

# THE PENDLETON TIMES

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\$1.25  
Volume 113, Number 3

Franklin, Pendleton County, West Virginia 26807

Thursday  
January 22, 2026



Grant Memorial Hospital, under ownership of WVU Medicine, has opened a rapid care center. Also known as “urgent care,” such clinics help patients spend less time and money compared to the emergency room for relatively minor medical issues.

## WVU Medicine’s Grant Memorial Hospital Adds Rapid Care Clinic To Reduce Patient Time and Cost

By Stephen Smoot

One of the problem areas in the rising cost of health care involves the use of hospital emergency rooms for immediate care needs. In the fall of 2024, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality issued a report on the rising cost of “treat-and-release” visits to hospital emergency departments.

Earlier this month, Becker’s Hospital Review published average emergency room wait times. West Virginia enjoyed a better than average time of 143 minutes with Maryland clocking in at 246 and Virginia 162. Patients in UMPC Western Maryland in Cumberland have seen much higher times, however.

Last week, a patient in their emergency room waited eight hours for treatment, saw no one, and had to find a ride to West Virginia University’s Potomac Valley Hospital in Keyser where he found treatment within two hours of arrival.

According to Cedar Point Health, in West Virginia an urgent care facility will see patients on average in under 30 minutes.

In 2021, the cost of an emergency room visit in the United States averaged \$440 for children up to and including 17 years of age, \$660 for 18 to 44, \$880 for 45 to 64, and \$1,110 for those 65 and older. By 2024, according to United Healthcare, the approximate cost of an emergency room visit reached \$1,700. In

November of last year, a United Healthcare report shared that “ER visits can cost 10 times more than an urgent care visit.”

With emergency department costs stacking up on both hospitals and patients alike, it makes sense for hospital systems to invest in establishing them as another option for patients.

Last week, “WVUMedicine Grant Memorial Hospital . . . hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the upcoming opening of the RapidCare Clinic and the WVU Medicine Golisano Children’s Outpatient Clinic.” The facility opened for patients on Jan. 19.

“We consistently heard from the community that there was a need for RapidCare,” stated John Sylvia, Grant Memorial Hospital chief executive officer, during the event. “This is another step in our commitment to providing quality care to our community, with many more to come.”

Urgent cares differ from emergency rooms in that they treat less serious illnesses and injuries and typically do not operate as a gatekeeper for patients that may require full admission to the hospital. As the GMH release explained, this enhances “timely access to treatment.”

“The walk-in clinic will be open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., closing only on Thanksgiving and Christmas,” the release also stated.

## Town of Franklin Council to Improve Public Communication Going Forward

By Stephen Smoot

Town of Franklin council members and town officials last week engaged members of the public in a lengthy discussion about communication and transparency. Elected members and town officials shared that they have been using print and social media to communicate with the public, but

expressed openness to expanding those efforts in the name of transparency.

Bruce Minor, town recorder, conducted the meeting on behalf of Bob Horan, mayor, who was out of town for family reasons. “Welcome everybody,” he said.

First, officials discussed the financial report, handed out by Frank Wehrle, town administrator, at the opening of each session. He stated that unexpected water system work “at the creek crossing” had drawn heavily from town funds. “It will be a slow build to get that fund back in better shape,” he noted.

Wehrle then provided an update on the water system work, sharing that the power should be connected soon to the Hanover tank, which will permit further progress “if the weather holds up.”

Discussion then turned to Phase III of the water system project, which will involve maintenance and repairs on and around Entry Mountain. Wehrle told council that Thrasher is working to get it “grant funded as much as possible.” He stated that the town may have to obtain a small loan of approximately \$400,000 to help fund it, but Wehrle also added, “we don’t want to have to do that.”

Failing full grant funding, the town may have to “have a small uptick on the water bill” to pay for it.

Wehrle, Minor, and others spoke of the scope of the problems afflicting the water lines there. Minor described how the plastic piping described in the time of instal-

lation three decades ago “was the latest and greatest in its time.” Ever since then it has, however, proven less than resilient. Extreme cold temperatures can create lengthy cracks in the line up to 10 feet, “making the hydrants basically unusable.”

Pipes installed in years after on Main Street in Franklin are still holding up, town officials confirmed.

Next came discussion of the town’s ongoing efforts to improve the sewer system to keep up with ever-changing compliance expectations. Wehrle stated that federal funding from congressionally directed spending will “probably not be forthcoming for the foreseeable future and that the town will need grant money to fund the planning process.”

Sewer project costs could come with tiered rate increases “addressing different aspects” of the project. The town will have to hold public meetings related to that. Wehrle stated, “We try and schedule for the evening . . . it’s not always possible, but we do try.” Failing an evening meeting, they will take place “as late as possible in the afternoon.”

Keely Smith, council member, asked if the law set a threshold for attendance, to which Wehrle stated no that “generally they’re poorly attended.”

Minor and Wehrle explained the motivations behind changing the town sewer system. “It’s incorporation on the Potomac River

*Continued on Page 8*

## New Sign Addresses Intersection Debate



Strongly supported by some, much maligned by others, Franklin’s newest street sign now stands in service. The West Virginia Department of Highways ordered its installation after conducting a traffic study. Some local officials have opposed it while others backed the DOH’s decision.

## A Sign of a Prosperous and Productive Future Installed at Sugar Grove



Liberty Community Programs touts its coming missions while expressing excitement over installing their new sign at the former Navy Base.

By Stephen Smoot

Few people have gotten more excited about a new sign than Fredericka Ford and Amanda Mowery.

Ford, chief operating officer of Liberty Community Programs, and Amanda Mowery, who directs operations on the ground at the former Navy base, described why.

“We just got our sign! We’re changing the trajectory,” Ford said. She explained how the installation of an electronic sign to replace that which denoted the former military base changed the mood of staff and emphasized the new mission to the community.

Ford shared steps underway to prepare the facility to open for patients and clients. These include the applications to get waivers to West Virginia Certificate of Need laws. These represent a normal, often difficult, barrier that health care facilities must address if they wish to open in the Mountain State.

Liberty Community Programs, which will operate the facility, had to work to get multiple CON waivers due to plans to offer different types of treatment to both adults and children. These include residential and outpatient options.

Programs will include, but are not limited to, help for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, comprehensive substance abuse treatment, psychiatric care, different forms of therapies, and much more. Services will address specific needs of the State of West Virginia in its efforts to help with these issues, especially in fields affected by facility closures.

Ladale Jackson, also with LCP, had earlier explained how the organization would scale up step by step and not move too quickly. That, he stated in a previous interview, led to other attempts to establish similar programs

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## Rebels, Blue Bellies, Stonewall Jackson, Cattle Drives, and US 220

By Stephen Smoot

The British military historian John Keegan, perhaps one of the last great academic military historians the world will see until higher education regains its sanity, included in his work “Intelligence In War: Knowledge of the Enemy From Napoleon to Al Qaeda,” a full chapter on Major General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s famous Valley Campaign.

Keegan called it “a model of an active intelligence victory” and quoted Jackson’s “catchphrase,” which was “always mystify and mislead.” In short, Jackson intimately knew the landscape of the Shenandoah and South Branch valleys. How? He had the only reliable maps of the area, its ridges, valleys, passes, little settlements, and the roadways, especially the bridges, that connected all.

Jackson had the task of occupying the Federal forces operating in the Shenandoah and South Branch valleys. General George McClellan landed the Army of the Potomac in spring of 1862 in Hampton Roads to threaten the Confederate States capital from the southeast. Jackson worked to keep those he faced from moving to attack Richmond from the west.

On May 8, Brigadier John Imboden received word from Jackson that “Providence blessed our arms with victory at McDowell yesterday.” After “the severe and bloody conflict,” as Imboden described, Federal

commanders “Schenk and Milroy fled precipitately toward Franklin to unite with Fremont,” in command of United States forces in the region.

“The route lay along a narrow valley hedged up by high mountains perfectly protecting the flanks of the retreating (Federal) army from Ashby’s pursuing cavalry, led by Captain Sheetz,” recalled Imboden, who also called the Captain “an intrepid leader.”

Jackson made his way to the South Branch Valley upstream of Franklin, where Imboden stated that General John C. Fremont “remained in blissful ignorance that Jackson had left McDowell.”

Judge H. M. Calhoun’s definitive masterpiece on Pendleton County in the Civil War, “Twixt North and South,” provides much more detail. Even if Fremont in Franklin remained unaware of Jackson’s intentions, on May 8 “the people of Franklin could hear the roar of the Battle of McDowell” with “many men from the town and county . . . known to be engaged.”

The road from Monterey to Franklin brought forth the first inkling of the Federal defeat with supply wagons “pouring into town,” as Calhoun described. Jackson’s forces “were in reach of the rear guard of the retiring army and almost constant skirmishing between them was kept up.” At Forks of the Water, Federal forces tried to relieve their exhaustion and care for wounded.

*Continued on Page 8*



### TMF Associaton To Meet Monday

The Treasure Mountain Festival Association will meet at 5 p.m. Monday at the bowling alley in Franklin.

### Family Support Center Sponsors Activity Jan. 29

The Pendleton County Strive to Thrive Family Support Center on Main Street in Franklin is hosting the following event.

•Jan. 29, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. — Take It Away Thursday. This event is a chance for the center to pass along items you might need but haven’t gotten around to collecting. It’s all about sharing useful things so they find a new home where they can be put to good use.

For more information, call 304-538-7711.





Henry “Hank” Wakefield Brandenburg

Henry “Hank” Wakefield Brandenburg, 65, passed away on Jan. 15, 2026, in Franklin.

Mr. Brandenburg was born on Oct. 4, 1960, in Washington, D.C., to the late Norma Jean Sites Brandenburg of Franklin and Russell Brandenburg of Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

He grew up in Oxon Hill and Camp Springs, Maryland. As a boy, his activities included scouting, playing the violin, and later timpani in the symphonic band at Crossland High School, where he spent his spare time at the school’s computer lab.

He attended the University of Maryland, where he majored in computer science and electrical engineering. He spent his career excelling in what he loved, leading programming and database management at several businesses and federal government agencies, including DataWorld, Apttis, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Postal Service.

He loved adventure and became a private pilot like his father, sometimes flying to Pendleton County and landing on farmland outside of Franklin. He explored Pendleton County’s caves, rafted West Virginia’s wild waters, rappelled off cliffs, bungee jumped off bridges, and RV’d around the Southwest.

He was passionate about classical music, Corvettes, cycling, Boston Terriers (and dogs in general), Mexican food, Led Zeppelin, and the New York Yankees.

He loved to work with wood and build things, and he picked up where his father and grandfather left off restoring and residing for some time in “The Cabin” at Trout Rock, where he replaced the swinging bridge that crosses the South Branch River.

He served as director of the Franklin Moose 769.

In his last years, he fell in love and developed a close relationship with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He spent many hours each day studying the Bible when he wasn’t adventuring in the beautiful mountains of Virginia with his wife and stepchildren.

He loved serving and spent hours at Bridge Christian Church in Virginia and at Walnut Street United Methodist Church in Franklin, where he volunteered his time and gifts as treasurer.

He leaves behind his loving wife, Sherril; stepsons, Dillon Stinnett, Aris Perez-Odom, and Yeriel (Gigi) Rodriguez-Odom; a sister, Julie (Gil); a brother, Bert (Margaret); nephews, Alex, Martin, and James; cousin, Eddie, and his other beloved Sites cousins; close friends, Chris and Penny Lambert and Brian Heasley; former wife, Jean; and a pack of loyal friends who enjoyed his love of fun and sense of humor, his kindness, and the pleasure of sitting on the cabin’s porch, watching the river flow.

He was also preceded in death by his cousins, Herbert Lee Sites and Marsha Sites Hibbs; and his former wife, Wanda.

The family will receive friends at noon on Saturday at the Basagic Funeral Home in Franklin. A memorial service will follow at 1 p.m. with interment at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Franklin.

Memories and words of comfort may be left at [www.basagic.com](http://www.basagic.com).



Delano Wayne Hartman

Delano Wayne Hartman, 92, passed away peacefully, surrounded by family, on Dec. 24, 2025, at Connecticut Hospice in Branford, Connecticut.

He was born on Oct. 27, 1933, in Franklin to the late Elmer and Shirley Hartman.

Mr. Hartman grew up in a small farming town in the hills of Appalachia. From an early age, he was known as a naturally bright, nature-loving, and mischievous spirit. When he wasn’t working on the family farm, he could be found lazing in fragrant hollows, fly fishing, and exploring hidden caves.

He was a gentle and loving brother to his four sisters. His sister, Judy, remembers him bringing her to the river to swim when she was only four years old. Another favorite family story recalls him and his brother, Gene, who were six and eight years old, respectively, falling into a cider barrel during a day of mischief and stumbling home drunk.

He graduated from West Virginia University with a degree in forest management and a commitment to join the United States Air Force. After college, he worked for the North Carolina Department of Forestry, a challenge that required wading through copperhead-infested swamps rather than walking the forested hills of West Virginia. It was during this time that he met the love of his life, Helen.

His technical aptitude earned him a place in pilot school, and he went on to serve in the Air Force for many years as an aircraft

pilot, ultimately flying B-52s. He served his country with dedication and left with the rank of major.

After 20 years of service, he returned with his wife and two daughters to his beloved hometown, where he managed the family farm for many years. In addition to farming, he served as a Justice of the Peace and earned admiration for his compassion, fairness, and quiet integrity.

A new and cherished chapter began when he moved to Connecticut to be near his daughter, Melissa, and four granddaughters. He often said these were the best years of his life. For more than a decade he played a central role in raising his granddaughters and was deeply involved in their daily lives. They remember him for his easy-going nature, warmth, and loving presence.

He was also the caring grandfather of his daughter, Anne’s, children, Lola and Axel. Though distance separated them, his love and pride for them were unwavering.

He remained engaged in political events until his last days. He was deeply committed to progressive values including equality, nonviolence, and protecting the dignity of all. His moral compass will have a lasting impact on all who knew him, and he will be deeply missed.

His beloved wife, Helen Marie Hartman, survives.

Also surviving are his sisters, Judy Ratcliff of Asheboro, North Carolina, and Jo Anne Harrington of Fargo, North Dakota; his daughters, Melissa (Hartman) Perez of Guilford, Connecticut, and Anne Hartman of London, England; and his grandchildren, Gabriela, Natalia, Juliette, Sofia, Lola, and Axel.

A graveside service with military honors was held Jan. 14 at the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, Connecticut.

For online condolences, visit [jferryfh.com](http://jferryfh.com).

Funeral arrangements were entrusted to the John J. Ferry & Sons Funeral Home in Meriden, Connecticut.



Raymond Curtis Mitchell, Jr.

Raymond Curtis Mitchell, Jr., 81, of Jane Lew and formerly of Franklin passed away on Jan. 17, 2026, at Lavender Fields Assisted Living in Beverly.

He was born on April 30, 1944, in Matador, Texas, the son of the late Sammie Letha (Hawley) and Raymond Curtis Mitchell, Sr.

Mr. Mitchell attended Montevideo High School.

He was a Christian by faith. He loved hunting, fishing, and playing softball.

He took pride in his work and had worked for more than 50 years as a stone mason.

He married Susan Jane (Pitsenbarger) Mitchell, who survives in Franklin.

In addition to his wife, he leaves behind to cherish his memory a son, Brian Curtis Mitchell (April) of Jane Lew; a sister, Candy Reiver (Gene) of Hamet, California; and two grandchildren, Austin and Brooke.

He was also preceded in death by two brothers, Charles Alton and Thomas Jerry Mitchell.

Funeral services were held Wednesday in the chapel of the Basagic Funeral Home in Franklin with Pastor Sam Sponaugle officiating. Interment was in the Wagoner Cemetery at Brandywine.

Memorials may be made to South Fork Volunteer Fire Department or Pendleton County Emergency Rescue.

Memories and words of comfort may be left at [www.basagic.com](http://www.basagic.com).



Reginald Dannie “DJ” Kimble

Reginald Dannie “DJ” Kimble, 45, left his earthly home on Jan. 12, 2026, at his home, surrounded by his loving family.

He was born on July 25, 1980, in Harrisonburg, Virginia, the son of Mary Susan (Duley) and Reginald Dannie Kimble of Upper Tract.

Mr. Kimble was a 1999 graduate of Pendleton County Middle High School.

He was an avid sports fan and enjoyed motocross, supercross, UNC Tar Heels basketball, Pittsburgh Steelers football, and NASCAR (especially Dale Earnhart).

His family was his entire world, and he loved spending time with them.

He was passionate about bringing awareness to people that had Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. He was an advocate for family and friends of Duchenne, The Jett Foundation and parent Project Muscular Dystrophy. He was an inspiration to the lives of those that were lucky enough to be his family or friend.

In addition to his mother and father, he leaves behind to cherish his memory a brother, Donnie (Ashley) Kimble of Ripley, New York; a sister, Kari (Coty) Sites of Upper Tract; his favorite nephew, Broty Sites; maternal grandmother, Frances Duley of Brandywine, Maryland; and several special aunts, uncles, and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his maternal grandfather, Joseph A. Duley, Jr.; and paternal grandparents, Reginal W. Kimble and Twila A. Kimble.

In honoring his wishes, he was generous in donating his body to West Virginia University Medical Science to benefit humanity by advancing medical education.

Memorials may be made to Jett Foundation, 390 Circuit St., Norwell, MA 02061 or online at [www.jettfoundation.org](http://www.jettfoundation.org) or to Upper Tract Fire and Rescue.

Memories and words of comfort may be left at [www.basagic.com](http://www.basagic.com).

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## Eastern Recognizes Pendleton County Students

Multiple Pendleton County residents achieved academic honors during the Fall 2025 semester at Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College in Moorefield.

Earning President’s List honors, which requires completing 12 or more credit hours with a 4.0 grade point average, were Aubree Keiter, Nancy Miller, Jacob Mitchell, Myra Mitchell, Leah Nesselrodt, Miranda Simon, and Sarah Zirkle.

Dean’s List recipients, earned for completing nine or more credit hours with at least a 3.5 grade point average, were Madison Arbaugh, Breena Bowers, Selena Hedrick, Lauren Jones, William Owens, Emily Poling, Shana Price, Carolyn Varner, Amber Verdoni, and Isabelle Zirkle.

Visit [Pendletontimes.com](http://Pendletontimes.com)

January Is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month!

Did you know...

•Cervical cancer is a disease in which cells in the cervix grow out of control.

•Each year 13,000 women in the U.S. will get cervical cancer, over 4,000 will die.

•It occurs most often in women over age 30.

•HPV causes cervical cancer.

•Any type of sexual contact transfers HPV.

•The HPV vaccination is recommended for girls and boys ages 11-26.

•All women should begin cervical cancer screening starting at age 21.

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## OBITUARIES CONT.

### Ernest Carroll Propst, 82

Ernest Carroll Propst, 82 of Stephens City, Virginia, passed away on Jan. 13, 2026, at Winchester Medical Center in Winchester, Virginia.

Mr. Propst was born in 1943 in Glen Dale and was the son of the late William and Elva Propst.

He graduated with his bachelor's degree in education from Shepherd University. He retired from working in the federal government in logistics.

He was a member of Spirit and Word Fellowship Church. He enjoyed hunting and was a member of the Izaak Walton League.

His wife, Virginia, whom he married on

June 15, 1968, survives.

Also surviving are daughters, Marcia Brackbill (Randy) and Mary Blowe (Dennis); grandchildren, Benjamin Brackbill, Garrett Brackbill, Meghan Blowe and Rachael Blowe; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He was also preceded in death by his sister, Ruth Royston; and his brother, Ralph Propst. Services will be private.

Memorial contributions may be made in his memory to the Izaak Walton League of Winchester at iwla.org.

The obituary and tribute wall can be found at ompsfuneralhome.com.

**Thank You For Reading  
The Pendleton Times**



Pendleton County Middle/High School November students of the month are, from left, Landen Champ, Kiera Heavener and Lainey Simmons.

### Champ, Heavener, Simmons Named PCM/HS Students of the Month

Landen Champ, Kiera Heavener and Lainey Simmons have been named outstanding students of the month for November at Pendleton County Middle/High School.

Champ, a senior, is the Academic Student of the Month. He is the son of Steve and Kenna Champ of Upper Tract. He is a member of the Christ Central Youth Group. He works for Lone Maple Construction. He likes to hunt, work on vehicles, and spend time with his family and friends. His plans are to go to school to become a traveling lineman.

Heavener of Circleville

is the James Huffman Responsible Student of the Month at PCHS. A senior, she is the daughter of Jarod Heavener and Brandy Bland. She is a member of the student council, National Honor Society, FFA, and pep club. She is on the All-A Honor Roll and is a member of the basketball team. She enjoys gardening, hunting, and reading. She likes to draw and paint and has received several awards at local fairs for her art. She plans to take a gap year before going to college for business and marketing, and art. She wants to expand her knowledge about art and start her own busi-

ness.

Pendleton County Middle School presents Simmons as the Student of the Month. An eighth grader, she is the granddaughter of Debbie and Daniel Propst of Franklin. She loves to read and draw. Her extracurriculars include wrestling and student council. Her goal after high school is to go to college, majoring in fine arts and foreign language.



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### MEMORIAM

**Robert "R.C." Nash**  
April 9, 1937 - January 22, 2015

*Those we love don't go away,  
they walk beside us every day.  
Unseen, unheard, but always near,  
so loved, so missed, so very dear.*

**We will  
Love you always and Miss you forever!**

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWN OF FRANKLIN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The West Virginia Community Development Block Grant program provides funding for projects that improve communities where lower income people live. Program objectives include supporting local efforts to: 1) provide affordable water and sewer systems that affect environmental quality, public health, or economic development and 2) help lower income people to achieve an improved quality of life by increasing access to community facilities, services, and housing. The state will grant funds to local governments whose projects 1) benefit low and moderate-income people, 2) aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight, or 3) meet an urgent need that poses an immediate threat to public health and welfare.

The Town of Franklin is considering applying to the West Virginia Community Development Block Grant Program. The purpose of this meeting is to obtain citizen input, comments, or opinions related to activities that the Town should include in an application seeking PY2025 State/HUD Community Development Grant funding for a planning grant for sewer plant upgrades.

A public meeting will be held on January 30, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Town Office meeting room located at 305 North High Street, Franklin, WV. All residents of the community are invited to attend the meeting and to comment on community development and housing needs. The Region 8 PDC will use comments to prepare a Regional Development Plan that the community has previously used to meet federal planning requirements.

"It is a policy of all of the above agencies not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, religion, age, familial status and handicapped status in employment or the provision of services."







# Locals Can Huddle in the Cold to Rekindle Quaint Dialect

## Sugar Grove

By Paula Mitchell

This cold spell has found the residents in Sugar Grove huddling in burrows to keep warm. This weather has been testing endurance and pioneer fortitude; but then, there are reminders that West Virginians are survivors.

It is true that the forefathers were not afraid of hardship. That blood running through the veins can certainly adapt to adverse conditions. In fact, some cling to the dialect that was common a generation or so ago.

To mean a large amount, the word “slue” was used. Such as, “We caught a slue of fish.” Not too many years ago, “galluses” were used, not suspenders. Clothes were packed in a “poke” or small suitcase.

There were a lot of expressions that meant to beat someone up, such as, “I’ll clean his clock for him,” and who could blame him if someone hit him “smack-dab” in the face with his fist?

When someone visits and they are taking their leave, one always says, “Come back, you all.” It is an invitation to visit again, and meant sincerely. The writer has even heard more “clever” used when someone visits. “They sure are ‘clever’ about the house” which meant they were friendly and hospitable.

Some words were taboo; they were too sacred to use in ordinary conversation. Instead of saying “God” or “Lord,” the term “The Good Man” was used instead. “God” or “Lord” were used in prayer or in church.

Times have changed; the speech has changed.

Life’s instructions include the following:

1. Listen to old people.
2. Hug a friend.
3. Giggle with children.
4. Take lots of naps.
5. Swing as high as a person can on a swing set.

Quotes for the week are as follows:

“I hope you live a life that you’re proud

of, and if you find that you’re not, I hope you have the strength to start over.” — F. Scott Fitzgerald

“January sees past mistakes with kinder eyes, offering new paths from lessons learned.” — Eleanor Roosevelt

“There’s a thin line between to laugh with and to laugh at.” — Richard Pryor

“I think I’ve discovered the secret of life—you hang around until you get used to it.” — Charles Schulz

“We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.” — Joseph Campbell

Clickety-clacks for the chin waggars are as follows:

- Cat grief can last for up to six months after another or human passes away.
- Greenland is colder than Iceland.
- Flamingos are pink due to eating shrimp.
- China was the first country to use paper money.

• The Great Barrier Reef, an Australian formation, can be seen from space.

The fireplace is the best place to hear the “Talk of The Grove.”

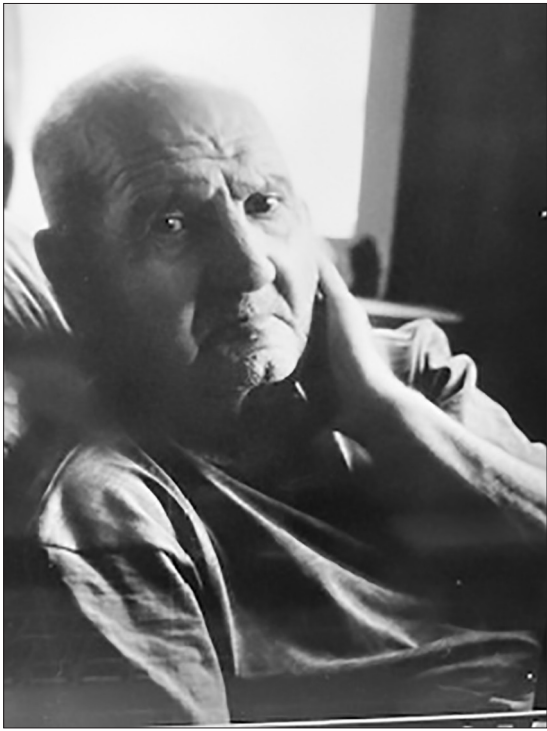
Saturday, some of Charles Anderson’s work buddies, Jonny Lee Puffenbarger and Jason Wisman, came from Virginia. He hadn’t seen them in more than 25 years. A good time was had by all.

On Friday, Bob and Marti Fisher of Romney were visiting and enjoyed lunch in the home of Willard and Judy Rader.

William and Donna Arrington had dinner with Robin and Mike DelBiondo Saturday evening at their red barn on Little Stony. The DelBiondoes made the barn into a beautiful home.

Weekend visitors of Tom and Paula Mitchell and Brandon, Cara, Macie, Carson, and Carly Mitchell were Richard and Mary Helon Ziehl of Huntingtown, Maryland, Rich and Alexis Ziehl of Edgewater, Maryland, Cary and George Hevener and Barry and Jacqueline Ziehl of Simi Valley, California.

Nashland recently hosted a “birthday soiree” when Vickie Nash of Fredericksburg,



*Samuel Henry Moats, Sr. (March 23, 1892 - June 2, 1973) was the son of Harvey (July 13, 1848 – April 1910) and Elizabeth Margaret “Betsy” Smith Moats (May 1855 - Nov. 14, 1929). He was the husband of Martha Rona “Mattie” Eckard (March 20, 1899 - Sept. 5, 1993). They are buried at the St. Michael Lutheran Church Cemetery.*

Virginia, came to celebrate with Helen for their mutual birthday. Todd Nash of Kinston, North Carolina, also came to join the festivities. Helen appreciated all of the birthday greetings, cards, phone calls, messages, and gifts commemorating her special day.

Birthdays include Wayne Price, 18th; Andy Hott Collins, 19th; Cary Hevener and Zion Brubeck, 20th; Noah Nelson and Catherine Eye, 21st; Jackie Smith and John Dorsey, 22nd; Charles Kiser, 24th; Myra Mitchell and Scott Rightsell. 25th; Violet Eye and Sue Ann Sites, 26th; Jarrod Nelson, Marian Williams Smith and Brandon Simmons, 27th; Jamie Hoover, 28th; Lainey Simmons and Nancy Pitsenbarger, 30th; and Jamie Watson, 31st.

Concerns are for the Mike Adams family, Charles Anderson, the Alfred Armstrong

family, Joan and Roger Ashley, Mike Baker, Dave Basagic, Allen Beachler, Bobby Bodkin, “Bo” Boggs, the John Burns family, Larry Byers, Doreen Calhoun, Joyce Calhoun, Marie Cole, Kim Crane, the Ronnie Crisco family, Stanley Dahmer, Kim Davis, Tommy Davis, Phil Downs, Steve Durham, Jennifer Errett, Isaac Eye, Mary Eye, Carl Gant, David Gillispie, Nan Goland, Kevin Gonshor, Patsy Green, JC Hammer, Wayne Harman, Steve and Arm-manda Heavner, Hannah Hedrick, Jack and Starr Hedrick, Chuck and Tracy Hiett, Jim Hiner, Evan Hise, Tim Hively, Edsel and Mary Ann Hogan, Karen Holsten, Julia Homan, Charlie Marie Hoover, Keith Hoover, the Debbie Horst family, Bob and Cynthia Hurry, Mike and Lisa Jamison, Linda Jones, Richard Judy, Marsha Keller, Tara Kelley, Ruth Kile, Kim Kline, Tracie Knight, Laura Kropp, Melissa Lambert, Robert Lambert, Rex Landis, Shannon Maloy, Donna Mallow, Roger and Skip Mal-low, Audree Marsh, Yvonne Marsh, Anna Mauzy, Ed May, Dave McConnell, Gene and Joan McConnell, Gary McDonald, Rose Miller, Bruce Minor, the Carroll Mitchell family, the Curtis Mitchell family, Dottie Mitchell, Dennis and Jamie Mitchell, Tom Mitchell, Barbara Moats, Gloria Moats, Sherri Moyers, Helen Nash, Aaron Nelson, Dominique Nelson, Dwight Nelson, Ruth Nelson, Cheryle Paine, Terri Parker, Andy Pond, Wayne Price, Janice Propst, Alda Propst, Mike Propst, Sheldon Propst, Eldon “Butch” Puffenbarger, Tom Rader, Willard Rader, Linda Reese, Jason Rexrode, Jimmy Rexrode, Linda Fay Rexrode, Vesta Ruck-man, Bernie Sasscer, Annie Simmons, Erin Simmons, Eva Simmons, Greg Simmons, Judy Simmons, Nelson Simmons, Tonya Simon, Robbie Sites, Mike Skiles, Bruce Smith, Ed and Carolyn Smith, Iva Smith, Natalie Stephenson, Tina Stuben, Steve Stump, Carolyn Thomas, Riley Thompson, Linda and Larry Vandevander, the Judy Vetter family, Peggy Wade, Junior Waggy, Mary Louise Waldschlager, Rene White, Sherry Wilfong, Judy Williams, Patty Wil-lis and Ann and Ed Wimer.

# SRRDA Supports Area Entrepreneurship

By Stephen Smoot

Sometimes a business starts off with an idea of how to do something better and mainly needs a bit of assistance to point the endeavor in the proper direction

Jamie Grove operates a history-based business occupying an interesting niche. From his home base in Virginia, Grove runs a company that, as he describes, “sells science and history artifacts.” The company has also printed a book and sends its materials worldwide, “thousands of items to different countries,” he noted.

Grove shared that for small businesses whose operations include boxing and shipping out to customers, “assembly is a key service.” Putting together a package and then shipping it takes time, which translates to more money spent or production dropping to accommodate the need to send.

He shared that “I was a client . . . for about 10 years” of a warehouse and custom packaging company that operated in the Pendleton Industrial Park in Upper Tract. Over time, Grove shared, “I started shipping more stuff and we grew over time.” He shared that “I want to do more of that.”

At a certain point, the original operator of the warehouse business planned to shut down after approximately a quarter century in business. Grove shared that he had done the packaging on his own at a point, but preferred to look for operations “able to do what I want.”

He explained on his company website that in 2015, he needed the right business partner to help him to package his company’s “mini museum” product. “The work was complicated,” described Grove, who added that “the product required attention to detail, including assembly and quality assurance. The items were sequentially numbered, and getting each individual item to the right person was absolutely critical. Further, there would be thousands of orders simultaneously, and everything would need to ship as quickly as possible.”

“In short, the project was a nightmare for any fulfillment company,” he explained, adding that he contacted several, but none had interest in his business needs. Almost as soon as they had figured on doing the work in house, “then, our printing partner suggested we take a drive into the heart of West Virginia and visit a little warehouse they had in a village named Upper Tract.”

Grove praised the work ethic and assistance of the warehouse staff, saying, “I found people who deeply cared about the customers they served and took a personal interest in the products that passed through their facility. They took immense pride in handling the merchandise and ensuring it was carefully packed. They were also intensely competitive and focused on overdelivering on expectations.” Then, the company that owned the warehouse indicated they would soon close down their Pendleton County operations.

One day he “contacted Sherry Mongold and asked if they would be interested in supporting an entrepreneurial experiment.”

Mongold serves as administrator of Seneca Rocks Regional Development Authority, an organization that combines the efforts of the Pendleton and Grant County Development Authorities. Each county development authority remains in place and is operational because they are the lawful recipient of certain grants. Both, however, ceded operational control of expanding economic development to SRRDA.

Grove proposed that he assume control of operations from the original operator and continue providing warehouse, packaging, and shipping services from that location. He would even keep as many of the same staff as possible to ensure continuity of operations. Some

clients of the former owner elected to stay with Grove as he established Innovative Distribution.

“Following (the original owner’s) decision to down-size,” explained Mongold, “we collaborated closely with Jamie to help him secure this building.” She added that SRRDA also worked to help adapt the building space to Grove’s needs “including addressing long-overdue maintenance for the facility.”

Two years later, Initiative Distribution continues to operate a prosperous business while providing jobs for locals. Grove said that they “ship tens of thousands of packages every year” and are still adding clients and, from time to time, expanding their workforce. Accommodating client needs also has meant adapting new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and processes for custom work.

“The biggest thing is that we appreciate the support from the community,” shared Grove. He added, “Positive vibes are the big thing.”



*These racks installed to serve a new client in April show the scale of Initiative Distribution’s operation in Upper Tract.*

Mongold stated that Initiative Distribution has served as a solid local corporate citizen, saying, “His company has been wonderful to work with and he takes great pride in our county.”

“We are proud to represent Pendleton County to the world,” Grove added.

# WVU Physicians Urge Caution as Whooping Cough Cases Continue to Rise

Two West Virginia University physicians are encouraging people to recognize the early symptoms of pertussis, or whooping cough, so they can take precautions and seek treatment, when necessary, to avoid further spread of the infection.

Since early November, the number of identified cases of whooping cough in the Mountain State has increased to a magnitude not seen since 2010, as reported by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health.

Dr. Matt Lokant, assistant professor of infectious diseases, WVU School of Medicine, and WVU Medicine internist, and Dr. Lisa Costello, associate professor of general pediatrics, WVU School of Medicine, and WVU Medicine Golisano Children’s hospitalist, are available to discuss symptoms, risks and preventive measures.

Whooping cough is caused by the bacteria Bordetella pertussis, which spreads through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes and talks. People in close contact, sharing spaces including houses, apartments, dorm rooms, enclosed areas or classrooms, are at higher risk for spreading whooping cough.

Lokant said, “People at highest risk for the infection and complications are those without prior whooping cough vaccination or an up-to-date booster, those with weakened immune systems, persons who are pregnant and infants less than 12 months old.

“The early symptoms of whooping cough are similar to the common cold: runny nose, mild cough and fever. After one to two weeks, the cough may worsen, causing a ‘whooping’ sound when inhaling and difficulty breathing. Coughing fits can cause vomiting.

“For cold-like symptoms, you should stay home and avoid close contact with others, especially infants. To prevent further spread of respiratory infections, wash your hands

often, wear a mask if you have symptoms and need to be in public, and cover your mouth when coughing. It is important to seek medical care if there is any breathing difficulty, violent coughing fits — especially with ‘whooping’ sound or vomiting, suspected exposure to whooping cough or severe dehydration. Dehydration can be seen with dizziness, dry mouth, and not tolerating food and water.”

Costello added, “Infants tend to be the most severely impacted because their airways are small and their immune systems are still developing. Pertussis can cause intense coughing fits that can interrupt breathing or even cause breathing pauses, or apnea, in infants. This difficulty in breathing can cause lack of oxygen to the brain.

“Complications of pertussis include pneumonia, especially a high risk in infants, seizures, brain inflammation, dehydration, low oxygen levels and, in very severe cases, even death.

“Whooping cough is best treated in the early stages with antibiotics. Preventive antibiotics may be recommended for those who have come in close contact with someone confirmed to have the infection. Drinking fluids and monitoring breathing are also very important. Hospital care, including oxygen support and IV fluids, may be needed for some, particularly for infants or severe cases.

“If left untreated, the infection can eventually resolve, but it may take weeks or months. The coughing fits can last for more than 10 weeks. People who don’t seek treatment are contagious for longer periods. Infants left untreated are at increased risk for complications.

“Staying up to date on immunizations is the safest way to protect against pertussis. Getting vaccinated and treating whooping cough early protects you and vulnerable groups. Pregnant women who get vaccinated can pass the protection to their baby. It’s also important to get health information from trusted sources.”



# Mountain Lions Bring Solid Effort, Succumb to Wildcat Pressure

By Stephen Smoot

The Mountain Lions of Tucker County this season have seen themselves in an unfamiliar position in that they are not occupying their normal summit in the Potomac Highlands boys' basketball realm. Last week, they braved a blizzard to come to Franklin to try and tame the surging Pendleton County Wildcats.

A Wednesday night packed house watched a display of basketball from both sides that showed the battling, but also the beautiful side of the game. Those "old schoolers" saw what basketball purists love the most.

Both teams fought ferociously, but cleanly. Both teams ran sophisticated offenses that executed well because both teams know how to make the extra pass to find the open man, usually near the basket. Both teams played tight and aggressive defense. Both coaches made moves and counter-moves through the game to try to wring an advantage.

When all was said and done, Pendleton County took a win they badly wanted over a rival that has made a recent habit of prevailing in these contests.

Tucker County took the opening tip. For almost two minutes the teams danced like heavyweight contenders at the start of a match, feeling each other out. Cashton Kisamore, a force underneath all night, took a pass inside, earned a foul, and hit one of two with 6:13 left in the first. Chase Owens not long after drove hard to the basket and kicked it out to Travis Owens for a three-point shot and a 4-0 lead.

At 5:13, Chase Owens hit a corner three. Tucker County hoisted up their own three that hit nothing but a Wildcat rebounder's hands. At about the five-minute mark, Chase Owens pump faked a defender out of position, then shot another three-pointer in his face for a 10-0 lead to the absolute delight of the crowd.

Pendleton County, as it has all season, likes to keep opponents guessing on their defense. The Wildcats switched often between its defenses. Tucker County used high low sets and crisp passing to find open spots in the Wildcat zone and picks to get separation from the relentless man to man.

Tucker County shot well. Pendleton County shot better.

The Mountain Lions roared out of the timeout, fighting to blunt the Wildcat momentum and right their own ship. They did so, scoring seven straight in 1:45 to pull within three. Chase Owens then poured cold water in their sparkling champagne with a psychologically punishing three. He repeated the feat at the opening of the second off a Jaydon Hess pass to set the lead at 16-7.

Pendleton County opened the second in a one-two-two zone. Tucker County kept the pace, scoring five on two shots to pull within, 16-12. Kisamore took a pass to the post, muscled past defenders, and laid the ball in from a foot away.

The next score came from even closer. Chase Owens slipped a pass to a cutting Travis Owens, who took the ball, elevated, and threw down a two-handed dunk to the loud approval of the crowd. At 4:45 left in the first half, the



Jaydon Hess extends to fire a pass inside around a Tucker County defender. Photo courtesy of Light in Motion.

visiting team found itself down eight, but by 3:37 they had closed the gap to three again.

Pendleton County then went on a nine to four run to close the half. Highlights included Travis Owens firing a ball out to Henry Warner for a three. Warner closed out the half with two free throws, putting his squad up 29-21.

Great programs down at the half surge when the second commences and this game was no different. Tucker County outscored the home team 11 to six from the opening of the quarter until the 4:43 mark when a Mountain Lion three closed the lead to 35-33.

In past seasons, when Tucker County surged they broke through and seized momentum. Pendleton County on this night found a way to make the plays to keep the opposition at bay.

Hess drove past the defense and deftly flipped in a layup. Kisamore blocked a shot, which led to another Chase Owens three. Every time the Sisyphean Mountain Lions mightily pushed the boulder to the top of the hill, the Wildcats would shove it right back down.

By the end of the third quarter, the Wildcat strategy shifted. Tucker County, in Bobby Knightlike fashion, never switched out of their man defense. Josh Owens, head coach, observing how they defended Hess, called for clearouts. All the Wildcat players stood outside the three-point line,

their defenders following. Hess took the ball to the top of the key, one man on him. Every time, Hess broke down his man to get either a good shot or a foul.

Had Tucker County switched to a zone, the Pendleton County shooters would have buried them in three-point shots. The Wildcats put pressure on the opposing team that they could not adjust to as the third quarter ended and the final started.

Tucker County closed the lead to six at the end of the third. Hess countered by drawing a double team on his drive, then dropping a pass to a cutting Kisamore for a layup and a 52-44 lead. The visiting team dropped a three to close the gap to 52-47. Hess missed a shot that Chase Owens rebounded, then basically told Hess "try it again" by kicking it out to him. That time the point guard's shot was true and lifted the lead to eight again with 6:57 left.

From about the 2:30 minute mark to the last seconds of the game, Tucker County pushed hard to grind its way back into the lead and break the hearts of the home squad. They found themselves down 65-55. Over a 1:30 span from there, however, they played their man defense as tight as one could dare, then took advantage of numerous free throw opportunities to cut the advantage to 65-61 with a little over 50 seconds left.

One good omen of luck that led to nothing, but remains worth mentioning, Travis Owens snatched a rebound under the basket. Not too unusual, except for the fact that he was lying flat on his back looking straight up. Unfazed and still on his back, he pitched the ball outside to keep the possession alive.

Tucker County wrested away a steal, but missed the layup. They fouled Kisamore immediately and he made one of two. At 42 seconds, the visitors hit a 10-foot jump shot, making it a one score game, 66-63. Inexplicably, they promptly fouled Chase Owens, who hit one of two to make it a two possession game once again. After missing a three on their next possession, the Mountain Lions put Travis Owens on the line. He scored on both attempts, extending the lead to 69-63 with 24.2 left.

Travis Owens stole the inbound pass to finally close the door. One last free throw ended the scoring at 70-63.

Chase Owens sliced and diced the Mountain Lions with 27 points, including six for nine from three. Kisamore also brought a monster game. He hit seven of 10 from the field for a total of 17 points. He also hauled down 11 rebounds. Hess had 12 points and eight assists. Travis Owens and Warner both scored seven.

"I'm very proud of the kids," shared Coach Owens. He first discussed improving free throw shooting with some misses coming in the final minute, but added, "We played great defense and did not let them shoot us out of the gym."

As of last night, Max Preps has Pendleton County eighth in Class A and Tucker County at 11. One score of note, Bridgeport last week defeated Lincoln at Shinnston 50 to 35. Pendleton County beat the same team in the same gym 50 to 43.

## WV State Legislators Pledge to Halt 'Death Spiral' from Open Transfer Rule

By Stephen Smoot

"Once a school gets into a situation where athletes are transferring out, it's a death spiral."

Delegate Dana Ferrell, (R-Kanawha) shared this point with WSAZ, a television station serving Charleston and Huntington. He refers to a now three-year-old rule allowing athletes to transfer from one high school to another without eligibility penalty.

"In scholastic sports, that was all about being part of your community, working with teammates through the good and the bad." He then referred to the hypothetical too often made real, where a parent-coach confrontation can lead to a situation where a player will "shop themselves somewhere else."

For more than four decades, Donnie Kopp prowled the sidelines and also had a legendary career as a head coach. He won titles in basketball at Washington Irving High School, then took a strong Pendleton County team to the state tournament last season before retiring.

"I grew up playing in the 70s," said Kopp. "If you don't play in your school district, you don't play." He further stated that "you should never place sports above doing the right thing."

Gary Smith, a member of the West Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame and a 35-year head coach for Franklin, then Pendleton County High School, said, "I'm not in favor of it. There's not any room for it. You need guidelines and sidewalls instead of a free for all."

Wayne Ryan, West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission executive

director, agrees that the current permissive law causes problems. He noted two major problems. First, student-athletes who came up together playing in youth leagues and middle schools suddenly lose positions in high school to players transferring in.

Kopp does not oppose academic based transfers, but argues that "I have many friends from Clarksburg who moved during high school, not to play for a better team necessarily, but because the parents had to, or wanted to, move. It made no difference; they still had to sit out for a calendar year."

The second issue Ryan brought up lay in the effect that open transfers have had on competition overall. "It's made some of the 'haves' have more and the 'have nots' have less," noted Ryan. He added to WSAZ that he opposes "the stacking of so-called all star teams."

Two ideals come into conflict on the issue. Advocates believe that a student-athlete should have no barriers to pursue opportunities anywhere he or she might find them. That said, those who oppose the rule point out, as Ryan does, that "it's also impacted communities."

Traditionally high school sports provide a center space for adults and youth to celebrate community. Keyser High School athletes, regardless of sport, yell "Keyser Pride" when taking the court, track, field, mat, or other sporting situation. With former KHS athletes serving in local police, fire services, or even joining the military in significant numbers, a correlation between instilled community pride and public service could exist.

While Republicans in the West Virginia

Legislature and the WVSSAC director argue to alter the rules, some doubt that the open transfer rule for high school students will

disappear. Said Smith, "It's a problem, no doubt about it, but I don't think it's going anywhere."

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## Lady Wildcats Win in Overtime at Moorefield



Tia Heavner challenges the Moorefield defense. Susan Vincell had a huge night with 20 points and 22 rebounds in the win over the Yellow Jackets, 62-54. Photo courtesy of Light in Motion.



# Annual Governor’s Energy Summit Includes PJM Report

By Stephen Smoot

Last month, West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey headlined the State Office of Energy’s Annual Summit. This brings together all elements of the power generation and distribution sector that relate to West Virginia to provide an update and also discuss the future.

One of the main foci lay in the presentation from Asim Z. Haque, senior vice president of PJM. PJM is a non profit entity that controls distribution in part or all of 13 states with a territory stretching from the Atlantic Coast to the Mississippi River. It covers the entirety of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland, the first three states to be served by it. West Virginia, Virginia, Delaware, the District of Columbia, and almost all of Ohio rely on PJM. The organization also serves the eastern half of Kentucky and bits of Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois around the Chicago area.

“The primary task,” says the PJM website, is “to ensure the safety, reliability, and security of the bulk electric power system.” That includes knowing “customer needs” while providing “valued service to meet those needs in a cost-efficient manner.” Its goal of reducing costs comes through operating “robust, competitive, and non-discriminatory electric power markets.”

In essence, the mission lies in balancing the needs of maintaining a reliable grid and power access system while keeping the cost to the consumer as low as possible. This comes from PJM’s policy of ruthlessly purchasing only at the lowest price, regardless of source. It also works toward supporting policies at the government level to keep costs as low as possible.

PJM also works within a broader regional framework called the Eastern Interconnection.

While PJM does buy from natural gas, coal, wind, solar, and other sources, trends in 2025 pointed toward the rising efficiency of buying natural gas and solar generated power while coal and wind sources saw less purchases in recent months.

Haque discussed evaluations of system reliability undertaken by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation. PJM uses

the three levels of risk as a means to communicate the likelihood of a power shortfall in extreme cold or heat conditions when power use is at its highest.

“High risk” areas include many of the states bordering or near the Mississippi River through its entire length. It refers to the strong possibility that power production shortfalls will take place during normal conditions, as opposed to the extremes found in winter and summer.

Low risk areas will not likely see power interruptions from shortfalls of supply. Much of the Deep South east of Mississippi enjoys this status.

PJM and systems covering the Northeast and Pacific Coast see “elevated risk,” or the possibility that shortfalls may occur in extreme conditions, especially during winter and summer when vulnerable populations need reliable power the most.

One of the key elements driving the rise in power demand comes from construction of data centers to serve the expanding needs of the artificial intelligence industry. In the 21st century, its importance in securing a prosperous future and technological independence equals the 19th century need for steel mills, the coal mines that provided the energy, and the railroads that connected them.

Just as passing on building the infrastructure to support steel would have surrendered the next century to the Germans, not investing in data centers represents a cession of power to countries like Communist China or Russia working to expand their capabilities to first in the world.

To function, AI needs secure and reliable sources of energy, facilities to operate, and transmission lines to connect producers of power to consumers.

During 2025, West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey rolled out a number of big picture policies designed to put the Mountain State at the center of efforts to expand capacity to meet demand. This effort dovetails with PJM’s decision to “jump start” the evaluation and approval process in its “transition cycle.”

The “50 by 50” plan, for example, envisions expanding West Virginia power production from its current 15 gigawatts to 50 by 2050.

In comparison, Pennsylvania has a capacity of just under that currently while Texas leads the nation at just under 170. Morrisey noted that “I recognize it is ambitious. I recognize it will be challenging, if not downright difficult. But we have no choice. Just as our government did during World War II, we have the patriotic duty, the solemn obligation, to meet this challenge head-on.”

Expanding capacity will require capital to construct in the short-term, but will provide a high enough supply to meet needs and also keep prices down for all consumers.

Since October, the governor has touted several major and key investments to boost power production as quickly as possible. At the summit, he announced a \$70 million investment from Diversified Energy to plug old wells for environmental considerations, a \$1.2 billion 625 MW power plant in Harrison County with 805 construction jobs, a First Energy \$2.5 billion facility with a \$1.2 billion ground-based energy plant (the term “fossil fuels” is outdated since science now knows that hydrocarbon energy resources also percolate up from deep in the Earth) and also a 70 MW solar facility. Mon Power will spend \$1.44 billion to upgrade its key coal-fired plants.

In two months, these and other pledged investments totaled \$4.17 billion and almost 4,200 jobs while increasing capacity by nearly two GW. The State of West Virginia only put in \$1 million to promote this series of investments, a miniscule percentage of the total level of private sector spending proposed. These announcements did not include solar farms proposed and under construction in the Potomac Highlands.

Additionally, transmission line operators

“overbuilt” in the 1970s to ensure proper capacity for decades to come. Now the system is reaching its limits and proposed new lines constructed by Dominion will connect current and future power production facilities in North Central West Virginia with both data centers built in state and also meet the demands of the National Capital Region. Most power will be generated by American Electric Power and First Energy.

The purpose of the lines shall be to “strengthen electric reliability across the 13-state PJM region over the next decade.”

Haque also described West Virginia’s growing expected power needs. He shared that summer peak demand will grow by just over three percent per year while that of winter will rise by just under four.

PJM suggested that its member states’ agencies that oversee utilities, such as the West Virginia Public Service Commission, or state legislatures themselves, examine the distribution of how customers pay for the improvements. Expanded capacity will lead to more stable rates, but paying for that capacity could bring up prices in the relative short term.

Indeed, many critics oppose data center development on some level based on these fears.

“Costs can be allocated away from residential and small business customers,” stated Haque, “and toward other customer classes more directly driving tightening supply.” In other words, PJM is suggesting that states adjust rate regulations so that the cost of capacity expansion falls more on major corporations, especially those connected to data centers.

## Resident Recalls Events of 2025

As we prepare to say goodbye to 2025 and look forward to 2026, I think back to some of this past year’s events.

December of 2024 was a cold month until just a few days before the new year. With temperatures in the mid to high 30s, we weren’t ready for what we would wake up to in a few days.

Some of the coldest mornings that we had all winter came the second week of January and continued for about two weeks. Then the temperatures rose again to the mid-30s with Feb. 6 hitting 50 degrees. The old saying, “this is the calm before the storm,” was to hold true.

On Feb. 6, the second of two ice storms that I remember hitting our area, the Thorn Creek, happened. This was by far the worst of the two—the other happening on an Easter morning many years ago.

I was awakened in the early morning to hard rain and wind blowing. Being an early riser most mornings, 4:00 to 5:00 am, I got up and realized that the rain wasn’t quite so hard any longer.

I did my morning devotions and was having a cup of coffee when the electric went off. I have a whole house generator, and the lights were back in seconds.

The news was warning of possible freezing rain but when I opened the front door, I could hardly believe what I was seeing. Everything was covered with a coat of ice! The rain had stopped, and it was like everything was quick frozen.

I made my way across the road to feed the cats and all the while I could hear limbs and trees falling. I put ice-melt on the steps to get back down and on the blacktop so I could get back in my yard and to my porch.

I called my sister who lives on the Doe Hill Road to see what was happening at her house. Doe Hill Road was blocked at numerous places with many trees from Moyers to the Highland County line. There was no way of driving from one point to the other.

The rescue squad was called to go to a house where a tree had fallen on it. They of course could not get there—thankfully no one was injured.

Most of the timber had been logged from this area years ago and what was left would be logged in the future. Not anymore!

One section of Thorn Mountain was hit hard. Everyone who drove that way after the

road was partly cleared, said it looked like a war zone. The trees stood like toothpicks all the way to the top of the mountain. There were no tops in the trees and few limbs left on the trunks.

Unlike the flood of 1985 that swept everything away, the ice brought down the timber where it was standing. The habitat for much wildlife changed or was completely gone.

The farmers, along with help from neighbors and loggers, spent weeks cutting trees off fences, repairing fences for miles, and cutting firewood for the next season. I have often said that farming is a hard job with little pay or rewards.

Many of the fences destroyed were the line fences—the fences that separate one farm from the neighbor’s farm. The cost of putting up new fence is quite expensive, and to look out and see new fence, old fence—regardless of the age lying on the ground, broken and tangled with timber lying across this mess—was heartbreaking.

The power company worked for days with help from other crews from another county, to restore electricity. The state road crews worked for weeks and months to get parts of trees and limbs out of the ditches and off the road banks. There are still places where the big ditches aren’t completely cleaned.

We moved from a hard, rough weather event in February to spring, and then to summer that brought a lot of rain to Pendleton County.

The pastures and hay fields were the best they have been in a few years, but there was one problem—the fields stayed so wet that the first cutting hay couldn’t be made unless on higher ground. A lot of first cutting hay couldn’t be made until July and some even in August.

Farmers were concerned that there would not be a second cutting of hay until September, if then. Our abundant rainfall wouldn’t last.

Much of Pendleton County went into a hard drought and not just in the Thorn Creek area. Some farmers would start feeding hay early in October because the pasture was gone.

The hope was that the county would get much needed rain before the cold weather and freezing temperatures set in. I am pleased to say that we did get some good measurable rain near the end of October and into

November.

As I close this article we are in the middle of December and it is almost a repeat of December 2024. There have been two measurable snowfalls and many mornings with freezing temperatures.

One morning things were covered with ice, slick roads, school delays and closings, and today we are experiencing an Arctic blast of cold air with the temperature at 10 degrees in mid-afternoon. One might say this is pay-back for the mild winters we had several years ago.

What will winter 2026 be like? I am not a fan of winter weather so I would much prefer milder weather. One thing is for certain, we will all have to deal with whatever the days might hold.

You might ask why certain areas receive such devastation and harsh winter weather while surrounding areas do not. I can’t give an answer.

I do know that residents that live just a few miles away in every direction could hardly believe that the Thorn Creek was hit with such an ice storm. A lot of credit is given to the sun that took over and within hours had melted the ice. The residents would now take over and restore their area as much as they possibly could.

We watch the news each day and see that someone, somewhere, is going through a devastating weather event and we think how do those people go on with their lives. People help people! God created each one of us in His image less we forget why we are on this earth and what our work is to be.

An update on a previous article—The Ruthless Ravens:

Mrs. Raven and the two children seem to have moved on. Mr. Raven was on vacation for a few weeks but returned to continue his mischievous ways. After a few days of mischief, Mr. Raven seems to have moved on. Maybe, Mrs. Raven told him it was time to join the family for the winter.

Violet R. Eye

## The 1400 Floor Supports West Virginia’s Smallest and Most Challenged Counties

By Stephen Smoot

In the formulas used to fund school systems across the state, some counties have student populations that fall beneath the capacity of both the state aid formula and local tax revenues to support. Many aspects of State of West Virginia aid to schools rely on funding certain numbers of personnel per thousand students, as well as taking into account local tax revenues and other adjustments.

Certain basic costs form a part of every school system’s budget and impose budgetary burdens. Differing economies of scale between more and less populated counties create larger relative burdens for systems in less populated or sparsely populated counties that put smaller counties at a disadvantage.

In 2008, the West Virginia State Legislature passed a bill highlighting an innovation crafted to address those issues and create balances that addressed smaller systems’ disadvantages.

Prior to this, according to a 2012 Pendleton Times article, support for such schools came piecemeal through appropriations from the former Budget Digest. No longer in use, the Budget Digest was assembled behind closed doors by the Legislature. It mimicked the “earmark” process followed by the United States Congress until that was discontinued, then resurrected as the more transparent “congressionally delegated spending.”

The Legislature also allows funds to each state senator or delegate to direct as desired to district needs.

That said, officials saw a need for a permanent solution rather than stopgap help. From that came the “1,400 floor” which currently benefits 12 school systems in the state: Pendleton, Pocahontas, Tucker, Webster, Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Gilmer, Pleasants, Ritchie, Tyler, and Wirt.

In the final meeting of the Pendleton County Board of Education for 2025, J. P. Mowery, treasurer, explained how Pendleton County’s support through that would change. In doing so, he also illustrated how the system works as well.

Mowery also shares credit with former State Senator Walt Helmick and Delegate Harold Michael for its creation and also its passage. Mowery created the policy and, as the Times described in 2012, “did the heavy lifting in Charleston.” Helmick and Michael, chairs of the finance committees in their respective chambers, carried the argument into the Legislature.

Michael praised Pendleton County Schools at the time for having “been great stewards of taxpayer dollars.”

Initially, seven counties benefited.

“It’s a little bit convoluted, but once you look at it, it makes more sense,” Mowery shared

with attendees at the recent school board meeting. The funding mechanism begins with the notion of creating the 1,400 floor, providing added funding schools with less than that amount with ratios based upon that amount.

“Everything is tied to Pocahontas County,” he started. Pocahontas County serves as the school system in the state with the fewest students per square mile. It also faces the challenge of serving low numbers of students in a geographically expansive area, much like Pendleton and Webster.

Until this year, Pendleton and Pocahontas occupied the same tier of funding with approximately the same number of students per square mile even with differing numbers of students. Pocahontas County in the past year lost enough students, going from 918 to 848 (while obviously keeping the same number of square miles) that it “pushed” Pendleton off the benchmark of 1,400. Pendleton County’s nine charter school student numbers, while not counted for funding, do get included in the 1,400 floor tally.

Pendleton has a similar number of students, but fewer square miles. Pocahontas fell under one student per square mile while Pendleton remained above it. The difference between the two was enough to result in a loss of funding from that program.

Pendleton County currently is 551 students under 1,400. The formula multiplies that 551 by the ratio of Pocahontas County set 73.95 percent. Mowery explains that would put Pendleton at funding for 1,256 students, but that in 2019, the West Virginia State Legislature allowed counties to add 10 percent at this stage in the formula, (Mowery said at the time that it was “a pleasant surprise”) totaling 125, which raises the funding level from there to 1,382 students.

“That’s the first year since 2019-2020 that we will be below 1,400 students in the calculation because the multiplier of what we need to get to 1,400 is 73 percent,” stated Mowery. He then went on to add that the school system will face “a potential negative impact of \$148,772.39.”

Mowery reassured attendees, saying, “Obviously this is not ideal. It still allows us to maintain our system pretty consistently.” As per usual, however, he emphasized that such developments illustrate a need for the board of education to “be proactive” in monitoring such funding sources and their potential impact on the overall budget.

With the Legislature examining the overall state aid funding formula in next year’s session, those using the 1,400 floor may have concerns about its future. As to the future of the policy, however, Mowery told the board, “Tt’s been there. I don’t see it going anywhere. (Pendleton County Schools superintendent) Nicole (Hevener) has emphasized keeping that in place.”

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# Sugar Grove

*Continued From Page 1*

at Sugar Grove not succeeding. Mowery shared that by year five, LCP will employ approximately 500.

Until the state completes its processes of approval, most of the hiring has not taken place yet. That said, Mowery shared that some who have accepted jobs live in Pendleton County and resigned from jobs in Harrisonburg, Virginia, to come home for employment.

Treatment, recovery, and learning, however, must optimally take place in a locale where those needing help also feel safe. Both Ford and Mowery reiterated the importance of creating that condition of safety and how the location contributes.

Mowery, a three decade veteran of Pendleton County's emergency services, shared that the isolated facility's stunning scenic beauty will help to create the right environment. "No matter what room you are in anywhere on the base," Mowery, "you have a window where you can see natural beauty."

Overall, both emphasized the goal of "creating a safe

## Town of Franklin

*Continued From Page 1*

that makes us a target," he shared.

Franklin serves as the most upstream municipality on a branch of the Potomac River, making the sewer plant a focus of attention. Any discharge comes most of the length of the Potomac River and ends up in the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake Bay Agreement, of which West Virginia has been a part since Governor Cecil Underwood's second term, requires that Franklin and other local governments in the watershed have more stringent requirements than other towns in West Virginia.

"Federal regulations apply across the board," explained Wehrle. He added that they are set at the federal level and enforced by West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection.

During the last decade, the Mountain State has served as the best performing state in the entire Chesapeake Bay Region for stream cleanliness and quality. Improvements in local sewer infrastructure and the voluntary work done by poultry and other farmers to reduce nutrient release have both helped contribute to the success of the effort in West Virginia.

Town of Franklin officials have a high ammonia discharge level with which to contend and also expected upcoming limitations on phosphorous as well. As a result, the Town of Franklin has opted to replace its lagoon filtration system with a "package plant." The plant will put the Town in compliance with ammonia regulations. Additionally, the plant has a modular design that allows it to adapt easily as mandates change.

With members of the public on hand, Wehrle explained in detail the various options to the Town and why it chose the package plant.

When the federal government starts implementing phosphorous regulations, the Town of Franklin can simply have a module added that expands the plant's capability to meet them. Jarred Rawson, council member, added, "The modular one is still within the capacity of our current employees," meaning that the town need not hire any new workers with needed skill sets to run it.

Meeting mandates is not optional, explained Wehrle, "we have to do what they tell us."

Rawson and Wehrle also discussed the painful reality of smaller towns and the baseline cost of operating any water and sewer system. Rawson shared that "200 people are paying for everything" while Wehrle stated in frustration that "costs in the last five years are ridiculous."

Town of Franklin resident Jeff Shaver came to council to share his frustrations on communication. After Rawson and Wehrle expressed the difficulties incumbent in complying with federal and state regulations, Shaver stated that townspeople do not experience the frustrations of their local government officials.

"I don't see your frustration. All I see is another fee that I have to pay," Shaver shared.

Shaver proposed some ideas that town officials shared that they had explored to take care of certain issues. Those included the enforcement of town ordinances, such as those for noise. Wehrle explained that with no town law enforcement that the county and state police have the authority to enforce, but only county and state, not town, laws.

As the discussion continued, Rawson thanked Shaver and other members of the public for their input. He stated that "we're a council of six plus a mayor. We don't get public in here. The public coming is wonderful!" Rawson added that the Council appreciates ideas shared by the community.

Shaver expressed concerns that the impending one percent town sales tax would drive away young people to other towns. Town officials shared that Franklin was one of the last municipalities in the region to adopt one. They also explained that the tax only covered certain tangible items for sale and did not tax services provided.

Wehrle shared that neither town nor state officials could estimate what the town might collect, so it's impossible to predict what it will pay for.

Additionally, officials encouraged the public in general to get more involved with groups supporting the area. They specifically mentioned the Mon Forest Towns organization that meets monthly in the town hall.

Smith and Wehrle then spoke about Town of Franklin businesses that did not have a full understanding of the new sales tax. "We just assumed the state would notify the businesses and let them know," said Smith. She concluded that was a mistake and that "we should've sent information to the town . . . so they hear it from us and not from the state."

Wehrle stated that the town's focus on legal requirements for public communication "has basically given us this tunnel vision. We think that's public notice . . . but it's not getting the word out." Smith suggested using the newly updated town website as a central source of information about town government.

space." Sugar Grove lies far from other towns and cities. Sugar Grove has layers of boundaries, both natural and man-made, that reinforce a sense of safety and security within the iron fenced perimeter. "The idea is for those here to not feel like they are in an institution, but members of a community," explained Ford.

Many come to such facilities bereft of support from family or friends. Driving support systems away is common for those experiencing mental illness or drug addiction. Ford stated that "we are their family while they are working through this next chapter." She again referred back to the importance of environment, saying, "What we bring is a safe space. It's very calming."

"It's something to be a part of changing lives," added Ford.

That sense of community will be organic and expansive where possible. Ford described vocational training programs that "give kids and adults an opportunity to learn a skill" while also developing confidence and the senses of worth and hope.

For those with more broad-based educational needs, the facility will "work with the department of education "to provide certified schooling experiences for elementary, middle, and high school aged students."

Another aspect of the community model lies in how LCP will use base housing. Those meeting a certain level of criteria may live with other patients in the former base housing. Many of the homes will have three residents and staff present for 24 hours a day. The former barracks will be refitted for safety to house patients with more intense needs.

During the next five years, LCP plans to roll out a

## US-220 History

*Continued From Page 1*

Federal forces sparked massive fires in the dry late spring timber between there and Trout Rock, using the ancient element in desperation to slow the advancing Confederates. Irregular bands supporting the Federals deployed to the narrow confines of Trout Rock to help to aid in the escape.

To the likely delight of most of the residents of Franklin, the Federal forces wore the visage of defeat. They feared Confederate States forces coming down the South Branch, but also across North Fork Mountain from Circleville. When on May 13 Fremont brought reinforcements to the Pendleton County seat, illness had reduced their ranks from 10,000 to 6,000.

Desperate Federals urged residents to leave town for safety, then pillaged the place like Vikings. According to Calhoun, every cow in the vicinity, save a curiously blue colored individual, was killed and eaten by the occupiers. A single piece of artillery guarded the future path of US 220, around where High Street intersects the highway. From the home of William McCoy, now Historic McCoy House, Federal forces ran telegraph communications along lines that paralleled the roadway.

Ten miles south along the road running between his target south to Monterey, Jackson stayed in the home of Henry Simmons Sr. As Calhoun wrote, "This strange, silent man used to go out into the yard and stand with his hands folded behind him, his face turned in the direction of Franklin."

Jackson endeavored to bypass the Federal forces in Franklin by moving west of them along Entry Mountain and Smith Creek Run to surprise their enemy in what was then north of town, but currently is the approximate location of the AGK Italian Restaurant and T&K Markets. The "mighty warrior who was at the same time a simple man of God" called first for most of his army to join "Divine Service" at 10 a.m. on May 17.

Both sides spent the next week feeling each other out, one preparing for attack, the other possibly yet another retreat. Confederate States forces helpfully worked to keep their opposites from getting bored in town as skirmishers regularly harassed forces in Franklin. Meanwhile, Jackson plugged gaps providing easy escape for the Federals back to the Shenandoah Valley, forcing them to move north to Moorefield as they followed orders issued from President Abraham Lincoln and escaped encirclement by the Confederates.

As Shenandoah Valley historian Julia Davis wrote, "McDowell reported from the Rappahannock that Jackson was in front of him. Schenk in the Alleghenies said that Jackson was in his rear. Fremont, from West Virginia, reported that Jackson was going west. Banks felt comfortably sure that he was still in Harrisonburg. Lincoln dryly remarked that when a force got that badly strung out, it should be possible to hit it somewhere in the middle and cut it in two."

The current route of US 220 as it moves north through Upper Tract toward Petersburg crossed from areas of Confederate States sympathy in Pendleton County, through Union supporters in Petersburg (not yet Grant County) then back through Southern leaning Moorefield on its way north through Hampshire County.

After its role in Jackson's Valley Campaign, the road saw another example of Confederate States military prowess. This came not in the high tide of Confederate fortunes, but when most of the aspirant nation had disintegrated into chaos and all awaited its now inevitable defeat.

As the road extended north, moving repeatedly through different Federal and Confederate dominated areas, it served as a highway for spies, guerillas, brigands, and military raiders.

Next month marks McNeil's Rangers famous raid on Cumberland, Maryland. An officially recognized assemblage under the 1862 Partisan Ranger Act, McNeil's Rangers performed the vital service of gathering and sending vital horses and cattle from (mostly) Union supporting farms in the Potomac Highlands to the Army of Northern Virginia.

By 1865 the South Branch watershed lay denuded. Irregular guerilla forces commissioned by governments, bushwhackers who murdered mainly for their own enjoyment, and gangs of thieves operated freely in the Potomac Highlands as law and order faded to nothing.

On a bitterly cold February night, McNeil's Rangers moved north in secret. Their mission lay in capturing three Federal generals, Benjamin Kelley, George Crook, and Rutherford

full suite of behavioral health services. Treatment for those with psychiatric conditions, drug addiction, and developmental disabilities will round out many of the services. Ford stated that LCP aspires to be "a model of what health care could be" by providing what "services should be."

Part of moving forward from old models may include a family centered treatment concept where, in appropriate situations, mothers receiving care may not need to be separated from their children. Additionally, Ford stated that the plan is not necessarily static, but "can adapt to meet changing needs" in the region or around the state. Changing the model somewhat to help to meet the state's challenges with children serves as an example of flexibility.

The idea of community also includes opening the facility as much as possible like the United States Navy did during their tenure of operation and ownership. That will likely include LCP operating its own fire and rescue units to not only mitigate any burden on local volunteers, but also to provide assistance and aid when possible.

Mowery shared that LCP has also reached out to Pendleton County Schools and other area agencies about taking some of the surplus furniture on site. She stated that since the taxpayers purchased the items to begin with, making sure that what LCP cannot use finds a good home is important to administrators.

Ford praised West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey for "bringing folks back to West Virginia" and working to make sure that families can "be successful." She added, "We've gotten overwhelming support from the State Legislature as well."

B. Hayes. Following George Washington's example at Valley Forge, the future president remained in his tent as per usual. Following the example of every other United States officer at Valley Forge, Crook and Kelley went for warmer quarters when the night temperatures fell to around zero.

It was there, in a lightly guarded hotel, that the Rangers captured and, without violence, neutralized the guard. They captured two of their three targets and removed them to Richmond as prisoners of war.

Crook, still considered the most outstanding irregular warfare general in the history of the United States Army (partly because he ignored rules of engagement) called Lieutenant Jesse McNeil and his Rangers success "the most brilliant exploit of the war."

During the Civil War, the Republican Congress labored to build a foundation for what they hoped could be a national economy that could compete with Britain and the industrializing German states. Even before the conflict, railroads had shown themselves more efficient in moving people and goods. Federal support during and after the war boosted an already burgeoning industry.

West Virginia first saw construction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad that moved roughly along the Northwestern Turnpike, now US 50. To the south, the Chesapeake and Ohio mirrored that of the James and Kanawha Turnpike, later US 60.

As rail drew more commercial and residential traffic, it remained a priority. In West Virginia, railroads increasingly branched off the main trunk lines. Some connected economic centers with the main lines while others extended into timber rich wilderness areas to help extract first that commodity, later coal.

Industrial, timber, and mining areas attracted the most development while those centered on agriculture fell behind this transportation revolution. Even in the Potomac Highlands, the South Branch Valley Railroad starting in 1884 conveniently followed the river valley upstream to Petersburg. Keyser grew up due to its position on the B and O while the much older Romney also enjoyed the benefit of both connections. Upstream, Moorefield and Petersburg flourished/

Roads served primarily local travel with rail an inexpensive and faster alternative for longer excursions.

Upstream from Petersburg, the rail did not extend. Those living in Pendleton County still needed the old road system that had borne armies in the Civil War, but became increasingly ill maintained. Horses and carts still carried goods from place to place, making the trek to Petersburg and back, for instance, a difficult day-long journey at least.

A railroad free existence meant that the Industrial Revolution passed Pendleton County by until the next century. As national travel and transport moved to rail, the effect isolated the area from economic and social changes. Traditions brought from Europe in the 1700s persisted into the 20th century. Pendleton County remained stubbornly agrarian and better connected via roads to the Shenandoah Valley than anywhere of significance in West Virginia.

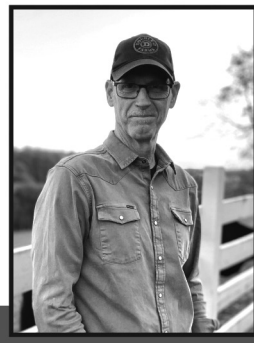
Though the roads continued to exist and be used, the relative isolation of the region upstream from Petersburg contributed to a distinct, different, and, let's face it, sometimes ornery culture that many would call over the decades "The Free State of Pendleton County."

Then came the innovation that changed everything when enterprising inventors attached an engine to a carriage, enabling it to run on fuel instead of animal power.

Once again, Americans, West Virginians, and residents of the Potomac Highlands thought more about the road system and how to bring it up to conditions favorable for automobile travel. In the Mountain State, this led to the "Good Roads Movement." In the United States, this ushered in the US highway system.

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