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A JOURNALISTIC COLLECTIVE FOR LAUREL, MARYLAND

The Tarnished Legacy of the Laurel Pool

How a Segregated Swimming Pool Was Ultimately Redeemed

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NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS West Laurel, South Laurel, and Russett/Maryland City

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PETE LEWNES A Special Note of Thanks

MARK J. STOUT Howard County Historical Society Has New Executive Director

JIMMY WILLIAMS 100+ Years of Faith, Fraternity, and Service

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KEVIN LEONARD 1969 Trash Strike in Contrast With Recent Council Action TOM DERNOGA From the Office of Council Member Tom Dernoga ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI Author Profile: Michelle Paris FAYE BEALL GREEN The Birds JACK CARR Growing Up in Laurel COVER STORY How Laurel's Segregated Pool Was Ultimately Redeemed

at Laurel (Part 2)

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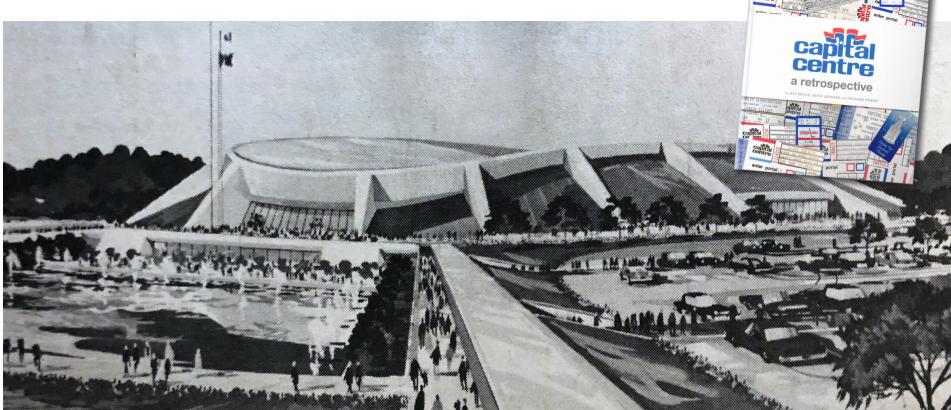
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My Hometown

What's New With The Laurel History Boys

BY KEVIN LEONARD AND RICHARD FRIEND



Do you recognize this prototype? It's not Space Mountain, but an early concept of the Capital Centre. The drawing appeared in the May 13, 1971 issue of the Laurel News Leader, announcing the proposal before the Prince George's County Planning Board. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the arena, The Laurel History Boys plan to release a retrospective book of Capital Centre memorabilia this December.

Grants and Donations

Thank you to John Robison, Janet Willis, and James Bowman for their monetary donations to *Voices of Laurel*. We are grateful for the support.

We now have Venmo! If you're buying our books or making a charitable donation of any amount, you can use the Venmo app on your smartphone to send us a secure payment. Simply look up @laurelhistoryboys to visit our profile page. At our in-person presentations, we'll also have our QR code for handy scanning. Many have expressed a preference of using Venmo over PayPal, so we're excited to now offer both options.

Board News

Shawn Gladden, the former Executive Director of the Howard County Historical Society, and a member of the Laurel History Boys' Board of Directors, is now the Executive Director of the Cumberland County (PA) Historical Society. Shawn continues to serve on our board and collaborate on projects.

Capital Centre Book

As noted above, we're deep into our latest project— *Capital Centre: A Retrospective*—a new pictorial book that will cover the history of the legendary Landover venue.

Our book—which has the support of the Pollin family and the University of Maryland University Libraries will be printed in time for the Capital Centre's 50th anniversary this December. Pre-ordering will be available via an upcoming Kickstarter campaign details to come soon on our Facebook page.

Richard Friend and Jeff Krulik Awarded

The Prince George's County Historical Society has announced its annual St. George's Day Awards, and our own Richard Friend and Laurel History Boys board member Jeff Krulik were among the four recipients this year! Established in 1974, these awards are given to recognize living individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the preservation of the county's heritage. Rich's book, *Postmark Laurel*—a visual archive of over 125 historic picture postcards from our hometown—was honored, as was Jeff's fantastic documentary film, *Tales of Belair at Bowie*.

If you haven't treated yourself to these gems yet, (or purchased them as a gift for someone who will appreciate this wonderful local nostalgia) Rich's book and Jeff's DVD are both just \$20 each and available at the links below. Thank you again to the Prince George's County Historical Society for this honor! Postmark Laurel book: <u>laurelhistory.com/shop</u> Tales of Belair at Bowie DVD: <u>talesofbelairatbowie.com</u>

Main Street Festival

We were happy to participate in the Main Street Festival again with a table in front of Oliver's Old Towne Tavern. The Laurel tradition is thankfully back on track with its usual May date after extraordinarily bad weather forced last year's event to be rescheduled to October. Our thanks also to the Laurel Board of Trade, who invited Rich to participate as a parade judge!

Upcoming Presentations

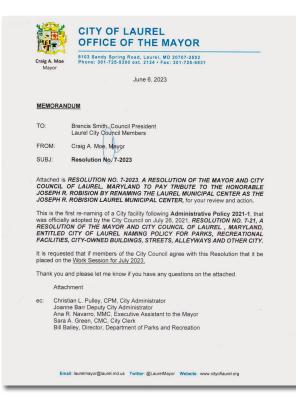
- On August 30, Kevin will discuss the origins of Laurel's USO Club, which was converted into the American Legion at the end of Main Street. Also presenting will be Mallory Noble, the Maryland representative for the USO, on the current facility at Fort Meade. The event, sponsored by the American Rosie the Riveter Association, will be held in Fellowship Hall at the First United Methodist Church (424 Main St.). 11 AM. FREE to the public.
- Also on August 30, Kevin will present Fort Meade Stories at the North Laurel Community Center. The presentation will discuss Gen Dwight Eisenhower's time living in Laurel and Fort Meade, entertainers who visited during WWII, and the Pigeon Corp that trained carrier pigeons for the battlefield. 1 PM. FREE. Register online or at the center.
- On September 25th, Rich will be the guest for the Prince George's County Historical Society's monthly *History Chat*—an informal conversation about Laurel history and our work to preserve and share it. Register for the free virtual Zoom event at pghistory.org.

A Message From Pete

Our Pete Lewnes is taking a break from his popular *Laurel Archeology* column while he continues to care for his wife, Martha as she recovers from a stroke. They would like to thank the many who have reached out to offer help and support—please see his note on page 9. We continue to wish them both the very best.

City Beat

A roundup of local events and announcements, compiled by The Laurel History Boys



City Hall Joe Robison Update

In January 2021, The Laurel History Boys submitted a proposal to Mayor Craig Moe and the City Council to rename the Laurel Municipal Center in honor of the late former Mayor Joseph R. Robison. One of Mayor Robison's many accomplishments in a lifetime of service to Laurel included securing that very building for use as City Hall, making the renaming a fitting tribute to his lasting legacy.

The proposal prompted the creation of the City of Laurel Naming Policy for Parks, Recreational Facilities, City-Owned Buildings, Streets, Alleyways, and Other City Assets over the next two years—a detailed, formal approval procedure that had not previously existed, despite the many buildings, parks, and streets previously named in honor of various individuals throughout the city. It's taken two and a half years, but progress is being made. Resolution No. 7-2023 has officially been submitted by Mayor Moe to the City Council, which calls for the proposal to be placed on the July 2023 Work Session. With support from the Council Members and ample opportunity for the public to weigh in, we hope to see the Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center become a reality soon.

Crawford Sentenced

In June, former Laurel Police Chief, David Crawford, 71, was sentenced in Howard County to eight life sentences plus 75 years in the serial arson case that spanned throughout multiple counties in Maryland. Crawford had been charged with attempted first-degree murder, first-degree arson and lesser related offenses.

No Mow April

The City of Laurel implemented an environmentallyfriendly campaign called No Mow April encouraging residents not to mow their lawns in the month of April. The idea was to allow lawn flowers to bloom and feed hungry native bees emerging from hibernation when other flowers are scarce. Resolution No. 2-2023, which passed on February 27, stated that during the month of April, the City of Laurel would relax the enforcement of long-grass rules, allowing Laurel residents to delay or reduce lawn cutting as a way to promote pollinatorfriendly habitat early in the growing season. However, what wasn't clear to many residents was that the City expected them to sign up to participate in the program-not to simply let their lawns grow freely as the many yard signs throughout the community urged. As a result, many were surprised with property violation notices on their doors ordering them to cut their grass within three days. A rainy April caused the grass to grow at an accelerated rate, prompting many participants to end the campaign by cutting their grass before the end of the month anyway. The wellintentioned event caused quite a spirited discussion on social media, with nearly 100 residents complaining on the "Laurel MD Connect!" Facebook page about the sign-up snafu.

No Moe November

Mayor Craig Moe announced in April that he will not be seeking re-election for a sixth consecutive term this November 7th, ending an unprecedented 21-year run as mayor. Moe also served 12 years on the City Council before being elected to Laurel's highest office in 2002. Councilmember At-Large Martin Mitchell was the first to announce his candidacy for mayor, followed by Ward 2 Councilmembers Keith Sydnor and Brencis Smith. As a result, their respective Council seats will be open for new members to be elected, including a new Council President.

This November's election promises to be the most interesting in years, with a new mayor and at least two new councilmembers ensured. If you live within the Laurel city limits, please be sure to register and vote. On average, only 7% of registered voters have turned out for local elections in recent years. Now is the time to change that. Become an informed voter—learn about the issues facing Laurel residents as well as the past performance of those currently holding office. Visit the City's website (cityoflaurel.org/council) to learn more about and to contact your representatives directly.

New UM Laurel Medical Center Opens

The new University of Maryland Laurel Medical Center officially opened its doors on June 4, replacing the older facility on the same campus. The new center facility represents phase 1 of a multi-phase plan to create a health and wellness destination campus. The Laurel Medical Center offers:

- 24/7 emergency and observation care
- 20 emergency bays
- 10 observation beds
- 2 operating rooms
- 2 procedure rooms
- 1 helipad
- Outpatient behavioral health services

Phase II of the campus development plan includes demolishing the current facility to make room for additional campus growth and expansion. [Source: Business Monthly]



After fleeing war in Ukraine, twin brothers graduate from Laurel High School with full scholarships

Days before Russia invaded Ukraine last year, friends worked quickly and helped move Vlad and Yarik Vashchuk, and their mother, out of Ukraine. The twin brothers, now 18, left everything behind and landed in an entirely different culture—one they had only dreamed about before.

They immersed themselves into their new home, making friends and joining the basketball team, and found a welcoming community in Laurel, Maryland, where people displayed an outward kindness they weren't expecting and weren't entirely used to.

Jackie Letizia, a guidance counselor at the school and a graduate of Susquehanna University, had friends in the administration there and reached out on behalf of the Vashschuks, who otherwise came to Laurel late in the college admissions process.

The school found scholarship money for the two, who visited a few weeks ago and were awarded full scholarships where they'll study computers and artificial intelligence.

"Thanks everybody, thanks Laurel High School, thanks Miss Letizia who helped us get into Susquehanna. Yes, thanks everybody," said Yarik. [Source: WTOP.com]

South Laurel

Local news covering Laurel Lakes, Victoria Falls, Oakcrest, Montpelier, and the Route 197 corridor



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE | SOUTHLAURELVOICES@GMAIL.COM

Regular readers might remember that I opened a Little Free Library in June 2022. At a neighbor's suggestion, I added a geocache to the LFL in November. I was aware of geocaching but had never participated in it. In fact, I was a bit surprised to learn that it was still a "thing." But is it ever! And did you know that there are super-duper geocaching masters among us here in Laurel?

The Thrill of the Hunt

In short, geocaching is a worldwide activity of hide and seek: participants hide "caches," publish the GPS coordinates on the official geocaching. com site, and look for caches that others have hidden. While the caches sometimes contain small trinkets, the payoff in geocaching isn't so much a physical prize as it is simply the fun of the hunt and the thrill of the find.

While perusing the geocache map of the Laurel area, I noticed that many of the local ones had been hidden by a geocacher called Deep Concern. His profile showed that he had hidden almost 200 caches and discovered more than 3,800. One morning, I woke up to a notification that Deep Concern had found my cache (GCA1NTW, "The Midnight Cache") and I was thrilled to discover that he had left behind his Geocaching trading card and a "pathfinder" token. Not only that—he had FAVORITED my cache. I felt so honored. And I wanted to meet him, so I messaged him and he graciously agreed to a meet-up at one of his hides, GC88M39, dubbed "Snack Time."

I deduced that the cache was near the Royal Farms off Van Dusen and Konterra. When I reached the exact spot and uncovered the cache from its hiding place, I heard a voice from across the parking lot say, "You found that pretty fast!" I walked over to a man covered in official GeoCaching gear: he was wearing a tee shirt, ballcap, and name tag emblazoned with the colorful logo and holding a thick, zippered binder with the Geocaching brand stitched on its cover. What followed was a wonderful two-hour adventure with Deep Concern, whose real name is Don Conway and whose family has been a longtime fixture in the Laurel area.

Don's Geocaching Adventures

Don is 84, which you would never guess by seeing him stride across a grassy field to search for a cache under a rock. He was born and raised in Prince George's County, graduated from Delaware State College (where he was an outfielder on their 1962 and 1963 championship baseball teams), then served as an elementary school physical education teacher and multi-sports coach for 33 years in Glenarden and College Park. Don's parents, grandparents, and many other relatives lived or worked in Laurel; in fact, he says that Conway Road, off Muirkirk between South Laurel and Beltsville, was named after his family. After living in Calverton for 47 years, Don and his wife of 55 years, Joyce, moved to the Riderwood Senior Community in Silver Spring four years ago. They are active in many clubs and groups at Riderwood, including a "small, but active" geocaching group that Don started. He is also a longtime member of the Freestate Happy Wanderers Walking Club in Savage, which is where his geocaching adventures began.

Don told me that at the walking club's 30th anniversary hike in Savage, in June 2014, a guest speaker introduced club members to geocaching and took them on a quick hunt. Don was instantly hooked, having found five caches that day. He started going on geocache outings with another member of the walking club whose handle was Portly Walker. They often teamed up with another geocacher using the handle Zorro Banes and together they found hundreds of caches. Don has a collection of photos commemorating their finds, as well as a token showing an artist's rendering of the three of them on a geo-hunt. Sadly, Portly Walker died earlier this year, but Don clearly takes delight in revisiting their adventures.

Don has found caches in 15 states. Opening his binder, he flipped through page after page of medallions and certificates commemorating significant accomplishments and milestone finds, which he tries to time around events. For instance, he held off on his 1,000th find until he was in California for his son's wedding; he also hid a cache there.



His 3,000th find occurred during a trip to Michigan, and he tells me that he will come up with a special plan for his upcoming 4,000th find.

One of Don's fond memories is of attending "GeoWoodstock" in Boonsboro, sponsored by Cache Across Maryland (CAM). That event drew hundreds from all over the world, and caches were hidden along the route to get there. More recently, in early June, he was one of over 200 people to attend a CAM-sponsored event in which 27 caches were hidden throughout Maryland, with at least one in each county, culminating in a meet-and-greet picnic. Don found 13 caches at that event.

Before I knew it, I was following Don to some of his hides around the new UMMC hospital off Van Dusen. We would park nearby and I'd use the Geocache.com GPS function to figure out the cache's exact hiding place. He took special delight in showing me one called "Kiara's Cache," named after his granddaughter; it was big enough to hide small items, and fellow geocachers had left behind figurines,



(Left): Don Conway, a.k.a. Deep Concern, poses by a statue that gives a hint to the location of one of his geocache hides. (Above): Kiara's Cache, one of almost 200 caches hidden by Deep Concern. PHOTOS BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE

a bracelet, and even a mini flashlight. Together, we found four caches.

There is so much more to Don's amazing life story, and I will feature him in a future article. For now, I'll end with the answer to one of my first questions for him, something I'd pondered for weeks: what is the significance of his handle "Deep Concern"? Did it reflect his concern for the country, the environment? Was it a military operation-style moniker? "No," he said, "nothing like that. I just needed a name I could remember, so I came up with one using my initials."

That was so perfect: a practical, straightforward reason surrounded by an aura of mystery, much like Don himself.

Diane Mezzanotte has lived in Laurel since 1987. A graduate of Penn State's School of Journalism, she is happy to return to writing "people stories" after retiring from a 34-year career with the Defense Department.

West Laurel

Local news covering the West Laurel and Burtonsville areas



BY VIRGINIA MAY GEIS | WESTLAURELVOICES@GMAIL.COM



(Left): This deep erosion of a channel into the Rocky Gorge Reservoir is affecting drinking water supply; an upcoming restoration project hopes to fix that. (Right): The Food Lion on Sandy Spring Road now has a Voices of Laurel newspaper box just inside the entrance. Pick up your free copy the next time you do your grocery shopping!

ell, spring has sprung, and the cars have started appearing in our neighborhood again. As we have observed in the five years since we bought our house, the Dead End sign does not deter outsiders who turn onto Julie Lane searching for Supplee Lane and the reservoir. When we see a car we do not recognize on the street, my husband regularly says, "They are lost, looking for the reservoir," and then we will see the same car drive back down the street. Probably still looking for the reservoir.

What is going on near the T. Howard Duckett dam?

Wonder what is going on near the T. Howard Duckett dam in West Laurel? It seems there has been work going on forever, tying up Bond Mill Rd and causing commuters, including me, to take alternate routes.

Well, I can tell you about one project that is due to start in the area.

According to news shared on the City of Laurel website, in February the Prince George's County Department of the Environment (DOE) announced an upcoming water quality project at the Washington Suburban and Sanitary Commission Rocky Gorge Reservoir. In coordination with the WSSC, the project will be launched as the T. Howard Duckett Community Center Stream Restoration Project; this effort will involve restoration of the unnamed tributary that runs into the reservoir. This restoration will take place just east of the T. Howard Duckett Community Center, north of the intersection of Brooklyn Bridge Road and Leo James Court.

The project will treat the runoff from the adjacent roadways and ballfields that becomes concentrated and causes significant erosion. This runoff also causes the formation of an entrenched channel into the Rocky Gorge Reservoir, which carries along whatever the water picks up along the way and dumps it into the reservoir. Since water quality is critically important—especially for drinking water reservoirs such as Rocky Gorge—this project will both treat the runoff water and reduce the amount of sediments going into the reservoir by 322 tons per year. The project is to be part of the county's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System's efforts to reduce nutrient loads in the Patuxent River watershed. Decreasing nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorous, and sediments in the water will make it more suitable for WSSC drinking water treatment. The design to be used for this project is intended to result in environmentally sound, aesthetically pleasing, and structurally stable stream restoration.

The restoration work will focus on stabilizing more than 1,200 linear feet of the stream banks with wood, stone, wetland creation, flood plan reconnection, and native vegetation. The construction phase is scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2023, and the DOE expects to complete this phase in February 2024. Completion of landscaping for the project is expected to be in the Spring of 2024.

Voices of Laurel at Food Lion

West Laurel residents and anyone who frequents the Food Lion grocery store on Sandy Spring Road will be happy to learn that there is now a *Voices of Laurel* newspaper box inside the front entrance! This is the third distribution box in town—the others are on Main Street: there is one in front of the Post Office and the other is in the MARC train station commuter parking lot.

In addition, limited print copies are also available at the Laurel Branch Library, the Maryland City at Russett Library, the Laurel-Beltsville Senior Activity Center, the Laurel Museum, More Than Java Cafe, Oliver's Old Towne Tavern, and Toucan Taco.

The distribution boxes are typically refilled weekly until each quarterly issue runs out, so they should be your best option for picking up your free copy.

Got feedback or story ideas for me?

Send me an e-mail at WestLaurelVoices@gmail.com, and please call me Ginny!

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

Russett/Maryland City

Local news covering the Russett and Maryland City areas



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

"Kindness Rocks" at Russett Library Highlights AAPL Theme of Unity

The Anne Arundel Public Library system's theme for this year is "All Together Now." Specially curated through a collaborative system, and with a goal of bringing people back together after the COVID-19 pandemic, the theme highlights the importance of unity, community, and positivity in an uncertain world.

This marks the third time that the Maryland City at Russett Library is presenting the concept, which grew out of the AAPL partnership with the Kindness Grows Here Foundation, a non-profit organization based in nearby Gambrills. (For more information, visit: kindnessgrowshere.com/.)

AAPL Program Coordinator Darnice Jasper says, "I couldn't wait to do it again since it fits perfectly with our Summer Reading theme and focuses on spreading kindness and positive messages through our community."

Why not join the fun and spread kindness in your community? The Maryland City Library at Russett will host a "Kindness Rocks" workshop for all ages on Saturday, July 22, from 1 to 4 p.m. Participants can decorate rocks with inspiring messages and designs. The homework assignment is to put a smile on someone's face by sharing the rock with someone, placing it somewhere special in the community, or "re-planting" the rock where someone else can find it.

Another Russett Good Neighbor Story

Speaking of kindness, this quarter's Russett Good Neighbor award goes to Vicki Johnson, a Special Educator in Howard County. I met Vicki by happenstance on a May afternoon when she pulled into a parking space two cars down from me and asked if I knew a young girl she'd encountered wandering alone on Russett Green.

Vicki explained that, while driving back from Walmart with her grandsons, she had noticed the girl emerge from the bushes on Russett Green and attempt to cross the street near the Sam's/Walmart sign, amid fast-moving traffic. Johnson looked around for an accompanying adult, but the little girl appeared to be alone. Johnson became nervous as she watched the girl walk near the sign, hesitate, then proceed into the street. With a distressed look on her face, the girl reached the median. Johnson drove up to the child and learned that she was in her brother's care, but her brother was at home. Several women then approached Johnson, saying they had seen the child in the street, were afraid for her safety, and thanked Johnson for stopping.

Johnson then offered to drive the girl safely home. Upon entering the vehicle, the child began to cry, so Johnson shared her name and asked the girl for hers. Upon hearing her name, Johnson's grandson told the girl, "My sister has the same name," which calmed her down, and she stopped crying. The girl didn't know her mother's phone number but said that she lived near the library and could provide directions. The girl successfully navigated Johnson to her street and house, which is when I encountered Johnson. While I could confirm that the girl lived in the house, I knew nothing else about the family. After no one answered a knock on the child's front door, we went to the back door. Fortunately, her brother was there and let her in. I took down Johnson's telephone number to give to the girl's mother so that she could find out precisely what had transpired.

Johnson has 30 years of experience in the medical field. She has cared for children, adults, and children with special needs while working in nursing homes and hospitals, including a mental health hospital. She was so glad to get the child safely home. "It was terrifying to see her alone in traffic like that," Johnson told me. "Unfortunately, I've been in this position many times, including assisting a man hit by a car on Route 198. Also, there was a time when I encountered a 6-year-old autistic child attempting to run across Route 198 by himself and I was able to prevent him from running into the street."

Most of all, Johnson says, "I'm a mother and grandmother. I would not hesitate to come to the rescue of anyone in distress. If I were in a similar situation, I would hope someone would show me the same love. It's nothing special for me. My belief gives me a helping heart, and I believe what you do, good or bad, returns to you."

West African Cuisine Comes to Russett

The old Wendy's location at 3563 Russett Green East, built in 1995, has undergone another transformation. A seafood boil restaurant had opened on the site in 2021, but didn't last long, perhaps hindered by the lingering effects of the pandemic. Now there is a new dining experience, called Crab and Chicken, which opened in March of this year.

The new restaurant's owner, Oyindamola Akinkugbe (Qyin), is Nigerian-born and has been in the United States since 1999. A restauranteur for 21 years, Qyin also runs the Zion West African KitchenZ in Northeast Washington, DC, which she describes as a laid-back destination with a menu of regional West African specialties and a full bar. Her mission is to "serve healthy, delicious, nutritional food while striving to create a relaxed and enjoyable dining experience."

When asked why she chose the Russett location for Crab and Chicken, Qyin said, "I always wanted to bring the West African flavor to Maryland." So, when the opportunity became available, she did not hesitate. The restaurant's extensive menu features a wide variety of seafood dishes, like Cajun-flavored crabs and seafood boil bags, as well as chicken baskets, spicy garlic chicken wings, and more. Qyin is working to acquire a liquor license to serve alcohol to add to the dining experience.

Crab and Chicken is located next to Route 198, adjacent to the Walmart parking lot. Hours of operation are Mon–Sat 11 AM–10 PM; Sun 12 PM–10 PM. Carryout and delivery are also available.

Brenda Zeigler-Riley is a 15-year resident of Russett, a retired educator, and entrepreneur with a marketing, public relations, and fundraising background. Please send information on Russett/ Maryland City (historical pieces, stories from first responders, hometown memories, resident profiles, etc.) to russett.mdcinfo@gmail.com.



Crab and Chicken, a West-African seafood restaurant, has opened in the former Wendy's location.

COMMUNITY



City Council Highlights



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE

f you haven't been keeping up with Laurel City Council meetings, you've missed a lot! The Council and Mayor have been busy with several issues of importance to residents, while counting down to November's elections.

Elections

Mayor Craig Moe announced in April that he will not seek re-election. Moe has served as Laurel's mayor since 2002, following 12 years as a City Council member. As of late June, three current Council Members had announced their candidacy for mayor: Keith Sydnor (Ward 2), Martin Mitchell (At-Large), and current Council President Brencis Smith (Ward 2). Former Council Member Fred Smalls also stated that he was considering a mayoral run. Potential candidates for City Council or Mayor must file their applications by July 21st.

The mayor serves a 4-year term; Council terms run just 2 years, with all five seats up for election every time. With Sydnor, Mitchell, and Smith running for mayor, the City Council will look quite different for its next legislative session. Fellow incumbents Carl DeWalt and James Kole told *Voices of Laurel* that they will seek re-election to their Ward 1 seats.

The City will offer both early voting and mail-in voting for the election. Visit the cityoflaurel.org website for more information.

Rent Stabilization

In February, Council President Smith announced an indefinite pause on draft legislation to set a limit on rent increases within the City. A temporary rentstabilization bill passed by the Prince George's County Council in early March applies to tenants and landlords within the Laurel City limits.

DPW Unionization

The Council adopted a charter amendment on May 22nd to allow city employees within the Department of Public Works to engage in collective bargaining.

Disposable Bag Ordinance

An existing ordinance prohibiting the use of plastic bags at point-of-sale is being amended to require a fee for paper bags. The goal is to encourage shoppers to use sturdy, reusable bags to help reduce waste, litter, and environmental impact. Some exceptions will likely be granted for certain restaurant situations and to avoid issues with EBT purchases.

No-Kill Shelter

A special task force formed in 2019 recommended that a no-kill animal shelter be established to serve the Laurel area. The City Council accepted the task force's report and will move forward on the recommendations.

Mandatory Composting

Beginning in July 2025, city residents will be required to separate organic waste from regular trash. The City will provide suitable countertop and outdoor containers and will use the organic waste for compost. Laurel is the first Maryland city to enact such a measure.

Diane Mezzanotte has lived in Laurel since 1987. A graduate of Penn State's School of Journalism, she is happy to return to writing "people stories" after retiring from a 34-year career with the Defense Department.



BY PETE LEWNES

• o the followers of my Laurel Archeology column in Voices of Laurel, it is with sadness that I am unable to contribute to this issue and that I am taking a leave of absence to care for my wife, Martha, who suffered a stroke last September. The endless doctors appointments, phone calls, therapy, and more have left little time, if any, for the type of articles I enjoy regularly producing. I will return when she is feeling better and after we both take a long overdue vacation.

At this time, I want to THANK YOU for your understanding and for the kind words and support so many of you have given.

Also, Martha and I would like to thank the following for all their help and support. First and most important is Ruth Walls (Patrons For Peace) for her endless support and dedication in getting things done. The word "no" is not an answer nor a solution in her vocabulary. John Russo's Concrete Construction Company for the installation of a barrier-free wheelchair ramp. Clayton Pittiglio Jr. (registered structural engineer), Jonathan Haight (a local accessibility expert), and Mayor Craig Moe for getting all the necessary applications and permits approved. Parkdale classmate of '74, Bob Reily, and the many others for their generous GoFundMe donations to help complete the job. Your help, prayers, time, and funds are greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten. We still have a long road back to recovery, but this will definitely make things a lot easier—it has already.

A special thanks to Martha's mom and to her brother for always being there when in need or a helping hand with something. To the rest of our immediate family for their endless prayers and support during this time and always. Myself, I would like to thank both Kevin and Rich for their friendship and support and the ability to be a part of The Laurel History Boys.

Howard County Historical Society Has New Executive Director

BY MARK J. STOUT, Ph.D.

VOICES OF LAUREL | SUMMER 2023



ello to our friends at Voices of Laurel! Beginning in January of 2023, I began my appointment as the Executive Director of the Howard County Historical Society. After spending 33 years in the Howard County Public School System in a variety of roles, I am thrilled to be back in our community and serving the public.

I have worked primarily in the education field, first as a social studies teacher and curriculum supervisor, and later as an international educational consultant with Discovery Education. As a long-time Howard County resident, I could not hope for a better opportunity than to lead our local historical society.

History is interpreted and written by people, and thus continues to evolve as new evidence and modern perspectives clarify existing narratives. It is important that we continue interpreting and analyzing evidence to construct the full stories of our past. It is through this lens that I hope to guide our Society so that our historical records are expansive, describe plausible explanations of the past, and are representative of all communities, past and present.

That is exactly why I value the work of Voices of Laurel and The Laurel History Boys. Journalism and historical research share much in terms of the processes used to construct a retelling of the past that is supported by verifiable evidence. Having read your publication and hosting a guest lecture by Kevin Leonard, I can clearly see the quality of the work of your organization. Here's hoping for our continued partnership and focus on community service for many years.

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Voices of Laurel is an all-volunteer effort. Your support goes a very long way.





COMMUNITY

10

100+ Years of Faith, Fraternity, and Service

Knights of Columbus Patuxent Council 2203

BY JIMMY WILLIAMS



n November 13, 2021, Brother Knights, family members, friends, and guests of Knights of Columbus Patuxent Council 2203 celebrated the Council's 100th anniversary. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was held nearly a year after the Council's actual 100th anniversary on November 28, 2020.

The evening began with Mass celebrated by Cardinal Wilton Gregory, who chose the occasion to make his first visit to St. Mary of the Mills. During the Mass, Cardinal Gregory, St. Mary's Pastor and Council Chaplain Fr. Larry Young, and Parochial Vicar and Associate Council Chaplain Fr. Christian Huebner presented a Papal Blessing to Grand Knight Augustine Nwabueze. Maryland State Deputy Vince Grauso presented a State Council Resolution in recognition of the Patuxent Council Centennial to Past Grand Knight Kyle Hubbard, the Council's Grand Knight during its Centennial Fraternal Year (2020-2021).

After Mass, the celebration moved to the Msgr. Robert Keesler Parish Center for a banquet, during which additional accolades were presented to the Council, including citations from city, county, and state elected officials.

Council Beginnings

In 1920, Fr. Joseph A. Myer, Pastor of St. Mary's, invited a group of Catholic

men to the rectory to plan a men's organization for the parish. Attendees decided to form a Knights of Columbus Council. The Charter for Patuxent Council 2203, named for the nearby river, was granted on November 28, 1920. Brother John F. Curtin was elected Charter Grand Knight.

Council Projects and Programs

From its inception, Patuxent Council has diligently served St. Mary of the Mills and the greater Laurel area with a variety of religious, charitable, civic, educational, and family activities within the program areas of Faith, Family, Community, and Life. In all its undertakings, it has faithfully adhered to the Knights of Columbus guiding principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism.

Support for St. Mary's Parish and School, and Other Faith Activities

In 1947, the Council helped organize three major events, including a dance at the Laurel Armory, to raise a combined \$10,000 for the construction of the current St. Mary's School building, dedicated in 1952. In the late 1950s, the Council donated a stained-glass window depicting Christ the King to the "New Church" addition to St. Mary's Church.

More recently, the Council has for many years staffed the concessions stand at the annual Parish Christmas Bazaar, donating all profits to the parish. The Council has provided sponsorship and volunteers for major parish events, such as the 2018 Gala celebrating the 175th anniversary of St. Mary's Church and the 125th anniversary of St. Mary's School. The Council also donates a significant portion of the proceeds from its annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinners and Lenten Fish Fries to the parish.

In the broader area of Faith activities, the Council annually contributes funds to Seminarians to assist with their expenses. The Council has hosted an annual Lenten Men's Retreat since 2019 and prays the Rosary frequently. Many Brother Knights serve as ushers, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and in other liturgical ministries at St. Mary's.

Family

Recent years have brought a renewed focus on Family-oriented programming as the Council seeks to have Brother Knights and their families take an active part in Council life, as well as to support families in the St. Mary's and Laurel communities. Patuxent annually sponsors a Consecration to the Holy Family. Youth of the parish annually compete in the Keep Christ in Christmas poster contest. Another significant Family program is Food for Families, through which Brother Knights pick up thousands of dollars' worth of food items at local grocery stores on a weekly basis for donation to local food pantries.

Over the years, Brother Knights, wives, family members, and friends have forged many close friendships by participating in various fraternal and social activities such as bowling, softball, golf, baseball games, theater outings, trivia nights, Christmas parties, and more. Brother Knights and family members also participate in Maryland State Council events such as the Columbus Day Gala, Family Picnic, and Founder's Day Mass and Dinner.

Community

Patuxent has a strong track record of community support dating back to the Council's earliest days. During World War II, the Council actively supported our country and the armed services. Many Council members served during the war while, on the home front, the Council hosted dances and other events for military and civilian personnel and their families who passed through Fort George G. Meade.

Members and their families volunteer in support of FISH of Laurel/Elizabeth House and Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services (LARS). In collaboration with the Laurel Police Department, LARS, and local schools, the Council annually distributes Coats for Kids to children in need of a new, warm winter coat. Parish youth compete annually in the Basketball Free Throw Championship. Each year, Patuxent presents awards to outstanding graduates of St. Mary's School, and Laurel and Pallotti High Schools. The Council annually honors St. Mary's Parish and Laurel community leaders through its Community Awards Program. Since 2017, the Council has participated in the Box of Joy Program, packing and collecting shoebox-sized Christmas presents for children in developing countries.

In the last quarter-century, Patuxent has established two signature Community programs of which it is particularly proud. The first is its SHARE Food Distribution Program. Established in 1996, the SHARE Program distributes thousands of pounds of food annually to the food insecure and to the food pantries at LARS and Elizabeth House. As of February 2023, the Council has distributed an estimated 850,000 pounds (425 tons) of food worth more than \$1.1 million through SHARE. The second program is its University of Maryland Football and Basketball Concessions Fundraising Program. Since the mid-1990s, Patuxent has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in support of its charitable activities through this program. UMD Concessions makes many of the Council's charitable endeavors a reality. This fundraising program currently nets more than \$20,000 annually, split between Patuxent and organizations partnering with Patuxent to staff games, including other



1969 Trash Strike in Contrast With Recent Council Action



BY KEVIN LEONARD

n May 22, after weeks of demonstrations and crowded City Council meetings, the Mayor and City Council unanimously approved a charter amendment to allow collective bargaining for certain employees of the Department of Public Works. Despite the usual back and forth allegations and recriminations between the city and the DPW workers, which is expected in these situations, the process went relatively smoothly to get to this point. But that wasn't always the case in Laurel's history.

"No need for a union"

In the Spring of 1969, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFL-CIO) asked Mayor Merrill L. Harrison and the City Council to allow an election for union representation by the city's "sanitation workers" (there was no Department of Public Works yet).

The city had taken the matter "under advisement," according to the *Laurel News Leader*, but by September, the sanitation workers "decided to strike when they felt that the City Council and Mayor were delaying on the request." They formed a picket line across the entrance to the city's lot, which then was located behind the Laurel Rescue Squad on Laurel-Bowie Road, next to the railroad tracks. "Their objective was to obstruct city trash collection to a point where the Mayor and City Council would be forced to allow an election among the street and sanitation workers to indicate their desire for [union] representation." Ernie Crofoot, the union organizer, told the *News Leader* that "We will stay here until we win."

Despite the picket line, five of the city's 14 sanitation workers reported to work anyway, but two of them later in the day joined their striking colleagues. Town Supervisor George Barkman announced a plan to grant commercial businesses, restaurants, and city residents permits to use the town dump, which was located on Route 198 across from the entrance to the Laurel Race Track, if they hauled their trash themselves.

Mayor Harrison added fuel to the fire when he declared, "We don't want any part of this union. There is just no need for a union in Laurel."

The concessions sought by the sanitation workers are similar to those that the present day DPW workers seek. Low wages, vacation time, written grievance procedures, and medical benefits were all cited in 1969 by the union and the workers as motivation for seeking representation.

But Mayor Harrison disputed some of the workers' complaints, saying, "We have taken the position that if any employee feels he has a reasonable grievance, we are ready to listen to that grievance, and I am sure each employee will find us very reasonable." However, he also admitted to the *News Leader*, "Maybe our salaries aren't what they should be and we are willing to make adjustments on an individual basis, but not through the union."

Harrison continued to attack the union in the newspaper after the strike. "The action of this union



(Left): Laurel sanitation workers form a picket line in 1969 to demand union representation. (Above): In 2023, Department of Public Works employees took their case to City Hall and won the right to collective bargaining.

is just ruthless and irresponsible, but most timely. ... To give in to such an irresponsible union, as far as I am concerned, would be sheer folly."

The Mayor Does a 180

At Mayor Harrison's invitation, Prince George's County Delegate Pauline Menes joined the fray by arranging a meeting between the mayor and union organizer Crofoot. Whatever happened at the closed meeting resulted in the sanitation workers ending the strike and returning to work.

Then, in a surprise move given his stance before the meeting, Mayor Harrison made a motion to the City Council to have the Maryland State Commission of Labor and Industry conduct an election with the sanitation workers "to determine their interest in union representation."

"The move seemed a complete turnabout for the Mayor from his position of last week when he seemed unwilling to permit the election under any circumstances," reported the *News Leader*. Harrison declined to divulge any details of the meeting, but did say, "Mrs. Menes had played a helpful role in moving the situation off dead center."

The City Council unanimously approved the motion. Acting City Solicitor James Chapin told the Council that the election results were not legally binding on the city, but Harrison replied, "I feel the city would be duty bound to recognize the results of the election."

On October 22, 1969, the election took place at the municipal lot on Laurel-Bowie Road. By a 9-to-5 vote of the sanitation workers, representation by the union won. An agreement worked out by Harrison and Crofoot obligated the city to enter into good faith collective bargaining with the union.

Not everyone was pleased with the result. Town Supervisor Barkman told the *News Leader*, "I am sorry the men took the poorest of the two choices for their own welfare."

In the years since, it's unclear what happened to the union after this vote in 1969. The *News Leader* had no follow-up to the story.

Kevin Leonard is a founding member of the Laurel History Boys and a two-time winner of the Maryland Delaware District of Columbia Press Association Journalism Award.

COMMUNITY

From the Office of Council Member Tom Dernoga



BY TOM DERNOGA | PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER

EORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL



The County Council recently adopted a balanced \$5.4 billion Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2024. Of the \$4.5 billion of General Funds' expenditures, 62% supports the Board of Education, almost 20% supports public safety, and the remaining 18% supports the rest of County Government operations. The Council also adopted budgets for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) FY 24 Operating Budget (\$913 million), and the Capital Improvement Budget (\$683 million). Additional budgets that the Council is responsible for approving include the Revenue Authority budget of \$46.33 million and the Redevelopment Authority budget of \$534,500.

This was a challenging budget year because, in the Spring, some revenue projections for next year changed for the worse. Still, the longstanding conservative fiscal posture of the County has prepared us well to withstand such challenges. We will keep a close eye on County finances throughout the fiscal year, but for now, I want to accentuate some positive aspects.

A few key Operating Budget enhancements directed by the County Council include increased funding for:

- Library system Increase in the County's contribution to support Sunday hours and the Books from Birth program
- Support for the City of Laurel Multi-Service Center

- Senior Meals Program
- Senior Housing Assistance
 Emergency Rental Assistance
- Program • More Firefighters/EMS Personnel
- Recruitment funds for the Sheriff
- More Neighborhood traffic safety studies
- Staffing to support the Nuisance Abatement Board

In the Capital Budget, the Council increased the proposed funding for street repaving by \$4.5 million to \$40.5 million. \$2.1 million is being added to Street Lights and Traffic Signals bringing the amount to \$4.95 million. The Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad replacement is on track with \$10.5 million budgeted.

Last, knowing how long it takes to obtain funding for a high school replacement, I was able to get Laurel High School added to the list for future replacement. There is no funding now or in the near future, but the first step is getting on the list of future projects.

I also have good news about the M-NCPPC budget. We approved the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Operating Budget at \$444.95 million and its Capital Budget at \$135.79 million.

- The new Deerfield Run Community Center is fully funded, and
- construction should start in 2025.Gunpowder Golf Course receives over \$3 million for upgrades and,

Council Chair Dernoga during the press conference announcing the enactment of the County Budget on May 25, 2023. PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM DERNOGA

ultimately, a new clubhouse.

- Plans for upgrading the Dinosaur Park to a Dinosaur Science Center received a boost with \$12.5 million of future funding.
- The Beltsville-Laurel Area Sports Park has been allocated \$3.1 million. With regard to M-NCPPC funds for

municipalities and sports and recreation groups, we have obtained the following:

- Cherry Lane Boxing and Youth Fitness. \$20,000
- Laurel Boys & Girls Club. \$100,000
- Laurel Little League. \$5,000
- West Laurel Swim Club. \$50,000
- Laurel Historical Society. \$50,000
- Laurel Stallions. \$5,000
- Greater Laurel United Soccer Club. \$5,000
- City of Laurel, Parks Department. \$10,000
- City of Laurel, Senior Services. \$55,000
- City of Laurel, Anderson & Murphy Community Center. \$30,000
- City of Laurel Youth Services Programming, \$45,000

If you have any questions regarding the budget, please get in touch with the District 1 office.

Contact Us

Please keep in touch. Email us at councildistrict1@co.pg.md.us or call 301-952-3887. Se habla Español. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @TomDernogaD1.



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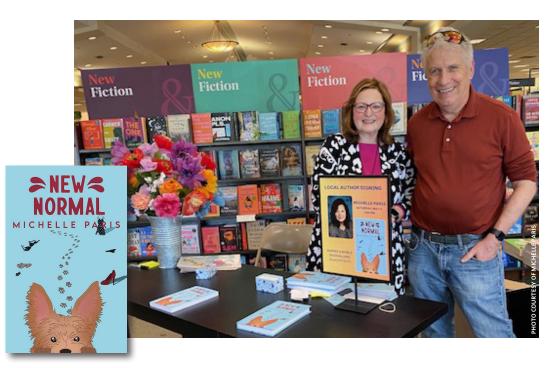
VOICES OF LAUREL | SUMMER 2023

AUTHOR PROFILE

Michelle Paris: New Normal



BY ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI



I took a tragedy for Laurel-raised author Michelle Paris to finally write that book she had told a friend in college she would one day write. Although she had started and stopped several writing projects over the years, none had kept her attention and resolve like her first book *New Normal*, published May 2nd by local publisher Apprentice House Press, in Baltimore.

Paris grew up in West Laurel in the home her parents built. The youngest of three, Michelle always enjoyed writing, from the self-confessed days of her childhood when she used crayons to express herself on the walls of her house to choosing English as her major in college.

When Paris became a widow at 40-years-young, she found solace in writing. She captured the trauma and pain of seeing her husband die of a heart attack in their home in a journal she started within days of his death. The writing calmed her, which allowed her to process her intense fog of grief that followed her loss. That journal and the story of her loss and subsequent re-found happiness formed the basis for her first novel.

The nearly 20-year journey to complete the novel included grief therapy and a search for books and movies that reflected her experience as a young widow. She did not find many examples. She realized that it would be important to tell her story, in the "hope that I can help people that are experiencing grief, and want to move on," she said.

The road from writer to author and bereaved widow to happily remarried woman was filled with fear and hope, emotional highs and lows, and the business of life: working a full-time job, writing, and managing a social life that included on-again off-again forays into use of a dating app to hopefully meet "the one."

Her writing was aided by the support of her critique group, which formed at the end of a noncredit Howard Community College novel writing course she took in 2008.

Deliah Lawrence still has the notebook she passed around on the last day of the writing course asking her classmates to write their names and phone numbers down if they wanted to keep in touch. Lawrence recalls "the class was taught by [prolific novelist] Loree Lough. The energy felt great." She was inspired to stay in touch with her classmates. That was 15 years ago.

The writing critique group that formed that day included Paris, Lawrence, Lisa Trovillion, and Susan Yanguas. They have met every three weeks since. Paris believes that in addition to becoming good friends, the women in her critique group keep her writing and accountable to her writing goals.

In addition to critiquing each other's writing, they have attended local writer's conferences together, according to Lawrence, a published author of two books herself. Each member of the group has a different writing focus, so there is no competition, according to Paris. Now working on promoting her new book, Paris appreciated Trovillion's knowledge of running Amazon ads from her experience having self-published several books.

But the bottom line, Paris believes, is that "you have to have confidence in yourself." The road to being published was arduous. She queried agents and received some nuggets of hope and then got rejected. Many, many times. She put the manuscript on her shelf. She continued writing. A couple of her essays were published by *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, a series of books that contain inspirational true stories about ordinary people's lives.

After a year, she was ready to revisit the "valuable feedback" that she received from the original query process. She reworked her manuscript and queried it again. She received "an unheard of 10 or 12" requests for full manuscripts from this effort. She was very hopeful. Then, every one of those manuscript requests ended up as rejections. Instead of feeling badly about the rejections, she says, "I got the feeling that I could do this, that I had a good story to tell."

She was preparing to self-publish when she checked in with a publicist she found on reedsey.com. The publicist recommended Paris consider small presses, and that is how she found Apprentice House Press, the Baltimorebased publisher run by Loyola University Maryland students.

At her "Meet the Author" book promotion event at Barnes & Noble in Ellicott City on May 6, which Paris alternately described as a "surreal" and "overwhelming," she sold out of her book. Forty copies, both hard-cover and paperback, were gone in about an hour. The mood was festive, as friends, family, and interested others lined up to meet Paris and have her sign their book.

Kimberly Hunt of Revision Division attended the event to celebrate with Paris. She was referred to Paris and performed copy editing for *New Normal*. Hunt is working with Paris earlier in her writing process for her second book. She said Paris is "fantastic to work with and a good writer," thoughts echoed by others who have worked with her.

As news of her book release has spread, Paris has heard from at least one former neighbor and has reconnected with friends from her days growing up in Laurel. In fact, two Kindergarten classmates from Bond Mill Elementary School came to the Ellicott City book signing.

For her part, Paris sent her now-retired St. Mary's College professor and advisor, Dr. Robin Bates, a copy of her book. She told him, "I don't know if you remember me, but you made me love writing." He responded by calling her to let her know "of course I remember you!"

Paris recommends aspiring authors join a writer's group, she says, to "find a group of people you trust and that are doing what you want to do," and, importantly, "never give up on yourself."

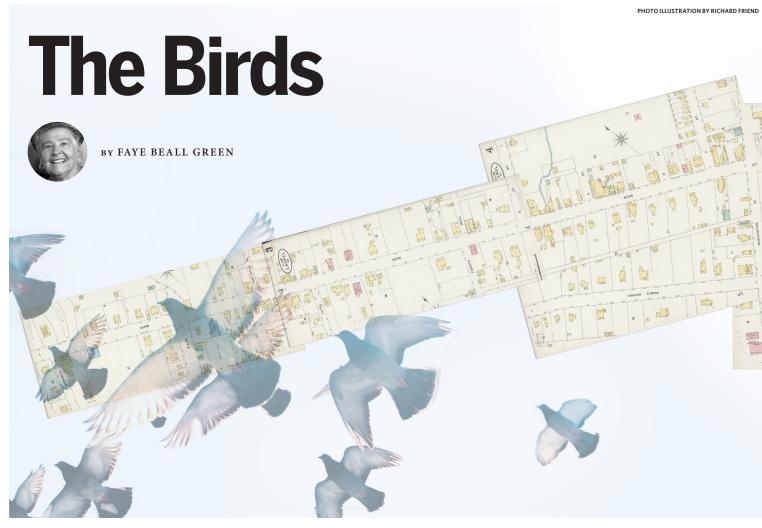
Paris is writing her second book that is due out next year and will be published by Apprentice House Press, as well.

New Normal can be purchased from Amazon, Bookshop.org, Barnes & Noble, Target, and Walmart.

Visit her website at <u>michelleparisauthor.com</u>.

Angie Latham Kozlowski is a staff writer and member of the Board of Directors for the Laurel History Boys. In addition to her investigative reporting, her articles frequently spotlight Howard County.

WRITING



he world of thoroughbred racing pigeons is a novelty not familiar to most people. Russell and Glenn Beall were successful breeders and racers in lofts started by their father on 11th Street in Laurel in 1922.

This is a non-fiction and fiction piece. The story of growing up as the daughter of Russell Beall and his birds is true. Unfortunately, Russell and Evelyn died in 2001 and 1999; they were not interviewed for this piece. The author feels very confident that the words in the interviews truly represent their feelings regarding their years with The Birds in the back yard.

By all standards, we were a normal, usual, average Laurel family—well known and respected in the community. But we had *the birds*. On the back edge of our yard, a large flock of birds lived in a well-designed coop with an aviary.

We moved through home life and school not realizing our life was different from other families in Laurel—even different from the many families we were related to—because we had *the birds*.

From the kitchen window or the deck of our home on Brooklyn Bridge Road, we could watch them fly. There were two flocks—one belonging to Russell Beall—one belonging to Glenn Beall, next door. The Beall brothers' flocks circled the houses each evening and returned to their home loft with a flutter and a few feathers—each bird to the correct loft.

We always referred to them as the birds. Dad had to feed *the birds*. *The birds* are out. There is a hawk threatening the birds. When school friends visited and wanted to go to the loft to see *the birds*, we did not understand why such interest. Birds in crates in the trunk of our car were ordinary. Cooing and fluttering sounds were usual. We knew at some place along our route, the birds would be freed to fly home. The family outing was also a training mission. Very seldom did we talk of them and call them pigeons but that's what they were-pigeons. These were not ordinary barnyard or city pigeons. These were not your common pigeons, or the nuisance birds of parks and streets. They were thoroughbred, pedigreed racing pigeons-homing pigeons-bred and trained to return to their loft at high speeds. Highly developed racers, comparable to pedigreed thoroughbred horses. Well cared for. Expensive and valuable.

The pigeons, their care and sport, were part of my life from the day I was born—even as they were to my father's youth when his father started the family sport in 1922. The lofts of my childhood are still racing today under the care of Glenn's son, Gary, my cousin. The same breed—blood lines—still racing as the Beall loft that our grandfather started 100 years ago. A century in the sport.

In the early 50's, the birds from the Beall lofts were gaining recognition in the world of pedigreed thoroughbred racing pigeons. The sport was, and still is, global. Thoroughbred racing pigeons are a sport in the United Kingdom, Asia, Europe, Japan, Scandinavia, Africa, Australia, the Mediterranean, and South America. The Beall lofts were highly successful, well known, and envied around the world.

We did not realize that our life was different because the Beall brothers were breeding and racing pedigreed pigeons. Living in brick homes, side by side, with twin lofts just yards apart on the back acre, was a great life for six cousins and uncounted pigeons, each knowing which was their home. These pigeons were trained to be either flying or in the loft. A racer that did not go immediately in the loft was a useless racer. We never had pigeons perched on our roofs, never had pigeons spoiling our windshields, never had pigeons begging at our family cookouts. Believe it or not.

The birds, like all livestock, had to be tended to daily, and our dinner was often late waiting for Dad to finish his

husbandry tasks. No one ate until Dad came to the table. Often, he came in the house with feathers in his hair and his shoes soiled. Our mother did not like that. We had to wait a bit longer while feathers, and worse, were purged. We thought we would starve.

Some Saturdays and Sundays we could not play in the back yard or have an afternoon barbeque. You guessed it—because the birds were due in from a race.

Friday events were managed without Dad because he had to crate and ship the birds. Sundays we went to church without Dad because the birds were coming in. It was life with racing pigeons. Seemed normal to us.

Doesn't everyone's father have feathers in their hair at dinner time? Of course not!

A bird race started on Thursday. Russell left the dinner table and went to the loft to select the birds for the race. Selection was carefully done. Entry fees are high and sending the right birds for this week's distance and conditions was important. Of the birds selected, one or more can be nominated to win. It cost to enter birds. It costs to nominate—that is betting money. Dad was in the loft a long time on Thursday handling and inspecting each entry.

Friday was shipping night. After dinner, the birds were crated and, along with the pigeon clock, taken to the club in Baltimore or Washington depending on the race being entered. Bets (nominations) were placed.

The pigeon clock was inspected. The time had to be accurate. Inside the pigeon clock, the paper stamping mechanism had to produce the all-important proof of dispatch and arrival. It was inspected and sealed. Any tampering with the seal and the loft would be disqualified. The pigeons would sleep all night while the truck driver and one club member went to the designated release-point. Distances varied. All from the south, southwest, or west with the prevailing winds. The longest race was about 500 miles.

Saturday was race day. Dad would get a call telling the exact release time. He would calculate when to expect his birds. Shorter races brought the birds home that day. Longer races often meant the birds would come in early on Sunday (pigeons do not fly at night). Hours before the birds were expected, our yards were closed for play. No balls, no swing set, no tag games. Dad put his lawn chair under a shade tree, got his shot gun, put a couple of 12-gauge shells on the grass. He waited, in case a hawk who regularly threatened the flock, came to the area. Next door, under another shade tree, Glenn got his chair. No need for another shot gun; Russell was the marksman today. The only sounds in the yard was the brothers' talk back and forth or the loud shout-"there's a bird"-at a distance, flying over the trees. It was impossible to know whose bird it was, but the pigeon knew. He/she flew right for its home loft. Make no mistake, Russell and Glenn were competitors. There was always pride getting the first bird and beating your brother.

The truth is the racers from the Beall loft were so successful that often the brother who got the first bird in today's race, beat all the entries from the club. Russell and Glenn took turns in the winner's circle.

It was not unusual to see a long black limousine parked on our back driveway. Men would not get out until invited by Russell. His wife, Evelyn, or the children would alert him that a Japanese Embassy car awaited his invitation to visit the loft. Very polite and formal men in dark suits went into the feathers and droppings at the loft on the back of the property. These gentlemen were not here just to see the birds; they wanted to buy them and ship them to Japan for breeding and racing. The Japanese Embassy car came often. These men knew the Beall loft's racers and the breeding stock that was gaining recognition. No doubt progeny of the birds that flew over the Beall yards are successfully racing today in Japanese concourses.

An interview with Russell Beall

"I want to make it clear. My name is not Russell Bee-all. It's Russell Bell, if you say it correctly. I'm Scottish by ancestry and they say bell not bee-all when they see B e a l l. By the way, it is most commonly pronounced correctly in Maryland. Not so in a state where it isn't known. Excuse me, I digress. We are not here to talk about my name. We're here to talk about my pigeons.

Most people do not know anything about thoroughbred pedigreed racing pigeons. The birds in my loft are no closer to the pigeons flying free and defacing statues, than thoroughbred racehorses, running for the triple crown, are the same as wild ponies, plow horses, fox hunting mounts, or fancy dressage steeds. You must understand that before I show you the birds and explain the sport.

Don't confuse pigeon racing with pigeon fancying. We breed birds for endurance and speed. Not beauty or special flight or tumbling. Speed! We want to win the race. These birds race many distances but I'm most proud of our long-distance flyers and their record. There is a lot of money to win and there are very high breeding fees to be gained by a champion. Just as horses who proved themselves, pigeons who win races, are very valuable. A good bird goes for thousands of dollars. Sometimes for many thousands. The Beall lofts have proven race winners. However, I am not breeding birds to sell.

The sport is international. Most countries around the world breed and race pigeons. I am proud to say that the birds my brother, Glenn, and I have developed, along with our friend Lou Opal, are coveted the world over. The Opal/Beall birds are winners. We get requests from all over the world to buy our birds. Also, we get requests from members of local clubs to buy birds, but we do not entertain them. Why would we do that and compete against our own blood line. Understand?

Come into the loft. Stand still. The birds will not land on you or worse. They are used to people.

This bird is a champion. He is a long-distance racer over 500 miles. Set a record coming from Indianapolis three weeks ago. His father was a champion, too. I have his pedigree going back longer than you can imagine. This loft and the loft of my brother next door were established in 1922 by our father. Our pedigree records are complete. We have been breeding and racing continually together since then.

You want to know how the races are accomplished? It is the question everyone asks. We belong to two racing clubs, Baltimore and Washington. On shipping day, we crate the birds we want to race and take them to the club. I might enter 8 to 10 birds. Sometimes only a few birds. Every bird requires an entry fee. I have to calculate the purse against the fees when I decide how many birds to take. The club has a truck for the crates. Drivers take the birds to the release point. Oh, I forgot. Each loft is surveyed for established distance from a GPS point-down to yards. Look, here is the race clock. We call it a pigeon clock. The distance calculation is registered in the clock. The timepiece is certified and sealed when we drop off our birds. The club accepts nominations (bets) on your bird. The money is recorded, and the bets are set. Each bird receives a rubber leg band—grey to be in the race, blue if nominated to win. Each band costs-blue more than grey. The club knows the exact time the birds are released. It is great having a bird win a race, even better if it is your nominated bird.

The birds are trained to go right to the loft. When they enter, tired, thirsty, and hungry, they go into a special race day trap. I run quickly to complete the certification. The rubber leg band is removed and put in a capsule to be inserted in the clock. Turn the handle to stamp the time and take a deep breath. It is exciting. You can see how important it is for a returning bird to quickly enter the loft and trap. I don't want hawks, children or weather to delay my racer going in the loft/ trap. I whistle a distinctive sound to assure my bird that he or she is home. It brings him or her right in.

Sunday night my brother and I take our clocks to the club to see if we have a winner. Race weekend is over."

Interview with Evelyn Beall

"Russell had the birds when I married him, and we lived on 10th Street in Laurel. They were a novelty, and I gave them little thought. Through the years, the birds seemed to dominate our lives. I understand his hobby required a lot of time, and the children and I had to accept it. Especially in the summer during race time. Our weekends had to be planned accordingly. If the children and I attended a family function without Russell, it was understood by our host—pigeon race day. I think the children did better with the birds than I did. I never went down to the loft. I paid little attention to champions, or the engraved trophies. Russell hinted at his winnings but never told us. He supported his hobby with the winnings and often surprised us with family outings and extra generosities, but I did not see the money. Racing pigeons is a very expensive sport. I'm glad it was never—never— a burden on our budget. I believe he was very successful. We have lots of trophies in the closet and a lot of distinguished visitors came to the loft. The best part was going with him to ship the birds and have dinner in a nice Baltimore restaurant. Often when he was training the birds in Howard and Montgomery Counties, we would load the kids and make a fun day in the country-picnics and ice cream cones. Sometimes, Russell brought a bag of hot steamed crabs home from his Baltimore bird meetings. I must admit those crabs took care of a lot of angst about the birds. The huge ledgers (green pages usually meant for financial spreadsheets) that Russell used for pedigree records, were on the dining room table. He spent hours recording bloodlines. They had to be moved if we wanted to eat at that table. I wonder how many times I said, 'Russell move those books.' Or 'Russell there's a feather in your hair!' I wonder?"

Comment from Faye Beall

I would love to walk down that hill today and enter the loft to find my father amid his birds. I would walk in quietly, knowing the birds would accept me. He would be standing six-foot tall, with a feather in his hair. I can see him.

Dad reaches over and picks up a bird. He gently holds the body in his large left hand letting the legs fall between his 3rd and 4th fingers. With his right hand he strokes the head and very large chest before he lifts and spreads the wing.

The beautiful light grey and blue checked hen rests in these hands as she proudly looks at her wing, too.

Note: Russell Beall retired as Laurel Postmaster. Glenn Beall, retired as Naval Ordnance engineer, also served as Laurel Town Manager.

This piece will be included in Faye Green's next book, *PIECES & EDGES Anthology*, a collection of short stories, recollections, recipes, and poetry, to be published later this year.

Faye Green's books are available from SaltWatermedia.com, Amazon.com, and the author, at greenvine@verizon.com.

Have You Ever Thrown a Snowball?

BY JACK CARR

In this column, contributors to *Voices of Laurel* describe their memories of growing up here. What are your memories? If you would like to contribute an article, contact us.

H ave you ever thrown a snowball? Thrown it so hard that the tips of your fingers, red and almost frostbitten, tingle? I have...but not this time.

Kluckhuhn's hill is a gargantuan hill for Laurel, Maryland. It's a couple hundred feet of cleared woodland that tops off in a flat meadow where the Kluckhuhn's house rests in overwatch. Everyone knows about the hill, especially because of the enormous pine tree that is lit up like a giant Christmas tree during the holiday season. The tree must stand at least 100 feet tall with boughs all the way to the ground and has about a million-and-a-half Christmas lightbulbs on it. What a beautiful tree! Next to the tree is Brooklyn Bridge Road, which is the main thoroughfare between Laurel and West Laurel and has steady traffic on it.

But the hill, what a magnificent specimen of sled riding enjoyment. On your sled the hill is high enough to hit the terminal velocity of a fighter jet and has a flat landing zone on the bank of Walker's Branch (which we always call the creek) that flows at the bottom of the run. The creek was a magical delight too. At the junction of the creek and the bridge of the Brooklyn Bridge Road there was a wonderful waterfall that fell onto rocks and through two man-size tunnels leading into the woods. The creek was deep enough that you didn't want to fall in, getting soaking wet, and shallow enough so that if you did go careening in, you wouldn't drown. But you would have an ear full of the harassment from your friends' relentless jokes until next winter or until, as inevitable as it is, someone else goes in.

One such event that stands out in my mind is when my friends and I were sled riding a red steel shield down the hill. We called it the Captain Rojo Shield. It's true that back then the sleds and shields were made of steel and wood, not plastic, like the ones made today that hurt your butt on the way down the hill. Steel protects your posterior from the stones, rocks, and sticks that go unseen under the snow. Anyway, on the top of the hill there was a perfect indent to set the shield in to steady it before you start your run down the hill. Scooching your way forward, you would slide over the lip of the dent and away you would go.

Now, there was a trick to stopping on a shield that not everyone knew. The trick, you see, is to pull the shield out from underneath you when you want to stop, letting friction slow you down and bringing you to a stop. If you don't do it, you don't stop. The shield is still under you no matter what else you do. Dragging feet and arms won't help you at all. Only the slow controlled crash of getting off the shield would slow you down. And man, was it fast.

Sometimes we would go sledding at night and have a great time, but that's not to say everyone in the

group gets along. There was a rub between a couple of friends, a friendly rub, but nevertheless there was a rivalry. Sometimes it was put aside, and a shaky peace treaty was observed on the hill. Not so much this time, though.

I had just made the mad ride straight down the hill on the steepest part of the hill, which is also the fastest and most difficult ride. The landing area is small and short, but that is what makes good sled riding...the danger factor. I was tired and sweating from lugging that heavy shield back up the hill and was ready to hand it off to anyone that would take it, when Kurt, one of the guys, asked me if he could try out the sleek beast. He wasn't the most experienced pilot, but he was older than I, so I let him have it.

He took the shield to the launch area, sat down gently, and by the way he sat down and twisted his legs to get onto the shield he turned around 180 degrees; leaving him facing up the hill instead of down. Kurt happened to be one of the members in the truce and was, at this point, surrounded by opposing forces. He tried to right himself for the ride just as Elmar, another of my friends, who, by the way, was on the opposing side of the truce, ran from the back of the band of sledders and pushed him by his shoulders as hard as he could. He ended up shoving him down the hill so fast that he had no time to right himself. To say it was a breach of the strained truce is an understatement.

Kurt was flying down the hill from the push and repeating over and over, "I'M NOT READY!!!" as his voice faded with the distance. It was hilarious watching him hurling down the hill and what came next is legend among sledders today.

Remember that I had told you how to get off the shield to stop? He didn't do it. Plain and simple. Instead, he just leaned back and dragged his heals in the snow which just kept him headfirst straight down the hill; the steepest part of the hill bear in mind. Well, needless to say, he didn't slow down, not one bit, and was headed right for the creek, which none of us, luckily, had made the freezing plunge into yet.

He was on his back, shield beneath, and flying down the hill headfirst, when he went airborne over the ledge of the bank. The ledge is only about a two-foot drop, but it's into the frigid water of the creek. We could hardly see him for the dark night as he had descended, but we could see the tsunami splash that he made as he penetrated the thin layer of ice on the water. The splash must have been ten feet high! No, really, it was like an Apollo splashdown but with no rescue party. Suddenly, finding himself in the water with ice around the edges of the bank, he realized his predicament. Dripping, with clothes freezing and wet, he climbed out of the creek and ran up the hill almost as fast as he went down, shouting in his frozen state, "I'm freezing, I'm freezing; take me home, take me home; I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die." He ran right through all of us on the top of the hill as we threw snowballs at him and he made a beeline for home, which was only about a quarter mile away, so, we didn't worry about him. However, we did worry about the shield that he left at the bottom of the creek, which gave us a devil of a time retrieving without getting soaked like him.

What a great ride! He not only made the season's best story, but it has gone down in the annals of history of all my friends. "I'm freezing, I'm freezing; take me home, take me home; I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die!" After that there was no sense to keep up the sledding for the night. No one could ever beat that.

Throwing snowballs seems to be a favorite pastime for us. We throw snowballs at anyone who makes a mistake, questions the authority of the group, makes a bad joke, or just has the bad judgement of using a preemptive snowball strike on the wrong person. Sometimes we would even use a sled rider as a target as they slid along the ice packed snowy incline. The only possible correct response for any infraction of normality or inexplicable action, was a good pelting. In turn, the constant threat of being bludgeoned by snowballs sharpened our reflexes into daredevil-like timing.

Without so much as a shiver, when a car passed by on Brooklyn Brook Road, our minds turned quickly from throwing snowballs at each other to throwing snowballs at cars. We always enjoy a good snowball fight, but our collective mind diverted to snowballing cars since we were cloaked by the darkness and terrain. And, like cats, we couldn't resist moving targets.

Remember that I told you about Brooklyn Bridge Road being near the Christmas tree? Just up the hill a little way and behind the tree was a fantastic place to stand while you snowball cars, if you had the range in your arm. There was one problem: you needed a spotter to be able to pull off the bombardment of snowballs onto a car. You see, you couldn't actually see the car when you needed to throw. You had to time your throw with a car you couldn't see. The flight time of the snowball in relationship to the defiladed target needed to be perfectly timed. Consequently, someone needed to be a spotter for the group in order to be successful. Everyone looked at me when it was time to pick a spotter, and with good reason. I was the youngest and had a more limited range than the older boys. Well, I said no, and they promptly pelted me with snowballs until I acquiesced and ran away shouting profanities as the snowballs hit me.

The best spotter position for snowballing cars is under the Christmas tree, sitting against the trunk of the tree itself. You can see up and down the roadway and see the throwers at the same time. Any hunter knows that a dark figure against a dark tree trunk is hard to see. Then add boughs all the way down to the ground and the onlooker had to see through bright lights hanging on the tree into a dark background made you invisible to any mortal. All you have to do is sit still, watch for cars, and act as a forward observer.

As I sat under the tree, who do you think showed up on the road? Kurt, the guy who had fallen into the creek, was walking down the middle of the road. It was great! He was like a walking range marker and instantly became the target of every thrower on the hill. They all threw their best shot and not a single one hit him. He stood defiantly in the middle of the road cursing at us and making a ruckus. He was trying to ruin our fun, standing in the middle of that road. From out of nowhere, a snowball was launched from the back of the group. I never found out who threw it but it had angelic trajectory, floating in the dim light of the Christmas tree and finding its way directly into Kurt's nuts. Down he went! It was like his legs had melted from under him. In his agony, he held his nether regions and rolled around in the middle of the road, "MY NUTS, MY NUTS!" Cars were narrowly passing him by, blowing their horns at him as they went. The strange thing is, none of them stopped to help him. I always wondered about that. Anyway, he was just having a bad night and, once again, he retreated toward home, this time bent over and moaning undiscernible bestowments of atrocities be placed upon our heads.

So, under the tree I continued to watch. After a couple of botched bombardments of the target area I got the lead time right. "THROW!" I would yell out with precision timing, and we began to hit the cars consistently. There were probably ten or so guys throwing, making quite a big area of effect on the road. All of this is before the time of mobile phones, so some people would stop on the road and yell into the darkness of the hill even if they couldn't see us. Most would just keep driving as we laughed. I think it is, sometimes, more fun to be chased by angry drivers than to use cars merely as target practice.

As cars and time passed by, and the pelting continued, I wanted to get in on throwing and out of the spotting, but when I complained, I was pelted with snowballs that penetrated the boughs as I sat underneath that tree while being told to stay there. The reason I mentioned that there were no mobile phones is that it takes time to get home from a barrage of snowballs and call the police on your landline to register a complaint. The reaction time of the Laurel Police couldn't have been better for me, and I began formulating my sinister plan immediately. Just for information, the police car of choice for the Laurel Police Department, at this time, was the Chevy Nova. They were retrofitted with roof lights, "popcorn poppers," two to be exact. The lights were blue, nine inches around, and about nine inches high and sat on a clumsily fitted roof rack that was probably ordered from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. They were a clunky mess.

Getting back, the police response was perfectly timed, almost like the cavalry coming to the rescue to free me from my condemnation under the tree. I had, as I said, instantly devised a plan in my head and put it into action. I waited for the cruiser to get to the launch point for the snowballs glide and gave the yell, "THROW!" None of my friends knew the ramifications of their act.

I was laughing, in my revenge, before the impact. I wasn't allowed to participate in throwing, but I could plot exact revenge for being pelted myself. What a perfect plan! It was like slow motion as the hurled snowballs descended like arrows into a far-off castle. They began hitting the blue Nova, which swerved and stopped. One of my friends was a pitcher in high school and threw what we called "watermelons" because they were such big snowballs.

He threw hard and fast with the rest, and as my luck had held, he hit the cop's roof light so hard that he knocked it off and hung by its wiring, flopping around as the cop turned his lights on. Like a surreal nightmare, the light dangled, swung, and flashed crazily. I have always wondered if cops get mad if their cars get hit by snowballs or if it just gives them something to do for a while. As a side note, I know for a fact that the light was fixed sometime afterwards because a few years down the road that same piece of junk cop car pulled me over and gave me a ticket. But that's another story.

Whatever the case is, anger or not, we added insult to injury by knocking off that light and the chase was on! The guys all took off. Some went across the field and up Snowden Place, and some went into the woods that skirted the opposite side of the hill, but most stood to see which way the cop was going to go so that they wouldn't get cut off in their escape. "It wasn't their first rodeo," as the saying goes.

I, personally, was in a conundrum sitting under the tree. The car was hardly twenty yards from me, but he hadn't seen me yet. Should I run or should I stay still? I gave it a very short consideration and decided to do what a deer would do...wait and sit as still as possible for the danger to go by. Like I said, I was invisible to mortal man and cops at this point, under this tree. That car backed up like the cop was crazy, simply out of his mind. On the wrong side of the road, facing the wrong way, and into a blind hill crest; that crazy cop was in hot pursuit of the perpetrators. He passed me like nothing else and pulled right into Kluckhuhn's driveway, that was perpendicular to the road, with his lights on dangling and knocking against the roof of the car. I could hardly contain myself. I had gotten away with it and all I could see of my friends were trails in the snow, which, by the way, works both ways when tracking: back to where you had been and forward to where you are. This cop was nobody's fool.

Kluckhuhn's driveway also connected into the dead end of Snowden Place, and a few less lucky comrades were chased through the neighborhood but miraculously not caught...good hoodlums all. The guys that went through the woods got away unscathed. As for me, I sat for a while under the tree, hidden, basking in the glory of my revenge. That is, until I realized that I was getting really cold.

Figuring that the trail had probably gone cold, I left my hiding place. I left the security of my hiding place and began walking up Brooklyn Bridge Road toward home. Wouldn't you know it, that cop, with the broken light, pulled up next to me, stopped and

got out to asked me why I was walking up the road. I was panicking inside, but outwardly calm as the night was cold. I told him that I was walking home. He cocked his head to the side and asked if I was throwing snowballs at cars? I thought that this question was awfully straight-forward and no one guilty would ever answer in the affirmative, so I assured him that I had not thrown a snowball all night, which was true. He looked at me crossly, questioned me more about throwing snowballs and I answered that I had not been throwing snowballs. This time he told me where the group of boys were standing when they had been seen throwing snowballs at cars and queried, again, if I knew any of them. I thought that the chase had shaken him a bit given this lack of insight into the questions he asked. I told him that I wasn't with any group of guys (just a little bend of the truth but I had to spot from under the tree and wasn't allowed to be with the group, technically). "Besides, I can't throw a snowball from where you say they were to the road," which obviously hit a chord with him.

He eyeballed me hard, got into his car, and through his open window, told me to go home. He then left in his car, speeding down the road, with the light still dangling limply. None of the answers were really "lies," but stretches of the truth and I didn't want to get caught and pay the consequences after plotting such a perfect and magnificent revenge against my "friends."

I returned to the innocence of my home and into the bliss of television and warmth, forgetting about the questions of cops and the throwing of snowballs. To this day we still laugh about that night. All except Kurt.

Jack Carr was born and raised in Laurel. He received an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College in 2009 and has since been published as a short story writer and a poet in Crosstimbers, The Pitkin Review, and Open Minds Quarterly. He taught Creative Writing (Poetry and Short Fiction) at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and English Composition at San Antonio College. He lives in San Antonio, TX with his wife and four children.



COVER STORY



Swimming in Irony

How Laurel's Segregated Pool Was Ultimately Redeemed



he Laurel Municipal Swimming Pool at the corner of Ninth and Main Streets, opened in 1953, has produced decades of fond summertime memories for residents. But like many small towns at the time, inclusion was unfortunately not on the list of priorities for most civic leaders.

Building the Pool

Plans for a "community swimming pool" began taking shape in the late 1940s, and were spearheaded by the Lions Club of Laurel—who quickly realized that the project was too large for them to undertake alone. They helped form a committee of representatives from other civic organizations in town and incorporated as the Laurel Park Commission.

The Commission met for the first time in March, 1949 and elected as its chairman Dr. John Warren, president of the Lions Club. The idea of a pool started with Dr. Warren the previous year, as he was "disturbed by the large number of children swimming along the wooded banks of the Patuxent-beautiful, but polluted."

BY RICHARD FRIEND

The city had recently been gifted some land along the river by Kent Mulliken and R.M. Marshall, as a possible site for a water filtration plant. That plan became moot when the city contracted with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission for filtered water, and the Lions Club suggested that the area be developed into a park playground instead. When the pool idea was suggested, things began happening quickly, and fundraising

efforts went full steam ahead. The city deeded the property to the Laurel Park Commission on May 11, 1949 for the consideration of one dollar, and real estate owners Harry and Walter Susini (founder of the Laurel Diner) volunteered to donate an adjoining parcel of land, bringing the tract to six acres.

The bulk of the funding challenge was solved when the Commission was empowered to issue \$75,000 in pool bonds, paying three percent interest and maturing in 25 years. By the summer of 1952, \$25,000 in bonds had been sold, and another \$15,000 had been raised by the community. The largest contribution, \$6,000, came from the Laurel Race Track.

When the lowest bid from professional contractors came in at \$75,000, George

H. Martin, a Laurel engineer and superintendent of the Laurel Race Track, volunteered his services. He designed the pool—75 feet by 120 feet, 3 feet deep at the shallow end and 9 feet deep for diving-through a means of concrete blocks reinforced with steel, filled with more concrete, and coated with waterproof cement. His method kept the costs under \$40,000. As the Baltimore Sun heralded, "And for \$40,000, the local 2,000 child population has more than just a pool."

But that population figure, sadly, didn't include everyone. Segregation prohibited Laurel's Black residents, the majority of families who lived just blocks away in the Grove neighborhood—and paid the same taxes as whites-from becoming members of the new community swimming pool.

(Opposite): A photo from the 1938 Album Representative of Laurel's Official, Financial, Professional and Business Interests shows "Our Lions Minstrel Comapany" posing on stage. Local members of the Lions Club, including several residents from prominent Laurel families, performed in blackface for minstrel shows that would typically benefit Whites only. From 1949 until at least 1954, the shows were used to raise funds to build and maintain the swimming pool at the corner of Main and Ninth Streets, which would not open to Black residents until the City of Laurel purchased the privately-owned facility in 1968. In the early 1950s, the Laurel News Leader advertised the minstel shows, and articles praised the performances.

(Right): The newly installed Civil Rights Trail sign at the Laurel Pool.

(Below): A pass from 1965 before the pool was desegregated, and a token from shortly after the City purchased the property to allow all residents to have equal access.



That fact made one particular fundraising tactic particularly ironic.

In both 1949 and 1950, minstrel shows were performed at Laurel High School to sold out audiences, with a number of prominent citizens appearing in blackface. The performances received rave reviews, even making the front cover of the Laurel *News Leader*. One gushed: "We heartily recommend that the Lions Club make a Minstrel Show an annual performance." In fact, minstrel shows had already been a popular thing in Laurel since the 1930s, and the performances continued as benefits for the swimming pool even years after it had opened.

The pool opened for Whites only in 1953, but it was 14 years later when another irony helped rectify that mistake. Increased racial tensions in the Grove-provoked by heightened Ku Klux Klan activities there in 1967—sparked a series of street protests by residents, demanding changes to improve the safety and quality of their neighborhood. Among the requests of the The Laurel Grove Improvement Committee-a bi-racial group appointed by Mayor Merrill Harrison—were better street lighting, police protection, the removal of a burned building, and recreational facilities. Chief among the latter was the integration of the swimming pool.

Mayor Harrison pledged action on the list of demands at a July 19, 1967 public meeting at St. Mark's Church, and announced that as of January 1, 1968, the privately-owned swimming pool would be returned to the City of Laurel. The Laurel Park Commission, Inc. sent a letter to its bondholders, announcing that its officers and directors had voted at an August 1, 1967 meeting to sell the pool back to the city for the sum of one dollar.

When it reopened for the 1968 season as the Laurel Municipal Pool, Black residents were allowed in for the very first time.

Earlier this year, Anacostia Trails Heritage Area/Maryland Milestones unveiled the Prince George's County Civil Rights Trail—an important public history project focused on regional sites and stories of the national Civil Rights Movement (1954–1964). Informational signage has been installed at nine sites to date. Each sign details the experiences of Black Marylanders as they fought against segregation and for equality. Two of the sites are in Laurel: one at St. Mark's Church and the other at the swimming pool. The Laurel History Boys are proud to have had a small part in bringing these signs to fruition. While they tell of an ugly time in our hometown's history, these stories serve as a reminder that "the good old days" weren't always good for everyone in the community.

Richard Friend is a founding member of The Laurel History Boys, and creator of LostLaurel.com.





HISTORY

A Look Into the Children's Center at Laurel



BY KEVIN LEONARD AND ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI

PART 2 OF A SERIES

EDITOR'S NOTE: Much of the material quoted in this article comes from sources dated well before adoption of current nomenclature and phrases describing mental illness. We retained these phrases for historical accuracy.

here was so much promise in the early days. So much, in fact, that in 1940 at the dedication of a new hospital on the grounds of the District Training School (which was the first facility constructed and later consolidated into the Children's Center), the featured speaker was the extremely popular First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt.

As we reported in part 1 of this series (*Voices of Laurel*, Spring 2023), the Children's Center on Route 198 next to Fort Meade eventually consisted of four facilities: The Industrial Home School for White Children; the Industrial Home School for Black Children; the National Training School for Boys, which takes Black and White boys who are seriously delinquent; the National Training School for Girls, which takes Black dependent and delinquent girls, both mild and serious cases; and the District Training School (DTS) for the "feeble-minded."

According to the Maryland Historical Trust, the prevailing model of social redemption up until about the 1920s held that rural settings with clean air and simple but ordered agricultural or industrial tasks isolated from the evils of urban life would rehabilitate the social outcast. "The medical community viewed the mentally retarded as children, classified them by grades of function, and held that institutionalization provided better care for the retarded individual than a life of neglect in the family home. This view of mental retardation interacted with larger models of social rehabilitation to produce isolated training institutions that were viewed as protecting the retarded from harm, but also protecting society from the retarded while they could be trained to be productive members of society."

By the time the DTS was built, the medical community's view on treatment of the "retarded" was changing. Half a century of largely failed projects shifted beliefs that there was little that could be accomplished to raise the social function of the mentally retarded, so the goal of institutions was increasingly seen as custodial and life-long. By the time the DTS opened, this view of longterm custodial care was the accepted approach.



Buying the Illusion

But the promise—supported with appearances by the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt—was an illusion. The illusion was created by the DC Government (which owned and operated the Children's Center) and people in charge of the facilities, and furthered by local media who bought the illusion and reinforced it to the public.

Behind the scenes—unknown to the general public—the Children's Center was a cauldron of abuse, incompetent care, and scandal since its inception in 1924. The sheer amount of the horrors and abuse at the Children's Center is difficult to fathom. Up until the late 1960s, media coverage was rare, since the DC Government and Children Center officials were very efficient in hushing up incidents.

The Laurel News Leader was guilty of buying into the illusion. For example, in 1954, when the Children's Center was dedicated, the News Leader reported that "over 200 children will be transferred here from 'antiquated' facilities in Washington, DC." The report added that "These children will come to live in a twomillion-dollar group of buildings built to meet all their needs, a unique development in public institutional facilities and one which makes the District one of the pioneers in salvaging young lives. It is a move worthy of the nation's capital, since it will serve as a model to other communities, but it is also more economic for the District in the long run."

And a year later, when the Cedar Knoll School opened, the *News Leader* reported that the motto of the school is "What's Amiss, I'll Strive to Mend."

For a few years in the 1960s, the Children's Center staged a May Day celebration and received a great amount of positive publicity. In 1969, Laurel High School's band, majorettes, color guard, and pompon girls marched in the May Day parade at the center. According to the *News Leader*, "Many visitors at the celebration stood in awe as the well-behaved children went through their rehearsed performances, clearly taking pride in their accomplishments."

A Good Neighbor?

Years of budget shortfalls preventing the Children's Center plan to come to fruition until the mid-1950s also created problems for the burgeoning Laurel community. The DTS population was growing, too. "Feeble-minded" wards of varying levels of delinquency were being moved into the DTS. Unable to adequately segregate the children due to the multiple stresses on the District's child welfare system, and unable to secure funding to build fences and securityenhanced buildings meant that some inmates escaped.

The strains on the greater Laurel community were observed in press reports revealing escapes and, when applicable, the crimes that were committed by the escapees. As far back as 1946, Dr. James Lewald, superintendent of the DTS, told the *Hagerstown Morning Herald* that since 1942—when the war depleted his staff—there had been from 100 to 125 escapes from the institution. Lewald also said that "since the school was established in 1924, about 350 inmates have walked out and never returned." There were no security enhancements to keep the children from leaving the campus.

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According to the *News Leader* in 1959, the Children's Center "is a good neighbor" to Laurel. The article also added that (pre-Civil Rights Act) "The inmate population is, of course, integrated and about five-eighths are colored. This is also true of the staff and, because of lack of proper housing in the area for colored, most of these commute."

Since 1962, and separated only by the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, Maryland City was the closest community to the Children's Center. Russett, developed in 1991, was also next door. Maryland City and Russett were continually terrorized over the years by news of escapees from the Children's Center. For about a year in the mid-90s, when alerted to an escape, the Maryland City fire station sounded an alarm to residents. That system was abandoned by Children's Center officials.

In 1966, 26 juvenile delinquents broke out of the Children's Center by breaking through a door and simply walking away from the grounds. Twenty-two were captured quickly in the vicinity of the institution but four remained at large for the next few days.

In the book, *Abandoned America: Dismantling the Dream*, Matthew Christopher writes "patient escape stories were more common, including an incident in 1973 where four employees were kidnapped at gunpoint by three men trying to break a resident out of the facility." In 1994, four juvenile offenders fled Forest Haven in a

friend's car, but no one informed local officials.

These are just a few of the hundreds of escapes since 1924. Ray Smallwood, president of the Maryland City Civic Association, told the *News Leader* in 1994 that "DC officials have consistently lied to the community after making agreements with community leaders about the facility." Smallwood's concern followed an escape a month earlier by four juveniles, one of which was incarcerated for murder. Previously, the DC Government assured Laurel Police that they would be contacted in the event of an escape, who would then contact other local officials. But when the four juveniles escaped, "I first heard it on the damn radio," Smallwood complained to the *News Leader*.

Abuse

Physical abuse of residents was commonplace. Abuse cases against the District for the poor treatment of those in the institution were first brought to the DC Superior Court in 1972. That case lasted several years and uncovered chronic mental, physical, and sexual abuse at the facility. The litany of abuse cases over the years would fill a volume, but the examples below give an indication of the horrific treatment that was inflicted during its existence.

In his book, Christopher describes an incident in 1961 when a 17-year-old African American resident was scalded to death while locked in a barred detention room after a fight. A pipe carrying "300 degree steam and boiling water under 55 pounds of pressure" broke while he was left unsupervised in the room. He was pronounced dead at the Children's Center. Little other information on the incident was given.

Staff members locked dozens of residents, naked except for adult-sized diapers, in rooms stripped of furniture other than wooden benches, according to a 1976 lawsuit. Some residents were tied to beds and chairs, and some choked to death on food the staff fed to them while they were restrained. According to the *Hagerstown Daily Mail*, in 1976 children awaiting trial in the District of Columbia Juvenile Court were beaten and otherwise mistreated by some counselors at the Children's Center. DC Government officials responding to the charges asserted that the city was following court-mandated orders and that "any beatings represented isolated instances."

In a 2009 report, the *Washington Post* said, "Oak Hill, once known as the Pound or Little Lorton, was a major headache for DC mayors. In its heyday, it had 208 beds spread across 11 buildings. From January 1988 to January 1989, 319 youths were on runaway status, an additional 191 didn't return from weekend passes and 128 escaped. It was violent. In 1989, an investigative panel found that staff members at Oak Hill and its annex had wounded or beaten juveniles with a brick, knife, chair, milk cartons and fists, causing broken teeth and noses, a dislocated shoulder, kidney injuries and eyes swollen shut."

Between 1989 and 1991, the Justice Department began to monitor deaths from aspiration pneumonia, a condition that can be caused by improper feeding procedures, such as feeding a patient who is lying down. Accounts of rampant physical, mental, and sexual abuse at the facility were also reported. Residents reported being hit with belts, switches, and baseball bats. Missing teeth and other dental problems were commonly reported. Many of the residents who died were buried in a mass grave, unmarked until a headstone containing 389 names was erected by some of the patients' families in 1987.

Scandal

As with the physical abuse meted out over the entirety of the Children's Center existence, scandals were commonplace and covered a myriad of issues. The following examples are, again, but a few of the known scandals. It's anyone's guess how many went unreported.

According to the website "Forest Haven Asylum: Abandoned Home for the Abandoned" by Sometimes Interesting (sometimes-interesting.com/forest-havenasylum), "due to poor recordkeeping the true number of patients treated by Forest Haven over the decades will never be known. Experts' best estimates have 3,200 patients spending time at the institution. If we consider the 389 deaths at Forest Haven, it had an operational lifetime residential death rate of twelve percent-and that's using the reported figures. Some of the worst cases featured those patients who were not mentally retarded at all. The deaf, dyslexic, illiterate, epileptic, and non-native speakers were just some of the those misunderstood by society or just too much for their families to handle. When a nearby orphanage closed in 1974, twenty orphans were relocated to Forest Haven. Rather than find alternate orphanage lodgings, the children were re-classified from 'orphan' to 'retarded'."

As to the hundreds of deaths at the Children's Center, according to the *Washington Post* in a 1999 article, "A decade ago, when retarded people died in the District's asylum called Forest Haven, in Laurel, they were removed to shallow graves in an unmarked field, from which the overflow of a nearby creek would sometimes disinter them."

Unqualified and incompetent doctors plagued the Center over and over again. Children's Center officials did not seem to ever learn from their mistakes.

The FBI arrested Borge Emil Stendorf, who posed as

a doctor at both the Aberdeen Proving Grounds and the Children's Center. He served as the medical director at the Children's Center from April 1949 to May 1953. Although Stendorf claimed years of medical experience in the Army, FBI investigators said he actually served as a private for less than a year.

Christopher's book described a Forest Haven doctor whose license was suspended but who nevertheless was allowed to provide grossly inadequate care resulting in the death of residents. The licensing board had previously declared that his continued practice posed a "grave risk and imminent danger to the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Maryland."

A January 1990 report noted just two physicians were serving Forest Haven's 232 patients, and one, Dr. Yin Chuan Hung, was found to be "professionally incompetent" in 1988 by the Maryland Commission on Medical Discipline.

The *News Leader* reported in 1970 that a 31-year-old housekeeper at Children's Center was found guilty of raping a nun.

In 1978, a food services employee at Forest Haven fired several volleys from a 20-gauge shotgun inside the building's cafeteria, which was full of residents and staff. Seven persons were wounded in the attack, three residents and four staff members. The gunman was arrested on the BW Parkway after a short car chase. The motive for the attack was unknown.

A District Court convicted a Forest Haven worker of stealing \$40,000 from residents' savings accounts in 1981.

One story that illustrates the incompetence of the scandal-ridden facility is about a resident named Mattie Hoge. Born deaf in 1912, Mattie was enrolled at the Maryland School for the Blind at Overlea, which also accepted deaf children, when she was 7 years old. When her mother died when she was 12, Mattie became a ward of the District of Columbia. Mattie was declared "feeble-minded" and sent to Forest Haven in 1929, when she was 17. In 1930, she was tested by someone who did not understand sign language and pronounced "severely retarded."

She remained at Forest Haven for *57 years* until 1987, when a judge ordered her released to a group home. Tests indicated the 75-year-old Mattie's IQ could be as high as 95, just below "normal." Mattie, who was partially paralyzed from a stroke, told attorneys she had never been tested by someone who could communicate with her. In 1987, a judge acknowledged Mattie was not retarded and ordered her to be released.

Mattie passed away three months after her release. Five months later, a DC Superior Court jury awarded her estate \$80,000 in damages.

Medical Experimentation

As if the abuse and scandals weren't enough, another horrific chapter in the Children Center's history involved using residents, including children, for medical experimentation.

In 1959, the *Washington Evening Star* reported that scientists with the United States Public Health Service proudly announced the results of their studies on a "massive," single-dose polio vaccine. The studies were done on "volunteer" adults and children at the Children's

HISTORY

Introduction to the Early History of Laurel Mills

The early history of Laurel Mills is a story of the Snowden family and manufacturers such as Horace Capron, Stephen Heath, James Gary, and even David Carroll. The property of these companies spanned the two sides of the Big Patuxent River in both Anne Arundel (before Howard) and Prince George's Counties. Capron, Heath, Gary, and Carroll all had work experience at the cotton mills nearby at Guilford and Savage. One could write a book about this topic, which rivals that of old Ellicott Mills.

Snowden's Mill

According to the 1894 Ross and Fairall's *Illustrated Laurel and City Directory*, the first grist mill in Laurel was built around 1811 by Nicholas Snowden. The Snowden family is one of the oldest in Maryland and were considered "iron masters" and founders of the state's iron industry with furnaces and foundries along the branches of the Patuxent River in the 1700s.

Nicholas Snowden was deeded the 504 acres of land that the grist mill was built on in 1807 by his siblings Richard, Thomas, and Mary. This was in fulfilment of the intent of their deceased father, Major Thomas Snowden, who died in 1803. The earliest documentation of a grist mill here was indeed owned by Nicholas Snowden, as noted in the 1820 Census of Manufacturers for Van Ville Election District. Snowden noted his "merchant mill" produced "wheat for bread stuff" employing two men for about \$600 annually. It was a small mill that marketed between \$12 and \$18,000 of product, a fairly large range perhaps reflecting yearly variation. In the 1820 census, Snowden's household had two adults and eight children, in addition to enslaving 48 individuals. Twenty people were engaged in agriculture, likely working in the wheat fields and one in manufacturing, perhaps the merchant mill. Census information for 1830, the year before Snowden died, is missing for a few Maryland counties include PG.

WAYNE DAVI

Ross & Fairall reported that in 1824 William Johnson leased the Snowden mill and installed a cotton manufacturing operation, a claim repeated by local historians. Although primary source documents are lacking for this, the timing is plausible. Snowden leased his property for eight years to William Johnson and John Watson for a cotton factory, grist mill, and sawmill in 1830. In fact, this lease was back-dated after Snowden died in early 1831 to make sure the 8-year lease was recorded in the land records. Since Johnson and Watson demanded a lease agreement be entered after Snowden died, there is no reason to believe it didn't last for the full 8 years, which would have ended in 1838. This first grist and cotton was located at the downstream end of Main Street where the Avondale Mill was later built. By June 1831, the Laurel Cotton Factory was already identified in a sale advertisement of a nearby farm "situated directly between the Savage and Laurel Cotton Factories." This is the first known reference to the name "Laurel" for this area along the Patuxent.

Horace Capron and The Patuxent Company

Snowden's daughter, Louise, married Horace Capron in 1834. Capron was from a cotton manufacturing family, and he first worked at the Warren Mill on the Gunpowder River before joining the Savage Manufacturing Company around 1832 with the responsibility of retooling their operations with new equipment. He was active in the Savage Mill temperance society and was still living there when he was credited with quelling the B&O Railroad riot during the construction of the Washington Branch line in November 1834 that resulted in the deaths of contractors John Watson and William Mercer, and the near death of Peter Gorman (the future Senator Gorman's father). Hundreds were arrested and three men were charged in the deaths. Capron had a military appointment in the Maryland militia and took charge when the rioters threatened the neighborhood. His actions were rewarded with the rank of Colonel in 1835.

Capron left Savage Mill in 1835 and, along with Theodore Jenkins, A. E. Hall, E. Snowden, O. C. Tiffany, and W.C. Shaw, he chartered a the "Patuxent Company" upstream of the Snowden's Mill in January of 1836. The Patuxent Company was to "manufacture cotton, iron and other articles" and it quickly advertised for machine makers. The area became known as Laurel Factory by 1838, in which their machine shop "everything is made, from a gun lock to a locomotive engine."

In 1839, just after what would have been the end of the Snowden Mill lease to Johnson and Watson, Richard and Elizabeth Snowden sold the land containing the mill to Horace Capron for \$5,650. This would give Capron control of the original Snowden mills, as well as the new business upstream that manufactured machine equipment and cotton products. In 1843, the Patuxent Company revised its charter to increase its capital stock up to \$100,000. Business at the time seemed good but Capron would soon focus more on his agricultural interests of demonstrating how to improve "worn out lands" and his debts mounted.

The Laurel Manufacturing Company and then Troubled Times

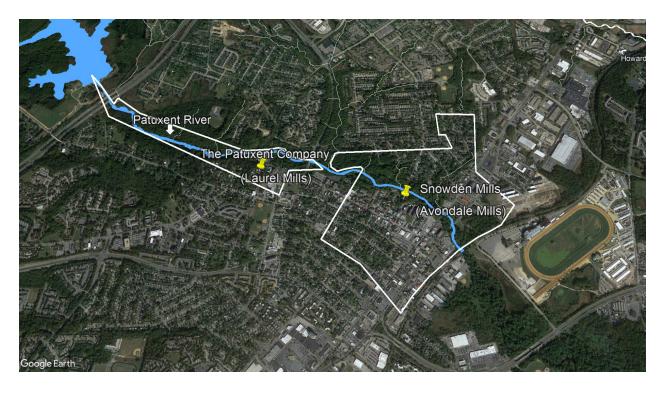
Machine manufacturing was a huge component of the success of Laurel Factory with both Capron and Stephen P. Heath involved. Heath was an expert machinist and, in 1845, that effort was transformed into the Laurel Manufacturing Company that included Capron, Tiffany, and others, including Heath as owners. The same year the Avondale Manufacturing Company was also chartered with Heath, D. Wilton Snowden, Capron, and Jenkins as owners. In the June 1850 census, Heath was listed as a machinist with real estate valued at \$3,000 and Capron was a manufacturer with no real estate value due to his insolvency and need to sell his properties just three months earlier. His troubles did not seem to affect the Laurel Factory businesses.

Capron blamed himself for his financial difficulties that he felt started around 1847 with the international banking panic that hit manufacturing stocks very hard. In his autobiography, he wrote that "The primary cause of my troubles which culminated in 1850, was no doubt the result of an over weening confidence in my abilities for overcoming every obstacle that came in my way, my unparalleled success in every thing I undertook strengthened this sentiment within me. The commendation of the press of the whole county had confirmed it." Capron continued an impressive career in 1852, becoming appointed by the President of the United States as a special agent in Texas overseeing settlement of certain Native American tribes. He wrote extensively about this experience in his autobiography and even more so about his "expedition to Japan" between 1871 and 1875, representing the U.S. Department of Agriculture as its Commissioner. Between the times in Texas and Japan, Colonel Capron lead the 14th Illinois Cavalry regiment in the Civil War. After an impressive personal life and career, Capron died in 1885 and is interred in Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown, Washington DC.

Stephen P. Heath

After Capron left the scene, machinist Stephen P. Heath, Sr., and then eventually his namesake son, had success in not only running the machine shop in Laurel but also the Avondale mills. By the end of 1850, Heath was becoming well-known in the region for manufacturing machines, including one for weaving fishing nets that the inventor, John McMullen, was taking to the London Fair. Despite the Laurel machine shop and the cotton factory being destroyed by fire in 1855, both were quickly rebuilt with Heath constructing the machinery for the cotton mill. In 1857, Heath and George Wheeler stopped the cotton operations at Avondale and focused solely on being a "merchant flour mill."

In 1860 Heath installed a turbine wheel for the nearby Savage Factory. The census for that year clearly shows the five manufacturing businesses at Laurel Factory. Heath and his 70 employees were running a "cotton machining" business for manufacturers such as George Tiffany, who employed 250 at the Laurel cotton mills. The merchant



mill at Avondale being run by Wheeler employed three, and produced 8,200 barrels of wheat and rye flour. A small woolen factory was run by Owen Carrol and a very small grist mill was operated by Charles DuVall. In 1865, Heath was building machinery at the Savage Manufacturing Company.

The Heaths at Guilford Factory

In 1867, Heath, Sr. purchased the Guilford Factory property from Henry H. Owings, and was soon borrowing money through a mortgage of \$10,000 from James S. Gary to pay debts and maintain the factory. That mortgage was foreclosed in favor of a \$7000 mortgage from Mr. Gary in 1869. Mr. James S. Gary died in March 1870, so his son, James A. Gary (who would become the Postmaster General in 1897 under President McKinley) issued a new mortgage in December 1870 to Mr. Heath for the original amount. Heath Sr. died in 1874, at which time the Guilford factory ownership reverted back to Mr. Gary. Mr. Gary then appointed Heath, Jr. to be manager of the Guilford Factory.

The Garys and the Laurel Mills

James S. Gary was born in Massachusetts and took cotton manufacturing jobs in Medford before moving to Connecticut and then Rhode Island, working various cotton mills. It has been written that James S. Gary then moved in 1838 to "take charge of a department of the Patuxent Manufacturing Company, at Laurel." He then established the Ashland Manufacturing Company, followed by the very successful Alberton Manufacturing Company at Elysville (now Daniels) on the Patapsco River.

June 1877, James A. Gary and others formed a corporation called the "Laurel Mills of Prince Georges County" and Gary became president of the company, but he hired George H. Nye to run the Laurel Mills, which he successfully did until 1885. In 1886, the company was put up for auction and was described as about 237 acres of land with a three-story main mill and 252 looms and 8408 spindles, including a pump for fire protection, along with pipes and a hydrant. Gary was on the Board of Directors of the American Fire Insurance Company by 1882.

Cut From the Same Cloth

The auction of the Laurel Mills of Prince Georges County resulted in an 1887 reorganization into "The Laurel Company of Prince Georges County" with James Gary and David H. Carroll, among others, as Directors. Gary and Carroll were also responsible for their other main mills, Alberton and Woodberry-Mt. Vernon, respectively. In fact, Gary also owned the Guilford Mills, where he put Stephen P. Heath, Jr. in charge. It was a closeknit family of cotton manufacturers (sorry, pun intended).

In 1899, the Laurel Mills became part of the Mt. Vernon-Woodberry Cotton Duck Company, named for the mills founded by David Carroll and Horatio Gambrill in the 1840s, both of whom were acquainted as apprentices at the Savage Mills in the 1830s. Carroll's son, David H. Carroll, was one of the directors of this company. Seventy years later you can see how these families were all cut from the same cloth.

I have shared all of my sources with Ann Bennett, Executive Director and Abby Carver, Visitor Services Coordinator of the Laurel Historical Society so please contact them if you have any follow-up. If you would like to see similar stories like the ones I have written for *Voices* of Laurel, please see my upcoming book entitled *Hidden History of Howard County* by the History Press to be published in October 2023.

Wayne Davis grew up in Chicago and has been living in Howard County since 1992. He is a retired environmental scientist for the USEPA and has a life-long interest in history. Wayne manages the Friends of the Guilford Industrial Historic District Facebook page and website and has been posting about local history since 2018.

HISTORY



The Forgotten Festival of '83

Less than a month before a major Simon & Garfunkel concert, a three-day music festival at Laurel Race Course drew major stars—but minor crowds

hen it comes to concert venues, Laurel Race Course probably isn't one of the first places that comes to mind. But for the few times when horse racing took a back seat to music festivals, the question of "what if?" still seems to hover over the infield turf to this day. Somehow, what should have been phenomenally successful concerts that took place there are now largely forgotten, sadly. Even the incredible 1969 Laurel Pop Festival, which took place a month before Woodstock and boasted a lineup that included Led Zeppelin, Sly and the Family Stone, Johnny Winter, Jethro Tull, Jeff Beck, Frank Zappa, and half a dozen other bonafide stars isn't much more than a footnote in those acts' histories. The festival was vexed by a number of problems, not the least of which included rain and technical delays. It was also only attended by roughly 15,000—a number soon to be dwarfed by Woodstock. Then came the 1970s, and the Laurel Pop Festival quickly began to fade into obscurity.

It wasn't until the summer of 1983 that Laurel Race Course hosted a concert that was an unqualified success. On August 13th of that year, Simon & Garfunkel made



BY RICHARD FRIEND

Laurel a stop on their 19-city North American tour, their first in 13 years and their only concert in the DC area. Attendance estimates varied wildly, with the *Washington Post* reporting 25,000, the *Baltimore Sun* estimating 40,000, and legendary local promoter Durwood Settles claming (with tongue firmly in cheek) in excess of 50,000 tickets sold. One thing they could all agree on, however, was that the Simon & Garfunkel concert was a smashing success. And it might be the one concert held at Laurel Race Course—other than the first night of the Laurel Pop Festival—that anyone who attended still remembers fondly.

This article was originally only going to be *about* the Simon & Garfunkel concert. After talking with my friend, Leslie, who absolutely beamed while reminiscing about attending it with her dad as a child, I realized that the 40th anniversary of the show was the perfect occasion to revisit it for *Voices of Laurel*. But in researching, I discovered something—*another* music festival at Laurel Race Course, complete with an all-star lineup, had taken place less than a month earlier. And like the Laurel Pop Festival, it too was plagued with problems that ultimately made it forgettable. The Laurel Super Music Festival '83 was promoted as a three-day event over the weekend of July 15th through 17th, with each night offering a different musical flavor.

The headliners for the opening Friday night of rhythm and blues were the Isley Brothers, who'd had over 20 years of hits with "Shout," "Twist and Shout," "It's Your Thing," "Who's That Lady?" and more. Also on the card that night were the vocal harmony trio Ray, Goodman, and Brown, and a new synth-funk band, System.

Saturday night featured a country music lineup with legends Glen Campbell and Tammy Wynette headlining, along with B.J. Thomas and Sylvia.

Last, but certainly not least, the festival closed on Sunday with the popular Kool and the Gang, Chaka Khan, and the incomparable Marvin Gaye.

Enjoying a resurgence, Gaye had already given two pivotal performances that year: his rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" at the NBA All-Star Game, and a performance at the 25th Annual Grammy Awards a night which saw him win Best Male R&B Song for "Sexual Healing." Tragically, in less than nine months, he'd be shot to death by his own father. (Opposite): Some of the diverse acts that appeared at the threeday Laurel Super Music Festival '83 included R&B, country, and pop, with the top star being the legendary Marvin Gaye.

(Right, top): A rare surviving t-shirt from the festival and the front page of the Laurel Leader showing the sparse crowd that attended the first two days.

(Right, bottom): By contrast, the Simon & Garfunkel concert less than a month later drew a record crowd and was universally hailed as a great success.

The festival's promoters, Carnegie Concepts, Ltd., had their work cut out for them when they realized that they wouldn't be able to obtain a beer license for any of the three days' events. And their decision to prohibit fans from bringing their own food and drinks into the show did not sit well with concertgoers at all, who also complained about high-priced concession stands.

The fans' biggest complaint, however, was about the delays. Shows that were supposed to start at 4 PM didn't begin until two hours later, and then they were vexed with technical issues throughout most sets. And the fans weren't the only ones complaining. When Glen Campbell finally took the stage *after 1 AM*, most of the sparse crowd had already left. "Welcome to the late, late show," he quipped. Unlike those in attendance, Campbell at least had been able to enjoy a beer backstage while he waited.

Susan Giddings of Laurel was quoted in the *Laurel Leader* as having left early that Saturday night, only to find more disappointment when the parking lot was pitch black and without security guards. "There were absolutely no lights out there. It was really spooky," she said. She later complained to both the promoter and the Laurel Chamber of Commerce, requesting that her ticket cost be refunded.

Friday night drew the smallest crowd, while Sunday's crowd for Marvin Gaye was the largest. The total attendance for all three days combined was estimated to be about 10,000—far below what Simon & Garfunkel would bring to the race course the following month.

Between acts and during the numerous technical delays, pre-recorded music played. The sparse crowd, though annoyed, largely kept dancing through it all. Despite "an obvious odor of marijuana," Anne Arundel County Police reported no disorders or arrests over the full three days.

Settles, the promotor of the Simon & Garfunkel concert, had attended the underperforming Laurel Super Music Festival himself the previous month to see how the race course would accommodate a concert crowd. He noted some key differences between the events: for Simon & Garfunkel, no chair seating would be sold in the track infield and all tickets would be priced the same. The biggest differences, of course, ended up being the attendance and the rave reviews. The Simon & Garfunkel concert drew the largest non-horse racing crowd in Laurel Race Course's entire history.

Richard Friend is a founding member of The Laurel History Boys, and creator of LostLaurel.com.



HISTORY

History of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System



BY DW ROWLANDS



Beltsville was supposed to get a new library in the 1970s, but budget cuts almost shuttered it altogether. The building shown here exists only because of community activism.

The 1960s and 1970s saw major growth in the PGCMLS, both in the number of branches and in moves to new, larger buildings that allowed more comprehensive library services. But at the end of the 1970s, that growth ground to a halt when residents passed a racially-motivated referendum limiting the county's taxing authority. That restriction, a form of which exists to this day, brought about an era of austerity for the library system that lasted a generation.

Budget struggles in the wake of TRIM

The construction of new library branches in Prince George's County significantly slowed after the 1970s, in part due to the county's severe budget struggles in the aftermath of the 1978 passage of the "Tax Reform Initiative by Marylanders" (TRIM) restriction on the county's property taxes. TRIM, passed five months after California's infamous Proposition 13 property tax restriction, initially limited PG County's total property tax revenue to its 1979 value of \$143.9 million, regardless of inflation and increases in home values.

TRIM passed just as Prince George's County began a demographic transition from majority-White to majority-Black. A major motivation for its passage was the desire of White voters to limit funding for a public school student body that was becoming increasingly Black and integrated—four years earlier, in 1974, the Prince George's school system had become the largest in the country to be subject to a court-ordered busing desegregation plan.

Holding property tax revenue constant while the county's population was rapidly growing led to severe cuts to many county services and increases to fees. PGCMLS started charging overdue fines for the first time, and librarians were removed from the system's smallest branches, which were now only staffed by circulation assistants. These budget cuts also brought the library system's rapid expansion to a standstill. After a 1974 referendum authorized the sale of bonds for the construction of a new library branch in Beltsville, PGCMLS had opened a temporary Beltsville branch in a set of interconnected trailers on Old Gunpowder Road. But in January 1979, shortly after the passage of TRIM, the county government suspended the planning of the branch due to anticipated financial shortfalls.

The Beltsville library was saved by community activism, cost-cutting, and the fact that the county police wanted a station in the Beltsville area at the same time. Instead of a new library building, in 1983 work began on renovating the former Chestnut Hills School building in Beltsville to serve as both a county police station and a library branch.

By the early 1980s, the scale of the damage done to the county's budget and services by TRIM was widely



The Spauldings Branch, which opened in 1987, replaced the District Heights and Suitland Branches, which had been housed in non-PGCMLS buildings

apparent. With the support of then-County Executive and later Governor Parris Glendening, voters supported a referendum in 1984 to change the property tax restriction to a limit on the property tax rate, while allowing assessed values and overall revenue to increase. Financial struggles, however, continued.

In 1987, two new branches did open: the Largo-Kettering branch opened in a rented storefront, and the Spauldings Branch opened in a custombuilt building. But the opening of the Spauldings branch came with the closure of two branches located about a mile away from it in different directions: the Suitland and District Heights branches. When the First Regional Branch in Hyattsville opened a similar distance from the College Park and downtown Hyattsville (later Magruder) branches in 1964, the older branches remained open, but the funding situation in the late 1980s made it impossible to keep the Suitland and District Heights branches open alongside Spauldings.

The 1991 budget crisis and its aftermath

Financial issues continued to worsen for PGCMLS in the early 1990s, and in 1991 the library system faced the worst financial crisis in its history. The Largo-Kettering Branch, which had only opened four years earlier, was nearly closed to save money, and was only saved by community activism.

Bookmobile service, which had begun to focus on providing book access to



The Largo-Kettering branch is housed in the lower level of a non-descript office building in an office park in Largo that was purchased by PGCMLS in 1993. The library system headquarters were relocated from the Hyattsville Branch to the upper level of the building.

underserved suburban communities as the county's rural population shrank, had suffered since the 1970s, and no new vehicles had been purchased since 1975. The 1991 budget crisis was the final straw for the beleaguered program, and it was eliminated that year.

The 1991 budget crisis also led to significant staffing cuts and service reductions, which predictably led to falling library usage. To save money, and because of reduced usage, the College Park Branch closed in 1994 and the Magruder Branch closed in 1996.



The Upper Marlboro Branch is one of the few PGCMLS branches in a pedestrian-oriented commercial strip: in 1995 it was relocated from a rented storefront to the renovated former Upper Marlboro Post Office, built in 1936 as part of the New Deal.

Three branches did receive larger spaces during this period, however. An expansion of the Laurel Branch opened in 1993 and, in the same year, the Largo-Kettering Branch moved from a rented storefront to an office building purchased by PGCMLS, the other half of which was used for new administrative offices. Then, in 1995, the Upper Marlboro Branch was moved from a rented storefront to the renovated New Deal-era post office that had recently been vacated by USPS.

Technological changes in the 1990s

Although the library system closed as many branches as it opened between 1981 and 2012, the 1990s also brought about significant technological changes that improved patrons' ability to find books. The library system's catalog was put online in 1992, and in 1994 public databases were made available online. All branches had full internet access by 1998.

In 2000, Marina, a web portal that allows anyone with a Maryland public library card to request books from anywhere in the state, became available to the public, making inter-library loans possible without a librarian to facilitate them.

Another component of statewide library integration came about in 2005 when Maryland became the first state to implement a statewide borrowing program with the "MPOWER" common library card. Although the state's library systems have returned to issuing their own library cards, it remains the case that a library card from any of Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City can be used in any of the state's public libraries.

PART 5 OF THIS SERIES WILL APPEAR IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF VOICES OF LAUREL.

DW Rowlands is a human geographer and PG County native, currently living in College Park. She is a senior research assistant at the Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking in the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. ADVERTISEMENT



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"We had a guy..."

Tales From the Laurel Police Department



ву RICK McGILL

his continuing series is an uncomplicated string of personal war stories from my time at a small municipal police department between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., told without a lot of extravagant details; just the facts, ma'am. Other cops will appreciate the bare-bones setups of my individual anecdotes. But I do try to explain some of the procedures for the general public who has little understanding of why we do some of the things we do.

The men and women I worked with are the finest you will find in any police agency anywhere. Some have since retired or moved on to other agencies, and some are still there fighting the good fight. Hopefully, this bit of sucking up will make up for any inconsistencies in my memory of the events in which some of these great guys made an appearance. They will no doubt recognize their own first names and possibly the fictitious names of some of our less-than-law-abiding customers.

So grab yourself a cup of java or crack open a beer and get comfortable. You're in a room full of cops talking shop. And the attitudes, sometimes smart-ass, sometimes despairing, that go with it. In our town, on my shift, this was policing in the last decades of the 20th century.

Honeysuckle blooms in June in our area and there are neighborhoods around town that are thick with this sweet smell of early summer. On a hot, humid summer midnight you could be blindfolded and know where you were just from the different smells around town. Stale beer: behind the B&E Tavern. Old, damp, rotten mattresses: behind Zayre's. Seafood: behind Giant Food. And honeysuckle: near the American Legion at Main & Lafayette, or Turney Avenue, or Prince George Street, or most any of the Old Town residences.

But honeysuckle also means that 4th of July is just around the corner. Fireworks were illegal in our county, so of course all the cool kids had to import their fun from faraway lands like DC or Virginia. As the holiday approached, their willpower to wait eroded until, in the days leading up to the 4th, we would be dispatched to "sound of shots" calls that just don't make the heart race as they do at other times of the year.

If we were very lucky, we could actually catch

someone with incendiaries and in the interest of public safety seize said contraband for "safekeeping" until it could be safely disposed of. This usually involved strict adherence to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 in which we avoided the drudgery of cataloging our nightly seizures on Property Reports, thereby saving the departmental property custodian from "properly disposing" said fireworks without any fun at all. We viewed it as a valuable training exercise of our squad in the safe handling and disposal of fireworks.

At the end of a shift of successful safekeeping I had a guy on my squad—okay, "had a guy" is genderneutral—it was actually PFC Laurie, who had some bottle rockets to dispose of. The other guys were busy with paperwork at the station or some such, so Laurie and I picked a quiet spot where no one would be disturbed or call the police about police setting off fireworks.

At that time there was a driving range on Ft. Meade Road which is now called Laurel Golf & Recreation. Back then it was barely developed and just outside the city limits. The perfect spot for "training." So, we picked up a couple coffees and headed over to the pitchdark driveway into the place. Laurie dug out her stash of fireworks and we set them up along a parking lintel aimed safely into the parking area.

After a few sips of coffee while she laid them all out, I said, "Okay, light 'em off."

Laurie just looked at me, "Sarge, I don't smoke. Don't you have matches?"

A flaw in the curriculum.

"Have no fear," I said as I popped my trunk and fished out a road flare, which was very much overkill for the job but ingenuity wins. As I lit the flare and folded back the wire legs to make it longer, I commenced torching the fireworks, all of which had tiny fuses that were completely incinerated by the flaming road flare. Bottle rockets were flying off in all directions and what was to have been a methodical private "ooh-and-ah" display turned into about a 20-second finale all at once.

At least nothing else caught fire. And no one called the police.

Summertime is also the best time to get out at night and hunt for bad guys. Let's face it: criminals are lazy and weak, so good weather brings them out of the shadows into, well, the shadows. I always told my new guys, "Just because you don't see them skulking around doesn't mean they're not there. Do your own skulking around."

So I had a call for a suspicious person one night at Brookmill on Dorset Road. Big condo and apartment parking lots are ripe pickings for thieves at night. I came in dark and quiet and parked on Sandy Spring Road and walked into the lot. Skulking into it, you could say. About halfway down the first big lot I spotted a guy working his way toward me pulling on car door handles. Back then car alarms were rarer than today, so he hadn't set any off.

I squatted down behind a car and waited. While I'm waiting for him to get closer, I called for backup to come in quiet, too, but to approach from the Brooklyn Bridge Road end of Dorset Road. One of the best things about our department is backup is always close by and when these calls come in for someone else's beat we usually drift that way.

It's a big lot so it took him a while, but I could see the guy through the door glass of the car I was hiding behind. Just as he got to the other side of the car I stood up, my pistol pointed at his chest (can't do that today), and said, "Freeze."

Immediately two things happened simultaneously. First, he stopped dead, literally frozen, the look on his face was priceless. Second, his bladder emptied.

As I clicked on the handcuffs and backup arrived, I had a warm feeling of satisfaction in my job. Much, but not quite, like the warm feeling running down this guy's pants leg.



All the world's a stage. Speaking of acting, we took a convoy of flood relief supplies down to Georgia back in 1994. We had some of our officers, some of our Public Works people, one police cruiser as an escort, and three trucks of food, clothes, and building materials. After delivering the supplies to the disaster zone, we were driving back north to Maryland and stopped for gas around three in the morning along the interstate. That time of night is inhabited by, well, a different sort of folks. I'm standing in line at the cash register waiting to pay for our gas and I hear a guy behind me reading the back of my FOP T-shirt.

"Fraternal Order of Police'. Hmph. Around here they're all a bunch'a crooks." Well *s---: Here we go. What a time to leave my gun in the truck.*

All my convoy associates are waiting out at the trucks and I'm way out of my home turf. But sometimes guts is enough. I turned around and in my best steely-eyed Clint Eastwood-gravelly voice I tell this bubba, "Well, I ain't from 'around here' so I don't know how to take what you're sayin'."

I guess I had that crazy look in my eye again. He took a step back and just stuttered, "Well... I just meant around here they are. That's all. Sorry."

He "made my day."

Sarge, how do you remember all these stories? You're making some up, right?

Nope. I'm giving you my best memories of true-blue events in my best of times and worst of times in uniform. I can usually close my eyes and point to a map of Laurel in my head and on any street there's at least one story to remember.

1000 block of 5th Street. PFC Preston running out of a house cradling an infant in his arms while he administers CPR and the Rescue Squad is just pulling up out front.

Laurel Pool. We're trying to surround another group of skinny-dippers and PFC Larry very un-tactically falls into the Patuxent River. He lost his hat but got extra credit for wearing it in the first place.

Mulberry Street behind Laurel Lakes Centre. I've been assigned to lead the Laurel High School homecoming parade up Mulberry Street, Cypress, Oxford, and Cherry Lane. As usual they can't seem to get started on time and after several exhortations from me to get it together, I gave up and just started off. They all seemed to quickly get it together and fell into place behind me and headed out.

Rt. 198 and Van Dusen Road intersection. Anytime there's an accident call here it's bad. I handled my share of accident reports there and when I wasn't the primary on the call, I'd direct traffic. Very challenging to keep everyone moving efficiently, including the lookie-loos.

10th Street, just off Montgomery. I had a burglary call there. The owner came home and found the whole house trashed. Every room was completely wrecked: furniture broken up, kitchen demolished, bedrooms ransacked, and everything turned over and thrown around. I don't recall anything specific stolen, but I don't think the owners knew either and they had to get back to me with a list. Just spiteful vandalism on top of the insult of a break-in.

1000 block of Ward Street. We had a domestic there one day. Nothing special, but I lived my first 20 years on that street. I remember going into this domestic, three or four houses down from my childhood home, and looking around at how small the house was inside. Identical to the one I grew up in, but man, the rooms were all smaller than I remembered.

Every street a memory. I wouldn't trade any of them.

It's a small world after all. I had a guy one night who, for whatever reason, found himself at a low point in his life and had decided to end it all. Now, we get these people from time to time and it's always dicey. The ones who are serious don't bother telling anyone, they just do it. Others at least give us a chance to change their mind.

The call came into Communications after midnight and the dispatcher was trying to talk him down when I got to the station to talk to him by phone and try to figure out where he was. It soon became apparent I knew the guy. I sold real estate for a short time and he worked in my office so we were at least passingly acquainted. I told him who I was and he remembered me a little. I have that effect on people: I'm mostly forgettable. But I was able to get his address on Oxford Drive so I asked if I could come over and we could just talk out front.

I changed into civilian clothes, sort of the opposite of Clark Kent, and headed over to his house unarmed but with plenty of backup. A few other guys approached the townhouse from the sides and got into place as I walked up to the front door. When he answered I could tell he recognized me now and after the, "Oh yeah" moment, I suggested he step out and we could work through this thing he was going through.

So, he stepped out the front door and straight into the waiting arms and handcuffs of three guys I trusted enough to leave my gun behind. The reunion was somewhat tarnished after that but at least he was not dead. I also recovered a really nice Sig-Sauer semiautomatic pistol that, alas, ended up in the melting pot at Sparrows Point, Baltimore, where all our seized guns used to go.

Not every police report ends with the initial description of the basic events. When there's a probability of additional supplementary reports the typical closing line of the report narrative is, "Investigation to continue." I hope these anecdotes haven't offended too many readers of this venture from The Laurel History Boys. And hopefully there will be more to come. Thanks for your time.

Investigation to continue...

Rick McGill grew up in Laurel and worked at the Laurel Police Department from 1977 to 2001. He authored two history books: Brass Buttons & Gun Leather, A History of the Laurel Police Department (soon to be in its 4th printing), and History of the North Tract, An Anne Arundel Time Capsule. In 2001 he retired to Montana and worked as a military security contractor for Blackwater Worldwide making 12 deployments to Iraq and Pakistan from 2004 to 2010. He is now a Reserve Deputy Sheriff in Montana.

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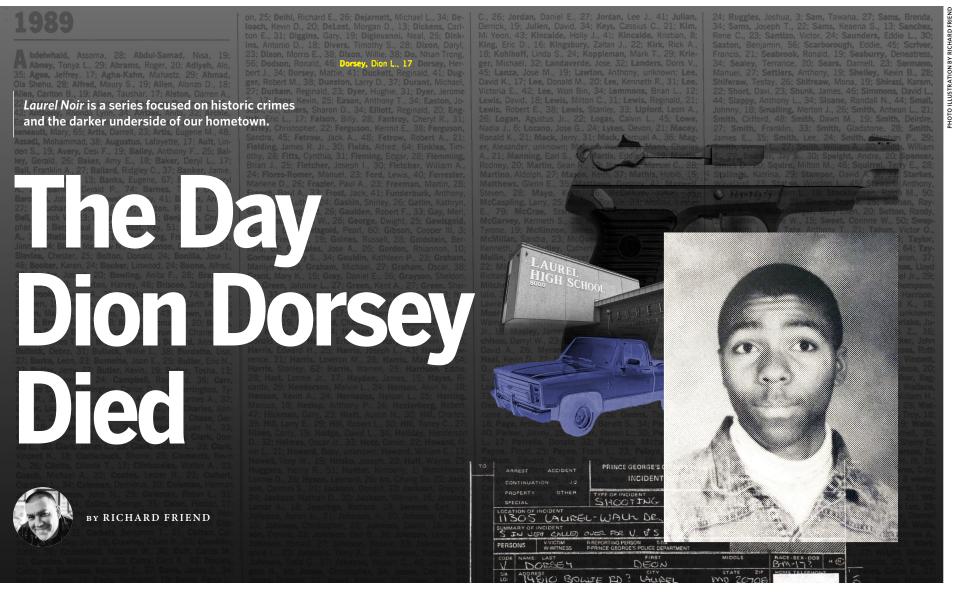
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LAUREL NOIR



Black and white. When I think of my old friend, Dion Dorsey, who was killed in Laurel when we were both teenagers in 1989, so much of his legacy is in black and white. It's almost metaphorical the only photos I have of him are from my middle and high school yearbooks; and then there's the meager press coverage about his murder that October 30th. It's all right there in black and white.

But Dion's life wasn't that simple. Neither, of course, was his death. That he didn't make it out of the 1980s alive shouldn't have been surprising, because Dion had been taking chances for years. But the news of his murder still came as a shock to those of us who knew him. It's a shock that still hurts more than three decades later.

It was a little after 10 PM on Monday, October 30, 1989 when Dion was outside with a friend along the 11300 block of Laurel Walk Drive in South Laurel. According to the friend, a White man in his early thirties driving a navy blue 1985 Chevy pickup truck with gray primer on the driver's side door had approached them, asking if they had any drugs for sale. They told him they did not, and the man drove off. Allegedly, he returned a few moments later and motioned the pair over to his truck again. This time, he pulled a gun and fired a single shot, striking Dion in the head before fleeing the scene. Dion was taken to the University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore, where he died early the next morning.

It was reported in the *Laurel Leader* that before going into shock, Dion had told his friend, "Man, get the bullet out of my head. It's still in my head." That will forever haunt me, because in my mind, I can hear those chilling words in Dion's voice.

Sharing the Wealth

I don't remember exactly when I met Dion, but it was sometime shortly before we started middle school at Dwight D. Eisenhower. At some point, he began showing up at the Steward Manor apartment complex where I grew up, seamlessly joining our football and basketball games behind Morris Drive. He lived just around the corner in a small house on Bowie Road, across from Laurel Pines apartments. He made friends easily, and was always a welcome addition to any team.

By the summer of 1986, we couldn't help noticing that Dion clearly had a new source of income. The expanding rotation of expensive new shoes and clothes that he suddenly began wearing was distinctive in our neighborhood, where so many kids came from very modest homes—many with single parents on small incomes. One day, while playing ball, we heard an unusual, motorized sound approaching from the far end of the field near Rt. 197. Suddenly, there was Dion, riding a new Honda minibike up the sidewalk. It was a far cry from the Huffy bicycles most of us rode, and we were blown away that he owned it. It was the first motorized vehicle any of us had owned, and it was impressive—he might as well have showed up that day piloting the Space Shuttle. The sound of that minibike became a regular part of life around Steward Manor those days, and when Dion let you take it for a spin, it was unforgettable.

Dion was always sharing things, actually. Our little group would frequently walk to 7-Eleven or Dart Drug together after a game, and on one such trip, we learned the source of his sudden wealth after he produced an impossibly thick wad of twenty dollar bills from his waistband and insisted that we each get whatever candy and other goodies that we wanted—it was his treat. Dion quietly admitted that his cashflow was a result of dealing drugs. He didn't get into the specifics of it, nor did he ever make any attempt to turn us on to either dealing or even trying drugs. He also didn't flaunt it—he enjoyed having the money and he enjoyed being generous with it.

One Last Game

My family moved from Steward Manor during the summer of 1987, and it was shortly before then that I was down at the basketball court by myself one afternoon. (Right): The Steward Manor football field behind Morris Drive, where a younger Dion Dorsey would frequently visit friends—his motorized Honda minibike speeding up this sidewalk. His 1989 shooting death outside the Applewalk Condominiums in South Laurel remains unsolved.

An only child, I never minded shooting hoops alone from time to time. I remember rightly sensing that those final weeks at the basketball court were to be treasured, as I'd soon no longer have the same easy access to it—or to my Steward Manor friends—after we'd moved away.

I was feeling nostalgic that day and decided to stay outside a bit longer, despite a light drizzle that had started. Soon, I heard that familiar buzz of Dion's minibike approaching. I waved, assuming he was heading home to beat the rain, but he parked the bike beside the basketball court and opened his hands for that universal "pass me the ball" gesture. We played a game of either H.O.R.S.E. or twenty-one—I can't recall which, but I do remember that Dion won. As the rain came down more steadily, we called it a day. "Alright, Rich," he said in that voice I can still hear today. He got back on the minibike, fired it up, and away he went.

It occurred to me then that this had been the first time Dion and I had ever actually played ball together one-onone. I never expected that it would be the last time—let alone the last time I'd ever see him alive.

Two Days of Hell at Laurel High

When my family moved to Anne Arundel County, it meant that I'd start my sophomore year at Meade Senior High rather than continuing at Laurel. In October 1989, I was in my senior year there when friends shared the shocking news of Dion's murder. When they also shared what was happening at school in the days that followed, I was relieved that I wasn't there.

Dion himself had no longer been a student at Laurel his enrollment had been withdrawn on October 1st due to nonattendance. But the news of his murder at the hands of a White attacker who remained at large created an unprecedented air of racial tension at the school.

According to principal Thomas Kirby, the trouble began almost immediately after the announcement of Dion's death, as rumors and speculation ran wild. Grief turned to anger as some Black students reported hearing White students claim that Dion "deserved to get shot." Many who were close friends with Dion later said that part of their anger was due to the perception that White students largely appeared to be indifferent to the murder. "It seems there was all this tension because they did not feel what we were feeling," one student relayed.

Countless fights and seemingly random attacks erupted over the course of two days, with many students reporting feeling threatened as they walked the halls. Approximately ten were suspended in the aftermath, with six of those facing expulsion. Among the six were Black, White, male, and female students alike.

In a nightmare scenario for school administrators, Laurel High was in the midst of hosting 27 observers from all over the eastern United States as part of the school's 10-year accreditation process, which certifies that it's meeting all state and federal education requirements. Kirby admitted candidly that on October 31st, "I was ready to quit. I just couldn't believe what was going on in our school."

But Tom Kirby didn't quit. Instead, he called in Laurel Police to keep the parking lot safe as school let out that Tuesday afternoon and for the following two days. He assembled a crisis intervention team of both teachers and students, which met in the cafeteria to help troubled students cope with the aftermath of Dion's murder as well as the ensuing problems at school. Kirby also welcomed groups of students to meet with him personally, where they talked candidly about their feelings. By that Thursday, emotions had

leveled off and some semblance of normalcy returned. In fact, in giving the school a passing grade, the accreditors noted the exemplary way Laurel High had handled the ordeal. Kirby said, "They saw a school dealing with the most difficult, difficult crisis and still having school... They saw us come back together as a school."

Blaming the Victim

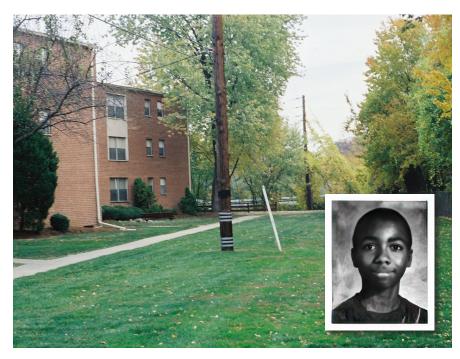
While Laurel High School staff had handled the tumultuous situation with grace and empathy, Prince George's County Police began taking a different approach—one that would likely receive critical public backlash today. In a crude effort intended to put the community at ease, Captain Richard Welsh, then commander of the Laurel-Beltsville police district, was quoted in the Laurel Leader shifting the blame onto Dion himself. "Dion was not just a poor, innocent bystander," he said, adding that Dorsey had been known to area officers as a drug dealer and openly speculating that the suspect in his murder was "one of his regular customers." Welsh, trying to dispell any notion that this was a racially motivated crime, added that "There's been a lot of talk among the younger people up there ... that Dion was the helpless victim of a racial incident. That is not the case."

Welsh added that in the days after the murder, "people have come forward to tell us he was selling," and emphasized that "this (was) not a random shooting."

He claimed that Dion had been "on the periphery of the drug trade," and although admitting that police "didn't have any hard evidence to charge him with it," he revealed that Dion and his mother had been brought to the police station just a few weeks before the shooting in an effort to scare him out of the narcotics business.

Cold Case

A little over two years after Dion's murder, the *Washington Post* ran a feature on the staggering number of homicides that had occured in the metropolitan area over the course of the previous five years. Between the start of 1987 and the end of 1991, there had been 3,056 known murders. Many of those had undoubtedly



happened in Prince George's County, and many of them—like Dion's killing—had gone cold. The sheer volume of backlogged cases coupled with what seemed to be an unending influx of new ones likely hindered any progress in solving Dion's murder.

I'm not a detective or a conspiracy theorist, but I've never been able to shake the uneasy feeling over these past 34 years that something just didn't add up. The description of the suspect and his vehicle were extraordinarily specific, and yet that navy blue 1985 Chevy pickup with the gray primer on the driver's side door was never located. The thinly-built White male with light brown hair and a mustache, estimated to be between 32 and 35 years old—he was never identified, either.

It's always struck me as odd that the witness(es) also described the man as wearing a plaid shirt and blue jeans, though. Even if they'd approached the pickup truck that night as reported, would they really have noticed—or even been able to see—what kind of pants the driver was wearing as he sat behind the wheel?

So many questions linger. I had hoped to get some answers through a Maryland Public Information Act request a couple of years ago, but because it is still technically an active investigation, they're not able to release much. As a courtesy, they did send me a copy of the original incident report. Reading it—the handwritten account describing Dion's murder that had been composed in the hours after it had happened—reopened the wound to a degree, but it was something, at least.

It's my hope that someone has more information they're finally willing to share, and that Prince George's County cold case detectives will be inspired to take a fresh look. Dion Dorsey, buried in an unmarked grave at Maryland National Memorial Park now for over three decades, deserves a measure of justice.

Richard Friend is a founding member of The Laurel History Boys, and creator of LostLaurel.com. B ecause *Voices of Laurel* is a quarterly publication, obituaries are compiled over the course of each issue every three months. We do our best to include as many published notices as possible, and there is no charge for inclusion. Send obituaries with a photo to laurelhistoryboys@gmail.com.

Keith Tyler Fitzsimons, 57



Keith Tyler Fitzsimons, 57 of Laurel passed away on March 21, 2023, with family and friends by his side. He was born July 21, 1965, in Brunswick Georgia

to Leonard James Fitzsimons and Wanda Mae Fitzsimons. He leaves behind his father L.J, his brother Kenneth Fitzsimons, (wife Betty) nieces Autumn Nolan and Alexis Fitzsimons, and lifelong, live-in companion Ann Parent.

Keith was predeceased by his mother, Wanda Mae Fitzsimons.

He had taken Culinary Arts at Howard Vocational Technical School, He had delivered pizza for several places including Dial-a-Pizza and Pizza Hut. Keith enjoyed taking trips with his family and Ann to Outer Banks, North Carolina and Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Keith had love for his dogs, Hatteras, Tucker, Frisco, Bandit, and Rascal. He also had a pet squirrel Willey. NASCAR was his favorite sport with Jeff Gordon being his all-time favorite driver.

He was a loving son, brother, uncle and lifelong companion and friend to many.

Ben Khan, 59



Ben Khan, a regular customer and friend to many at Oliver's Old Towne Tavern especially, passed away peacefully at home on June 9, 2023 at just 59 years old. He

was born May 29, 1964. Despite having no known blood relatives in the United States, Ben made friends easily and counted them as family. Even many who did not know Ben on a personal level knew *of* him, having seen him countless times along Main Street and throughout Laurel. Those who did know him paid tribute to his kindness with glowing praise. "He had a heart of pure gold," said one. "He was a friend to everyone he met," another said.

Russell T. Meehan, 63

Russell Thomas Meehan, 63, of Kittrell, North Carolina passed away suddenly at his Lake house residence in Littleton, North Carolina, On

Sunday June 18th, 2023. Born March 28th, 1960 in Cheverly, Maryland. Russell was a graduate of Laurel High School in 1978, Russell served in the United States Army from April 1983 to February 1987. Russell was known as the fixer, he worked many different roles and positions throughout his life. Russell started dating the love of his life Maria Meehan 21 years ago marrying in July of 2004. Russell was a life long resident of Laurel, Maryland for over fifty years. In August of 2012 Russell finished building his and Maria's dream home in Kittrell, North Carolina. Russell is survived by his wife, Maria; his daughters Angela (Billy Jerome), Marisa (Wes Ohle), Kayla (Chuck McMahon), Breanna (Zachary Wynne), and son Lee Meehan. Russell was the grandfather of Alexis (Anthony Wall), Caiden, Kane, Khloe, Elyse, Russell Lee and greatgrandfather to Lila. He is survived by his siblings Cheryl (Jimmy Simmons), Rick (Dixie) Meehan, Cindy (Phil Ammon) Robert (Jennifer) Meehan, and Steve (Holly) Meehan as well as several nieces and nephews. Russell is preceded in death by father Richard Vincent Meehan Sr and Carol Ann (Wossowski) Meehan. As well as grandparents, Thomas (Eleanor) Meehan, Russell Wossowski and Anna Rose Bolton. Russell shared a special bond with his granddad and namesake, Russell Wossowski. Russell was a friend to many, and always had a story to tell. Russell enjoyed fishing and spending his time on his pontoon boat at Lake Gaston and spending time with his family. He is loved and will be missed by many.

Edna L. (Duvall) Powell, 81



Edna L. "Duvall" Powell, 81, died on March 30, 2023 at Adventist Medical Center. She was born January 8, 1942 in Olney, MD to the late Vernon and Maude (Musgrove)

Duvall. Edna grew up in Burtonsville, MD, moved to Silver Spring, MD, then lived in Laurel, MD for 36 years until her passing. She graduated from Sherwood High School in Silver Spring, MD in 1960. She worked for the American Postal Workers Union as an administrative assistant. Edna's goal in life was to be a loving mother to her son, Bobby. She loved tracing family roots and spending time with her family and friends.

Edna is survived by her loving son Bobby Powell. In addition to her parents she was preceded in death by her brothers George (Elizabeth), and Leroy (Betty), and sisters Irene (Calvert), Doris (Alton), Audrey (Melvin) and Marianna (Edwin).

Myrna Ann Roling, 87



March 27, 2023, Myrna Roling passed on to her great reward. Myrna is predeceased by her husband, Duane, and was married for 50 years; as well as

On Monday,

her sister, Carol, and her parents, James and Anna. Myrna is survived by her six children: Gregory A. Roling, Richard A. Roling, Mark A. Roling, Julie A. Roling, David A. Roling, and Maria A. Ammon; loving mother-in-law to Matthew Ammon, Michele Roling, Janet Roling, and Susan Roling, as well as a great grandmother to 16 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren and her brother, James, and her sister, Judy. Myrna, a native of Baltimore, Maryland, was born in East Orange, New Jersey on January 26, 1936. In her 87 years, Myrna worked at various jobs performing administrative functions. Her life's ultimate job was as a loving wife and mother. Myrna travelled the world with Duane and her children residing in Japan and Germany. Myrna came to Laurel, Maryland in June of 1969 and has resided there until her passing.

Lois Ann Buckley Shelley, 70



Lois Ann (Buckley) Shelley, of Red Lion, PA accepted the hand of her Lord and Savior on Wednesday, March 29, 2023, from Dallastown Nursing Center at

the age of 70. She is the wife of Alan L. Shelley, of Red Lion, to whom she married on September 16, 2005, celebrating 18 years together. She was born in Boston Massachusetts on March 19, 1953, and was the daughter of the late Edward C. and Doris T. (Knox) Buckley. She worked for Giant Food Stores in the deli department for seventeen years prior to her retirement. She was a member at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Red Lion, and she enjoyed rock climbing, and spending me at the beach. She also enjoyed horses and had previously worked at the Pimlico Racetrack in Baltimore, MD.

Lois leaves her husband, Alan, son David Burke of Sykesville, MD, and daughter Amy Hamilton of OK, along with two grandsons and numerous neices and nephews.

Velma Lee Williamson, 89



Velma Lee Williamson passed away quietly at home at the age of 89 while surrounded by her loving family. Velma was born January 8, 1934 in Columbus, GA. As

a child, her family moved to Aniston, AL and then to Laurel.

Velma married Howard W. Grimes in January 1952. They raised two sons, Howard, born in 1952 and John Alan, born in 1956. In 1957, she started working for IBM at their location in Washington, DC.

In 1962, her husband Howard died suddenly following an auto accident, leaving her a young single mother to raise two young boys.

In 1963, she met James (Jimmy) Williamson while working at IBM and married on July 1, 1977.

In 1987, Velma retired from IBM. She and Jimmy traveled the country by flying in his private airplane to numerous destinations across the country including the West Coast, Yellowstone NP, the Grand Canyon NP, Jackson Hole, WY and Gatlinburg, TN. They also toured Alaska by car and cruise ship.

Knights of Columbus CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Knights Councils; Boy Scout, Girl Scout, and American Heritage Girls Troops; the St. Mary's Youth Group; and more.

Life

Patuxent Council remains active in the support and defense of Life in all its stages. In 1987, members assisted in establishing a Memorial to the Unborn in the St. Mary's cemetery. The Council rededicated this memorial in 1993 and 2018 and assists in its upkeep. Members annually participate in the National and Maryland Marches for Life. The Council provides financial support to the Knights of Columbus Ultrasound Program, which assists in the placement of new ultrasound machines at pregnancy centers, as well as to organizations such as Gabriel Network and Mary's Home of Maryland. In 2019, the Council revived

MARIAN QUINN'S LAUREL

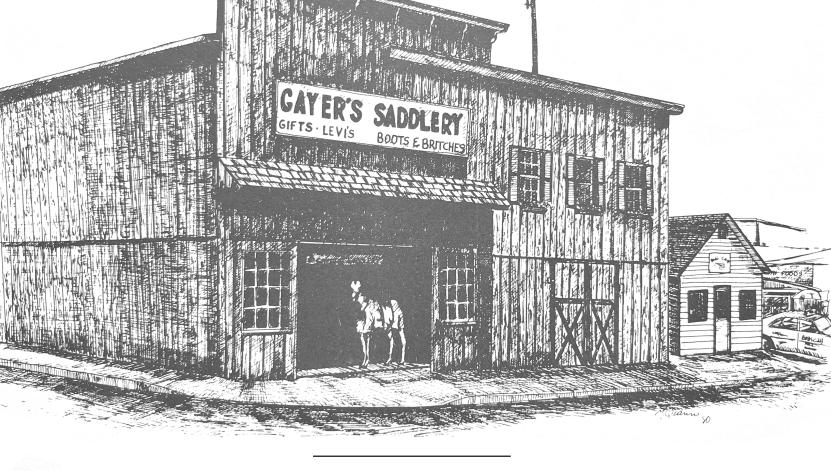
its annual blood drive. The Council uses proceeds from its annual Tootsie Roll Drive to support organizations serving the intellectually disabled, including the Catholic Coalition for Special Education and Special Olympics of Maryland. In 2022, in the wake of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned, the Knights of Columbus established the Aid and Support After Pregnancy (ASAP) program to support new mothers in need. Through ASAP, Patuxent Council raises money in support of the Laurel Pregnancy Center.

Supporting the Growth of the Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus

In addition to St. Mary's, Patuxent was also initially associated with St. Lawrence Martyr Parish in Jessup. As the Laurel area grew, the Council likewise expanded. In 1963, residents of Maryland City formed a new parish called Resurrection of Our Lord. During construction of the church in 1969 and 1970, Patuxent donated funds towards the construction of the Memorial Chapel. Following the opening of St. Nicholas Church in 1967, the Council donated a tabernacle and later contributed additional funds for a baptismal font and sanctuary furnishings. St. Lawrence formed its own Council in 1998.

Patuxent Council's members have been integral to the growth of the Knights, particularly here in Laurel. Members helped institute Deacon John Lynn Council 11619, chartered June 26, 1995, at St. Nicholas Church. On June 26, 2006, Resurrection of Our Lord Council 14099 was chartered at Resurrection of Our Lord Church. At both Deacon Lynn and Resurrection, many of the Charter Members were former members of Patuxent Council. These Brother Knights helped the new Councils establish themselves and grow to directly support their parishes. Following the establishment of Councils 11619 and 14099, Patuxent Council became the Council specifically associated with St. Mary of the Mills.

Patuxent Council's accomplishments over the years would not have been possible without the support of many Brother Knights and their families. Patuxent's Brother Knights and family members take pride in the successes of the Council over the past century and look with hope toward the next 100 years.



GAYER'S SADDLERY (NOW OUTBACK LEATHER)

Marian Quinn, a local artist and framer for over 50 years, has a large collection of illustrations of historic and cultural sites in Laurel. She is also the owner of Fulton Art & Framing in the Cherry Tree Center at Routes 216 and 29. She is a regular contributor to Voices of Laurel.

Children's Center CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

Center. The research, which was published in a series of reports, was conducted by scientists from the National Institutes of Health and Dr. Wilfred R. Ehrmantraut, medical director at the Children's Center.

According to the Rutherford Institute, in the 1960s the Children's Center "used mentally retarded children as test subjects. They were given a diet pill called NeoBazine, which contains thyroxin, a drug that causes tremors, nervousness, insomnia, and tachycardia. The FDA later found that this drug was not safe for use."

In the book, *In the Name of Science: A History of Secret Programs, Medical Research, and Human Experimentation,* author Andrew Goliszek claimed that researchers at the Children's Center tested "experimental acne antibiotics on children and continued their tests even after half of the young test subjects developed severe liver damage because of the experimental medication."

Judicial and Political Indifference

There are reports of sporadic attempts to help the residents by advocates, politicians, attorneys, judges, and residents' families. But nothing ever positively changed. In spite of the efforts of caregivers and administrators who were horrified at the conditions, things only got worse over the decades.

Why were these horrific conditions allowed to go on for so long? It's fair to say that many of these conditions would have been corrected with proper oversight by government agencies. It's also important to point out that over the years, some officials with the DC government tried to fix things but were constantly stymied by the indifference of politicians and, sometimes, the courts. Budgetary restraints were the rule of thumb.

This was illustrated in 1971, as reported in the *Washington Star*, when a new building at Forest Haven opened. "We almost didn't get the funds for the air conditioning," said administrator Helen Hogan Curley. "One senator said, 'Why give it to them? If they don't know the difference between night and day, how are they going to know the difference between hot and cold?"

This indifference was not new. As far back as 1945, the *Evening Star* reported that the conditions at District homes for wayward children were so disturbing that a House Democrat called a special meeting of the House District Subcommittee to take emergency action to alleviate the situation. Superintendent of the Industrial Home School Daniel Ahern said, "I testified at a similar hearing last year. At that time, I said conditions were horrible. They have not improved. Plans for improving them have been going on for the past 20 years. Nothing, or little, has been done."

Major changes were anticipated a month later when the Senate was set to vote on the DC budget, as "the 'medieval' conditions of the buildings housing the child wards of the District was denounced by several civic witnesses, who urgently requested the addition of \$180, 000 to... [have] architects draft an overall plan for the proposed 'children's center' near Laurel, MD."

Two child welfare advocates spoke to Senate members of the subcommittee concerning the 1946 District Appropriation bill. The committee chairman acknowledged the "scandalous conditions of the present Receiving Home and Industrial Home for Children," and the advocates argued that "the snakes and animals at the zoo are better housed," adding that unless there is prompt action by the District government, "we should transfer the child wards of the District to the zoo."

Judicial indifference was astonishingly illustrated by the case of Arthur Harris and Federal District Judge John Pratt. The story was reported in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1994.

Arthur Harris was one of at least 10 Forest Haven residents who, during a two-year period, died of complications related to aspiration pneumonia. His death was the result of inaction by representatives of the government of the District of Columbia, the federal judiciary, the medical profession, advocacy groups, and law enforcement.

The DC Government was warned repeatedly over a 15-year period about the abuse and neglect of patients at Forest Haven, and specifically that aspiration pneumonia was killing them. But despite the warnings and a court order to improve conditions, the city government did nothing until it was too late.

Justice Department civil rights attorneys presented evidence eight times over a period of 18 months to Federal District Judge John Pratt, who was enforcing the court order, that Forest Haven patients were dying because of improper mealtime practices and substandard medical care. But Pratt did nothing.

Betty Evans, mother of Forest Haven resident Joy Evans, provided a sworn affidavit to Judge Pratt. "Dogwood, the cottage where Joy lived, was a veritable snake pit," she wrote. "I once witnessed a nurse open the cottage door only to find 80 half-clad screaming women come running to the door; the nurse quickly closed it shut."

She also described the constant physical abuse her daughter had been subjected to: "The more simple injuries ranged from chipped teeth to scratches, lacerations and bruises all over her body. On one occasion we found Joy's entire back raw." The Evanses were later to learn the injury was the result of "urine burns from being restrained on a rubber sheet."

In 1978, the plaintiffs and the city agreed to settle the case, signing a consent decree ordering that Forest Haven would be closed and its residents moved to community group homes. In the meantime, they would no longer be subjected to "acts of physical or psychological abuse" and would receive proper "medical, dental, and health related services." The consent decree came too late for Joy Evans, who had died at Forest Haven, at the age of 18, in July 1976.

But Pratt's indifference was not done. Months went by and residents continued to die from abuse and substandard care. Pratt routinely overruled or simply ignored Justice Department motions. To pick up the story from the *Los Angeles Times*:

The attorneys prepared for a hearing in federal court, where they would seek a contempt ruling and fines against the city for neglecting to obey the consent decree. They were confident that the dying would finally come to an end. But Laurie Weinstein, the Justice Department civil rights attorney, hardly had the chance to make her case. Judge Pratt told attorneys for both sides that he had decided to review the matter in another 120 days, telling them to try to work it out on their own.

Weinstein rose to object, but the judge was in no mood to listen. "Thank you, Ms. Weinstein," he said, gesturing that the court session was over.

Weinstein's eyes welled up with tears as she pleaded with the judge. "Your Honor, may I add something?" she asked. "I really feel that it is important to do something immediately about the situation currently at Forest Haven. The court monitor and our own expert ... have found that every day the residents are out there, they are in serious risk of harm. Now you have just given them another 120 days of danger, and I really feel that we have got to do something better than that, Your Honor."

But Pratt had already made up his mind: "I appreciate your concern. Thank you," he said and recessed the court.

Five more Forest Haven residents would die of complications related to aspiration pneumonia before Judge Pratt held his next hearing on Jan. 12, 1990. On Jan. 29, 1990, Judge Pratt finally heard arguments about whether to impose sanctions. The medical report, which had been presented to the judge, concluded: "Medical care and practice at Forest Haven is inadequate ... (and) exposes (Forest Haven residents) to unreasonable risks of harm."

But Pratt praised the city, noting that it had reduced the number of residents from 1,300 in 1978 to a current level of 232.

"The most significant outplacement they've done is that they've buried five more people since the last meeting," Weinstein responded.

"We don't know whether they would have died anyway," Pratt told Weinstein. "These people ... are not in the best of health probably, any of them."

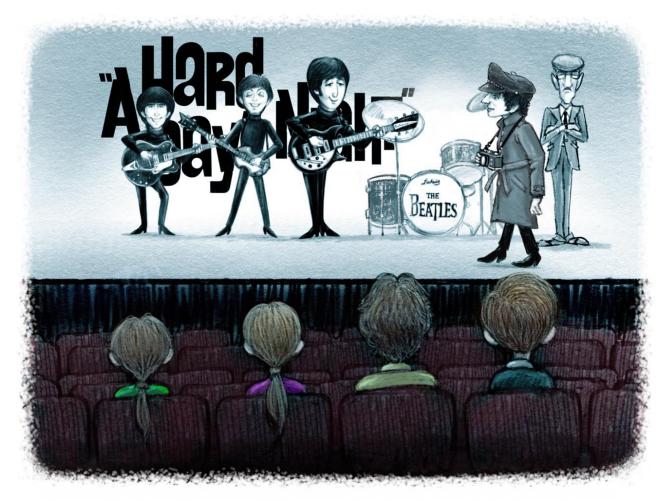
Even when administrators did try to improve conditions, the indifference raised its ugly head. In 1976, Roland J. Queen, Forest Haven Superintendent, criticized the lack of resources and administrative support provided to Forest Haven by the DC government in a series in the *Washington Star*. After speaking out in the Star to focus attention on Forest Haven's needs, he was cut off from any decision-making at Forest Haven.

As Queen told the *Star*, "The only time they react is when there is a crisis, either one that appears in the media or one they are afraid the media will discover. They don't perceive people at Forest Haven as people capable of living in the city–as being human beings, really."

Kevin Leonard is a founding member of the Laurel History Boys and a two-time winner of the Maryland Delaware District of Columbia Press Association Journalism Award.

Angie Latham Kozlowski is a staff writer and member of the Board of Directors for the Laurel History Boys. In addition to her investigative reporting, her articles frequently spotlight Howard County.

MY HOMETOWN BY PERRY KOONS



We walked to the Laurel Theatre, for the three o'clock matinee. Mr. Prior was selling the tickets, for a special premiere that day. We went to the candy counter and all of us got a snack. We bought M&M's and Lemon Drops in case of a hunger attack. Every song we heard was happy and the movie was totally fun, and we listened to all the music and left when the credits were done.



Perry Koons, a writer and illustrator, will be releasing The Kid From 5th Street Creek later this year. It is a collection of treasured memories from his childhood on Fifth Street in Laurel. His children's books are available at Amazon.com, and you can see more of his work on Facebook and Instagram @KOONSPERRY, and on Pinterest @perrykoons.

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