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Vol. 1, No. 12
December 2011

Zebra

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See page 4

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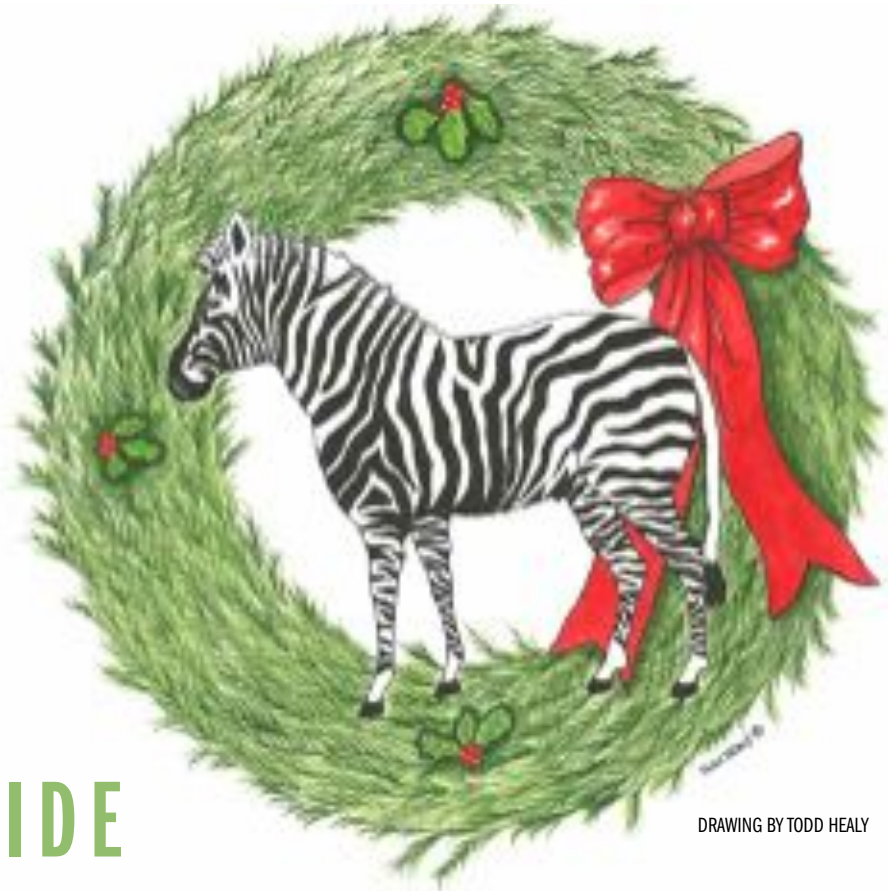
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DRAWING BY TODD HEALY

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On Cover: Cheri Hennessy, co-owner of The Christmas Attic alongside a life size toy soldier. PHOTO BY GREG KNOTT.



INBOX

HOW TO GIVE US FEEDBACK
If you would like to send us a comment, send your mail to mary@thezebra.org or Zebra, PO Box 6504, Arlington, VA 22206. Submission of a letter constitutes permission to publish it. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

Dear Mary,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my email. Enclosed you will find my check for my subscription. After 42 years of living in the Alexandria (Del Ray) area, I made the decision to move into a retirement community. I got the October issue of the Zebra, and when I moved on October 29, I brought the paper with me. I love your newspaper/magazine, and enjoy reading the good news and stories. I have shared it with many others.

I look forward to having a little piece of home sent to me each month in Warrenton. Blessings to you and your staff.

Frances Augustine

[Publisher's Note: Yearly subscriptions are available for \$25. Please send payment to Zebra, PO Box 6504, Arlington, VA 22206]

Whew! I can't believe it has been a whole year since *Zebra* galloped onto the scene. Well, maybe we didn't gallop all the time, but we cantered. We definitely cantered. It's been a journey well worth the making, and I have a lot of people to thank for where we are and how we got here.

First off, the writers, columnists and contributors have given freely of their time and energy, and asked little in return save to help keep *Zebra* growing. Our main features writer, Chuck Hagee, has worked tirelessly to bring you the cover stories, and the Civil War Series, in addition to numerous special assignments and projects. Our two photographers, Greg Knott and Harry Merritt, have been nothing short of miracle givers, providing the hundreds of images that color our pages and bring them to life.

Single-handed magic-making belongs to our ingenious designer, Vicky Cruvey, who alone tackles all the editorial and advertising bits every month, which believe me is like being handed a bag full of a thousand little jigsaw pieces and being asked to figure out the final image without the benefit of a picture on the front of the box. Month after month, the puzzle comes together, and each time, I think it's better than the last.

And finally, the advertisers who "get" what being part of a well-read and exciting publication filled with good news and positive community action is all about, and who have continued to support us from the first issue. We intend to keep doing what we are doing, and giving them the value to back up their investments.

So this month, I am enormously grateful to our loyal, very underpaid staff, the folks that buy ads, the guys who hand deliver over 25,000 of our copies every month, and to you, our bedrock of interested readers, who constantly ask, "When is the next *Zebra* coming out?"

Well, we'll be out around January 9th when next you see us, so in the meantime, have a wonderful season sharing with family and friends, and here's wishing you have Z-Best of holidays!

Mary Wadland
Publisher

Zebra

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Deadlines

The deadline for the receipt of all new advertising materials is 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, seven days prior to publication. Materials and space reservations will be accepted for proofed unchanged camera ready repeat ads until 5:00 p.m. Friday, the week before publication. Cancellations and changes cannot be accepted after Monday, the week of publication and no refunds will be made after that time. For advertisers wishing to see a proof before publication, the deadline for approval is Wednesday, seven days prior to publication.

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C h r i s t m a s A t t i c

40 YEARS OF HOLIDAY CHEER

BY CHUCK HAGEE

Forty-three years ago, 125 South Union Street was a framing and gift shop known as the Picture Place, owned and operated by Henry Hobbs. Then his wife Nita had an idea.

She asked her husband if she could open a small Christmas shop in one corner of the store on the second floor. He agreed, and along with her friend Suki Groscup, Nita Hobbs introduced Old Town Alexandria, and the Washington Metropolitan area, to her idea of the holiday season.

That was 1971. Nita's experiment soon overtook the Picture Place. "It was so successful that they decided to turn the entire store into The Christmas Attic," said her daughter Cheri Hennessy, who now owns and operates one of Alexandria's best known businesses, along with her sister Fay Hobbs-Carter.

"It was such an unusual concept at the time. There were only a handful of Christmas shops throughout the nation. Mom brought in items from throughout the world such as Equadorean bread dough ornaments and handmade ornaments from Germany," Hennessy explained.

At the beginning there were only five year-round employees. Their ranks swelled to 15 or 20 during the Christmas holidays. Tourists and locals alike flocked to The Christmas Attic to find that special something for themselves or to give as special gifts.

The enterprise was eventually expanded to add another store in Old Town at 107 North Fairfax Street, known as the House In The Country, which opened 15 years ago, as well as shops in Virginia Beach and Norfolk. Each location became a booming success.

Then five years ago, Nita passed away and her two daughters were faced with this retail enterprise in three locations spread across the Commonwealth of Virginia. After trying to operate the three locations, Cheri and Fay decided it was time to cut back. Which turned out to be a wise and perfectly timed decision, according to Hennessy.

"It was just before the economic downturn. Had we tried to keep all three locations operating we may not have survived," she said. They owned the properties in Old Town and Virginia Beach. The Norfolk location was leased space in a shopping mall that has now lost most of its retail businesses, according to Hennessy.

The North Fairfax Street location, an historic site featured on the local Ghost tours for its alleged in-house specter of Laura Schafer, who accidentally burned to death on the night before her wedding in 1868 when her wedding gown

now a confectionery store known as Candi's Candies but remains owned by Cheri and Fay. The Virginia Beach location was sold to a local restaurateur.

The original shop on South Union Street has also undergone a transformation during 2011. "Although Christmas ornaments are still our specialty, we have broadened our merchandise base to meet the changing needs of our customers," Hennessy explained.

In addition to a vast assortment of Christmas items they now feature decorations for other holidays and a variety of home decor items. Overall The Christmas Attic carries over 10,000 items, according to Betsy Husser, store manager, who previously managed House In The Country.

"We have broadened the store's appeal in the last year and have added another name -- "The Urban Attic," Cheri said. The original door into the shop, the one closest to King Street, with the elevated electric train circling overhead, still bears the name "The Christmas Attic." The second door, closest to Prince Street, is the entrance to the original's new sibling, "The Urban Attic." However, both still bring customers into the first floor of the shop with its wonderland of holiday cheer.

In addition to the myriad of Christmas items, patrons can now purchase books, wine, jewelry and home decor specialties. "We say that we now have items for the other 364 days of the year," Hennessy noted.

Among those items are clear, hand-blown glass ornaments and figurines from Egypt, where Fay is now living since her husband's job took them there. They range in price from \$12.95 to \$19.95.

"We are still both involved with the store and are in constant touch about everything from merchandise to management decisions. Fay does a great deal of buying for the store and it saves us

PHOTOS BY GREG KNOTT



▲ Christmas Attic from page 4

dealing with the middle men,” Cheri stated.

Some of their very unique offerings, in addition to the Egyptian glass, include a line of wooden ornaments made specifically for The Christmas Attic in the Shenandoah Mountains of Virginia. Each features a detailed scene of Old Town and sells for \$16.95.

From Germany come hand painted pewter ornaments of intricate detail. Each “is cast individually from molds carefully engraved in slabs of slate,” then artistically hand painted. To preserve the artists’ originality, none have undergone any mechanical process, according to accompanying literature. They are priced at \$29 each.

Finally, there are a group of ornaments named “Straight From The Source.” Created by local artisan Judith Fraser these \$8 paper creations can be individualized for the recipient. “While Judith celebrates all our holidays with her work, Christmas is at the heart of her work,” according to promotional literature. “She takes the symbols of the season and makes ornaments intended to be original and appealing.”

In addition to all the wondrous

items within Christmas Attic’s two levels, Cheri and Fay have introduced something entirely new this holiday season. They have turned their building into a three story Advent Calendar display.

Each of the windows facing South

“Christmas is all about hope and the future and celebrating what is the best in all of us.”

~Cheri Hennessy

Union Street has been covered with a full size canvas that has been hand painted with a Christmas symbol. Each original art work is wrapped until its unveiling.

Beginning December 1 and ending December 24, Christmas Eve, each day at sundown, the store will reveal a work of Advent Art as part of the store’s 40th Anniversary Celebration. The idea originated with a visit by Fay to Prague where she saw Advent art on buildings throughout the city, according to Cheri.

“She called me and said we have to do this to our shop,” Hennessy explained. “I went to schools, pre-schools and churches and got an overwhelming reception for the idea. As each painting is unveiled each evening it is back lighted,” she

explained. Younger students are doing Christmas pieces and older students are contributing nativity scenes, according to Hennessy.

At the closing of the Advent Calendar event, the canvases will be available during a silent auction at a post-event celebration on January 7, 2012 from noon to 2 p.m. at The Christmas Attic. Proceeds from that auction will be donated to the Make-A-Wish Foundation of the Mid-Atlantic, an organization that grants the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions “to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy.”

“We are also considering having a caroling event on Christmas Eve at the store when the last canvas is unveiled and lighted. That’s when it will be the most impressive,” Cheri stated.

“Christmas is all about hope and the future and celebrating what is the best in all of us. Things are beginning to look up. And, people are still buying Christmas ornaments,” she said.

Christmas Attic or Urban Attic or both, if you want to get in the holiday spirit, 125 South Union Street is the place to visit. Even Santa would let out a “Ho!Ho!Ho!” at the sight of the many treasures contained within the walls of the old “Picture Place.” On this anniversary year, it is literally picture perfect for the Advent season.



PHOTOS BY GREG KNOTT



Inside the Christmas Attic, children can celebrate Christmas all year long. Here Elise Walker tries out a hobby horse.



The Christmas Attic Advent Celebration

For the holidays, The Christmas Attic assembled an extraordinary Advent Calendar. Working with local community and school groups, 25 Advent-style panels are now part of the facade of the Christmas Attic store. Each of the 25 days leading up to Christmas, a panel is unveiled at the store. In January, the artwork from the panels will be auctioned with proceeds going to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

PHOTOS BY HARRY MERRITT



Cheri Hennessy, co-owner of The Christmas Attic decorates one of the many trees on display in the store.



The Christmas Attic employees get into the spirit of the season. Here Britni Foster (in elf clothes) poses with young patron Madeleine Durkin.



CEO of Make-A-Wish Foundation - Mid-Atlantic Chapter, Maura Harty, Cheri Hennessy, co-owner of Christmas Attic and Regional Director, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Mary Martinez pose outside the Christmas Attic store.



Reece MacDonald and Sydney Walker of the Meeting House Cooperative Preschool pull the rope to remove the cover and display their Advent artwork.

2011 Living Legend of Alexandria

JON LISS

BY SARAH BECKER

Jon Liss is a democrat with a small d. Liss, Executive Director of Virginia New Majority, actively promotes democracy. A community organizer, he fights passionately for social equality. Jon champions people of color and labors to change “the old ways.”

“I’m shameless; an urban expert,” Liss said. “I work consistently for what I know is right. Sure there’s hostility out there, but a new day is coming!” Jon repeatedly references “the old ways.”

Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1958, Liss is of “eastern European Jewish” heritage. When his father, an architect, relocated to Falls Church, Virginia the family followed. Jon “grew up Jewish in what was then the South.”

Liss graduated from Falls Church’s Marshall High School—“the wrong team in Remember the Titans”—and the University of Virginia. A history major, he became intrigued with Virginia’s past. “The old ways” are synonymous with the old Confederacy.

Described as a strong community advocate, Jon empowers the poor. Liss is committed to affordable housing, human rights, and fair employment practices. He is credited with the city’s 1990 hiring of ten bilingual police officers.

“When I graduated from college I knew I did not want a corporate job,” Liss explained. “My history degree prepared me to be a taxi driver so I went to work for the Falls Church Yellow Cab Company. It wasn’t long until I was organizing, fighting for drivers’ rights.”

“We were union affiliated, the Communications Workers of America, and to make a long story short I was fired.” Liss continued. “Law suits ensued and it took a while for things to settle.” Jon later organized Alexandria’s driver-owned

Union Cab Cooperative.

Liss’ achievements are many. The Ford Foundation in 2003 gave Jon, and four colleagues, its Leadership for a Changing World Award. The Award, including a \$100,000 prize, assisted in “fighting what they call ‘Jim Crow II’—meaning discrimination against low-income people, especially immigrants.”

“A New Majority is not outside the realm of possibility...”, Liss said.

Award application said, “and they are still learning their rights.” Liss speaks “of a wave of anti-immigration ordinances,” especially in Prince William County.

“People of color are from the global south, African-American, or born in Africa,” Liss explained. “They have a right to city space.” According to the 2010 Census Alexandria is 16.1% Hispanic, 21.8% black or African-American.

“Race is a social construct,” Liss said. “We are a salad bowl not a melting pot. Most segregation problems, issues in the city, are about white people leaving or self-segregating.”

Liss, until December 31, 2010, served as Executive



JON LISS
PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON/
TISARA PHOTOGRAPHY

▼ See LISS on page 14



The tree looked especially nice reflecting in the Market Square pool.



After the ceremony the crowds participated in singing Christmas carols.



Mayor Euille and Santa pose for the camera.

Alexandria’s Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony

In a very festive atmosphere, Market Square, in front of City Hall, held it’s annual Christmas Tree Lighting event. Mayor William Euille hosted the ceremony. The Metropolitan Fine Arts Center sponsored Santa’s Frosty Follies by providing entertainment to the crowds. Spirited community caroling took place around the tree at the end of the event.

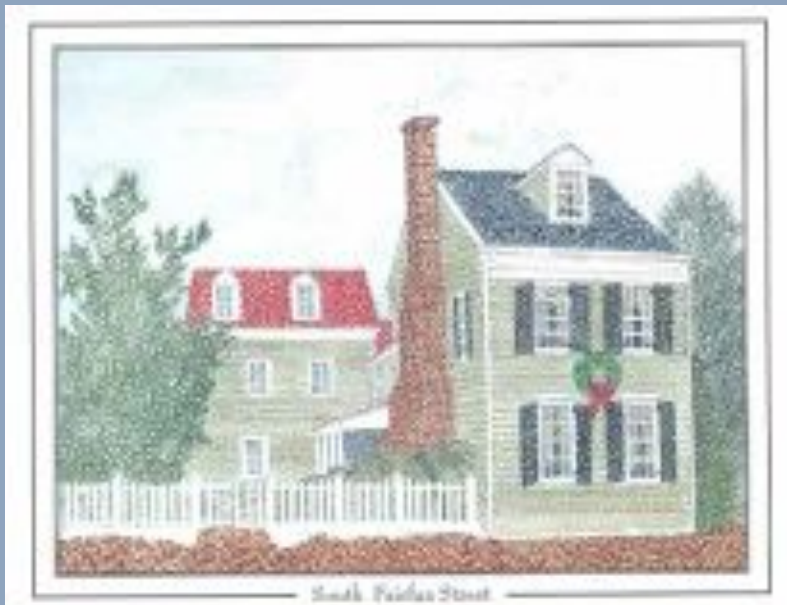
PHOTOS BY HARRY MERRITT



The Frosty Follies provided a high energy Christmas dance performance for the crowds to enjoy.



Mayor Euille introduced Santa Claus.



ORIGINAL WATERCOLOR BY TODD HEALY

STROLLING BY HISTORY

This is a private residence on South Fairfax Street decorated for the holidays. But since we're here, have you ever wondered who Fairfax was and why so much is named after him?

In short, all this land around Alexandria belonged to Thomas Fairfax, 6th Lord Fairfax of Cameron, who while born and living in England in 1709, came into possession of his mother's family inheritance of vast estates and lands in Virginia's Northern Neck between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. Fairfax travelled to Virginia for the first time between 1735 and 1737 to protect his lands. He eventually settled in Belvoir (present day Ft. Belvoir) and became the only resident peer in North America. Fairfax befriended a young George Washington and hired him to survey his lands.

It was his young cousin Brian Fairfax, who became a lifelong friend of George Washington's and the first American-born member of the House of Lords. Bryan Fairfax was torn between England and America during the Revolutionary War. On his own in 1777, he tried to travel to England. He was arrested in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for refusing to sign a loyalty oath. However, he wrote to his good friend, George Washington, who sent him a pass to travel between the lines. In New York, British officials also required a loyalty oath, to board ship, which he refused to take.

Limited editions of this print are available at Todd Healy's Studio at 320 King Street in Alexandria, 703-549-7883. Todd is also available for private commissions.

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Christine Roland Garner

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ASK THE CLOCKMAN

BY PHIL WADLAND



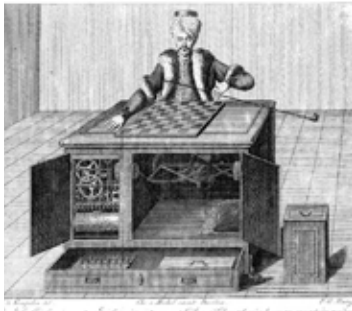
Three automaton “bird in cage” examples in for repair at Phil Wadland’s shop.

PHOTO BY PHIL WADLAND

This month, the movie *Hugo* came to my attention, as it had something to do with clocks and a little boy. I started to learn about clocks from my father when I was 4 years old. When I was 12, I was repairing clocks in my father’s clock shop in Melrose, Massachusetts. So off to the movies I went! I mean, how often does a clockmaker get to see a blockbuster movie about his chosen vocation? The theatre offered the option of 3D. On went the glasses, and I sat back to be amazed. Amazed I was by the movie and the true story, but not so amazed by the automaton segments of the movie. As I work with automatons all the time, I have come to think of them as just more work. However, I am sure *Hugo* is a great

eye opener to others.

By definition, an automaton is a mechanism that is self-operating. Most people have no



The Turk, also known as The Mechanical Turk or Automaton Chess Player.

COURTESY DRAWING

idea what an automaton is, but as a clockmaker, I run into them quite often. In fact, certain cuckoo clocks have a automaton feature. But, bar far, there

is one artistic contraption I see the most often, and it is a singing bird in a cage.

Believe it or not, in the last two weeks, I have repaired three of them.

It doesn’t sound like much when you hear the chirping of the moving, “singing bird”, but this little caged bird is still made today and retails for around \$5,000 (but recently I did notice some nice antique versions and even newer models available for bid on eBay at very reasonable prices). The cage is only 12 inches tall and seven inches around. Three inches of those 12 are the base which houses the automaton mechanism. Inside the cage, sitting on a small perch, about two inches tall, is a tiny feathered bird. This automa-

ton has wind-up clockworks in its base that control the sound and motion of the little bird. The bird sings multiple notes in different order, while the bird’s mouth opens and closes in time with the bird’s whistles. While the bird moves, his tail feathers up and down and he moves his head left and right.

Automatons were very popular in the 1800’s. Most are very detailed and were made in France and England. Many of the old automatons still exist in working condition. A very famous one was the life-size “chess playing Turk”, constructed in 1770. This “Turk” traveled the globe on exhibition until 1854, when it was destroyed by fire. It even won chess matches throughout Eu-

rope, playing chess with the likes of Ben Franklin and Napoleon. The Turk was able exact all moves needed to complete a chess game. If the challenger made an illegal move, the Turk would sweep all the chess pieces off the board.

Automatons are an interesting genre within the world of clock making, and should you ever have the opportunity to see one operate, or even choose to invest in their collectability, I am certain you will be glad you did. Happy Holidays!

Phil Wadland is a third-generation clockmaker and horologist, residing in Manchester, New Hampshire. If you have questions for the Clockman, email clockman@thezebra.org



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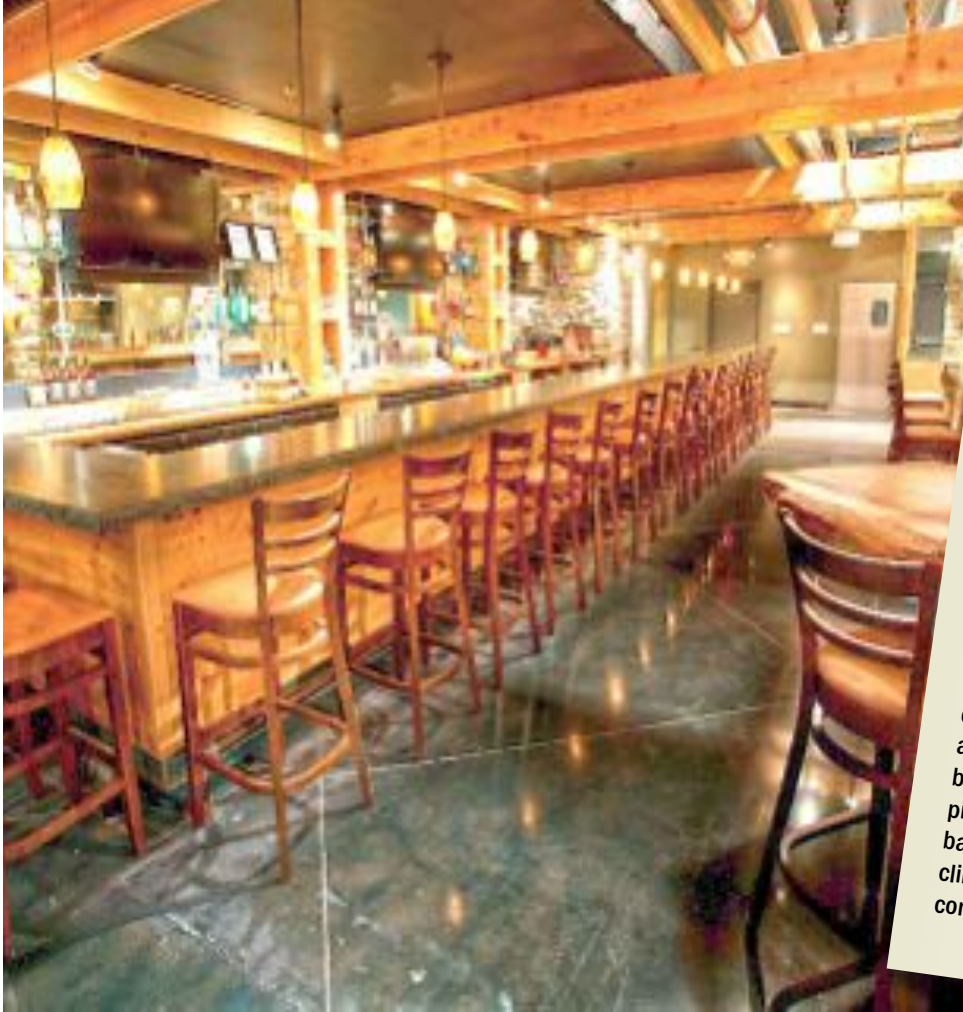
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Pork Barrel BBQ has opened its first restaurant at 2312 Mount Vernon Avenue in Alexandria, and has officially fired up its smoker and is serving hungry and happy customers. Pork Barrel BBQ co-founders Heath Hall and Brett Thompson partnered with veteran restaurateurs "Mango" Mike Anderson and Bill Blackburn in 2009 with the goal of turning their dreams of creating a gathering place for the community, centered around their national award-winning barbecue into a reality. The attention to detail and quality is ever present in the new restaurant. The owners literally have their hands in every detail from the hand-laid rock walls and columns to the one-of-a-kind beer tower constructed from sprinkler pipe by Blackburn himself. As for the barbecue, Hall and Thompson have climbed to the top of the professional competition barbecue circuit and

racked up numerous awards for their 'que and sauces since the restaurant's groundbreaking ceremony in October 2009. Pork Barrel BBQ has earned a reputation for their consistency in producing high quality barbecue and side dishes alongside some of the world's top pitmasters in the competition barbecue community. The menu includes Pork Barrel BBQ's take on traditional barbecue meats and side dishes. Customers can order ribs, brisket, pulled pork, chicken and sausage as a sandwich, platter or by the pound. Side dishes include BBQ baked beans, coleslaw, mac and cheese, smoked Ratatouille, collard greens, Texas caviar, potato salad and corn pudding. **For more information, visit their website at porkbarrelbbq.com.**

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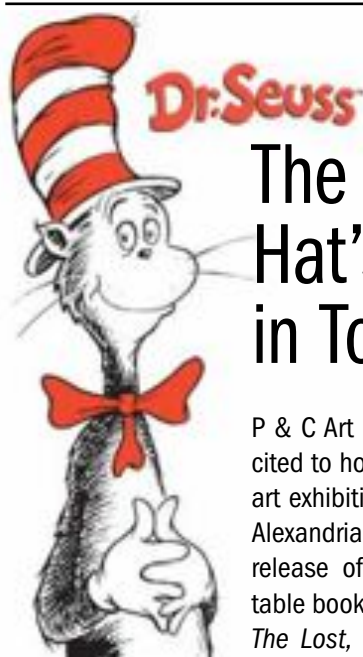
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Patent & Trademark Office Remembers Steve Jobs

Displaying over 300 patents and trademarks from the iconic Apple computer to the latest Ipad, the Patent and Trademark Office pays tribute to the brilliance of Steve Jobs. With the passing of Steve Jobs this past year, the world lost an innovator, and entrepreneur of immense status. The exhibit located in the Patent and Trademark Madison building, is free and open to the public through January 15.

PHOTO BY HARRY MERRITT



The Cat in the Hat's Secret Art in Town

P & C Art Gallery, at 212 King Street is excited to host the highly anticipated national art exhibition "Secrets of the Deep" at their Alexandria Gallery. In conjunction with the release of the new award winning coffee table book, Dr. Seuss's *Secrets of the Deep: The Lost, Forgotten, and Hidden Works of Theodor Seuss Geisel*, the "Secrets of the

Deep" art exhibition features limited edition reproductions of the original artwork from Dr. Seuss's never before seen personal collection. The unique exhibition offers an expanded look at Dr. Seuss's artistic legacy with a focus on the extraordinary collection of imagery reproduced from his nearly seventy-year artistic career. Secretly, Ted Geisel wanted to be recognized as a serious artist, but openly, he was quick to describe his private works as "midnight paintings." While researching Ted's paintings and sculptures at his La Jolla home, it was discovered Ted and his wife Audrey kept more than forty artworks behind a concealed false door that were publicly unknown and unpublished, all waiting for Audrey to reveal them to Ted's fans upon his passing per his request. *The Secrets of the Deep* coffee table book is the first book released in more than 15-years featuring never before seen artwork from the Seuss private collection.

Two extraordinary exclusive limited tour editions are also being showcased as part of this exhibition:

The Cat Behind the Hat: Ted Geisel's most iconic self-portrait ran in the July 6, 1957 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Appearing just four months after the launch of *The Cat in the Hat*, this classic portrait depicts Dr. Seuss as his mischievous alter ego, complete with red and white stovepipe hat, cat ears, and the Cat's now famous red bow tie.

Cuddle Fish: Cuddle Fish was kept close at hand by Ted throughout his lifetime which to this day resides with Audrey in the Geisel home. In the vein of the Horton Line Drawing, this work exudes classic Seussian charm and confirms the Good Doctor's breezy artistic talent.

The exhibition is free and runs through December 24.



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Studio Body Logic instructor Rachel Merga leads students through side sit ups on the Reformer.

COURTESY PHOTO

Studio Body Logic Celebrates 15th Anniversary as Northern Virginia's First Authentic Pilates Studio

It was 1996: Braveheart won the Oscar, Spice Girls ruled the stage, and Bill, Bob and Ross were vying for the White House. Pilates? It was barely a blip on the fitness radar despite an avid following among dancers and its proven effects on flexibility, strength and posture.

Undeterred by the lack of awareness in 1996 and inspired by her own life changing experience with the exercise, professional ballerina Karen Garcia threw open the doors to Studio Body Logic, then the first authentic Pilates studio in Northern Virginia. Ms. Garcia is one of a handful of second generation Pilates instructors in the world, having been certified by Romana Kryzanowska, a protégée of Joseph Pilates. Now the proud owner of two locations – Del Ray in Alexandria and Ballston in Arlington – Ms. Garcia remains dedicated to Pilates' original teachings and employs instructors with 600+ hours of intense training. Both studios offer dozens of mat classes at varied levels as well as private and semi private sessions on apparatus known as Reformer, Cadillac, Tower and Wunda Chair.

Studio Body Logic will kick off its 16th year with a Winter Mat Session starting January 2, 2012.

FROM THE WEB “Awww”



A cat with a permanent top hat



A pug with pug slippers



A turtle the size of a grape



An otter showing you its baby



This baby owl.....



Baby penguin meeting a baby dolphin



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BY MARCUS FISK

A Christmas Blessing

I was going through my family photos the other day and found several Christmas pictures from various years. They included our lives growing up in the Army and celebrating Christmas stationed in North Carolina, Germany, Thailand, Virginia, and Colorado. More recently there were other photographs that struck a particular chord with me. The Christmas 2005 photo showed the entire Fisk clan at my parents' home in Arizona. It included all of us 'kids' and all the grandchildren up to that point. As I looked at it I thought about the years since and how things are today since that wonderful, warm, laughter-filled time.

Looking over the faces in that photo I remembered that my nephew Rawley, then an exuberant, 16-year old soccer player, is now a Navy Corpsman with the Marine Corps in Afghanistan and how tough it must be for him to spend his first ever Christmas away from family – and do it in a combat zone.

I also remembered that it was the last time I had spent time with my daughter Chandler. How happy she looked standing arm-in-arm with her cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Today, she is in college, following her dream of being in the performing arts. It was an unfortunate set of circumstances that has kept



Navy Ball 2011



The Fisk Family Christmas 2005



Marcus and Pamela Fisk

us apart over the ensuing years and yet as I looked at her in the photograph, I could see the light in her eyes signaling the direction of her future.

That photograph was in my personal gear when I was in Iraq. I had spent many, many holidays away during my military career so as Christmas 2006 approached in Baghdad and since we were all sharing the same experience, it was just another day closer to going home to me. Being gone is an unfortunate but undeniable fact of life in our line of work. It always lurked in the fine print of the 'other duties as assigned' in the job description.

I really didn't give much thought about being away from family and friends, but

our Commander, General Caldwell, gave all of us senior folks a quick cautionary note at our morning meeting on Christmas Eve. He reminded us that many of us had been away for Christmas in the past but it would be a new and tough experience for some of the younger folks and we should spend time visiting and talking with as many young Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines that we could to stave-off 'the blues.' I remember that he distinctly said, "Until we all turn in tonight, *no one* will be alone. Make sure your troops are not alone and make sure you stop and talk with as many as you can". Every senior officer knew that, but the reminder was like a quick leadership refresher.

Christmas Eve dinner that evening was tremendous. No expense was spared and officers and enlisted personnel sat together, talking, laughing and remembering the good things in our lives. After dinner I made a trip to the combat hospital to visit the wounded, and then spent the remainder of the evening wandering our compound, stopping to talk with the Marines on security detail, the Airmen outside the Intelligence Center, Soldiers coming off convoy/escort duty, and stopping to offer every Sailor I met a 'Merry Christmas, Shipmate' and we

exchanged thoughts of home, our lives and careers.

It had been a particularly long day. The Iraqi insurgency was in full throttle and our casualty counts devastating – three Americans killed per day – but as the night fell, it was eerily quiet. No mortars, now sporadic small arms fire, no roadside bomb explosions. The Christmas dinner and the walks around the compound vis-à-vis Prince Hal in Henry the 5th were poignant and exhausting. But all of us did our part and we found even the most morose of those we met were able to keep on the sunny side. Morale was high and our troops rallied around one another.

It was nearly midnight when I headed home to my 'hooch' as we called our little trailers where we lived. I walked around the sandbag wall that protected my hooch, found a little bench and sat down to relax a bit and sipped on my bottle of Gatorade. The sandbag walls were high but you could see the palm trees silhouetted against the clear starry night sky, and in the distance the Muslim call to evening prayer was being called from a Mosque. I remember thinking how close I was to the Holy Land and how ironic it was to hear a Muslim prayer on that night, as if they were honoring our Holy night. It was one of

those moments that stays with you a lifetime.

Sure, I had been away at Christmas before and this should have been no different, but I broke down. Quietly, on a bench, behind the sandbags protecting us from an enemy that few of us saw, and sheltered from any of my troops so they wouldn't see me, I let lose the tears of a father for his estranged daughter and the joy I felt for being alive, at that very moment, and in that very place.

My favorite Christmas picture however, is a fairly recent Christmas photograph of my wife Pamela and me shortly after we met. There are stars in both our eyes but the stars in hers remind me of that Baghdad sky from five Christmases ago. She has helped me through some particularly tough times and I am particularly thankful for the blessing she has been to me. Looking at that picture I wonder if she was there among those stars I saw that night in Baghdad but I hadn't met her yet. She truly is the greatest Christmas blessing of all.

Marcus Fisk is a retired Navy Captain, Naval Academy graduate, sometime actor, sculptor, pick-up soccer player, and playwright. He and his wife Pamela live in Alexandria.

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In 1956, the Mikimoto Pearl Company of Tokyo created this magnificent ceremonial crown that is only used once each year to crown the U.S. Cherry Blossom Queen at the NCSS Grand Ball in April.

COURTESY PHOTO

BY MARY EHLERS

I have always been fascinated by pearls. They are available in so many shapes, sizes, and colors. And now is a particularly exciting time for anyone who loves pearls, because they are available in so many different price ranges that they are affordable treasures which can cost under \$100, or as much as \$1,000,000 or more.

At this holiday time, I thought I'd share some of my 35-plus years of experience gained by buying, selling, designing with, and wearing pearls. There are two basic categories of pearls. There are pearls which grow in freshwater lakes, and which are found in mussels, and there are pearls which grow in salt water and are found in oysters. Either category of pearl can occur naturally when some small irritant enters the mussel or oyster, such as a grain of sand, causing it to try to protect itself from the "foreign body". The oyster or mussel secretes a material called "nacre", which encases the foreign object. When layers of nacre are secreted over each previous layer of nacre, a pearl is formed.

A cultured pearl is one which has been created by man providing the irritant. Mikimoto developed this technique of "culturing" pearls by inserting a round mother of pearl bead into the oyster by a surgical technique. Then the oysters were put into the water and left there to develop more and more concentric layers of nacre. Some pearls were left for 2 years to develop a really thick nacre and a finer lustre. These pearls were known in the jewelry trade as "2 year pearls". In today's market, most pearls are not left in the oyster for more than 1 year, and about a .5 mm thickness of nacre is what is likely to be found in most stores.

Today the waters in Japan are becoming more and more polluted, as are many of the other bodies of water elsewhere in

the world. Several years ago, an entire harvest of cultured pearls was ruined by a Japanese manufacturer dumping his plant's toxic wastes into the waters which flowed into the pearl beds where pearls were being cultured. That resulted in a scarcity of cultured pearls that year, and also for several more years, since those pearl beds were contaminated and the oysters were also killed.

It takes at least 2 years to start the culturing process all over again, so cultured pearls became very expensive as a result of this thoughtless dumping of chemical pollutants by a nearby manufacturer who didn't want to pay for the proper disposal of his chemical waste.

Now culturing has become very popular and new areas of production include China where stands of freshwater pearls, which have the appearance of "rice crispies" cereal, can be produced and sold for as little as \$3 to \$5 per strand. Also the pearl farmers in China have developed some proprietary processes of culturing freshwater pearls into more round shapes which also have nice nacre thickness and lustre. These new pearl farms are in competition with the round cultured pearl which is much more expensive. Many consumers do not see a difference significant enough to justify

the additional expense. For example, a strand of 7 1/2 - 7 mm round cultured pearls of a fine quality can cost \$1500 to \$2000. A similar strand of cultured freshwater pearls can cost as little as \$100 to \$150.

COLOR OF PEARLS

There are many pearls which naturally appear white with rose overtones, or cream with rose overtones. There are also many freshwater pearls which can be found in almost any color. Many of the pastel shades of peach, apricot, pink, grey, silver, and golden colors are natural. There are also many colors of pearls which are produced by dyeing the outer nacre layers of pearl. Some pearls are also irradiated which alters the color of the nacre. There are many variations of Tahitian Black pearls. These are usually cultured pearls which are grown only in the Black-lipped oyster in the waters around Tahiti. The pearls can have a size ranging from 8 mm on up to 15 mm or more in diameter. The rounder the pearl, the more valuable. Black Tahitian pearls are not always "black". Tahitian pearls have about 80 different categories of color and range from brown to green and magenta overtones.

I took a recent course from GIA (Gemological Institute of America) focusing on pearls.

It is somewhat mind boggling and overwhelming to realize how many factors must be considered to properly evaluate a pearl. There is size, shape, nacre thickness, lustre and orient, and of course, body color of the pearl as well as overtone colors.

I have had the pleasure of seeing the Cherry Blossom Princess's Pearl Crown up close about 7 years ago. This crown has some truly fine cultured pearls which have fabulous color, lustre, nacre thickness and orient. By the way, the Crown weighs about 20 pounds, and whoever wins the title of Cherry Blossom Princess had better have a strong neck!!!

There are also South Sea pearls which are basically white or golden colors. Some necklaces which have 31 pearls in them, have taken 5 to 7 years time to collect enough well-matched pearls to be strung together into a necklace. When the necklace is also graduated in size, the sorting and selecting process can only be done by trained experts who work with these pearls on a daily basis.

Some pearls are dyed to look like Black Tahitian pearls. Some are very obvious and have a very metallic look to them. Other dyeing techniques produce a more subtle color harder to detect by a consumer. The best way to tell is to look down the drill hole of the pearl

to see if you see a starter bead of Mother of Pearl. If you do, then the pearl is cultured. If you see no bead, then you have to have the pearl x-rayed to see if there is a starter bead inside or not.

CARE OF PEARLS

Pearls are organic, and as such can be damaged easily by careless use of perfume, hairspray and exposure to ammonia while cleaning window glass, or chlorine from a pool. Anything acid can also "eat at" the pearl's surface and create pits or pocks. This includes wearing your pearls against your neck during hot, muggy weather. Also, if you are dancing and working up a sweat while dancing, then your own body acid can attack your pearls at the back of the neck.

DO NOT EVER put your pearls in an ultrasonic cleaner or in any jewelry cleaner which has ammonia in it. Clean your pearls with a warm damp cloth and allow the pearls to towel dry. Try not to immerse them in water. The silk thread, which most better pearls are strung on, can deteriorate if the water gets into the silk thread and is trapped in the inside of the pearl. DO NOT allow your pearls to dry out. They can chip and crack if they become too dry.

Restraining your pearls periodically, usually once a year, if you wear them frequently. The knots between the pearls get dirty and stretched. The dirt and body acid which accumulates on the thread can damage the pearls if not cared for by regular restringing. It is always best to get dressed first, put on your hairspray and your perfume next, and put your pearls on LAST!!!! You will be glad that you did, and your pearls will last for many years to come, and may become an heirloom that you can give your children.

LASTLY, pearls are a symbol of wisdom. Make a wise choice

▼ See PEARLS on page 15

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▲ LISS from page 6

Director of Tenants & Workers United. Jon was a co-founder. Established in 1986, TWU is the largest member-based, low-income community organization in Northern Virginia. Its mission "is...to develop multi-racial leadership for social and economic justice, and to democratically control or own community resources including housing, education and health care." In 1990 TWU's budget was \$3,000. Today its operating budget is \$1.1 million.

Tenants & Worker's United was born in response to a Washington Post article detailing mass evictions in Alexandria's Arlandria section near Four-Mile Run. Many of the residents "were Salvadoran, victims of gentrification." In 1996 Liss and the TWU solved the problem, in part, by establishing a resident-owned housing cooperative known as Chirilagua. TWU's constituency is primarily Hispanics.

"I spoke my smattering of Spanish, the residents responded, and together we prevented the mass evictions of low income tenants," Liss smiled.

Jon believes housing, like city space, is a right. Low income housing, however, need not be scattered-site. Liss again reminisces about his life in an "immigrant Jewish enclave."

Among Liss' other accomplishments: passage of Virginia's first Living Wage legislation (Alexandria and Arlington), education reform including the creation of a bilingual immersion program, and formation of

the nationally-organized Right to the City Alliance.

What is Liss' life lesson? "I am the father of two and I want to teach my children that we can make the world a better place. I believe on some fundamental level people have a tremendous capacity for good. Income implies riches, but real wealth is adequate housing, healthcare, work that brings sustenance and a better life for our children."

Virginia New Majority is TWU's sister organization. Liss' goal is "to patch together a new progressive majority in Virginia." The political agenda includes universal healthcare, better public education, and immigration reform. In 2008 VNM reached "more than 100,000 homes in Virginia's 11th Congressional District."

"A New Majority is not outside the realm of possibility," Liss said. "So what if some politicians drive us like a corkscrew. We're advocating for a different kind of Virginia."

From Virginia New Majority's website: "Founded in August 2007, VNM breaks from Virginia's old history of racism and corporate domination. We build on the best democratic traditions...we work to create a new and modern political system...We build power by organizing the diverse peoples of the Commonwealth." Jon argues "people first," allies with "progressives" and favors "the progressive tax."

The connection between ethnicity, race and class is difficult for Liss to detail. A recent

Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation-Harvard University poll confirms Hispanics and blacks are "far less likely to own homes." Foreclosures are not uncommon and Hispanics median income is 73% that of whites.

Can a Hispanic be elected to Alexandria's City Council? "There could be a Hispanic on School Board maybe as early as the next election," Liss replied. "City Council could be within the next ten years, but it would have to be a coalitional deal."

Jon Liss is a street soldier who in his own words is "creative and collective; realistic, but ambitious."

Living Legends: The Project Now in its fifth year, Living Legends of Alexandria is an ongoing 501(c)(3) photo-documentary project to identify, honor and chronicle Alexandria's Living Legends. The project was conceived by Nina Tisara to create an enduring artistic record of the people whose vision and dedication make a positive, tangible difference to the quality of life in Alexandria. 2011 Platinum and Gold Sponsors are Club Managers Association of America, Erkiletian Real Estate Development, Inova Alexandria Hospital, Renner & Co., Rotary Club of Alexandria, the Alexandria Commission for the Arts and the late Douglas Thurman. For more information, visit www.AlexandriaLegends.com. Writer Sarah Becker was nominated as a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2007.

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Honoring our Veterans, 100,000 wreaths were placed at grave markers in Arlington National Cemetery.

100,000 Wreaths Placed at Arlington

BY MARY WADLAND

Maine Gov. Paul LePage joined thousands of volunteers Saturday, December 10 in placing over 100,000 wreaths at grave markers in Arlington National Cemetery. A convoy of more than 20 trucks left Maine the Sunday before, bound for the cemetery just across the Potomac River from the nation's capital.

The tradition began 20 years ago with little fanfare. Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine, and others laid 5,000 wreaths on headstones the first year to give thanks to the nation's veterans.

"The first year there were 13 people involved and now there are, I don't know, someone said there may be 20,000 people here. So it's -- I can't say enough about it," said Worcester.

Since then, it has grown into an organization called Wreaths Across America with ceremonies across the country.

Organizers estimated 10,000 people joined Saturday's wreath laying at Arlington.

"It means a lot to those who are serving to know that what they are doing is important enough that we are going to remember. And I think it is the right thing to do," said Karen Worcester.



Black pearls.

COURTESY PHOTO

▲ Pearls from page 13

for yourself, or your significant other. Pearls are a soft material, but if you learn how to care for them, they will bring you many years of pleasure just by looking at them. Whether you like freshwater pearls, cultured round pearls, Tahitian pearls or South Sea pearls, you will be in good company. Pearls are God's gift from the sea, and should be enjoyed by everyone.

For more pearl information, or to view some spectacular pearls, please call The Nugget. I would be delighted to show you some more of these gorgeous gems.

Mary Ehlers is a goldsmith and the owner of The Nugget, located at 123 South Fairfax Street in Old Town Alexandria.

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Vice Mayor Kerry Donley congratulates Tisara on the success of the project.



Tisara (right) surrounded by Board members Mary Anne Weber, Joe Shumard and Jane Collins and past year's Legends Fran and Gant Redmon, John Porter, Melvin Miller and Arlene Hewitt holds up the Living Legends catalogs. The annual catalog with stories and photographs of the year's Legends and nominees is donated to the Alexandria Library, collected by the Library of Virginia in Richmond and available at the U.S. Library of Congress.

PHOTOS BY STEPHEN HALPERSON / TISARA PHOTOGRAPHY



Becky Arnold, Realtor, Prudential PenFed Realty, (right) introduces Living Legends director Nina Tisara.



Vice Mayor Kerry Donley (left) and Prudential PenFed Realtor Becky Arnold. Arnold organizes the art exhibitions at the Prudential PenFed Offices.

Living Legends of Alexandria Portraits on Exhibit

Three years of Living Legends of Alexandria portraits by artist-photographer Nina Tisara are currently being exhibited at the offices of Prudential PenFed Realty, 300 N. Washington Street, Suite 100 in old Town, Alexandria.

In her review of the exhibition, Trudi Van Dyke, Independent Fine Art Consultant, wrote "...Artist Nina Tisara is representative of the many historical photographers and painters who see beyond the subject of the "head shot" and present the soul and personality beyond the likeness.

"Capturing the essence of each person is the key to making the black and white portraits of the legends come to life. The viewer of this exhibition is treated to meeting each of the legends in a way that brings their indi-

viduality to the forefront. The careful composition, lighting, and unpretentious appearance allows the viewer to virtually interact with the subject. "...I encourage citizens of Alexandria in particular to visit this outstanding art exhibition before it closes on January 27 and get insight through art into the people who make Alexandria a great place to live and work. The Prudential PenFed Realty office is open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday-Friday."

Now in its fifth year, Living Legends of Alexandria is an ongoing 501(c)(3) photo-documentary project to identify, honor and chronicle Alexandria's Living Legends. The project was conceived by Tisara to create an enduring artistic record of the people whose vision and dedication make

a positive, tangible difference to the quality of life in Alexandria.

Major 2011 sponsors are Club Managers Association of America, Erkleletian Real Estate Development, Inova Alexandria Hospital, John McEnearney, Renner & Co., Rotary Club of Alexandria, the late Douglas Thurman and the Alexandria Commission for the Arts.

The Legends of 2012 will be announced by the end of December. For more about the project and a list of past Legends see www.AlexandriaLegends.com or contact Nina Tisara, AlexandriaLegends@NinaTisara.com. For information about art exhibitions at Prudential PenFed, contact Becky Arnold, becky.arnold@penfedrealty.com, 571-345-6175.

Old Town's WINDOW WONDERLAND WINNER

On Saturday morning, Mayor Euille announced the winner of the Old Town Boutique District's contest for the best-decorated window in Old Town. The banner went to The Walker Home, located at 1125 King Street. The Walker Home is a unique home furnishings store specializing in East Asian 17th to 19th century antiques and decorative arts, but is filled with a blend of contemporary offerings as well. Over 2,500 votes were cast in the social media contest conducted via facebook. The runner-up was Fibre Space, located at 102 North Fayette Street.

PHOTOS BY MAURISA POTTS



Pictured above is Elizabeth Todd, co-founder of the Old Town Boutique District and owner of The Shoe Hive, Rose Woolford, owner of The Walker Home, Mayor Bill Euille, and Kim Putens, co-founder of the Old Town Boutique District and owner of Bloomers.



Beautiful displays abound at the Olio Tasting Room at 1223 King Street.



Window takes all at The Walker Home at 1125 King Street.

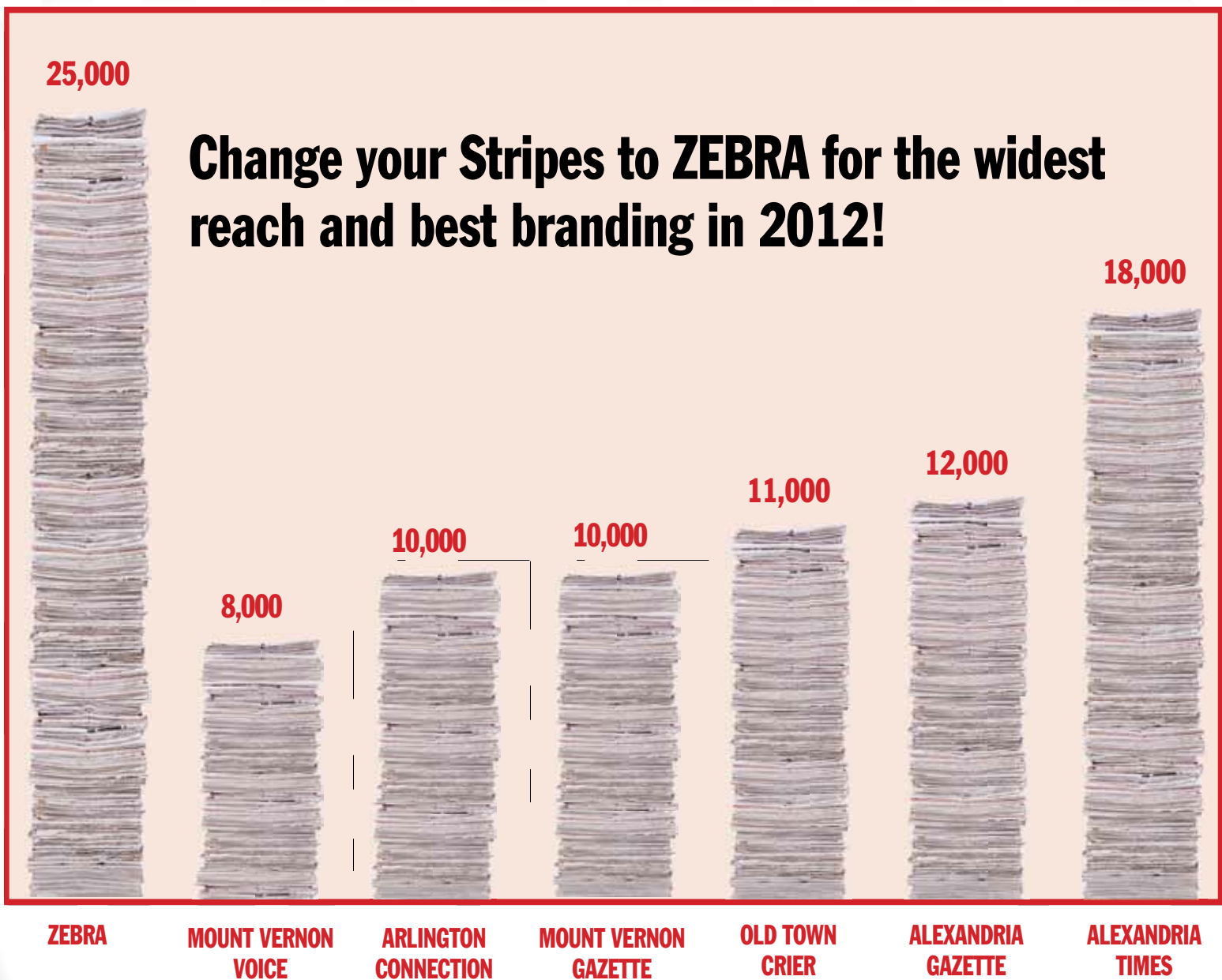


The window dressing at Fibre Space at 102 North Fayette Street came close at second place.



Bishop Boutique lights things up at 815 King Street.

Call of the Wild!

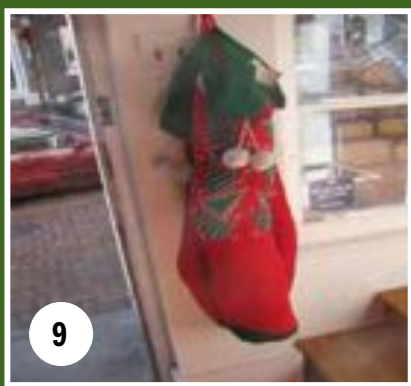
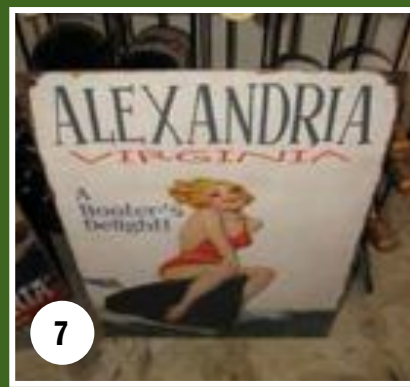


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PHOTOS BY CHUCK HAGEE AND GREG KNOTT

Holiday Shopping à la Yesteryear

BY CHUCK HAGEE

Long for the days when it was actually fun to holiday shop? When it put you in the Christmas spirit instead of a raging, battered state of physical and mental disarray? When store clerks knew their products? And store owners knew their customers?

A familiar 70s song lyrics ring true: "Those were the days my friend -- We thought they'd never end." Well, for most of us, they did end. And we joined the thundering herds in the seemingly endless malls or product-blurred "big box" stores.

Then again maybe they didn't actually end. Maybe it was us who just got caught up in the cookie cutter culture of "me too."

Those personal shopping experiences of yesteryear are still all around. Just stop and smell the heather and put the holiday spirit back into finding just the right gift for those special people on that shopping list. In other words, visit the shops in Old Town Alexandria, Del Ray, and Belleview Shopping Center.

There's plenty of parking. The prices are right. The prod-

ucts are unique. And, best of all you won't have other shoppers walking on the tops of your feet. Here are some suggestions.

They include such hallmarks as a northern flag of the Civil War with 13 stars and a southern flag of that era with seven stars; a

from \$32.50 to \$47; three-foot tall Mark Roberts decorative phenols; and miniature old fashioned "television set" music

until Christmas Eve. It is listed at \$29.99. As always, there are the Corolli dolls ranging from \$29.99 to \$59.99.

Two blocks away, at 2205 Mt. Vernon Avenue, discover Kiskadee, owned by Darby Rush and Cornelia Hall. "We have a wide variety of great gifts reasonably priced for both women and men," said Rush. Among those items are festive dresses and tops from \$120 to \$400 and women's fur-topped boots from \$89 to \$395.

One of Alexandria most unusual shops is located in the Fox Chase Shopping Center. Shoppers who want individualized, handmade items for the hard to buy for people on their list should visit Authentically Amish at 4609 Duke Street.

Owner Chris St. Pierre has assembled a wide array of handmade furniture, toys and home decorating items that he personally buys and transports directly from the craftsmen in the Pennsylvania Dutch countryside to his store. One of the big favorites each holiday season include the wooden toys -- primarily trucks and trains that sell for approximately \$80 each. There are also children's table and chair sets at \$270 and rocking horses at \$275.

boxes that light up with winter scenes as the songs play. They are priced from \$135 to \$300.

In Del Ray, Linda Johnson, owner of The Purple Goose at 2005 Mt. Vernon Avenue, is featuring a "very large floor puzzle" that can be walked upon priced at just \$14.99. Another item to keep children guessing about their standing with Old St. Nick is the "Elf on The Shelf" that moves mysteriously around the house

As with every season of the year, but particularly during the Christmas holidays, The Virginia Florist, with stores in Belleview Shopping Center, and Hollin Hall Shopping Center, boasts excellent floral offerings, but also has some of the unique gifts to be found in the immediate area.

At the top of this year's possibilities is an assortment of historic American flags covering the period from 1876 to 1940.

48-star American flag; a "Remember The Maine" flag and many others.

"These are not replicas. These are the real thing. And, each is individually framed," said owner Kevin Green. "They range in price from \$60 to \$200 depending on size, age and condition."

Other specialty items include a large red Santa bag at \$99; Narcissus and amaryllis bulbs in Nantucket baskets ranging

KEY FOR GIFT PHOTOS

- 1 Large collection of Todd Healy's holiday items at Gallery Lafayette.
- 2 Personalized jewelry at Zoe Boutique.
- 3 Irish Shawl Cardigan at Irish Walk.
- 4 Muppet puppets at Why Not?
- 5 Gadsby's Tavern sign at The Virginia Shop.
- 6 Bulb baskets at Virginia Florist.
- 7 Alexandria Boating Sign at The Virginia Shop.
- 8 Tea sets at Why Not.
- 9 Large knit stocking at 3 Sisters.
- 10 Mirror at Ten Thousand Villages.
- 11 Santa bag at Virginia Florist.
- 12 Elf on A Shelf at 3 Sisters and Purple Goose.

For adults, he offers all types of wooden handmade furniture from rockers to dressers, tables and chairs, and a myriad other items. One of the most popular accessory pieces is the wooden quilt rack that sells for \$95.

Trudging the sidewalks of Old Town, the average shopper can find just about any item they desire. Got that person on the list who supposedly has everything? I'll bet not.

Just walk through the door at Ten Thousand Villages, 915 King Street, and prepare to be amazed. A "fair trade" enterprise, managed by Kate McMahon, every item in this store is hand-crafted by villagers in third world nations, enabling them to tell their stories while making a livable wage.

It is literally packed with highly unusual items that are not available anywhere else. Does that hard to buy for person have a mirror made of recycled metal washers, painted black and connected together with a mirror in the center? Highly unlikely. It is not only attractive but would be the ultimate conversation piece in anyone's home. Made in India it is priced at \$115.

At 1102 King Street is Today's Cargo, managed by Donna McIntyre. For anyone hunting for charm bracelet charms this is the place. "We have a huge selection of sterling silver charms in flowers, dogs, musical instruments, sports themes, regional sightseeing sites, you name it," said McIntyre. They range from \$18 to \$42 depending on silver weight. There are also freshwater pearls from \$18 in a variety of colors

and an array of other jewelry.

Exquisite antique jewelry can be found at King's Jewelry, 609 King Street. "We refer to it as previously loved jewelry," said owner Norman "Brad" Bradford. Pieces range from \$100 to \$10,000 with the average price

For boys and girls of all sizes and ages there is no place like Whistle Stop Hobbies at 130 South Royal Street. This year's big item, according to owner Frank Kozuch is the Airsoft rifles and pistols. "They are like BB guns but they fire short soft

different styles.

Another item desired by both locals and tourists is a Christmas ornament detailing a scene of Old Town. For that, look no further than Gallery Lafayette, 320 King Street, at the rear of Gadsby's Arcade. This year, artist/owner Todd Healy's ornament features the Alexandria waterfront -- a source of great controversy and something that may look quite different in years to come making this year's ornament, priced at \$26, a potential collector's piece.

Clothing, particularly that with a specialized DNA, is always a popular. Two Old Town merchants specialize in such products -- The Irish Walk, 415 King Street, and Gossypia, 325 Cameron Street.

Patty Theobald's Irish Walk carries a variety of hand-knit Irish sweaters and other Celtic items that she personally purchases on trips to the Emerald Isle. They are priced from \$230 depending on color, style and size.

Another uniquely Irish offering in her shop is a series of necklaces and earrings of silver and gold named, "Windows to the Soul." Pieces of this collection sell for \$105 to \$190.

Gossypia, primarily a woman's clothing and jewelry shop owned and operated by Amanda Lasker, features products from throughout the world. At this time of year there is special emphasis on a wide array of natives from many countries. They range in price from \$14 to \$800. Her jewelry, at all price levels, is a world showcase not com-

monly found elsewhere within the metropolitan area.

To find items for home décor, pay a visit to Jeff Albert's Decorium at 116 King Street. Specializing in furniture, fixtures, and chandeliers, this holiday season they are also featuring a collectible -- the Mark Roberts stocking holders at \$170. They are not only functional but also great holiday decorating pieces.

This holiday season welcomes three newcomers to the Old Town retail scene -- Zoe Boutique, 130 S. Union Street; 3 Sisters, 213 King Street; and lou lou, 132 King Street, the former home of Arcraft.

Zoe owner Susan Gerock is featuring a collection of John Wind necklaces and bracelets with personalized initials. The necklaces are priced at \$68 and bracelets at \$98.

Stephanie Kokkinis opened 3 Sisters, a woman's clothing and accessory shop, eight months ago. As you walk in the door you are greeted by a giant Christmas stocking selling for \$13.95. Throughout, there are many items that would make excellent primary gifts and stocking stuffers.

And, finally, but far from least, is lou lou, managed by Stephanie Schaffer. As one of nine such establishments throughout the metropolitan area, the Old Town location features women's clothing accessories. For this holiday season they are highlighting a long Echo scarf with a contrast fringe in five different colors, priced at \$40. Happy shopping!

There's plenty of parking. The prices are right. The products are unique. And, best of all you won't have other shoppers walking on the tops of your feet.

coming in at \$400 to \$500. There are antique bracelets, pendants, pins, rings, etc. And, throughout the holiday season most are on sale at 25% off.

It's often said that Christmas is for kids. If so, head for Old Town's best known children's shop, Why Not? at 200 King Street. It is loaded with just about every item for kids imaginable -- toys, books, clothing and much more.

"One of our most popular items are the Muppet puppets in both finger and hand sizes. The average price is \$25," said owner Kate Schlabach. For little boys there are the Bruder large trucks, fire engines, and cranes with all the moving parts. They range in price from \$60 to \$100. For little girls there are a variety of tea sets with their own picnic baskets and carriers selling for \$32.50.

pellets," he explained. Price: \$60 to \$400.

Whistle Stop is Old Town's only model shop featuring not only model trains in all styles and gauges but also cars, planes, boats, remote-controlled helicopters, to mention just a few. One of the big items in the train category is the Lego trains that can be continually restyled by the owner.

For a variety of items under one roof visit The Virginia Shop, Old Town's Country Store, at 104 S. Union Street, owned by Bob Lorenson. From Virginia Peanuts, to regional food items, to wines and local souvenirs, The Virginia Shop has it. A big seller this year, appealing to both locals and tourists, are the custom reproductions of signs pertaining to Alexandria. Selling for \$80 each there are approximately 15

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MATCH GAME A Wonderful Life: The Many Faces of Jimmy Stewart



BY HOLLY BURNETT

This holiday season, the Zebra staff wanted to pay homage to the quintessential American actor, Jimmy Stewart, who portrayed George Bailey in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, perhaps the most beloved Christmas movie of all time. Also starring in the title role of such films as *The Glenn Miller Story*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *The Stratton Story*, Stewart made an indelible mark on our country's cinematic culture with every part he played. See if you can match his character names in the left column with their corresponding films. Correct answers will be revealed in our January issue. Enjoy the game!

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Macaulay Connor | No Highway in the Sky |
| Lt. Col. Robert 'Dutch' Holland | The Greatest Show on Earth |
| Elwood P. Dowd | Rear Window |
| Charles Augustus 'Slim' Lindbergh | Vertigo |
| Theodore Honey | The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance |
| John 'Scottie' Ferguson | The Flight of the Phoenix |
| Buttons | The Philadelphia Story |
| Ransom Stoddard | Strategic Air Command |
| L.B. 'Jeff' Jeffries | Harvey |
| Frank Towns | The Spirit of St. Louis |

November Match Game Answers:
 Cary Grant/Archibald Leach; Joan Crawford/Lucille LeSueur; John Wayne/Marion Morrison; Rita Hayworth/Margarita Carmen Cansino; William Holden/William Beedle, Jr.; Susan Hayward/Edythe Marrenner; Marilyn Monroe/Norma Jeane Mortenson; Shelley Winters/Shirley Schrift; Judy Garland/Frances Gumm; Charlton Heston/John Charles Carter.

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
November 27 Larry Graham & Graham Central Station 7:30pm \$69.50	November 28 An Evening with Chaka Khan A Rare Jazz Quartet Performance 7:30pm \$75.00	November 29 Birchmere Box Office is open 5:00 - 9:00pm on SHOWDATES ONLY!! A \$4.50 per ticket service charge will apply.	1 A Peter White Christmas w/ Mindi Abair, & Kirk Whalum 7:30pm \$49.50	2 NEW SHOW! The Four Bitchin' Babes Debi Smith, Sally Fingerett, Nancy Moran, Deirdre Flint 7:30pm \$35.00	3	
4 Holiday Show! Over The Rhine w/ Milk Carton Kids 7:30pm \$25.00	5 AMERICA WITH JIM MESSINA 'HOLIDAY HARMONY TOUR' 7:30pm \$79.50	6 PAUL MALCO'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY	8 JARS OF CLAY DREW HOLCOMBE & THE NEIGHBORS 7:30pm \$29.50	9 Vanilla Fudge 7:30pm \$29.50	10 1964: THE TRIBUTE 7:30pm \$35.00	
11 Avery Sunshine & Trina Broussard 7:30pm \$25.00	12 Lyle Lovett and His Acoustic Group 7:30pm \$89.50	13	14 Dwele w/ Frank Sirius 7:30pm \$45.00	15 TANK 7:30pm \$45.00	16 Pieces of a Dream 7:30pm \$35.00	17
18 A John Waters Christmas 'Role Models' Book Signing After Show! 7:30pm \$45.00	19 BEYOND THE SUN TOWER CHRIS ISAAK 7:30pm \$89.50	20 Jake Shimabukuro 7:30pm \$29.50	21 Jewmangous featuring Sean Altman 7:30pm \$25.00	22 TBA	23 TBA	24 TBA
25 MERRY CHRISTMAS! ticketmaster Ticketmaster.com 800.745.3000 Find a retail outlet near you Ticketmaster.com/outlets	26	27 OCEAN ORCHESTRA & WASHINGTON REVELS' SINGERS 'A Celtic Solstice Celebration' 7:30pm \$25.00	28 Ted Vigi & Steve Weisberg perform THE MUSIC OF JOHN DENVER 7:30pm \$22.50	29 Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes w/ Dean Rosenthal 7:30pm \$39.50	30 19th ANNUAL HANK WILLIAMS TRIBUTE feat. Cathy Fink & Nancy Marner, Bill Kirchen, Bobin & Linda Williams & Their Fine Group! 7:30pm \$29.50	31 NEW YEARS EVE with The Seldom Scene, The Hot Seals, Tim Finck & The Eastman String Band 8pm \$39.50

It's Not Just a Dog Dish Anymore!!



If you have a photo of your pet or any animal using one of our bowls, please send it in to mary@thezebra.org and we will publish it as soon as we can.

C A T I N A B O X



It looks like Barnaby is fully relaxed and settled into the box he found.

Submitted by Richard Bunch

"I finally got one! My cat gets in boxes all the time, and I kept trying to get a picture to send in. Thanks Zebra for making my cat famous for the holidays!"

Submitted by Jena Misercola

If you have a cute photo of your cat in a box, please send it to mary@thezebra.org and we will try and get it published as soon as we are able.



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Saturday, Dec 24

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&

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Historic Alexandria 2011 Holiday Ornament Commemorates Civil War



Collectible Ornament on Sale in Museum Gift Shops, Online

Celebrate the holiday season and honor Alexandria's Civil War heritage with the newest collectible ornament from the Office of Historic Alexandria! This year's ornament commemorates the Civil War Sesquicentennial with an etched brass-finish design of historic Marshall House, an important site in Alexandria's Civil War history. Each ornament costs \$16.95 and comes in an embossed gift box.

On May 24, 1861, the Marshall House became the scene of a violent confrontation between Union officer Colonel Elmer Ellsworth and secessionist innkeeper James Jackson that would come to symbolize the opposing sides and the war itself. Because of its significance, the Marshall House, at the corner of King and South Pitt streets, became a popular destination for sightseeing soldiers to visit and one of the most photographed subjects during the war.

The ornaments will make memorable gifts for family and friends this holiday. Order your 2011 ornament online or stop by Gadsby's Tavern Museum, The Lyceum, the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, City Hall, Carlyle House or the Historic Alexandria History Center and Museum Store.

For more information, please call 703.746.4242 or visit www.historicalexandria.org.

Kiwanis

Luncheon Honors All Alexandria Non-Profits



On November 17, Keynote Speaker, former T. C. Williams Principal, John Porter captivated over 100 attendees at the Annual Joint Services Luncheon of the Alexandria Kiwanis Club. The Club holds the event every year to publicly acknowledge and recognize the tremendous impact all the Alexandria service and non-profit organizations make to the youth and children of the community

Approximately 100 people were in attendance and were honored. City Council members Kerry Donley and Del Pepper joined Chief of Police Cook and Sherriff Lawhorne in both the humor and seriousness of Porter's message to keep giving and paying back. Don Wells, a WWII veteran, and 52-year member of Kiwanis with a perfect attendance record, gave the benediction.

by Past President Mary Ehlers, Alexandria Kiwanis Club.



Al-Anon helps families deal with drinking problems during the holidays

Problem drinking during family celebrations can turn parties into disasters. Holidays tend to raise expectations for family happiness, and disappointments caused by problem drinking can do serious damage. Reverend Daniel Gowan said, "As a family disease, alcoholism must be treated within the entire family."

Gowan said, "Attending Al-Anon meetings helps clients to engage with this disease in a healthy way. Al-Anon is a useful resource for family members and friends to discover how they participate in this system or family disease. I encourage family members to consider that

the alcoholic is a sick person trying to get well, rather than a bad person trying to get good."

Over 14,000 Al-Anon Family Groups meet every week throughout the U.S. and Canada. There are no dues or fees to participate. For information about groups in the northern Virginia area, visit the web site, www.alanonva.com, call 703-534-4357 or toll-free 1-888-4AL-ANON, or send an e-mail to info@alanonva.com. For more detailed information about Al-Anon, go to www.al-anon.alateen.org or call toll-free 1-888-4AL-ANON.

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QUOTABLE:

“One can always be so much more friendly to people who can't stay long.”

-Sir Anthony Hopkins as C.S. Lewis in *Shadowlands*, 1985

The Shops at Mount Vernon:

TODAY'S
TREASURES
AT HISTORY'S
FRONT DOOR

BY CHUCK HAGEE

Need something special for that really special someone? Are they a history buff? Do they love natural products? How about concentrating on “made in America” in this time of need for American workers?

All of these requirements can be fulfilled in one location and without the hassle of the malls -- both inside and in the parking lots. This one-stop shopping mecca is located at the southern terminus of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. It's The Shops at Mount Vernon.

Located just off the circle at Mount Vernon Estate, there is ample free parking and gifts for every name on anyone's list regardless of age, sex, interests, or nationality. And, best of all, there is no mall mob scene or walking the length of several football fields.

Your shopping experience can also be made even more memorable by taking a break to enjoy a leisurely lunch or dinner in the Mount Vernon Inn, immediately adjacent to The Shops. Or if a quick snack is all that's desired, there is the food court just beyond the shops.

Speaking of dining, a gift that would be appreciated by any hostess and/or host who is into American history is the new 208 page hardcover book “Dining with the Washingtons: Historic Recipes, Entertaining, and Hospitality from Mount Vernon” priced at \$35.

Edited by Stephen A. McLeod with contributions from Steven T. Bashore, Carol Borchert Cadou, Nancy Carter Crump, J. Dean Norton, Dennis J. Pogue, Walter Scheib, Mary V. Thompson and Esther White, this attractive volume contains 230 color illustrations, notes, and index.

As the home of America's first “First Family,” Mount Vernon Estate saw a constant flow of guests. This book is the definitive guide for how the Washingtons entertained and contains many recipes of the favorite cuisines of the day.

There are also vivid photos of many of those dishes accompanied by engaging essays that shed fresh light on the daily lives of the first couple. There are over 90 historic recipes “adapted for today's kitchen” and guidelines for formal and everyday entertaining and dining in colonial style.

Complimenting this attractive treatise on historic dining and food preparation are a myriad of products in The Shops that originate at Mount Vernon, either on the farm or at the Gristmill and Distillery. Some of the offerings that would intrigue any cook on anyone's list include Gristmill yellow cornmeal, yellow grits, pancake mix, and white cornmeal. Each comes in its own decorated bag that holds 907.2 grams and sells for \$7.95.

For other possibilities in the colonial food and beverage line there various varieties of Virginia peanuts ranging in price from a four-ounce bag for \$2.95 to nine and 16-ounce containers of roasted salted and honey roasted at \$6.95 each.

For those who prefer something sweeter in nature, there is the 13.5-ounce decorated tin of “24 delicious chocolate covered classic shortbread cookies” at \$21.95.

For a more whimsical gift, emphasizing Washington's venture into distilling spirits, try a decanter in the form of the stills now operative at the distillery adjacent to the Gristmill. It sells for \$55 and can be accompanied with an ornament depicting the still for \$21.95.

As always, there is a wide selection of Virginia wines and the continuation of the “Ales of The Revolution” to accompany the various food offerings. The ale is a joint effort of Mount Vernon Estate and Yards Brewing Company of Philadelphia to recognize the preferred beer of Washington, Jefferson and Franklin. It makes the perfect gift for beer lovers at \$3 per bottle.

And, what would proper entertaining be without the appropriate silverware and the ornate cases in which to keep it? Both are available at The Shops.

Sterling silver utensils in the Classic Bead design from Reed & Barton are available in both adult and child sizes. The adult fork and spoon, gift-boxed and engravable, are priced at \$195.

Silverware purchases can be complimented by a Tarpley knife and flatware mahogany case with vertical storage and removable racking. The lining of the chest is black tarnish-resistant silver cloth. It holds service for 18, including serving pieces and sells for \$265. There is also a Reed & Barton jewelry box at \$250. Both pieces are handmade and feature inlaid woodwork.

Other sterling silver items available at The Shops include various flatware pieces as well as baby cups and comb and brush sets selling for \$95 to \$195.

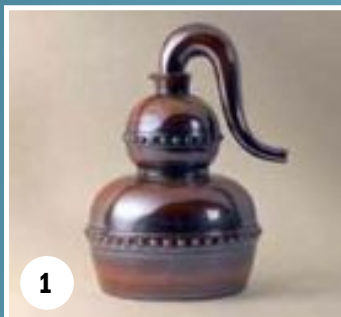
Not only was Washington a surveyor, farmer, military general, and entrepreneur, but also he was a Free Mason, as were many of the founding fathers including Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton along with Washington's military compatriot in the Revolutionary War, the Marquis de Lafayette. Masonry was a theme throughout Washington's life.

To honor that fact, The Shops are offering a 14 inch tall Byers' Masonic George Washington caroler, holding a bible and gavel, and wearing the traditional masonic apron of “cream-colored silk with nearly 30 symbols of the Masonic brotherhood.” Handcrafted in Pennsylvania, it is priced at \$72 and available only at The Shops.

One of The Shops most unique offerings this year is a collection of hand painted coin and stamp jewelry featuring pieces representative of the United States and around the world. They are offered in a variety of settings including necklaces, pendants, cufflinks, belt buckles, and money clips. And, they are a “Made in the USA” product ranging in price from \$85 to \$195.

Created by a United States family of artisans, each piece is hand-done and covered with a space-age plastic to protect it and add depth

▼ See TREASURES on page 36



KEY FOR GIFT PHOTOS

- 1 Stoneware Whiskey Still Decanter
- 2 Chocolate Covered Shortbread
- 3 White Dove of Peace Ornament
- 4 Mount Vernon Estate Cookbook
- 5 1800 Silver Dollar
- 6 Commemorative Ornament of the Distillery and Gristmill
- 7 Various Flours and Gristmill products
- 8 Tarpley Knife and Flatware Case
- 9 Prayer at Valley Forge Ornament
- 10 Sterling Silver Engravable Flatware
- 11 George Washington Mason Caroler
- 12 Wide Assortment of Canned Nuts

THE VINTAGE RECIPE BOX

“Dump” Cake

This cake was recently served at the Associated Builders and Contractors’ 2011 pot luck lunch and won raves! It’s incredibly easy to prepare, with no mixing involved. Just “dump” the ingredients in a pan and bake. The result is amazingly delicious, something between a cake and a cobbler – a definite new addition to your holiday table.

- 1 20-ounce can crushed pineapple, undrained
- 1 21-ounce can prepared Comstock More Fruit cherry pie filling
- 1 18.25-ounce box yellow cake mix
- 2 sticks (1 cup or 16 Tablespoons) butter or margarine, cut into 12 slices
- 1/4 cup chopped nuts of choice (pecans, walnuts, etc.)

Have a 9 x 13-inch baking pan/glass baking dish ready.
Preheat oven to 350 degrees (325 if using a glass baking dish).
Dump undrained pineapple into pan and spread out evenly.
Using a spoon, dump globs of cherry pie filling evenly on top of pineapple.
Sprinkle dry cake mix evenly over the cherry and pineapple layers.
Place 12 butter/margarine slices evenly over cake mix.
Sprinkle nuts on top.
Bake for one hour.
To serve, scoop out with a large spoon and dump in bowl. Top with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream. Delicious hot or cold!

Recipe Courtesy of Barbara Sexton



If you have a tried and trusted recipe that is quick and easy and gets rave reviews, please share it with us by emailing recipes@thezebra.org.

A S K D R . K N A P P

BY ROBERT KNAPP



10 Healthy Resolutions To Help Make 2012 Your Best Year Yet!

Dr. Knapp, one of Virginia’s most recognized Chiropractors, discusses the benefits of combining chiropractic care and simple lifestyle choices to become healthier and even pain-free.

Bidding a fond farewell to 2011, a new year filled with possibility has been ushered in. As with each New Year, 2012 brings with it a multitude of resolutions. Many of these often-unkept promises revolve around enjoying life more, spending more time with family, or quitting smoking. Other resolutions involve the ongoing “battle of the bulge.”

However, as these resolutions fall by the wayside almost as quickly as an ice storm in Washington DC, Dr. Knapp encourages you to consider and keep ten simple resolutions that can quickly improve your health and help you become – and stay – pain-free.

Says Dr. Knapp, “Making a New Year’s resolution for your health may actually be one of the most important things that you do in 2012. Of course, when talking about healthy resolutions, most people immediately think of eating healthier foods and exercising more. And these things definitely are essential factors in enjoying a healthy lifestyle. But there are several other steps – resolutions, if you will – that can help ensure that you feel better year round.”

Here are the top ten resolutions Dr. Knapp recommends for a healthier, happier you in 2012:

- Limit your intake of caffeine. While caffeine has a reputation for being a great “eye-opener” in the morning, it also has a definite downside. As a diuretic, caffeine has been known to cause dehydration. Caffeine can also cause the body to lose calcium and, over time, that can lead to bone loss as well as an increased risk of osteoporosis. Instead, drink plenty of fresh water and natural fruit juices. Vegetable juices are also a great choice.
- Use caution when taking medications. People have a tendency to over-medicate, whether for a headache, backache, sinus problems, or a myriad of other ills. All medications, prescription and over-the-counter alike, have some kind of side effect, and many of these side effects can be very dangerous. Instead of automatically reaching into the medicine cabinet, ask a Doctor of Chiropractic about natural, safe alternatives for fast, effective pain relief.

- Carry your purse or briefcase properly. When a heavy purse or shoulder strap-style briefcase is carried on the shoulder day in and day out, the spine can begin to compress unnaturally, resulting in chronic back pain, poor posture, improper spinal alignment, spinal injuries, shoulder and neck pain, breathing problems, and excessive fatigue. Instead, cross the strap from one shoulder over your torso, with the bag resting against the opposite side of your body.
- When it comes to your child’s backpack, remember to keep it light. A child should never carry a backpack that weighs more than ten percent of his body weight. Actually, this



rule of thumb applies to college and high school students as well as elementary school students. So if your child weighs one hundred pounds, his backpack should weigh no more than ten.

- Use caution when lifting heavy objects, and never lift heavy objects over your head. This type of dangerous motion can result in strained muscles and damaged nerves, with the end result being painful, and sometimes debilitating, neck, shoulder, and arm problems.
- When lifting heavy objects, or even objects that are only moderately heavy, be careful to avoid twisting your torso. This type of movement rotates the spine in an unnatural and painful manner, often causing strained, inflamed, or even torn soft tissue.
- Pay attention to your posture when sitting. Chiropractors have seen a spike in health problems linked to poor posture, especially related to increased computer use. For example, slumping over a computer keyboard can do a lot more than create dazzling web graphics or mind-blowing computer programs. It can also force your spine out of its natural alignment, cause chronic pain, and result in restricted movement.

- Avoid long periods of sitting in one position. Your body simply was not created to sit in one position for extended lengths of time. So take periodic breaks and stretch your arms, legs, and back. Take a quick walk or do deep breathing exercises – anything to get your body in motion and stretch out those muscles.
- When using a shovel, whether to shovel snow off the driveway or dig a garden in the spring, be sure to do so properly. Protect your back, shoulders, and neck by pushing the shovel head forward, moving snow, soil, or whatever you happen to be shoveling, to the side. Avoid lifting a heavy, loaded-down shovel.
- Make an appointment today with your Chiropractor to discuss any recurring aches, pains, or lifestyle limitations. If you do not currently suffer from any of these maladies, a board certified chiropractor can help keep you that way.

Dr. Knapp says, “Being proactive about your health is the very best way to ensure a happy, healthy lifestyle. That chiropractic care is a remarkably effective way to improve and protect your health, increase your productivity at work, and help you to enjoy a life filled with energy, fulfillment and joy.”

For more information on how to enjoy a healthier, pain-free lifestyle as well as the benefits of chiropractic care, contact **ADVANCED ALEXANDRIA CHIROPRACTIC OFFICE** at (703) 823-2201.

Dr. Knapp graduated from Wesleyan University with a Bachelor of Science degree, followed by a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from New York Chiropractic College. He received his C.C.S.T. degree from Life University in 1995. His post-graduate work has exceeded 600 hours. These hours have included study in spinal curvature, disc disease, arthritis, nutrition, headaches, sports injuries, and carpal tunnel syndrome, just to name a few. Currently, Dr. Knapp is taking courses at the prestigious Carrick Institute of Neuroscience. He is also a contributory author of Neck Pain, Neck Pain – You Don’t Want It, You Don’t Need It. Since his arrival in Alexandria in 1989, Dr. Knapp has been involved in many civic associations, as well as serving as chiropractor for the Kennedy Center and Shakespeare Theatres. His hobbies include kayaking, strength training, biking, art, and literature, just to name a few. If you have a question, please email him at dr.knapp@aachiropractic.com or call his office at 703-823-2201.

QUOTABLE:

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”

Sir Winston Churchill

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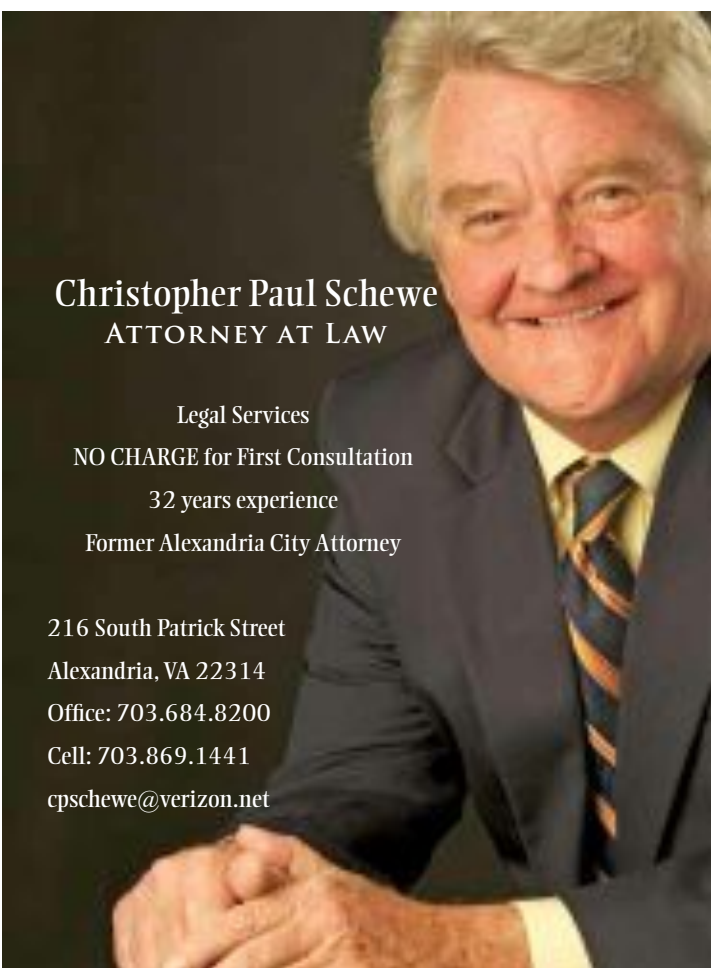
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Tuesday, December 6, The Alexandria Chamber of Commerce held its 2011 Annual Meeting and State of Business Breakfast at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Old Town, Alexandria. Terry McAuliffe, businessman, entrepreneur, past Democratic National Committee Chairman and former Virginia Governor contender gave the keynote address. Among the many issues he covered, McAuliffe highlighted the need to create jobs and what efforts he has personally done to bring jobs to this country. This includes starting GreenTech Automotives and building electric cars. During the breakfast, members of the Chamber's board and staff were recognized and presented awards. At the conclusion of the breakfast, a drawing for a Land Rover Evoque lease was held.

PHOTOS BY HARRY MERRITT

Terry McAuliffe addressed the sold-out Chamber of Commerce 2011 Annual meeting.

Alexandria Chamber of Commerce 2011 Annual Breakfast Meeting



Jack Litzenberger of SunTrust Bank (Event Sponsor) welcomes all to the meeting.



Former Chairman of the Democratic National Committee and businessman extraordinaire, Terry McAuliffe, gave the keynote address



Skip Maginniss (Maginniss & del Minno Architects) was honored with Committee Chair of the Year Award.



Marcy Anderson of Federal Professional Solutions was awarded Board Member of the Year.



The Rising Star Award was presented to Christine Sennott of Century 21.



Connie Dale of Dale Digital Printing was honored as Member of the Year.



Andrew Palmieri (Saul Ewing, LLP) receives the Chairman's Award. Palmieri is also the incoming Board president.



The Chamber Staff Award went to John Renner (Renner & Company).



Roger Parks of American Advertising Distributors also received a Chamber Staff Award.



Outgoing Chamber President & CEO Tina Leone received a personalized painting by renowned local artist Pat Palermino,



Board President-Elect Andrew Palmieri (Saul Ewing LLP), stands with John Altman (Land Rover, Alexandria), and Skip Maginniss (Maginniss & del Ninno Architects), winner of the Land Rover Evoque lease drawing.



The very personable current Board President Mike Anderson (Mango Mike Café and Pork Barrel BBQ) emceed.

“By way of nourishment, not by way of knowledge.”
— Rabbi Isaac the Blind



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FRIDAY

Steak Night (prime rib and other steak specials)

SATURDAY

Half Price Bottles of Wine (list of 50+ bottles)

SUNDAY

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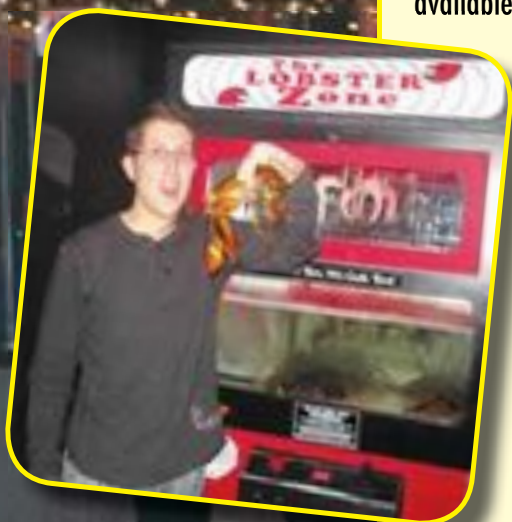
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The fabulous ensemble cast of The Little Theatre's production of *A Christmas Carol*.

PHOTOS BY SHANE CANFIELD



BY HOLLY BURNETT

The Little Theatre of Alexandria Brings Community Spirit to *A Christmas Carol*

There's an 8th grade teacher, a personal trainer and a few defense contractors thrown in for good measure. If it were the London of 1843, there'd be a candlestick maker. Everyone has a day job, but when the curtain rises on The Little Theatre of Alexandria's holiday offering of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, it's pure magic.

An ensemble cast of more than 30 actors, young and old, spanning the generations with varying degrees of stage experience, some first-timers, began their journey to the 600 Wolfe Street stage in October.

Each put their egos and vulnerabilities on the line to read for a part in Jim Howard's production of the classic holiday fable, fully aware of a stringent rehearsal schedule that would perhaps leave them threadbare by opening night – adults scrambling to leave their offices at 5:00 to get to the theatre on time – selfless parents ushering their young thespians to and fro, suffering well beyond the routine soccer practice or ballet class schedules. For everyone, including those in the front-and-back-of-the-house, this was the ultimate volunteer labor of love.

So the performance, an enchanted and haunting examination of the human spirit in its own right, is made all the more poignant when the full weight of its participants' sacrifices are brought to bear.

The one-act play's prologue draws the entire cast onstage to dissect Ebenezer Scrooge's stingy, Christmas killjoy behavior when Scrooge, portrayed by retired Navy Captain Marcus Fisk, appears silent in their midst. Fisk's unctuous omnipresence envelopes the stage, cascading down into the audience like a seaport fog, rolling row after row, overtaking, pulling us into his personage, not stopping until it reaches the two double doors leading to the lobby.

Without a sound, his glare, his gaze, his posture, denoting dangerous, even lusty overtones, makes one wonder if they are witnessing a vampire's folly – Fisk's Scrooge plundering the streets of Victorian London in search of fresh blood. Indeed, this Scrooge is not a hunched old man with thinning hair and spindly legs, bracing against the cloying holiday cheer he has come to resent, but a sexy, powerful Scrooge, worthy of the wrath heaped upon him by his detractors. Fisk's performance is intoxicating. When he is on stage, you can't release yourself from his inflicted psychological trance.

In like fashion, Robert Heinly portrays the ghost of Marley, Scrooge's deceased business partner, who, wrapped in clanging chains to signify the sins he could not rectify in life that now weigh him down in the after, appears to Scrooge, warning him to change his ways before it

is too late. He tells Scrooge that he will be awakened by three ghosts who will show him his past, present and future. Heinly, who commutes from Ashburn (hopefully not while decked in chains), delivers a stellar performance, keeping par with Fisk as if both actors were suddenly superheroes, joining forces to save the world.

As the scenes progress, every performance is nerve-less, comfortable and credible. In particular, the child actors are fearless in their vocal deliveries and theatrical gesticulations. I've seen Broadway plays that were not this well-acted.

The onstage support for each other is palpable, and a great deal of credit must be given to director Robin Parker, who has elevated this production and its actors to bring audiences a truly memorable holiday experience. And she should know. *A Christmas Carol* was the first play in which she performed at age 12, and it made an impact on her for life. As well, this Dickens tale was the first show Fisk ever saw, a base production while living in Germany in 1964. He was so enthralled that he has acted in more than 40 plays since (while still maintaining his day job).

So while you perhaps know how Scrooge's story comes out, The Little Theatre has brought the volunteer spirit to this production, with the true meaning of the play lived out every day in the individuals who have come



Robert Heinly as Marley and Marcus Fisk as Scrooge steal the show in The Little Theatre's production of *A Christmas Carol*.

together collectively to bring a voice and a presence to community theatre. It can be good, it can be great, but, in this instance, it is a transcending experience that will change the way in which you think of community and volunteerism. The sheer silent beauty of this realization will blind you with tears

of joy and a rejuvenated soul, not unlike Scrooge, grateful he did not miss Christmas morning and his chance to change.

A Christmas Carol runs through December 18. Visit thelittletheatre.com for show times, tickets and information on how to become a volunteer.

Local Author To Discuss and Sign Latest Book



Alexandria author Brooke C. Stoddard will discuss and sign copies of his new book *World in the Balance: The Perilous Months of June-October 1940* at *The Hangar: Aviation Specialties*, 1325 King Street, Alexandria, Va., on Saturday, December 17 from 2:00PM to 4:00PM.

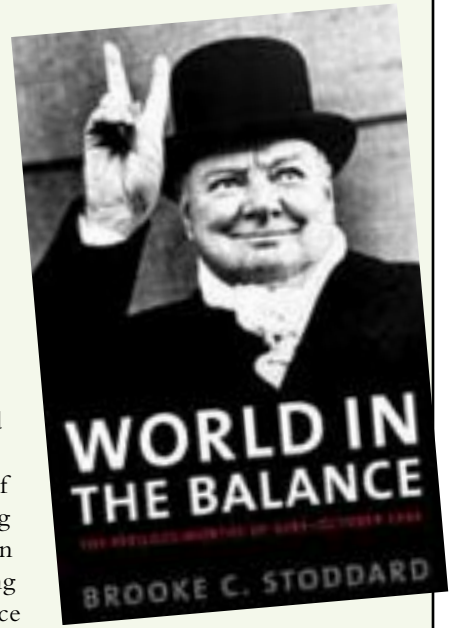
Owing to the aviation aspects of the Battle of Britain, Stoddard and *The Hangar: Aviation Specialties* are teaming up: *The Hangar* specializes in aviation memorabilia, clothing, and aircraft models, especially as they relate to World War II.

Stoddard is a former editor of *Military Heritage Magazine* as well as a former writer and editor at Time-Life Books and National Geographic. "I wrote this book about the Battle of Britain for Americans," he says, "because there are stories about the struggle Americans often over-

look. One is the attack of the British navy on the French fleet days after France's armistice with Germany so that French battleships would not fall to the Nazis. More than a thousand French sailors were killed."

The book also presents plenty of aviation-related material, including comparisons of British and German aircraft, the story of Hugh Dowding who masterminded Royal Air Force Fighter Command, and the development of radar just in time for the Nazi air invasion.

Stoddard has lived in Alexandria since 1979 and the Washington, D. C., area since 1973.



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City of Alexandria to Host Holiday Invitational Cheerleading Competition



The public is invited to attend the Alexandria Holiday Invitational Cheerleading Competition, scheduled for 11 a.m. on Saturday, December 17 at T.C. Williams High School, 3330 King Street. The competition features youth cheerleading teams from City recreation centers and other teams from the metropolitan area.

Tickets are available for purchase in advance and also at the door the day of the event. Tickets will be on sale from December 2 - December 15, at the Charles Houston, Cora Kelly, Patrick Henry and William Ramsay recreation centers and at the Recreation Services Division Office, located at 1108 Jefferson Street. Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$5 for ages 13 and older, \$2 for ages 6-12 and ages 5 and under are admitted free. Ticket prices at the door will be \$6 for ages 13 and older, \$3 for ages 6 - 12 and for ages 5 and under are admitted free.

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QUOTABLE:

“Why is Christmas just like a day at the office? You do all the work and the fat guy with the suit gets all the credit.”

-Anonymous



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St. Stephen's & St. Agnes Latin students attending the Virginia Junior Classical League state convention in Richmond

Latin Students Excel at State Convention

A talented group of classics students from St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria took home more than 50 awards at the Virginia Junior Classical League (VJCL) state convention, held in Richmond November 20-21. The annual convention brings together delegations from independent, public, and home schools across the state for competition and camaraderie. SSSAS 11th grade student Evan Draim won the position of VJCL president and was sworn in before more than 1600 delegates. He delivered the opening remarks of the final assembly and now serves as president of the statewide organization.

With a large delegation of 39 creative and enthusiastic Middle and Upper School students, Saints Latin won first place in



St. Stephen's & St. Agnes student Evan Draim (left) being sworn in as president of the Virginia Junior Classical League

Spirit in the Grand Delegation category during the convention. The Saints also won the VJCL Publicity contest, as well as the best article and most original publicity activity.

In academic awards, SSSAS students scored well and earned dozens of honors. Among them,

Draim won best-in-show in Roman History and Roman Life. In addition, he earned first place on five tests (Latin Literature, Grammar, Pentathlon, Roman History, and Roman Life) and fourth place on Greek.

Junior Brett Williams placed first in Derivatives, second

in Grammar and in Reading Comprehension Prose, fourth in Vocabulary, and second in Photography. Seventh grade student Kathryn Riggs placed fourth in Greek.

"It is amazing how many Latin students have availed themselves of countless opportunities for Classical enrichment," said Upper School Latin Teacher Ian Hochberg. "Latin is fortunate to have so many competitions, which serve as outlets for such enthusiasm, and to have so many students interested in this enrichment." Hochberg manages the St. Stephen's & St. Agnes Upper School Latin program and was the 2011 recipient of the Lurlene W. Todd Teacher of the Year Award from the Classical Association of Virginia.

The convention offers many

opportunities for creative and artistic expression related to the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. Among the art awards, sophomore Liza Freed earned first place and best-in-show in Sculpture for her bust of Diana, while freshman Zach Tilch's Hydra also placed first in Sculpture in his division, and Draim placed first in Dramatic Interpretation. Seventh grade student Courtney Tillman earned a first place award in Impromptu Art and second in Child's Books, and seventh grade student Nathan Pugh placed second in photography and cartoons. Freshman Joshua Reed earned second in Dramatic Interpretation and third in Child's Books, and seventh grade student Patrick Fullem placed fourth in Impromptu Art.

Fourth Grade Students Help Buy Toys for Sick Children

Fourth grade students at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria organized their own bake sale to buy toys for patients at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. this holiday season and then delivered the toys to the hospital. This is the 18th year of the program. Each December, the children turn their classrooms into bakeries for a day to raise money from the school community. They organize the baking, advertise the sale around school, decide how to price the items, make change, and roll the coins. Then they make a list of toys they'd like to buy, and their teachers purchase them with the bake sale proceeds.

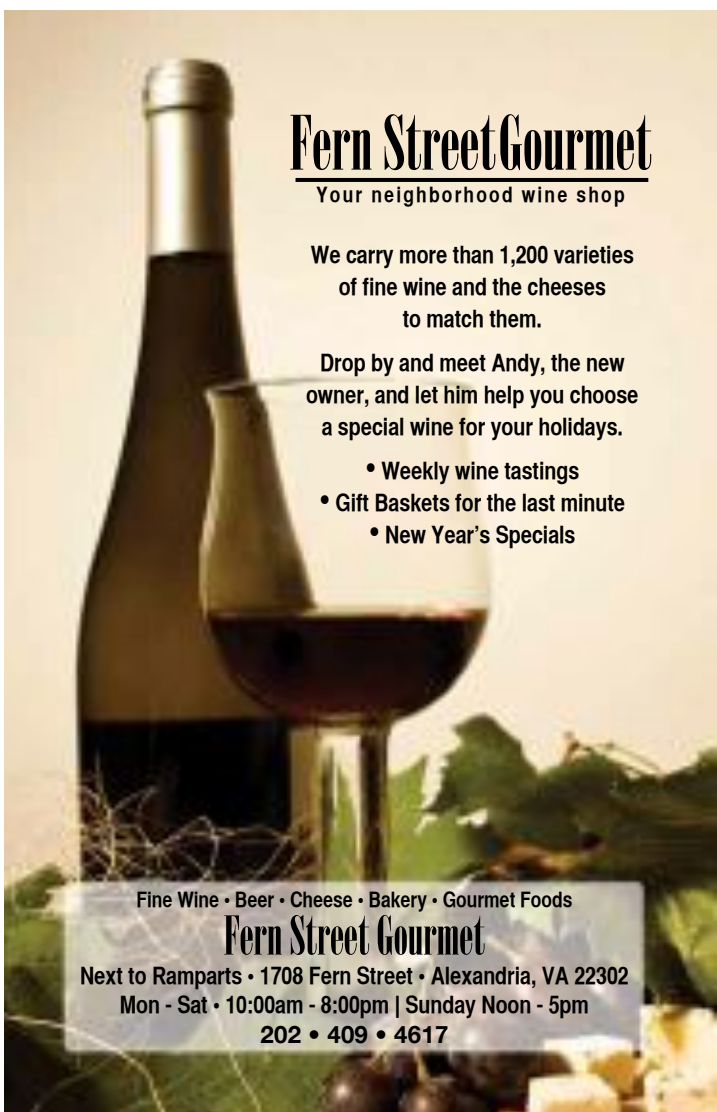
On December 9, the Lower School held an assembly with a representative from Children's National Medical Center and special guest mascot, "Dr. Bear." Immediately following the assembly, the fourth grade went to Children's National to deliver the toys around the Christmas tree in the lobby.

"The bake sale is a service-learning project in which every member of our Lower School community can participate," said SSSAS Fourth Grade Teacher Beth Barrow, co-creator of the annual program. "We love doing this project at holiday time, as it lets the students express the true spirit of the season through giving to others. We are so grateful for everyone's support!"

SSSAS will continue its service with the hospital later in the school year, when the fourth grade will make fleece blankets for infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and the fifth grade will perform a magic show for patients.



Fourth graders at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School bought toys for patients at Children's National Medical Center after raising money through a bake sale.



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PICK OF THE MONTH

Ass Reaper hot sauce will make you feel like the Grim Reaper came for a temporary visit! This sauce ranks at #20 on the ReimerSeeds.com Top 20 list of super hot sauces! It is a product from Costa Rica and distributed out of Texas. This fiery hot sauce has a great combination of flavors and heat. It is not for the normal over the counter hot sauce users.

Ass Reaper Hot Sauce is made with Habanero and Scotch Bonnet Peppers. Not only does it look good in your collection, but delicious on nachos and fajitas. I tried it on pizza and it automatically became one of my favorites.



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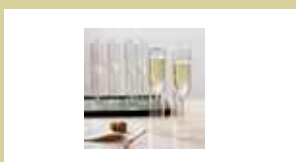
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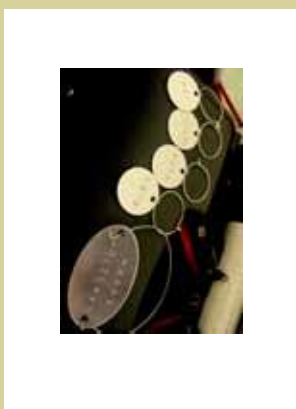
The Vixen Ten

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2. Inside-Out Champagne Flutes \$70 (set of two) – Way cool. MoMA Store (momastore.org)



3. Handstamped Holiday Wine Charms \$20- Set includes four wine charms hand stamped with the words love, joy, noel & merry. Wine tag is stamped "Happy Holidays." Shipped free and hand made. Use Holidays10 at check out and enjoy 10% off. Such a deal! Philanthropic Panda shop on Etsy www.etsy.com/shop/PhilanthropicPanda

4. Vacu Vin Stainless Steel Wine Saver Set \$16 – Boring, but appreciated. World Market, All major wine shops.



5. Keep Calm and Drink Wine print \$12 – Absolutely. A Drop of Golden Sun shop on Etsy www.etsy.com/shop/adropofgoldensun



6. Monogrammed Champagne Bucket \$34 – They will use it. Often. West Elm Stores www.westelm.com



7. Personalized Linen Cocktail Napkins \$25 (set of four) – Simple and chic Saks Fifth Avenue www.saksfifthavenue.com



8. Wine Carafe with Oak Stopper \$36 – It's a carafe. With an oak stopper. www.uncommongoods.com



9. Mingling Plate (set of four) \$24 – Now you don't have to choose between a plate of cheese and your wine. Pottery Barn

10. Laguiole Engraved Corkscrew from \$119 – These corkscrews are handmade in Laguiole, France and are simply stunning. Engrave your wine-oh's monogram or name on the handle for a lovely touch. www.customcurling.com

BY RYAN WEGMAN



Decanters and Vinturis: How to Breathe Without the Crystal Cost

Wine tips often involve purchasing products, an Olympian's assault on your kitchen or bizarre info impossible to repeat on a date (and therefore what the hell's the point if you can't impress?). Wineboy wine tips are tailored to meet the needs of real people that want more pleasure without the pain. "No pain, no gain." For the birds. And of course, email with any questions. The most precious will be published (with permission).

BREATHE! Oxygenators, aerators, Vinturis, decanters, call them by their brand or purpose, they baffle most people as yet another "wine-people exclusive, self-hatred inducing accessory". But they're a great idea for complex reds, though fun to use and no harm for simpler wines. Here's why: "Breathing" is exposing wine to oxygen and allowing the complex compounds that are the physical make-up of juice to breakdown and in the process turn, like a flower from bud to brown, into a bright, glowing beauty. And like a flower that's bloomed, there is the 'opening', 'peak' and 'station wagon ride a la National Lampoon's Family Vacation to death'. The process of "letting a wine breathe" adds to the pleasure and enjoyment of most reds, generally those of the more tannic, bolder and aged variety. I own multiple of all of the above as I enjoy their practical purpose as well as the aesthetic nature of a crystal decanter on a baroque monster dining table. They are expensive. Aerators average about \$40 and decanters start at the same price and can reach into the thousands of dollars.

What you can do: Remove the cork from your wine bottle and pour enough wine into your glass to expose the shoulder of the bottle (where the neck meets the curve -- until the wine is about 3 in. from the mouth of the bottle). For most reds (I do not recommend decanting or aerating Pinot Noir given its delicate aromas), I'd let the wine rest in the open bottle for about 20 min. and then taste. It's fun to taste what you've poured into your glass immediately after exposing the shoulder to compare at the 20 min. mark. For wines that are older, beyond 5-6 years, particularly blends and 'big' Cabernets, you can wait anywhere from 30 min - an hour. For some wines, I've waited beyond four hours and the wine still needed more time. But don't worry: only the Chinese can afford those these days.

Sprinkle, sprinkle, all those little sparkles, sparkles. Crystal tears, golden bubbles, I love how you twinkle. -A morning prayer to Champagne

Formerly a wine buyer for Whole Foods Market before devoting himself exclusively to Wineboy Wegman, he has also managed two wine retailers, was director of operations for the French Wine Society, an international trade organization and is a regular columnist for local publications. He began his career as the associate wine buyer and wine specialist for Dean and Deluca of Georgetown and is certified through the Wine and Spirits Education Trust in London. He is from Naples, FL.
www.wineboywegman.com

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Lyric has "overcome many of the problems associated with traditional hearing aids" — The New York Times

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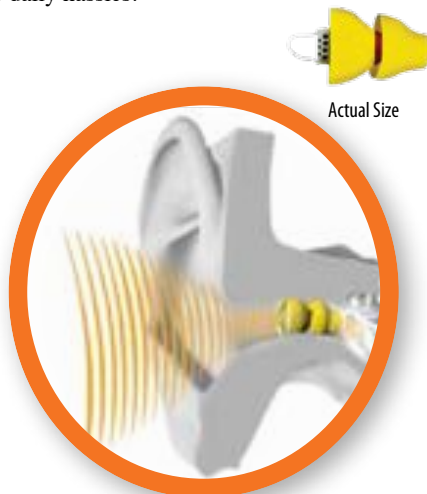
People have a love-hate relationship with traditional hearing aids. While regaining their hearing is a huge plus, many are frustrated with the limitations and maintenance that comes with these devices. In fact, many decide to just live with their hearing loss rather than put up with the daily hassles.

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Loaded on a flat bed truck the U.S. Capitol Christmas tree could be seen at the Mount Vernon Community School.

U. S. Capitol Christmas Tree visits Del Ray

The Nation's U.S. Capitol Christmas tree made a stop at Alexandria's Del Ray neighborhood for all to view. Along with the tree an enormous Christmas card was attached for visitors to sign. The 63-foot, Sierra White Fir tree was donated from the State of California. It will make a 4,500 mile voyage before ending up in the front of the U.S. Capitol.

PHOTOS BY HARRY MERRITT



Alana Harrington holding her daughter Sydney, autograph the Christmas card to be included with the tree for presentation at the U.S. Capitol.

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EVENTS

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"A Broadway Christmas Carol"

Thru December 18
 MetroStage
 1201 North Royal Street
 Alexandria
 703/548-9044
metrostage.org
 Created by Kathy Feininger, the show tells the story of the classic Dickens' tale with uproarious parodies of favorite Broadway show tunes. Laugh out loud, roll in the aisles funny. A holiday tradition returns. Thurs and Fri at 8, Sat at 3 & 8, and Sun at 3 & 7. Tickets \$45-50 (students \$25).



Dreamworks' Merry Madagascar in ICE!

Now thru January 8
 National Harbor
 301/965-4000
nationalharbor.com
 Two million pounds of ice sculpted into scenes from the famous movie. Handcrafted by artisans from as far away as China, who worked an entire month in 12-hour shifts. Adult ticket prices range from \$25 to \$35; children ages 4-12 are \$20 to \$30; seniors age 62 and older are \$19 to \$24; military adults are \$22 to \$32; children of military are \$17 to \$27; and children under 3 are free. Ticket prices range depending on the day of the week.



Colonial English Handbell Ringers Perform

December 18
 The Lyceum
 201 South Washington Street
 Alexandria
 703/746-4994
alexandriahistory.org
 Enjoy your favorite holiday music with the Colonial English Handbell Ringers, now in their 20th season, will give two performances with the first beginning at 2 p.m. and the second, a repeat performance, at 4 p.m. Limited free parking is available. FREE!

FIRST NIGHT ALEXANDRIA

First Night Alexandria

December 31, 2011
 Durant Arts Center
 1605 Cameron Street
 Alexandria
 703/746-3301
firstnightalexandria.org
 Second Annual Fun Hunt: 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 Kick-off Event at Durant Arts Center: 5 p.m.
 100 Live Performances throughout Old Town: 7 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.
 Multimedia Fireworks Finale at George Washington Masonic Memorial: 12 midnight
 \$15 before December 21; \$20 after. Children 12 and under are free. Admission badges may be purchased online through December 25. Badges can be purchased in person at the Alexandria Visitors Center at Ramsay House, 221 King Street. On December 31, all First Night venues will have badges for sale beginning 15 minutes prior to the first performance. Admission badges will also be available beginning at noon on December 31 at the Durant Arts Center, 1605 Cameron Street.



"A Christmas Carol"

Now thru December 18
 Little Theatre of Alexandria
 600 Wolfe Street
 703/683-0496
littletheatre.org
 LTA rings in the holiday season with a return of the classic by Charles Dickens. Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly Victorian humbug, travels with ghostly guides through Christmas past, present, and future to find the true meaning of the holidays. Complete with special effects, Victorian carols, and Tiny Tim, A Christmas Carol is a must for the entire family.

HOLIDAY FOLLIES

"Holiday Follies Cabaret"

Now thru December 23
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"Hairspray"

Now thru January 29
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 571/527-1860
signature-theatre.org

When she wins a coveted spot on "The Corny Collins Show," Baltimore's most popular teen dance program, the high school loser with the big heart, big personality and big hair proves everyone wrong and becomes a local TV celebrity. It seems like Tracy will have it all - the eye of heartthrob Link Larkin, the Miss Teenage Hairspray crown, even a modeling gig with Mr. Pinky's Hefty Hideaway. But is segregated Baltimore ready to embrace her demand for racial integration? And will her larger-than-life mother ever leave the house? Tickets \$41.





You want to know about Small Claims Court?



It wasn't a loan your honor. He said it was a gift.

Last month I indicated that I would discuss the Small Claims Court as it exists in Virginia. It is part of the General District Court and has a jurisdictional limit in the amount not to exceed \$5,000.00.

Claims in this Court shall be commenced by filing of a "Warrant-In-Debt -Small Claims", which must be served on the Defendant. Mailing to the Defendant is in and of itself not sufficient service. This requires service by the Sheriff, private process server or any individual over the age of 18 who is not a convicted felon. Plaintiffs may not serve their cases themselves. Plaintiffs in this court may receive information promulgated and distributed by the Committee on General District Courts which is instructional and helps explain the Court on issues such as courtroom procedures and case preparation amongst other items.

The date for the parties to return for a hearing shall be contained on the "War-

rant-In-Debt -Small Claims". However, the hearing must be held at least five days after the service of the Warrant-In-Debt. By agreement of the parties or a Judge's Order, the date may be changed.

It is very important to note that the law states that all parties shall be represented by "themselves". This is a gift from Santa Claus since here they will not even *let you* have a lawyer. In fact, our Virginia Law states that an attorney may be involved here (in this court) only if he is representing himself in a case which involves his own claim.

However, a person who is *not* a lawyer, but qualifies as an owner, general partner, officer or an employee can represent their own businesses.

In addition, a party (Plaintiff or Defendant) who a Judge believes cannot understand or properly participate in his

own case may be represented by someone who is a friend or relative and he demonstrates that he is familiar with that person's case. Remember in this Court he cannot be an attorney for this purpose.

This is a gift from Santa Claus since here they will not even let you have a lawyer.

There is one problem regarding this Small Claims Court. This is, that at any point - a Defendant has a right to "remove" or switch to the "regular" General District Court at any time prior to the decision by the Judge and for that purpose this Defendant may have a lawyer. Remember that in General District Court, in my opinion you should have a lawyer.

The best way, of course, to prevent this from happening is for the parties to agree ahead of time that they will at least let a decision be rendered by the

Judge in the Small Claims Court.

Also, note that in this Court the Judge is to conduct the trial in an informal manner and will not be strict or even follow the strict rules of practice, procedure, pleading or evidence.

As always, however, the decision in this Court may be appealed to our higher Court (Circuit Court) where the case will be heard *De Novo* (all over again and a whole new show). In the Circuit Court you can even have a jury hear the case. We will talk about the Circuit Court next month. Happy Holidays to you all.

Christopher Paul Schewe is a former City of Alexandria attorney and has been practicing over 32 years specializing in personal injury and DUI/DWI cases. If you have a question for Chris, please email him at cpschewe@verizon.net or call his office at 216 South Patrick Street, Alexandria at 703-684-8200.

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CIVIL WAR SERIES | PART 7

DECEMBER 1861 — NO GUIDING STAR



BY CHUCK HAGEE

Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." A nice thought. But, hardly apropos to December 1861 as the Civil War entered its first winter with many soldiers away from home and family for the first time over the holiday season.

In fact, December 1861 proved to be one of the most contentious periods for the Union cause. President Abraham Lincoln was at odds with his newly named Commanding General George McClellan's timidity in pressing troops into battle.

The Congress was frustrated with both Lincoln and McClellan and began to doubt the Commander-in-Chief's ability to lead. As Congress seems prone to do in such situations, the Senate established a committee known as the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. It produced nothing but grandstanding.

On top of everything else, the British government had dispatched two troop ships to Canada in preparation for entering the war on the side of the Confederacy. Their ire was raised by the actions of U.S. Naval Captain Wilkes of the USS Trent in stopping a British vessel on the high seas to remove two Confederate emissaries and bring them back to the United States against their will.

That happened at the end of November. The international confrontation was then compounded when the USS Santiago de Cuba stopped the British ship Eugenia Smith on December 7, 1861, and removed Confederate pur-

chasing agent J.W.Zacharie.

On December 18, Britain's US Ambassador Lord Lyons demanded the "immediate release" of John Slidell and James Murray Mason, the two Confederate emissaries removed from the Trent. If this did not happen in 10 days Britain threatened to break off diplomatic relations with the United States and formally recognize the Confederacy.

Lyons met with U.S. Secretary of State Stewart on December 19 and again on the 21st. It became apparent to both Stewart and Lincoln that the United States could well be fighting two wars simultaneously -- the Confederacy and, the far more potent adversary Great Britain, which had the largest naval force in the world at that time.

As with all wars, money was also a prime concern. The U.S. Treasury had estimated that the Civil War could be adequately financed for up to two years, depending on battle and supply circumstances. Beyond that the U.S. faced substantial financial hardship.

Again Congress acted with their own Christmas gift to the American people. On December 24, 1861, they passed a series of new duties on tea, coffee, sugar and what they considered "luxury goods."

With all this, Lincoln called a cabinet meeting for Christmas Day. The prime focus was how to deal with the so-called "Trent Affair" and Mason and Slidell. The result was that on December 26, it was announced that the Confederate emissaries would be released and turned over to Lord Lyons. That occurred on December 30 -- in time for a New Year's Eve celebration in Richmond, capital of the Confederacy.

They were subsequently placed on a British ship to complete their journey to England. Trent's Captain Wilkes, who had originally been hailed as a hero by Congress and many northern citizens, became the fall guy when it was also announced that he "had acted without the knowledge of the U.S. Government."

On Christmas night, after a hard day of Washington politics, Lincoln hosted a holiday White House gathering. Christmas was not yet an official holiday. That did not happen until five years after The Civil War ended.

Unlike the cessation of hostilities on the battlefields of World War I on Christmas Eve and throughout Christmas Day, the American Civil War en-

joyed no reprieve during that season. Military actions did not cease on December 25, 1861.

On that day, a blockade runner was caught by the U.S. Navy and earlier, there were skirmishes in Maryland and Virginia. One was known as the Battle of Dranesville -- a confrontation between Union Generals George Meade and Edward O.C. Ord and one of the Confederacy's most recognized field commanders J.E.B. Stuart.

It began on December 6 when Meade and his brigade of Pennsylvania Reserves moved toward a farm in the Dranesville area to arrest southern sympathizers for alleged murder. Meade had Ord protect his flank to the east.

Although nothing happened that day, Meade learned that Confederate foragers planned to be in Dranesville on December 20. Based on that information General George McCall ordered Ord to stop the Confederate troops from their mission. Dranesville, located on what was then known as the Alexandria-Leesburg Pike, some 16 miles from the District of Columbia, was a critical location.

Ord's orders were to "drive back the enemy pickets" and "procure a supply of forage." As Ord advanced on Dranesville, Union scouts spotted Confederate cavalry and smoke coming from the area of Centreville. Ord called for support and McCall answered by advancing his Division.

Stuart had a force of approximately 3,000 composed of cavalry, artillery and infantry. But, he had no backup as did the Union forces. Stuart made his move at a key intersection on Leesburg Pike in an attempt to cut Ord's forces from communications. An artillery battle ensued. Both Stuart and Ord had the same objective -- take a key farmhouse strategically located between the two opposing forces.

Ord's troops got there first and secured their position by calling up reinforcements. Stuart had no such reinforcements to rely upon and therefore called off his attack retreating to Confederate lines with his forage and wagon train intact -- thus ending the most significant battle of the December 1861 holiday season.

But, that first Civil War Christmas was probably best summed up not by battle but rather the lack of battle and the humanism that prevails even in the most destitute of times down through history. The scene was a gathering of Confederate soldiers on Christmas Day 1861 encamped near Bull Run.

A group of officers and soldiers had gathered at Stuart's Tavern on Little River Turnpike, according to an account by one of the soldiers, W.F.

Shippey. In addition to Shippey, the group included Captain James H. Drake, Captain Irving, Lieutenant Larrick, Dave and Gash Drake, William Guy and William Meade.

As Shippey recalled in his account many years later, that Christmas day was "cold, dark and dreary." But they enjoyed "the bright fire from the old fashioned fireplace" and the unbridled hospitality of the inn keeper who was preparing a Christmas feast for them.

As combat veterans they were never completely without a sense of readiness. As Shippey wrote, "The rule of our lives in the front under "Jeb" Stuart, was vigilance, and on this occasion it was not relaxed." Their horses were tied up "at the front fence, ready to mount and away."

They sang and told stories as they enjoyed a true Christmas dinner of turkey with all the fixings, "interspersed with occasional libation to the Shrine of Bacchus, represented by a large bowl of punch and an egg nog." The hours passed "merrily," as Shippey recalled.

Then "a solitary horseman" appeared. He was from another Confederate battalion making the rounds of picket duty and had stopped by to warm himself by the tavern's fireplace. His name was Captain Atkins from Major Wheat's battalion, according to Shippey.

Learning that Wheat was nearby, Shippey and Meade went to search for him and bring him to the Christmas meal. They were successful and all enjoyed a full evening of song and merriment as well as a bountiful dinner and spirits.

That was Christmas 1861. By Christmas 1862, Wheat had fallen in the Battle of Cold Harbor in June 1862; Drake fell at the head of the Old First, at Falling Waters, on the retreat from Gettysburg, according to Shippey's account. "The others did their part, and some laid their heads upon the lap of earth, to fame unknown, and in other commands," he noted.

"I do not know that this will meet the eye of any of those who met at Stuart's Tavern that Christmas day, or even that any of them survive the storms of twenty years; but should it do so, I feel assured that they will recall with pleasure this little episode in our camp life," Shippey wrote in his reflections on Christmas 1861.

That was the year the Christmas tree made its first appearance in the camps of Union and Confederate soldiers longing for the warmth of a home hearth. A Christmas wish that would not be realized until Christmas 1865. And, for many thousands, North and South alike, never again.

A Visual Tour of Civil War Alexandria at The Lyceum on January 25

Encore Lecture by Author Wally Owen Includes 3-D and Rare Civil War Images

See what Alexandria looked like during the Civil War through the eyes of photographers who documented it! The Office of Historic Alexandria will sponsor a special Civil War 150th Commemoration lecture on Wednesday, January 25, 2012, at The Lyceum, entitled "A Visual Tour of Civil War Alexandria." Wally Owen, Assistant Director of Fort Ward Museum and co-author of *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses*

of Washington, will present an illustrated lecture featuring 3-D images and rare photographs, including many that have never been published. This presentation is an encore of the sold-out lecture Owen gave earlier this fall.

Meet some of the people behind the lens who are responsible for Alexandria's rich Civil War photographic heritage, such as Andrew J. Russell and Egbert Guy Fowx. Also learn about the challenges that con-

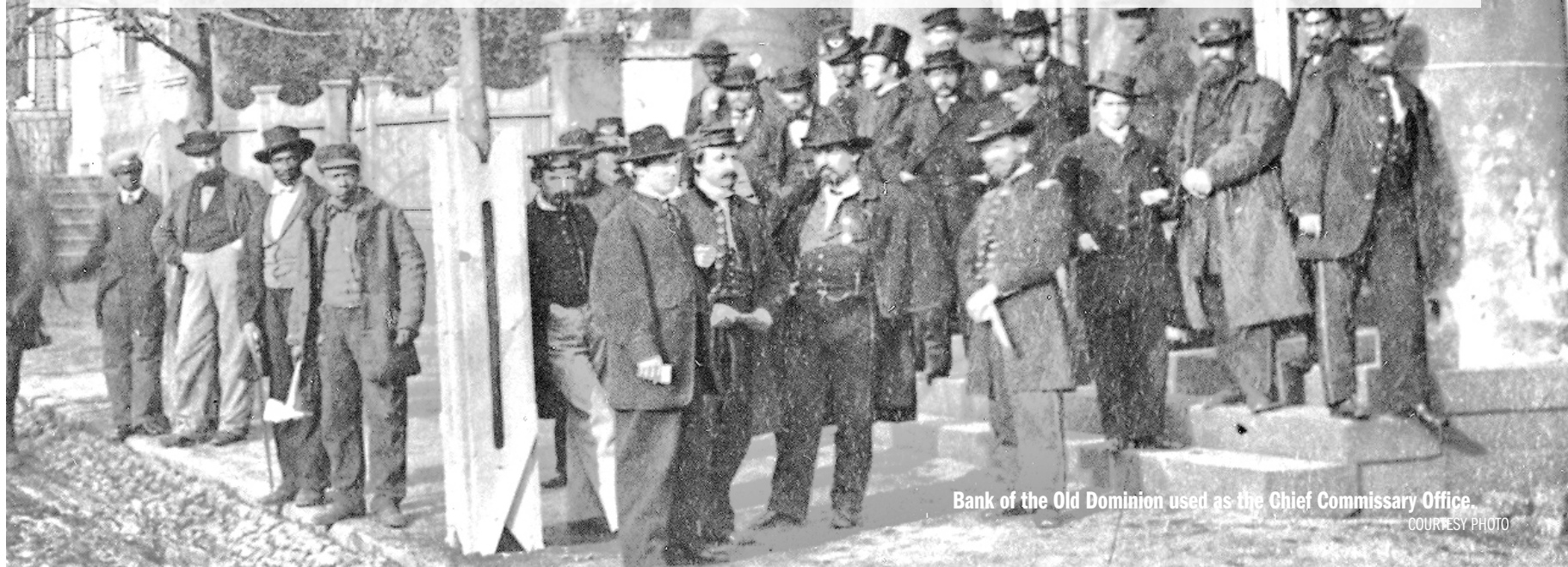
temporary historians face in studying these images, and how technological advancements can be used to bring these 19th-century photographs to life.

The lecture begins at 7:30 p.m., and tickets are \$10 per person. Reservations are recommended due to space limitations. Tickets are available by calling The Lyceum at 703.746.4994 or through the online shop at www.alexandriahistory.org. Should this event be rescheduled

due to winter weather, the snow date will be Wednesday, February 1, 2012.

The Lyceum, Alexandria's History Museum, is located at 201 South Washington Street in Old Town Alexandria and is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information, visit www.alexandriahistory.org or call 703.746.4994.



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COURTESY PHOTO

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▲ Treasurers from page 23

and luster. Because the enamel is mixed by hand at the moment of application, no two pieces are identical, thereby creating a true original. It is a gift anyone would cherish as a keepsake.

For those who really want to splurge, there is the one and one-half inch 1800 United States Silver Dollar at \$4,800. Issued just one year after Washington's death, it features Lady Liberty, 13 stars, and the date on one side and the American Eagle with E Pluribus Unum on the other. It comes with a certificate of authenticity.

The Shops also feature many gifts for children. This year's hot item is the complete line of American Girl books that vary in price depending on size. Sale of the dolls is restricted to American Girl shops.

What is available is a stuffed toy of Washington's Christmas camel at \$10.95 as well as "Bo" the Presidential pup and The Liberty Cat. There is also an ornament featuring the Christmas camel.

Speaking of ornaments, no visitor to The Shops during the holidays should leave without the annual official Mount Vernon ornament. This year's edi-

tion is particularly beautiful and meaningful in that it depicts the famous Arnold Friberg painting entitled "The Prayer at Valley Forge" on one side and "the snow kissed West Front of the Mansion" on the other.

The images are on porcelain ovals surrounded by eight point decorative framing with a 24kt gold finish. It is approximately three and one quarter inches wide and three inches tall and includes a red ribbon for hanging. It comes in a beautiful gift box with an educational enclosure card. And, the best part is that the price has been maintained at \$18.95.

Another specialty this year in the ornament category is "The White Dove of Peace" at \$9.95. As a companion piece to The White Dove of Peace tree topper, this four by three and a quarter inch ornament has the same crackled look as the tree topper which is modeled after the weathervane perched atop the Mansion cupola.

Whether it is books, articles of clothing, china, silver, toys, food, beverages, art, home accessories, or a myriad other possibilities, they can all be found at The Shops at Mount Vernon -- not only during the Christmas season but also throughout the year.

QUOTABLE:

No self-respecting mother would run out of intimidations on the eve of a major holiday.

--Erma Bombeck



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BY GINGER RODRIGUEZ



It's Complicated? Not Really!

Have you watched the Nancy Meyers movie, *It's Complicated*? It's a romantic comedy, which stars Meryl Streep, Steve Martin, and Alec Baldwin. If you haven't - it is a MUST. Clients keep referring to the living room in the movie and wanting a similar look, so we got the scoop on the products.. just for you!

After intensive research, we determined that the overall price for the living room was a gazillion dollars. Naturally, "Hollywood" can spend that, but you don't have to. We pared it down to the main factors that make this room so inviting, and we found very reasonably-priced alternatives for you!

1. Chunky, Hunky Coffee Table

Let's start with that "grounding" coffee table in the center of the room. The one in the movie set is from Lucca Antiques, for \$6,500.00. A bit too rich for your blood? No problem!

OUR IS: Custom size: 50"x50"x19" made by an amazing carpenter and great guy, Bryan Black, located in

Waynesboro, Virginia. Bryan's great grandfather (12 generations) was John Alden, the ship's carpenter on the Mayflower. NOT kidding! It's made from reclaimed white oak from a barn in Weyers Cave, VA, which was built around 1880's. He didn't use screws, nails, or glue. It's not just a table it's a story that will last generations to come. conceptscreated.com, 540.447.4695

2. The Sofa

We estimate the cost at about \$6,000.00 for their beautiful, linen slip covered sofa. You can slip right out of that expense and go for....

OURS IS: We found and love our gorgeous, affordable, comfortable Loreiei Sofa from SimplicitySofa.com, 800-813-2889, for way less! It has a solid oak frame, comfy cushions, kid/pet friendly fabric, and the neat thing is it comes in two boxes and is super easy to assemble for \$1,049.00 Twillo Stone, Slipcover is \$399.00 Geo Pearl.

3. FIRE PLACE

Nothing creates a cozy focal point better than a fireplace. If you have one, great. If not, fake it! We found a 54"

wide VENICE ELECTRIC FIREPLACE SUITE, at \$1599 (\$500 off while supplies last). We all love Horchow, but that's the cost of just their mantle-no fire, no heat!

OURS IS: We planned a day trip to Richmond to visit the Victorian Fireplace Shop, gascoals.com, 804-355-1688 for their HUGE selection of "faux" fireplace options. Electric is the way to go for us busy Northern Virginians; it's super-convenient and there's no messy installation process - just unbox your fireplace, plug it in and enjoy instant ambiance!

4. Chair

The Set Designer found this one by George Smith at \$5,000.00. **OURS IS:** Hand-made chairs from Arthur Bailey Co \$1,100.

5. Bright Orange Chair

We really love this look, and the punch of paprika is... delish, but only the incredibly brave would invest a portfolio on an orange chair. You don't have to. Two ideas for this: Buy a simple, cotton slip cover and a box of orange dye or.... (sounds crazy but trust me) buy a reasonably-priced version of the chair in white or beige and



Living room designed by Ginger Rodriguez, and intern Luc Thia.

PHOTO BY DANIEL BLOOM OF WWW.DANIELCBLOOM.COM

deploy upholstery spray paint! You'll find "Burnt Orange" at SimplySpray.com

6. Accessories

Great texture, interest and whimsy is introduced with the enormous glass bowl of artichokes... porcelain artichokes, that is! You can opt for: Porcelain artichokes for a mere \$175.00 each (we DO hope they come with a vinegrette for that price!)... or

OURS ARE: Jus-as-great-looking Artichokes \$19.99 from CountryDoor.com, 1-800-341-9477

7. Floor Covering

This Sisal Rug is a great look that can work just about anywhere. We "canvassed" the internet and found a very reasonable option: SisalRugs.com Every rug is made to order, even standard sizes. We chose Size: 14'-4"x 14'-4", Style: Sienna Brasilia Sisal, Extra-wide binding in Honey color, blind stitched for just \$1744, and Freight is FREE. 888-613-1335

8. WALL COLOR

Ahhh... paint. Wonderful, never expensive, totally "customizable"... paint. It's by Benjamin Moore Tapestry Beige.

9. Art

Now, I grant you that the Mitchell Johnson landscape

over the fireplace mantle does bring all the right colors into focus... and for \$4,500... it should! But for the somewhat more sensible cost of \$193.98 you could also choose Embudo Cliffs or Monterey Cypress, available at EncoreEditions.com on stretched canvas, sent right to your door!

10. Throws

Final touches... for snuggling, napping and adding more texture to the room, we found BedfordCottage.com throws in indigo & mandarin at only \$69.99. Great rich color, nice and cozy, and easy on the budget! Add a few pillows in browns, beige, and flax with bright navy and orange.

Invite the girls over for wine, cheese, conversation, fun... and if a Baldwin happens to drop-in, give the guy a chance!

A Virginia native, Ginger shares her experiences: some personal, some professional, in her light-hearted Blog Coffee With Ginger (www.coffeewithginger.com) and teaches monthly design seminars (The Alexandria Design Dilemma Meetup Group) FREE to the community. She lives in Alexandria with her husband and two sons. Have a design dilemma or question you want answered in the Zebra? Email: info@westbayinteriors.com.



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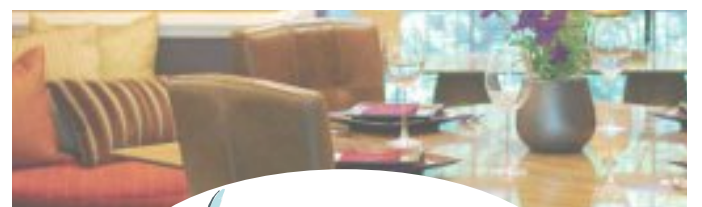


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These furry friends (and many others) are looking for loving homes ...



Barbara - (Female) - Available
 Breed: Domestic Short Hair-black Mix
 Age: 17 Months
 History: Cross-post
 Description: Barbara is one of eight kittens that were born to Momma Anna on July 15, 2010 in West Virginia. Barbara

and her alphabet siblings (Carol, Donna, Ethel, Faye, Gertrude, Henry and Irving) were given up when their owners were given a 10-day eviction notice because their landlord had not paid the mortgage on their rented house. The cats were rescued by a Maryland foster, who drove to West Virginia to pick up Momma Anna and her eight kittens. All have been adopted but Barbara and four siblings. Barbara was the "runt" of the litter, but received more attention and as a result is very friendly and loves to be brushed. She has a small swatch of white hair on her chest, is litter trained, fully vetted and spayed. She is playful and is familiar with dogs, as her fosters have two of their own whom she sees regularly.

Chili - (Male) - Available

Breed: Pomeranian / Chihuahua Mix
 Age: 9 Years
 History: Owner Release
 Description: Chili is a Pomm/Chi mix. He was given up because his owner passed away. He is housetrained and very sweet. Chili is good with other dogs. He has not been around young children. He loves being held.



Chase - (Male)-- Available

Breed: Rottweiler Mix
 Age: 5 Months
 History: Shelter



Description: I'm Chase, and my brother Ceasar and I are available! The other 6 of our litter mates have all found their forever homes. Ceasar and I have gotten our last set of shots so our foster Mom has been taking us on walks with a collar and leash. We are doing great... I guess that's because we have great temperaments and we are very intel-

ligent and calm, well as calm as two male puppies can be, But really, we are smart playful and healthy.

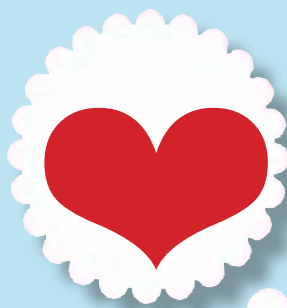
Steve (Male) - Available

Breed: Beagle / Australian Shepherd Mix
 Age: 15 Weeks

History: Shelter
 Description: Hi, I'm Steve and I'm the last puppy out of a litter of 4 VERY cute puppies. I'm adorable and I'm the biggest of the litter. But I'm also the shyest. I live with a bunch of big dogs and



love them. But I'm still a bit shy around humans. I'm really well socialized with dogs and am playful and super sweet. I'm about three months old and weigh about 20 lbs. I'll probably only get to about 45-50 lbs. If you would like to meet me, please send an email and we can set up a time to meet.



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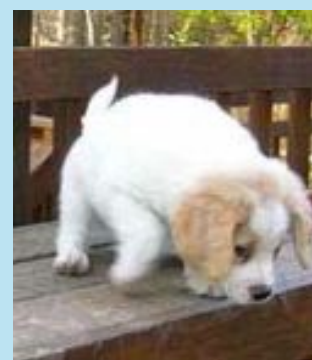
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Doughboy (Male) - Available

Breed: Terrier Mix
 Age: 12 Weeks
 History: Shelter
 Description: Littermates Dyna-mite, Dixie, Doughboy, and Danny are now available for adoption. I'm Doughboy and aren't I just so cute!

Garrett - (Male) - Available

Breed: Chesapeake Bay Retriever Mix
 Age: 13 Weeks
 Weight: 30 Pounds

History: Shelter
 Description: Garrett is a newly arrived gorgeous male Chesapeake Retriever mix who is approximately 30lbs at just 12 weeks old, so needless to say he is going to be a big dog. He has a thick, soft,



curly coat that is various shades of caramel with black markings, specifically around his face, neck and tail and heart-melting big brown eyes. He enjoys his toys and chewing on his bone and some unapproved items, such as slippers, but is easy to correct. He is very playful and curious of his surroundings, and is well behaved in the house for such a young guy and will gladly cuddle next to you or on your lap when it is time for a nap. He does well in his crate during the day for short periods of time and throughout the night which is putting him on the right track for being housetrained.



Honey - (Female) - Available

Breed: Beagle Mix
 Age: 17 Months
 Weight: 20 Pounds
 History: Shelter
 Description: This beautiful little beagle mix (20 lbs) was found on

the side of the road with her six newborn puppies. She is a wonderful mom, not wanting to leave her puppies for a second, but definitely prefers children to adults. When the foster's children are near, her tail is wagging and she is quite happy. She's so sweet she was instantly named "Honey" by the foster's daughter. Honey is still very tentative and shy with adults. Honey's puppies have all found their forever homes and now Honey is available for adoption.

Sadie - (Female) - Available

Breed: Dachshund Mix
 Age: 2 Years
 History: Shelter

Description: Sadie is as sweet and trustful as can be. She is about 2 years old and the proud mom of nine adorable puppies. Sadie is housebroken, good with kids and social with dogs. During the short breaks from her maternal duty, only if pups are well fed and asleep, she likes cuddling in bed



with us or a moment of fresh air outside. Sadie has been with us for four weeks now and she continues to show a delightful personality, lovely with everybody and particularly patient with kids of all ages. While being a quiet and relaxed dog, at the sight of the leash she bursts in excitement and is ready to go with you for new outside adventures. She is an ideal pet companion who deserves a new chance of happiness with a loving family she can call her own.

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