Arrundel" County, and by 1728, when Queen Caroline Parish was organized, the existing hundreds were Elk Ridge Hundred, Huntington Hundred, and Patuxent Hundred.

Parish Precincts

Tobacco was the cash crop in colonial Maryland, but it was also the backbone of both its secular economy and its ecclesiastical infrastructure. The legal mechanism for the parish's financial support was finalized in the Act of 1702, which mandated an annual assessment of "forty pounds of tobacco" for every taxable inhabitant. This covered the salary of the parish minister; construction, furnishing, and maintenance of church buildings and chapels; parish poor relief, including aid to widows, orphans, and the indigent; and burial expenses and administrative costs for vestries.

The 1728 Act for Improving the Staple of Tobacco required each parish to be divided into smaller units called precincts to facilitate survey and reporting of all tobacco plants; appointment of two local men per precinct to inspect crops and record plantings; and coordination of destruction of excess or low-quality tobacco, including stalks and suckers, to ensure quality standards.

Prominent Vestrymen and Families

The founding vestry of Queen Caroline Parish in 1728 included John Dorsey (son of Edward ca. 1682-1735), Henry Ridgely "the Surveyor" (ca. 1690-1749) and John Hammond (1685-1735), descendants of prominent Anglican families with deep roots in the religious and political life of Anne Arundel County. Their prior involvement in St. Anne's Church and Queen Anne Parish positioned them as natural leaders in the formation of the new parish.

The Dorsey Family. The Dorsey family served as the primary architectural and leadership bridge between St. Anne's in Annapolis and Christ Church (Queen Caroline Parish). This connection began with Edward Dorsey, who was a founding vestryman of St. Anne's and was commissioned in the late 1690s to oversee the construction of its first brick sanctuary. As the family shifted its economic focus inland toward the iron forges and tobacco fields of Elk Ridge, his sons, Caleb, John, and Joshua, fostered the St. Anne's model in their new Elk Ridge home. Caleb, with his son John, had allowed the Elk Ridge Church to be built on their land prior to Queen Caroline Parish being established. In 1738, they fulfilled their promise and legally transferred the two acres of "New Year's Gift" to the parish.

The Ridgely Family. The Ridgely family's foundational influence on Queen Caroline Parish spanned three generations of civil and ecclesiastical leadership, beginning with Col. Henry Ridgely Sr. (ca. 1635-1710), a high-ranking militia officer and Provincial Assembly delegate who originally patented the 268-acre Ridgely's Forest within the future parish bounds. His son, Capt. Henry Ridgely Jr. (1669-1700), solidified the family's social standing through his marriage to Catherine Greenberry, daughter of Col. Nicholas Greenberry, further intertwining the Ridgelys with Maryland's colonial elite before his early death and interment at St. Anne's. The lineage culminated in the work of Henry Ridgely III (the "Surveyor"), who inherited these vast holdings and served as a founding vestryman of Queen Caroline Parish.

The Hammond Family. Like the Ridgelys, the Hammonds were part of the landed gentry that helped shape the sociopolitical structure of central Maryland. John Hammond (1685-1735), a founding vestryman of Queen Caroline Parish, descended from Col. John Hammond (ca. 1645-1707)—a Protestant Associator and key supporter of the Church of England following the Glorious Revolution. Col. Hammond was a founder of St. Anne's Church in Annapolis after the 1692 Vestry Act and owned the Rich Neck estate on the South River. John Hammond's father, Charles Hammond (1671-1713), remained active in the civil and ecclesiastical life of Anne Arundel County, serving in the Maryland Assembly.

Read Hidden History of Howard County by Nathan Davis and Wayne Davis, published by The History Press, for more forgotten and hidden stories about Howard County.

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Laurel, Md.— a Wartime Study

Town Solves Soldier-Girl Problems

BY MARTHA STRAYER

This article is reprinted from
the *Washington Daily News*,
October 13, 1944

Its own young men gone to war and its streets crowded with Ft. Meade soldiers, this is how the little town of Laurel, Md., has so far successfully handled the same kind of servicemen-and-girls wartime problem that has shocked Washington with the brutal slaying of 18-year-old Dorothy Berrum.

Easy on Soldiers

Laurel, 19 miles out of Washington, is a wartime study from many angles.

Soldiers and their wives occupy literally every vacant room in the town and for miles in every direction; women help man its volunteer fire department; Laurel has four policemen for a normal population of 3000, now swollen to an unknown figure; its very nice USO center competes with taverns and one moving picture theater for soldier entertainment; soldiers stand in line to get on buses for Washington, Baltimore, Ft Meade; two military police are on duty each night; a replacement center, big Meade houses a constantly changing stream of young men

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Laurel's police chief, Lieut. Edward S. Brown, admits that this little town nearest Ft. Meade is easy on soldiers. It tries to keep them out of trouble, arrests them only as a last resort, and then detains them only until they can be taken over by military police. Laurel police have arrested nearly 100 race-track followers since the 51-day racing season opened in September, and in the same time have had practically no soldiers in custody.

HOSTESSES NEED REFERENCES

But Laurel and Ft. Meade learned lessons early in the war, and together have taken precautions that may have saved plenty of grief.

Taverns within town limits used to stay open till 2 a. m., some eating places were open all night. Police had trouble with early-morning brawls in eating places, with out-of-town soldier dates on the streets after late closings. Ft. Meade informed tavern keepers they would have to shut up shop by 11 p. m. if they wanted to keep on having unrestricted military business. They obeyed. Eating places followed suit. Troubles diminished.

But the servicemen-and-girls problem remained. Laurel's USO has young girl hostesses to dance with soldiers and help them have a good time in its attractive ballroom, movie theater, music room, lounge, reading room, soft-drink-and-sandwich bar. These girls must have references, etc., as at all such centers and at Army camp dances.

But buses run constantly from Washington and Baltimore, and girls ride them to meet soldier dates at Laurel—or just looking for soldier dates. Soldiers who can't get a pass to go to Washington or Baltimore usually can make it on the bus to Laurel to meet or pick up dates there. And after taverns and eating places close, there's no place for couples to linger except in doorways or on not-too-well-lighted streets.

That's when Laurel's small police force goes into action. Unobtrusive officers stand on the corner of Main-st and Baltimore Boulevard, watching little groups leave the closing taverns, picking out possible trouble-makers with experienced eyes.

"Now there goes one of them," says Patrolman Elwood L. Steldt, middle-aged, with four years' service as a Laurel policeman . . . "And there goes a bunch up the Boulevard . . . they'll go to another tavern beyond the town line, it closes later . . . then they'll come back here . . ."

Officers keep their eyes open, unobtrusively follow couples drifting off the principal streets, talk like Dutch uncles, still trying to avoid arrests, and trouble. Does the girl live in Laurel? If not, does she have any place to stay there? Where does she live? The next bus to Washington or Baltimore is due at such-and-such a time. Get on it and go home.

She goes. Her soldier date puts her on the bus and himself shoves off for Ft. Meade.

So far, the Laurel system has worked.

Wartime Laurel is a town of middle-aged and elderly persons plus girls, youngsters, soldiers and their wives and dates. Here are contrasting Saturday afternoon scenes. Upper right: Ft. Meade soldiers take a Washington bus as an MP watches. Lower right: No youth in mufti in sight on Main-st (Baltimore Boulevard). Above: Pvt. George McCabe and his visiting family on lookout for a room. They finally found one in a private home at \$10 per week (50 cents extra to brew coffee for the period). McCabe is soon to go overseas; his wife followed him from Tennessee to Texas to Laurel. Rooms are hard to get; many owners specify no children. Hotels virtually limit guests to soldiers and their wives. Some wives temporarily sleep in the Laurel police station. Many jobs are available to wives if they wish to remain in the town. —Star Photos

in uniform from all over the country.

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HISTORY

Laurel-based Institute for Colored Youths was Predecessor to Bowie State University



BY ANGIE LATHAM KOZLOWSKI

“Any effort to educate our fellow-man should invite favor and support. Nothing is lost to him who helps to better the condition of the unfortunate and helpless.”

— The *Afro-American Ledger* (October 12, 1901)

Praise and the promise of support from notable local and national public figures filled the full-page appeal for public financial support for the establishment of the Maryland Industrial and Agricultural Institute for Colored Youths in the *Afro-American Ledger*. However, following a decade of financial insecurity, the Institute was quietly closed and its mission moved to Bowie.

The institute was the vision of prominent pastor Rev. Dr. Ernest Lyon (pictured), who “starting without a dollar, except his own money,” had purchased 87 acres of property in North Laurel, Howard County, for the school. The institute was founded to provide Black youth not only the literary education but to “emphasize especially their industrial and agricultural training under competent instructors.” It was modeled on Booker T. Washington’s successful Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

The location of the institute was considered ideal for reaching Black youth, who were part of “three large and populous cities, viz., Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, and Annapolis, Md.,” which made up a “black belt” of the country with more than a quarter of a million Blacks living in the state of Maryland, according to the *Ledger*.

Despite the fanfare and hopeful beginning, funding for the institute was an issue from its inception. The institute was about two weeks from its opening date, October 30, when the full-page appeal was published. It included an extensive list of supporters of the project, well-known citizens, both White and Black, and sketch drawings of the existing building and ones yet to be built. There were several quotes from prominent local leaders endorsing the institute and from the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church Pastor, Rev. Dr. Ernest Lyon, the institute’s founder and president.

“The professions are crowded. It is just as honorable to work with the hand as with the head. You shall have my influence as well as my signature.”

— Ferdinand Claiborne Latrobe, Former Mayor of Baltimore and member of the Maryland House of Delegates

Located in Laurel, the institute would open in an area where existing overall efforts to educate Black youths were not sufficient to meet the needs of those students. Lyon was quoted in the *Ledger* saying, “there is no opportunity for industrial and agricultural education, except that offered by Cheltenham, a penal institution. It is this pressing necessity which caused us to organize this Institution almost single handed.”

Then-Mayor Edward Phelps of Laurel was quoted

as saying, “My life thus far, as a public man, has been devoted to education. We have just succeeded in erecting a magnificent building for a High School for the town. It took us ten years to reach the point. Your school is a necessity, and the best people of the town, as far as I know and can hear, are commending your movement. We will watch with interest your success.”

The amount raised by the pre-opening appeal was not disclosed. The appeal notice indicated that in addition to their education, students would benefit from a “wholesome Christian influence [and] they shall experience no barrier in reaching the highest and loftiest development possible to every American youth under the aspiration of the Stars and Stripes.”

Room rent, board, and tuition cost \$9.00 per month. However, of the 18 rooms in the main mansion, furniture was needed for about six rooms. Teachers’ salaries would cost \$2,000, and \$2,500 was needed for repairs, fuel, interest on mortgage notes, incidental expenses, insurance, and taxes. There were 11 pupils in the first class of students, 6 from Baltimore. Professor R. J. Pollard, a graduate of Hampton Institute, was hired as an assistant to Dr. Lyon.

In its inaugural year, the farm had three horses, carriages, carts, wagons, and some farming implements, but not enough to prosecute the work, the appeal noted. “We give this statement hoping that it might appeal to the sympathy of those who are in condition to help us.” The appeal also listed over 100 names of prominent Black and White “well-known” citizens, who had endorsed the effort, and included quotes from “prominent Marylanders and others.”

Unfortunately, state and federal funding was sporadic and far below the needs of the school. In 1902, the *Baltimore Sun* wrote that U.S. Representative Frank C. Wachter and the chairman of the Baltimore delegation at Annapolis, William J. Broening, had called on U.S. Commissioner of Education William T. Harris to include the Laurel-based Maryland Industrial and Agricultural Institute for Colored Youths in the annual appropriations under the Morrill Act of 1890, which mandated that states using federal land-grants and funds for teaching agriculture, engineering, and mechanical arts must either admit African American students or create a separate land-grant institution for them from the \$25,000 designated for agricultural colleges in the state.

Harris, however, believed that “the Laurel college had not been designated as a prospective recipient of any of the money appropriated.” Although Harris was informed that the State Legislature had recognized the Institute by appropriating \$1,000 for its use, and therefore was an officially recognized institution, he refused the request and the Maryland Agricultural College, a “whites only” college that became the University of Maryland College Park, received the entire \$25,000 appropriation that year.

The next year, while the institute was praised for having excellent results, it continued to struggle financially. The 1903 edition of the *Maryland Manual*

stated that the Institute received \$1,000 in both 1902 and 1903 from the State of Maryland.

The *Baltimore American* reported that a large portion of the 87-acre farm had been under cultivation with gratifying results, showing pronounced improvements in the crops from the previous year.

The Institute’s founders and supporters again made an appeal to the public for an annual subscription to guarantee the pay of three teachers, money to erect a trades building, and a dormitory for girls. That same year, school president, Rev. Dr. Lyon, was appointed Minister Resident and Consul General of the United States at Monrovia, Liberia, by President Theodore Roosevelt.

In 1904, the *Baltimore American* reported that enhanced school course offerings of cookery, carpentry, sewing, and other industrial lines, as well as a positive financial report, indicated a prosperous coming year for the school.

Likewise, in 1905, the *Baltimore American* reported that the acting president of the Institute, Rev. M.J. Naylor, addressed the formal opening exercises along with other notable people. The school’s enrollment had doubled from the previous year, and it had employed five teachers. The prospects were bright for a good year.

At the May commencement, the *Baltimore American* reported that visitors were met with samples of work completed by students, and that over the four years of earnest labor on the school farm, 55 acres were under cultivation. Rev. Naylor opened his commencement address observing that [the Institute had] 8 horses, 8 cows, a dozen hogs, and 40 persons to feed through the year; not a head of cabbage or a potato, or an ear of corn had been purchased.” He noted that all of these staple foods had been raised on the farm.

In the subsequent years, as financial issues continued to plague the Institute, a different kind of fundraiser was attempted. The *Afro American* reported that in 1909 colored farmers of Howard and adjoining counties met at the Laurel Institute for a fair and tournament to raise money for the school. In 1910, the State of Maryland had approved only \$500 for the Institute.

The inauspicious closure of the Institute happened sometime in the 1910 timeframe. Apparently, the Institute merged with the Bowie Normal School, which then became the Bowie Normal and Industrial School. When the agricultural program was transferred from Laurel to Bowie, there was little fanfare or reporting. Similarly, the sale of the 87-acre property by Dr. Lyon to Fulton R. Gordon, a prominent real estate developer based in Washington, D.C. in 1911, was also not widely reported at the time.

Absorbed by the State of Maryland over the next several years, the combined schools in Bowie eventually became Bowie State University, according to the Maryland State Archives.

Kevin Leonard contributed to this article.





PHOTOS BY NICK GIUMENTI

What's It Like to Jam with Alice Cooper?



BY JIM CLASH

The great European mountaineer Reinhold Messner once told me, “Fear is coming and coming when you’re waiting and waiting and going and going when you’re doing and doing.”

Messner’s observation is correct. As an adventure writer with *Forbes*, I’m pretty much afraid just before I do something extreme, but during the experience itself not so much so, whether it’s flying supersonic in an F-16 or to the edge of space in a U-2, or driving 253 mph in a Bugatti.

Now, granted, those are physical fears. What I did with Alice Cooper at the Rock ‘n’ Roll Fantasy Camp last fall in Scottsdale, Arizona, was entirely different, but fear-inducing nonetheless.

As a youngster in my hometown rock band, Tram, I had played Alice’s hit, “I’m 18,” countless times. I was only 17 at the time. Bobby Jeschelnik, lead guitarist in that band, remembers it that way, too. “While singing ‘I’m 18’ at St. Mary’s Hall, where we practiced and played at teen club dances, I wondered what 18 would actually be like. [laughs] I remember Mike Oakes even driving us to one of those early gigs in a baby-blue Lincoln!”

But at the fantasy camp, there would be no Bobby or Mike with me. I was to play the tune live with the real Alice. Talk about fear. It wasn’t physical this time, but mental. If I screwed up—and I very well could as I hadn’t been behind a drum kit in decades—I would only be embarrassed, not killed or maimed. Still, the fear of that is damn palpable.

Rock fantasy camp is the brainchild of David Fishof, a former music industry executive and tour manager of The Monkees who has steadily built the concept into an institution over the last three decades. The idea is simple: Let amateur musicians jam with bonafide rock stars. “This place is all about living dreams,” says Fishof, “about the smiles on our campers’ faces when they return home.”

Every camp features different celebrities. In addition to Alice, Rob Halford of Judas Priest headlined at ours. In January, at the big 30th anniversary camp in Miami, it was The Who’s Roger Daltrey.

Here’s how it works. First, you’re placed into a band according to your ability and song interests, then, for the next few days, immersed into a practice studio to choose and learn songs. Each band—our camp had 14—has a counselor, a professional musician, who guides the groups. Our coach was guitarist Ron “Bumblefoot” Thal, 56, who has participated in a dozen previous camps. He has also toured the world many times over with groups including Guns N’ Roses and Asia.

Members of our band, called “Go Ask Alice” (I got to name it), included vocalist Jay Nailor, the three guitarists Ken Palamar, Ken Gillett, and Michael Gutierrez, bassist Jen Van Orman, and myself on drums. Some were veterans of previous camps, and others were newbies like me.

Early rehearsals went surprisingly well, considering that none of us knew each other beforehand and that our musical interests varied somewhat. For example, some



Author Jim Clash played drums with legendary recording artist Alice Cooper (above left and opposite) and Rob Halford of Judas Priest (above, center) at Rock & Roll Fantasy Camp, which gives amateur musicians the chance to jam with bonafide rock stars.

group members wanted to cover Judas Priest's "You've Got Another Thing Coming," a song I had never heard, and "Slither," by Velvet Revolver. That second one not only had I not heard, but I had never heard of the band, either.

The night before our big Alice show, I found it difficult to sleep. I kept worrying that I would let the other band members down by performing poorly. Then there was Alice Cooper himself, and what he might think.

Suddenly, we were at the venue. After watching a dozen other bands perform, we were called up. Like real rock stars, we approached the stage to the audience's whoops and claps. Was this really happening?

Equipment was adjusted, Bumblefoot counted us down, and then we were off. I tried to keep a steady beat, not throwing in any fancy fills that might screw up my timing. The key to "I'm 18" is to hold the band's tempo back as the song builds; i.e., to not speed up. And do you know what? We did it. And we were pretty darn good.

Afterward, I nervously approached Alice and asked how we did, told him we chose "I'm 18" because it's fairly straightforward. "You did great," the shock rocker said, smiling. "You know, the simplest songs are always the biggest. We wrote 'School's Out' in like 15 minutes, '18' in maybe 10 minutes. All hits. That's usually how it goes."

I then asked him, given all of his fame, why he participates in these camps. He doesn't need the money and he's a busy guy.

"You know, it's the only time I get to meet fans," he said. "I'll be honest with you.

We do a show and then we get on a bus and go. I don't even have time to say hi to anybody. I do meet people, but never at a thing like this. Besides, I like hearing the bands do my songs."

Finally, I asked him after the fact what advice he would have given to calm us down before the show. "You know the song. Just play it. Honestly, we actually make it harder than it is. If you just get up there and feel it, that's it. You're a drummer. It's all feel. You're the guy driving."

Our band members were pumped coming off the stage. I personally felt a sense of relief. But that was all short-lived. We headed right back to the studio to rehearse for the Rob Halford performance the next day, and a gig later that night at Phoenix's Wasted Grain club. The show must go on. But, unlike with Alice, the nervousness had faded, just as climber Messner had predicted. Now it was, "We've got this."

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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*.*

Wait For Me: A Granite Ghost Story



BY RICK MCGILL

Rick McGill, who wrote a column about his time as an officer with the Laurel Police Department for *Voices of Laurel* for five years, has released his first novel, *Wait For Me: A Granite Ghost Story*. The novel is set in the 1890s silver-mining town of Granite, above present-day Philipsburg, Montana. The Laurel History Boys are proud to present this excerpt. The book is available on Amazon.

Prologue

In a small tourist town of eight hundred residents in western Montana, Steve and his fourteen-year-old daughter, Janie, wandered off the main town thoroughfare and admired the historic buildings on both sides of the street enjoying the summer sunshine. They'd come to explore the American West, and the wide-open Montana spaces and scenery were working their magic.

They chose Philipsburg when Janie wanted to see what the "real" Montana was like, not the one depicted in movies.

They stopped in front of the Opera House Theater, built in 1891, and Steve consulted his local map of interesting sights.

"The oldest continually operating theater in Montana," Steve said. "Nice old place, huh?"

"Look, Dad. There's a man watching us. Up there in that window."

In a second-floor window, they could see a man seated just inside the glass. At first, he was indeed watching them, but only briefly. Then his focus turned more up the street as if he was expecting to see something or someone coming down the road. It was hard to make out details, but he was on the senior side of life. His face looked like it held many stories—of hard times and hard work, as well as good times—all competing for expression.

"He looks like an Old West character," Steve noticed the awning over the front door. "That's the local museum, should we check it... Whoa."

The gentleman in the second-floor window suddenly vanished. He didn't get up and leave. He didn't close the shade. He didn't move at all, in fact. He just faded quickly from sight, as if he was never there.

"Did you see that? He just, like, disappeared," Janie said. She was used to all kinds of high-tech tricks, but even she was impressed.

He chuckled. "That was some pretty neat special effects. Probably draws lots of visitors."

They waited for a rickety farm truck to go by, bits of hay trailing in its wake, one more example of the "real" Montana Janie was looking for. Then they crossed the street to the museum and walked into the museum gift shop. An older gentleman with wavy silver hair and a white bushy mustache sat on a stool behind the counter, reading a book. He wore an ivory-colored shirt with a stiff, old-fashioned paperboard button collar, common in the 1800s, and a dark silk vest that hung loosely on his bony frame. An old ledger was open on the glass counter, no doubt part of the museum's collection of old records

and manuscripts.

He pushed his glasses back up his nose, and when he smiled, the lines in his face changed places. "Welcome to our museum, folks."

"Hi," said Janie.

Her father decided to ask about the disappearing effect they had seen in the mannequin upstairs.

"How do you make that mannequin disappear upstairs?" Steve asked. "That's pretty cool."

The old man was gently closing the old ledger book, but stopped and raised an eyebrow, and cocked his head to one side. "Mannequin? Oh... Oh!" He let the ledger close with a soft thump. "You saw something? Really?"

"Yeah. Pretty authentic. Do you have it rigged like that to draw people in, or what?"

"You really saw him? No one sent you over to get me all stirred up?" The old man took on a suspicious tone. "Last year, Charlene at the candy store told a gal to come over and—"

Janie giggled.

"Nope. No one told us anything," Steve said. "We were waiting to cross the street just now, and that guy you have in the window did what he was supposed to do, so here we are."

The old man smiled half to himself, then leaned forward and looked at Janie.

"You saw him, too?"

Janie nodded.

"Well, first, I'm sorry for sounding suspicious. You're both nice folks, and we're glad you're here visiting our town."

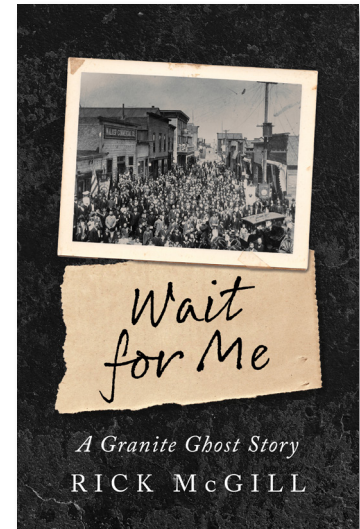
The man tugged his vest down straight. "And now, second, I also have to say that was no mannequin you saw upstairs. To tell the truth, I'm a little jealous, because I've never actually seen him myself."

Janie and Steve looked at each other in puzzlement. The man seemed sane enough—and, of course, he was in charge of the museum, so he must be responsible or they wouldn't have left him on his own.

The man cleared his throat and stood up. Reaching across the glass case, he introduced himself.

"Name's Ralph. As you can see, I run the gift shop here at our museum. Nowadays they call us 'docents.'" He leaned toward Janie, wrinkled his nose. "Kind of a frou-frou title if you ask me."

Steve shook Ralph's hand in return, "Steve. And this is Janie. It's her summer trip, and she picked Montana. We're out here from Baltimore. We love your town—a really cool, old-timey place."



Janie shook the man's hand, too.

"So, who is that guy?" she asked uneasily. "Do you mean he's a ghost?" She was unsure what to make of Ralph and what he was implying.

Ralph slid the old ledger off the counter onto a shelf. "Ah. Who is he indeed? Now that requires a full and thorough answer and cannot be rushed through. I hope you folks have some time to kill?"

Steve saw Janie's head bobbing in agreement and knew the afternoon was wide open—and apparently now decided.

Ralph could see that Janie was calling the shots. "Well, in that case," Ralph said, "the story also requires a nice cup of tea and a comfortable chair to go with it. Why don't you both take a wander through the museum, and I'll put a pot on the cooker? Take your time while I gather my thoughts and set up a place here on the table."

He motioned toward a long reading table and chairs in the center of the shop and turned to collect a few implements of hospitality from behind the counter.

Janie and Steve headed off to the displays while the tinkle of cups and saucers on a serving tray told of Ralph's preparations.

Once they were out of earshot, Steve said softly, "He seems harmless."

Janie smiled but wasn't quite sure what to think of the implications of an actual ghost upstairs. The natural inquisitiveness of her younger years had recently developed a skeptical armor. She was ready to hear the tale but expected a logical outcome.

Steve found the museum very interesting indeed. It told of the early days of the town, which had its roots in the mining boom of the late 1800s.

After exploring the museum exhibits, they returned and found Ralph in the gift shop. He set a beautiful silver serving tray containing cups, saucers, and a steaming pot of tea on the reading table in the center of the room.

"So..." Ralph beamed. "How do you like our oldies-but-goodies?"

Referring to the 19th-century kitchen exhibit, Janie said, "I can't even tell what some of those kitchen things do."

They all had a laugh.

Ralph busied himself with serving a proper tea, distributing the china, spoons, and napkins, and pouring

just the right amount of tea in each cup. As he set the pot back on the tray, Janie couldn't wait for the story to begin.

"So, tell us about that guy," Janie said. "I can hardly wait."

"Ah, but the waiting's the thing, young Jane." His use of her formal name got her attention, and the tone of his voice seemed to change, almost gaining a mannerism of some other place and time. He settled back.

"You see, towns come and go. Even this one will hang on someone's wall someday in faded, dusty old photographs. It's our job to remember and to pass on to others what's gone before."

He sipped some tea and smiled, a twinkle in one squinting eye, and began his tale.

"I hope you inspected carefully the photos of the town of Granite throughout our museum," Ralph said, "for it is Granite that we have to thank for most of the early success of this town and the surrounding area. The town had over three thousand people at the height of its population. All kinds of people: Italians, Chinese, Welshmen, Germans, Irishmen, Finns, you name it. You wouldn't know by visiting the crumbling ruins up the mountain now, but it was a busy place. Saloons, hotels, churches, stores, even a hospital. Just about everything a big town needs.

"But it all depended on the mine. It was a big silver mine—biggest in the world at that time. They crushed the ore up there, smelted it into big ingots, and shipped it out by train here in Philipsburg. Millions of dollars came out of that ground. But when the price of silver crashed in 1893, well, everyone just left. The town of Granite turned into a ghost town almost overnight, they say."

"So, what about the guy?" Janie asked. "What was his name?"

A half smile crept across Ralph's lips as he settled back in his chair, nodding slowly. "Ah. His name..."

Chapter 1

"Name?"

"Jack," said the newcomer, looking around the busy office of the Granite Mountain Mining Company, hoping for a job. It was a large open space, with work tables at odd angles, desks, and shelves full of ledgers and maps. Two men were huddled over a large set of diagrams on a square table, carefully mapping out new sections of tunnel. Another man fiddled with a coffee pot, spilling some on a big iron stove in the middle of the room—hot, sizzling streams dribbling down the side. A thin haze of cigar smoke hung near the ceiling.

After several weeks on the road—most of it with only himself for company—and now in the midst of so much hustle and bustle of the mine office, Jack failed to notice the heavysset man at the desk with his pen poised above the ledger as he looked over his glasses at Jack expectantly.

"Shall I guess your last name, mister, or just make one up for my book?" asked Tom Kelley, who was not used to being ignored by men begging for work.

Kelley was the manager for the Granite Mountain Mining Company, in whose offices Jack had arrived that morning looking for work. It was his responsibility to keep the company roster full of working men to ensure the flow of silver from the Granite mine continued to roll down the mountain.

The mine ran twenty-four hours a day, and wages were \$3 for a good day's work underground. The Granite Company was a solid place to work, and more often than not, Kelley could find room for anyone who showed up looking for employment.

Anyone, that is, who could pay attention long enough to get signed up.

"Sorry, sir," said Jack. "It's Fallon. Jack Fallon. I've been on the road for a while, and your place sure seems busy to me."

He shifted his tweed snap-brim cap from one hand to the other and hoped he hadn't ruined his chances. All he owned in the world lay in a rolled-up satchel at his feet, and the few coins in his pockets would barely last another week. Jack was from Ireland and started working in coal mines when he was seventeen. He put away enough of his wages to purchase passage to America in 1889 aboard the steamer *Abyssinia*. He would forever love the Old Sod, but America held the promise of adventures indescribable.

Word had it there were still opportunities to be had in Montana, and a man had only to show up with all his appendages and a decent command of the English language—and at some outfits not even that—to be added to the ledger books.

Since crossing into the state, he was convinced it was indeed a fine country. Montana held real promise. So he paused long enough to sign on for a real job with real income. His young back was as strong as the next man's, and this company looked like the right place to start.

Kelley looked the young stranger up and down and made a few quick judgments. He had intelligence behind his eyes, and it was clear he took in everything around him with the ease of someone who's worked in the dirt before. His accent was not long off the boat—a few years, perhaps. And the foreigners Kelley had known had generally not picked up the laziness of some Americans he'd met.

"I'm no stranger to workin' or minin'," said Jack. "I've heard this is a good outfit, so I hope you can use a hand."

"Okay, Mr. Jack Fallon. Now we're getting somewhere."

Kelley took down a few more particulars, such as Jack's age—twenty-four—and his birthplace, County Kerry, Ireland. Satisfied with his first impression, he filled in the "Date Hired" column in his ledger: May 12, 1893.

"You go with Mr. McFeeney over there," said Manager Kelley, "an' he'll take you to a crew in the middle of their shift. Payday is a week from Friday. You can bunk in one of the company bunkhouses until then, or longer if you've a mind. You'll learn more from your fellows about what's what around here."

He raised his voice and spoke over his shoulder, "McFeeney!"

A short, thin man with sideburns, wearing a smudged bowler hat, hurried over from the stove. He looked a little older than Jack, but not by much. His open vest gave the appearance of someone perpetually coming or going on some urgent task.

"Take Mr. Jack Fallon here up to see Jimmy at the yard and get him started muckin'."

Fallon cleared his throat and shifted his stance. Mucking was the lowest job one could have, usually given to drifters or drunkards of little respect.

"Mr. Kelley, sir, when I said I was a miner, I meant it.

No disrespect, sir, but I've worked for six years minin', and muckin's a bit under my status, if you take my meaning, is all. Again, no disrespect."

Kelley leaned forward, and his wooden swivel chair groaned under his not-inconsiderable weight. He clasped his hands together on the desk.

"Mr. Fallon," he said in a low, firm voice, "and no disrespect, either, but I don't know you, and you're new in town. And it's you who's wantin' a job now, isn't that a fact?"

This was no temporary day-by-day job he was trying for. Hard as it was to his pride, Jack decided to take whatever came. He knew he could make his life better with hard work alone, so he just nodded and swallowed.

Kelley smiled. "Well, then, know this: every man on this mine started out muckin', including me. And McFeeney here. If your crew boss notices you're a good, hard worker, you'll be sittin' in this chair in no time at all." His smile instantly turned to a frown. "Now get the hell out of my office and earn yer wages."

Fallon took a step backward and nodded, putting on his cap and hefting his bag. He followed McFeeney out the door, and they started walking up the slope toward the mine yard.

"Don't worry about Kelley, mister," said McFeeney. "We get fellows up here who can't cut it, and sometimes it's a waste of time to string 'em along until they get tired of workin' and quit."

"Well, he's right: he doesn't know me. But I'm not a quitter. I might just end up in that chair one of these days." Jack grinned and shifted his pack from one shoulder to the other as they walked uphill. Jack's impression of the town was that everything seemed to be either uphill or downhill from everything else.

According to McFeeney, who was quite the guide, the mining company owned the hospital, the bank, the mercantile, the larger businesses, and most of the lots on which homes were built. The local jail was tucked away in the same depression, though McFeeney explained that there was no local sheriff, and the simple one-room lockup was more for drunkards than ruffians and criminals.

As they climbed the road that led to the hoist house above the stamp mills, Jack had a better view of the working side of the town. The hoist house they were headed to was on a wide shelf above the mills.

A tall man in a bowler hat stood in front of the building, chewing the stub of a cigar. He turned toward them as Jack and McFeeney approached. His coat was open, and bright red suspenders framed his bulging belly. Jack was learning all he could about his surroundings and the new job. This would be his first chance to make any kind of impression on the people he would be working with. "Mr. Brownlow, this is Mr. Jack Fallon," McFeeney said. "Mr. Kelley says to put him on your gang as a mucker."

"Well, I'd be struck dead if Kelley said to start anyone other than muckin'," said Brownlow.

He looked Jack up and down, touched the brim of his hat, and nodded, dismissing McFeeney. "Come on, Fallon. Let's find you a shovel."

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.

George Aleksei, 71

George Kuno Aleksei of Laurel passed away peacefully on January 13, 2026, at Oak Manor at Autumn Lake. Born on October 2, 1954, in Fort Meade, he was the

son of Kuno Aleksei and Carol Margaret Aleksei. He graduated from Arundel Senior High School in 1972 and worked independently as a construction worker and delivery driver. He was an avid boater and also traveled to various states to attend thoroughbred horse racetracks.

George is survived by his wife of 30 years, Sandra (Morris) Aleksei; his son, Wyeth George Aleksei; his sisters, Benita Steele (Robert) and Jouett Kahan (Bruce); and two nephews, Alex and Aaron Kahan.

Judith Boyce, 87

Judith "Mamma" A. Boyce, a longtime librarian in Laurel, passed away in Florida on February 22, 2026. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Judi had a lifelong love for

books. When she moved to Maryland with her first husband and their five children, she dedicated her professional career to serving others as a librarian at the Prince George's County Library branch in Laurel. In 1978, Judi married Francis "Grumpy" Boyce; they moved to Titusville, Florida, and formed a blended family during their 47 years of marriage.

Judi loved spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She liked to go bowling, shop, and read. She is survived by daughters Terri Peters (George), Francis "Gil" Gilmartin (Leslie), Janine Reeves (Charles), and Patricia Aldrich; son Ronald Boyce (Regina); 18 grandchildren; 42 great grandchildren; and, two great-great grandchildren.

Beryle Cohen, 91

Beryle Cohen, who established the wrestling program at Laurel High School and served as LHS wrestling coach for many years, died on March 17th, 2026. A Baltimore native,

he began wrestling in his youth at City College and at a local YMCA. His success in wrestling continued during his collegiate years at the University of Maryland. After graduating in 1958, he served two years in the U.S. Marine Corps; later, in the Marine Reserves, he was named Outstanding Marine of the Year.

Beryle joined the staff at Laurel High School in 1960, teaching driver's education and physical education and serving as athletic director for part of his 34-year career there. He started the wrestling program in 1960 and served as its head coach from 1960 to 1963, then again from 1966 to 1979. During the interim years, he coached at American University. In addition, he established a junior wrestling program at the Laurel Boys Club and often officiated at local high school and college matches. He retired from coaching in 1979 and from teaching in 1994. He was inducted into the Maryland Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1983 and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2004, lauded for building a program defined not only by success, but also relentless work ethic, discipline, and accountability. He held himself to the same standard he set for others, teaching that a leader must give their very best before expecting it from anyone else.

Beryle never slowed down or did anything halfway. Even in his later years, he remained deeply committed to his health, working out every day with the same discipline that defined so much of his life. He found joy and freedom in movement—whether skiing, sailing, or riding his Harley—and he loved spending time with his family, particularly his beloved grandchildren. He will be remembered not only for his accomplishments, but also for the lasting impact he had on others: the lessons he taught, the standards he set, and the lives he shaped. His influence will

continue to be felt for generations to come.

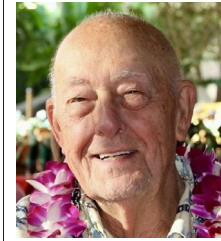
He is survived by his wife of over 61 years, Barbara Cohn; sons Erik Cohen and Neil (Suzanne) Cohen; daughter-in-law Dr. Stefanie Stevenson; and eight grandchildren. He was predeceased by son Dr. Paul Cohen, sister Naomi Seligman, daughter-in-law Marcia Cohen, and granddaughters Devorah and Leika Cohen.

Lois Croy, 97

Lois O. Croy, of Laurel, died on February 3, 2026, in Newark, Delaware. Born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, she was the middle child of five. After graduating from

McKeesport Technical High School, she worked as a telephone operator for Bell Telephone and was a volunteer in the Women's Air Corp (WAC) during World War II. She married Clarence Walter Croy in 1955 and was a devoted mother to their three children. When her children were grown, Lois worked as a records clerk for Phelps Time Lock and Goodyear Tire Companies, and then as an office manager for Happy Property Management Company. She retired at age 65 but remained active: she was an expert baker, avid gardener, and excellent cook and seamstress. She always had a batch of chocolate chip cookies on hand for family and friends. She was a longtime member of Riverdale Baptist Church, where she taught Sunday School to first graders for over 20 years.

Lois was preceded in death by her former husband, Clarence, and three siblings. She is survived by her son, Keith Clifford Croy (Patrizia); her daughters, Geri Christine Croy Larson and Shari Pauline Croy Wagner (David); four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and a sister, Olive Ruth "Jimmie" Traeger Croft.

George Currie, 102

George Currie was born on February 19, 1923. He passed peacefully in his Laurel home of 56 years on February 9, 2026—just shy of his 103rd birthday. Born in Philadelphia,

George lived in the same neighborhood as his extended family and often spoke of growing up playing ball in the streets and spending summers in Wildwood. He attended West Catholic Preparatory High School in Chester, Pennsylvania, where he rowed on crew and graduated with honors. He enlisted in the Navy and trained as a pilot for World War II; he flew more than 20 types of aircraft in his career and later served as a flight instructor in Pensacola, Florida. He loved to fly and continued to serve in the Navy Reserves for 20 years after leaving active service. He attended Villanova University on the GI Bill and was proud of earning a degree in electrical engineering as a "very senior" student. That degree led to his second career, as an electrical engineer for Bosch Arma Aerospace, where he played a role in his country's space flight development.

George married Jane Nolan in 1950. Together they raised three children—Kevin, Sharon, and Donna—and enjoyed a beautiful life. His job took them around the country, and the family lived in New York and California before settling in Maryland. He loved people and was always open and present when spending time with others, actively listening and genuinely enjoying being with them. He could always be seen on the sidelines cheering on his grandchildren, who called him Pop Pop; he attended all of their games, concerts, presentations, and ceremonies that he possibly could. He loved to travel, loved new experiences, and loved to learn about the world he lived in. Having lived through the Great Depression, he had a deep respect and love for life, taking nothing for granted. He was known as a "gentle giant," patient and kind, and a true man of God with unwavering faith.

Barbara Dye, 91



Barbara A. Dye passed away on January 7, 2026. Born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, she was the youngest of 13 children. She left high school in her senior year to help

support her family, and shortly thereafter met the love of her life, Roy E. Dye. They dated for several years, during which time he went to Korea; waiting for him back home, she wrote letters to him weekly, and they married in 1955 after his return to the States. They were married for 45 years until Roy died in 2000.

Barbara held several jobs in the Laurel area over the years. She worked as a pharmacy technician, worked in doctor's offices, and spent several years at Arbitron. She was a room mother at Maryland City Elementary School for all three of her children and was a den mother for a local cub scout troop. She belonged to the Eastern Star and the Maryland City Civic Association, and was active in the First Baptist Church of Laurel, where she taught Sunday school and sang in the choir. She became active in politics starting in 1960, often hosting luncheons and tea parties for candidate spouses and eventually serving as a Chief Judge and Precinct Chairperson for elections.

In addition to her husband, she was preceded in death by her first-born son, Thomas R. Dye. She is survived by daughter Sharon Rankin and son Danny Dye (Anna); daughter-in-law Elaine Dye; seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren; sister Agnes Ventura; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Mary Jo Edwards, 87



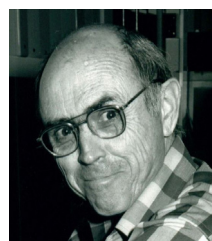
Mary Jo Edwards died on February 23, 2026, just four days shy of her 88th birthday. Born in Savage, she was a 1956 graduate of Howard High School and worked for

Arbitron in Laurel for many years, retiring in 1993. She loved traveling with family to Florida, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia to visit her siblings, and also traveled to Ocean City and Canada. She served at Lifehouse Church in Beltsville, where she sang in the choir and visited the elderly and hospital patients. She enjoyed doing

crossword puzzles, playing games, and spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

For 20 years, Mary Jo was part of a prison ministry at Maryland Correctional Institute for Women in Jessup. Every week, she would visit inmates and offer a Bible study. Two of the women she met there became good friends after their release. Mary Jo was predeceased by her eight siblings. She is survived by her children, Gina Burdette and Suzanne Foreman (Robert, Sr.), six grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren.

Robert Gregory, 96



Robert James Gregory passed away on January 23, 2026. Born in Newport News, Virginia, he moved to Washington, DC in 1947 to attend Capital

Radio Engineering Institute. He lived in College Park from 1957 to 1991, then lived in Laurel for 32 years before moving to Brooke Grove Assisted Living in 2023.

Robert worked for the Department of the Army, Harry Diamond Laboratory (Army Research Lab) from 1957 until his 1988 retirement. During his career, he developed important technology that is still used today. He served as Scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 740 in College Park for 12 years, mentoring countless young men in leadership and outdoor skills. He was a member of St. Nicholas Catholic Church in Laurel and Our Lady Star of the Sea in Solomons. He enjoyed woodworking and operating his ham radio.

Robert was predeceased by his wife of 53 years, Ruth Lucille (Tatro) Gregory and his three siblings. He is survived by his seven children: Raymond Joseph Gregory (Cathy), Paul David Gregory (Cheryl), Bernard Frances Gregory (Donna), Anne Michele Packett (Stephen), Amy Joan Howdysell (Michael), Timothy Charles Gregory (Teri), and Nancy Joy Sites (Jeff). He will also be missed by his 12 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Edwin Hughes, Jr., 97



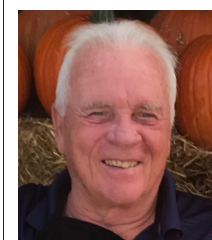
Laurel resident Edwin Joseph Hughes, Jr., died peacefully on January 7th, 2026. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1928, Edwin earned a bachelor's

degree at Loyola University. He joined the Navy during the Korean War and served with distinction as a lieutenant for three years. He went on to earn post-graduate degrees at Tulane and Harvard universities, and subsequently earned his doctoral degree at Iowa State University. It was there that he met his wife, Darlys. They married, started a family, and moved to Oregon, where Edwin was a statistics professor at Oregon State University. The family eventually settled in Laurel. Upon his retirement, Edwin and Darlys took their dream cruise to Alaska to celebrate.

A faithful parishioner of St. Mary of the Mills Catholic Church, Edwin will be remembered as an. Honorable man, devoted husband, and attentive father who lived a principled life, provided for his family, and cherished his wife. He made education a priority for his children and, by his example, taught them the importance of always doing what is right.

Edwin is survived by his wife, Darlys; their five children—Michael, Laurie, Stephen (Laura), David (Cecilia), and Julie; three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Charles Ippolito, Jr., 80



Charles Joseph Ippolito, Jr., passed away on December 29, 2025. Born in the Bronx, New York, he was affectionately known as "Buddy" to his family.

Growing up as an "Army brat," he lived in many locations, with two of his favorites being Germany and Japan.

A graduate of the University of Maryland and lifelong Terps fan, Charlie enjoyed a long and distinguished career with the federal government. He was a mentor to many coworkers, passing on his knowledge by developing and presenting training seminars. He initiated and formalized the Business Management Certification Program at his government agency. He spent most of his adult life in Ellicott City, raising his children before moving to Delaware to enjoy retirement.

He was an avid sports fan, playing basketball into his adult years. He loved to coach basketball and baseball; he is a Hall of Fame member of the Howard County Youth Program in recognition of 30 years of coaching and serving as commissioner.

Charlie treasured his faith, family, and friends. He loved boating, traveling, and spending time at the beach, especially his trips to Aruba. He loved animals of all sizes, especially his German shepherds, and volunteered for many years at a local horse rescue.

Charlie was preceded in death by his parents, Charles and Edna Ippolito, as well as a brother, John Ippolito. He is survived by his wife, Sheri L. (Miller) Ippolito; sons Charles Joseph Ippolito III and Joseph Thomas Ippolito; daughters Stacy Marie Ippolito Long and Ashley Lauren Hill; brother Robert Ippolito; sister Carol A. Collins; and six grandchildren.

OBITUARIES

King Leatherbury, 92

Hall of Fame thoroughbred trainer King Leatherbury, whose career spanned eight decades and included 52 training titles at Pimlico and Laurel, passed

away on February 10, 2026, at his home. With 6,508 career wins, he is the fifth-winningest trainer of all time and was inducted into the National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame in 2015. Leatherbury is also a member of the Anne Arundel County Hall of Fame and received a lifetime achievement award from the Maryland Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002. He served as president of both the Maryland Horse Breeders' Association and Maryland Million Ltd., and served on the board of directors at Timonium.

A Maryland native, King was born in Shady Side and raised on a farm. He graduated from the University of Maryland with a business administration degree, then went on to work at a horse track in Florida, winning his first race in 1959. After returning to Maryland, he made a name for himself as one of the top trainers throughout the 1970s and 80s. His specialty was "claiming" horses, meaning he had a knack for finding cheap horses that he thought were not being trained to their winning potential.

King won at least 100 races every year between 1972 and 1997, then improved even more through the mid-1980s, winning 200 races annually. In addition to his training titles at Maryland tracks, he won four titles at Delaware Park. His most famous claim was a horse called Ben's Cat, who had suffered a broken pelvis at age 2 and did not race until age 4—but then won 32 races and earned over \$2.5 million in winnings, leading him to be named Maryland's Horse of the Year four times and helping King gain the honor of induction into the Hall of Fame.

King retired in 2023 at the age of 87, after a 62-year streak of having trained at least one winner a year. He is honored each year at Laurel Park with the running of the King T. Leatherbury Stakes for 3-year-olds. He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Linda Marie Heavener Leatherbury; twin sons Taylor and Todd; and grandson Heavener.

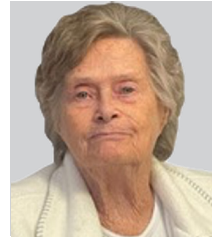
Paul McKee, 83

Paul Eugene McKee passed away on February 1, 2026, leaving behind a legacy of love, service, and dedication to family and country. Born and raised in

Pennsylvania, he enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly after graduating from Grove City High School in 1960. For nine years, Paul served as a heavy equipment operator, including in a combat engineering battalion in Vietnam.

Following his military service, Paul built a career as a heavy equipment operator with Ratrie, Robbins & Schweitzer from 1969 until 1991, when the Jessup plant location closed. He finished his work tenure as a heavy equipment operator for Driggs Corporation. He was a devoted member of Covenant Church in Ellicott City and a proud member of the American Legion. He deeply enjoyed time spent with family and friends, participating in church activities, and following NASCAR.

Paul was married for 59 years to Patricia Ann (Mathieson) McKee, who preceded him in death. He was also predeceased by a grandson, Daniel Paul Grimes. He is survived by his loving partner of four years, Jo Ann Woltze; his children, Laurie Grimes, Melissa Beall, Debra Marshall, and Michael McKee; nine grandchildren; and 17 great-grandchildren.

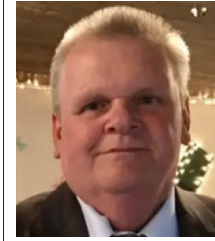
Betty Bell Moore, 89

Betty Bell Moore of Laurel died at her home on February 12, 2026. Born in Washington, DC, Betty graduated from Montgomery Blair High School in 1954 and went on

to build a long career as an administrative assistant. Her greatest joy was her family, with whom she shared her boundless kindness, generous spirit, and deep love of reading. She was a steady presence to them, a trusted confidante, a storyteller, and often the life of the party. Her home was a gathering place, her advice was treasured, and her hugs were legendary.

Betty was a "force of nature" who lived with vibrant, unfiltered joy. From being crowned Queen of the Girl Scouts at age 12, to teaching exercise classes to fellow seniors, to dressing up as a clown in her 70s in order to entertain nursing home residents, Betty embraced life fully and fearlessly. She laughed loudly, loved deeply, and brought energy into every room she entered.

Betty was preceded in death by her husband of 52 years, William Moore; her brother, James Bell, Jr.; and her son-in-law, Dwight Peters. She leaves behind a legacy of love through her children: Patricia Marion (Mike), Laura Rousseau (Steve), Kathryn Peters, and Michelle Camba (Gary); her eight grandchildren; and her 10 great-grandchildren, all of whom carry her spirit forward.

Dwayne Pickett, 69

Dwayne Douglas Pickett, of Aberdeen, died on February 18, 2026. A proud Marylander, Dwayne's life reflected the strength, humility, and generosity of a

true "salt of the earth" man. Dwayne found his greatest joy on the water. Whether he was fishing at sunrise, crabbing from his Jon boat, or relaxing aboard a cruise liner on vacation, the water was where he felt most at home. Those who knew him will remember the stories, the smiles, and the simple peace he found with a rod in his hand and the horizon in front of him.

Above all, Dwayne will be remembered for his fun-loving spirit and the way he made others feel welcome, valued, and cared for. His kindness left a lasting mark on everyone fortunate enough to know him. He would give you the shirt off his back without hesitation. His laughter was easy, his presence steady, and his heart always open.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Leftridge Ben Hur Sr. and Leona; his brother, Ben Hur Jr.; and his sister Rebecca. He is survived by his loving wife, Joanne M. Pickett; his brothers Roger, John, and David; and his sisters Jane, Diane, Vicky, and Pamela. He also leaves behind his beloved Kristin; his "dearly loved as a granddaughter" Charlie; and a number of nieces, nephews, cousins, great-nieces, great-nephews, and cherished friends whose lives were made brighter by knowing him.

Kevin Redman, 60



Kevin Wayne Redman of Laurel passed away on January 5, 2026. Born in Washington, DC, Kevin spent most of his life in Laurel. After graduating from

Johns Hopkins University with a degree in physics, he spent a 36-year career at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, where he worked on missions that quite literally changed how we see the universe. Most notably, he contributed to the Hubble Space Telescope mission, helping to build something that outlasts him, quietly orbiting above the Earth and expanding humanity's knowledge of outer space.

One of Kevin's greatest passions was his 46 years of service with the Civil Air Patrol, serving in various positions at Maryland Wing Headquarters and the Howard Cadet Squadron. He was deeply committed to search and rescue missions, emergency preparedness, and community outreach; he loved to teach and mentor others, sharing his knowledge and encouraging curiosity, preparedness, and service. Civil Air Patrol was more than volunteer work for Kevin; it was a place where his love of learning, discipline, and helping others came together.

Kevin is survived by his father, Elza Redman; his siblings Keith Redman, Terri Taylor (John), and Mark Redman (Samantha); and 10 nieces and nephews.

George Schaab, Jr., 96



George Thomas Schaab, Jr., passed away on January 31, 2026, just two days shy of his 97th birthday. Born and raised in South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,

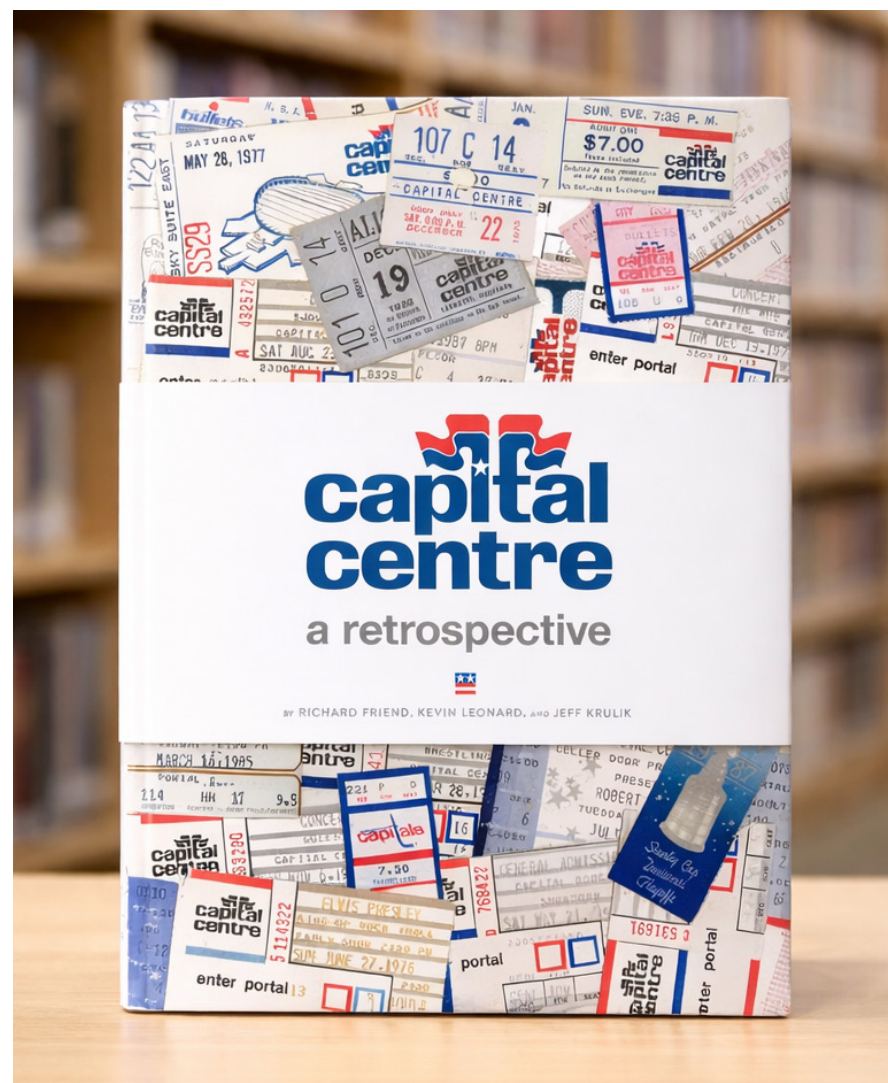
George was the third of five children. A deeply patriotic man, he enlisted in the U.S. Army at just 17 years old and served a distinguished 22-year military career, during which he served as a translator and intelligence analyst and received numerous awards. He was deployed to Asia and France and stationed in New York, Washington, and California. While in France, he met his wife, Denise; they married in 1952 and had two daughters, Corinne and Michelle.

A strong believer in higher education, George continued to pursue his academic goals, taking courses and earning college degrees while serving in the military. After retiring from the Army in 1968, George worked as a counselor at the George G. Meade Army Education Center. He also dedicated time at his daughter's high school, serving as a track and field coach.

George spent 58 years in the Laurel area. An American Legion member for more than 70 years, he served as Legion Commander for about 10 years, and continued to chair and attend both official and informal Legion meetings—at both the local and national levels—In his later years. He enjoyed being active in his community and loved participating in social and community activities. For many years, he gathered with friends every Friday for lunch and drinks.

George was preceded in death by his wife, Denise; his daughter Michelle Brown; his brothers, Albert and Roy Schaab; and his sisters, Marie Radar and Doris Adams. He is survived by his daughter, Corinne Schaab Codjoe; her husband, Theophilus Codjoe; five grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

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OBITUARIES

Michael Smith, 44

Michael Patrick Smith, of Centreville, died on December 13, 2025. Born in Laurel, Michael played sports with the Laurel Boys and Girls Club, was a

member of St. Mary of the Mills Catholic Church, and was a 1999 graduate of St. Vincent Pallotti High School, where he was inducted into the Hall of Fame for his contributions on the soccer field.

Michael's goal in life was simple: to live a happy, good life. He accomplished this through the family he and wife Alyssa built together: their move to the slower pace of the Eastern Shore, where they built a home; the traditions they held dear, especially annual family trips to the Outer Banks; and his enduring connection to family and friends. He worked hard at a job he was proud of, believing deeply in responsibility, providing for his family, and doing honest work. He was intentional about maintaining strong relationships and close ties with those who mattered most to him. Curious by nature, Michael formed genuine connections through conversation and made people feel seen, heard, and understood.

Michael is survived by his wife, Alyssa; his sons Kaleb and Michael II; his mother, Jo Ann Smith; his brother, Andrew Smith (Karen); his grandfather Francis Oakes; and many aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, and a close circle of friends he considered family. He was preceded in death by his father, Richard A. Smith, Jr.

Betty Jean Thoreson, 94

Betty Jean Thoreson, a resident of Laurel for over 50 years, died on January 30, 2026, just 8 days shy of her 95th birthday. Born and raised in Minnesota, she worked as a teacher

before marrying LeRoy F. Thoreson in 1957 and moving to Milwaukee, then eventually to Maryland. After being a full-time mother for 20 years, she returned to work as a bookkeeper for the Hecht Company, SCAN Furniture, and Ritz Camera.

After retiring in 1993, she traveled extensively and remained a fine cook, outstanding hostess, and excellent bridge partner well into her 80s. A member of St. Mary of the Mills church since 1970, she volunteered her time extensively, being involved in St. Mary's Ladies of Charity, taking communion to nursing home residents, and cooking and serving meals at Elizabeth House and for the Catholic Terps. Over the years, she enjoyed spending time with her children and grandchildren, who now range in age from 15 to 41, attending their sporting events, concerts, recitals, and other activities.

Betty was preceded in death by her husband, LeRoy, and her sister, Ruth O'Donnell. She is survived by her six children and their spouses—Brian (Kathryn), Jeffrey (Reba), Gregory (Helene), Mark (Louise), Jeananne (Charlie), and Nancy (Tim)—as well as 14 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Joyce Weir, 95

Joyce Virginia Weir, of Laurel, died on January 27, 2026. Born in Washington, DC, she worked for many years for the Department of the Navy as a civilian secretary,

then the Naval Ordinance Lab and the Harry Diamond Lab, before retiring. She remained busy in retirement, helping to establish what is now called the Laurel Senior Friendship Club. She loved cats, traveling with friends and family, and crocheting, providing her granddaughters with crocheted clothes for their dolls.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Chalmers Jr. Weir, and a great-grandson. She is survived by her daughter, Deborah (Frank) Dorbert, and sons C. Gregory (AnnRae) Weir and Jonathan Weir, as well as five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Heaja Cho Wichman, 91

Heaja Cho Wichman, of Beltsville, passed away on December 29, 2025. Born in South Korea, she married Ernest Wichman in 1959. After his untimely

death in 1967, Heaja came to the United States with their three sons and settled in Odenton, then later moved to Laurel, where she worked for the May Company at the Hecht department store in the Laurel Centre Mall. She remained a widow, working very hard and raising her sons on her own. Retiring after 30 years in the workforce, she moved to Beltsville.

She was very active in Korean Christian churches, attending services regularly. She loved to cook, knit, crochet, and garden. She also enjoyed traveling, making trips to New York City, Nags Head, and Ocean City, among other places. She loved family celebrations and will be remembered for her faith and her great love for her family.

In addition to her husband, Heaja's son Anthony and her five siblings preceded her in death. She is survived by sons Peter John Wichman and Ernest Patrick Wichman (Laurie), as well as four grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, one great-great-grandson, and several nieces and nephews, both in the U.S. and in South Korea.

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— First Amendment to the United States Constitution

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