Valley Vets Remember D-Day
Op Shop: Putting The Pieces Together
Andre Viette’s Green Thumb
From the Editor

My grandmother often spends her free time collecting bits of unusual fabric from old shirts, blankets, ties and curtains. Once a healthy pile accumulates, she sits by the fire, carefully sewing all the unrelated pieces together into a beautiful quilt.

The making of a Curio is not unlike the creation of a quilt. We begin by gathering interesting pieces of the fabric of life in the Shenandoah Valley. Some of the pieces are found in the heart-warming stories of volunteer organizations such as Caring Canine Companions (see page 20) and the Op-Shop (see page 6).

Other pieces find their way into Curio by virtue of their colorful features like the one this year on Rusty Davis Jr., who has a collection of antique — full-sized — fire engines, or George Blakey, a barber who has been giving trims in downtown Harrisonburg for almost 40 years. In fact, this issue probably contains more interesting profiles on Valley folk than ever before. We meet a retiring police chief (see page 44), who plans to spend his golden years racing Thoroughbred horses, and a group of vivacious sixth graders (see page 41) known as the Class of 2000, as they look to the future.

Additionally, this year we remember those in the Valley area who courageously stormed the shores of Normandy in 1944 to turn the tides of WWII (see page 24). The common thread throughout our quilt-like assemblage remains, as it has in all 17 years of Curio publication, the people of the Valley. A snippet from each of their lives fills our pages with a kaleidoscope of neighbors and community — past and present.

Donna Ragsdale
executive editor

ABOUT THE COVER: Photography Editor Karen Segermark snapped the cover shot of Stephen Joseph and his Caring Canine Companion, Cooper. The dog pictured above, Lord Baxter, is also a CCC participant. This heart-warming story is featured on pp. 20-23.
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IT'S BEEN SAID THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND BOYS IS THE SIZE OF THEIR TOYS.

"Well, these are my toys," John "Rusty" Davis Jr. says, proudly surveying the six full-size fire engines parked in his front yard near Grottoes.

Rusty Davis and his son Brian have tracked down, repaired, and paraded their old fire engines since the mid-1970s. Resting amid a few small trees and several older cars in various states of disrepair, the trucks sit in silent homage to days past. They were used by men who had something in common: a desire to fight fires. Though once shiny and primed for action, they now bear signs of age: rust, faded red paint, and the absence of much of their original equipment.

But Davis says these are more than just six old fire engines.

"They are not just trucks," Davis explains. "You can stand and talk for hours and get stories about the trucks from the people who used to ride them. There's some personality to the trucks."

That personality, according to Davis, comes from each truck's unusual background, which he researches as part of the hobby. "There's just a world of history there to enjoy if you enjoy that kind of stuff."

Davis' interest in fire engines comes primarily from his three-year, 10-month stint in the Air Force's Special Purpose Maintenance Division. He served in Danang, South Vietnam, in the late 1960s where he and other mechanics were responsible for fixing broken vehicles, especially fire trucks.

"If a fire truck broke down, then we'd fix it first. I got used to fixing things in two or three hours that normally took four to five hours to fix," Davis recalls.

He also vividly remembers several North Vietnamese rocket attacks and spending 18-hour days repairing dam-
aged equipment.

Fortunately, things are not as hectic now.

"If you have the time and you have the patience, mechanical stuff can be fixed," Davis explains. "Patience is a virtue that's just about over the hill nowadays. Everybody's always in a hurry to go everywhere."

After leaving the service, he eventually returned to his native Shenandoah Valley with his wife, Charlene, to raise his son and two daughters, Angie and Tracy. Davis settled down a short distance from where he was born in the Grottoes area and joined the Grottoes fire department as a volunteer, a position he held for almost 18 years. He also began working for his father, John Davis Sr. of Davis Recycling, in 1973.

If not for that job, Davis may never have run across the first two trucks in the collection.

In the mid-1970s, Harrisonburg had its two identical 1937 Seagrave fire trucks slated to be scrapped.

Davis intervened. He brought the trucks home with him and they remained there for nearly a decade before he and his son began searching for parts for them.

During one of those searches, Rusty and Brian happened across their third fire truck.

While visiting the Shenandoah Fire Department in search of an engine to fit one of their trucks, the Davises were shown a 1953 Seagrave formerly used by the department.

Brian offered the department $500 for the truck, and according to the elder Davis, "We took down a battery and some gas, and in half an hour had it started up."

Brian, only 13 years old at the time of his purchase, says he "just always wanted a fire truck and always liked their color."

Rusty Davis says his son took to the hobby partly because of its novelty.

"How many teenagers have fire trucks to work on and drive around while they are growing up?" he asks.

“That truck was his project. It kept him out of trouble all through his teenage years and gave him something to do," the older Davis says. "He got it running and pumping. Anything that broke on it he fixed."

Brian, now 21, has acquired most of the 1953 Seagrave's equipment. He is still gradually restoring the truck, the most valuable and the most expensive one the Davises own.

“Patience is a virtue that’s just about over the hill nowadays. Everybody’s always in a hurry to go everywhere.”

— Rusty Davis

Davis estimates he and his son have spent $1,000 for the fire trucks, which they almost always get running. All but the two 1937s run, testament to the Davises' mechanical ingenuity.

“They are like any other hobby. They're going to take as much time as you're willing to put into them. They're going to take as much money as you're willing to put into them," Rusty Davis says.

According to antique car collector Howard Hulvey, collecting fire trucks is different than collecting cars.

“Cars are common,” explains Hulvey, a Harrisonburg resident and friend of the Davises. “Towns saved up their nickels and dimes and bought these fire engines. It's not like they grew on trees."

According to Hulvey, Buick made anywhere from 19 to 30 thousand Rivieras each year in the early 1960s, and it is "one of the rarer cars." Hulvey estimates that, for some of its models, the Seagrave company made only 1,000 trucks a year.

Many fire trucks were built by hand, Hulvey says, and therefore "are hard to find."

On the other hand, Davis says the trucks are out there, but "you just have to have the right contacts" to get them.

One of those contacts is the Old Dominion Historical Fire Society, a club consisting of people with fire-related interests. Brian and Rusty are members of the ODHFS. The society has helped them locate several trucks,
such as the fourth one of his collection, a 1950 Seagrave ladder he obtained from the town of South Boston for just $100.

Tommy Herman, ODHFS secretary and historian, says antique fire trucks generally range from $500 to $2,500, depending on the model, overall condition and equipment on the truck.

He notes one exception: the 1924 Ahrens Fox.

According to Herman, that truck is one of the most sought-after because it features a front-mounted piston pump. Most trucks have pumps mounted in the middle. One Ahrens Fox sold for $38,000.

Generally, however, fire trucks do not have a high appreciation rate; the same truck cost around $30,000 when it was brand new.

That figure is still a far cry from modern fire trucks. Some new models today, Davis says, cost more than $175,000. The 1953 Seagrave carried a $23,000 price tag when it was new.

After purchasing his fifth truck, a 1940 LaFrance ladder, Davis came across a military vehicle collector who owned a 1943 Seagrave the Navy had used during World War II.

"He had neither the time nor the money to try to get it working," Davis explains. The collector simply gave the truck to Davis, who paid only for the cost of transporting the vehicle home.

"That doesn't happen very often," Davis notes, but he eagerly accepted this most recent addition to his front yard.

Though pleased with his collection of six, Davis doesn't mind dreaming a little.

"I would like to have one of the trucks I worked on in the service," he says. Those trucks were driven by eight wheels and boasted four-wheel steering and dual engines, but would not be legal to drive because of their size.

Davis does not rule out acquiring more trucks in the future. In fact, he has his eye set on purchasing a 1951 Dodge with a closed cab. All the trucks he currently owns have open cabs.

"My wife doesn't like to ride in the rain in an open-top truck. I don't understand why," Davis jokes.

Most of the riding the Davises do in their fire trucks is in parades. They attended about a dozen events between May and December last year, from Christmas parades to town festivals.

"It's a really good feeling to me just to watch all the little kids' faces when they look at these old trucks. A lot of the older people, too," Davis says.

Davis recalls being the center of attention when he rode one of his fire engines in the 1993 Waynesboro Christmas parade.

"We hauled Santa Claus that day," he explains. "We weren't as much the center of attention as we could have been if we were alone. Everyone was looking at Santa Claus and not the fire engine.

"It's a lot of fun to get in one and ride up and down the road," Davis continues. "Everybody waves at you. It's not that I like to be looked at, and there's some people in this world who like to be recognized. I'm not one of those people. I know people are not looking at me anyway. They're looking at the truck."

The Davises also regularly attend fire musters, which combine a truck show with fire-related games, such as dressing contests or hose rolling contests.

Some musters are much more elaborate, Davis says, such as those held in Long Island, N.Y., that feature souped-
up fire trucks that race like dragsters.

But Davis is one for tradition. For him, the true joy of the hobby lies in learning a truck's history.

“That's the kind of stuff that fascinates me,” Davis says. His identical 1937 Seagraves were manufactured one after the other and bear consecutive serial numbers. This makes them more valuable than if they were simply two trucks from the same year of manufacture.

The 1953 Seagrave started its service in Upper Darby, Pa., a town on the outskirts of Philadelphia.

Davis says that truck was once in a wreck and had its front left fender banged up. The fender still bears those scars today. The Shenandoah Fire Department purchased the 1953 Seagrave from its original owner.

The Davises' 1940 American LaFrance ladder truck has also had a colorful past. It started out in York, Pa., served in Mount Jackson for a time, and finally ended up in Pearisburg, located in Giles County in Southwest Virginia. From there, it was sold to a private individual, whom Davis bought it from.

Davis points out that the LaFrance's cab design is unique because it is open-air and located forward of the truck's front axle. Most cabs today are behind the front axle and are closed for safety and comfort reasons. The entire truck was repainted prior to reaching Davis' back yard, though in places its original blood-red hue is still visible.

Occasionally, a truck's history is too obscure for even fire truck buff Davis to know. He knows very little about the 1943 Seagrave he got for free, except that the 160-170 horsepower V-12 engine under its hood was massive for its day.

Usually Davis writes back to the factory that manufactured the truck and obtains paperwork and factory photographs of the truck as it appeared upon leaving the plant. He says the photos are “the only way you're going to find out what the original truck looks like” if you plan on restoring it.

At times, photograph and final product can tell a different story. Before buying it, Davis saw photos of the 1950 Seagrave ladder, which started out its service in Orange, and eventually came to be used in South Boston. According to the photos, much of the original equipment was still in place on the truck. After paying his $100, Davis was shocked to discover that much of the equipment had been forcibly removed. He never got most of it back, but says incidents of this nature are rare.

Davis sees the personal property tax as the only other drawback to collecting fire engines.

“A man who has a hobby of golf does not pay personal property on his clubs, or on his membership to the country club,” he protests.

But the tax is something Davis is willing to put up with. He considers himself fortunate. “A lot of kids grow up with the fantasy of being a fireman,” Davis says. “I was just able to continue on with my hope, that's all.”

He does not, however, recall having toy fire engines when he was growing up. The victim of a dog attack at age 5, Davis suffered a lapse of memory and can recall nothing about his youth prior to the incident.

“I don't guess I've been right since [the attack]. I do a lot of crazy stuff,” he says, smiling.

“A lot of people get mad when you call them crazy. I don't mind admitting I'm crazy,” he continues. “I've always said that firemen are crazy because they are the only ones running into a burning building while everyone else is running out of it.”

In the near future, Davis hopes to get the 1937 Seagraves operational and to build a shelter for the trucks.

“Whether I'll ever get what I've got planned done, I don't know. I often say I've got a whole backyard full of good intentions, and a front yard, too.”

ED GRAY, a senior mass communication and English double major, was literary editor for JMU's art and literature magazine, Chrysalis, this year. The Blacksburg native plans to pursue a career in technical writing.

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PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

by Deana Hoisington

IMAGINE BEGINNING YOUR workday playing a friendly game of basketball with your fellow employees. After everyone arrives, you settle down for announcements and your boss, like a baseball coach, calls out your assignment for the day. Then you proceed to your work station and begin a task tailored to your abilities, but a challenge you accept all the same.

This is a typical morning for the 18 mentally retarded adults who are employed at the Op Shop, an adult work activity center located in the basement of the Simms School building in Harrisonburg.

The clients — or employees as they prefer to be called — produce wooden and ceramic crafts. They come here, most by van, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. They work four one-hour periods and spend the rest of their time on breaks, eating lunch, or participating in activities designed to further life skills management.

Employees of the Op Shop must be over 18, and most are between 30 and 45, though the oldest is 67. They are all mentally retarded, but some have multiple disabilities, such as also being deaf or blind.

In order to be placed at the Op Shop, they must fill out a job application and come in for supervised visits to assure that they are suitable to the environment.

They are called “clients” because they are receiving training, but also “employees” because they are paid for their work.

CARVING OUT A NICHE

The wood working area is in the front of the shop. Here, wood is cut and unfinished items are piled into boxes before being assigned to employees. The tables are littered with sawdust and small wooden animals, as employees sand, stain, and paint the crafts. More highly skilled employees may use the drill press or assemble items like book racks.

“I wish I could come here every day. It’s a lift, it’s really a high.”

—Iris Hashiguchi

According to Tom Dove, the director of the Op Shop, about 80 percent of what they do is wood, the rest ceramic. The ceramics are low-priced items like Christmas ornaments or magnets and were added to the product line to give employees a larger variety of tasks. These items are finished at a work station in a back room.

The employees remain focused while they work; there is little excess chatter or disruption.

A photo of the employee of the month posted on a bulletin board outside the kitchen signals that traits like “staying on task” will be rewarded. Creativity, however, on the part of employees is limited because items have already been cut for them, so their primary concern is finishing their craft projects.

Ideas for the crafts come from a number of sources, says wood working instructor Duane Martin. He says they are usually found in books and magazines.

“The bottom line is, is it something that the clients can do? We could make bookshelves and clocks, but there would be little that they could do,” Tom explains.

Most crafts are simple items like animal banks and cutting boards, which cost $7 to $10. The highest priced piece, at $45, is an elaborate Noah’s Ark, complete with paired wooden animals. These crafts — along with pegboards, puzzles, and napkin holders — fill shelves and line cabinets, and lie incomplete at work stations marked with employee name tags.

During most of the year, crafts are collected into a storage closet to be sold at four to six craft fairs and an annual open house before Christmas. Otherwise, some work is sold on consignment to the Dayton Farmer’s Market, through special orders, or to customers who come in off the street. There are also a few regulars.

“There is a man, it seems like every month he’s going to a wedding. He’ll come in and buy a little cutting board,” Tom says. Others stop in to purchase children’s name trains for births or birthdays.

PEOPLE PUT PIECES IN PLACE

Tom, a paid staff of four others, and a corp of community and college volunteers work alongside employees to
Through wood working and ceramics, the Op-Shop work-activity center gives mentally retarded adults opportunities to be productive members of society.

Employee  Steve Bridges sands a piece of wood that will soon be a dinosaur. Items like this sell for under $10.

assure that they can complete their tasks; they also instruct the clients in new tasks. Tom found this job after working in the Harrisonburg Department of Corrections for 12 years after graduating from JMU.

"I had just sort of had enough and was looking for some kind of a change," says Tom who has been at the Op Shop for a year and a half. "Most of what I do is hands on, actually working with the clients and teaching them new jobs."

The main concern Tom has in working with mentally retarded adults, is the problem of transportation. "These people lack social activities because they can't get where they want to go. Once they get home, that's where they usually stay."

These sentiments are echoed by Iris Hashiguchi, a petite, soft-spoken volunteer of eight years. "The employees are miserable if there is a snow day or holiday because they look forward to being out of the home," she says. "Often work is their only time for fellowship."

During the past years, Iris has developed close friendships with
Volunteer Sally Raines teaches employee Jan Patterson skills in counting money and making change.

employees, many of whom she knew from earlier volunteer work. She has seen some of them grow to adulthood and they have come to trust her. Often they will call her at home to confide in her. In fact, it was an employee of the Op Shop who asked her to begin volunteering there.

"Becky Hoback called me and asked me to get involved. She said there was a really 'cool' director and I should check it out," she says. She has been coming here ever since.

"I wish I could come here every day. It's a lift, it's really a high. You come in here, they greet you, and they really love you. And of course, they know that I love them. It's just a good relationship," Iris says. She recently retired from working in daycare and is now able to volunteer at the Op Shop at least twice a week.

She has seen improvements in employees since they've started here, noting that they can hold conversations and express their feelings better. Working at the Op Shop has also improved the confidence of employees.

Becky has worked here for 10 years and takes pride in seeing her work sold. She has also learned a lot of life management skills and is considering taking an apartment by herself after the recent death of her mother.

"I feel confident," she says, as she sands a napkin ring. "I feel like I can handle it, even though I'm handicapped."

It is this type of confidence that the Op Shop aims to instill in its employees. They strive to teach employable skills and provide tutoring in areas such as budgeting and sign language. These sessions are taught by volunteers from local colleges and the Dayton Learning Center.

Tutoring sessions take place in the kitchen, in which the only decoration is a larger-than-life poster from the television series "Life Goes On." The show stars a man with Down's syndrome. The employees seem inspired by this reminder of what others like themselves can accomplish.

"It's just like any other job. Some employees view the Op Shop as a stepping stone to other jobs, as an opportunity to move on to something else," Tom says. "Others view the Op Shop as a permanent career."

Learning at the Op Shop is, however, not one-sided. Often, volunteers and staff are the ones gaining new skills.

Tom says that some of his best volunteers have been college students who have produced newsletters or catalogs for the Op Shop. Others have tutored those with special needs.

Duane says that he has two roles at the center. One is as the wood worker, cutting items and preparing them for
the employees; the other is as a tutor. He works one-on-one for two hours each day with a student from the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind. His student is blind, mentally retarded, and autistic.

Duane was in college when he began at the shop and had no prior experience working with mentally retarded adults. "I didn't know quite what I was getting into for sure. "I was willing to learn and have learned a lot over the past two years in dealing with them, working with them; and I am still learning — especially since I've taken on the new responsibility of tutoring. That's probably the biggest challenge for me right now."

COMING TOGETHER

Meeting the needs of the community's mentally retarded adults was the challenge the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Association for Retarded Citizens accepted in 1981 when it developed a committee to assess these needs. The committee found that jobs in the community and a work activity center were the primary concerns of retarded citizens.

After 21 months of planning and preparation, the Op Shop opened on July 5, 1983. It was started with donated materials and first managed entirely by volunteers.

The center is supported by funding given by the United Way to ARC and the Community Services Board. Proceeds from sales also help run the program.

The success of the Op Shop in its mission to provide employment, training in vocational skills and basic survival and social skills can be judged by its growth over the past 11 years. It has developed roots in the community, and at the last open house, sold and took orders for $3,200 worth of items, according to Tom.

Expansion of the Op Shop, however, is limited by funding and available space. There is a waiting list for employment because the work areas are too small.

"We simply don't have room for more than six to eight people in each work area," Tom says.

Aside from the quality of the work produced, it is not hard to see why the Op Shop continues to be successful. It is the support of the community and those regular customers who Tom says "use us for their yearly shopping."

It is also the volunteers who come back year after year and the employees who begin their days playing basketball.

DEANA HOISINGTON is a senior double majoring in mass communication, with concentrations in journalism and visual communications, and art history. She plans to pursue a career in publishing.

KATHY HAWK is a junior double majoring in mass communication and English. After spending two years swimming for JMU, she has now turned her efforts to working with the Bluestone and next year will be the Editor-in-Chief.

Working in the ceramics room, employee Donna Jenkins weaves yarn to make a duster. Hanging beside her are ceramic crafts waiting to be sold.
HAVE A SEAT IN THE DEN

From chess boards to samurai swords, a local tobacco shop offers diversity, hospitality

by Jim Heffernan

WHEN THE SUN SETS ON the Shenandoah Valley, signaling the end of another day of hurried activity and tired hands, many folks look forward to the calm repose that stems from their favorite chair, the daily newspaper and a pipe.

One local Harrisonburg shop makes these activities its business. The shop’s rustic setting, leisurely pace, and smiling faces are a welcome sight among the hustle and bustle of shoppers. It recalls a simpler era in American life, when patience and trust were valued, and business was conducted by real people, with a smile and a handshake.

“A cup of coffee is 25 cents, ma’am,” instructs the gentle, bearded man behind the counter as a frosty-haired woman warily enters the Pipe Den for the first time. “Have a seat if you’d like.”

Dean, a Pipe Den employee, lends a boyish grin before returning to his duties, which include stocking a new shipment of cigars behind the sliding glass of the humidor, a damp heated room that keeps the tobacco fresh.

As the woman fumbles through her purse for a quarter, an elderly man lounging at an adjacent table decides to help with the sale. He takes time out from his poker game to adjust his weathered Redskins cap and faded overalls before turning to her.

“Just put the money in that cup,” he says in a thick mountain accent, pointing to an old tin cup at the far end of the counter. “We’re on the honor system here.”

She smiles and thanks him, and the familiar clank of coins hitting the bottom of the container fills the tiny room. She pours a cup of piping hot French Roast and is on her way.

With its shelves lined to the brim with fine tobaccos and accessories, gourmet coffees, candy, cutlery and games, the Pipe Den is a throwback to the popular General Store of decades past. Regular customers and casual visitors can always find a copy of the daily newspaper and a deck of playing cards on the table — evidence there is no pressure to buy anything here.

True to its name, the Pipe Den is a sort of community gathering place, where the hassles of everyday life take a back seat to the rural code of leisure and good conversation.

“We’re basically a men’s toy store,” says 42-year-old owner Matthew Willis, feverishly playing with one of the store’s popular new items, a ten-gauge rubber band gun. “So many stores cater to women. This is a place where a wife can dump her husband off while she shops.”

Willis, a Harrisonburg resident who has managed the Pipe Den for the last three years, attributes the shop’s overall appeal to the enjoyment of the simple pleasures in life. “In a world where many people can’t afford luxuries, such as a new car or fancy clothes, I think it’s important that there be a place like this, where they can come and treat themselves to a bag of gourmet coffee or sit and relax with a pipe.”

Willis says the Pipe Den offers that
little something extra that keeps customers coming back. "I think people really feel welcome here."

"There's no salesperson breathing down their neck, so they know they're free to browse or just have a seat at the table," he says.

At times, the walls of the tiny shop, with its single wooden table meticulously placed in the center, seem a bit confining to house so much atmosphere and personality.

On any given day, fellow recreationers from all walks of life are scattered about the floor. Here, the businessman clad in a three-piece suit converses freely with the farmer or the housewife about the news of the day.

But while the rest of the shop is engaged in small talk, the table takes on a more serious atmosphere. It is there that two players, chins resting on their fists, try to match wits on the marble battlefield of a chess board. With each carefully planned move, a ring of pipe or cigarette smoke rises slowly toward the ceiling, momentarily masking the various tobacco advertisements which line the store's upper walls. When the smoke clears, the faces and creeds of past generations spring to life — from "More doctors smoke Camels than any other brand of cigarette" (a newspaper ad from the late 1940s) to the familiar, rugged face of the frontier cowboy (used by the Marlboro company) — and every once in a while, a toy train carries the cut-out faces of five Pipe Den employees in a circular journey far above the activities below.

"The ex-owner's wife used to pick up little trinkets at area yard sales," explains Willis, "and sometimes customers will donate cool stuff, too."

Despite an antique setting, much of the Pipe Den's charm lies in the colorful personalities of its employees and cast of regulars. They all help fuel a rustic, carefree atmosphere which, although a far cry from the streets of Boston, could easily rival that of the epic TV series, "Cheers."

Heeding references to the show's head bartender, the dashing Sam Malone, Willis laughingly points to the superhero caricature of himself on the wall. It reads, "This mild-mannered shop-keeper turns into Captain Caffeine!"

Willis enjoys talking with customers who know more about what they want than he does. He regards it as a learning experience. "I've never really known what I'm doing here. I don't smoke or drink coffee, but I always make it a point to listen to every customer's needs."

"So many stores cater to women. This is a place where a wife can dump her husband off while she shops."

— Matthew Willis

The philosophy has paid off. "I guess when you get invited to birthday parties and old ladies start bringing you brownies at work, you know you're doing something right."

Although the store has enjoyed much success over the years, the Pipe Den recently closed its shop in Valley Mall. Willis hopes to relocate and expand the scope of the Pipe Den to include more games and recreational items. With a ban on smoking in all shopping centers and malls drawing nearer, he believes product diversity can help ensure the success of the Pipe Den.

"Where else can you buy a pack of cigarettes and a Samurai sword in the same place?"

The Pipe Den plans to relocate by summer.

JIM HEFFERNAN, a native of Roanoke and a fifth-year senior majoring in mass communication, plans to reside in Harrisonburg for a year after graduation, contemplating life's mysteries before pursuing a career in magazine journalism.

SHARLEY SIMPSON, a senior mass communication major with minors in French and Italian, is a photographer for the Bluestone. Having grown up in the foreign service, she hopes to use her camera as a ticket to travel the world.

Flavored tobaccos are popular counter-top items, ranging from Gold Rush to Hunter's Blend.
Joyful and Alive at 125

by Sharon LaRowe

The cheery older gentleman stands ready. Extending his weathered hand, he gives a firm and welcoming handshake.

"Your hands are cold," Harold Showalter, a greeter at Harrisonburg Baptist Church says with a smile, adding quickly, "How's your heart?"

Member Pat Dickens says she would sum up the "heart" of HBC "as a willing heart. If the members know of a need, they try to, as small groups or individuals, meet that need."

Church members celebrated the history of caring hearts at the 125th anniversary of HBC. And for its 830 members, this "heart" is just beginning to beat.

The anniversary party, held in the basement fellowship hall, had the theme "Joyful and Alive at 125."

"That's when we let our hair down," says Evelyn Stiteler, who chaired the event.

For the church service that followed the party, Stiteler chose "hymns with a beat to them," to demonstrate the joy and spirit of the church family.

A close inspection of the weekly bulletin displays a common tie that binds the church family together. Below the names of the pastoral team are printed the words, "Ministers, The Congregation." Pastor Tom Reynolds and his flock take these words to heart, as they serve one another and the community. They follow the motto of the church, developed in the '70s, "Commissioned to Care in Christ."

Because of this commission, HBC members reach out to the community, giving a whole new meaning to the phrase, "church service."

Blue and yellow cut-outs of "helping hands" cover HBC's foyer bulletin board. Each construction paper hand symbolizes a different service project in the church family or surrounding community, demonstrating their compassion for others.

For example, at Christmas-time, they ring bells for the Salvation Army at Valley Mall. Members also work at the food bank, Patchwork Pantry; help renovate the Mercy House; volunteer at the Mediation Center; and travel to natural disaster areas like Florida and Petersburg to aid in relief efforts.

Even the young people get involved in service. While the youth take summer trips to other states to teach Vacation Bible Clubs, the younger children collect personal hygiene products for migrant workers and their families.

"I think it is a church for everyone in the programs," Dickens says. "From the young through the senior adults, it is inclusive."

Any Wednesday night demonstrates her assertion.

Wednesday evening activities start at 4:30 with choir practice for senior adults, one of the 11 choirs active in the church. Known as the XYZingers, part of a weekly senior adults' club, the choir and the club together promote
those “X-tra Years of Zest” that the older members of the church have to offer.

The senior adult choir, initially named the XYZ Singers, became the “XYZingers” with a simple typo in the Sunday bulletin. The name stuck, director Sharon Wampler says.

Like the senior adults, children take part in their own groups on Wednesday evenings, as they exercise their abilities in vocal and handbell choirs.

At 5:30, hungry, busy families take a break from meetings and choir practices to come together for a Family Night Supper, served cafeteria-style for the more than 150 people in the fellowship hall.

After dinner, while the children enjoy their own missions programs — filled with games and Bible study, the adults share together in a large Bible-study format.

The evening caps off with adult choir practice in the choir loft of the sanctuary. It is here that the spirit of the members resounds.

Peals of laughter staccato out into the sanctuary, echoing off the high ceilings as the sopranos hit a wrong note. Smiles cross their faces. “I think my timing’s off,” says one bass after another unsuccessful try at the notes.

“You ought to buy yourself a new timing belt,” another man chimes sarcastically.

Rev. David Barker leads the spunky group during the hour-long practice.

“It takes a deep level of commitment to put together an anthem each week,” he says, adding that the church sees their singing as a ministry.

“We kind of have a sense that the choir is not performing to the church but for the church,” he says.

The light-hearted evening is capped off with a serenade to alto Mavis Wilcox, celebrating her 65th birthday. The members break off into melodic four-part harmony of “Happy Birthday.”

As the singing dies down, one man jokingly makes reference to the cast on her right arm. “If she keeps milking that broken arm, I don’t know if she’ll make it to her next birthday.”

Wilcox turns with a menacing look toward her heckler.

Bass singer, Dr. Larry Roller, catches a glimpse of Wilcox’s glance. “If it’s gonna’ be that kind of fight I’m laying my money on Mavis,” he says, with a chuckle. With that, the entire choir bursts out in laughter.

FAMILIES ARE THE MAINSTAY of the church.

This family looks picture-perfect. Grandma and Grandaddy Dove may have silver in their hair, but their faces shine with healthy glow. Mom is a pretty, petite blonde with soft laugh lines. Dad’s tall frame harkens to his Bridgewater College days as a basketball star. Their three boys, ages 18, 15, and 10, each have their own individual boy-next-door appeal. The family wouldn’t be complete without the dog — Yogi, a 5 1/2-year-old golden retriever.

In 1960, first-generation members Nelson and Mary Belle Dove brought their family to HBC. They worshiped with the original 700 members in the fellowship hall because the sanctuary had yet to be constructed.

The Doves, their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild are still part of the church family. They have seen and made a difference in the
church during the last 34 years, not only in the people but in the growth of their family because of HBC.

The church serves what Pastor Reynolds refers to as a “transient community,” through which many families come and go. Mary Belle says, “We’re one of the only families who have four generations.”

Her daughter, Sharon, was 12 at the time her family joined the church. She sang in the choir, joined the youth group, and sometimes even served as an accompanist. Ten years after her family became members, she ceremoniously walked the red, carpeted sanctuary aisle to the wooden altar and her fiancé, Jim Wampler.

The Wamplers were publicly dedicated to serve as spiritual leaders to their children after each of the three boys was born.

Sharon’s parents, Nelson and Mary Belle, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary in the fellowship hall. The celebration was appropriately held at the church, a focal point for the family.

Young and young-at-heart find their place at HBC. Martin Shears and Jay Pendergrass (above) share a laugh after Wednesday night adult Bible study. (Above right) Rebecca and Alex Bugg wait for their mother to pick them up after Mission Friends time.

For the past 34 years, HBC has been a foundation in their lives.

“I find that Sunday school and church together bring you back together,” Jim Wampler says, encircled by his family as he sits on the floor of his country-decor home. “During the week you tend to slide away.

“I hate to miss church because it really helps to refocus,” he says thoughtfully.

Some Sundays he refocuses and relaxes enough to nod off when the lights turn down in the choir loft where he sits.

“Occasionally I’ve fallen asleep, but not recently, Mary Belle,” he says, glancing at his mother-in-law and laughing, his eyes sparkling.

The entire clan is musical. Sharon leads the senior adult choir, which both her parents regularly attend. She and her husband perform every Sunday morning in the adult choir. Dan and Nathan have sung in the youth choir, which their mother also directs, and Wesley now participates in the children’s choir.

The Wamplers have been happy to raise their children in the church’s active, nurturing environment.

“The children’s program is one of the strongest programs, if not the strongest” the church offers, Sharon says.

The youth meetings also add a nurturing facet to their family’s development. Jim says, “Probably our best experience...has been with the youth.”

Both Jim and Sharon have been active on the youth group committee for 10 years.

The older boys have found their own place in youth group. Nathan, a sophomore at Harrisonburg High School, hangs out with his best friend at the weekly youth meetings.

Nathan’s grandfather, Nelson Dove listens intently as his grandson talks about the various activities of the youth group at church.

While Nelson agrees that the youth are a strong part of HBC, he says, “I don’t see too much future for the senior adults.”

“Nelson, you’ve got a great future, just not here,” Jim jokes his father-in-law. Jim doesn’t agree that the seniors have little future, however. “The senior adults are there,” he says emphatically.

Sharon agrees. “They’re the backbone of the church. There are an awful lot of really active senior adults.”

Her father reconsiders, “I guess they do have a future, after all.”

The only thing the church really lacks is a college program, Nelson says, thinking back to a time when the church held three or four Sunday-school classes specifically catering to young adults from JMU and EMC.

Because of the lack of college students, the Wampler’s oldest son, Dan, a freshman at Bridgewater College, spends time with the youth group.

His college is a short, 15-minute drive from home, so Dan returns every weekend to be with his family and get his laundry cleaned.

“He’s only missed one Sunday,” Sharon announces proudly.
Dan insists he missed that service because he attended services elsewhere with a friend. "Just give me a car to drive in, and I'll be there," he says, eying his parents with sarcasm. His mother admits that he faithfully attends church. "But he sits on the back row in his blue jeans," she adds, a hint of disdain in her voice.

THOMAS JEFFERSON ONCE said, "I like the dreaming of the future better than the history of the past." Stiteler, the church historian, included this passage in her compilation of HBC's recent history. "We all like to dream," she penned, "but it always seems wise to review the past to see if we have accomplished our goals and have done our very best for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

When Harrisonburg Baptist Church formed on January 17, 1869, the weather outside was cloudy; the streets full of mud.

According to one of the local weekly newspapers of the day, Old Commonwealth, "notwithstanding which, there was a good congregation assembled."

Since then, the congregation has assembled weekly for the last 125 years in five different buildings since they first purchased an old brick Methodist church building on West Market Street in 1869.

Interestingly enough, the current home of HBC looks architecturally similar to the colonial design of that original site with its arched windows and classic white trim.

In addition to recording the yearly building and mission happenings, Stiteler gets a kick out of the humorous times at the church. She recalls the time in 1987 when members of the youth Sunday school program, their parents, and a youth minister met a famous visitor while eating breakfast at the local Hojo's.

She writes, "It so happened that on that particular morning President [Jimmy] Carter, his wife, Rosalyn, daughter, Amy, and the Secret Service had been traveling on Interstate 81 and had also stopped there for breakfast."

The youth minister introduced himself to the President and asked him to greet the young people.

"Being a good Southern Baptist, President Carter graciously accepted the invitation," Stiteler states in her compilation of recent church history. The next morning's Daily News-Record carried a front-page article about the event, with the headline: "Guess Who Came to Breakfast?"

Stiteler also tells of the time in 1990 when the electric power went out in the church, casting darkness across the Sunday school classrooms and dimming the sanctuary.

Power was still out when the main church service began. The associate pastor informed the congregation that he had phoned the power company to find out what to do about their dilemma. Company representatives suggested the congregation sing the hymn, "Send the Light!"

"The power company didn't know how applicable it was to tell this church to sing. They love to worship through song.

So how's your heart, HBC? Church historian Evelyn Stiteler, says of the first 125 years, "We accomplished an awful lot. We're looking forward to starting another mission church and that would help spread the message of Jesus Christ."

No hymn can be a better representation of the heart of Harrisonburg Baptist Church than "The Church of Christ, in Every Age."

("We have no mission but to serve in full obedience to our Lord, To care for all, without reserve, And spread His liberating Word."

SHARON LAROWE, assistant Focus editor for The Breeze, freelances for the Virginian-Pilot/Ledger Star. She hopes to positively affect the world of journalism through her writing and photography the way Jesus Christ has positively affected her.
Petaling Along
in Life with
Andre Viette

by Anne Marriott

MOST GROWN MEN DON'T like to play in the dirt. Andre Viette makes a living out of it.

He’s a world-renown horticulturist whose playground is his 200-acre farm and nursery in Fishersville. Here, he and his wife Claire and his son Mark manage one of the largest perennial nurseries in the country.

“We were just going to have a small business,” Andre says with a laugh.

That was 18 years ago when he and Claire and their four children moved to the Shenandoah Valley from Long Island, N.Y. Since then, the business has grown, and Andre has added a
teaching job at Blue Ridge Community College and a radio talk show to his list of accomplishments.

He makes his home in a large brick house just off the road and only a few hundred feet from his nursery. Out front there's a sign welcoming potential planters to the Andre Viette Farm and Nursery.

Up a gravel-stone road, there's a little red barn and rows of seedling plants waiting to swallow the sunshine and grow into beautiful plants. This spring, yellow daffodils are the first signs of life to pop up from the moist dirt outside the Viette home. Inside, in the antique-laden living room, bunches of daffodils sit in vases, adding color to the April showers. Looking out the window, a sparrow sits on a berry bush, chirping as it looks inside. It almost looks like a scene out of Snow White, if it weren't for the reality of business — voices drift through the floorboards from the office downstairs.

When Andre comes into his living room, wearing tan trousers and carrying a steaming cup of herbal tea, he is able to speak of himself for only a few moments. He's a humble man who obviously knows his business well — Blue Ridge Community College and WWSVA radio wouldn't have hired him otherwise.

But Viette is more interested in talking about the accomplishments of others. One man he speaks of with great respect is his father, Martin Viette. He is, after all, the reason Andre is in the flower business.

“I wanted to be an artist — that's what I really wanted to do,” Andre says. But now instead of creating with paints, at least for a living, Andre creates with flowers.

His father immigrated to the United States from Switzerland, and in 1929, began his own nursery in Long Island. Following in his father's footsteps, Andre pursued gardening.

Andre graduated from Cornell University with a degree in horticulture, and then returned to Long Island to work alongside his father.

Now his son Mark is working alongside him. This father-son connection is one that spans three generations and 65 years.

“Working with Mark,” Andre says, “we get along well — just like I did with my father.”

Close family ties are not unusual in the Viette family. Andre felt it with his father, and now he feels it with Mark. It all comes down to family values, he says, explaining why the Viettes chose the Shenandoah Valley in the first place.

“If you study this area here,” Andre says, “there will be very few places that match it.”

About 20 years ago, when drugs were making their way into the school system, pollution was heavy and population was growing, the Viettes decided to leave Long Island.

The decision was a difficult one for the family. “We left with a lot of sadness,” Andre says.

The search for a new home wasn't easy, either. The Viettes wanted to move to a rural setting where academics weren't compromised. Andre also wanted a place where his four children would grow up with a strong sense of family. “A lot of people think it's corny to say 'family values,'” Andre says, “but I still hold it as strong today as it was then.”

They searched every state east of the Mississippi to find a match for their qualifications. Then they found the Shenandoah Valley.

Now Valley residents — and people all over Virginia — associate Andre's name with perennial perfection. His nursery, in fact, was the first perennial nursery to open in the state, and one of the largest perennial nurseries in America.

“We're farmers,” Andre says of his business. “Instead of growing corn, we grow flowers.”

Bunches, as a matter of fact. At the nursery, Andre grows more than 3000 varieties of plants. And according to Andre, by the year 2000, the green goods will outnumber farm products.

But this is a fleeting thought for Andre. He's more interested in talking about his radio show, “In the Garden with Andre Viette,” on WWSVA.

Six years ago, Andre started the call-in radio show, which was broadcast across the Shenandoah Valley. It received such an overwhelming response that the show became more widely broadcasted, adding stations up and down the East Coast. “We're pleased that we have such a following,” Andre says.

He tells a story to convey the popularity of his show. One night the show was bumped for a basketball game. Many listeners were upset that the
program was canceled and called the station to complain. Andre smiles and says this was a sign of how popular the show is.

Now he and his co-host Jim Britt, a radio personality at WSVA, are looking to make the show national. "Hop-skipping and jumping all over is not the way to do it," Andre says of getting a radio show off the ground. Instead, it's important to take things slowly and develop an audience first. This appears to be something Andre has no trouble doing.

A large part of his success is due to his developed knowledge of the subject matter—something that continues to amaze co-host Jim Britt. "His name is one of those magical names," Britt says. "If you're talking about Andre, you're talking about Andre Viette."

Each Sunday afternoon from 4-7, and every Tuesday morning from 10-12, Andre takes to the airwaves to solve gardening dilemmas for woeful listeners.

"He's kind of a guru as far as our audience is concerned," Britt says. And when Andre can't make the show, his son, Mark, sits in for him. "There's not too many talk-show hosts who can have an immediate stand-in," Andre says.

The show itself is rather informal, almost like talking to an old friend about a problem in the garden. This old friend, however, just happens to have a degree in the subject.

Andre sits in the studio with a notepad and a pencil, says Britt. When a person calls in, Andre jots down the situation on the notepad and doodles some while he thinks of the answer. At times he's stumped, but not often. "I have not met anyone who comes close," friend and Blue Ridge student V.K. Begoon says about Andre's plant knowledge.

When Andre does get stumped, he goes home and researches the question in his many books until he figures out the answer. Then, during the next week's show, he tells the listeners what he's found.

To prepare for the show, Andre rises early on Sunday mornings and studies his books. Another source of preparation, one Andre says is invaluable, is his teaching at Blue Ridge Community College. "It absolutely prepares you for all subject matter that might come," he says.

When he moved to the Valley 18 years ago, there were no courses offered in botany and horticulture at Blue Ridge. So Andre went to the college and said, "Do you want me to start a program here for you?"

Now he teaches 10 botany and horticulture classes at the college. Subject matter includes everything from dirt to trees. And Andre says his roots are so firmly planted in the college that even if he wanted to leave he couldn't.

"It wasn't something we had to do, it wasn't something we needed to do," Andre says of inventing the program. "We just thought it would be fun."

As part of his teaching, Andre frequently takes his classes on field trips to show them what he is instructing them. Often, Andre takes his classes to his own nursery.

Begoon says that Andre makes the
Andre Viette Farm and Nursery was the first perennial nursery to open in Virginia, and is one of the largest in the country. Andre, his wife Claire, and his son Mark manage the nursery.

class “more of a friend thing.”

“If someone has something on their mind, they put their hand up and get the question answered,” Begoon says.

The class is not intimidating because Andre is so good-natured, Begoon says. This good-natured attitude about class and about life is part of what makes Andre so unique.

He’s been bestowed many honors, most recently in March for outstanding service to horticulture by the John Clayton Society and the James Madison University Arboretum. Despite his achievements, Andre remains just a regular guy. At least he would like to. Some people don’t want to let him get away with it.

“It was our privilege to recognize Andre Viette, one of the most active and productive horticulturalists in the country,” JMU Arboretum Director Norlyn Bodkin says. “He has added so much beauty to our lives.”

Again, Andre turns the discussion away from himself. He looks out his window to the gigantic wreath hanging on the side of the house, one he made for Christmas and has yet to take down. “I love Christmas,” he says. “It takes me two weeks to decorate for Christmas.”

Andre says that he was going to take the wreath down, but when the birds came back this spring, he couldn’t bring himself to do it. “I’ll leave it for them. It’s a good place for them to nest,” he says.

He glances at a book, one which he co-authored. It’s The American Horticultural Society Flower Finder published by Simon and Schuster. Andre put in 1,000 hours on this book — all volunteer. He also donated 160 photos from his private collection.

But the long hours and hard work didn’t faze Andre. It was something he wanted to do. He’s not only a painter, but an amateur photographer, too.

On the second floor of his home, one of the rooms is dedicated to his photography. When his two daughters moved out, he moved in. Their childhood bedroom now belongs to rows of filing cabinets housing nearly 50,000 slides. A large poster of his wife hangs on the wall. He affectionately calls her his “pin-up girl.”

Andre shoots mostly garden shots — pictures of his flowers and his plants. Although he doesn’t do his own processing, he says that he is opposed to the manipulation of photography. If he can’t see it with his natural eye, he doesn’t want it in the picture, Viette says.

“You have to be in the right place at the right time,” Andre says about getting a good shot.

One of his favorite flowers to photograph is the daylily. Andre likes the daylily because its season lasts for a few months. Often, he says, the lifespan of a flower is very brief; if he blinks, he might miss it. But not with the daylily.

That’s how Andre’s garden and business have grown — by never blinking and always growing.

ANNE MARRIOTT is a senior mass communication and political science double major. This summer she is interning at U.S. News and World Report.

AMY PETRUCCI, a senior journalism major from Arlington, enjoys photography and hopes to pursue a career in the magazine industry.
MOST OF THE PEOPLE AT Harrisonburg's Liberty House Nursing Home are at least 65 years old, but one of the most popular residents is not even a teenager.

Generally known as "everybody's friend," Annie came to the home in September 1990 when she was 3. She has been living and working there ever since.

Distinguished by her youth and energy, Annie makes a world of difference. Strutting down the halls on all fours, the lass' speed is often impeded by her arthritis, but this just gives her more time to do her job. The 7-year-old purebred boxer is not only a resident and an "employee," but she is also the nursing home pet.

Annie, a fawn-colored hound with bulging eyes and a short, compact snout, is one of 30 working dogs trained by Caring Canine Companions, a volunteer organization dedicated to preparing unwanted canines to serve as assistance dogs.

By taking on some of these ill-fated pooches and investing up to $5,000 per dog for training and care, CCC has been providing a humane service for both the animals and their new owners since 1988.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND
At Liberty House, Annie helps a lot of residents.

"Studies have shown that animals in nursing homes are very therapeutic," says Jill Siegel, the nursing home's activities and volunteer coordinator.

Illustrating these therapeutic benefits, Siegel recalls a particular resident who was "combative." He was always "yelling and agitated, and it was very difficult to get him to interact with the staff. But he's very appropriate when he interacts with Annie," she explains. The man has a "total personality change" when the dog is around.

In addition to improving the residents' demeanor, Annie helps some to adjust to their new home more easily. She was particularly helpful with a deaf resident who was "isolated and tremendously afraid."

“When she first got here, she was very tentative to meet everyone else, but she just adored Annie. She taught me the sign for Annie," Siegel says, pausing to demonstrate.

Making the sign for the letter "A" by forming a fist with her thumb adjacent to her index finger, she moves her hand up toward her chin and then shifts it horizontally from left to right.

“She never could remember my name, but she could remember the dog's name," Siegel adds laughing.

Although she is at Liberty House for
the residents' benefit, Annie's relationship with them is not one-sided. Many adore her and enjoy caring for her, especially Millie Compton, a Liberty House resident since April 1986.

Compton was initially reluctant about the idea of a dog in a nursing home, but she grew to love Annie. She was delighted when the dog became a resident and excited when its caretaker left the nursing home after Annie had been there for only a month. The coveted position was up for grabs, and Compton wanted it badly.

The white-haired, wheelchair-bound woman spends a lot of time in the physical-therapy room where Annie lives. She gets the dog water and food, lets her out for nature calls, opens the door to her cage so she can go to bed, and ensures that her blankets get washed.

"I just like having her around," Compton says. "She has brought me so much pleasure. I love her like a best friend."

Like Annie, dogs that live in long-term care facilities are called resident-therapy dogs. They are trained to provide a few services like picking things up, but their most important duty is to be friendly and outgoing — to be a companion to all the residents who like dogs.

As a purebred whose trainer Sylvia Fisher was active in the Skyline Kennel Club, Annie got a lot of practice before she started working full-time. Every other week, she visited the nursing home as part of a pet-therapy program.

Annie clearly had a productive past before she became a resident, but many of CCC's other hounds have histories that are not so pleasant.

NEW TRICKS FOR BAD DOGS

"A lot of times, when a dog gets about 10-12 months old, they can be a real pain in the neck," explains Fisher, CCC's vice president and training coordinator.

"They have all sorts of behavior problems. They go around barking, they chew, they hike their legs up all over everything. They do all sorts of things and people get tired of them. The owners suddenly think, "this cute little puppy isn't a cute little puppy anymore. So they give them away."

Many dogs also start out as ill-mannered "mutts" from SPCAs and shelters, and they are often "rescue dogs" — animals saved from euthanasia.

When CCC gets a new dog, they begin training and designate it to one of the four categories of assistance dogs. Some, like Annie, have difficulty mastering advanced levels of training but are impartially friendly. They make good resident-therapy dogs.

"Social dogs" and companion-therapy dogs also serve in home environments. Social dogs are just well-mannered pets, but companion-therapy dogs have specific responsibilities. They help children and invalids by picking things up, carrying messages and going for help, but they do not have public access.

The only dogs allowed in public — churches, schools and restaurants, for example — are certified service dogs that accompany their "handlers" wherever they go. Service dogs assist people dependent on wheelchairs...
walkers and crutches; they carry packages and cordless phones; and they retrieve dropped items.

A DYNAMIC DUO

Lord Baxter, a boxer and Rhodesian ridgeback cross, is one of these remarkable animals. His handler, Mary Elizabeth Skinner, is the medical-care-evaluation coordinator at Rockingham Memorial Hospital and a graduate student pursuing her second Master's degree in counseling psychology at JMU.

Skinner, who has nerve damage in her left leg, has difficulty walking and requires the use of two canes. Occasionally she uses a wheelchair, but since she was paired with Baxter in July 1992, her mobility has improved. Skinner's damaged nerves render her unable to perceive where her leg is. Baxter walks slightly in front of her so she can judge where to place her foot as she walks.

"Baxter gives me more confidence because he acts as a reference point for me so I can tell better where I am in time and space," Skinner explains. With him, she is more comfortable walking in crowds and isolated areas.

During their walks, Baxter's beautiful golden coat, long angular mask, and wide, seductive brown eyes attract many admirers, but his assets go beyond skin-deep. For example, he has raised Skinner's ability to achieve her academic and professional goals. With his help, she is free to travel for business meetings, seminars, and educational workshops without the aid of another person.

He's very helpful at the office too. Resting on his mat in the far left-hand corner of Skinner's third-floor, corner office, Baxter sits quietly and waits to respond to her beck and call. In addi-

Rescued dogs make life easier for disabled citizens

AFTER BEING SHOT IN THE neck and back in 1981, Neil Shapiro became a quadriplegic. Paralyzed from the chest down, he could do very little for himself and thought people would always have to help with even the simplest tasks. Thanks to a combination of forces, however, he is able to live alone.

In 1989, Shapiro enrolled at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center where he learned to straighten up for himself instead of depending on other people. "They make you use muscles you never thought you would use," he recalls.

Putting those muscles to use, Shapiro lives a lifestyle he once thought was no longer feasible. He does, of course, have some help. Each morning and evening, a home attendant comes to prepare his meals and provide a few other services. Once the aid is gone, however, Shapiro and his service dog, Casey Bones, are left to fend for themselves.

Casey, a Labrador-retriever blend, does everything from answering the door and turning on lights to getting things from the refrigerator.

"I'm independent," Shapiro asserts, acknowledging how fortunate he is. "I wouldn't be able to make it without Casey."

Sadly, Shapiro could have missed his chance to live independently because Casey was almost put to sleep three times in two days. Like more than eight million stray animals that are put to sleep annually, Casey was on his way to termination. Fortunately, someone at the Staunton-Augusta SPCA noticed that he had some remarkable qualities and called CCC.

CCC acquires most of its rescue dogs in a similar manner. Someone from a shelter will call and say, "there's a dog here that's just too good to put to sleep," explains Sylvia Fisher, CCC's vice president.

Cooper, a yellow Labrador-shepherd blend, is another service dog that was almost put to sleep.

Casey Bones fetches a CD for Neil Shapiro.
tion to other tasks, he carries the contents of Skinner's briefcase and delivers messages to her co-workers in neighboring offices.

"He's been very well accepted by the people in the department, but they just take for granted that he's a part of me," Skinner says, turning her head of neatly pinned hair over her shoulder to glance at her partner. "We're a team."

Including Skinner and Baxter, CCC currently has 26 working teams. "We don't consider them a dog and master," Fisher explains. "We consider them a full-working partnership. The dog makes life easier for his handler. And the handler still, although he's disabled, has the responsibility of taking care of the dog and seeing that the dog is healthy and happy and well-loved. So it's a two-way street."

In order to become certified as a team, handlers and their prospective service dogs must participate in a 65-hour intensive team-training and a six-week bonding period. For the team-training, a qualified instructor accompanies the pair to malls, movie theaters, restaurants and airports.

Team-training "was very scary for me," Skinner says. CCC "had spent a lot of time and effort and money in training [Baxter] and I didn't want to mess up his training." The most difficult part of the transition was getting used to have a dog with me 24 hours a day, she adds.

Once the instructor is sure a new handler can control the dog in a variety of environments, CCC relinquishes ownership. The dog, however, does a lot of work before it is ready for that final step. Each canine is trained by a CCC volunteer responsible for taking it to obedience class once a week, training it every day, and ensuring that it is well cared for and in good health. CCC pays for the food, veterinary care and equipment, but "if the dog chews up your furniture," Fisher says chuckling, "we don't pay for it." After a year of training and classes, the dog is ready to be paired with a handler.

"The hardest part is when the dog has to leave you. You get really attached to them when you have a whole year with them. And you see them grow from these horrible, obnoxious animals causing everybody problems to a real productive working dog. The satisfaction that you get from doing a job like this, and understanding that you have helped a dog, and you have helped a person, and you have helped the community in which the team lives... it's really, really, really super because you've got over 100 people that are volunteering and nobody's making any money."

The dogs are free, so there is no financial profit; but almost everyone involved with CCC and its program makes friends. Just ask the people at Liberty House.

SUSAN EDWARDS, a senior mass communication major, plans to pursue a career in journalism after continuing her education in Ghana. She has interned at Vibe and spent the fall in Jamaica.

KAREN SEGERMARK, a junior journalism major from Newtown Square, Pa., enjoys photography and hopes to someday work for a magazine.

"They called about three times" trying to save Cooper, Fisher recalls, glad that someone spotted his potential.

"He could do anything that you ask him to do.

"He's the kind of dog that if he washes out of the program, I want him back," she adds.

Stephen Joseph, an eight-year-old boy with cerebral palsy and Cooper's new handler, probably has other plans for the dog's future. So does his mom.

"Basically the reason we wanted a dog for Stephen was we wanted him to be a companion and a friend," especially when he has to be away from school and friends due to his illness, she explains.

Realizing the difference this companionship can make in her child's life, Catherine Joseph of Lynchburg appreciates CCC's work with rescue dogs.

"I think it's great," she begins. "It would have been a real waste of a dog" if Cooper was put to sleep.

Statistics from the Humane Society of the United States indicate that about 11.6 million strays end up in shelters each year. CCC, whose work is limited to Virginia and involves only dogs, saves relatively few of these animals — but they go above and beyond the call of duty to put the lives they save to good use.

Cooper attracts curious looks in the mall.

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Rockingham County Goes To War
Remembrance & War

After 50 years, Valley veterans recall D-Day

by Rob Kaiser

A WAVE CRASHED DOWN ON THE VALLEY THAT MORNING. However, the storm had already begun in the Shenandoah Valley. There was the rationing of gasoline and staple food items such as sugar. Many women entered the work force for the first time. Letters, written with love, were received from absent sons, boyfriends and fathers, turned soldiers.

That morning, though, currents caused by the assault boats used in the D-Day invasion covered the Valley. “Germans Report Invasion Of France Has Started” headlined the front page of the June 6, 1944 Daily News-Record.

The next day’s paper explained how it learned of the invasion:

“Though the news was officially announced at 3:32 yesterday morning, most residents of Harrisonburg were unaware that the invasion had started until they picked up their News-Records from their doorsteps...”

“As dawn broke over the city word of the invasion was spread among night workers making their way home and among early-risers on their way to work. Arrangements for the I-Day meetings were immediately set in motion.”

Everyone knew what the news meant. Almost all of the absent sons, boyfriends and fathers would see battle for the first time. Company C of the 116th infantry faced the gravest danger yet. Hundreds of Valley residents congregated in churches and schools to pray for their safe return.

The men who did return brought with them stories of June 6, 1944 — D-Day. Now, nearly 50 years later, they still have vivid memories of the day, and stories still ripple.

“O K, what was D-Day like?” Bill Bryan asks, settling into a cushioned rocking chair in his Dayton home. “I spent a lot of money and I bought the after-action reports of the regiment... I'll show you what they look like.”

Bryan retrieves the eight-inch thick report and sets it on the coffee table. The table and the rest of the living room is kept tidy. Some military texts line the bookshelves. Several News-Records and a few copies of Southern Living are out for for visitors to thumb through.

Bryan flips open the report. The wrinkles on his cheeks and around his eyes show the effects of time. But time, along with the report, has offered him great insight about D-Day.
"In battle, you know what's going on exactly where you are," he explains. "Fifty yards from you, you don't know what's happening."

"This [part of the report] will tell you what it was supposed to be like. Then the next part of it will tell you what really happened — and it was one hell of a mess!"

Undoubtedly, Bryan has set up this scene countless times before. He still, though, goes about it in a deliberately ordered manner. First, he paints a picture of what was supposed to happen before the troops landed:

The Navy was supposed to launch rockets at the beach to "tear up the barbed wire, destroy German emplacements along the beach . . . [and] demoralize the enemy," Bryan says. Twelve Howitzer tanks, covered in canvas, would be put in the sea on "ducks" and float into shore, firing all the way in. Thirty minutes before any troops reached the beach, the Air Force was to drop bombs on the beach.

"There was supposed to be a gap in the [barbed] wire," Bryan recalls from his days as a captain. "I was supposed to walk with my little team . . . to set up an ammunition supply point on top of the bluff."

Confident he's covered what was supposed to happen, Bryan moves into what actually occurred:

A big storm lingered from the previous evening. Rain still fell the morning of the planned assault. The overcast skies foreshadowed what was to come.

The Navy fired prematurely and the rockets didn't make it to the beach. The "ducks" that the tanks were on encountered rough storm waters and only one tank made it to shore. Finally, "the Air Force came over," Bryan says they "couldn't see the beach through the clouds, dropped their bombs 12 miles inland and killed a lot of cattle."

Unaware of what was happening, the troops divided into groups of 30. Each group boarded an assault boat and headed for the beach.

About 400 yards in the channel, Bryan's boat was struck by enemy fire. "The ramp dropped and we spilled out into the water," Bryan says. "It was well over my head. I never touched the bottom."

All the soldiers were supplied with life belts that inflated with CO₂ cartridges; however when the life belts inflated, several men were flipped around by their backpacks, which weighed more than 80 pounds each, and drowned.

"We had preached and preached to these guys to wear them well up under your armpits," Bryan says angrily.

When Bryan hit the water and began sinking, he dropped his pack, extra ammo and rations. Once he reached the surface, he only had his weapon and canteen with him. "My gas mask kept my head up out of the water."

The surge of the tide pushed Bryan closer and closer to land. In the water, though, he was an easy target for the enemy on the shore.

"I'd go up on the top of [the wave] and some German machine-gunner would fill the bottom of the trough with bullets." Bryan thought when the wave crested and descended, he would be shot. "The funny thing was when I'd go down in the trough, I could hear the bullets pop over the top of my head! And then I'd go back down and they'd be at my feet!" Bryan laughs.

"That stupid whoever he was just couldn't get me. I was lucky, very lucky," Bryan says. His voice is low and serious — in stark contrast to his normal jovial tone.
When he could touch bottom, Bryan dug into the ocean floor to make his way out of the sea. At one point he stepped over a dead body.

Once on the shore, someone brought Bryan his backpack that must have been swept in by the tide. Inside the pack was Bryan's social security card that he still carries in his wallet.

On the beach, soldiers were scattered everywhere, Bryan remembers. "Everybody was trying to find a hole to get out of this terrific fire. "I was scared to death for a while. But I finally got over it, knew I had a job to do and I did it. But if anybody was there and getting shot at like that. . . and says they weren't scared, they're either lying or they're crazy."

Bryan's boss was killed during the invasion and Bryan was suddenly ranking officer. Though his command position wouldn't last long, Bryan would witness a lot more death. One of his best friends took a bullet between the eyes from a German sniper.

"The water was so rough, the boats just drifted to the west. We made it because we got blown off course."

— Jesse Bennington

"It was boats over here burning, boats over here upside down and dead bodies floating everywhere."

— Norman Taylor

assault jackets with deep pockets to store food rations, toiletry articles and a four-inch long "energy bar" that was similar to dehydrated food, Bennington recalls. Hand grenades were kept in the jacket's pouches.

"Also, each man had a little kit of morphine, because on invasions on the beachhead you aren't allowed to stop and help other people," adds Taylor, who has shiny white hair and mustache. "If someone gets hit, shot, whatever, you don't stop. The first-aid man is supposed to take care of that and medical detachments. You had to stick yourself with a shot of morphine for the pain until they could get to you."

Their conversation flows naturally. Each plays off the other's stories. This isn't surprising, though, considering that they've been friends since Bennington entered the National Guard right after high school.

Bennington describes the assault boats used in the landing. "Those little boats that we were on were 30 feet long and 10 feet wide and had about that much sides to them," he says spreading his arms about four feet apart.

"Some of the fellows have said they
climbed down rope ladders to get in it," Taylor says.

"I climbed down a landing net, myself," adds Bennington, who didn't board the same boat as Taylor.

Taylor says he slid through a chute. "It was a big, plastic chute that was hooked onto the ship down into the little assault boat."

Once all the soldiers were on board, the boats circled around the channel until the signal came in. Then they all made a beeline for the beach. Some of the boats were hit by incoming shells and sank. The situation also looked bleak for the boats still afloat.

"The waves would come and smack up against the front of the things," Bennington says. "All the boys were sick in the boat, there was stuff floating around.

"The smell was enough to make you sick," he adds.

On top of that, the enemy was knocking on their door.

"You could hear machine gun bullets just splattering on the front of the ramp and everybody's down in there like this," Taylor says crouching back in the chair.

Communication with the rest of the fleet was cut off in the chaos.

"It was boats over here burning," Taylor points, "boats over here upside down and dead bodies floating everywhere."

"The water was red," Bennington interjects. "I mean the water was red. And the odor, I don't know what the odor was... Have you ever been in a slaughterhouse and smelled the hogs bein' put in scalded water? That's kind of what it smelled like. Plus, gunpowder mixed with it and everything else."

To avoid the fate of the burning boats, they had to avoid underwater hazards such as steel beams that had been planted in the ocean floor. On
the ends of the beams were mines that would explode upon impact with a boat.

"Where we went in," Bennington adds, "they’d get close to one of them mines stickin’ up and then they’d back up." Everyone in the boat was scared to death they’d hit a mine.

Bennington’s and Taylor’s boats landed 1,000 feet from where they were supposed to land. "The water was so rough, the boats just drifted to the west," Bennington explains. "A company was all killed. We made it because we got blown off course."

The water was only at knee-level when they exited the boats. On the beach, though, they were pinned down by machine gun fire that was "kicking up sand," Taylor says.

A colonel approached the group of soldiers Taylor was with and said, "If you gonna have to die, don’t die on the beach, die up here on the bluff."

Meanwhile, the Navy had fired "chemical mortars" that hit the bluffs and set fire to the dry sage grass. "It made a terrific smoke," Taylor says. "A lot of us, including myself, feel like the smoke screen was one thing that saved a lot of us."

Once off the beach, the assault teams were supposed to reorganize back into their regular rifle companies. But this task was made difficult since all of their officers had been killed in the landing as well as most of the first-aid men.

"Well, I don’t know how it ever happened," Taylor shrugs, "but we finally got our companies back together and starting advancing into several villages."

"When I got up on top of that bluff, I snuck a look back," Bennington recalls. "I never saw so many boats in my life. Thousands of them."

Today, these three sons, boyfriends and fathers who became soldiers are all grandfathers.

Bennington has two grandchildren. After the war, he was a surveyor with the Soil Conservation Service for 39 years and had a daughter. Taylor was an engineer with Merck Company in Elkton for 37 years. He has three kids and four grandchildren. And Bryan, who has six grandchildren, earned a bachelor’s degree from Madison College and had four children after the war. He retired from the Department of Education after 13 years of service.

These three veterans are part of a handful of men still in the Shenandoah Valley who served during D-Day. Some of the guys they served with were killed during the war, and many others have died since.

Along with the gift of time, Bryan reflects on his D-Day experience, "Damn glad I was there, but I won’t do it again for anything in the world."

Bryan enjoys getting together with war buddies like Bennington and Taylor. "I see these guys, it makes me feel good," Bryan says. "I guess there’s some respect from these fellows and I respect them."

"We always have a hot dog and a beer about D-Day, a picnic usually." And when they get together "every war story gets a little bit wilder."

"In the past we’ve had about 40 people attending, which includes most of them with their wives."

This year, though, there may not be a local reunion on D-Day since some of the veterans are planning to return to France for that day. Taylor, who has been back to France several times, recalled his trip there last year, "Everything is just like it was. . . . trees and everything growing up on the bluffs. You’d never know there was ever a war there."

While he was at Omaha Beach, Taylor visited the cemetery near the bluff. "Beautiful place," he says. "Very, very large. Any place you stand . . . [the graves are] in perfect alignment."

Taylor found the graves of a lot of the people he knew who didn’t return home to the Valley from D-Day. "That made me feel kind of emotional when I found them."

Taylor, though, isn’t the only one who still feels the ripples of D-Day.

"I’m not interested in going [back to France]," Bennington says solemnly. "I’ve tried for 50 years to forget this thing."

ROB KAISER will graduate from JMU in May with a bachelor of business administration. He served as The Breeze’s opinion editor this school year. SHARLEY SIMPSON, photographer.
George Blakey Jr. trims hair and upholsters furniture in his Harrisonburg barber shop

by Jonathan Rhudy

THE HISTORY, PERSONALITIES and stories of the Shenandoah Valley often meet in a small brick building on Community Street.

Here, George Blakey Jr. operates his barber and upholstery business, where people have been seeking advice and friendly conversation for the past 26 years.

Eager ears fill the room as Blakey shares his opinions on everything from politics and law to fishing and gardening.

The atmosphere at Blakey's resembles the barber shop in Eddie Murphy's movie, "Coming to America," in which a barber and his "regulars" argue the finer points of boxing.

Blakey also has his regulars. They wander in from all over the Valley, for a haircut or to get furniture reupholstered — but often they come just to sit and listen.

Perhaps they frequent 230 Community Street because of Blakey's expertise. A master behind his electric shears, Blakey has 42 years of experience as a barber.

His ability to cut all types of hair assures that his customers leave with a smile. "I can do it all. I can cut any type of hair," he says.

"I would love to cut Bill Clinton's hair," says the 60-something-year-old barber. "Whenever you see him on television, his hair is flat. Whoever is cutting his hair is cutting it the same length all over.

"This is why Clinton's hair is always standing up," he explains. Compared to the estimated $200 Clinton recently paid for a trim in California, a $7 trim from Blakey would be a bargain.

Why does this local barber think that he should be cutting the President's hair? Well for one, Blakey has already barbered for rich and famous athletes.

Former NBA basketball player and Harrisonburg native, Ralph Sampson, experienced Blakey's electric shears as a child.

Dallas Cowboys' defensive end Charles Haley, Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Gary Clark and former Buffalo Bills place-kicker Scott Norwood have received haircuts in his shop. These three NFL stars all played football at James Madison University.

Blakey admits, however, that he is not the best barber in Harrisonburg. Instead he says that he is "the second best... I have not found the best yet," he says.

Complete with a $2 shoeshine, Blakey owns one of the last full-service barber shops in the Valley. He describes it as "the most extended black business in town.

"I don't view any shop in Harrisonburg as being competitive of me. I have a monopoly on the barbering business," he says. His full-time shoeshiner George Reed says, customers "always have to wait a little while, but most people don't mind. Saturday is usually the busiest day."

Due to the AIDS epidemic, Blakey has put away his razor and no longer offers shaves. "Everyone is trying to be as careful as possible," he says.

Being careful is crucial for any barber and perhaps it is part of the reason his customers trust him so much.

Walter Duncan, a Harrisonburg native, is one of Blakey's regulars. "He has been cutting my hair for 37 years. He was the last person to cut my dad's hair."

Blakey frequently takes his barbering skills to funeral homes and hospitals for the deceased and sick. "As long as they don't wiggle, I just go ahead and..."
Blakey (right) and his apprentice Hercules Clark (left) give their customers’ hair a trim while debating sports.

cut their hair,” he says with a smile.
Like Duncan, Jeffrey Johnson, a Harrisonburg native, says, “I can remember crying in this chair,” pointing to Blakey’s heavy metallic barber chair near the picture window.
Originally, Blakey established his barber shop in the Colonnade building on Wolfe Street with the help of his two older brothers, Wilson and Joseph. Paying $85 monthly rent Blakey stayed at the Colonnade building until 1968.
“I started a desegregated shop. Everybody kept saying, ‘It is not going to work. It is not going to work,’” Blakey says. Since he opened, however, he says that there has never been a racial incident in his shop.
In 1968, Blakey opened at his current shop, which originally had two entrances, one for the barber shop in the front and one for a beauty salon in the back.
Keeping the salon in his family, he rented out the back room to one of his sisters. About 1979 the salon went out of business. Shortly after, he replaced it with Smartcraft, his upholstery business.
For the past 14 years, Smartcraft has grown under Blakey’s guidance into a big-time operation with two full-time upholsterers, Hercules Clark and Freddie Brown. (See sidebar.)
Blakey also employs Mac Gause, an apprentice barber who has been working with him since 1990. “George taught me everything I know about cutting hair,” Gause says.
Over the past four decades, Blakey has trained about five barbers — but none of them have stayed with his operation. Blakey explains, “Barbers tend to view things as very confining.”
Gause, a 1993 JMU graduate, says he is not sure how long he will continue cutting hair. Sitting in a wooden chair looking out his picture window, Blakey says, “You always have to be there like me today, regardless if I have a customer, I have to be here.”
Running his operation strictly by word of mouth, Blakey has never advertised his business. “I make money in it. I don’t like to tell nobody that I make money in it.”
But money is not his motivation — serving the community is.
Blakey says, “From this barber shop has become, I would say the center focus of the whole Northeast community.”
Johnson agrees, “Within a 40-mile radius people know where his barber shop is. When I say that, I mean when you could go from here to Luray and people would talk to you the same about him.”
Perhaps it is Blakey’s strong reputation that keeps the iron bell on his front door ringing.
Hercules Clark says, “When you are coming in from out of town and want to find something out. Where do you go? You got to the barber shop.
“[Blakey] gives out good advice. If you got a question, somehow he will eventually answer it. No matter what field it is in or what the subject you want to talk about . . . he knows something about it.”
During the course of any given day, Blakey assumes the role of lawyer, doctor and banker to answer questions for his customers.
“There is hardly a family in this area, that one day or time has not come to me with a question,” Blakey says.
Duncan adds, “His phone is ringing all the time with people asking him questions. He is definitely the type of person that you would want in your community.”
Whether they have been going to Blakey for 30 years or three months, the customers are generally amazed with his fatherly insight.
JMU senior Mike Wiles, who has been going to Blakey’s shop for the past year, says, “He is very educated on the ways of the world. You can talk to him pretty much about anything.”
Perhaps Blakey’s knowledge of the world comes through his diverse work experiences. Born in McGaheysville, the sixth of 12 children, he learned the importance of a strong work ethic.
Working with his eight brothers and three sisters on farms throughout McGaheysville, Blakey learned how to operate a successful business. As a
teenager, he was determined to make his father's farm successful.

In addition to his obligations on the family farm, Blakey also attended Lucy Simms High School where he studied various trades. Under the instruction of John H. Pleasant, an industrial arts teacher, he learned upholstery, brick masonry and barbering.

The first head of hair that Blakey cut was Pleasant's.

"He said, to me 'You might make a barber some day,'" Blakey recalls. "Soon after Blakey developed a different style of cutting — butchering on the family farm."

"From then, I was trying to decide what I wanted to do with my life."

Blakey decided that he either wanted to be an "industrial arts teacher, like Pleasant, or an attorney," he says. After graduating from Lucy Simms, he attended classes at West Virginia State College — but he returned from time to time to work on the family farm. "All of us left home in our 20s or beyond to make sure that [my father] could pay for this farm," he says.

Born the grandson of a slave, Blakey was forced to deal with racism during his young adulthood. He was drafted to serve in the Korean War, despite concentrating in biology and chemistry. Like his older brother, he is considering medical school.

Gerald, Blakey's youngest son, will graduate from the University of Virginia later this spring with a degree concentrating in biology and chemistry. Like his older brother, he is considering medical school. Blakey beams with pride when talking about his family. He is not just a father to his two biological sons, he is also a father figure to his employees and many of his regulars.

"He treats me like his own son. Since I have been in his life, he has treated me like a real son," Hercules Clark says.

Calvin Williams, who will begin as a barber apprentice for Blakey later this summer, says, "He is like a father-type figure and he watches out for me."

Perhaps this is because Blakey has attempted to set an example for young people in the community. "Through the years, we had no black doctors or no black dentists. We had no black people to look up to, but by faith we have come a long way," he says.

This belief, along with a gradual decline in black businesses in downtown Harrisonburg, brought Blakey into political activism.

Through his community and equal-rights activism, Blakey has worked toward improving the city. In May 1972, Blakey ran for Harrisonburg City Council. He was the first black man ever to run for council.

"I lost by a very narrow margin," Blakey says while digging through a cabinet to find an old campaign brochure. "I think politicians then would have thought that I would have been too controversial."

Although Blakey lost the city council election, he was not discouraged — instead he continued his activism.

"I have always tried to stand for something and not against it. If I can't help someone you better bet your boots that I would not hurt them."

Serving on the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Council on Human Relations, Blakey worked toward promoting better racial understanding.

He also played an instrumental role in the founding of the People's Aid Center, which provided financial and legal counseling to families and individuals in need.

However, his involvement with the Martin Luther King Memorial Fund Project Dream with WSVA radio has brought him the greatest satisfaction.

"We raised money to put kids through school," he says. The educational fund played an instrumental role in financing tuition costs for the first black student at James Madison University.

"I don't think there is a black or white family that has lived within the vicinity of my barber shop, that I haven't touched their homes," Blakey says.

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JONATHAN RHUDY, a junior mass communication major, has the best haircut on the staff. This Richmond native is the advertising manager of The Breeze.

AMY PETRUCCI, photographer.
A different kind of trim in the shop

They are like jigsaw puzzles. Each one has a different style, texture and form. When all the trimmed fabric, foaming, padding and stitches fall together, the reupholstered chair or sofa is given new life.

This refurbishing process involves creativity, dedication and skill. Upholsterers or “sofa surgeons” are a rare breed in the Valley.

Hercules Clark is one of these craftsmen. Ripping out rusted staples from the dry wood on an antique wing chair, Clark remembers one of his boss’s old sayings. “Mr. Blakey says, he ‘could cover a bald-headed squirrel in the middle of a silver lake and not get his ears wet.’”

Clark says that Blakey thrives on challenges and “eventually he will conquer any upholstery project.”

“Mr. Blakey will say, ‘Oh I can’t do that . . . but leave it, drop it off.’ He will sit there and look. It might take him a day or two days, but eventually he will figure it out.

“Missing buttons, broken boards, stuff like that is what we can handle,” he says exposing the yellowed seat cushion as it crumbles in his hand.

This determination and patience has led to the success and quality reputation of Blakey’s Smartcraft Upholstery.

“I just came out of school in 1982 and I got amazed with what he was doing,” Clark says. Blakey taught Clark everything about reconditioning and upholstering furniture.

“If I get frustrated a little bit, I can work on another project or watch TV and take a break,” he says with a grin. “You have to have patience . . . that’s the main thing.”

Blakey lets Clark work on commission and set his own schedule.

Clark, the main upholsterer, is assisted by Freddie Brown, who specializes in upholstering car seats. Calvin Williams, a JMU junior also assists part-time with the upholstery.

In between haircuts, Blakey frequently runs in the back of the shop and offers Clark assistance and expert advice. Blakey’s and Clark’s attention to detail has resulted in long-term customers.

“We don’t advertise. We just go by word of mouth. People just tell someone else when they come in their house, ‘Oh who did that sofa?’ — ‘well, Smartcraft Upholstery, you know.’ Word of mouth: it keeps us busy. Our regular customers keep me busy all year round,” Clark says.

Customer service has been a major priority for Smartcraft. Every piece of furniture is treated, stripped down and then built back up. “We pad it and get it right, and then start putting more material on,” Clark says.

Sewing and stitching for the furniture’s fabric is done on one of two large sewing machines.

“That’s the baby . . . that’s the bread money,” Clark says pointing to the machine behind a wing chair.

All supplies used by Smartcraft are ordered from American companies, Clark explains. “We’ve got at least 10,000 samples right here. If you can show me a sample of what it is I can match it real closely,” he says reaching for a thick fabric display book.

Smartcraft charges for labor and the cost of the material used on the piece of furniture. “If we get a discount then we pass it on to the customer. The more fabric you get, the more of a discount for the customer,” Clark says.

In order to rebuild an average-sized sofa with new cushions, Smartcraft charges about $290 plus the cost of fabric, Clark says. Labor charges on a wing back chair run about $125.

After staring at chairs between eight and 10 hours a day, Clark admits that the first thing he looks at when he walks in a room is the furniture. “Mostly the furniture made today has a lot of staples and is not made as well. The older chairs are made with more wood and screws.”

Most jobs take about two weeks to complete, depending upon the size.
'Braking' for Breakfast
Pedals and pancakes provide perfect Valley getaway

by Stephanie Kriner

A HUMBLE WOODEN SIGN — decorated with hand-painted pineapples and stick figures on bicycles — stands at the driveway’s entrance to welcome guests.

Although a modest introduction to a dignified and stalwart abode, the sign suits the true character of the bed and breakfast at the driveway’s end. It embodies an unusual combination of hospitality, symbolized by the pineapples, history and recreation. This is not your ordinary bed and breakfast.

Its guests can challenge the Valley’s pedal-pushing mountains on their bicycles, see a bridge last crossed by Confederate soldiers and relax in grandma-style hospitality.

Stephen Poulson, 27, was the artist who painted the sign and began this unique lodging and biking business called Pineapple Pedalers and Patrick Manor in historic Port Republic.

“I’m proud of that sign,” he says. Poulson is also proud of the alliteration in his bed and breakfast's name. But he confesses, he stumbled upon it. He found ‘Patrick Manor’ etched on a stone that is part of the wall at the drive way’s entrance. He thinks this may have been the name of a former owner’s child. And after his aunt made him a flag with a pineapple on it, he decided to incorporate the fruit into the name, too.

This flag flaps beside an American flag on the front of Pineapple Pedalers — the banners guard the front porch steps, which has banisters decorated with wooden pineapples. The pineapple became a symbol of hospitality in colonial times when families used to spear them on fence posts to welcome sailors home.

Pineapple Pedalers exemplifies this symbol in both its setting and atmosphere. Ancient made-for-climbing oak trees line the otherwise spacious yard like a hard outer crust protecting its delicate fruit.

The ripe, yellow two-story with its pointy green roof softens the atmosphere. Once inside, the sweet lusciousness of comfort can be savored for those seeking “a home away from home.”

“It just kind of fell into place,” Poulson says about his decision to open Pineapple Pedalers.

After graduating from JMU in 1988, Poulson left the Valley for a year and a half to attend graduate school. He returned to the Valley to teach political science at JMU. When his full-time position ended, he considered leaving the Valley to get his Ph.D last summer. Instead, he decided to stay and open a bed and breakfast for his parents who bought the house to have something to do after they retire. They will take over in two years when they return from Saudi Arabia, where they now work.

Even then, Poulson will continue running the bike tours. In fact, he isn’t sure if he will ever leave; the Valley suits his amiable and relaxed personality. After visiting it as a child and then attending JMU, he became attached to the beauty of its lands and the friendliness of its people.

“The history [of Port Republic] reflects a lot of the history of the Valley in terms of community,” he says.

“It’s a historic area, and the community is like Mayberry. Places like this don’t exist anymore,” he says. The idea to run the bike tours is
what truly kept him here, though.  
   "I thought, 'What do I really want to try and do when I'm young and I don't have limits?""

His answer, of course, was to bike the Shenandoah Valley while sharing his love for the sport with Pineapple Pedaler visitors.

And Poulson's guests benefit from having a guide who is as enthusiastic about riding as they are.

"One of the things which is best about going with Steve is he can give you lessons on biking. It's almost like going away and learning how to bike in a relaxed atmosphere," says Robert Meehan, a Princeton, N.J., resident who visited Pineapple Pedalers with his family.

Poulson leads bikers on both road and mountain-biking trails. He says the Valley is perfect for both types of riding.

"When you're biking, you're kind of moving up and down, and there's the challenge of getting up a hill and there's a new scene when you get to the top," Poulson says, describing the appeal of road biking in the Valley.

His guests say the scenery is the most enjoyable part of these trips.

"There's not too many valleys in the country so beautiful," says Kibbe Turner, a landscape designer in Gaithersburg, Md., who spent New Year's weekend at Pineapple Pedalers with his family.

Spiraling mountains, quaint villages and vast farm lands are sites that stun these wide-eyed vacationers who come mostly from flat suburban areas.

Those who choose to mountain bike see another part of the Valley.

These more adventurous individuals plow through streams, logs, roots and rocks. And, after a grueling ascent, they must confront the same obstacles going at a downhill pace of about 20 miles per hour.

"It's kind of liberating to be able to ride your bike over the kinds of things you can with a mountain bike," Poulson says.

The veteran biker, who has been cycling since college, feeds off the enthusiasm of his guests.

"It's good to see people get excited over riding their bikes," he says.

Poulson caters to both novice and experienced riders, adjusting the tours to their needs.

And those who prefer a slower pace, or just a break from biking, can rent a canoe from the convenience market up the street, go bass fishing on the Shenandoah River, or go hiking on a nearby trail.

Poulson says this wide variety of activity attracts "outdoors enthusiasts." But by combining ruggedness with comfort, he allows people of diverse interests to vacation together.

"We were not camping out, but we had all the amenities of camping and all the amenities of a comfortable place to stay," says Meehan, who enjoyed the outdoors on his bicycle while his family visited the nearby Turner Ashby Museum, to learn about the history of Port Republic.

Turner agrees that the historical setting adds to the diversity of opportunities available.

Patrick Manor stands near the spot on the Shenandoah River where Stonewall Jackson burned the North River bridge to keep Union soldiers from invading Port Republic.

Guests connect to the past by taking canoe trips on the river to the place where the bridge's stone base still protrudes out of the water or by going to the bank, only a march away from Pineapple Pedalers backyard, to stand lookout.

They can imagine how it was for the soldiers on that summer day:

On June 9, 1862, Stonewall Jackson was about to be walled in by two Union forces. He had barely enough time to get his troops across the bridge to destroy it before the enemy arrived.

After his troops were safe, he ordered a squad of two wagons loaded with hay to ride across, dump their loads and apply torches.

Poulson's guests are inspired by this story of the past.

"I would like to have been able to trod where the soldiers had trod," Turner says.

When they're not investigating the past or riding to explore the Valley of the present, guests can relax with all the comforts of home.

"We just try and make it comfortable. We want to make sure everyone can feel like they can sit on the furniture," Poulson says.

According to his guests, the young host has succeeded. "The atmosphere of the house was absolutely delightful," Turner says.

And visitors' most cherished part of the house is its wrap-around porch.

The porch, hugging the house in a full embrace, is ideal for reading, eating lunch, writing in a diary and socializing, Meehan says.

Another guest, Peggy Schott, a maintenance supervisor in Lebanon, Pa., says she liked the porch because it allowed her to meet the other guests,
creating a mood of congeniality.

"I got there, and it was this lovely warm evening; and the house has this big white porch out there; and everyone kind of congregates on the porch. And that kind of atmosphere makes it easier to meet people," she says.

But the house can't take all the credit. Poulson put hard work into creating a place that guests consider a second home.

Since its previous owner didn't live in it, the 79-year-old dwelling was slightly run-down when the entrepreneur decided to turn it into Pineapple Pedalers. Poulson did most of the work by himself — he patched the roof, painted the interior and exterior, added wallpaper to some rooms, built steps onto the back patio and landscaped the yard.

Poulson is proud of the house's durability, though. Unlike houses that are a few years older, his was "built like a rock."

"It's a treat to work on," he says.

The bachelor also did all the decorating. After receiving some old furniture from his great aunt, he tried to find more to match it.

"The things I got just kind of fit the house," he says about the pieces that tend to remind guests of childhood visits to grandma's.

Poulson, who is colorblind, says he is lucky the decor coordinated so well.

A mix of early American, Indian, and French styles blend into a complementary melting pot of designs.

The first room guests see after entering the foyer is a lime green parlor filled with traditional American furniture. Cascading green drapes block out peepers to accentuate its forbidden tone — reminding guests of the room they were prohibited to enter as children.

Mahogany pocket doors open into a dining room where Queen Anne chairs surround a lace-covered table. Despite the formality of these two rooms, the overall feel of the house is comfortable.

Upstairs, four guest rooms match the early American and French appeals of the downstairs rooms, but with a touch of home. Brass and wood canopy beds, most covered with handmade quilts, create a cozy escape for tired bikers. American antiques and

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Pedaling past the pain to my just rewards

Riding up a 60-degree, ice-packed incline seemed more difficult than when I was 10, testing how fast I could go without holding the handle bars of my yellow 10-speed.

The winding path of slush, mud and ice before me demanded not only that I hold the handlebars, but that I keep them perfectly straight. The difficulty was staying in the slippery tire marks. While trying to keep my arms stiff, I swayed, hit the snow banks on either side and lost balance. It had never occurred to me before then that I wouldn't be able to "just do it."

So, when Steve offered to take me mountain biking, I had no qualms. Risky, rugged sports have always appealed to me, and I wanted to give this one a try. I didn't consider that it might require a little skill — something that forced me to run cross country instead of playing field hockey in high school.

"This has never happened before," Steve said after I had fallen about three times. The concern in his voice assured me that, although he might think I'm an invalid, he had not yet lost his patience.

In hopes of giving me enough momentum to propel myself through the ice, Steve decided to help me out a little. He held the hike up while I stepped into the pedal clips. I turned my pedals backwards to the angle he demonstrated I could "easily" insert my right foot. After several nervous tries, I was ready with both feet in their proper clips.

Other memories came to me . . . of the first time I rode my little gray dirt bike without the training wheels — I recalled my mom running beside me in the court in the front of our house — as Steve pushed me up the mountain.

This was a little humiliating. I began to wonder if I'd forgotten how to ride a bike. When I felt him let go, I remembered my mom's instructions, to just keep pedaling. This method didn't apply to my present circumstances. I still fell onto the wet mushy ground. After we'd made it about half a mile of our six-mile journey at this pace, Steve decided we should try another path.

Steve took a picture of me speeding down the final run of our journey downhill.
Native American pieces decorate the mantles of the rooms’ fireplaces. And ferns and fresh flowers brighten the already well-lit rooms whose windows reveal scenic views.

Old photos of Poulson’s relatives and paintings by his grandfather adorn the walls. Throw rugs and baskets add a personal touch.

Poulson, who was building a new kitchen at the time this article was written, says, “These are things no one my age should be thinking,” referring to the decisions he has made regarding everything from choosing furniture to selecting cabinet doorknobs.

But the young host quickly excelled at his new domestic duties.

“Steve is a gracious host, and he makes all the guests feel very welcome with his personality,” Meehan says.

Poulson isn’t only a host. He also acts as maid, tour guide, innkeeper and cook. His guests can expect to wake up to the smells of pancakes or French toast, and brewing coffee.

For dinner, Poulson, a vegetarian, likes to refuel his bikers with plenty of carbohydrates. After a 45-mile trip, cyclists return to the manor for a health lover’s dream meal of pasta, rice and vegetarian dishes with whole grain bread, short muffins and healthy desserts.

Despite all his duties, Poulson’s energy does not run out; he is dedicated to Pineapple Pedalers because he is doing it for himself. “It’s my own, and I get to make it. If it goes wrong, it’s my fault, and I don’t have to answer to anyone but myself,” Poulson says.

But Poulson doesn’t always wait on his guests. He creates a relaxed atmosphere by allowing them to do some things on their own. Bikers prepare their own lunches and all guests have access to the kitchen facilities to prepare meals.

Schott was attracted to this quality. “When [Poulson] wasn’t around, I just kind of helped myself around the house... I felt like I was home while I was there,” she says.

Breakfast time is when both Poulson and his guests get a chance to relax, though. Poulson says that this is usually when he tells his guests about the historical intrigues that surround his house. This is often the favorite part of the day for host and guests.

“I always looked forward to hearing his stories. It added some local color and it added to the experience of staying there,” Schott says.

After all his guests are served, Poulson sits down to relax with a cup of coffee, and to get to know his visitors.

“It’s kind of homey. It feels like when you sit down with the family in the morning before everyone has something to do, like Saturday or Sunday when you aren’t in a hurry and you’re kind of looking forward to the day,” Poulson says. There’s only one day that Pineapple Pedalers’ visitors don’t look forward to— the day they have to leave.

Backing out the driveway of the vacation house that became their home, guests plan when they will return. As they drive away, they may think about the effort put into that little sign on the driveway’s end.

A simple introduction to an extraordinary sojourn gains new meaning after the inspiration behind the brush strokes is revealed.

STEPHANIE KRINER, a junior mass communication major, will spend her senior year as Style editor of The Breeze. After graduation she hopes to write for a magazine.
KAREN SEGERMARK, photographer.
She draws the line at swimming.

As a Valley artist Julie Burtner draws many lines, but swimming is one activity that has eluded her thus far. Julie fills her canvas with a kaleidoscope of colorful ideas, though, and fills her time with many activities. She teaches art to homeschooled children, sings second soprano in the Harrisonburg Welcome Wagon chorale, volunteers at Sunnyside Nursing Home, plays the violin, and runs 70 miles a week. But Julie never learned to swim.

Julie's busy lifestyle carries over into her art. For several months she drew churches — from the St. Hebron Baptist Church in Elkton to the country church in Lacey Springs. Changing her focus to trains and then architecture, Julie began drawing hotels. After finishing a series of four drawings, she has moved on to a new one featuring sections of buildings in downtown Harrisonburg.

Having grown up on 110 acres near Keezletown, the 27-year-old says that farm life inspired her to try her hand at a variety of projects. "If a farmer had to hire a carpenter, an electrician and a mechanic every time he needed one, he would never make any money at all," she says, her blonde, waist-length hair accentuating her long, narrow runner's frame. "You've just got to learn to do those things yourself."

Similarly, Julie's art changes from one type of subject matter to another. With her train series, for example, she says she could see it was time to move on when the drawings became easier and took less time to create.

"I got really fast there at the end," she says. Shortly after that, she switched to another track. "It's like my grandma says, 'A new broom sweeps good,'" she laughs. "After a while, you sort of get tired."

Drawing is one broom she'll probably never get tired of, though. "I've always enjoyed drawing, even as a child," she says, recalling her second grade teacher who assigned the class to free drawing each week. "I always enjoyed that so much because I got a lot of positive feedback from the teacher, which was important to me."

That class first inspired Julie to draw upon her unique talent, but artistic ability runs in her family. "Everyone says, 'Well, you get your talent from your mother,'" Julie says. "I think I was born with a lot of talent. I was inspired by my mom a lot, and probably a lot by my second grade teacher."

Although her mother paints with oils, Julie says she pictures herself as a pencil artist because drawing comes more easily for her.

When a client in Chicago asked her to draw a landscape for him, she drew one and painted another. "The one in pencil was so much better," she says. "I seem to be able to control the pencil better."

As an art student at Blue Ridge Community College, Julie was encouraged to go to shows. When she finished her studies, she continued displaying and purveying her work at local art shows.

Ken Schuler, another Valley pencil artist, says that through area shows he has become familiar with Julie's art. "Julie does real nice work," he says. But their drawings do not compete because the subject
matter is different; to put the two in one category would be like comparing “apples and pears.”

Schuler says there is a definite market in the Valley for pencil art.

“There are people that like black and white and they’ll make a beeline to my booth at a show, and there are other people that won’t take a second glance,” he says.

But Julie says pencil drawings can be a hard sell because they aren’t as colorful as other art forms. “I think there’s a bias in a lot of people’s minds that they think a pencil sketch is not as elite.”

Having done both, Julie says she puts more elbow grease into pencil drawings than paintings. “This has far more technique and skill in it than any oil painting that I’ve done.”

And Julie’s pencil art also has a marketable advantage in newspaper ads because, she can display her drawings. Customers can view the work for themselves, and “know what they’re getting,” she says.

The newspaper marketing has worked so well, she says, that she seldom uses shows anymore. “Usually at the shows just the art lovers and the art collectors come, but the type of drawing I do would appeal to history buffs, architecture buffs, train buffs.”

Julie tried selling her work in local galleries, but was unsatisfied with the results. “It was so hard for me to keep up with my art work,” she says. Sometimes she didn’t know a work was sold until months later.

She hasn’t ruled out this option, though. “I’ve gotten some offers from the bigger galleries, I just haven’t taken them yet.”

In spite of the limited number of clients in the Valley, she says she gets enough business to keep her working on several projects at once. That suits her fine.

“I was always one of those people that could turn on the radio and the TV and do my homework and fix supper and carry on a conversation all at the same time, so that’s sort of how I do my drawings.”

This unusual aptitude meshes well with Julie’s personality, she says. “I’m not a real organized person,” she says. “That stereotype that artists are sloppy and disorganized — I fit that stereotype to a tee.”

Surprisingly, her work is organized, and much of it fits into a series. Julie’s hotel series focuses on a group of local inns, most of which were built by the railroad. She drew them mostly from photographs, checking the details of her drawings with nursing home residents who remember the buildings as they once were.

Julie chose the hotels because several of them were designed by premier architects of the Victorian Era, she says. The Hotel DeHart in Lexington, for example, was built by Stanford White, a well-known architect of the early 1900s.
“Of course that’s trivia to most people, but amazing to me to think that someone that great would come here to the Valley.”

The hotel had a Soviet-style onion dome reminiscent of traditional Russian buildings.

Sea Wright Springs, on the other hand, has a maritime theme. The hotel was built several feet above the ground, as if to protect it from the high tide in Augusta County. On the roof is a crow’s nest and the top-floor dormer windows are portholes. Unfortunately, the hotel burned down two weeks after it opened, Julie says, and she had to base her drawing on a photograph. “I’ve always been fascinated by old buildings. Probably has a lot to do with the history in the Valley,” she says.

Closer to home, the Elkton is a sprawling, yet painstakingly detailed example of Victorian architecture. Drawing an intricate building like the Elkton showcases Julie’s technical talent, but sometimes she prefers to draw less complicated subjects. Her sister, Virginia, is partial to these simpler drawings. “She likes this better than any building I’ve ever drawn,” Julie says of the quaint country church she drew.

Julie is always looking for something different. Lately she’s moved toward more elaborate drawings. “I’ve become a technician. It’s amazing the mathematics involved in perspective drawing.

“When Einstein said everything was relative he was right. Mathematics and art are first cousins.” Not only is all art mathematics related, but art is a part of everything and everybody, she says. “Everyone really is an artist.”

Recently, Spotswood County Club hired her to draw a picture of its renovations and new face. While drawing preliminary sketches of the building, a man walked by and caught her attention.

“Well, that’s a cute man,” she remembers thinking, “He looks so typical of the golfer with his wind-breaker jacket and his hat and baggy pants and golf shoes — I’ll put him in there.”

Julie’s finished drawing was hung in the renovated club, and the same man immediately recognized the golfer in front of the building. “He said, ‘I’ve been immortalized in art,’” Julie recalls with a smile.

Lately, Julie has been working on a series featuring portions of buildings in downtown Harrisonburg. She wants to capture the unique and historic aspects of some of the piece-meal area buildings.

“So many of those buildings down there . . . they’ve torn out a wing or replaced something and you don’t have the whole building anymore. It’s been architecturally mutilated.”

One drawing in the series is the doorway of the old Ford Motor Company building, shadowed by a looming gargoyle chiseled out of stone. “I usually don’t go looking for subjects,” she says. “If I’m just out driving along the road and see something I like I’ll stop.”

Julie says she’ll never run out of material to draw. “There’s always something,” she laughs, glancing toward her drawing of the Sky View Ice Cream Parlor.

The small, squarish building is dwarfed by the lavender cow’s-head sign high above, balancing on a pair of rusty poles and accompanied by a faded, round sign that reads “18¢.”

Having made the transition from student to teacher, Julie now teaches art to a group of home-schooled children in Augusta County, as well as giving private lessons in her home.

The children openly discuss any questions or difficulties they have with their art. “Boy, if they’ve got a question they just blurt it right out,” she says. “We’re all on a first-name basis. Julie, I don’t know how to do this, come here, tell me!”

She sparks their creativity by giving them free reign over their drawings once they’ve mastered the basics. Diane, having just finished drawing a woman in a bathing suit, says her drawing belongs in jail, and begins to draw bars on her sketch.

“It’s Carmen Sandiego,” she says, calling to mind the villain of the PBS learning show who attempts to elude the young “sleuth” contestants. Hillary explains that Carmen was at the beach when she was captured.

Diane’s brother Randy says he’d rather draw a professional football player with big muscles.

“That’s one thing girls can’t do, you know, they can’t play pro football,” he points out confidently. “That’s a fact.”

Keeping the children entertained comes easily to Julie. “All the years I studied music, it was recreation as well as education, and I try to show that to my students — that art is fun. It’s relaxing.”

JESSICA JENKINS, a senior mass communication major, hopes to spend next year soaking up the sun in Savannah.

KAREN SEGERMARK, photographer.
Local sixth graders look toward the future

Thomas Harrison Middle School sits on top of a steep hill, creating an island filled with children destined to determine the future. Standing outside the brick building in the peaceful morning hours, one is struck by the stillness filling the air. Once inside, however, it becomes obvious that the high school Class of 2000 has not lost sight of reality.

For the Class of 2000, currently sixth graders, high school graduation and college seem to be a long way off.

As is typical in every middle school, kids rush through the halls, yelling greetings at each other. One can catch snippets of conversations about the latest music, who's wearing what and who's friends with who.

A closer look at five members of the Class of 2000, however, paints quite a different picture of what these children's goals are and how serious they are about the future.

Sixth graders Robert Harper, Nausheen Khan, Tim Pippert, Alissa Ritchie and Heather Zirkle, each

Sixth graders at Thomas Harrison Middle School, Tim, Alissa, Heather, Nausheen and Robert throw open their arms, ready to embrace their future.

silently wait to tell about their goals and their dreams.

Fidgeting a little, the nervousness quickly melts away into eagerness as they begin to describe themselves.

Tim, a little too short to sit comfortably in an adult-sized chair, constantly shifts his position throughout the interview, revealing that he wants to be an architect after going to Virginia Tech when he graduates from high school.

"My favorite actor is Tom Hanks, because I like his movies," he says after a few moments of thought and a few tugs on his red suspenders. "I want to be like my dad, because he's an architect, too."

Heather agrees that she also wants to be like her dad. The tallest of the group, she sits back in her chair, her strawberry-blonde hair pulled back neatly in a barrette and a thoughtful expression never leaving her face. In a quiet, confident voice she promptly answers that she wants to go to an art college in Texas when she graduates.

Her soft voice barely above a whisper, Nausheen shyly leans forward in her chair. "I want to go to a pretty big college, somewhere far away," she says. "I don't know whether I want to be a doctor, or a lawyer, so I don't know
who I want to be like." Nausheen does know, however, that she admires Mariah Carey. "She makes really good music," she explains.

Robert, whose bright face and good-natured laughter lasts throughout the interview, reveals that he wants to design cars and be an inventor after graduating in the year 2000 and going to college. "I want to go to a small town, not a big city — it would be easier to concentrate on your studying," he says.

Robert’s role model is Martin Luther King, Jr. "because he tried to help with freedom."

Sitting still in her chair, a smile crossing her lips along with a nervous giggle, Alissa explains that she wants to go to college — in a small town — to learn to be a fashion designer. "I would know all the people," she says, "and you wouldn't hear all the cars going 'beep beep' all the time."

Alissa admires two people who have nothing to do with the fashion industry. Her favorite celebrity is Sylvester Stallone, she says slyly, but her favorite historical figure is Harriet Tubman. "I like Harriet Tubman because she helped the African-Americans find a free world, because I wouldn't like people to be slaves . . . everybody should have the right to do what they want."

All of the students want to get married, but only after they finish college and get settled in their jobs. While Nausheen, Heather, Alissa and Robert each want to have one or two children, Tim shakes his head emphatically, his short brown hair swishing with the movement. "No," he exclaims. "They'll track [dirt] in the basement," he says.

They do that, you know," he adds in a conspiratorial tone.

Before they can get married, however, they have to date — and this is a source of some embarrassment to the usually candid sixth graders.

Heather says girls can ask boys out on dates. Nausheen says, "People think that only boys can ask girls out, but that's not the way it is." Naussheen is not so sure that she would ask a boy out, and Tim is not so sure that that would be all right with him.

Robert, after a shy grin and deep sigh, says, "I'm just concentrating on my studies." Alissa doesn't think she could ask a boy out. "I'm too shy," she says. "I'd be all nervous and say something stupid."

All agree, however, that family is one of the most important things in their lives.

"My parents are most important to me because they taught me everything," Nausheen says.

Robert says he can learn from his parents. "I look up to my parents. You can learn a lot from their mistakes so you don't make the same mistakes."

To these sixth graders, "family values" is about having a strong, supportive family. Nausheen says, "It means you don't get in fights. You're a family, you should always stay together." Nodding, Tim adds, "you can trust them, spend time with them . . . ."

Robert says that a family should support each other. "It would be OK if you made a mistake because they'd be right behind you, supporting you," he says.

The sixth graders do not just believe in a stronger family, but in a stronger and more effective government. By the time they graduate, they hope the government will have more peaceful relations with other countries, and that it will concentrate on internal problems.

"They should make more peace . . . America helps other countries, they're just not helping their own country," Nausheen explains.

Robert also believes the government should help the people in America. "I think they should help people get on their
feet and help them out more and get them jobs and help pollution and improve the school systems," he says.

Alissa adds, "If they could manage it, they should pay off the national debt and lower the taxes, because when it's tax time, my parents get all gripey."

When it comes to President Clinton, all the sixth graders are very opinionated. Tim says emphatically, "I hate him! He's not really a good president, I like George Bush better."

Robert is less harsh on Clinton. "I think he's trying to do the best that he can do," he says.

One thing they agree on is that Hillary Clinton is doing a good job as First Lady. In fact, they all said they like Hillary Clinton better than Bill Clinton. Heather says, "She does more than Bill Clinton — she does more speeches and she cares more about people."

They also believe that there will be someday a female president. "I think there will be a woman president one day," Heather says, "because a long time ago women weren't allowed to do anything and now we're allowed to vote and allowed to do more and more things every day."

Robert believes in the equality of boys and girls. "The media is trying to influence us of what we're supposed to be like if we're male or female, but it's changing... girls can do the same thing boys can and boys can do the same thing girls can," he says.

Looking toward the future, all the children begin speculating on the problems and their hopes. If Heather could solve two problems in the world, she would fix the pollution and get rid of wars. "Everyone would get along," she explains. "Right now people don't get along and they don't care what they're doing to the Earth."

Nausheen and Tim agree. "I would fix it so that everyone could live together without all the fighting," she says. "People dying, like what you see on TV, it's really sad to see."

Robert says that people don't get along because they don't understand or appreciate their differences, and because they can't let go of the past. "The problem is grudges against people for what they did in the past, or what their ancestors did or something. Some people think other people should be exactly like them, but they're not."

Alissa agrees with Robert, adding, "People need to understand that other people can't change the way they are... we should learn things from other people who are different."

They all have high hopes for the future. Tim says he's "probably going to college; that's the big thing."

Robert responds, "I want to be good at my job and live a long life, but not be here forever... but to see how the world will turn out and to see my kids."

These sixth graders talk so seriously about the future that even their wishes are down-to-earth. When asked about his wish, Tim laughs. "To wish for more wishes and then get everything I want to."

After a few moments of reflection, he then answers, "probably to live forever and be healthy — and to grow more."

JENNIFER OVERMAN, a mass communication major and Richmond native, will spend her senior year as news editor of The Breeze and looking toward her own future.
Off the Beaten Track

After 35 years of law enforcement in the Valley, Broadway police chief Paul Neff heads for the races

by Larry Cooper

Paul Neff prepares one of his Thoroughbreds for the long ride home from Charles Town.

PHOTOS BY CRAIG NEWMAN

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A S A BOY, PAUL NEFF KNEW horses, the farm where his family lived, and the lessons he learned in the old Woodstock schoolhouse.

He also dreamed, as children often do, about what he would be when he grew up, and decided upon becoming a police officer.

“In the sixth grade, we all drew something. I drew a police shield and won first place in the contest. The teacher said, ‘I guess you want to be a policeman.’ So, it was showing even back then, I suppose,” he says, a warm smile crossing his face.

Now, as Neff nears the end of about 35 years of wearing the shield of a policeman, he has time to reflect on a long and eventful career as a police officer in the Valley. Neff knows that the Valley he loves, while still a wonderful place to live, is changing with the times.

Seated in the police office at the Broadway Municipal Building, he speaks over the intermittent chatter of the police scanner and the soft percolating sounds of a coffee pot. Neff compares the Valley of 1956, when he started as a police officer in Woodstock, to 1994. Leaning away from the tidy stacks of paper on his desk, Neff’s eyes narrow behind his glasses, as he seeks perspective on years of police work.

“Back then you could almost leave a car sitting and running and no one would bother it. In all the years we were down there, we probably didn’t have a dozen stolen cars. We had a couple of armed robberies, some shootings, but not at the rate we have now.”

Neff knows that Broadway, along with much of the Valley, has succeeded in remaining somewhat protected from the problems that now plague big cities. As midnight descends, the darkened streets of Broadway remain quiet except for the occasional late-night jogger.

Neff’s voice slowly fades as he ponders Broadway’s relative immunity to serious problems such as an active drug trade or violent night life. “We’ve got a pretty good town here. Our crime rate is down real low. We try to treat everyone fair and equal, and I really think that goes a long way.”

Life for Neff, as with many police officers, is not only meeting with townsfolk and looking after their safety. Even a small town police officer has to deal with the darker side of this dangerous profession.

“We’ve got a good town here. Our crime rate is down real low.”

— Paul Neff

In the mid-1960s Neff was nearing the end of a 10-year stint with the Woodstock police department. As he made his nightly rounds at the northern end of Main Street, he spotted a car traveling up the street with no lights on. At 2 a.m. Neff stopped the car in front of Woodstock’s Tasteel Freeze restaurant — the only well-lighted spot in the north end of town at that time.

Neff told the car’s driver to follow him to the station to be served with a citation for driving with no lights on. But after driving a few yards, the suspicious man fled in his car down a back alley. Neff sped up an adjacent side street and headed the man off at the next intersection, where the motorist left his car and ran.

As Neff searched the abandoned vehicle, the gravity of the situation began to take shape.

“When I started looking in his car, I found a bunch of wide tape, short pieces of rope, and some hose. There was a map showing the time the Safeway manager was at the bank, the time he got to his house, and the time he went to the bank on the way back to Safeway in the morning. All those times were on there,” he says.

The Virginia State Police had just begun a program using dogs to track fugitives, so Neff called in a canine unit from Culpeper along with backup from neighboring police departments. After searching throughout the night, the units that had been called in to assist with the search were beginning to disperse and head back to their home jurisdictions when an off-duty policeman saw the suspect.

“One of the Strasburg officers was on his way home in his own truck when he saw the guy walking down the road. He stopped him and cuffed him,” he said.

The suspect had a .25 automatic pistol in his hip pocket when he was arrested. Once the man was fingerprinted and the results were sent to an F.B.I. lab in Washington D.C. to be analyzed, agents drove down to Woodstock to retrieve him.

“It turns out he was wanted for armed robbery and murder in Pittsburgh, where he shot two police officers. That was probably the closest call that I ever had. The suspect told me that if I hadn’t stopped him where I did, I wouldn’t be standing there talking to him in the station,” Neff says, his voice softening with the sobering implications of such a realization. “He told me that.”

“I was lucky, that’s all it was,” he adds.

Neff says, however, that the most consistently dangerous situations arise from domestic violence calls, which involve some of the most emotionally charged confrontations.

“You get a lot more of these problems in apartment buildings than you do in regular homes. I think a lot of times folks will get bunched up and get mad at each other,” he said.

Dealing with a couple in the heat of a passionate dispute requires fine-tuned negotiating skills, and over the years Neff has learned how to end a confrontation before it devel-
ops into a violent clash.

"You don't want to show any partiality. The best thing is to get them apart as soon as possible."

Neff has had to master this and many other types of crisis situation actions. As a small-town police officer he and his successor, Jay Lantz, have to deal with every call they receive because the closest backup is in Harrisonburg — about 15 miles away.

"One of the main things is, if you have a problem to get it solved quick. The quicker, the better. If they find out that you can solve a problem and solve it fast, the problem doesn't come back," Neff says. "You have to be able to talk to your people. You get more with kindness than you do with force."

As the sunny February afternoon fades to an orange sunset through the window looking out on Broadway's Main Street, Neff adds that kindness should not create the illusion that an officer is lenient.

Part of keeping the respect that an officer of the law requires involves persistence in going after law breakers. Shifting his glasses, Neff thinks back to a time when a speeding motorcyclist tried to elude him by cutting through an orchard on the outskirts of town. He waited to hear the biker buzzing through the rows of trees and headed him off at the road.

"He thought he was gone, but he didn't get away," he says with a laugh. "There are times when somebody's going to get away. And sometimes that's probably better than putting a lot of people in danger. It all depends on the circumstances."

"I'm a firm believer that you can't let everybody go. It won't take long before everyone that you try to stop will run, because they know you won't take off after them," he says.

A ringing telephone heralds the first call of this night shift at about 5 p.m. Neff picks up the receiver and listens with concern to the voice of a distraught man who needs help locating his son who has run off.

Neff strides out the door of the municipal building and into one of two Broadway police cruisers. The white Chevrolet moves from Central Street to Broadway Avenue as it makes its way toward Main Street, which bustles with late-day traffic.

Jay Lantz describes Broadway as a "bedroom community," a primarily residential town that is a sort of suburb to a larger city. In this case that larger city is Harrisonburg, which is more developed industrially and holds more employment opportunities. Lantz is a Broadway native and has seen the Valley grow as he grew up himself.

"With Rt. 42 being four lanes now, and a bigger and faster road into Harrisonburg, I know that we'll grow, and when you have growth, you have problems."

As the cruiser rolls through the heart of town, Neff spots the parents of the runaway boy waiting on the porch of their house. Here is a situation that needs an experienced and cool-headed third party like Neff to put things back in order.

After a few minutes in the house and on the phone, Neff returns to the warmth of the cruiser and says that the boy has called home all the way from New Market, some 20 miles up the road. This apparent disruption of a family reminds Neff of the disturbing increase in juvenile problems across the country.

"I don't know what can be done with it, and this is the kind of thing that they're going to have to deal with now in town, more than speeders and such."

Gazing intently on the road ahead, Neff guides the Chevrolet past Broadway Drug Center and Rhodes Service center, turning the cruiser left onto Lee Street.

"When I was a kid, the police would scare the pants off us when they came to talk to us. They could scare the heck out of you. Now, you just don't scare the younger generation. It's more about getting the people to know that you want to help them, that you're not out to get them."

Neff wishes that there was a way to show young people that there is nothing glamorous about committing a crime and landing in prison.

"I'd like to be able to see them take some of these kids down to the penitentiary and show them what it's like there. When those bars get to clicking and those gates start snapping shut, then see what it's like."

He sees today's prison system as being softer than the system that existed in the early 1950s, when he began his career in law enforcement as a
(Above) Neff’s many years of experience have taught him to exercise caution in potentially dangerous situations. But in a small town like Broadway, violent crime is not a big problem. (Left) Neff gives new meaning to ‘community policing.’ About 90 percent of the job is talking to people and getting to know their needs and concerns.

guard at a state prison camp near Winchester. In those days, prisoners were handled somewhat more severely. Whippings and solitary confinement in a rough wooden cell were common practice then, but both were abolished upon being deemed inhumane.

“They said that whipping thing was rough, but there wasn’t too many of them going bad while that thing was going on. About 50 percent of criminals can be rehabilitated. The rest is going back to their old routines because they have it too good on the inside.”

Neff began working at Camp Salem in 1950 after serving in the Navy from 1946 to 1947. He then left the Valley in 1955 for a short stint with the Air Force. Upon returning, Neff became a police officer in Woodstock in 1956, where he alternated 12-hour shifts with the town’s other officer. He left Woodstock in 1967, and began working in Broadway in 1978, after serving a number of years in Dayton.

Throughout his career, Paul Neff has seen every extreme of law enforcement — ranging from the comical to the tragic. Neff giggles as he recalls the boy who he was about to serve with a citation for breach of peace one day on Main Street. The boy escaped by wiggling out of his coat and running away as Neff stood dumbfounded on the sidewalk, clutching a jacket. But there was also the case a couple of summers ago where a young man shot another man over a girlfriend, and then turned the gun on himself.

“I guess that was the worst thing we’ve had in this town since we’ve been here,” Neff says softly over the low hum of the cruiser’s motor. “It upset the town pretty badly.”

Now, as the Chevrolet makes its way through the failing light of a cold winter evening, he turns onto his gravel driveway and checks in on what has been his passion for years.

The cruiser rolls to a stop in front of a long, one-story horse barn. Neff’s love for training racehorses becomes apparent as he steps out of the Chevrolet and turns to the fenced area across the driveway, where his newest filly rears her head and dances about the dampened earth, seemingly oblivious to the biting winter cold.

Inside the barn the winter chill is lost in the smell of hay and horses; the moist, warm air fills the nose and lungs. Neff walks across the sawdust-covered floor to a stall where his son Michael, 19, is hunched over the front leg of a chestnut filly belonging to the owner of the barn. The horse’s upper leg sports a nasty looking gash, and Michael is rubbing blue ointment on the wound.

Neff says the 2-year-old filly is about to be “broken,” jargon for training a horse to feel comfortable with a saddle and rider. The horse was outside and became excited when Michael approached earlier that afternoon. In her flustered state, she ran into the fence and split the skin above her leg.

“The wound’s not bad, she’ll be all right,” Neff says, shaking his head. “We just hate to see them get hurt,
Neff will be spending more time with his horses after retirement.

that's all. Look at Mike, you could tell it bothered him."

Horses have been a part of Paul Neff's life from the time he was a boy growing up on a farm near Woodstock.

"The only thing my family knew was draft horses and work horses. They didn't have machinery then, just horses. That's how I got to riding horses, those old farm horses," he says.

"If they weren't broke to ride, we broke them. We were like leeches to them," he adds with a wide grin.

Neff began horse training with his wife 25 years ago, starting with Tennessee Walking Horses, which are distinguished by their high-stepping gallop. He says he has loved riding horses all his life, though nowadays he prefers simply to train the horses and watch someone else in the saddle.

"I'm too heavy now for riding. I don't know if I could ever get that slim again," he jokes.

Neff and his wife, Janice, both used to break horses in their younger days, though they now leave that task to younger counterparts.

One of the rites of spring for the Neff family is taking four or five Thoroughbreds to the Charles Town Racetrack in Charles Town, W. Va. for workouts with professional exercisers. This year the Neffs expect further success for Michael's Thoroughbred, named Mike's Curious Boy.

"He has run with the best up in Charles Town, and he has beaten the best up there," Neff says with pride.

His love of horses is known also to those around him in the community.

Pablo Cuevas, a Broadway resident and member of the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors, says that Neff's horses are a common conversation topic when he's seen around town.

"If I run into him in the store, he'll talk about his horses," Cuevas said. "He'll say, 'I've got so-and-so horse running this Saturday. If you want to win something, you'd better be there!'"

Neff says that training horses is much like any kind of athletic training. "You take a horse and get him ready by galloping him slow and then gradually faster, just like a runner. You start out slowly and condition them up."

Workouts that can range from a mile to three miles per day take their toll on horses.

What track athletes refer to as "shinsplints" can also hinder racehorses, though the condition is known as "buck shins" among the equestrian community. Trainers detect the problem by running their fingers along the horse's legs and looking for signs of discomfort. "If their legs get sore, you have to work on them. One that's hurting can't run. He's just not going to try," Neff said.

He now looks to retirement as an opportunity to devote more energy to training his own horses and offering his services to other horse owners.

Neff looks forward to shuttling from the 36-acre farm where he lives with Janice and Michael to the horse barn where he expects to spend most of his days of retirement. "I'll be with my horses now," he says with unmistakable happiness. "I'm ready to go to my horses now."

Now is the time when Neff and those around him can reflect on the legacy of a Valley native who devoted some of his best years to its residents. "I'd like to be thought of as someone who did the job the way it should be done, and that I treated everybody the way they should be treated," Neff said.

Jay Lantz now looks forward to taking over for Neff in March. As the older man leaves to go to his horses, the younger man will take the reigns of the Broadway Police and seek to continue the tradition of competent and even-handed law enforcement.

"He spent 16 years in the Broadway community as a police officer," Lantz said. "He's one of the people that stand out in the town."

Neff remains a standout figure in Broadway. If he's ever difficult to find, it's an hour to Charles Town.

LARRY COOPER is a junior mass communication and Russian major from Arlington. Next year he will work as Focus editor for The Breeze.

CRAIG NEWMAN is a mass communication major from Harrisonburg. He plans to spend all his free time as Managing Editor for The Breeze next year.
Congratulations to the winners of these 1993 competitions

In the national contest sponsored by the Society for Collegiate Journalists: First place, Sports Photography, Craig Newman; First, Sports Feature, Steve Miranda; First, Cartoon Strips & Panels, Brent Coulson; First, Graphic Illustration, Bob Daly; Second, Sports Page, Steve Miranda, Grant Jerding and Mike Heffner; Second, News Stories, Jonathan Rhudy; Third, Photo Essay, Craig Newman; Third, Sports Feature, Cyndy Liedtke; Honorable Mentions to Heather O'Neil for Editorial Writing, to C.J. Grebb, Andy Saffron and Chris Podeschi for Editorial Cartoon, to Jessica Kaminski for Graphic Illustration, and to Alison Boyce for two Honorable Mentions for Sports Features. Also, an Honorable Mention to The Breeze for Editorial Page.

In regional competition sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists: First, Best All-Around Magazine, CURIO; Second, Non-fiction Magazine Writing, Kate McFadden; Third, Non-fiction Magazine Writing, Dan Krotz; First, Best All-Around Newspaper, The Breeze; First, Sports Writing, Rob Kaiser; First, Sports Photography, Mike Heffner. This year, James Madison University student publications also received the Sweepstakes Awards for receiving the most first places and overall points.
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