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LEANN CROY
OFFICE MANAGER/CSR

PH: 540-864-6688
TEXT: 540-486-2970

leann@guthrieinsurance.net
www.guthrieinsuranceva.com
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PSA lifts boil water alert for local customers

Bonnie Cranmer
Contributing writer

On July 3, just seven days after the initial warning was publicized, the Virginia Department of Health lifted the boil water notice for the Craig-New Castle Public Service Authority. The Department of Health did a Level 2 assessment of PSA facilities which revealed no visible evidence of a contamination source. Recommendations were made to the PSA for reducing the potential risk for cross contamination during water testing which may cause a false positive for system contamination.

The Virginia Department of Health is requiring that the PSA install

testing stations designed to limit cross contamination risk. In addition, the PSA is to purchase a backup chlorination pump in the event the existing system goes offline. These requirements are to be completed by Aug. 1, as required by the Department of Health.

Local water quality is important for the health of the community. Residents can request an annual water quality report or consumer confidence report from the local water supplier. In the report submitted to the Craig County Board of Supervisors in May 2023, for the previous year 2022, it states the following: "Your drinking water is groundwater obtained from two drilled wells. Water from the

wells is chlorinated by adding a weak bleach solution. Water is then pumped through the distribution piping to a storage tank." As part of the source water assessments completed by the Virginia Department of Health in 2022, it was determined that the wells may be susceptible to contamination because they are located in an area that promotes migration of contaminants with land use activities of concern.

Craig County has a mix of public water from the Craig-New Castle PSA, private wells, and springs throughout the county. Home water filtration systems are available, from a point-of-use filter on the faucet, to pitchers and bottles that filter contaminants, to under the sink and whole house

systems. People with health conditions such as immune systems weakened by medications or chemotherapy need to take special precautions with drinking water. Finding the right system for the health of your household is essential for water safety.

The Virginia Department of Health has inspected the treatment and testing facility, and has notified the PSA that tests show that the tap water is safe to drink as of July 3. It is recommended to run water to flush the pipes in your home before using your tap water after any safety situation. Learn more about drinking water in Virginia from the Department of Health at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/drinking-water>.

Craig County celebrates July 4th in style



Fun was had by all, and the Craig County spirit was shared with the tourism commission providing free stickers detailing the animals on the unique mural on the farmers market wall. The public was invited to name the animals, deer, eagle, bear and cardinal. Future opportunities to get one of the stickers will be at the mural grand opening in August.



PHOTOS BY BONNIE CRANMER

With all the preparations by Craig County community members, July 4th was expected to be quite an event. It ended up being much more than was expected. The Craig Valley Chapter NSDAR organized the 3rd Annual Craig County Independence Day Parade with the help of a multitude of volunteers. Families, local businesses, church groups and community organizations gathered to participate with floats, cars decorated in red, white and blue and a patriotic demonstration of what the July 4th holiday means. The road was secured by local police and community volunteers. A long line of floats, cars, bikes and even a golf cart followed the decorated John Deere tractor down the parade route. People lined Route 311 from the fairgrounds to Main Street, where the parade turned into a real celebration. The newly opened farmers market was buzzing with vendors and community organizations sharing the best of Craig County. Music filled the air from the "Tuesday Night Music Jammers."



A vintage John Deere tractor led the July 4th parade.

See Additional parade photos page 2

Craig County adds new farms, per 2022 Census of Agriculture

The recent release of some of the 2022 Census of Agriculture data indicates Virginia is trending with the nation in terms of fewer farms and less farm acreage than in 2017, when the previous census was conducted.

In 2022 there were 38,995 farms in the commonwealth compared to 43,225 in 2017. Farm acreage was 7.3 million in 2022, down from almost 7.8 million in 2017. The agriculture census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.

In Virginia, the number of small and medium farms—those under 1,000 acres—all decreased in numbers. But farms from 1,000 to 5,000 or more acres increased slightly—from 1,340 in 2017 to 1,367 five years later.

Nationally, the number of farms and farm acreage also decreased from 2017 to 2022. According to the 2022 census, there were 141,733 fewer farms in 2022 than in 2017. The number of farm acres fell to 880 million, a loss of more than 20 million acres in five years.

Craig County bucked the trend a little by adding seven farms to its total, moving from 179 in 2017 to 186 in 2022.

The county also reported an additional 2,459 acres in farmland. The average size of a Craig County farm in 2022 was 247 acres, also an increase from 243 acres reported in 2017.

"I am surprised that we have a gain of 7 farms here in the county," Mary Hunter, member of the Craig County Farm Bureau Board, wrote in an email. "My take on that is that these are mostly small homestead or hobby farms as I am not aware of any major farms that have been added recently. We have gone from 3 dairy farms down to 1 which is a major loss to the county and farming industry."

Local farmers deal in cattle mostly, with 114 farms reporting cattle, both beef and milking cows, as inventory. The Census, which dates to 2022, reports 5 farms with milk cows in Craig County, most likely small family farms and not significant dairy operations. County farmers also sell hogs, sheep, and poultry.

Most of Craig County's farms are family owned, and range from 7 farms that are less than 10 acres to 3 farms that encompass 1,000 acres or more, according to the 2022 numbers. Most area farms fall in the 50 to 179 acres range.

"We continue to see that our children and grandchildren

aren't interested in continuing to work the family farms, so the farmland is split up into smaller parcels and sold," Hunter wrote. "This may be where the increase in farms is showing up on paper as the large farms are going away and as the land is sold the families purchasing them are looking to raise their own food and possibly sell their leftover products locally."

This is a trend that is being seen nationwide. But family farms remain important.

"Family farms not only help drive the economy, they allow the rest of the nation the freedom to pursue their dreams without worrying about whether there will be enough food in their pantries," said American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) President Zippy Duvall.

Average farm production expenses, which include things like equipment, crop inputs, livestock, animal feed, labor and more, increased in Craig County as well as the state and the nation.

The census also found that the average age of farmers continues to increase. In the commonwealth, the average age of a farmer in the 2012 Census of Agriculture findings was 57.2. Ten years later, it had increased to 59.2.

Additional information from the Census is scheduled

to be released from March through June.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years. The data collected provides valuable insights into demographics, economics, land use and activities on U.S. farms and ranches.

In addition to tracking the number of farms and amount of farmland, the census tracks the value of agricultural products, the use of renewable energy-producing systems and characteristics of farm operators themselves.

"The Census of Agriculture provides critical information for USDA in its work to ensure farms of all types and sizes have the support that they need," said Tony Banks, senior assistant director of agriculture, development and innovation for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. "The data provides a very important snapshot of agriculture's production and economic health, and is useful in documenting trends that can help direct state and national public policy."

The first Census of Agriculture was conducted by the Census Bureau in 1840 in 26 states and the District of Columbia. However, the history of collecting data on

U.S. agriculture dates back as far as President George Washington, who kept meticulous statistical records describing his own and other farms. In 1791, President Washington wrote to farmers requesting information on land values, crop acreages, crop yields, livestock prices, and taxes. Washington compiled the results on an area which today lies in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. In effect, Washington's inquiry was an attempt to fulfill the need for sound agricultural data for a nation that was heavily reliant on the success of agriculture. Such informal inquiries worked while the nation was young, but were insufficient as the country expanded.

In 1997, the agriculture census was transferred from the Census Bureau to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The 2022 census is the 30th in the series and the sixth conducted by NASS.

The full report may be reviewed online at https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Virginia/vav1.pdf
-- AJF, Special to The New Castle Record

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Task force studies JNF's impact on Craig County life

From the January 5, 1994 edition of *The New Castle Record*

A Craig County task force has completed a study of the effects closing the New Castle Ranger District Station would have on the community.

The statement of impact, which will be sent to state legislators, offers a review of the county's demographics, describing the county as a rural community with little economic opportunity and a dependence on Forest income. The Forest Service's roles and responsibilities in the county are defined, and the impact of the New Castle station on Craig County is detailed.

The New Castle Ranger District provides employment, transportation and recreational resources, safety and law enforcement assistance and fire protection to the county. Economic support in the form of payments to county schools, roads and government is also provided by the Forest Service, since the county's tax base is severely limited as the Jefferson National Forest consumes 336 square acres in Craig, the task force states.

The halting of timber sales in the JNF led the Forest Service to propose the consolidation of the Blacksburg and New Castle Districts, since a great deal of Forest funding will be lost as timber harvesting ceases.

County Extension Agent Debbie Snead worked with local groups to research the station's role in the county and prepare a statement of impact. She

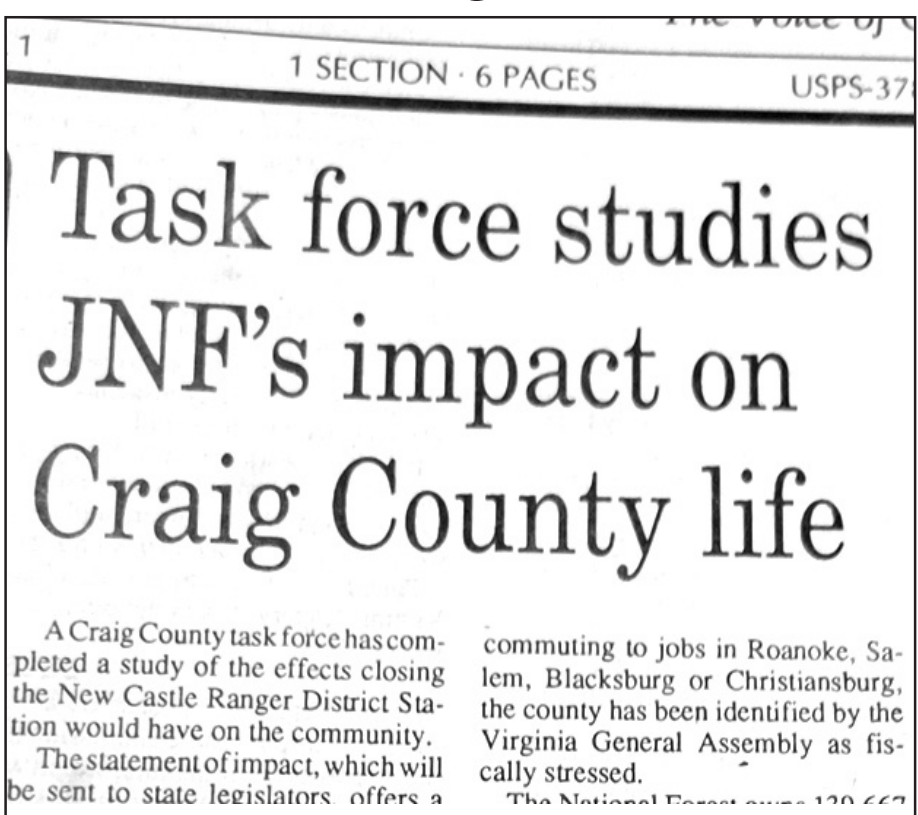
said the New Castle District Ranger Station makes a tremendous impact on the county through the services and economic support it provides.

Three percent of jobs available in Craig are provided by the Forest Service, the report states. With about 72 percent of the county's work force commuting to jobs in Roanoke, Salem, Blacksburg or Christiansburg, the county has been identified by the Virginia General Assembly as fiscally stressed.

The National Forest owns 139,667 acres of Forest land in the New Castle District, with 116,664 acres in Craig County. The task force's report maintains the Forest Service has an obligation to provide economic and environmental assistance to the county, since about 54 percent of county land is forested.

The Forest Service is committed to caring for the land and serving the people, according to the National Forest-Dependent Rural communities Economic Diversification Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Management and Budget directives, and President Clinton's Executive Order on Customer Service, the task force states. Rural development concerns are explicitly recognized by the Forest Service's mission, the report states.

"Our representatives need to inform the officials of the U.S. Forest Service that it is not economically feasible to consolidate districts," Snead



FROM THE NCR ARCHIVES

After legislators read the task force's statement, Snead said, there should be no doubt in their minds that the station should stay in Craig County.

County Administrator Richard Flora, Superintendent of Schools Dallas Helems and Snead are some

of the task force members who will travel to Richmond Feb. 2 to discuss the proposed consolidation with congressman Rick Boucher, Senator Charles Robb, and Delegate Dick Cranwell, who volunteer to host the meeting.

-Prepared by Shelly Koon

Independence Parade winners announced

The following were named winners during the 3rd Annual Craig County: Most Patriotic Entry, Patriot Cup 2024—VFW Post #4491 for "Washington Crossing the Delaware"

Youth Most Patriotic Entry—Charlie Bob, Jonah, Chase Dunbar and Eden Tyree
Youth Honorable Mention—Girl Scout Troop #793

Contests winners at the Farmers Market celebration after the parade:
Watermelon-Eating Contest—Elijah Matyas, adult winner

Watermelon-Eating Contest—Levi Matyas, youth winner
Longest Beard—Anthony Dillon
Bushiest Beard—Jason Sarine

Crowd Favorite Beard—Jason Matyas
Most Patriotic Bonnets—Ashley Kassebaum, Linda Surber and Lauren Shears

-The New Castle Record

Parade from page 1



Blue Ridge Soaring Society passing New Castle Christian Church crowds.



PHOTOS BY BONNIE CRANMER

Craig Valley VFW won the "Most Patriotic" category for the second year in a row.

VDOT Roadwatch

INTERSTATE 81 LANE WIDENING CONSTRUCTION PROJECT EXIT 137 TO EXIT 141 - The \$179 million design-build project to widen both directions of I-81 between mile markers 136.6 and 141.8 from two to three lanes is underway. Work is being performed along a five-mile section of both northbound and southbound Interstate 81 in Roanoke County and the city of Salem. Barrier wall is in place along the shoulders. Two lanes of I-81 traffic in each direction are expected to remain open during the project with periodic lane closures scheduled during nighttime hours or outside of peak travel times as needed. Drivers can expect the following lane closures and upcoming traffic impacts in this area on northbound and southbound I-81:

ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC IMPACTS: WORK ZONE SPEED: Drivers should adhere to posted 60 mph speed limits in the work zone and allow space when following a vehicle. Narrow spacing in lanes due to barrier walls, lack of shoulders and lane shifts in various

locations, are present. TRAFFIC SHIFTS ON WILDWOOD ROAD: Expect a work zone with traffic shifts and narrow width on Wildwood Road after exiting I-81 southbound on exit 137 heading towards Salem. Southbound and northbound I-81 exit and entrance ramp narrows are possible at Route 311.

TRAFFIC SHIFT ON EXIT 140: Drivers may experience periodic lane closures that require a quick merge into traffic onto Thompson Memorial Drive from the southbound exit ramp of exit 140. Work zone located at bottom of the ramp for work on the I-81 bridge at the underpass.

RAMP CLOSURES: Ramp closures are possible during nighttime hours, 12 a.m., to 5 a.m. Drivers should watch for message boards dates and times the ramp will be closed.

LANE CLOSURES: Alternating left and right lane and shoulder closures during nighttime hours between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., Sunday through Thursday, are possible. Lane widths will be reduced to 11 feet. Nightly lane closures

may be in place along the right lane with possible nightly ramp narrows as needed for guardrail and shoulder strengthening.

The project also includes replacing six bridges, widening two bridges, installing approximately 2.6 miles of sound barrier walls along northbound I-81, improving the southbound exit 137 off-ramp intersection at Wildwood Road and adding interchange lighting at exits 137, 140 and 141. Expected

completion in early 2026.

I-81 NB & SB DECK OVERLAY AT PEAK CREEK MILE MARKER 95.7 - Repair work is underway on the northbound and southbound bridges on I-81 over Peak Creek near mile marker 95.7. This repair work will require nighttime single lane closures for the duration of the project. Lane closures may occur nightly from Sunday night through Friday mornings between

the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. Estimated completion is scheduled for end of 2024.

I-81 NORTHBOUND AT EXIT 105 NEW RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY - Traffic on northbound I-81 has been switched onto the newly constructed bridge over the New River at the Montgomery/Pulaski County line. Lane and shoulder closures may be

in place near exit 105. Lane closure may be in effect during the week from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. Shoulder closures may be in effect at any time during the week. Slow rolls may be performed on I-81 in the north and southbound lanes from mile marker 98 to 109. Speed limit is reduced to 60 miles per hour in the work zone, will remain in place through the duration of the project. Project completion is estimated for Summer 2024.

Craig New Castle Public Service Authority

Proposed Rate Increase Effective August Billing 2024

Type of Service	Old Rate	Proposed Rate
Residential Water	20.08	25.10
Residential Sewer	34.10	42.63
Commercial Water	22.94	27.88
Commercial Sewer	38.94	48.68
Intuition Sewer	152.13	190.16
Non-Metered Service	54.76	68.45

***The new residential minimum for water & sewer is currently \$54.18, approved \$67.73 for 2,000 gallons of water used

***The new commercial minimum for water & sewer is currently \$61.88, approved \$76.56 for 2,000 gallons of water used

***The non-metered service - customers on sewer only - current flat fee of \$54.76 approved \$68.45

** A public hearing is scheduled for August 5th, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the Craig County Courthouse.

Recipe of the Week



Shelly Koon
Contributing
Writer

This week's recipe takes me back to my roots. My family is from Arkansas, and we would return to Little Rock at least once a year to visit our grandparents and great aunts and uncles. One summer, Dad's uncle Dennis came to visit us in Toledo, Ohio. My great-uncle Dennis was a menopause baby, so he was 15 years younger than my dad (his nephew); only 8 years older than me. I thought he was so cool. A teenager traveling through 5 states on the bus to see his relatives all on his own. We were living in Toledo, Ohio at the time and I was 8 years old. My mom asked him what his favorite dessert was, thinking to make it for him. He told her it was possum pie. My mom looked at him and told him "No way, no how" was she making possum pie. Dennis laughed and told her it was pie that was made with pudding not meat. My mom called great-grandma Mills to see if she had a recipe. Grammy Mills said she got the recipe from the "Arkansas Democrat-Gazette" in the 70's and this pie became a favorite of ours, just like great-uncle Dennis. Called many names, this multi layered dessert is called possum pie in Arkansas. This no bake pie gets its name from playing

possum. Just like a possum plays dead to fool its enemies this pie's simple appearance hides what's underneath, only visible when you cut in. The pie is made with several layers, usually a vanilla pudding or cream cheese layer, then another layer like chocolate custard in a pecan shortbread crust. Topped with whipped cream or Cool Whip Topping, it's an easy no bake pie that takes a few minutes to mix together. This recipe is my mom's, so it uses a storebought crust, instant pudding, and Cool Whip instead of a homemade crust, custard filling, and whipped cream. You can always make your own nut crust, custard fillings and use meringue for the topping if you are more ambitious.

Possum Pie
Ingredients:
6 ounces cream cheese, softened
3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1 graham cracker crust (9 inches)
1/4 cup chopped pecans
1-3/4 cups cold whole milk
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 cup instant vanilla pudding mix
1/3 cup instant chocolate pudding mix
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped (or use 8 oz Cool Whip)
12 to 16 pecan halves

Directions:
1. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese and confectioners' sugar until smooth. Spoon into ready-made crust. Sprinkle with chopped pecans.

2. In a bowl, whisk the milk, vanilla, and pudding mixes for 2 minutes. Let stand for 2 minutes or until soft set. Spoon over the pecans.
3. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours. Top with whipped cream and pecan halves.
How To Switch Up Possum Pie. While this pie is already decadent and beautifully layered, you can't go wrong with a little customization: Type of crust: You can also opt for a graham cracker, Oreo, or standard pie

crust if preferred, although it isn't traditional. Add flavorings: For a little extra flavor, add a sprinkle of cinnamon to the shortbread, a hint of orange zest to the cream cheese layer, or a splash of bourbon to the chocolate pudding. Decoration ideas: Take this pie to the next level by garnishing with a drizzle of melted chocolate, chocolate chips, chocolate curls, or a sprinkle of flaky sea salt to balance the sweetness.



COURTESY PHOTO

Upcoming public meetings scheduled in Craig County

July 11
Board of Supervisors Monthly Meeting will meet at the Craig County Courthouse at 6 p.m.

July 15
Town of New Castle Town Council Meeting at New Castle Town Hall at 7-8 p.m.

July 16
Congressman Morgan Griffith citizen comment period 9-10:30 a.m at Craig County Courthouse Breakroom.
Planning Commission meeting at Planning Commission at 7-8 p.m.

July 17
CPMT MEETING CPMT - Department of Social Services at 1 p.m.

July 25
Department of Social Services Board Meeting at Department of Social Services Board Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Aug. 1
Board of Supervisors Monthly Meeting will meet at the Craig County Courthouse at 6 p.m.

Aug. 12
Library Board of Trustees Meeting at Craig County Library

Aug. 19
Town of New Castle Town Council Meeting at New Castle Town Hall at 7-8 p.m.

Community Events
Cooking Event at

Waiteville Community Center on July 13
Waiteville Community Center (WCC) is sponsoring "Cooking Light & Cool for a Hot Summer Night" on Saturday, July 13 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Don Shaw, who worked as a caterer and chef in the Northern Virginia area for 37 years, is leading the event again this year. He is happy to share his knowledge and love of cooking. He will demonstrate preparing Curried Carrot Soup, Ricotta Stuffed Chicken Breast with Sweet& Sour Peach Sauce, Asparagus with Orange Zest & Balsamic Glaze, Orange Pesto Vinaigrette Quinoa Salad, and Lemon

Curd Whipped Cream with Fresh Berries. Recipes will be provided. After the demonstration, participants will enjoy eating these wonderful dishes. The cost of the demonstration and meal is \$25 per person and limited to 40 participants. Make your reservation and payment by contacting Shelby Jennings at 304-772-5503 or shelbyjennings1958@hotmail.com by July 1. Make checks to Waiteville Community Center and mail to 7644 Waiteville Rd, Waiteville, WV 24984.

Ongoing
Craig County Genealogy Library open Fridays 1-4.

p.m. 152 Main Street. 540-864-7023
Feeding Southwest Virginia will be offering food twice a month on the second and third Wednesday of the month from 3-5 p.m. and 4-5 p.m., respectively. All community members are welcome to purchase fresh produce and other canned and boxed items. EBT recipients receive 50% off their fruits and vegetables.
Booster Club of Craig Schools meet on the third Monday of each month in the school cafeteria at 6 p.m. Community members are encouraged to attend.
-The New Castle Record

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Sr. enlisted Army member
4. Payroll firm
7. Monetary unit of Macao
10. Cooking vessel
11. Cow sound
12. Hairpiece
13. Spoon-shaped surgical instrument
15. Mother
16. Remove from record
19. Foolish
21. Mailman
23. Unit of data size
24. Stirred
25. Deceptive movement
26. We all have one
27. Direct from pasture beef animal
30. A person's own self
34. Helps little firms
35. Deep, red-brown sea bream

CLUES DOWN

1. Small stem bearing leaves
2. Female Bacchanalians
3. Mediterranean city
4. Measures electric current
5. Arrived extinct
6. Edible butterflyfish
7. Causing wonder or astonishment
8. Behaviors showing high moral standards
9. Ancient Irish alphabets
13. Footballer Newton
14. Utilize
17. Sum of absolute errors
18. Opposite of the beginning
20. Shoe company
22. Algerian port city
27. Girls organization (abbr.)
28. Type of cell (abbr.)
29. Swiss river
31. When you hope to get there

CLUES DOWN

32. Fall behind
33. Expresses distaste, disapproval
37. Volume containing several novels
38. Less sharp
39. Food for the poor
40. Having made a valid will
41. Royal estates
42. Relating to wings
43. Japanese three-stringed lute
44. Taking something through force
47. Angry
48. Before the present
49. Showy ornaments
51. Norway
52. Comedienne Gastereyer
53. Consume
58. Founder of Babism

If you see this gentleman out and about in the near future, give him a shout and wish him Happy 50th Anniversary of covering all our local sports with all the gusto he can muster! We appreciate him immensely!

Brian Hoffman, thanks for all you have done and continue to do for our newspapers!

OPINION

News from the 9th: Are the Olympic Games fair?



Morgan Griffith
Representative

On July 26, the 2024 Summer Olympic Games are set to begin in Paris.

These competitions provide countries from all over the world the opportunity to showcase their best athletes.

The United States holds an illustrious record in the Games. Most recently in Tokyo, the United States placed first in medals won (113) as well as gold medals (39).

In Tokyo, most aspiring Olympic athletes played by the rules and worked their tails off to perfect their craft.

Unfortunately, this can't be said of every athlete.

Earlier this year, the New York Times broke news of twenty-three Chinese swimmers who tested positive for banned performance-enhancing substances before the Tokyo Games.

Despite this revelation, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) cleared the swimmers to compete in the Tokyo Games and didn't inform the rest of the athletes!

Five of those swimmers had a medal finish.

Subsequently, eleven of those

twenty-three were selected to participate in this year's Paris Games too.

Doping in sports has prompted bipartisan Congressional attention before. In 2017, the Oversight Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee launched a hearing to discuss ways to strengthen the international anti-doping system.

Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, the most decorated athlete in Olympic history with a record twenty-eight medals, was a witness at that 2017 hearing.

During that hearing, Phelps emphasized: "If we allow our confidence in fair play to erode, we will undermine the power of sport and the goals and dreams of future generations."

Some changes were made at WADA.

Now as Chairman of the Subcommittee, I asked Phelps to return and he agreed to testify again because the earlier changes were ineffective. I held a hearing on June 25th to discuss WADA and things Congress can do to help ensure a level playing field.

Accompanying Phelps as a witness to this hearing was U.S. swimmer Allison Schmitt. Although not as world-famous as Phelps, she won ten Olympic medals (4 gold) in her career. Wow!

The Chinese doping scandal is a deeply personal issue for Schmitt. She missed out on another Olympic gold medal at the Tokyo Games. In

the 800-meter freestyle relay, her team placed 2nd to the Chinese. Some of those Chinese competitors are a part of the list of twenty-three who failed their drug test.

Also in attendance at the hearing was U.S. Olympic swimmer, Allison Wagner. Although she was not a witness for the hearing, she finished 2nd in the 1996 400-meter individual medley. The gold medalist from that race, an Irish swimmer, was suspected to be a user of performance-enhancing drugs.

During the hearing, it became clear that doping issues partly stem from inconsistency in testing athletes.

I advocated a simple solution. Investigations should be performed in the same manner and that every violator receives the same punishment, regardless of nationality.

Phelps concurred with the idea and cited one year where he was tested over one 150 times, while other Olympic delegations received only thirty or forty tests.

Schmitt went into graphic detail of her tests, an uncomfortable and awkward reality (see the June 25th hearing recording, 1:02:18).

But she acknowledged that this is what she signed up for. And others should be held to the same standard to keep the sport clean.

The witnesses railed against WADA for not showing up to support athletes.

Travis Tygart, head of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), testified WADA - which consists of a

former member of China's Olympic Committee - should not allow individuals from various national Olympic Committees to serve on WADA.

It would have been nice to make recommendations in-person to WADA. However, WADA decided not to accept the Subcommittee's invitation to testify!

Earlier in June, WADA also declined to testify to the German Bundestag (parliament).

This demonstrates to me that WADA is not interested in addressing anti-doping concerns. Moreover, it calls into question WADA's commitment to provide a level playing field for all athletes.

If there is no responsible authority to enforce equal and fair measures, how can Olympians trust the outcomes of competitions?

How can athletes put their faith into a system that is subjected to abuse by cheaters?

As the biggest contributor to WADA (nearly \$3.7 million this year), the United States should reevaluate the funds we send them.

NBC, which has a \$7.5 billion contract with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and other sponsors could also exercise influence to promote clean competition.

Phelps and Schmitt have represented their country admirably. I am determined to see reform as future generations aspire to compete at the Olympic Games.

Forks of John's Creek Christian Church dedicates refurbished steeple

Members and friends came together on Sunday, June 30, 2024, to dedicate the Refurbished Steeple and to hold a Service of Appreciation for the

individuals who were instrumental in donating countless supplies and funds, expertise, and limitless hours to underwrite the reconstruction of the steeple that had experienced major weather damage in the last few years. The congregation honored Daniel Huffman, who served as the steeple jack to ramrod the demolition and reconstruction of the steeple bell table, pickets, and railing. To round out the volunteer team who began work in the Fall of 2023, was Bill Mitchell and Howard Arrington, who worked together to cut the pickets and railing to exactly replicate the intricate, unique design of the steeple supports and four sides.

J. Wayne King, Elder, read and awarded a Proclamation of Appreciation to each of these men who restored the Steeple to its original structural integrity and visual beauty. It was noted that the Steeple serves as testament to the passersby of The

See Steeple page 5



The congregation gathers around the new steeple.

COURTESY PHOTO

THE NEW CASTLE RECORD

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www.ourvalley.org

Michael Showell, *Publisher*
Aila Boyd, *Executive Editor* aboyd@mainstreetnewspapers.com
Brian Hoffman, *Sports Editor* bhoffman@ourvalley.org
Debbie Nixon, *Graphic Designer* dnixon@ourvalley.com
Edmee CR Hasler, *Graphic Designer* edmee@mainstreetnewspapers.com
Wendi Craig, *Advertising Consultant* advertize@ourvalley.org

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The New Castle Record encourages letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Record reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length content and style. News of public interest is solicited from all sections of the county.

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Steeple from page 4

Forks; mentioned was that the cross, at 58-feet in height, stands tall as the congregation lifts its belief that Christ is the center of its principles and practices. During this recognition, two of Bill Mitchell's great-grandchildren, Lillie and Elena Mitchell, came to the front of the congregation and recited and performed the children's recitation "Here is the church; here is the steeple; Open the door and see all the people" to honor their great-grandfather and

Daniel and Howard.

Also honored were two donors, Sharon and Denver Lester, who graciously donated to defray the costs of the motorized lift to refurbish the steeple. The donation was given in honor of Sharon's mother who always loved to hear her home church's bell rung whenever there were services at her church.

At the conclusion of the worship service, the congregation gathered

on the porch to complete the brief Dedication Service, where the congregation members participated in responsive readings lead by J. Wayne King. Immediately after the Prayer of Dedication, Lillie and Elena, along with Jasmine and Abby Foutz, pulled the bell cord to ring the restored Steeple's bell ten times to signify that the Steeple has been refurbished and dedicated. To further celebrate, the congregation then moved to the

Fellowship Hall for a fellowship meal.

The congregation greatly appreciates the skills, abilities, and blessings provided by Daniel Huffman, Bill Mitchell, Howard Arrington, and Sharon and Denver Lester in their ministry to the Forks of John's Creek Christian Church and the John's Creek Valley.

-Submitted by A.Dale King



Children in the congregation perform 'Here's the church, here is the steeple'.



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11599 Cumberland Gap Road/Rt. 42, New Castle, 864-5242; church phone 544-7040 Sunday 9:30 a.m., Sunday School 10:30 a.m., Choir Tuesday 7:30p.m., Youth Outreach and Missions Program. Rev. San Kang.

CHESTNUT GROVE CHURCH
Duane Went, Minister, Rt. 42, New Castle, 540-864-5692. Sunday: Worship 10:00 a.m.

CORNERSTONE CHURCH
Pastor Don Brown, Corner of Salem and Wagner, New Castle, 580-3228. Sunday Worship 10:30am (Children meet separately, Nursery provided). Bible Study - Wednesday 6p Teens - Wednesday 6p. Ministries: Men, Ladies, Young Adult, and Seniors. Times vary, call for details.

CRAIG HEALING SPRINGS CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ)
Pastor - Kenneth W. Davis, Jr., 6 Grannys Branch Road (Johns Creek), New Castle, Phone: 864-6102. Sunday School at 10 am. Sunday Worship at 11 am every Sunday. Fellowship meal after Sunday Worship on second Sundays. Everyone is welcome!

CRAIG VALLEY BAPTIST
171 Salem Avenue, New Castle, 864-5667; Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m., Wednesday: Prayer Service and Bible Study 7:00 p.m., Youth Group 6:30-8:00PM, Bible Buddies at 6:30-8:00PM. Transportation provided - call the church. Hearing devices also available. www.craigvalleybaptist.com

CRAIG VALLEY GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP
HWY 621, Pastor Roy Lee Law Jr., "Jay", 864-8984. Sunday School 10:00am; Worship 11:00am, Wednesday night Bible study 7pm, from HWY 311, up HWY 621, 8 miles on left.

CROSSROADS CHURCH
21892 Craigs Creek Road, New Castle. Pastor Gary

Burch. 864-7520. Sunday School- 10-10:45AM, Sunday Worship - 11AM-Noon.

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FIRST BAPTIST
Pastor Kevin Altizer, Corner of Main Street & Boyd Ave., New Castle. Church phone 864-5919. Sunday School 10:00AM, Sunday Worship 11:00AM and 6PM. Wednesday Evening Bible Study 7PM, Youth Group 7:00PM, Reformers Unanimous Addiction Recovery every Friday evening at 7PM.

GRACE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
5530 Catawba Valley Drive, Catawba, VA, 540-384-7075. Pastor Loraine Taylor, agladypastor@msn.com. Sunday service begins at 10:30 a.m.; Wednesday Evening service at 7:00 p.m.; Youth (ages 13-18) & Super Church (ages 4-12) Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. You can also watch on Facebook Live at 10:30 a.m. www.graceassemblycatawba.org

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
159 Old Railroad Ave, New Castle, 540-864-PRAY, Sunday School 9:30AM, Sunday Worship Service 10:00AM, Wednesday Night Services 7:00PM.

HEBRON UNITED METHODIST
Pastor Chanmi Lee, 347-684-2607, Rt. 606, 1981

Caldwell Mt. Rd., New Castle, 540- 400-3419. Worship 11:15AM.

LIGHTHOUSE BAPTIST
Rev. Lee Looney, Rt. 311 N., New Castle. Sunday: Sunday School 10AM, 11AM, & 6PM. Wednesday Bible Study 7PM.

LEVEL GREEN CHRISTIAN CHURCH
3388 Cumberland Gap Rd. Newport, Duane Went, Minister, 540-544-7179. Sunday School 10:00am, Sunday Morning Worship 11:00am, Children's Church 11:00am. Choir Practice, bi-weekly 7:00pm, Ladies meeting first Monday of each month at 7:00pm.

LIGHTHOUSE BAPTIST
Pastor Lee Looney, Rt. 311 N., New Castle, 540-525-7662. Sunday: Sunday School 10AM, 11AM, & 6PM. Wednesday Bible Study 7PM.

MOUNTAIN VIEW CHRISTIAN
4199 Craig Valley Drive, New Castle, Jonathan Lee, pastor, 864-6622. Sunday: Worship Service 9:00 a.m., Children's Church 9:15 a.m., Sunday School 10:30 a.m.

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282 Salem Ave., New Castle; 864-5212; Pastor Bill Frazier. Sunday Service: 10 A.M.; Wednesday night Bible study at 6:00 P.M. for K-5; If you need a ride to church, please contact Calvin Duncan by 8 P.M. on Saturday at 864-5321; www.nc-cc.org.

NEW CANTERBURY PENTECOSTAL FELLOWSHIP
Pastor John D. Abbott, Hwy 621 (10 miles), phone: 540-580-5837, Sunday Prayer 10:00-10:30 a.m.; Sunday Worship 10:45 a.m.; Wednesday Service 6:00 pm.

PAXTON CHAPEL
Pastor Kenny Davis, 17 Sage Brush Lane, New

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NEW CASTLE UNITED METHODIST
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99 2nd Street, New Castle. Tel: 540-473-3691. Email: StJohnnewcastle@gmail.com. Mass is on Sunday at 11:15 AM.

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Legals - Botetourt County

VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BOTETOURT COUNTY

IN RE: ESTATE OF DEBRA ANNE DAWSON, DECEASED NOTICE

Having been requested to do so by Christopher Dawson, administrator of the estate of Debra Anne Dawson, Deceased, and in accordance with Section 64.2-550 of the 1950 code of Virginia, as amended, all creditors of Debra Anne Dawson, and all persons in any way interested in her estate are hereby notified that I have fixed the 7th day of August, 2024 at 10 o'clock a.m. at my office at 13 south Roanoke Street, Fincastle, Virginia as the time and place for determining an account of the debts and demands against said Debra Anne Dawson or her estate, the priorities among them, and the names of the persons to whom they are due. All creditors of Debra Anne Dawson, deceased, and persons interested in her estate should appear at the time and place named, or any other time or place to which the proceedings may be adjourned, and protect their interest. Given under my hand this 2nd day of July, 2024. Malcolm McL. Doubles Commissioner of Accounts

TRUSTEE'S SALE OF 89 White Oak Drive, Blue Ridge, VA 24064

In execution of a Deed of Trust in the original principal amount of \$234,179.00 dated February 7, 2018 recorded among the land records of the Circuit Court for Botetourt County on February 8, 2018 as Instrument Number: 180000469, the undersigned appointed Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction, at the Main entrance of the courthouse for the Circuit Court of Botetourt County, 1 W Main St, Fincastle, VA 24090 on August 12, 2024 at 10:00 AM the property described in said deed of trust, located at the above address and briefly described as: Lot 4, Block 5, according to the Map of Section 1, White Oak Estates, which map is recorded Plat Book 5, Page 31, in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court for the County of Botetourt, Virginia; and Tax ID: 12297.

TERMS OF SALE: A bidder's deposit of \$11,000.00 or 10% of the sale price, whichever is lower, will be required in the form of a certified or cashier's check. Cash will not be accepted as a deposit. Settlement within fifteen (15) days of sale, otherwise Trustee may forfeit deposit. Additional terms to be announced at sale. This is a communication from a debt collector. This notice is an attempt to collect on a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. (Trustee # 24-006338) Substitute Trustee: ALG Trustee, LLC C/O Orleans PC PO Box 2548, Leesburg, VA 20177 (703) 777-7101 website: www.Orleans.com

Legals - Botetourt County

Order of Publication

Commonwealth of Virginia VA Code §§ 1-211.1; 8.01-316.20-104 Case No. **023CL24000234-00** BOTETOURT COUNTY Circuit Court, COURTHOUSE, P.O. BOX 219, FINCASTLE, VA 24090 Commonwealth of Virginia, in re CARMEN OLIVIA GRACE JARVIS v. BRIAN IONA, JR. The object of this suit is to: DIVORCE. It is ORDERED that BRIAN IONA, JR. appear at the above-named court and protect his/her interests on or before JULY 31, 2024. JUNE 13, 2024 Joel R. Branscom, Judge Tommy L. Moore, Clerk

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Legals - Botetourt County

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Legals - City of Salem

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the Board of Zoning Appeals of the City of Salem, Virginia will hold a public hearing, in accordance with the provisions of Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2309 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, on July 24, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, in the City of Salem, Virginia, to consider the following applications.

The request of Savory Ventures Salem, LLC, property owner, for a variance from Section 106-402.7(A) of the City of Salem Zoning Ordinance pertaining to perimeter landscaping standards for parking lots for the property located at 600 block of West Fourth Street, Tax Map # 143 - 4 - 1. The petitioners are requesting a variance to allow for a food truck court. Section 106-402.7(A) states that the required landscaped planting strip shall have a minimum width of eight feet. Therefore, the petitioners are requesting a 3-foot variance.

At this hearing, all parties in interest will be given an opportunity to be heard, present evidence, and show cause why such requests should or should not be granted. For additional information, contact the Office of the Zoning Administrator, 21 South Bruffey Street, Salem, Virginia (Phone 375 3032).

THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS OF THE CITY OF SALEM

BY: Mary Ellen H. Wines, CZA, CFM Planning & Zoning Administrator

Legals - Town of New Castle

ABC NOTICE

RCLC LLC., trading as CARPERS, 5178 CRAIG VALLEY DR., NEW CASTLE, CRAIG COUNTY, VA, 24127.

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a RETAIL ON AND OFF PREMISES WINE AND BEER license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

ROBERT CARPER, OWNER

NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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Legals - Montgomery County

Order of Publication

Commonwealth of Virginia VA Code §§ 1-211.1; 8.01-316.20-104 Case No. **CL24000869-00** VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY Circuit Court, 55 EAST MAIN STREET, SUITE 1, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA 24073 DONALD BROOKS SAVILLE, JR., et al Plaintiffs, v. RICHARD BARNETT, ADMINISTRATOR FOR THE ESTATE OF EDITH CORDER BARNETT, et al. Defendants.

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Upon consideration of the Affidavit for Entry of Order of Publication filed by the Plaintiffs, the reason for this cause is to obtain the whereabouts of any person who may have an interest in the property located at 3114 Emerson Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060, and/or 3137 Emerson Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060, and if such parties cannot be located, the secondary purpose of this cause is to quiet Plaintiff's title to the Property.

An Affidavit has been made and filed showing that the Defendant **John Does 1-100 All Persons Unknown or Parties Claiming a Title, Lien, Easement, or Other Interest in the Lands Known as 3114 Emerson Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060; John Does 1-100 All Persons Unknown or Parties Claiming a Title, Lien, Easement, or Other Interest in the Lands Known as 3137 Emerson Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060; and John Does 1-100 All Persons Unknown or Parties Claiming an Inherited Interest from Avery May, a/k/a Lee Evans May, Brandyne May Moorefield** (collectively "John Does 1-100"), address unknown the general description of "parties unknown," who by reason of true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate or otherwise of defendants JOHN DOES 1-100 are unknown to Plaintiff, and may have a beneficial interest in the Property. UPON CONSIDERATION whereof, this Order of Publication as to all the parties above is GRANTED, and it is ORDERED that any interested person(s) shall appear here on or before July 31st, 2024 at 9 am, which date is no sooner than fifty (50) days after entry of this Order of Publication.

And it is further Ordered that this Order of Publication be published once a week for four (4) successive weeks in The News Messenger, a newspaper of general circulation in the Montgomery County, Virginia. ENTERED the 11 day June, 2024 K. Mike Flenor, Jr. Judge

WE PRAY FOR THIS: FIDELITY NATIONAL LAW GROUP, the Law Division of Fidelity National Financial By: Lisa M. Ernst, Esq. (VSB#72718) 8484 Westpark Drive, Suite 310 McLean, Virginia 22102 (T) 703-245-0298 (F) 703-821-1618 Lisa.Ernst@fnf.com Counsel for Plaintiffs

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a RETAIL ON AND OFF PREMISES WINE AND BEER license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

ROBERT CARPER, OWNER

NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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Legals - City of Radford

TRUSTEE'S SALE OF PROPERTY

486 Waterworks Road, Radford, VA 24141 Tax Map No. 064-A 68, Parcel ID No. 020697

In execution of a Deed of Trust dated July 24, 2008, in the principal amount of \$73,280.45, recorded in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Montgomery County, Virginia, of record as Instrument Number 08008179, Woods Rogers PLC, Trustee, will offer for sale at public auction outside the main entrance of the Montgomery County Circuit Court, 55 East Main Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073, on July 30, 2024 at 12:00 noon, the property described in said Deed of Trust lying in Montgomery County, Virginia, and more particularly described as follows:

All that certain lot or parcel of land with all improvements thereon situate, lying and being in the Prices Fork Magisterial District of Montgomery County, Virginia, on Water Works Road, containing 2.1417 acres more or less as shown on a plat of same dated October 15, 1992, prepared by W. A. Davis, CE/LS, referred to as "Plat prepared for Bobby Wayne Southern, et al."

LESS AND EXCEPT: All that certain lot or parcel of land with all improvements thereon lying and being in the Price's Fork Magisterial District of Montgomery County, Virginia, and being all of Lot Two (2) containing 1.03 acres, conveyed to Alan K. Southern and Drema J. Southern by deed dated June 1, 1995 and recorded in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Montgomery County, Virginia, in Deed Book 876, Page 361 and as shown on plat of survey of record in Deed Book 876, Page 363.

TERMS: Cash - Bidder's deposit of ten percent (10%) of the sales price by cashier's or certified check may be required. Balance of purchase price shall be due and payable not later than ten (10) days after sale.

WOODS ROGERS PLC, Trustee For Information Contact: Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black PLC, P.O. Box 14125, Roanoke, VA 24038-4125, Telephone: 540-983-7729

Legals - Roanoke County

ABC NOTICE

Bent Mountain Brewery LLC, trading as Bent Mountain Brewery, 9513 Bent Mountain Road, Bent Mountain, Roanoke County, VA 24059.

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for an Industry Farm Winery and Limited Brewery license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

Tommee Larochelle, Manager

NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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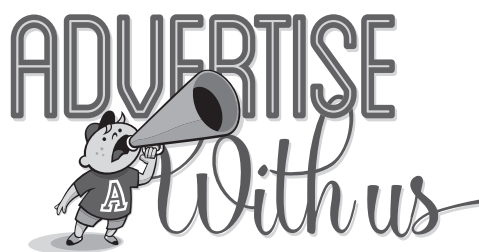
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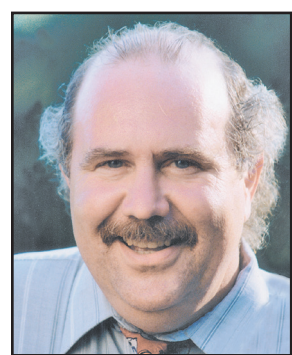
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Brian Hoffman column: 50 years ago



Brian Hoffman

Today's edition is Wednesday, July 10, 2024. That's significant to me because I started working for this company 50 years ago this week, in 1974.

I can remember it like it was yesterday. I had graduated from Roanoke College in May and went back home to Pennsylvania to try and find a job. I was working at the ceramic tile factory in Lansdale, PA, where my mother had worked for years when I got a call from Ray Robinson in Salem.

Ray was the owner of the Salem Times-Register and New Castle Record and his part-time sports editor, Rick Harvey, had resigned.

I had been the sports editor of the Roanoke College newspaper, the Brackety-Ack, which was printed on the Salem Times-Register press. Apparently Ray had been reading my stories and liked them, so he reached out to see if I'd like to return to Salem and replace Rick.

I had decided about a month before graduation I'd like to pursue journalism. I majored in Business Administration because I thought it was the most well-round field, but in addition to being Sports Editor for the RC paper I also worked for the Sports Information Department, writing stories for the basketball program and helping the late Ray Brown, and I was also the head stat me for the Maroon hoops team. So, it hit me I might want to do this for a living.

I had applied for a job at the Allentown Morning Call, but with no real newspaper experience I had little shot of getting that job. So, rather than sweat in

that tile factory for an uncertain length of time I decided to take Ray up on the offer.

My dad and I loaded up my uncle Bill's truck with any furniture we could find and drove to Virginia. We took a room at the old Regina Motor Lodge on West Main Street in Salem and looked through the paper for possible apartments. We found a place on Craig Avenue that's still there and I soon had a one bedroom apartment about a mile away from the Roanoke College campus I had just left.

I realized right away I wasn't going to get rich doing this, at least not in a financial sense. My salary was \$40 a week plus mileage and I worked from home, which was now my one bedroom apartment. To "supplement" my income I got a job at the Damon Company machine shop, which was then located on Tennessee Street in Salem in the building where B&B Fasteners now operates. I came

home every day smelling like lubricant oil and soon my '63 Chevy Impala took on the same aroma.

I did stories for the Salem Times-Register and New Castle Record. After a year or so I moved into a two-bedroom apartment and took in a friend from college to share the expenses, Denton Willard. He would get a job coaching the Craig County basketball team for one season and future Craig hoops coach John Looney was on the team. I got to know John well as he visited our place from time to time and I also made some great friends in Craig County when they still played basketball in the old high school gym/cafeeteria and baseball at the Fairgrounds.

Speaking of the Fairgrounds, one of my first experiences with New Castle was when I attended the fair when I was at Roanoke College. Back in the '70s the New Castle Fair was famous in the area for

its "hoochie cooch" show. I was surprised to find cars backed up on Route 311 waiting to pull into the fair, and it was an experience I'll never forget. That tent show wouldn't fly in 2024.

As mentioned, my first edition was 50 years ago today. After introducing myself I wrote a column about Dave Schultz, who had played for the Salem Rebels ice hockey team and was a key member of the '76 Philadelphia Flyers, who had just won the Stanley Cup. I also had a story about the Salem Pirates and the Carolina League All-Stars that week, and a story about how a friend of mine from college, Jay Piccola, would be participating in a try-out camp for the New Orleans Jazz. The Jazz had drafted Piccola in the eighth round of the NBA draft on a tip from Tulane University coach Charlie Moir. Charlie had recruited Jay to Roanoke College, won a national championship in 1972, then took the

Green Wave job after Piccola's junior year. As you may know he eventually wound up coaching Virginia Tech and his son, Page, coached for many years at RC.

By September one of our news writers, the late Pat Hooker, had decided to leave and I was hired full-time to do sports and news, enabling me to quit the Damon Company. I enjoyed the sports much more and eventually worked my way into doing just that. In years to come our company purchased the Vinton Messenger and Fincastle Herald and I did the sports for the Salem, New Castle, Vinton and Fincastle papers, as I do today.

It doesn't seem like 50 years. I've made many friends over the years and have totally enjoyed bringing sports stories to you in our papers on a weekly basis. I met my wife here at the paper and have truly enjoyed a wonderful life in this Shangri-La we call the Roanoke Valley.



After a year and 11 months of renovations the James I. Moyer Complex in Salem cut the ribbon Monday to reopen the multi-sport facility. The complex features 860 chairback seats on the main field and a rotating ball at the entrance that's great for photo opportunities.



PHOTOS BY BRIAN HOFFMAN

Cook does field at Rickwood

Roanoke Valley native Murry Cook, the world's most well-respected guru of baseball diamonds, has been busy again this summer. Murray was recently in charge of the fields that hosted big league games in London, England and Birmingham, Alabama.

Cook, President of BrightView Sports Turf Division, is Major League Baseball's Field and Stadium Consultant. Cook began his trade as groundskeeper at the current Kiwanis Park in Salem and worked his way up to be the most respected person in his field, creating and maintaining diamonds for the Olympics, MLB special events and anywhere a ballgame might be played.

Cook was recently in charge of the field for the two-game series between the Mets and Phillies in London on June 8th and 9th, converting a soccer(football in England) stadium to a big league diamond.

"The 2024 London series was our third transformation of the London

stadium that is the home of the West Ham Football Club," said Cook. "Although it was the third time, we still only had 18 days to flip the venue into an MLB ballpark, which still amazes me. It's a very sustainable project, as everything from the turf to padding, infield clay, backstop, dugouts etc. goes into a 20,000 square foot storage facility and then reused again. We are going back in 2026."

After the London games Murray flew to Birmingham to get the field ready for the game between the Giants and Cardinals at historic Rickwood Field. The game was a tribute to the old Negro Leagues and played at a stadium that had been home for many Negro League games. And, it took some doing to get it ready for Major League baseball.

"I basically went directly from London to Birmingham," said Cook, who had been working on the Rickwood project for quite some time.

"We started looking at Rickwood as

a potential site in 2021," said Cook. "The field needed to be replaced along with dugouts that were basically bunkers. We built the field, fencing, backstop and foul poles.

"We partner with BAam productions and Populous on these builds for MLB. BAam handles all the back of house temporary build items like locker rooms, media center, hospitality while Populous handles the traffic flow of people, fan plaza etc."

Cook's baby is the playing surface itself, and no one does it better.

"The infield crown on the field was so high if you looked out of the old dugout to find your outfielder you could only see him from the chest up," he said. "Also, the old distance from home plate to the backstop was 85 feet. The average backstop distance in big league parks is about 50 feet. We moved the field back and closed up the wall behind home plate to get to 60 feet.

"The stadium still has one of the original fences behind the wooden fence we replaced. It was used in the 30's and 40's and is concrete. The distance on those walls made Salem's old Municipal centerfield at 420 feet look small. They had 478 feet to center and 405 down the left field line."

It was anticipated that Willie Mays would be a featured guest at the game, as he grew up there and played at Rickwood for the Negro League Birmingham Black Barons. Unfortunately, Mays passed away just two days before the game.

"When we began building back in the fall there was a lot of talk about Willie being at the game," said Cook. "Unfortunately he became ill and passed. We painted the 24 behind home plate in his honor.

"It was a moving experience for the players and fans as they escorted the 40 plus Negro League players to the foul lines before the national anthem."



Murry Cook

Top: This plaque was erected for Willie Mays, who died two days before the game

Left: Murry Cook and staff paint a '24' behind home plate to honor Willie Mays

COURTESY PHOTOS