

# VOICES OF LAUREL



A JOURNALISTIC COLLECTIVE FOR LAUREL, MARYLAND

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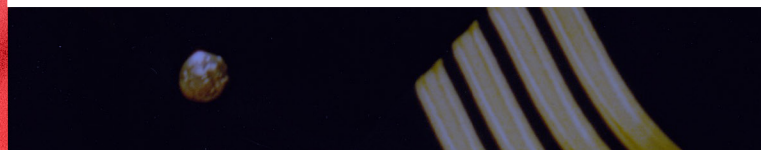
WINTER 2023  
VOL. 3, NO. 1



## A Quiet Hero

*Former Laurel Police Chief Roy Gilmore's  
Storied Service in the Vietnam War*

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## LEAD STORIES

# What's New With The Laurel History Boys

BY KEVIN LEONARD AND RICHARD FRIEND



Richard Friend and Kevin Leonard at the Laurel History Boys' table during the Main Street Festival. ANN BENNETT

## We Met Some Interesting Folks with Stories

People tell us stories and share historical artifacts and photos that many times become the subject of an article in *Voices of Laurel* or on our website, or a post on social media. Here is a recent example:

- While doing research for a book about the 50th anniversary of the Capital Centre with Jeff Krulik (who is on our Board of Directors), we were given a tour of the collection housed at Hornbake Library at the University of Maryland. While walking among the shelves, we spied a fantastic miniature scale model of Cole Field House. Upon closer inspection, we discovered it was made by a Laurel resident who, it turns out, made numerous other models of sports venues and was a major collector of sports memorabilia. Look for the whole story in the next issue of *Voices of Laurel*.

## Grants and Donations

A big thank you to Bethany Frye, Myra Phelps, Karl Ginter, and the office of Laurel City Councilman Carl DeWalt for their monetary donations to *Voices of Laurel*. We are grateful.

## Facebook

We recently hit a milestone, topping 3,300 followers! Thank you to all who like and share our content! If you don't already follow us on Facebook, please give us a like—it's where you can best keep up to date with the many projects we're working on.

## 1982 Stefanie Watson Murder Featured on New Episode of A&E's *Cold Case Files*

Richard was contacted by producers of the show who had seen his 2012 *LostLaurel.com* story marking the 30th anniversary of the Stefanie Watson murder. Rich's work ended up having a role in the solving of the cold case. In late May, he was invited to film an interview for an upcoming episode and provided archival material about the case to producers. The episode, originally planned to air in November, will be part of the new season of *Cold Case Files* now scheduled to premiere sometime in early 2023.

## Presentations

Kevin gave a presentation about the Carol Replane cold case at the Laurel-Beltsville Senior Center. He presented the story of a teacher's murder in 1963 that was never solved. She was abducted in Laurel and her body was found in Ellicott City. After years of research and interviews, Kevin detailed exactly what happened, the extensive police investigation, and how he figured out who was the killer.

In October, Rich teamed up with the Laurel Historical Society for "Takeout Time Machine: The Restaurants of Laurel Past." The Zoom presentation covered a number of food favorites from years gone by. A video of the full presentation is available on the Laurel Historical Society's YouTube page, as well as on the videos page of our website, [LaurelHistory.com](http://LaurelHistory.com).

## Main Street Festival

We had a table in front of Oliver's Saloon and thoroughly enjoyed talking to all the people who stopped by. The October event—rescheduled from its usual May date—was the first opportunity since the pandemic began to really see the community come out in droves, and the Main Street Festival did not disappoint. Thank you to everyone who stopped by to purchase books or to simply chat about Laurel history!

## Spanish Version of Renters' Article

*Voices of Laurel* staff writer Diane Mezzanotte has attended most of the meetings and rallies of the Laurel residents who are fighting unfair rent increases by landlords. Her reporting on the efforts of both residents and the city has been cited by Laurel City Councilmen Martin Mitchell and Carl DeWalt, who have led the city's efforts to pass legislation. Diane had the idea to provide a Spanish-language version of the article from our last issue to CASA of Maryland, a nonprofit group that advocates for immigrants and has provided support and advice to the residents. CASA organizer Jorge Benitez-Perez was grateful to receive the article and has distributed it through CASA's network to help keep residents apprised of developments.

## Year Three

This issue marks the start of our third year producing *Voices of Laurel*. We've seen our paper increase in both page count and circulation, as well as expand to cover some important local news in the wake of the decline and ultimate ending of the 125-year-old *Laurel Leader*.

What does the new year hold? In addition to the features you've come to expect, we will be continuing our neighborhood news columns, and hope to meet volunteer writers interested in covering the Old Town and North Laurel areas. If you're a resident of these neighborhoods and are interested in contributing, please contact us at [laurelhistoryboys@gmail.com](mailto:laurelhistoryboys@gmail.com).

Hopefully, year three will also see more engagement and support from the likes of Laurel TV and the City of Laurel's official social media platforms, which, surprisingly, have yet to publicly acknowledge that *Voices of Laurel* exists. City of Laurel Director of Communications Audrey Barnes recently told Richard Friend that her "door is always open." We'll see if that translates to any Facebook post likes or content shares.

## A Speedy Recovery

In September, Pete Lewnes' wife Martha suffered a stroke and has been hard at work on the road to recovery. After four weeks at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, she began home therapy. While making great progress, the recovery back is a slow process. Our thoughts are with Martha and Pete as they navigate the challenges of rehabilitation.

We also send our best wishes for a speedy recovery after surgery to our friend and frequent collaborator, John Mewshaw. Get well soon, John!



# City Beat

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

## City Hall Joe Robison Update

Mayor Craig Moe was helpful in recently providing some long-awaited next steps in the proposal to name the Laurel Municipal Center in honor of former Mayor Joseph R. Robison, which The Laurel History Boys requested in January 2021. Speaking to us at the Main Street Festival, Mayor Moe explained that a formal nomination process has been put in place for such requests—something that had not previously existed. Mayor Moe was kind enough to have Senior Administrative Assistant Ana Navarro email the application to us. The completed application was mailed to the City on Nov. 2, and the proposal should go before the City Council for a vote in early 2023.



## Pallotti Groundbreaking

St. Vincent Pallotti High School broke ground on Nov. 16 for the latest addition to its campus: an indoor athletic center and outdoor turf practice field. This is the first phase of a three-phase project that will also see construction of a Robotics and Engineering Lab & Performing Arts – Black box Theater (Phase 2) and upgrading of the cafeteria (Phase 3).

Speakers at the ceremony included Sister Karen Lester, Dan Florenzo (Chairman of the Fundraising Committee), Joanne Barr (representing the City of Laurel), and Jeffrey Palumbo (President of Pallotti).  
[Source: St. Vincent Pallotti press release/Claire Rudinski]

## Howard County Announces \$1.65M Grant for Patuxent Branch Trail Upgrade

A \$1.65 million grant has been awarded to Howard County to upgrade the surface of a 1.3-mile dirt and gravel section of the popular Patuxent Branch Trail, in Savage and Kings Contrivance, which will improve its accessibility. The grant, awarded through the State of Maryland Transportation Alternatives program, is funded with federal dollars and the project was selected by the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board.

Construction work to improve the 1.3-mile section of the trail between Old Guilford Road and Vollmerhausen Road is expected to begin in 2024. Design and engineering are in progress, incorporating community input and minimizing environmental impacts.

This section of the Patuxent Branch Trail provides a connection between Lake Elkhorn and Savage,

including a crossing underneath Interstate 95. The existing dirt and gravel surface suffers from erosion, mud puddles and ruts after rainfall.

[Source: *The Business Monthly*]

## Baldwin Hall Celebrates 100 Years

Carroll Baldwin memorial Hall was built in Savage in 1921 to honor Carroll Baldwin, the supervisor of Savage Mill. Constructed “for the welfare and happiness of the whole community,” the hall still functions as a community center. In recent years, it has undergone extensive renovations to ensure it will continue to serve the vibrant, historic town of Savage.

On Nov. 12, several hundred people stopped by throughout the afternoon to learn about the community and the hall, reminisce about their memories of the hall, listen to the rededication speakers, sing Happy Birthday, and enjoy cake cut by 104-year-old Jeanie Watts Smith, whose father helped build the hall.

[Source: Carroll Baldwin Hall press release and Facebook page]

## Laurel Leader Ceases Publication

In a terse announcement on the front page of the October 13 *Laurel Leader*, the *Baltimore Sun* announced that “due to the changing habits of our readers and the shifting demands of our advertisers, the *Laurel Leader* will cease print publication effective immediately.”

What they left out was that the *Leader*—which was Laurel’s local source of news since 1897—hadn’t contained any local news for months, instead just rehashing content and advertising from other community papers in the Baltimore region owned by the *Sun*. We assume that “the changing habits of our readers” meant that people were not interested in a Laurel newspaper with no content about Laurel. The once-proud *Baltimore Sun* and its greedy hedge fund owner, Alden Global Capital, should be ashamed.

## PGCPS Announces Boundary Changes

After more than two years of community engagement, multiple proposals, and analysis, the Prince George’s County Public School system announced massive changes to school boundaries for the 2023-2024 school year. The following Laurel-area schools are impacted by a boundary change or reassignment of sixth grade from elementary to middle school:

Laurel Elementary	Vansville Elementary
Oaklands Elementary	Eisenhower Middle
Deerfield Run Elementary	Martin Luther King Middle
James Harrison Elementary	

Bond Mill Elementary, Scotchtown Hills Elementary, Montpelier Elementary, and Laurel High School are not affected by the changes.

[Source: PG County Public Schools]



## City Opens New Parking Lot at 312 Main Street

A ribbon cutting was held on Dec. 5 for the new city-owned parking lot on the site of the old Laurel/Petrucci’s Dinner Theatre.

Mayor Craig Moe and Community Redevelopment Authority president Donna Crary were on hand to speak, deeming it “the most environmentally-friendly parking lot in Laurel.” The 22-space lot includes two electric Blink Charging stations (capable of charging four electric vehicles), solar panel lighting, and porous asphalt paving to help absorb water naturally.

## PG County Sheriff Dies

Melvin C. High, who served as sheriff of Prince George’s County since 2010, died Nov. 17. He was 78.

Col. Darrin Palmer, who also serves as chief assistant sheriff, was appointed interim chief following High’s death. He will assume all responsibilities of the position until Lt. Col. John D.B. Carr assumes the position. Carr, High’s assistant sheriff, ran uncontested in the Nov. 8 election.

Prior to serving as sheriff, High was county chief of police. He was appointed to the position and served from 2003 until 2008, according to the county’s website. In that role, High oversaw the country’s 32nd-largest local law enforcement agency which provided services to nearly 900,000 people.

[Source: *Laurel Patch*]

## Fort Meade Opens Resiliency Center

Fort Meade—home to the National Security Agency, the U.S. Cyber Command, and units of all the service branches, including the newest, the Space Command—opened the Education and Resiliency Center in November. The center will serve as a hub for the wellness and mental health services available for those on the sprawling installation.

Counselors will staff the center to triage and steer visitors to the right services for their needs—perhaps they are having trouble sleeping, managing their finances, dealing with trauma, looking for an Alcoholics’ Anonymous meeting, or a local yoga class, for instance. All services are provided anonymously. “No records, no creating a file,” said an official.

[Source: *Washington Post*]



# West Laurel

Local news covering the West Laurel and Burtonsville areas



BY VIRGINIA MAY GEIS | WESTLAURELVOICES@GMAIL.COM



LAUREL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Holiday Lights in West Laurel—Then and Now

Growing up in Laurel, one thing I loved during the Christmas season was seeing houses lit up around town. The lights people put on their houses made the festive season more exciting. There was one house on Fourth Street that seemed to have every line accentuated with green lights. Some of our neighbors on Turney Avenue had lights on their houses, and my family usually put up lights both outside and inside. Sometimes our Christmas tree stood in the picture window in our living room and was quite a sight to see at night. I loved seeing all

the lights when I went caroling with various groups, either with the high school band or with my church youth group. Every street in our neighborhood had houses that were all lit up for the season. Everything was low-tech back then, but it was still exciting and magical.

One sight that always completed our Christmas Eve celebration after church was the Kluckhuhn tree, on Brooklyn Bridge Rd. We would drive out to see the massive evergreen that was covered with what must have been thousands and thousands of lights. It just was not Christmas without that finishing touch. The Kluckhuhn family began to put

lights on that tree in 1963, and it had grown to almost 70 feet by the 1990s.

In recent years I have not driven around to see the lights as much, since my children are grown; the sights still add excitement to the season for me, though. Sadly, the Kluckhuhn tree was damaged by vandals and eventually had to be cut down in 2014. If that tree were still standing, I would see it on my daily commute during the holiday season now. I can still imagine it when I drive by that spot, though. Nevertheless, there are still festive lights to see around town that enhance the holiday excitement during December, including the tree by the Armory at the corner of Fifth and Montgomery Streets. I love it when people leave their lights up even past the holiday period. Driving to work in the wee hours, I still get to see some of the lights when people keep theirs on all night. They still give me that butterfly feeling.

## Update on Friends of Tonga

In the Spring 2022 issue of *Voices of Laurel*, we introduced you to Friends of Tonga, a nationally acclaimed non-profit organization formed by former Peace Corps volunteers—including two West Laurel residents, the husband and wife team of Michael Hassett and Chiara Collette. This organization was established to help the people of the tiny southwest Pacific nation called the Kingdom of Tonga. To provide an update and maybe keep Tonga on the radar, here is some information about what the organization has accomplished since the January 2022 massive eruption of an undersea volcano that spewed ash dozens of miles into the sky and

sparked tsunami warnings as far away as California.

Thanks in part to local donations, Friends of Tonga has been able to provide the following critical services to the people of Tonga:

- more than 30 rainwater cisterns for outer island communities; the 10,000-liter cisterns provide clean drinking water for more than 10,000 individuals
- three aquaculture farms\* in the Ha'apai island group
- vegetable propagation and distribution to 439 families across 26 villages
- water, sanitation, and hygiene services to over 5,000 individuals
- emergency scholarships and student support to every student displaced by the tsunami
- counseling certification for community leaders

All told, this organization's programming has touched 24% of the entire population of Tonga. Because of these efforts, the organization was invited to meet with the Tongan Prime Minister and the Ambassador to the UN to talk about its work and to discuss how to best support the Tongan people.

Thanks, Michael and Chiara, for continuing to make West Laurel proud of you.

*\*Aquaculture is the breeding, rearing, and harvesting of fish, shellfish, algae, and other organisms in all types of water environments. Ha'apai is a group of islands, islets, reefs, and shoals in the central part of Tonga and has a combined land area of 42.20 sq miles.*

## Got feedback for me?

Do you have a West Laurel story to share? Or, do you want to give me feedback on the column? Send me an e-mail at [WestLaurelVoices@gmail.com](mailto: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.*



# South Laurel

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



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE | SOUTHLAURELVOICES@GMAIL.COM

One of the benefits of writing this column is that I learn about neighbors and events I wouldn't have known about otherwise. I keep my eyes open for new businesses springing up; I read what's happening in the area on the Nextdoor app and on Laurel-based Facebook groups. But there is still nothing like meeting people in person to learn their stories. I know there are a lot of interesting people stories to be told, and I want to hear them! Are you part of a multi-generational South Laurel family? Did you move to the South end of town for a particular reason? Do you work in South Laurel and have anecdotes that can be shared? Do you work for one of the area schools, or lead a Scouting group? Email me and tell me your story!

## New Eateries Coming Soon

I was very excited to see a “coming soon” sign for Nothing Bundt Cakes in the Contee Crossing shopping center at Route 1 and Contee Road. I was first introduced to this sweet franchise in Florida, and it was a case of love at first bite for me. I spoke to the franchise owner, Katheryn Hoerster, who is also excited to bring the brand to Laurel. Katheryn is the owner of the Silver Spring location, which opened about four years ago. She told me that she hopes to open in early 2023, after renovations are complete and staff are hired. Originally from Texas, Katheryn moved to the DC area when she took a government job; however, after 6 years she felt that the job just wasn't what she was happy doing, and she wanted to pursue her dream of running a bakery. Her parents suggested that she look into the Nothing Bundt Cakes brand, which they knew was very popular in Texas, and that set her on the road to being a franchisee.

If you're not familiar with the chain: they sell bundt cakes and nothing but bundt cakes (get it?) in a variety of sizes and flavors. Cakes are baked daily on the premises and walk-in orders are welcomed. There are four sizes: 8- and 10-inch cakes; the “Bundtlet,” which Katheryn describes as about the size of a “hefty muffin” and which makes a perfect “just for me” portion; and then the Bundtinis, which come a dozen to

a box and can be mixed-and-matched. Customers can choose from 10 flavors, a few of which change with the seasons—an exciting new flavor, Oreo cookie, will be unveiled in 2023. All the cakes have cream cheese frosting and can be decorated for any occasion.

In other franchise news, you might have noticed heavy machinery clearing out the area next to Nuzback's bar on the east side Route 1. One day in late November, my husband came back from his morning walk with the news that a sign had gone up at the site announcing the construction of a Checkers franchise. This is also welcome news for me. I mean, I love Five Guys' burgers, and there are also other places around town to grab a juicy burger—including the famous cheese-stuffed ones at Olive on Main. But in recent years I've watched several drive-in, burger-and-shakes places show up in many nearby cities like Ellicott City, Annapolis, and Glen Burnie—heck, there are even two of them in the rural area of PA I grew up in!—but none in Laurel until now. I couldn't find an opening date for the Laurel franchise, but my research showed that many jobs for the location are already being advertised online, so I have a good feeling that by the time our next issue comes out, I can report on the grand opening date.

## Montpelier Offers a Wealth of Educational Events

The Montpelier House Museum is one of my favorite places to visit—and no two visits are ever the same. I've written previously about attending Uhuru Quilt exhibits, garden tea events, and some of the art exhibits in the adjacent Montpelier Arts Center. But did you know that the venue, which is managed and run by the PG County Parks and Recreation Department, also sponsors many educational programs throughout the year, available to school and homeschool groups?

Their Maryland history-based experiences include both in-school programs and field trips to the house museum. Guided and interactive history tours of the house museum and its grounds can be scheduled for students of all ages and grade levels, during which



The sign goes up for “Nothing Bundt Cakes,” opening soon at Contee Crossing. DIANE MEZZANOTTE

they will learn about life in 17th and 18th century Maryland through a series of hands-on activities.

Another program, currently being offered for grades K-8, focuses on the architectural designs of the 18th century. Students learn about the roles of symmetry and geometry within architecture, and also gain insight on how buildings were designed for climate control in the days before indoor heating and cooling. Students also can learn about historic preservation techniques by doing experiments.

There is a small per-student fee for these enrichment programs; teachers are admitted free. To schedule a 1- or 2-hour session, contact Holly Burnham at 301-377-7827 or email her at [holly.burnham@pgparks.com](mailto:holly.burnham@pgparks.com).

Feeling left out, as a parent who works through the week and can't chaperone a trip? Montpelier House Museum will offer “Goode Inventions” on January 28, 2:30–3:30 pm for children 6-12 with parental accompaniment. This hands-on Black History Month STEM program tells the story of the first two African-American women inventors granted U.S. patents: Sarah Goode, who invented a combination

bed/desk; and Miriam Benjamin, who invented the precursor to the call button used on airplanes. Children will make their own inventor's handbook and come up with their own invention ideas.

Also, adults can attend a Black History Month discussion on February 18 at 2 pm entitled “Defying the Odds: A Talk on Slavery and Resistance at Montpelier.” Learn about the many ways enslaved people, here and elsewhere, resisted the dehumanization of the institution of slavery.

To sign up for either event, go to [pgparks.com](http://pgparks.com) and then navigate to the ParksDirect page. Search for the word “Goode” and/or “Defying” to find the registration form for each respective event. More info can be found at [history.pgparks.com](http://history.pgparks.com) or by emailing [montpeliermansion@pgparks.com](mailto:montpeliermansion@pgparks.com).

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.



# Russett/Maryland City

Local news covering the Russett and Maryland City areas



BY BRENDA ZEIGLER-RILEY | [RUSSETT.MDCINFO@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RUSSETT.MDCINFO@GMAIL.COM)



Livhu Ndou (above) fell in love with the fall foliage at Russett. BRENDA ZEIGLER-RILEY

In this issue, we're spotlighting a new Russett resident, telling a story of good neighbors coming to the rescue, and sharing information on the many programs available at the Maryland City Library at Russett.

## Resident Spotlight: Livhu Ndou

New Russett resident Livhu Ndou is a New England girl at heart. She attended elementary school in Montgomery County but grew up in Massachusetts. After returning to Maryland for law school, Livhu never left. She has lived in Laurel for almost 10 years and likes it here.

When asked why she purchased a home in Russett, she says, "I chose it because I knew if I was going to buy a townhouse, it had to be one with a swimming pool, and I fell in love with all the trees. It probably biased me that I was looking in the early fall when the foliage was at its peak!"

Livhu's settlement took place in November, and she planned to be moved in fully by Christmas. She shared that she can't wait to have dinner on her deck facing the tranquil woods, explore the 12 miles of walking trails, and check out Wine Down Wednesday!

## Russett Good Neighbor Act of Kindness

In a world that can seem topsy turvy and sometimes divided, it's good to

know that there are caring people who reach out to strangers in times of need. This was the case with Russett resident Carole Geronimo and her 11-years-young Schnoodle, Cho'GGath.

Carole likes to walk Cho'GGath in the morning, which she says is her favorite time of day. They often can be seen walking along busy Russett Green West. During their walk one mid-November morning, Cho'GGath escaped from her harness and ran into the racing traffic. Carole, who is disabled and uses a walker, was terrified and screaming. She had to maneuver her way into the 4-lane road to save her beloved pet.

Carole says that hardly any of the passing motorists stopped, but thankfully a young couple, residents of Russett Parcel 3, heard her cries and came to her rescue by cornering Cho'GGath and assisting Carole back to the sidewalk. Forever grateful to the couple, Carole and Cho'GGath continue their daily morning walks.

## Upcoming Offerings for Library's "Science Saturdays"

The Maryland City at Russett Library hosts a series of science-based presentations on the second Saturday of each month. Combining fun with learning, these sessions are aimed primarily at kids ages 6-10, but other age groups are often welcomed as well. Check the library's website for specific

information on each session. All sessions begin at 10:30 am.

Here is a look at the themes for the first quarter of 2023:

January 14. **Magnet Magic:** Does it attract or repel? Find out by exploring with magnets. Ages 6-Adult.

February 11. **Straw Structures:** Connect straws to create lines and shapes. Join them together to engineer structures as tall as you! Ages 6-Adult.

March 11. **Basketball Buckets:** Design and build your own basketball hoop and shooter, using common household items. Then see how many buckets you can score! Ages 6-10.

## Other Library Opportunities

The Maryland City at Russett Library also hosts a variety of adult-interest activities open to the general public:

A **Craft Drop-In** is held on the second Wednesday of each month at 2 pm. Bring your current knitting, crocheting, or other craft project and enjoy a cup of tea.

**Senior Social Hour.** Held the third Tuesday of each month at 2 pm. Come socialize with other seniors and enjoy refreshments. Attendees will help to choose topics and activities of interest.

**Virtual Visit Series.** This is an online series of discussions and virtual field trips, offering a wide variety of topics and interests. All sessions start at 7 pm. Upcoming events include a discussion about the birth and death of stars, led by a retired NASA astronomer, on January 9, and a February 7 virtual tour of the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore.

For more information on any of the above programs, or to learn about more of the library's many services and offerings, go to their website: [www.aacpl.net/services/maryland-city-at-russett](http://www.aacpl.net/services/maryland-city-at-russett).

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](mailto:russett.mdcinfo@gmail.com).

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# Rent Stabilization Movement Heats Up

*Laurel Activism Inspires Other Maryland Communities*



BY DIANE MEZZANOTTE AND KEVIN LEONARD

As described in the last issue of *Voices of Laurel* (Fall 2022), unprecedented rent increases could render many apartment tenants in Laurel homeless in the coming months. The issue has become an activist movement involving residents, the Laurel City Council and Mayor, County and State legislators, and a coalition of activist organizations under the name of the Laurel Housing Justice Association.

Publicity from the activism, as well as proposed legislation before the City Council, has shone a spotlight on Laurel, resulting in unusually heavy media scrutiny, and inspired numerous other communities across the state to explore similar legislation.

But landlords—specifically deep-pocketed landlords—are fighting back by hiring lobbyists. As described in the *Washington Post*, “For tenants across the country, the huge rent hikes of recent years have been a burden. For the private investment firms emerging as America’s landlords, they’ve been a bonanza.”

## Laurel’s Rent Stabilization Bill

The two Laurel City Councilmen who have been the most supportive of the tenants, Martin Mitchell and Carl DeWalt, are co-sponsoring a bill titled the “Anti-

Homelessness and Displacement Act.” As drafted, the bill sets a limit of “3% of the existing monthly rent for any residential property” and establishes a “Rental Registry” that will prohibit unregistered properties from raising rents at all, among other actions designed to offer renters “protections from massive rent increases from lease to lease.”

As the long, arduous process to passing legislation grinds on (the graphic on page 9 illustrates the process in Laurel), Mitchell and DeWalt’s stabilization bill has been the subject of numerous public and “special” City Council sessions.

Mayor Moe and city staff made an initial proposal as an alternative to the bill that caps the rent increase at 4%, among other changes.

In November, Moe invited city landlords to a meeting with the Council members to give them a chance to present their side of the story. No tenants, activists, or other members of the public were invited. Attendees included management representatives from Laurelton Court, the Dona Apartments, Laurel Park, Steward Manor, Cross Creek Apartments, Laurel Manor, Park Hill Apartments, C Street Flats, Emerson at Cherry Lane, and others. Also attending were some lobbyists

being paid by some of the landlords, including Ryan Washington, from the Apartment & Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington, and Grayson Wiggins, from the law firm Harris Jones & Malone.

Also in attendance was Cameron Manesh, the landlord at Patuxent Place and other apartment complexes in Laurel. It was Manesh’s efforts to almost double the rents at 332 11th Street in 2021 shortly after buying the building—and then doing the same months later at Patuxent Place—that lit the fire under ensuing protests and activism. Many of the 11th Street residents were elderly and had lived in the building for decades. According to sources at the meeting, a contrite Manesh admitted to the other landlords that he misjudged the Laurel market.

## Laurel Activism Leads to Action Elsewhere

What has been happening in Laurel has not gone unnoticed in other municipalities in Prince George’s County. On the contrary, several communities also took up the rent stabilization issue—some on their own initiative, rather than in response to demonstrations and testimony. In fact, the draft legislation prepared for Laurel’s City Council by Mitchell was used, *word-for-word*, by the Mount Rainier City Council as the basis



(Opposite): Along with dozens of concerned renters from Laurel and beyond, Laurel City Council Members Martin Mitchell and Carl DeWalt attend a Cancel Rent Hikes March and rally outside the Laurel Municipal Center in December. COURTESY OF DIANE MEZZANOTTE

of its own rent stabilization ordinance. That council adopted the draft, with almost no revisions other than to change occurrences of the name Laurel to Mount Rainier, upon its first presentation and hopes to finalize it in the first quarter of 2023.

Councilman Mitchell, representatives from CASA (a nonprofit group that advocates for immigrants and has been involved with the Laurel tenants from the beginning), and local delegates have been asked to speak to several legislative groups throughout PG County and in other areas throughout the state, reflecting both the widespread impact of rent hikes and a consensus to halt rent gouging, while also protecting the interests of landlords and city coffers.

As of early January 2023, the following cities in PG County were discussing the rent-hike trends at the city government level, with some using the Laurel City Council’s draft as a starting point: Bladensburg, Bowie, Cheverly, Forest Heights, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, and Mount Rainier.

### Media Coverage Puts Laurel in Spotlight

Although local officials and advocacy groups were well aware of the rising rent issues affecting Laurel tenants as early as February 2022, not much press coverage occurred until one particular incident drew the media’s attention: the rent strike launched by Westgate Apartments residents, in which they announced intentions to withhold their August rent payments unless a compromise was reached. Coverage of that event suddenly became a top story on many news outlets based in the metro area. From local news sources like WUSA9, the *Laurel Independent*, *NewsBreak Laurel*, and *Bethesda* magazine, to nationally focused outlets like the *Washington Post* and the *Baltimore Sun*, several Laurel renters who had spoken up about their exorbitant increases found themselves fielding media calls.

Even after a compromise was reached at Westgate, coverage of the rent-increase story continued, because it had become clear that the issue was a widespread one with consequences for so many people in varying walks of life. *AARP Magazine* talked to Rose Thompson, one of the seniors living in the apartments at 11th Street, as part of an article that warned of a looming senior housing crisis. That article noted that more than a quarter of the country’s senior renters spend over half of their income on housing—higher than the 30 percent

that most financial advisors set as a maximum. *AfroDC*, a subsidiary of The *Afro-American* news organization, noted in a July 2022 article that rising rent prices had hit an all-time high over the previous 14 months, presenting a financial burden that is particularly hard on Black and Hispanic low-income earners.

The *Baltimore Banner*, an all-digital nonprofit media company, ran an in-depth investigative piece looking at the tenants-rights activism movement in Laurel. That article, like others, also presented the landlords’ side of the situation and the claim of potential loss in tax revenues that municipalities could face if they enacted rent stabilization laws. One key point, however, was that landlords and their lobbyists often cite statistics that are old—newer research conducted by the University of Southern California and the University of Minnesota concluded that stabilization measures generally do not affect new construction, which can be excluded entirely or given a phase-in schedule so as to ensure a return on investment. Further, the *Banner* article quoted a housing associate at the national research and advocacy firm PolicyLink: “Economic analysis is so heavily focused on market distortion and

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 32](#)

## Why Does It Take So Long?

Many people who have followed the proposed Rent Stabilization bill before Laurel’s City Council have asked why these things take so long. This graphic, provided by Mayor Craig Moe, illustrates the legislative process followed by the Laurel City Council.



\*This flowchart reflects process only for ordinances and resolutions. Charter and Map Amendment process is different.





KEVIN LEONARD



BY KEVIN LEONARD

In the middle of a long drab stretch of garages and other industrial shops on Route 1 southbound in North Laurel stands the most distinctive and whimsical building (it's actually a house) in the area: the Kake Korner. Owner Diane White had decided to sell the building and business—and had received a number of offers—but has decided to stay and expand operations. That is good news to the hundreds of loyal customers who would dearly miss “The Cake Lady” and her custom cakes and cupcakes if the deal had gone through.

#### A Murky History

The Kake Korner house was built in 1905 (as confirmed with Howard County land records) but its history up until 1973 is murky. In interviews with White and former Kake Korner owner Pam Horne, the history of the building was reconstructed through their memories,

since the land records are woefully incomplete.

The house was built for a family in 1905 and remained a residence for decades. Horne seemed to recall that it was a bed and breakfast or hotel many years back, but she wasn't sure. The Laurel History Boys were able to confirm that by finding a postcard of the house from 1936 when it was called “The Colonial.” The faded writing on the back of the postcard indicates that this was where the writer was “staying in Laurel.”

At some point, White thinks, it became an orphanage until it was bought by a Dr. Palmer, a veterinarian who used it for his practice. Horne knew that Dr. Palmer performed animal surgery in a shed behind the house, which was torn down before she bought the property.

When Horne bought it in 1973, she recalled it was then being used as a halfway house, possibly leased by

Howard County. But when Dr. Palmer passed away, the house went up for sale, and Horne was looking for a location to start a bakery. Her booming home-based cake business needed a larger set-up. She remembered they had to cut down two large oak trees in the front yard to make room for customers' cars.

Horne and her husband, Greg, called her bakery JP's Kake Korner, named for her sister, Jennifer, and herself, Pam. The business thrived for 30 years until she sold it to White in 2003.

#### An Inspiring Story

Diane White has baked cakes most of her life, starting when she was a child. Like Pam Horne, she had been baking cakes at home for many years—and for many jobs—and was looking for a place to start her own bakery. But White's story is one of extreme hardship giving way, ultimately, to success.

White survived sexual abuse as a child, marriage at 16 to a physically abusive man, the birth of her first child at 17, divorce, and numerous other hair-raising experiences. The single, exhausted mother was always working two jobs to make ends meet. She wrote her life story in a book, *The Cake Lady, My Life in the Mix*, which is on sale at the Kake Korner and on Amazon.

Two years after buying the business, White quietly dropped the “JP” from the bakery's name and—more importantly—only offered her cake recipe. She had been selling cakes made from both her recipe and Horne's to satisfy long-time customers, but it became a burden to produce both. The calculated risk soon proved worthy as sales took off and she had difficulty keeping up with orders.

White says most people don't know her name. They just refer to her as “The Cake Lady.” She's proud of her custom designs,





*Kake Korner Owner Diane White, affectionately known as The Cake Lady. Constructed as a family residence in 1905, the building had numerous functions prior to becoming one of Laurel's favorite bakeries in 1973—including a veterinarian, a halfway house, and as this postcard from 1936 attests, a bed and breakfast known as The Colonial.* KEVIN LEONARD

some of which have to be seen to be believed. Her most impressive creations are on display at the Kake Korner.

Things were constantly on the upswing for years. In 2006, she opened a second location in Clarksville for pickups, but closed it after a few years. At one point, she had 14 employees and the bakery was making \$1 million in sales annually.

In 2019, the Kake Korner won the \$10,000 Grand Prize in the Flavor Right Icing Funds Contest. White used the prize money to update and renovate the bakery. *Bake* magazine ran a profile of White and her operation. The future looked bright.

Then came Covid.

Like other successful establishments, White adapted and made the best of the situation. Curbside pickups and pre-packaged cakes saved the business, which was down to five employees during the pandemic. As restrictions have eased,

customers are once again flocking to the bakery.

Soon, the Kake Korner will expand its offerings with novelty cookies and treats produced on the premises by Mad River Bakes. And to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Kake Korner, White hopes to organize an Open House for the public and reunion of former employees next Spring.

White's indomitable spirt, which has guided her through a lifetime of hardship, once again has the Kake Korner back on top.

*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.*

# From the Office of Council Member Tom Dernoga



BY TOM DERNOGA | PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER

## Council Member Dernoga to Chair County Council

On December 6, the Prince George's County Council elected District 1 Council Member Tom Dernoga as the Chair of the County Council for the 2023 Legislative Year. This will be Councilman Dernoga's third time serving as Chair of the County Council, having served as Council Chair in 2006 and 2010. He also served as Vice Chair of the Council in 2005 and 2009. Council Member Dernoga's tenure on the Council has been noted for his leadership on environmental, historical, and agricultural preservation issues and smart growth. Wala Blegay, Council Member for District 6, was elected as Vice Chair to serve alongside Council Member Dernoga. They are committed to bringing government to the people.



*Newly elected County Council Leaders Chair Tom Dernoga and Vice Chair Wala Blegay*

## Future Council Sessions and How to be Involved

The Prince George's County Council will begin County Council meetings and County Council committee meetings in January 2023.

The Council will focus on essential opportunities for prioritizing and addressing key concerns of residents through policy and legislation, with County, business, labor, and nonprofit community leaders, as expressed in the Council's People's Agenda: open government, service delivery, protecting the environment, smart and quality community development, supporting working families, increasing opportunity for local minority development, and access to quality healthcare.

In the past, County Council and committee sessions have been held on Tuesdays and Thursdays. That is likely to continue, but residents may watch sessions live and submit testimony during the appropriate hearing here: (<https://bit.ly/CountyCouncilVideo>) come January 2023. Watch our first Council session from December 6, 2022, here: ([https://bit.ly/Dec6\\_22CouncilSession](https://bit.ly/Dec6_22CouncilSession)).

## Operation Warm—Free Coats for Kids

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) and PGCMLS Foundation continue to provide essential support to the residents of Prince George's County this winter with the fourth annual edition of Operation Warm—Free Coats for Kids. This special initiative provides free brand-new coats to children in need. Families can bring their children to the Laurel Branch Library on Saturday, January 7, between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm to obtain a free coat while supplies last. The coats are generously sponsored by the PGCMLS Foundation, Wawa, and Operation Warm.

## Contact Us

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



# Russett at 30

## Part 3: “It’s Not Easy Being Green” ... Kermit the Frog Was Right!



BY ELIZABETH YSLA LEIGHT

During the development stage of the community, some homebuyers were confused about the roles and responsibilities of the HOA. The Russett Center Limited Partnership, representing the developer, built the infrastructure for the community—roads, utilities, sewers, streets, sidewalks, landscaped common areas, recreation facilities, etc.—and sold large groups of land to homebuilders who sold individual homes to the general public. The developer took responsibility for organizing and managing the community association until such time that it was transferred to a homeowner-run HOA several years later.

Russett hired a management company to run the community on behalf of the Russett Community Association. The RCA had two primary functions:

1. to maintain all property and improvements in the community
2. to protect the aesthetic quality of the community

### Owner Representation in the RCA

The RCA governmental structure started at the neighborhood level, where it remains today. The RCA is designed for each neighborhood to create its own identity and provide services to suit the needs of that neighborhood. By May 1993, each neighborhood elected their own three-member committee, known as Parcel Representatives and later also referred to as Neighborhood Representatives.

Russett had few committees in the early days, but one of the most important was the Community Activities Committee (CAC), which was comprised of the Neighborhood Representatives. These homeowner volunteers served as the advisory body to the RCA board of directors on activities within the community.

Soon, Russett neighborhoods were holding street parties as a good way to get to know your neighbors. During National Night Out, we headed to the Community Center for activities and to get safety reminders from Anne Arundel

County Police representatives. The Green Committee held sessions where neighbors could learn about recycling and even pick up a recycling container. Russett didn’t forget the four-legged neighbors and held a Pet Fest where vets and pet vendors handed out samples and pet health information. The Activities Committee has always held great events like the Annual Yard Sale, but a memorable activity was a Broadway-bound trip to New York City. One of the most memorable events was the “Taste of Russett” where members of the community brought international dishes to share.

### Neighborhood Pride

Getting to know the area community was also important to Russett homeowners. Some events were held in the neighborhood in conjunction with the Maryland City Civic Association and Maryland City Volunteer Fire Department to foster community goodwill. In 1993, Russett welcomed autumn with a pumpkin sale to benefit the nearby Maryland City Teen Club. Russett Center Limited Partners donated two tons of pumpkins to benefit the Teen Club but also the Waxter Children’s Center and the American Legion of Laurel.

Also in 1993, Phase 1 of development brought hiker/biker trails that started on Woodland Hills Ways and traversed the entire community. Soon, RCA meetings included presentations on covenants and guidelines on the use and appearance of home exteriors, staining or painting deck railings, etc. The Board of Directors would soon make decisions on guidelines and modifications to those guidelines, a responsibility that continues 30 years later.

Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club soon announced their new store would be open in the Fall of 1993 at what would soon be known as Russett Square. There was an agreed-to massive reforestation program behind the stores designed to support the vision of the Russett community.

### Russett Goes to School

Russett homeowners and its developer, Marshall Zinn, turned their attention to area Anne Arundel County Public Schools that encompassed Russett’s footprint. In 1993, Russett children from kindergarten to 6th grade would attend Brock Bridge Elementary School, an open-space school just minutes away. Soon, the parents were working with the developer to enhance opportunities at the school by supporting club activities, and donations of computers to create the school’s first media lab. The Brock Bridge PTA drafted plans for a state-of-the-art computer lab at the elementary school. By June 1994, the campaign had achieved only 25% of the \$40,000 price of the computer lab. The Russett Center Limited Partnership joined the campaign and donated forty new computers and supporting software and printers. Russett parents, many with IT expertise, rolled up their sleeves and were soon assisting to help wire the computers throughout the school.

School needs brought changes in safety as well. As Russett was being built and several builders brought staff to the area, parents reported that the school bus stop on Whiskey Bottom Road headed to Meade Senior High School was becoming a problem when students were being harassed by workers building houses in Russett neighborhoods. The female students did not feel comfortable waiting for an early morning bus or when they returned home in the afternoon. Russett residents called a meeting with the Laurel Police Department, Howard County Police Department, and Anne Arundel Police Department, as well as the Anne Arundel County Board of Education, to discuss a solution. As a result, the bus stop was changed to Woodland Hills Way where it remains today.

In addition, a solicitation watch was underway because of an influx of the sex workers known to use Whiskey Bottom Road as a place to solicit. When police showed up, they would head toward the Howard County line to

avoid apprehension. Little did Russett homeowners know, but Whiskey Bottom Road got its name from a long history dating back to the days of Prohibition. Whiskey Bottom Road was dotted with houses that were a haven for illicit liquor distribution and “speakeasies” with houses that had tanks in the walls where supplies from stills could be hidden, as well as rooms for women of ill-repute. In the late 1800s, quantities from the “Maryland Rye” distillery located near the Laurel Mill frequently headed to Whiskey Bottom. Due to the negative connotations of the name “Whiskey Bottom,” many sought to change the name to Patuxent Drive. It did not happen, but Russett does have a street named Patuxent Landing as a nod to its historical past.

### Community Celebrations Abound

The summer of 1993 brought many more families to Russett and the first real big splash, with the Memorial Day weekend opening of the bathhouse and pools. The pools and bathhouse and playground added to the existing six-court tennis complex.

Summertime was good as the Russett lifeguards provided swim lessons to residents throughout the swim season. Soon a Russett Running/Walking Club sprung up to take advantage of the walking trails and a Gourmet Club had on its agenda a long list of local restaurants to sample.

### A Tradition Was Created!

Since 1993, Russett’s Annual Community Celebration generally takes place on the first weekend in May. At first, it was designed by the RCA developer to give homeowners an opportunity to know each other and to meet special representatives from the county government, elected officials, area schools, transportation, health care, and community services. The Russett homeowners were treated to festive music by the Meade Senior High School Jazz Band and carriage rides through the community as a way to enjoy the Russett surroundings.



In some years, August in Russett meant it was the time for the Community Picnic. The Russett Center Limited Partnership kept Russett residents together by providing opportunities to mix and mingle with an opportunity for plenty of food, Aqua Follies, competitions and prizes for all ages and tennis tournaments.

By the end of 1993, many families moved to Russett and we had close to 2,000 residents. This meant that additional amenities and common areas were a priority in the community. Close attention to the needs of the community of Russett and development of amenities brought Russett a unique prize. Russett was chosen by the Land Development Council of the Home Builders Association of Maryland as the winner of the 1993 project of the year Award of Excellence. That was a big honor to Marshall Zinn who managed the growth of the community, its forests, topography, and wetlands clustering housing designed to leave acreage undisturbed.

Another new addition in 1993 was a Security Patrol that was on duty every night. The service brought general surveillance for the community overall.

### Russett Advocacy Brought Positive Changes!

Soon a grass roots organization created by concerned citizens living in Russett and the surrounding community formed an organization to ensure that the next public library would be located at Russett. The group was organized after the Anne Arundel County officials at the time removed funding for the project in the 1993-94 County budget. Russett homeowners engaged everyone in public office and attended public meetings to insist that Russett and Maryland City have a new fully-staffed library located in Russett Commons, where it stands today.

By 1994, the Russett library funding was re-allocated and the County Council voted for the 14,000 square foot library to serve the rapidly growing population in Russett. Russett Center Limited Partnership stepped up to donate land for the library at the Russett Commons. Many of the original staff assigned to the library saw Russett children grow up and some are still there today. In the intervening years, Sunday hours at the Russett library were added and funded by Russett homeowners who served on the Laurel Race Course Impact Fund Advisory Committee by allocating fees



Residents mingle while enjoying international fare during the Taste of Russett event. ELIZABETH YSLA LEIGHT

to the expense. It turned out to be a popular idea as Russett drew people from across Anne Arundel County because it was then, and still is, the only public library in Anne Arundel County to open on Sunday.

Soon Russett residents turned their attention and sharpened advocacy to the needs of mass transit and in 1994, Russett residents convened to support the MARC Commuter Rail Services and Connect-A-Ride system. These commuter trains stop at two stations close to Russett, at Laurel and Savage, each with free parking.

The year 1995 marked a first for Russett residents. Russett homeowner Keith Johnson became the first to serve on its Board of Directors. Johnson was a single-family homeowner and early resident of Russett. Prior to Keith's addition, the board of directors was developer-run and now residents

would have a voice in decisions made in the community. In addition, because Russett had grown so much, Laura Waters, also one of the community's first homeowners, served as the first on-site manager to the CMC management company.

As families grew here, children needed additional amenities and soon basketball courts, volleyball courts, and tennis lessons were a reality at Russett. Ideas for a potential softball backstop and soccer venue were also discussed at board meetings but have yet to be realized as part of Russett's comprehensive recreational facilities plan. Russett residents with young children created the Russett Mom's Club, which later became the Laurel Mom's Club as residents of Maryland City and Laurel joined in the fun. They scheduled summer activities and meet-ups at the baby pool and area venues

for young children. Their meetings had speakers on childcare issues and planned activities designed to bring the community a rich family-friendly feel to Russett. The LMC held fun activities at the Russett Baby Pool and picnic area.



*Elizabeth Ysla Leight is an attorney and has been a Russett resident since 1993. She is a former Russett Board Member and Russett Community Association Representative. She also served as a member of the Kirwan Commission, Laurel Race Course Impact Fund Advisory Committee, and Anne Arundel County Plan 2040 Representative. She served as President of the Maryland State Parent Teachers Association and the Maryland Hispanic Commission. She currently serves as a Steering Committee member of Maryland Latinos Unidos.*



# Gems of the Ocean



BY CHARLES H. CLYBURN

PART 1



CHARLES CLYBURN



CHARLES CLYBURN

This is Part 1 of the story about four women living in the Laurel area whose lives are comparative to the main character (a 285-year-old female former slave) of August Wilson’s award-winning play *Gem of the Ocean*. In the play, she is a keeper of tradition and history for her people, and a renowned cleanser of souls.

Our first “gem” is an 81-year-young person named Ms. Jessie Y. Ifill (above left). Her credo in life is written in her “My Life Board of Inspirational Sayings,” which states “What propels me is that I am a child of the King of Kings, knowing my identity as who I am and to whom I belong!”

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, to Thelma and Burt Williams, a show business duo who traveled the country with Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, she graduated from high school with the highest grade point average of her class. Despite receiving college scholarship offers, she chose to attend New York Business College to pursue a career in the business world.

She married George Ifill (who passed on in 2011), had four children, and worked for corporations like IBM, Mobil Oil, and TIME, Inc. as an administrative assistant. Realizing her calling was to work for not-for-profit organizations, Mrs. Ifill received a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and a Master’s

degree in Education before moving to Maryland in order to be near her children, who attended colleges in the area. After living in New York and Pennsylvania, she made Maryland her home again to assume the babysitting responsibilities of her great grandchildren on a full-time basis.

Mrs. Ifill is one of the founders of the Residents’ Service Committee at her place of residence, fulfilling one of her mission statements “using my talents, resources, and skills to perform Godly services.”

Allow me to introduce you to our second “gem of the ocean.” Her name is Edna Newkirk-Brown, now a resident of Ellicott City, who calls Baltimore her place of birth but spends a lot of time in Laurel. Her community activist work began when she sold cupcakes in order to raise money for her church choir’s robes. She entered the world of work while enrolled at Carver Vocational High School in Baltimore at a downtown Baltimore store where Black people were not allowed to sit at the lunch counter. After graduating from Carver, she moved to Hempstead, New York, where she became a member of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) civil rights organization, registering over 350 people to vote.

In the year 1972, Ms. Edna became Mrs. Newkirk, raised a son, divorced her husband, and continued her career as a flight attendant for American Airlines. On

her days off, she sat in on her son’s high school classes. When this son became a college student at Bowie State University she also sat in on his classes. This inspired her to become a student at BSU where she graduated, at age 68, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Broadcast Journalism and a grade point average of 3.8. Ms. Edna was on the university’s Dean’s List three times.

This energetic woman became a home health worker, where she provided in-home assistance to elderly and/or disabled patients. The year was 1994 when she used her skills to become a Licensed Real Estate Agent being featured on the front page of the national Century 21 newspaper.

An avid marathon runner, she has participated in two Los Angeles meets and five half-marathons in Virginia when she is not working in the Carver High School book store as a member of the Alumni Association, or volunteering in the Residents’ Service Council of Selborne House in Laurel. A “gem” for sure.

Stay tuned to this space for the second two of the four “Gems of the Ocean” quartet.



*Charles Clyburn, a resident of Laurel for 20 years, is a storyteller of African American folktales and a television and voice over actor.*



## PROFILES

# From Laurel High School to Children's Author in Hawaii



BY KEVIN LEONARD

Perry Koons (Laurel High School Class of 1972) has had quite a career as a graphics artist. But it wasn't until a few years ago that he tried his hand at writing and illustrating a children's book. It was the result of his young grandson, who lives in Hawaii, asking him to "write a book about an elephant that surfs."

In an interview, Koons told me that "my first book was for my grandson's first birthday. It's called, *On the Island of Ko'Ona Lanu*. It is about a baby elephant who believes there is more to life than just following the herd. His biggest dream is to become the first elephant to ever surf the ocean waves from his beautiful tropical island home."

He enjoyed creating the homemade book for his delighted grandson so much, he figured he would do more.

In 2019 he wrote, illustrated, and self-published *Comet Saves the Day!* The story is that "Santa has a problem and must cancel Christmas. Everyone tries to help, but only his best friend Comet knows how to help Santa and put Christmas back on schedule."

Three years later, in 2022, Koons released his second book, *Son of Comet*, a sequel to *Comet Saves the Day!* The story, according to Koons, is that "when you're the smallest reindeer in Santa's stable and your father is a great North Pole hero, life can be an uphill climb. It's a good thing Santa can see the big picture and has the perfect plan. All Comet's son has to do is give his best and believe the impossible is possibly, possible."

Those of us that remember Perry Koons from high school (he and I graduated together) recognize his personality in his description of his children's books. "Both of my Christmas books and *Ko'Ona Lanu* are about friendship, kindness towards others, and determination. They are about thinking and caring for others first and never giving up at whatever you love to do."

## Laurel Roots

His family's roots go back away in Laurel. Koons' grandfather, Howard Merson, worked at Donaldson's store at Sixth and Montgomery Streets. His grandmother, Elizabeth, worked at the Laurel Sanitarium as a nurse's assistant.

His father, Jim Koons, was in the Air Force Reserves while working for NSA at Fort Meade. His mother, Nancy, was born in an apartment above the old Laurel Fire Department on Montgomery Street (now the Harrison-Beard Building).

Perry's time at Laurel High was interrupted during his senior year when his father was transferred to England, but he returned to live with his grandparents in 1972 to graduate with his class. He lived with his grandparents on the corner of Fifth Street and Gorman Ave.

He graduated with the Kappa Pi Outstanding Art Award from Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, Tennessee, and is also a graduate with a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Tennessee.

In 1985 he began working as an illustrator for a large special events company in Lanham, designing parade floats and theme parties for events in Washington, D.C. and Atlantic City, N.J.

In 1990, Perry and his wife, Martha, returned to Laurel. He taught art, U.S. History, literature, and Bible at Faith Baptist Christian School in Laurel. He also taught at various other private schools until retirement in 2019. After visiting their family in Hawaii, Perry and his wife decided to stay and moved to Honolulu in 2021.



COURTESY OF PERRY KOONS

## Books in the Pipeline

In addition to his two published books (and his homemade book for his grandson), Koons has written and illustrated five other books. The cost of self-publishing, however, is prohibitive so he has to take it slow.

One of his unpublished manuscripts, *The Kid From 5th Street Creek*, is about growing up as a child in Laurel from 1955 to 1972. He described it as "black and white TV, battery operated transistor radios, great teachers and friends in the Laurel community. I feel very fortunate to have grown up in Laurel during that particular time. I have many childhood memories of loving a family, local town folks, and wonderful life-long friends that are my real treasures in life. This is the true story about how I met my best friend for life, Mark Perry. His father was our church pastor at First Baptist Laurel, located of all places, on 5th Street! Directly across from the creek." Koons hopes to release it later this year.

His two published books are available on Amazon and BarnesandNoble.com.



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.



# Dreams Can Come True, With Hard Work and a Little Luck

*Take the Case of Former Laurel Resident Kathy Coleman*



BY JIM CLASH



The dream of many people is one day to open a bar, restaurant, hotel, whatever, when they get older, rather than just retire. They've toiled all of their lives at a job maybe they didn't love, weren't passionate about, but they've also saved some decent money along the way. What to do with it? If you've squirreled away enough, maybe you have a cushion to do bucket-list things, like start your own business.

Kathy Coleman Wood has always been interested in travel. Her late father, John, was with the U.S. Army, later the National Security Agency, and, as such, Wood lived in a variety of places, including Munich, Germany, where she was born, and Melbourne, Australia. Finally, the family settled in Laurel, near NSA headquarters at Fort Meade. There, in Laurel Hills on White Way Avenue behind the shopping center, she led the

life of a normal teenager growing up in the suburbs in the 1960s (think *The Wonder Years*), attending Laurel Junior and Senior High Schools. She had one sister, Debbie, and a brother, John, who also attended Laurel's public schools.

But Wood always was an achiever. As a high school senior, she was class secretary, homecoming queen, and yearbook co-editor. After graduation in 1973, she attended a small university in Tennessee, Tusculum, where she engaged in social life (she was a cheerleader) and graduated with a perfect 4.0 average. She then moved to Philadelphia, to earn an MBA from the Wharton Graduate School Of Business, majoring in management. She was recruited by several blue-chip companies upon graduation, including General Electric and Pfizer, but ultimately chose Union Carbide/Martin Marietta, now part of Lockheed

Martin. She had worked at Carbide during summers while in college, and felt familiar with the company and its location in Oak Ridge, TN, near Knoxville. Later, Wood went on to hold human resources and strategic planning jobs at smaller companies, including Plasti-Line/ImagePoint, and CTI, Inc, both now defunct. Her schedule for much of her career was hectic ("60-hour work weeks," she admits), as so many middle- and upper-level management positions require. But the jobs allowed her to save money and, later, to access benefit plans the companies had given her. Plus, she had a young daughter, Kelly, that kept her even busier.

On a lark, she, Kelly, and her husband, Charley, took a short trip to France in early 2003. The couple enjoyed the vacation so much they decided to use some of the money from their savings

to return for 14 months, in 2004–05, a "sabbatical from life," if you will. Wood says that is when she hatched her plan to open a boutique travel company. She had established many connections with the French locals already, and knew the lay of the land. Why not have others experience the same treasures she had discovered, and make money at the same time?

Wood initially designed company brochures and, instead of sending out Christmas cards that year, sent the flyers to her entire mailing list. Surprise: She got just nine takers! But Wood was having fun, and firmly believed in her idea.

As with any good story, random things happen—call it luck—that change the course of life. A *USA Today* writer was researching Luberon, France, (the area Wood specialized in), and wanted advice. A movie starring Russell Crowe and directed by Ridley Scott, *A Good Year*,





A former Laurel High School homecoming queen, Cathy Coleman Wood and her husband, Charley, founded European Experiences—a boutique travel company.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES



had caught the reporter's attention. It didn't do well at the box office, but no matter—it did captivate an audience by revealing the stunning beauty of the region. The ensuing article appeared above the fold, on page one of the *USA Today's* travel section, and included a mention of Wood's company. The response this time: Over 800 leads, almost more than she and her husband could handle.

European Experiences, the name of Wood's company, continued to grow, and, in 2019, had its then-best year: 186 customers. But Covid-19 hit, and all of Wood's advance deposits for scheduled trips had to be returned to customers because international travel was pretty much suspended. Wood was lucky in that her company, as opposed to say, a hotel or restaurant, requires little overhead and capital investment to keep it afloat. She also had the cash she had stashed for lean times, and was collecting retirement benefits from some of the companies she had worked for. European Experiences does no advertising, and new business mostly is generated by word of mouth.

To get through the pandemic and keep sane like the rest of us, Wood held webinars with her clients on a variety of subjects from cooking to French cheese to olive oil, all for free. (Participants could make donations if they wanted, but were not required to.)

Now that the world finally seems to be coming out of Covid, Wood's business is getting hot again. In 2022, she ran trips

with more than 300 customers, a new company record. Half of the clients were repeats, and two-thirds were women. In 2023, she hopes to do even better. Advance bookings already look good.

When will Wood retire? Her husband, 77, is already pulling back from the business. "Maybe in three or four years," she says, admitting that as she gets older the demands of her job take a bigger toll. "But for now, I'm doing what I love, keeping busy and meeting interesting people from all over the world, including a few from where I had once lived as a kid, Australia." In keeping with her sound business acumen, once Wood, 67, does retire, she plans to sell the company.

Moral of the story: Dreamers can live out dreams, with a little luck and the guts to pursue a passion, take a risk, start a company. Kathy Coleman Wood's passion is travel. What's yours?

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*Jim Clash, a longtime writer for Forbes magazine, regularly immerses himself in extreme adventures. He has driven a Bugatti at 253 mph, flown in a MiG-25 to 84,000 feet at 2.6 times the speed of sound, summited the Matterhorn, and skied to the South Pole, among other things. He has a BA from the University of Maryland, an MBA from Columbia University, and graduated from Laurel High School in 1973. His books include Forbes to the Limits and The Right Stuff: Interviews with Icons of the 1960s.*

# Edna Davis, Force of Nature

## *Not Your Average Centenarian*



BY VIRGINIA MAY GEIS

Edna Davis was much more than just another centenarian living in North Laurel for over six decades. At the time of her passing at age 102½, she had been a wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother; that was only the end of her amazing life. Her family was very important to her, but this remarkable woman was so fun-loving and full of life her family could barely keep up with her at times—to the very end. She was fiercely independent her whole life, often venturing out on her own; no one could tell Edna what to do or how to live. She was a force of nature and a role model for everyone who knew her!

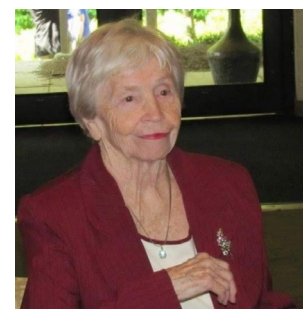
Edna was born in Albany, NY, on November 23, 1919, the youngest of Edward and Mary Agnes Murphy's four children. Her father was a public servant and a true hero. However, when Edna was 8 years old, the family moved to the "country," to Hampton Manor, in Rensselaer, NY. There the family lived in a Sears house—a kit ordered from the catalogue—and enjoyed having electricity for the first time. Edna learned to love swimming in the lake nearby. Around this time, she also discovered that she had lost her hearing in one ear as a result of a childhood illness for which there had been no vaccine at that time. For this reason, she was always eager to receive vaccinations when they became available.

Edna showed her fierce independence at an early age when, at 8 years old, she would take the bus into town to pay the family's bills with an envelope of money her mother would give her. This independence served her well in many situations throughout her life when she had nobody else to turn to. Maybe her mother saw this unusual independence and fostered it in Edna.

Edna had wanted to be an actress and a singer. When she was 12, she signed up to sing in a radio contest and won, being voted best talent. She always played some role or another in theater productions while she was in school, volunteering for parts nobody else wanted. They offered Edna a chance to be more creative. In school Edna had started on the academic track, but her mother convinced her to switch to a more practical course of study, where she learned to type and take shorthand, graduating when she was 17.

When Edna's mother passed away, she was 19 and the last of the children still at home, leaving just Edna and her father. He urged Edna to take the civil service exam, which, of course, she passed. Edna eventually received that telegram offering an entry-level job with the U.S. Department of Treasury and, at age 21, she left home to travel to Washington, D.C. by herself. Eager to embark on her adventure, Edna set out for Washington dressed in her Sunday best. However, upon her arrival, she quickly learned that people in the nation's capital did not wear hats or gloves as she had expected. Her daughter, Diane, also related that Edna had seen the crossing signs on the street corners and thought "DO NOT WALK" was an advertisement for a ride service.

Upon her arrival in Washington, Edna lived in a boarding house and worked at the Treasury Department. The custom at that time was to retire worn out currency by cutting bills in half and returning them to the Treasury Department. Edna's job was to count these bills by hand. While working for the U.S. Government, Edna was one



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COURTESY OF ROY GILMORE

# A Quiet Hero

*Former Laurel Police Chief Roy Gilmore's Storied Service in the Vietnam War*



BY KEVIN LEONARD

Roy Gilmore was appointed Chief of the Laurel Police Department in 1994 by former Mayor Frank Casula to succeed the retiring Chief, Archie Cook. A nationwide search yielded 19 qualified applicants, which were whittled down to three finalists. He was known for his 24-year career with the Prince George's County Police Department, and had been most recently commander of the Beltsville station, which provided police protection in South and West Laurel. Gilmore, a Laurel resident, was intimately familiar with the area.

But few knew that Laurel was getting a true decorated hero from the Vietnam War as its new chief.

## Recondo Training

In an interview, Gilmore pointed out to me that his father and uncles were veterans, which influenced

his patriotism as a kid growing up on a farm in Pennsylvania. Years later, just a few months after graduating from high school in Florida, Gilmore enlisted in the Army in 1965. His older brother, Joe, had enlisted three months before Gilmore and was sent to Korea with an armored tank division.

After basic training, Gilmore volunteered to be a point man in an infantry battalion. Before long, he heard about the Army's Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol units (or LRRPs), a specialized unit trained to be invisible in the jungle. Usually, their mission was to gather intelligence in the jungle and then silently retreat. He signed up.

He underwent rigorous training to join the LRRPs at Recondo school, short for reconnaissance commando doughboy. As described in the book, *Recondo*, by Larry Chambers, "To graduate from Recondo school, you had

to prove you could blend into the surroundings and gather information about the enemy units—right under the enemy's nose."

The physical training was so intense that fully half the trainees washed out. Through camouflage and behavior, the soldiers were trained to be invisible, as described by Chambers:

Never remove your equipment even when you sleep. Tape up every part of your equipment to prevent jingling and rattling. The lightest rattle, especially from metallic objects, can travel hundreds of feet. Always have tape for the mouths of prisoners; it only takes a yell to alert the enemy to your position. Do not use insect repellent because it makes the team traceable. You may be eaten alive by the jungle insects, but the Vietcong doesn't use insect repellent, and neither should the recon teams.



Soap cannot be used. Captured VC claimed that anticipating French ambushes during the first Indochina Wars was easy because they smelled the soap before they saw the army.

Cigarettes are prohibited. Smoke can be detected up to one quarter mile away if wind conditions are right. Heighten your sense of smell: learn every aroma of the enemy, from body odor to cooking habits. Heighten your sense of hearing: hear the safety snap of an AK-47, learn when birds or jungle animals make startling noises. Detect the enemy before he detects you.

Gilmore served with the LRRPs for 20 months. He estimated they went on three or four missions a month and they were mostly uneventful. Whatever the assignment, the goal was always the same: get in, get out—fast.

“The idea was to remain undetected,” Gilmore told me. It didn’t always work out that way.

### All Hell Breaks Loose

In March 1967, Gilmore was part of a six-man LRRP on a helicopter that landed in a jungle clearing. They ran a hundred meters into the jungle and took positions along a trail. Their mission this time was much more dangerous: they were to extract a prisoner for interrogation.

Their mission that day was so harrowing that it has been described in two different books: *Up Front in Vietnam*, by David Reed, and *Toy Sampans*, by Ray Hill.

Lt. Robert Stowell, 23, the team leader, hid just off the trail with three others: Gary Lotze, 20, Forrest Kendall, 20, and Sidney Smith, 23. David Liebersbach, 20, was about 40 meters ahead on the right side of the trail, and opposite him, on the left side, crouched Gilmore, 20, who served as the point man for the unit when entering the jungle. *Get in, get out—fast and undetected*. But that was not to happen this day.

They had placed claymore mines strategically to ambush any Viet Cong coming down the trail. The first three Viet Cong soldiers that walked into the trap were killed when Lotze detonated a mine, starting a firefight with more Viet Cong trailing the first three. Gilmore and Liebersbach could see the enemy soldiers as they passed, firing at the Americans further down the trail. Gilmore detonated a mine from his hidden position, killing two more.

More Viet Cong came running down the trail. Gilmore spotted an enemy soldier pointing a .30-caliber machine gun at his comrades. When he tried to return fire, Gilmore’s M-16 jammed, so he pulled out a .45-caliber pistol and shot the machine-gunner. He then threw a grenade, killing the two ammo-bearers behind the machine gun.

Firefights, although sometimes unavoidable, were not desired. As they were trained, as soon as the shooting started, Kendall, the radio operator, called for an immediate helicopter extraction.

Gilmore then spotted six more VC with a machine gun coming down the trail. He had managed to unjam his M-16 and fired on them, killing one. The others ran into the jungle.

The Americans retreated toward the landing zone to wait for the helicopter, exchanging gunfire as they

went. Liebersbach, however, silently held his position up the trail. The enemy still hadn’t spotted him due to his camouflage. His comrades feared he had been killed in the firefight. He waited until six Viet Cong stopped directly in front of him—and had no idea he was there—and opened fire on the six. Liebersbach then retreated with the others.

They were still far from safety, as described by Reed: “The helicopters were overhead now—two gunships and a slick [helicopter for passengers]. The men on the ground exploded a yellow smoke bomb and told the gunships to make strafing runs just beyond it. The NVAs [Viet Cong], knowing what the smoke meant, moved even closer to the Americans to escape the strafing. Now the Americans and the NVAs were trading bullets and grenades from a distance of only a few yards.”

In the middle of this firefight, Gilmore ran to the middle of the landing zone and lay down on his back with an orange panel on his chest as a signal to the helicopter to land, taking fire from the enemy. He frantically pointed to the machine gun shooting at him, hoping the helicopter would strafe the position, but the pilot mistakenly thought Gilmore was waving him off. As the pilot of the slick left, an American gunship firing on the enemy machine gun accidentally shot the orange panel out of Gilmore’s hands and set it on fire.

The team was finally extracted, as described by Reed: “The slick came back and landed. The men were almost out of ammunition, except for one claymore and some grenades, which they kept for suicide if capture is inevitable. As they ran for the ship Lotze placed

the claymore at the treeline. Then he ran after them, reeling out the detonator wire. When he touched off the mine, the explosion blew him into the helicopter.”

Amazingly, only Stowell was wounded, as described by Hill: “Not a single person on the team realized he had taken three rounds at the start of the long running battle. He stayed in command throughout the entire episode. Only when they were securely on the slick and flying low over the tree tops did the young officer give in to his serious wounds.” He spent two weeks in the hospital.

The entire team was decorated for the mission: “The team got credit for over twenty confirmed and almost as many probable kills. The end result was the team was awarded one Distinguished Service Cross for Lt. Stowell, three Silver Stars and two Bronze Stars—possibly the most decorated recon team action in the entire Republic of Vietnam conflict.”

For his actions that day, Gilmore was awarded the Silver Star medal, the third highest military award for valorous actions in combat.

### Laurel Chief

During Gilmore’s time as Chief of the Laurel Police Department (1994–2002), the city experienced two of the most traumatic events in its history.

When terrorists brought down the World Trade Center on 9/11, Gilmore was in Ocean City at a conference for Maryland municipal police chiefs. He recalled that officials closed the Bay Bridge, fearing

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LRRPs reunion in 2022: (left to right): Roy Gilmore, Bob Stowell, David Liebersbach, A.W. Steed, and Alan Phillips. KEITH PHILLIPS, U.S. ARMY



## GROWING UP IN LAUREL

*A small game on Woodland Court in the early 1980s. Kids at Steward Manor Apartments were discouraged from playing football on all but one field in the community, but often broke that rule.*

# Good Sports

*For Laurel's Generation X, Childhood Was All About Backyard Football*



BY RICHARD FRIEND

COURTESY OF RODNEY PRESSLEY

This time of year, with the NFL playoffs in full swing, I always think back to my childhood days and the kids in my Steward Manor neighborhood. Football was the defacto sport for my little group, with basketball a close second. In those days, Steward Manor actually had a basketball court behind Morris Drive—one of the only apartment complexes in Laurel that did. But the older kids had a monopoly on it that we respected, so football became our main thing.

Where the asphalt basketball court ended, our football field began. The field, while relatively narrow, measures just shy of 100 yards in length. The field is still there today, (although the basketball court was removed about 20 years ago) and hasn't changed a bit. To kids in the 1970s and 80s, it was nearly perfect. To find a bigger and better football field, you'd have to go to one of the public parks, or worse, to a school field. And none of us wanted to spend any more time on school property than we had to, I assure you. Steward Manor had three other smaller fields that were also fantastic for impromptu pickup games, but if the maintenance men caught us playing there, we'd get yelled at. They were instructed to let all the neighborhood kids know that those fields were off

limits—they wanted to keep the grass looking good for prospective tenants. Eventually, trees were planted in the center of the smaller fields to discourage us from playing there. If you wanted to play football, you had to go down to the big field by the basketball court. And that was fine by us.

I couldn't begin to tell you the final scores of any games I played there. There were no championships or otherwise meaningful contests in the way that high school football games counted. But what there *was* on that field was magic for kids who were first learning the nuances of the game, developing into solid players even before our teenage years. What I remember vividly are snippets of games, or times when it was just a few of us hanging out at the field tossing a football around—moments that still reverberate forty-plus years later. And those moments are enough, because they're golden memories.

The kids that I grew up with came mostly from single-parent families with very modest incomes. Not everyone had their own football or basketball, and those that did often had old, worn ones found at yard sales. Nerf footballs were extremely popular, but they quickly got destroyed. Once the thin latex skin was torn, the spongy footballs lost any waterproofing

quality they had—so rainy games had the added element of getting hit with a giant, soaked sponge. Worse, if the ball got wet during snow games, it could actually freeze. Then it was like trying to catch a block of ice.

The moments I remember most—and most fondly—are the ones when just a couple of us would go down to the field with a football to mimic something we'd seen in an NFL game. Such was the case after the 1981 NFC Championship Game, when Mike McNeal and I took turns that Monday after school, trying to replicate “The Catch” we'd seen play out live on TV the day before. Our version of Joe Montana to Dwight Clark wasn't quite as iconic, but we certainly had fun trying.

Mike's little brother, George, wasn't the all-around athlete that Mike was, but he always played hard. He was also more introspective and enjoyed aspects of football that we didn't incorporate into our neighborhood games—like punting and kicking. As I mentioned, the field was quite narrow, and while one sideline was defined by a







(Above left): Brothers George and Mike McNeal pose with Richard Friend behind his building on Bryan Court in 1983. The boys were holding basketballs, but football was their number one sport. (Above right): Marcus Ritter channels his inner John Riggins while outrunning a pair of younger defenders in 1986. (Top): Football cards from the nearby 7-Eleven were another fun part of growing up in the 1980s. When kids weren't playing football, they were buying and trading cards, often in the hallways and on the front porches of the apartment buildings. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICHARD FRIEND

concrete sidewalk, the other edge was lined with a 6-foot chainlink fence that separated the field from what we called “The Creek”—the little stream of Bear Branch that runs along Bowie Road and under Route 197. It wasn't much of a creek, but there *was* water in there somewhere amongst the thick overgrowth of trees, weeds, thorns, and poison ivy.

Most of us dreaded the thought of a football going over that fence, because it meant that someone either had to climb over it or walk to the far end of the field, around the fence, and navigate through what seemed like endless jungle to retrieve it. George never seemed to mind. Anytime he got his hands on the ball, there was a 90% chance he was going to punt it rather than simply toss it back to you. And when he punted it, there was an even higher percentage chance that it was going over that fence.

There was one time that I did appreciate George's penchant for kicking footballs. He and I decided to try our hand (or foot, I should say) at placekicking. This was a particularly useless exercise, I should add, because our field didn't have any goal posts. But there was something fun about simply trying it—one of us would hold the ball and the other would kick it, doing our best to kick what we imagined would've been a game-winning field goal. George loved the Redskins, so he adopted the classic Mark Moseley straight-on approach. Being a Philadelphia Eagles fan, I couldn't resist trying the Tony Franklin barefoot kick—not the smartest thing to do, especially in the dead of winter.

I also remember our group planning a big tournament with four-man teams one year. I can

vividly recall drawing up plays at every opportunity during the school day, anxiously waiting for the bus to take us home so we could try them out. I also had the idea that I wanted to make the tournament extra-special by somehow adding yardage numbers and a “Steward Manor Football” helmet logo in the center of the field—and attempted to do so by stealing my mom's bags of flour and sugar to use in lieu of white paint or chalk. The result was less awe-inspiring than I'd hoped for, but it did add a new element of fun.

Our love of the game took us to the local 7-Eleven near the bowling alley several times a week. Our little group would walk over to spend our allowances on Topps football cards, and when they had those collectible plastic NFL cups, Slurpees. Then we'd sit in the warmth of one of the buildings' hallways and trade cards. Any negotiating skill I've acquired through the years probably started with those football cards.

I remember watching the NFC Championship Game in January 1983 with Mike and George in the McNeals' living room. With Mike being a Dallas fan, it was predictably spirited. Poor George would celebrate every Washington touchdown only to get punched or put in the dreaded figure four leglock by Mike seconds later.

Washington went on to win that game, of course, and Super Bowl XVII the following week. I happened to be riding my bike near Mike and George's building early that Super Bowl Sunday, just as they were helping their mom bring groceries in from the back of her old Ford Pinto. I'll never forget the excitement on George's face as he opened the front door—I think he was looking forward to their meal as much as the game itself. With

that big, toothy smile, he gleefully shouted four words to me: “Hot dogs and pizza!” I've thought of that moment fondly every Super Bowl since, and especially since George sadly passed away in 2020.

None of us grew up to play professionally, of course, although Mike probably could have if things had worked out differently. He really was that good. Aside from our 1981 youth football team being the first rookie squad to go undefeated in Maryland City Recreation Council history, our little gang never enjoyed any real team football accolades—but we didn't need that. The game was always more fun when it was just a group of us playing down by the basketball court after school at Steward Manor. Organized football practice felt like work, and there'd be plenty of time for work when we grew up.

Years later, after I *had* grown up, I was fortunate to have what almost felt like a second childhood. Throughout my thirties, I played in a Saturday morning flag football league in Fairfax County; and every weekend, my mind would be transported back to those days as a kid in Laurel.

Some of the guys and I get together before the big game every Super Bowl Sunday to reminisce—about the football we played both as adults and as kids, and the sheer joy those memories hold. Maybe this year I'll institute some new menu options: hot dogs and pizza.

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





## Catching Racetrack Tipsters, Criminals & Nazis: The Unheralded Past of the Laurel Monitoring Station



BY ANGELA LATHAM KOZLOWSKI

PART 2 OF 2

During World War II, the Laurel Monitoring Station was responsible for recording propaganda emanating from Europe and North Africa. The recordings would end up being “piped” directly to Washington to centralize the work and speed up the process to beat the press, as noted in transcripts of the closed-door hearing.

Eventually, the crowded conditions at the Laurel site and the time required to get the material to Washington, D.C. for further analysis and dissemination led to the NDA operation being relocated to an old Civil Aeronautics Administration engineering site in Silver Hill, Maryland.

When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and war broke out, the staffing at Silver Hill increased to accommodate a 7-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day schedule.

The Radio Intelligence Division (RID), Engineering Department of the Federal Communications Commission, was headed by George E. Sterling, who observed that a great deal of improvising and innovating

occurred in support of their war efforts. The Silver Hill post also acted as a training ground for engineers and operators later further deployed to the newly constructed stations in Puerto Rico, Texas, and Hawaii.

### Laurel Monitoring Station and RID Successes

In his manuscript, “The History of the Radio Intelligence Division Before and During World War II,” Sterling wrote:

*When the war came upon us on December 7, 1941, RID was given a full share of duties, far beyond that which it ever thought it would be called on to perform.*

In his account of the successes of the RID efforts throughout its years of operation, Sterling emphasized that the results of their work were not always known to the individual operators and engineers. For example, he observed that, “[f]rom its inception until the war was over, RID intercepted hundreds of coded messages sent by German espionage agents all over the world and supplied the cryptographic laboratories of our government

*with these messages at their specific request.”* Those messages were puzzle pieces used in military operations that led to the sinking of Nazi submarines, the capture of Axis spies around the world, and the elimination of enemy supply lines, among many others.

Cooperation and unity of purpose between the American people and government united against a common enemy was evident in nearly every aspect of everyday life. Sterling revealed that, “the Hallicrafter’s organization went all out to supply us with receivers. The Hudson Motor Company cooperated [in the war effort] by modifying a production line of their passenger cars at no additional cost” so that they could be used for the direction-finding undercover work. The cars contained a “retractable loop direction finder installed so that they would not attract any undue attention.

Likewise, the Dictaphone Company provided recorders for the mobile units.”

Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Sterling and a group of trained men and equipment sailed for Honolulu in a Navy convoy. The men were working against Axis espionage agents around the world in counter espionage operations, locating sources of interference, performing military radio intelligence tasks for the Army and Navy, and, importantly, finding lost and distressed aircraft.

As the word spread about RID’s existing network of listening posts and its direction-finding capabilities became known to Army, Navy, and FBI Intelligence sectors, the men of the FCC’s RID were called into action.

Of the RID’s call to action in Hawaii when the war broke out, Sterling opined that “if there was any single thing that made RID successful, in addition to teaching and having its men possess a thorough knowledge of the radio spectrum and its occupancy by services, it was the relation of radio propagation to direction finding.”

A main responsibility of the RID was locating illicit transmitters. In response to reports of suspicious activity and orders to find the illegal transmissions, the RID would send a mobile unit to investigate. Sterling noted that “there were two cases of radio activity carried out by racetrack touts trying to beat the bookies that was (sic) properly termed by our fellows [in the RID] as “Target Practice” in preparation for bigger cases ahead.” Sterling credited those two cases for helping to prove the efficiency of RIDs monitoring and mobile direction-finding systems.

The most significant of the two, a case at the Laurel Racetrack, occurred during the early part of World War II. An illegal radio transmitter being used at the track by a tipster was interfering with U.S. Naval communications between the Navy station in Annapolis and Naval Communications Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Technical supervisor Charles Ellert, was called in to assist a mobile unit team from the Laurel Monitoring Station.



The modified Hudson car was allowed to take bearings from inside the racetrack to locate the offender. A “fix” on the location of the culprit was ascertained. The perpetrator was arrested and given harsh prison time commensurate with interfering with a wartime radio communications circuit.

Ellert had prior success shutting down an elaborate operation at the Charles Town, West Virginia, track involving a singing tout transmitting to an accomplice in the grandstands from a motel just outside the track. His team also identified a transmitter in the motel that sent coded signals to an unidentified group in a distant city intent on beating the bookies after the singing tout performed his song. This case ended in arrests, conviction, and jail for the crew of touts.

### Engineering Innovation

The Laurel Monitoring Station was the development and test bed for the High Frequency/Direction Finder (HF/DF) portable Army Adcock direction finder antenna improvements, among other technological equipment advances.

The first HF/DF at the Laurel post was a portable Army Adcock design based on the Adcock type developed in about 1917 in England. It performed poorly. Engineer Milton Mobley was tasked with developing a better model, which was installed south of the Laurel station building. The Laurel Monitoring Station was credited with manufacturing about 125 of the second-generation model, some of which were transferred to Office of Strategic Services, the WWII forerunner of the CIA, or the military for use outside the country. Every FCC/RID primary station and some of the secondary ones were equipped with this antenna.

Other innovations, such as a suite of equipment that included tuners was also credited to the Laurel Station. Mobley noted that he made 50 tuners. Manuel Kahn started a small Baltimore manufacturing company that made the rest. Following the war, the HF/DF suites were upgraded with better materials. Kahn’s Baltimore company also manufactured a number of aperiodic (wide band) receivers designed to report the presence of RF emissions without regard to frequency for the RID.

The manufacture of the improved Adcock DF equipment at the Laurel station had an extra, unintended military use: locating lost and distressed aircraft. As Sterling noted, “This new use of our direction finders was really just a byproduct of our nationwide system which had been established for entirely different purposes. However, it was a very important by-product.”

### Teamwork and Training Services

In performing its patrol of the ether, RID located Nazi agents with their transmitters in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, Europe, and Asia. It sent trained radio intelligence engineers to Latin American Republics in accordance with a hemisphere defense plan to aid in cleaning out the massive number of German spies in those countries.

RID also trained representatives of Latin American countries in radio intelligence techniques at its specialized school at Laurel, Maryland. With funds furnished by the military, RID performed a host of military intelligence duties on the mainland, Hawaii, and

Alaska. It established radio intelligence centers in San Francisco and Honolulu, which were manned by Army, Navy, and RID men around the clock. RID also trained OSS men in radio intelligence techniques and procedures and built equipment for its use.

The Laurel Monitoring Station was called upon to configure a jamming device to prevent the German Embassy in Washington, D.C. from contacting Berlin. Two days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Sterling revealed that he deployed a mobile listening station to Washington, D.C. to monitor the airwaves of several embassies to locate an unidentified, but strong signal.

Sterling issued a nationwide alert to all the FCC primary stations to get a fix on the location of the new signal. It was in one of two buildings occupied by the German Embassy. Instead of raiding the buildings to find the illicit transmitter, they devised an alternate plan. Instead of opting to disrupt the power to each of the two buildings in the complex to determine which one had the clandestine radio, jammers were devised at Laurel. Despite their impromptu improvisations, the Embassy never transmitted again.

In August of 1942, the Laurel Station also supported the location of another clandestine radio site at the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C. This radio was shut down immediately after transmitting weather information for Washington, D.C. and vicinity, in violation of censorship regulations prohibiting the broadcasting of that information.

By early 1942, the number of clandestine Nazi radio transmissions being broadcast from South America to Germany exploded. The volume of intelligence about U.S. operations and logistics transmitted by those posts to Germany led to enhanced U. S. diplomatic efforts with several South American governments to put an end to the many networks of German spies. The RID, FBI, and State Department sent men and equipment to Latin America to conduct training, while thirty Latin American trainees arrived at the Laurel Station for training.

According to the Maryland Historic Trust, between 1942 and 1945 a training program for new monitoring personnel was relocated from Fort McHenry, near Baltimore, to the Laurel Monitoring Station. A prefabricated building (since demolished) was constructed east of the Cape Cod house to provide space for indoor training sessions. As a part of their training, personnel also drove the antenna-equipped Hudson cars around the Maryland countryside to gain experience in operating the mobile unit.

The trainees learned radio intelligence theory and technique at the Laurel training school. The lab where the training took place was known as “the schoolhouse,” while excursions to hunt for transmitters happened off site in the areas surrounding the Laurel station. Milton Mobley indicated that several hundred people had been trained at the post and that Charles Ellert was the principal instructor.

### RID Counter-Nazi Operations in Africa

The discovery of Nazi espionage stations in Africa, the Laurel Monitoring Station’s Area of Responsibility, was termed the “most intriguing operations the Division engaged in,” by Chief Sterling.

Germany continued its tactic of employing U-boats

to land their spies in neutral countries and colonies of Africa. These secret agents were delivered to set up shortwave transmitters to send the Reich information on convoy arrivals and departures, and movements of allied troops, supplies, and aircraft. Nazi intermediaries operated in Lisbon, Madrid, Rome, and Paris, in hopes of giving cover to the German High Command. The RID detected radio transmitters in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea.

Of note was a peculiar call found by a RID unit operator in South Miami. This intercepted signal triggered a RID investigation. Over the course of collecting the broadcasts, working to determine the network’s clandestine radio locations, and whether it was in fact a spy network, the RID broke the cipher used in the network’s messaging. The RID was able to pass along the key to the coded texts that the FBI had already begun receiving. The spies used transposition cipher in the Portuguese language to encode their messages.

According to Sterling, the first message intercepted revealed that the *USS Idaho* was in Durban, South Africa. He immediately contacted the Director of Naval Communications, who was astonished to learn how proficient the RID had become in countering Nazi spying and that the Nazis had espionage operations in Africa.

The RID was also integral to the establishment of regular liaison and information exchanges with their British counterpart, the Radio Security Service of the Signal Corps, regarding Nazi espionage operations in these countries. The Nazi spies were reporting on British naval and merchant ship movements in the area, as well.

Sterling’s assessment of RID’s interagency efforts: cooperation with the RID’s British counterpart, the Radio Security Service, and the interception, deciphering, and quick dissemination to appropriate agencies within the Allied high command foiled the Axis dreams of world conquest.

### A Fitting Finale

March 10, 1944, marked an historic first when a Hollywood-made movie about RIDs WWII accomplishments was aired on television. The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production was a “two-reeler” motion picture called *Patrolling the Ether*, that was celebrated by both the National Broadcasting Company and MGM, according to the *Baltimore Sun*. The 20-minute film is a “fictional version of the RIDs more dramatic adventures...” noted FCC Chairman James L. Fly. He believed “Metro could not have picked a better piece for its initial television experiment.”

*Kevin Leonard contributed to this article.*



*Angie Latham Kozlowski is a U.S. Masters swimmer with the Columbia Masters. When she is not swimming, she is often researching and writing about her family history or historical topics of interest to her, growing her own luffa sponges and blueberries in her backyard garden in Ellicott City, and actively promoting sustainable and Earth-friendly practices.*



# History of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System

PART 2 OF A SERIES



BY DW ROWLANDS

Because of the difficulty private organizations had in finding long-term funding to rent and maintain space for libraries, the library system's early branches were largely limited to municipalities with governments willing to pay for space. For example, the Paint Branch library in College Park joined the system in 1951 in a space rented by a community organization, the Paint Branch Library Association, but the organization struggled with funding and, in 1955, the city of College Park took over providing space for the branch.



*The Mount Rainier branch is the only remaining PGCMLS library in a building owned by a municipality.* PGCMLS

Although these municipally-owned branches have nearly all closed or been relocated to PGCMLS-owned spaces, one still remains. The Mount Rainier branch opened in a city-owned building in 1952; it is now the only remaining PGCMLS library in a building owned by a municipality.

## Takoma Park remains an outlier

Although the city of Takoma Park is now entirely in Montgomery County, until a 1995 referendum part of the city was located in Prince George's County. When the Takoma Park Women's Club organized a town library in 1935, it was located in a house on Jackson Avenue.

The Takoma Park library was evidently unusually well-funded for a privately-organized library, since it did not join PGCMLS, nor did it join the Montgomery County Library System, which was established in 1951 and absorbed its last

independent library, Rockville, in 1957. Instead, perhaps in part because of the city's unusual situation of being located in two counties, Takoma Park took over the library as a department of its city government in 1963.

The Takoma Park library is still run by the city, making it perhaps the only public library in the state not operated by a county or the City of Baltimore. However, people who work, live, or go to school anywhere in Montgomery County are eligible to receive library cards.

## PG County's Library-Building Spree

If you visit a library in Prince George's County, there's a good chance that library was built in the 1960s or 1970s.

Although the Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS), founded in 1946, is more than 70 years old, more than half of its branches were built in a span of just 16 years. Ten of its 19 current branches opened between 1964 and 1980, and another two (Hyattsville and Laurel) built during that period have been replaced with new buildings on the same sites.

The county's library-building spree was unique, and hasn't been replicated since. Although the county's population has increased by almost fifty percent in the 40 years since 1980, only six libraries were built in that period, and three of them (Spauldings, Upper Marlboro, and Accokeek) were built to replace libraries that opened before 1964.

## Before 1964, PGCMLS libraries operated in rented spaces and city buildings

In the early years of the county library system, PGCMLS did not have the budget to rent or purchase space for libraries. Instead, the library system provided books and staffing for libraries housed in spaces provided by municipalities and local, non-profit library associations.

In practice, however, local library organizations had trouble maintaining funding for buildings, and their branches were often taken over by local

municipalities. For example, the Paint Branch library in College Park joined the system in 1951 in a space rented by a community organization, the Paint Branch Library Association, but the organization struggled with funding and, in 1955, the city of College Park took over providing space for the branch.

The practice of operating libraries in spaces provided by local municipalities worked reasonably well in the relatively well-off incorporated suburbs along Route 1, but posed problems in the unincorporated parts of the county. The branch in unincorporated Suitland opened in 1952 in a space rented by the Suitland Free Library Association, but when the organization ran out of money in 1958, there was no municipal government to take over, as had happened in College Park. Instead, for the first time, PGCMLS took over renting space for the library.

## The 1959 regional libraries plan

The idea of using county funds to build regional or "area" libraries in Prince George's County was considered by the county commissioners as early as 1955, but plans for regional libraries were not actually adopted by the county commission until a 1959 proposal for library construction in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties was released by the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).

The plan called for five regional libraries in Montgomery County—expansions of the Bethesda and Silver Spring libraries, as well as new libraries in Rockville, Wheaton, and Bells Mill (Potomac)—and four regional libraries to be newly constructed in Prince George's County: Prince George's Plaza, District Heights, Oxon Hill, and Defense Heights (Landover Hills). In addition, seventeen smaller branch libraries in Montgomery County and eleven in Prince George's County were proposed, along with the closure of the Bladensburg, Hyattsville, College Park (formerly Paint Branch), Forest Heights, and Suitland branches.

Elizabeth B. Hage, who became director of the library system in 1957, was a strong advocate of expanding the system, and pushed for the \$1 million bond issue that allowed a version of the M-NCPPC plan to be implemented. The first of the new regional libraries opened in 1964 adjacent to Prince George's Plaza in Hyattsville with 42,000 square feet of library space, far larger than the one- and two-room spaces that housed the library system's other branches. The new library was originally intended to be named after the recently-assassinated president, John F. Kennedy, but the Kennedy family expressed concern about overuse of his name and so the branch was instead named the "First Regional Library."

With the opening of the new Regional Library, the Hyattsville and College Park branches, both located about a mile away in the two cities' municipal buildings, were originally expected to close, but community opposition to this kept them open. The former Hyattsville branch was renamed the "William Pinkney Magruder Memorial Branch," after the wealthy landowner who had donated money to the city for the construction of a library building in the 1920s. (Today, Magruder is better known for donating land for a park to the city of Hyattsville with a condition that the park only be used by "Caucasian" residents; the city is currently in the process of renaming the park and having the racial restriction removed from its deed).

In 1966, the First Regional Branch was renamed the Hyattsville Branch, and three additional regional libraries opened over the next few years: one in Oxon Hill to replace the Forest Heights Branch (housed in the Forest Heights Community Center) in 1967, one in Bowie (rather than in District Heights as originally proposed) in 1969, and one in New Carrollton (rather than nearby Defense Heights as originally proposed) in 1971.





*The former Hyattsville Branch Library, built as the “First Regional Library” in 1964. The iconic flying saucer entrance was intended to convey a sense of “space age” modernity, and was preserved in the replacement library which opened in 2021. DW ROWLANDS*

### Local branches get new buildings in the 1970s

While the regional branches were under construction, PGCMLS also began constructing custom-built libraries for local branches, a change from its previous practice of operating in borrowed space. Other new local branches, including Upper Marlboro—in 1960, the first branch to be established solely at county expense—were established in rented spaces with the intention of constructing new buildings when funds became available.

The first of those custom-built libraries opened in Laurel in 1967 to replace the small building that the Laurel Branch—the first public library in the county—shared with the Laurel Women’s Club. In 1970, the Greenbelt Branch was relocated from rooms in the Greenbelt Center School to a newly-built building next door, and a new building for the Hillcrest Heights library, which had been housed in rented space since 1963, opened in 1976.

Local branches, whether they had new buildings or not, moved during this time to being operated as satellites of the four regional branches in Hyattsville, Oxon Hill, Bowie, and New Carrollton.



*The Hillcrest Heights library opened in this location in 1976; it had been housed in rented space since 1963. PGCMLS*

The change from locally initiated and funded branches to building new branches according to a countywide plan and with county funding somewhat changed the geography of the library system. While most of the system’s earlier branches were located in incorporated municipalities near the District border—the county’s oldest suburbs and the ones that could most afford to provide space for a library—the county began to open libraries in newer, unincorporated areas. One of the first of these, in Hillcrest Heights, opened in 1963 in rented space and then moved to a newly-constructed building in 1976.

Along with the replacements for branches housed in non-PGCMLS-owned spaces, newly-constructed libraries were opened in Glenarden in 1979 and Surratts-Clinton in 1980. The

Baden Branch, which opened in 1970, is somewhat of a special case, as its space was custom-built for PGCMLS but is in a building that also contains the Baden Community Center and Baden Elementary School.



*In 1978, the Bladensburg Branch moved from rented space to what was, until its demolition last year, the oldest building in the library system: a former schoolhouse originally built in 1925 for the Bladensburg Academy private school. PGCMLS*

At the same time PGCMLS was constructing a number of new buildings, the Bladensburg Branch was being relocated. That branch, which had opened in 1964 in the rented space that had housed the library system’s administrative offices before the opening of the First Regional Branch in Hyattsville, was moved in 1978 to what is now the oldest building in the PGCMLS

system: a renovated school building that, until 1925, had housed the 19th and early-20th Century Bladensburg Academy private school.

Because the newly built buildings were much larger than the rented spaces that had previously housed PGCMLS branches, the library system was able to increase the number of books and types of services provided. Today, if you live in Prince George’s County and use your local library to access the Internet, academic support services, or a 3D printer, you have the building spree of the 1960s and 1970s to thank.

**PART 3 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.*





PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD FRIEND

# You Can't Go Home Again...?

*Finding Nostalgia Through Real Estate Websites*



BY RICHARD FRIEND

There's a line in the 2002 film, *Road to Perdition*, that has always stuck with me. As Tom Hanks' character and his son are forced to flee, he tells the boy, "This house is not our home anymore... It's just an empty building." It reminds me of each time my family had moved from one place to the next, how I would make it a point to take in those last few moments in the empty space before we locked the door that final time, recalling the countless memories that had been made there. While there was always excitement at moving to our next home, I could never shake the twinge of sadness at leaving a place that I'd lived in previously—especially knowing that strangers would soon be moving in and making that space their own.

I've lived in seven different places throughout my lifetime so far. Most of them were apartments, and of those, three of them were only home to me for a year at a time. Aside from the very first apartment my wife and I rented when we got married, those three don't really hold much sentimentality for me. Another apartment, in the former Chillum Heights complex of Hyattsville, is where I spent the first four years of my life before my parents

and I moved to Laurel. Most of my earliest childhood memories are of that apartment, probably engrained in my mind more by family photos and old Super 8 home movies than by my actual recollection.

Not counting my current home—a townhouse in Northern Virginia my wife and I purchased in 2000, which we've somehow now lived in for more than 22 years—the former homes that will always be the most special to me are the Steward Manor apartment where I grew up, and the new townhouse on Laurel View Court that my parents bought in 1987. I was fourteen that summer when they made that purchase—their very first house after a lifetime of renting—and it was indeed exciting to see their plans come together and the new Laurel Highlands neighborhood—which predated Russett by a few years—take shape just off of Whiskey Bottom Road.

Years after I'd moved out and gotten my own place, my parents sold that house and bought a new condo on the eastern shore. They'd lived in the townhouse for more than 20 years, and it still looked great inside and out. The rest of the neighborhood, however, was starting to show some wear and tear—a trend that has sadly only

accelerated over the next decade-plus. Today, the house originally owned by my parents bears little resemblance to how it looked when they lived there, and it's hard to reconcile its current appearance with how I remember it.

There have been at least two new owners over the years, and the last time the house was on the market, I had the opportunity to get a glimpse inside via the realtor's online listing. It's a surreal feeling when you see drastic changes to a place that was once so familiar. In the case of my parents' house, the carpeting on the main floor had been replaced with dark hardwood—probably the last thing my mom ever would've chosen. Likewise, the kitchen had been completely renovated with new flooring, dark granite counters, and black appliances. This despite still retaining the original brown wooden cabinets. Some of them, I should say—not all. It's clear that a few cabinets were replaced, and not with an exact match. I'm no interior decorator, but it's safe to say that these choices would never be featured on an HGTV show.

But even in spite of the bold aesthetic changes, the familiarity is still there. It's forever part of the space defined by those old walls.





(Above): Steward Manor Apartments offers a virtual tour of its units online. The two-bedroom model shown on its website happens to be the very unit that I grew up in at 100 Bryan Court. At right, I superimposed a photo of my mother, Carol Friend, in our kitchen from 1985 onto the current view of the same kitchen with upgraded appliances, cabinets, countertops, and flooring. (Below): Websites like Redfin and Zillow may show photos from recent sales of a home you once lived in, allowing you to see how both the exterior and interior has changed since your time there. The Laurel Highlands townhouse that my parents originally owned is nearly unrecognizable today.

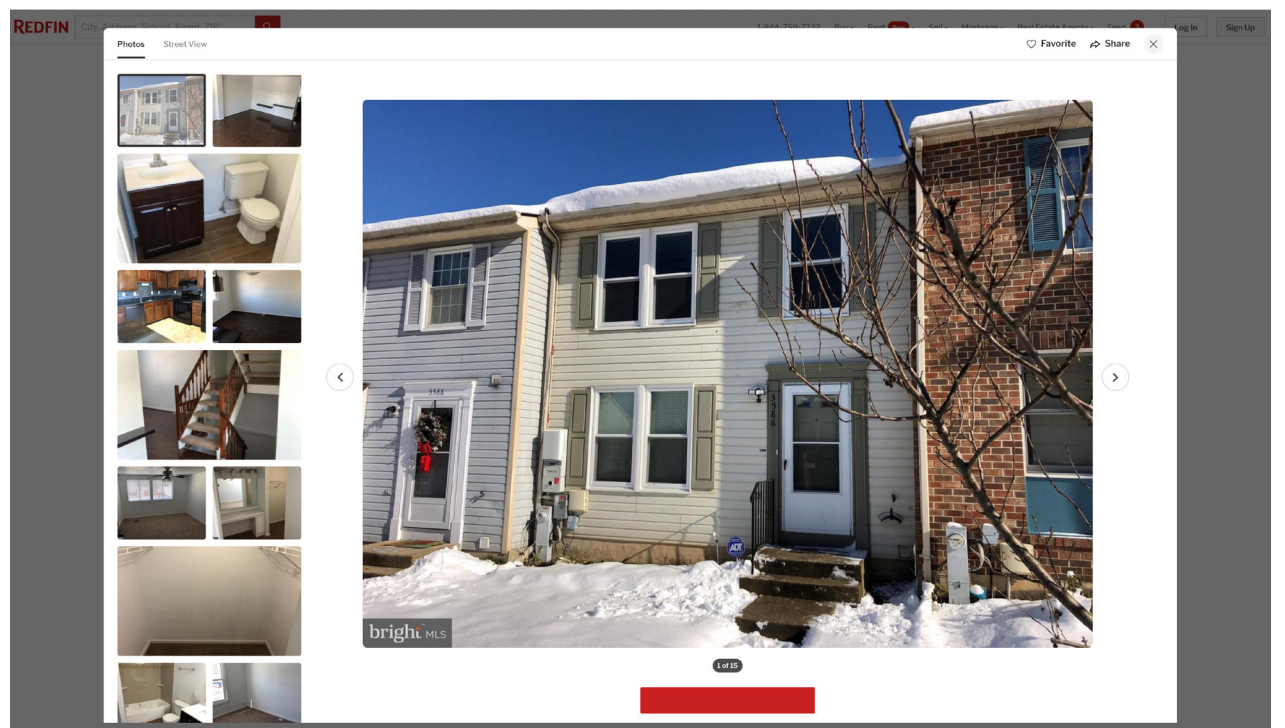
A few years ago, I had a chance to visit the actual apartment at Steward Manor where I lived from 1979 to 1987. One of my friends who'd been a maintenance man at the complex called me when he realized that my old unit at 100 Bryan Court was vacant, and invited me to stop by and take a tour. It was the first time in over 30 years that I'd set foot in that apartment, and it was an amazing experience. There were many aesthetic changes—namely the carpet and the upgraded kitchen and bathroom—but within the space itself, it really felt as if time had stood still.

On a whim, I recently looked at Steward Manor's website to see the floor plan, and was surprised to find that the two-bedroom unit they'd photographed to use as their online model was actually that very apartment. A view of the open window left no doubt that it was the very one where I'd grown up. Here again I had the chance to walk through my childhood home, albeit virtually. And again, despite their emptiness, the rooms sparked vivid memories. Practically every inch of that apartment holds some memory for me: the living room space where our Zenith floor model TV sat with my Atari 2600 (and later Nintendo Entertainment System) atop it; the corner where our landline telephone was, and all the calls I'd had with friends and family from that spot; the dining room, where I spent countless hours at the table trudging through homework throughout elementary and middle school; the place in my bedroom where my first Philadelphia Eagles poster hung on the wall; the living room window where our Christmas tree stood each year; and of course, the door that I'd unlocked and opened so many times to see the faces of beloved childhood friends who'd stopped by to see if I was "allowed to go out" to the basketball court or any number of other neighborhood adventures.

For most of us, the inside of our childhood home is something we haven't seen in person in quite some time. For some, it may no longer even exist, sadly. But for those that do, there are some wonderful memories to be rediscovered. Take the time to look up your old addresses online, whether it be a house or apartment, and revisit them. The changes that later tenants made may be jarring, but the essence of what had once been your home is still very much there within the walls. And if those walls could talk, you'd have quite a nostalgic conversation.



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







# 1920s Murder Mystery in Guilford



BY WAYNE DAVIS

James Bernard Pattison was a likeable and happy man in his 30s. He was known to be sociable and was in fact reported to be “harmless and usually went about singing,” but many felt he had a slight mental affliction. He visited many of his neighbors, including Mr. and Mrs. Pease, many times. His brother Thomas was concerned that he wasn’t holding down a steady job and filed a police warrant for vagrancy. Thomas didn’t know his brother found employment at another nearby farm owned by James Oursler. Sometimes between jobs he wandered off for several days, so when he didn’t show for work Mr. Oursler wasn’t immediately concerned. Part of Thomas’ concern for his brother’s stability was that James Bernard had some minor issues and spent several months in the Springfield Asylum near Sykesville before being recently released as “cured.” Pattison was last seen walking on his brother’s property in the evening of May 11, 1922.

## Finding the Body

While walking through the sprawling woods on May 18, along the property of Thomas Pattison, neighbors William Carr and his son Henry discovered a badly decomposed body. The authorities had few clues but were able to identify the dead man by the initials on his underwear: it was James Bernard Pattison. He had been reported missing. Neighbors reported hearing two gunshots that night but paid no attention, since it was not an uncommon event, due to the hundred plus acres of land used for target practice, hunting, or just shooting fun.

But how did J. Bernard Pattison die? A Coroner’s Jury was convened and their first thought was Pattison committed suicide, but there was no gun found at the scene and he had two bullet wounds to his head. No doubt that pointed to murder. His death certificate listed the cause as a “pistol shot into right side of brain” concluding “homicide-murder.” But they were not able to identify any suspects and determined Pattison was killed by unknown persons. Detective James Manning from the Baltimore Police Department was then assigned to the case at the request of State’s Attorney Clark.

## The Arrest

The investigation was stalled and Pattison’s brother-in-law had hired his own private detective to assist. The police figured that Marbelle Pease was involved somehow, so on August 5 they arrested both her and an uncle. It was reported that the uncle was not a true suspect and was only arrested to pressure Marbelle into providing more information and it worked. She ended up confessing that William Carter Cronmiller killed Pattison and she and her uncle were released.

On August 7, 1922, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that Guilford residents Cronmiller, 29, and Mrs. Pease, 27, were charged with the murder of James Bernard Pattison. Cronmiller and Pease were lovers and, while Pease was separated from her husband, allegedly due to their affair, a divorce was never filed. Cronmiller’s wife, Carrie, was granted a divorce two years earlier on charges her husband

committed adultery. If the affair between Pease and Cronmiller had been going on for five years as claimed, she may have been the reason for Cronmiller’s divorce.

Pattison became aware of their affair when, during one of his visits with Mrs. Pease, she told him of the secret meetings she had with Cronmiller. Pattison allegedly threatened to tell her husband, Ross Pease. That provided a motive and, when arrested, Pease and Cronmiller each accused the other of murdering Pattison. On September 15, during a court appearance, they both pleaded “not guilty” and they both requested to be tried separately.

## Back in the Day

Pattison was the youngest son of Martin and Maria Pattison, who lived off Guilford Road and, in 1876, had donated the land for building Guilford’s first public school. In 1908, Martin and Maria Pattison sold their 357½ acres of land to their oldest son Thomas, whom James lived with. The land was located between Savage Guilford Road, Guilford Road, and the Little Patuxent River (see map below). Martin was a farmer in Guilford for 45 years and died in March 1915 at 77 years old.

William Carter Cronmiller was born in December 1893 in Guilford to farmer John and his wife Willie Carter. He had two older sisters and one younger. John died in 1915 the same year as his neighbor Martin Pattison. By the age of 23, Walter was working as a storeman for the government at the Washington Navy Yard and living with his then-wife, Carrie, in Prince Georges County. In 1920,



### Held On Murder Charge



William and Carrie were divorced and William moved back to Guilford.

Marbelle, or sometimes Mary Bell, was born to Richard and Annie Reely. Richard was a well-known local carpenter. Marbelle married widower Ross Pease, a stone cutter, in 1912 and they had three children. Ross died in 1935 at 55 years old. She did recount an odd event that occurred involving her and Pattison. The previous November, Pattison visited Mrs. Pease outside her home carrying a shotgun. She said he “riddled the clothes on the clothesline.” He said he “only shot to scare” her. Holding a revolver she had borrowed from a neighbor, she said, “Well, I’ll shoot to scare you.” She fired the gun twice at him, resulting in Pattison dropping the shotgun and running off. It is reported that shortly after this incident he went to the Springfield Asylum.

Killed on May 11, it wasn’t until August 4 that Cronmiller and Pease were arrested for the Pattison killing. She accused him of the murder and then giving her the gun used when they met up later. She admitted to throwing the murder weapon into a quarry near the property. The quarry containing the gun was the old Guilford and Waltersville quarry just east of the Little Patuxent River off of the dirt pathway. The .27 caliber gun was eventually found after draining over a million gallons of water from the 30+ foot hole. The gun was identified by Benjamin Somers, an Ellicott City merchant, as the one he sold to Cronmiller.

#### Love Letters from Behind Bars

During their confinement in the Ellicott City Jail awaiting trial, Cronmiller paid a trustee working in the prison to deliver six love letters to Marbelle. However, the letters were given to the Warden instead and would eventually sway the jury tremendously. One of the letters printed by the *Baltimore American* read:

Sweetheart: Why don’t you answer or write me a line? Gee, but I hate to see you in here, and I also hate to be here myself, but I can’t say a word, only why did you let them pick anything out of you?



(Opposite): The view from the site where the murder weapon was tossed in the quarry. (Left): Mugshots of William Cronmiller and Marbelle Pease as they appeared in contemporary newspapers. PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAYNE DAVIS

Say, darling, who is coming to see you tomorrow? Are you expecting anyone? What is Ross Pease saying about this? I guess he is giving me Hell, ain’t he? Say, what do you think we will get; about 10 or 20 years, that is, if we don’t get a good lawyer, but I am going to fight it to a finish, and I want you to do the same. But don’t care, and I won’t put it on you. I am awful sorry that I said what I did, but you put in on me so strong I got mad and said anything, for, if I had not said a word, they would not have had as much to work on.

Well, darling, cheer up; we will make the best of it, and when everything is over I want you and only you, so, if it is 20 years, will you be true to me? Well, darling, I would like to be with you tonight. Well, I guess I will stop for tonight. With lots of love. Answer at once if not sooner. Write on back of this, please.

Marbelle successfully sent some love letters to Cronmiller but their contents were not fully revealed.

#### A Quick Trial

During the police investigation they each accused the other of the murder and disposing of the gun into the quarry. The murder trial began on October 23 with William Cronmiller’s mother testifying that her son told her the evening of the murder that Marbelle killed Pattison and she got rid of the gun. Marbelle testified against Cronmiller but it seemed the letters influenced the jury’s decision. He wasn’t the only one who wrote love letters. In fact, she admitted in court she had also written several letters to Cronmiller while they were in jail, according to the *Annapolis Evening Sun*, including one asking for money when the defense showed her the note. The Court did not feel those letters were significant.

On the 26th, it was reported Cronmiller was convicted of second-degree murder. He was sentenced to 18 years in prison. Mrs. Pease would be tried separately. After the conviction, the Howard County State’s attorney said that, “Cronmiller and Mrs. Pease were the only persons who had any real knowledge of the murder...and this information had to be dragged from them inch by inch.”

Mrs. Pease was put on trial in November. There was difficulty getting a jury since so many prospective members said they had already formed an opinion on her

guilt or innocence. They ended up finding jurors from Anne Arundel County, of which nine found for acquittal and three felt she was guilty. A new trial was scheduled in Annapolis for November 10, and she was released after providing bail. Ironically, Ross, her husband, provided the bail and took her home as they were reported to have reconciled. Mrs. Pease was apparently never tried again. After Mr. Pease’s death, Marbelle moved to North Carolina, remarried in 1959, and died in Florida in 1981.

While in prison Mr. Cronmiller was listed as a machinist in an iron foundry in the Baltimore penitentiary. He applied for and was granted parole in 1930 and in August 1932 he was “pardoned to restore citizenship” by Maryland Governor Ritchie based on a recommendation from the Parole Commissioner and “reputable citizens of the State.” He married again and had three more children while living on 9th Street in Laurel. Cronmiller worked for the U.S. Government in the Washington Navy Yard after his pardon through the early 1940s. He died in 1945 and is buried in Ivy Hill Cemetery in Laurel with his second wife.

#### Who Done It?

I think that Marbelle Pease killed James Bernard Pattison so her husband wouldn’t find out of the affair with Cronmiller, and her “accomplice” helped her cover up the crime. Since she had the murder weapon she likely threw the gun in the quarry and had more motive than Cronmiller, who was later pardoned for the crime. She had shot a revolver at Pattison once before when he messed up her clothesline with a shotgun and she had told him about her affair with Cronmiller. What do you think? We will never know for sure. Pattison certainly didn’t deserve this fate.

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.





# “We had a guy...”

## *Tales From the Laurel Police Department*



BY RICK MCGILL

This 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.



As Cpl. Walt would write in some of his reports, “It was a dark and stormy night...” I wouldn't describe this one as “stormy” but it was raining and definitely dark. Late one night we had a guy, well, an ex-guy because he was dead, who had been shot to death on the front porch of his apartment building at Gorman Avenue and 5th Street. These are older buildings with four apartments: two single apartment doorways on the ground floor divided by a third doorway that led to a common stairway for the two upstairs apartments. The guy was lying in front of one of the single doorways blocking the door but since the crime scene was outside, I wasn't concerned with opening it.

Like many homicides, all the excitement was over by the time we arrived to clean things up. I had Cpl. Mike bring the mobile command post from the station and park it on Gorman Avenue in front of the building and I had the rest of my guys secure the scene with police tape and set up an outer perimeter, funnel

traffic on Gorman Avenue down to one lane, and begin canvassing the neighborhood for witnesses. All while the rain continued to fall off and on all night. Pretty routine stuff.

Later on toward morning, the apartment door became a problem because it wasn't this guy's apartment. The resident, who had somehow slept through all the activity just outside his door, tried to open it and couldn't because there was a dead body in the way.

“Sorry, sir, we can't move him until the medical examiner gets here.”

“But I gotta get to work, officer.”

“Shouldn't be too much longer, sir.” *It's not lying if you really don't know how long, right?*

We got his information to add to the neighborhood canvas and a few minutes later he climbed out his side window and headed off to work. Very resourceful.

Very early in the evening, as soon as we knew what we had, I had Communications notify the on-call detective who responded to the scene from home. When he arrived, he paid me and my squad a nice compliment. It was Detective Rich and he said, “When Michelle called me at home just now, I asked her what squad was working and she told me it was Edward shift.” He smiled, “Right then I knew half my work would be done by the time I got here. Nice job, Sarge.”

I made sure to pass his comments on to my squad when it was all over. They did indeed do some good work, in the rain, that “dark stormy” night.

Thanks for the compliment, Chief.



We make a lot of arrests on outstanding warrants on file with the Sheriff's Department. Someone fails to appear for a court date or a warrant is issued on such-and-such charges and it just goes in the system until Lady Luck decides to rain on someone's Wheaties and an officer runs his name through the computer and he comes up wanted. It's an easy stat: just an arrest report, fingerprinting, and photograph and log him into the holding cell to wait for the Sheriff's Department to come pick him up. We don't even have to transport him to Hyattsville. Easy stat.

Unless you're off duty in about an hour.

I had occasion to run into one of our frequent flyers.

I'm sure it was for something innocuous, but out of habit I ran him through Communications without noticing I was almost off duty. Lady Luck tried to rain on my Wheaties and he came back wanted. So, I hook him up (in handcuffs, not a blind date) and take him to the station. Like I said, he's a frequent guest in our jail so I know, I just know, he's probably holding something he shouldn't and there's a ton of extra paperwork if I have to charge him locally.

So, when I get him out of the car at the station I have him chest to the wall next to the back door while I'm entering numbers in the combination door lock, and I said, “Now, Dougie, right now this is just for the warrant from the Sheriff's Department. If you have anything in your pockets tell me now and it goes away. If I find it in the booking room I gotta charge you. Understand?”

He thinks for a minute, lets out a big breath and says, “Yeah. In my little front pocket there's a little bag...” And sure enough, in his watch pocket is a little nickel bag of weed. True to my word, I dispersed it in the grass behind the back door and there's probably some growing there today. Or would be if it wasn't all new apartments now.

Now, before you say, “But, Sarge, you let him off?” A) That nuisance arrest wouldn't make any impact on his already-lengthy criminal record. And 2) Next time he's confronted by a police officer he might remember he was treated fair and square by one of us and he might hesitate before he decides to fight, just long enough for back-up to arrive or for the officer to use just the right words to get handcuffs on him without a fight. So, in that sense a little discretion pays dividends later.



By the time you read this it'll be mid-winter but I'm writing around Halloween so this one just came to me. Not that it happened on Halloween—it was summer time, but hang on, it'll fit.

It's early evening and Cpl. Carl and I answered a call for a burglar alarm at an office building on Main Street near Riverview Court. This is one of so many old homes or apartment buildings in Laurel converted to commercial office space. We checked the doors and windows and everything was locked up so we cleared the call.



In no hurry to leave, we were just chatting by our cruisers when a car pulls up and two women get out dressed in gowns having come from some formal event. I didn't know the alarm company had notified the business owner but that's who it was. One woman thanked us profusely for waiting for them to come and reset the alarm.

Two minutes later and we'd have been gone, but I smile, "Yes, ma'am, happy to stand by for you."

We walked up the four steps of the building's old brick front porch while she fumbled with her door keys and she's making small talk as she opened the door.

"I'm serious: we're *really* glad you're here. That's why we both came, so we wouldn't have to go in alone. You know, because of the ghost."

Carl and I looked at each other. I think I still had one foot in the air climbing the steps. I don't know what he was thinking but I was like, "Well, well. *One of Laurel's old buildings has a tale to tell.*"

"Ghost?" I said.

"Oh yes. He's no trouble really." By now we're all inside and she flips some switches on the alarm panel behind the door. "You see this used to be an old house and, well, we're a women's advocacy service so it's all women who work here. Some of us have had things happen over the years that we never knew about until we happened to share stories one time. It turns out we've all had a feeling now and then that someone, a male presence, was in the office watching us. Usually in the evenings when there are only one or two of us here."

The other woman is nodding her head in agreement so I guess she's had these experiences, too.

"So, we did some research into the building's history and it turns out this was a house owned by an old man who died, I think, back in the 1920s. Apparently, he was single but had a reputation as a ladies' man, or perhaps he thought he was a ladies' man. But anyway, we've often felt like he was here watching us."

"Wow, that's pretty amazing. That you looked into it and it sounds like it fits. Fits the feeling you get sometimes."

"Oh, it gets better! I was here alone one night, not late but in the evening, and I was working upstairs." She points up the stairs where we're standing to the second floor and I can see other office doors up there. "I was at my desk and I heard someone coming up the stairs. You can imagine these old buildings: everything creaks. I called out 'Hello?' but no one answered. The footsteps just kept clump-clumping up the staircase. So I rolled my office chair backwards so I can look right out my door and down the stairs and..." She must have told this story many times and had the pause timed just right. "There was no one there! The clumping stopped and I didn't see anyone or hear anything afterward. I gathered up my purse and my goose bumps and locked up for the night. Fast as I could."

Just one more Laurel ghost story.



Keeping a fleet of high-performance police interceptor engines running is no easy task. Maybe not now but back then there were a percentage of police

officers who "drive it like you stole it." Before we all had personally-issued cruisers, which made it infinitely easier to hold guys accountable for the condition of their car, everybody just took a car to start their shift from the guy they were relieving. The car was just another tool. You traveled light and you transferred your personal gear each day to your cruiser for that shift. It wasn't like today where guys have a rolling apartment full of stuff that wouldn't fit in our trunk. You only carried what would fit in a briefcase or milk crate to carry your clipboard, ticket book, reports and what have you.

But the fleet then was what we had and no complaints. If a car had mechanical issues, you wrote it up on your time sheet, a multi-use form that had spaces for vehicle information. You'd record your starting and ending mileage and how much gas and oil you put in, plus notes on things needing repair. Your shift supervisor would sign off on the time sheets at the end of the shift and, if he wasn't paying close attention, guys would slide things past him on the form.

FC Richard submitted his sheet one morning after midnight: "Dead midget in trunk." No one noticed it until it got to Central Records and it got kicked back for correction. I guess they expected someone to bury the midget. (Can I say "midget" anymore?)

But, like I said, keeping them running was a daunting task. We had a master mechanic at the City Lot named Buck Harding. Buck's gone now so I'll use his whole name. Buck could "Keep 'Em Flying" like the old WWII poster says. He saved the City countless dollars in repairs by hook or crook keeping the fleet running with enough serviceable cruisers to continue the job. Winter time was always tough on the cars, especially during snow storms. He'd be mounting tire chains or patching broken hoses or cussing guys who brought him stupid things to fix.

How do I know that last part? Sgt. Harris was the fleet vehicle officer and he was also my shift supervisor then. He stressed on us not to let small problems grow into big problems when it came to vehicle maintenance. "Always check your oil." Things like that.

So, one day my "Check Engine" idiot light came on. Sometimes it goes away and sometimes it wouldn't. Normal starts and stops during the shift, engine off, restarting, and the light would come back on. So I pull up to the garage at the City Lot on First Street and a very-harried Buck comes out to my car window.

"What's up?"

"Hey, Buck, my Check Engine light is on."

"Pop the hood." And he raises the hood and looks over my engine for about three seconds and slams the hood back down. He walks back past my window on his way back to the shop and says, "Yup. It's still there."

I got the hint. *Don't bug me with stupid s\*\*t to fix.*



Radar. Gotta love it. You want to talk about easy stats. At some point we all went through radar school and, in order to maintain proficiency with the equipment, you were required to work a minimum number of hours running radar each month. With that many officers, in

so many departments, running that much radar every month, you can imagine traffic court was a busy place. District Court in Hyattsville was an assembly line of justice and District Court judges had little patience for arm chair lawyers who wanted to defend themselves and have a TV-style trial to get out of a simple speeding ticket. Most people just took their medicine and paid their fines and hopefully changed their driving habits.

Judge Sylvania Woods was just such a judge. Radar operators in his court, in most traffic courts, know the script by heart and when a defendant pleads "not guilty" the officer takes the stand and the hard part is to not sound bored while you recite your lines. The judge knows what to listen for and mentally checks enough blocks to find a conviction.

Driver and vehicle positively identified. Check.

Speeding in a posted speed zone. Check.

Officer's radar certification up to date. Check.

Violation occurred in the jurisdiction. Check.

The judge asks the defendant if he has any questions for the officer and, when he starts to get all Perry Mason challenging the validity of radar as a measure of speed, Judge Woods interrupts him.

"Sir, radar won the Battle of Britain. Radar helped put a man on the moon. I'm quite sure that radar can tell this officer how fast you were driving. Anything else?"

"No, your honor."

"Guilty. \$75.00 fine, \$5.00 court costs. See the clerk on your way out."



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.*



## Renters CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

not focused on the social values of housing stability: keeping kids in the same schools, having a place to make your meals and feel safe.”

### “Keep Showing Up”

It has been over a year since the rent-hike crisis first took center stage in Laurel. For many tenants, the situation is about to go from a serious situation to an urgent one: they face potential eviction once the one-year deadline is reached on temporary rent-freezing agreements between landlords and tenants. But the past year hasn't been merely a waiting game for those tenants: they have remained front and center in the ongoing debate over whether the City of Laurel should adopt a rent stabilization bill.

Dozens of tenants attended every City Council meeting. They were joined by community advocates from CASA, LARS, Patrons for Peace, the NAACP, PG Changemakers, and others who together comprise the Laurel Housing Justice Coalition (LHJC), formed in July in response to the rent-hike crisis.

When the meetings were open to public commentary, tenants shared their stories of exorbitant rent hikes and how they were already holding down two or three jobs just to make rent. They spoke of their love for Laurel, their desire to stay a part of the Laurel community, and their fears that uncontrolled rent hikes throughout the area would force them to move, disrupting their children's schooling and making it impossible to save up for their ultimate dream of becoming homeowners in the community. Advocates spoke of the inequity within Maryland laws, which offer codified protections for landlords but none for tenants; they warned of the loss to Laurel if most working-class residents are forced to move elsewhere; and the inevitable homelessness crisis that will result area-wide if out-of-control rent hikes are not capped. They implored the Council to act with urgency to pass a rent stabilization bill.

When the City Council held “special” working sessions, at which no members of the public can speak, the LHJC showed up anyway. After one meeting in September, frustrations were high because of a perceived lack of urgency among some Council members. One tenant lamented, “Why don't they see that Laurel can be the leader in all of this, for other cities to follow?” Others asked why it was taking so long to review and vote on the draft bill authored by Mitchell, which they thought was straight-forward and fair to all parties, including landlords. One woman, wearing an “I Love Laurel” sticker and fighting back tears, wondered whether the Council would even reach a decision before her lease runs out in May 2023.

Many who spoke at Council meetings or rallies did so in halting English or through an interpreter from CASA. They sometimes arrived a bit late, still in their work clothes or uniforms, as they skipped dinner or took a few hours' pay cut from a shortened shift to make their voices heard at City Hall. Others were senior citizens on fixed incomes, lifelong Laurel residents who feared they would run out of housing options. At one meeting, a Westgate resident placed an empty wheelchair next to her in the aisle to represent



COURTESY OF DIANE MEZZANOTTE

a disabled neighbor who was unable to attend but who wanted to be sure that the Council was aware of the potentially devastating impact that uncontrolled rent hikes could have on tenants with special needs and limited housing options.

Council President Brencis Smith and other Councilmen lauded the tenant group for its dedication, assuring them that they were being heard. At one meeting, in September, DeWalt implored the group to “keep showing up,” because their presence and testimony were an important part of the democratic process.

Before the October and November open Council sessions, rallies were held on the steps of City Hall just prior to the start of the sessions. Notices were sent to local press outlets, several of which showed up with cameras and notebooks to cover the event. Between chants calling for rent stabilization and housing justice, various speakers took a turn at the megaphone to implore action.

In a public work session on Dec. 7, the two lobbyists who attended the landlord meeting in November addressed the City Council. Grayson Wiggins spoke at length to argue against *any* legislation designed to stabilize rent increases, citing data—some of it from 1970s and 80s—from various other cities across the nation. He claimed that “rent control” (as he insisted on calling it even though an earlier presentation at the

meeting made clear the substantial difference between rent “control” and “stabilization”) lowers property values for landlords.

But DeWalt wasn't buying it, admonishing Wiggins that “You don't care about people not being able to afford their rent.” DeWalt made the purpose of the proposed legislation clear to the lobbyists, saying “We want to protect our citizens from predatory landlords and corporations that come in here and raise their rents 30, 40, and 50 percent.”

In December, on a night when windchill temperatures were below zero, dozens of supporters met at 332 11th Street—the seniors' apartment building where residents first reached out to Councilman Mitchell in late 2021 for help following unexpected and exorbitant rent hikes—for a “Cancel Rent Hikes March.” This event was sponsored by the Prince George's County Housing Justice Coalition, with some marchers representing other cities in PG County that are facing similar issues.

Two weeks later, at a January 7 Housing Coalition meeting, participants talked about the show of community support. They recalled how people had honked their horns or joined them in walking, once they learned why the group was assembled.

“But now we wanna know, who at City Hall heard us?” one attendee wondered.



## Gilmore CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

that it could be a target. But it was briefly reopened for the police chiefs from across the state so they could return to their cities. When he returned to Laurel, he immediately put together an emergency operations plan, working with Mayor Casula and the city administrator.

Laurel was one of the main focal points for the FBI's investigation into the 9/11 attacks since a number of the hijackers, including all of those who crashed Flight 77 into the Pentagon after taking off from Dulles Airport, spent a significant amount of time beforehand here. Nawaq Alhamzi, who piloted Flight 77 after the takeover, and Ziad Jarrahi, who took over the United Airlines flight from Newark that crashed in Pennsylvania, both stayed at the Pin-Del Motel on Route 1 along with others. The *Washington Post* reported some hijackers lived at the Valencia Motel, also on Route 1.

Food court employees in the Laurel Mall told the FBI the hijackers regularly met there for afternoon meetings, including Mohammed Atta, who flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center. The McDonald's on Route 1 was also a favorite of the hijackers.

The other traumatic event was a tornado—actually, two of them. In July 2000, the first recorded tornado to ever strike Laurel downed about 50 trees on Patuxent Greens Golf Course and damaged houses in the Oakcrest neighborhood.

But the damage in 2000 paled in comparison to the havoc of another tornado to hit Laurel a year later, just weeks after the 9/11 attack. The September 2001 tornado swept through the area on a northward route, tearing off roofs of Laurel High School on Cherry Lane, the Westgate apartments, the Harrison-Bear Building on Montgomery Street (the old Laurel Police Department headquarters), and the Settler's Landing townhouse development off Route 216 in North Laurel. Houses in Fairlawn were in the path of the tornado and many sustained major damage. Officials said almost 175 houses in Laurel were damaged.

Gilmore instituted many positive changes to the Laurel Police Department. His predecessor, Chief Archie Cook, had started the long process of national accreditation for the department. But, as described by Rick McGill in his book, *Brass Buttons and Gun Leather, A History of the Laurel Police Department*, "The ongoing process was completed after Chief Roy P. Gilmore joined the department upon retiring from the Prince George's County Police Department. Gaining national accreditation was an early goal of Chief Gilmore's administration and eventually became a reality in 1996. His Mission Statement and Organizational Values became instant buzz words and served to guide the department on its path to accreditation and improve its standing in the community."

Recently, McGill (a regular contributor to *Voices of Laurel*) told me that, "When Roy Gilmore came to be our chief it was obvious right away that we finally scored a win from the county. He brought a winning personality and big-department experience and knew



*Snapshots from  
Gilmore's U.S. Army  
career in the 1960s.*

COURTESY OF ROY GILMORE

how to work with the politicians to get things done. But he also took time to keep in touch with the rank-and-file guys. Always approachable, always ready to listen without letting someone go around their chain of command. It was more of a professional atmosphere and you could tell we were in good hands."

He was also responsible for implementing Community-Oriented Policing and Community Outreach Programs in Laurel, and the Laurel Police Memorial in Ivy Hill cemetery was created during his tenure. Dedication ceremonies for the memorial were held in May 2000.

At the dedication ceremony, then-Maryland State Police Superintendent Col. David B. Mitchell, originally from Laurel, was one of the guest speakers. In describing the heroism displayed by officers, Mitchell told a story about Gilmore from their days together on the PG County Police force, which Mitchell relayed to me in a recent interview.

In 1973, officers responded to a burglary-in-progress call. Officer Carroll "Bo" Garrison noticed that a window pane had been tampered with and stepped onto the porch.

"They're still inside," Mitchell remembered Garrison saying to the officers behind him, and then hearing the blast of a 12-gauge shotgun from inside, which blew Garrison off the porch. The officers returned fire ("a helluva shootout," according to Mitchell). In the middle of this gunfire, Gilmore and another officer dragged Garrison away from the house and Gilmore laid on top of him to shield him from "so much gunfire." This was well before body armor was standard issue for police officers.

Mitchell took the occasion of the memorial dedication (Garrison is interred there) to present Gilmore with an award of valor. As Mitchell put it: "Some stories you never, ever forget."

Mitchell also remembered telling Casula when Gilmore was being considered as Chief of the LPD, "You're not going to get a better pick."

Gilmore resigned from the LPD in 2002 when an opportunity arose to be the Executive Director of the

Maryland Police Corps, a police training program at the University of Maryland. In 2003, he became the Director of Security, Safety and Transportation at Holy Cross Hospital, where he worked until his retirement in 2016.

### Reunion

The surviving members of the LRRP unit stayed in touch over the years, along with their platoon commander, Alan Phillips, who was not present in the jungle fight. Lotze died not long after the patrol in a plane crash on a mountainside in 1967 in Alaska, but the wreckage wasn't discovered until 1983. Smith passed away in 2020.

The only member of the unit who knew the name of the pilot that extracted them was Stowell. The pilot was A.W. Steed, who, unbeknownst to the other patrol members, also received a Silver Star for his actions that day. At a chance meeting in 2019 at an Army Rangers reunion, Steed talked to someone who knew Stowell, so Steed contacted him.

At the same time, Gilmore had been thinking about a reunion with his comrades, who hadn't seen each other in 55 years. It all came together in September 2022 when Gilmore, Stowell, and Liebersbach (Kendall was in ill health and couldn't travel) held an emotional reunion, along with Phillips and, meeting for the first time since jumping into his helicopter, the pilot who saved them—Steed.

I was honored to be invited. At the reunion in Northern Virginia, Steed told me the story of his coming back to retrieve the patrol. Shortly after turning back when he mistakenly thought Gilmore had waved him off, he changed his mind.

"We couldn't leave them," he said. "We'll get them out or die trying."

==

*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.*



## Edna Davis CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

of the first workers to use an electric typewriter, because everyone else was afraid!

After marrying in 1941, Edna followed her then-husband to Texas, where she worked as a secretary for the commandant of a camp for German POWs in Brady, TX, during World War II. While there she had befriended a prisoner who was especially charming. However, contact with the prisoners was stopped after some of them attempted to escape by tunneling out of the camp.

Edna and her first husband had a son, William, who was born in 1946. As a small child, William suffered from a brain tumor that subsequently resulted in severe intellectual disability. At that time, after being abandoned by her son's father, Edna's determination and self-sufficient nature saw her through the rough times that followed and inspired everyone who knew her. She taught William and her other children to be very independent also.

After the war, Edna returned to Washington and began working at the Atomic Energy Association, in a section that subsequently became part of the Geological Survey, which was part of the Department of Interior. There Edna met her husband of 44 years, Collin Davis. They started attending dances together, eventually married in 1957, and settled in Laurel. They were blessed with a daughter, Diane; then they lost a son who had been born premature and did not survive; finally, their son, Gary, was born.

Edna also worked for the D.C. Children's Center and the Howard County Board of Education and did not stop until she retired at age 74 to take care of her husband, whose health was declining. Her determination also saw her through three bouts of breast cancer. She survived the first two times with lumpectomies. However, the third time, at age 89, she was advised to have a mastectomy and undergo chemotherapy and believed she would die from the disease.

Although Edna beat cancer, she lost some of her self-confidence after the third

time. She no longer wanted to drive herself to her beloved condominium in Ocean City, MD, so she relied on her daughter to make sure she had her time there, where she would walk to the community pool to swim her laps daily and socialize with her friends, who were actually closer to her daughter's age! Her friends there threw her a nice party when she turned 90, but, sadly, she seemed to outlive all of them. Although she continued to spend time in Ocean City until the age of 102, the daily swims stopped when she was 99 because of the Covid pandemic. And do not think for one minute that her family members were allowed to merely serve as chauffeurs. Edna insisted that anyone else present should also swim laps instead of sitting there just watching. In 2015, at the age of 97, Edna had moved into an assisted living facility near Annapolis. However, during the pandemic, life in assisted living became too isolated for her. Family abetted in her escape from the facility to return to her home in Laurel, where she spent the rest of her life.

An example of Edna's independent nature could be demonstrated when her daughter, Diane, described a Saturday morning when she could not find her mother at 7:30 am. When she finally located Edna, it was outside doing yardwork, with a sweater over her nightgown, at age 100½. It did not matter if the rake was taller than Edna because there was work to be done. If she saw something that needed attention, she would tend to it. Another time she dragged a dining room chair out through the side door of her house to saw off a tree limb that was hanging precariously.

Edna's daughter, Diane Harkleroad says, "She profoundly affected me. She was the most important person in my life and the strongest person I've ever known. Edna was the most stubborn and determined, truly a force of nature! She showed us how to laugh in the face of adversity and to just keep on going, no matter what." Family found it surreal when Edna entered hospice care, only days before her passing, still expecting her to sit up and ask for her favorite cocktail!



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# Patches of Time



BY PETE LEWNES

Over the years, patches have been used for almost everything including various events, milestones, organizations, sports teams, and even places of employment. Here are a few from our hometown. Enjoy!

*Pete Lewnes is a founding member of The Laurel History Boys, and a prolific collector of historical Laurel memorabilia from all eras.*





## OBITUARIES

Because *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.

**Pamela J. Anderson, 71**

Pamela Jordan Anderson, 71, of Laurel died on October 26 in Columbia, MD. She passed peacefully with family by her side. Pamela was born on November

17, 1950 in Uniontown, PA. She was preceded in death by her husband of 45 years, Michael Anderson; parents, William Jordan and Retha Jordan; and her brother, Bruce Jordan. Pamela was a class of 1969 graduate of Atholton High School in Columbia, and participated in cheerleading, Future Business Leaders of America, journalism, and Pep Club. Pamela's career as a legal secretary included working for the District of Columbia court system followed by several law firms. She was a former President of the Maryland Jaycees, Howard County Chapter. Pamela had a passion for antiques, crafting, decorating, gardening, and traveling. She loved spending time with her family, friends, and grandchildren as well as cuddling her beloved dog, Macy. Pamela had a very generous and giving heart. She is survived by her daughters Kimberly Leaman, Diana Conway (Chris), and Jamison Anderson (Everardo Estrada); four grandchildren; siblings Doug Jordan, Peggy Lamborne (Richard), Danny Jordan, and Jennifer Yost (Kevin); cousins, and many nieces and nephews.

**Mildred Ceceilia Awkward, 98**

Mildred Ceceilia Awkward was born on August 7, 1924 in Maryland and passed away on November 27, 2022. Mildred was a longtime resident of Laurel's Grove neighborhood

and possessed a wealth of knowledge, frequently sharing important context for our community's understanding of Black history. She will be missed by family and friends alike.

**Gerard P. Caillouet, 67**

Gerard P. Caillouet, 67, of West Milton, OH passed away on November 2, 2022 at Hospice of Miami County. He was born April 21, 1955 to Edgar Joseph & Alethea

Agnes (Pfaff) Caillouet in New Orleans, Louisiana. He is preceded in death by his parents.

He will be missed and remembered by his loving wife Cynthia (Hale) Caillouet of 46 years; children Courtney (Rebekah) Caillouet of West Milton, Kate (Jeremy) Mary of Troy, and Clinton (Ashley) Caillouet of West Milton; 10 grandchildren; siblings Kathie (Joseph) Bakanovic of Panama City, FL, and Tim Caillouet of Oregon.

Gerard served his country proudly in the United States Marine Corps. He was the president and producer of God's Great Outdoors and a member of the Christian Bowhunters of America.

**Sharon Hazel Crowne, 74**

Sharon Hazel Crowne of Centreville, MD, entered into eternal life on November 2 at Compass Hospice Care surrounded by her loving family. She was 74.

Born on September 12, 1948, in IL, she was the daughter of the late John and Sarah Burgett. After spending years moving around the world as an Air Force child, her family settled in Bowie, MD. She attended Seton High School and then the University of Maryland, receiving a BS in Education. In 1973, she married the love of her life, Frank Crowne. After some more moving around (including a year in Paris), they would settle in Laurel, MD. She became the church secretary at St. Mary of the Mills Catholic Church where her main role was to design the weekly bulletin, a task she greatly enjoyed. Upon retirement, the two of them moved to Centreville, MD, and spent the remainder of their years next door to their daughter's family and enjoying the beautiful and quiet corner of their neighborhood.

While she enjoyed many activities (crocheting, puzzles, card games), it was her family that brought her the most joy. She so enjoyed the vacations to Ocean City and the mountains that she took almost every year with her children. She lovingly and patiently took care of Frank as he succumbed to Alzheimer's, and courageously battled her own fight with cancer. Throughout everything, her faith remained rock-solid—a trait marveled at by everyone who knew her.

Sharon is survived by her daughter, Theresa (Durnbaugh) and her husband Bill of Centreville, MD and their children Liam and Sarah; son Scott and his wife Leah (Schenck) of York, PA, and their daughters Aivleen and Veronica; sister, Mary Ann Burgett; brother, Scott Burgett and his wife Nancy; and sister, Debbie Cambardella and her partner John. In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her husband Francis "Frank" Crowne in 2021; her sister, Diane McMullen; her brother-in-law, Terry McMullen; and her brother-in-law, Lou Cambardella.

**Anna G. Frye, 97**

Anna G. Frye passed away peacefully on December 19, 2022. She was 97 years old. Anna was born in Lovettsville, VA to Henry and Mary Axline. Anna was extremely proud

of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She is survived by her three children: Ron Dixon (Sue Dixon), Kevin Frye, and Tony Frye (Patti Frye). She was predeceased by her two children: Larry Dixon (Sandra Dixon) and Andrea Gale Dixon. Anna was the adoring grandmother of seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. A longtime resident of Savage, MD, Anna's home was always filled with her unforgettable stories and radiant spirit. Her family will cherish the memories from "Going to Mom's" or "Going to Nana's" and seeing her display how family was her greatest passion in life. Anna taught her family the definition of working hard after her 35 year career in the cafeteria at Hammond High School and as a prior Worthy Matron of the Order of the Eastern Star for over 20 years. Retiring at the age of 90, she inspired many to not let age be a defining factor in independence. She will be remembered as a loyal, thoughtful, and loving friend and family member.

**Betty Elizabeth Grasso, 90**

Betty Grasso passed away peacefully on Tuesday, November 29, 2022.

She was born on June 21, 1932, the daughter of John Anthony Grasso and Florence

Heinemann Grasso. She worked for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers for 25 years until retiring in 1987.

Betty is survived by her sister Amelia Shannon, granddaughters Lorie Ann and Tanya Ashley, great grandchildren Aeon, Julius, Meadow, and Madison. She was preceded in death by her son Alan, sisters Violet, Clorinda, Flora and Gloria and brothers John, Arthur, Richard and Fred. Memorial contributions may be made in honor of Betty Grasso to Season's Hospice Foundation, 8537 Solution Center, Chicago, IL 60677-8005.



## OBITUARIES

**Joe D. Green, 93**

Joe Dee Green passed away on October 28, 2022 in Baltimore. He was born in Guthrie, Oklahoma on November 13, 1928 to the late Lois and Wade Green.

Mr. Green is survived by his wife Pauline Green. He was preceded in death by his siblings Charles Green, Millard Green, Irene Brooks, Lorene Watts and Bennie Frank Green. He is also survived by his nieces and nephews Rose, Charles, Michael, Melissa, Christopher, Victoria, Timothy, David and Billy.

**John A. Harrison, 69**

John Arthur Harrison, born May 21st, 1953, passed away on December 8th, surrounded by family after a short illness.

John was big in stature and in life.

He loved his family more than anything in the world and was loved as the giant he was.

John served with the Prince George's County Police Department from 1974 through 1988 until a previous on the job injury forced his retirement. After retirement, John found a love of real estate and became a licensed Maryland Realtor. During his career, he served in many positions throughout the real estate community, including serving as the President of the Maryland Realtors Association.

John had a passion for golf, fishing, boating, and his future retirement to Smith Mountain Lake Virginia. He was known as Papa John, Grandpa, Paw, and Pop-pop, to his many grandchildren and great grandchildren. He was best known though, as Dad.

Pamela Kohel-Harrison was the love of John's life. Pam's love for John knew no bounds, no matter how irritating he could be.

John was preceded in death by his parents Merrill and Minnie Harrison, and his brother Merrill Harrison, Jr.

John is survived by his loving wife Pamela Kohel-Harrison; children Leslie Kohel Kocevar (Tim), Matthew Kohel (Kimberly), Carl Kohel (Susan) Danielle Hutchinson (Elwood), and Justin Hutchinson (Renne); 18 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

**Cathy Mitsue Harvey, 62**

Cathy Harvey passed away peacefully with her family by her side on December 2, 2022 at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

Cathy was born on July 31, 1960 to Edward and Irene Izumi in Washington, DC. Cathy and her family made their home in Maryland City. Upon graduation from Meade High School in 1978, Cathy went to work for Montgomery Ward in Laurel. It was there that Cathy met her love and future husband, Calvin Harvey, the City's current Fleet Maintenance Superintendent. Cathy worked at Montgomery Ward until it closed in 2001, when she was hired by the City and was promoted up the ranks to HR Specialist III. Cathy was often the first face new employees saw during their orientation and was always available to answer questions. Due to illness, Cathy was forced to retire in October 2021.

Cathy's greatest loves were her daughters Amy and Elizabeth. Traveling to volleyball games and tournaments became a family event and always brought a smile to her face. Seeing her daughters as they grew into lovely young women brought her such joy! Family was Cathy's priority.

Cathy will be greatly missed by her husband Calvin and her daughters, as well as her father, Edward, brothers, Laren, David, Kenny, and Michael, her in-laws William and Mary Harvey, and numerous nieces and nephews as well as her City of Laurel family. Cathy was preceded in death by her Mother, Irene and her sister Karen.

**Josephine Culmone Harvey, 64**

At just 64 years young, Jody Culmone has left our world and a massive void in our hearts.

Born in New Jersey to the late Jockey Joe and

Rosemarie "Cookie" Culmone, Jody moved to Maryland and built a beautiful home and family. She graduated from The University of Maryland and was a devoted AOPi sorority sister.

Jody is survived by her incredibly grateful children, Anthony Harvey (his girlfriend Raisa Magro) and Margaret Prus; her adoring grandson Cyrus; her loving siblings: Laura, Debbie, and Cheri Culmone and Don Yaquinta; dear nephews, Kevin Zane and Kyle Yaquinta; Step-son Zachary Gallagher; aunts, uncles, and dozens of cousins, family, and friends both home and abroad, too many to name, but never too far from our hearts.

Our only solace is that Jody is now reunited in heaven with her parents and siblings, Joey Culmone Jr and Joanne (Culmone) Favoretto. We imagine a great card game is taking place.

Jody was always quick to open her home and especially her kitchen to all; she was happiest hosting her son's friends, teammates, and peers. Jody's life revolved around family and friends whom she cared so deeply about. She made lifelong friends in MD and still connected with her friends from early childhood.

Jody was one of the hardest-working and most sincere individuals, as evident by the many people she has connected with through the years. Whether working as a Regional Manager for IQVIA or as a Team Mom helping out in the snack shack, Jody always ensured that she helped others in any way possible.

Jody will be missed immensely and will forever live in our hearts.

**John Ippolito, 75**

John Bruce Ippolito, beloved husband, brother, friend and mentor, died on December 30, 2022.

He was a resident of Easton, MD, where he and his wife,

Diane Laird-Ippolito, owned and operated the Bishop's House Bed and Breakfast for the last 34 years.

John was born in the Bronx, NY, on

February 7, 1947, to Charles Joseph Ippolito and Edna Dorothy Knack. John lived in Japan, Germany, and several posts in the US with his military family before settling in Maryland. John graduated from Laurel High School in 1965 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree from University of Maryland in 1970.

John fell in love with Diane Laird, and they married on April 16, 1977.

John retired from his position as Director of Information Assurance at Allied Technology, but even after retirement he continued to share wisdom and advice generously. John's career spanned more than 40 years working in the IT industry and included being a Vice President at Comsis Corporation and working at the General Accounting Office.

In addition to his illustrious career helping the government adjust to rapidly changing technology, John was an inspiration and mentor to following generations in the technology field. He taught not only the technology of business, but also the business of life.

During his career, John supported a variety of civilian and defense agencies. John helped develop guidelines for IT security plans that became NIST Special Publication (SP) 800-18, and John as a primary author of NIST 800-16. He also contributed to other publications too numerous to mention. John was a Federal Information System Security Educators' Association (FISSEA) Educator of the Year, an elected board member of FISSEA, and he served on the board of directors for Native Intelligence, Inc.

John was an IT security visionary, public speaker, author, consultant, and hands-on guru with the gift of long-range vision.

John coupled impressive knowledge and analytical abilities with imagination. His thoughts on security were consistently ahead of the crowd. Time and again, John saw the implications of technologies and raised concerns before others had begun to understand the scope of the security issues at hand. The solutions that John came up with were elegant as well as effective.

Most importantly, John was an excellent mentor and friend. He taught his charges about project and staff management—what counts, and what doesn't. He advocated for and promoted women when it was rare for an executive to do so, and he stood behind people with unwavering confidence and lifted them up.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Diane; his sister, Carol (Randy) Collins of Charles Town, WV; his brothers, Charles (Sheri) Ippolito of Dagsboro, DE, and Robert (Leslie) Ippolito of Damascus, MD.



## OBITUARIES

**Carl Adam Jaeger, Jr., 76**

Carl Adam Jaeger, Jr., 76 passed away on October 26.

Carl was born October 8, 1946 in Linden, NJ to the late Carl Adam Jaeger, Sr. and Margaret Ann Velebir Jaeger.

Carl entered into the U.S. Marines and served in Vietnam, as a cryptologic linguist and translator. After being honorably discharged, he moved to Laurel, where he operated Jaeger Floor Service for 50 years.

Carl was the beloved husband to Hedy S. Way Jaeger and loving father of Carl Adam Jaeger, III (Chip), dear brother of Thomas A. Jaeger and sister Barbara Ann Kellar. Carl is also survived by his nieces and nephews, great-nieces and nephews, his step-daughter Kelly Way, step-granddaughter, Brittany Sewell and great-step-granddaughter, Delaney Marie Fowler of Laurel.

Carl was an avid fisherman and won many fishing tournaments. He also had an admiration for classic boats. He enjoyed doowop and acapella music. He was a member of the Laurel Moose Lodge and American Legion Post 60.

Preceding Carl in death were his father and mother, niece Pamela Jaeger and step-daughter Kandice Way.

**Laurel Leader, 125**

The *Laurel Leader* newspaper, which had been a shell of its former self for more than a year after being acquired by Alden Global Capital, mercifully printed its final issue on October 13, 2022. It had been published continuously each week for over 125 years, beginning in 1897.

Even after the first major purchase by Patuxent Publishing in July 1980, the *Leader* maintained a strong stake in the community. In September 1997, Patuxent Publishing was sold to *The Baltimore Sun*, which at that time was a subsidiary of Times Mirror. In June 2000, Tribune Publishing purchased Times Mirror and its subsidiaries. It was under Tribune's ownership that the first signs of real trouble appeared. In April 2009, Tribune fired more than 20 percent of staff at the *Sun* without warning, and had cut newsroom staff by more than 60 percent by the end of that year.

In May 2021, Tribune was purchased by Alden Global Capital, a hedge fund that is now the second-largest newspaper publisher in America. All local columnists were fired and the *Leader* began simply reprinting content from the *Sun*. This continued until October 2022, when the final issue was released without fanfare—including just a footnote on the cover, blaming its demise on “the changing habits of its readers.”

**Theresa “Teri” M. McIntosh, 63**

Theresa “Teri” Veirs McLoughlin McIntosh, age 63 of Laurel, Maryland died on Thursday, October 27, 2022 at home from duodenal cancer.

Teri graduated from Regina High School before earning her bachelors from St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania. She went on to earn a Masters in Health Administration and Policy. Teri was a Physician Assistant who worked in hospitals across the DMV, including for 20 years at the University of Maryland Rehabilitation & Orthopaedic Institute (Kernan).

She was preceded in death by her parents Mary Lee and Donald McLoughlin and her parents-in-law Carolyn and Charles McIntosh Sr.

Teri is survived by her husband of 40 years, Craig, their two children—Christopher McIntosh and his partner Maria Luongo, and Casey McIntosh and her husband Patrick Skelly, and her sister Kathleen Hull. She is also survived by her dog Gus, granddog Clover, and many grandsnakes.

**Nancy Neeld Nickell, 87**

Nancy Neeld Nickell, 87, of Xenia, OH, formerly of Laurel, MD, passed away Sunday, November 13, 2022. She was born December 8, 1934, in Xenia, Ohio, the daughter

of William A. and Virginia Kinsey Neeld. She is survived by her son, Eric Charles Nickell; daughters Katherine Connors (Ron Frahm) and Melissa (Pete) Weisberg; seven grandchildren; one great-grandson; sisters Linda (Robert) Nohren and Twila (Pete) Neeld-Bracken; brothers Thomas Neeld and Bruce Neeld; several nieces and nephews; and by many close friends. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, James Nickell, by a daughter, Elizabeth Haslup and son-in-law David Haslup, a daughter-in-law, Lisa Nickell, a sister, Marilyn Dirksen, and by three brothers, Dr. William K. Neeld, Richard W. Neeld, and Robert H. Neeld. Nancy was an avid gardener, reader, singer and piano player. She loved genealogy, the woods, American history, and classical music.

**Richard A. Ridgely, 68**

Port St. John, FL resident, Richard A. Ridgely, Sr. passed away on December 28, 2022. Richard, aka Rich “I’m not really Rich, it’s just my name,” is survived by his wife

of 42 years Kathy “Wallman” Ridgely, son Richard A. Ridgely Jr, daughter Ginny “Ridgely” Usinger (husband Dustin), granddaughter Corabeth Ridgely, grandsons Kobe and Kelan Usinger, brother Greg Kovolenko, and sister Cindy Heller. He was preceded in death by sisters Laurie and Diane.

Rich was originally from Laurel. He went to Morgan State University where he studied to be a teacher but decided to pursue a career in Law Enforcement. After a few years of varied police officer positions, he became the youngest Police Chief in Maryland history for the town of Sykesville, MD. He then became a Deputy Sheriff where he was an instrumental part of SWAT, Narcotics and Undercover Operations for Carol County Sheriffs Department. Rich was awarded Deputy Sheriff of the Year, 2 years in a row, for his contributions toward training other deputies, SWAT involvement, undercover oversite, and cease of Narcotic distribution in the county.

In 1987, Rich and his wife Kathy moved their family to Port St. John. Rich continued his law enforcement career with Brevard County Sheriffs Office. He then retired and worked as the Loss Prevention Manager at JC Penney in Merritt Island.

Rich’s life long dream was achieved in 1999 when he established, ran & operated (alongside wife Kathy, daughter Ginny & granddaughter Corabeth) Indian River Sportsman, a fishing and hunting store specializing in gunsmith services. He and associate Frank Brooks had the expertise and capabilities it took to be successful for nearly 20 years.

Rich retired and lived the rest of his life peacefully with his loving family at his bedside during his fight at end of life. He has touched so many lives with his wisdom, sound advice, and caring soul. Those who knew him will never forget his big heart, his pay it forward attitude, and his loyalty. RIP Rich, we will keep you in our memories forever.

**Nancy Griffin Warren, 78**

Nancy Griffin Warren passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on September 30. Nancy was born on March 19, 1944 in Leaksville, NC and grew up

in Bertie County, NC, the daughter of Charles Bennett Griffin, Jr. and Gertrude McCollum Griffin.

Nancy graduated as Valedictorian of Bertie High School and graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a degree in Elementary Education, and was a member of the Alpha Sigma chapter of Tri Delta Sorority. Shortly after receiving her Master’s in Education from the University of Maryland, Nancy became a Kindergarten teacher and after first working at Margaret Edmonston Elementary School, took up residence at Montpelier Elementary school. Her passion for Montpelier continued beyond teaching as she led the annual Book Fair and fundraising efforts for the PTA. After her retirement from teaching, she took her love for fashion and entertaining and began a second career starting Urquhart Incorporated where she sold Doncaster clothing for over 20 years.

Nancy also had a multiple-decade volunteer career serving in various capacities at St. Philips Episcopal Church, as Chairwoman of the Laurel Medical Society, and multiple-term President of Snow Hill Garden Club. Nancy couldn’t stay away from teaching forever, later coming back as a long-term substitute Kindergarten teacher at Montpelier Elementary and as an Aqua Aerobics Instructor at Fairland Sports and Aquatics Complex in Laurel. Nancy was an expert gardener, interior decorator, incredible cook, avid Tar Heel basketball fan and beloved wife and mother who cherished her faith, her family, and her friends.

Nancy is survived by her husband of 54 years, Dr. William Addison Warren and two children, daughter Eliza Hill Urquhart Warren and son William Addison Warren, Jr. and wife Rebecca Hart Warren; her two grandchildren, Frank and Mary Bond; her brother John McCollum Griffin, his wife Claudia Blackburn Griffin, her sister-in-law Marcia Sawyers Griffin, wife of the late Charles Bennett Griffin, III as well as many precious nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and great-nephews.



THE BIG PICTURE

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*Sign, sign,  
 Everywhere a sign  
 Blockin' out the scenery,  
 Breakin' my mind  
 Do this, don't do that,  
 Can't you read the sign?*

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The Five Man Electrical Band was ahead of its time in 1970 with their song, “Signs.” Road “improvements” around the area have sprouted pedestrian signs like mushrooms. It gets a little ridiculous with so many signs in such a small area. These photos were taken in Patuxent Greens (above) and Savage (left).

Send us your photos that capture a unique perspective of Laurel from the past or present. We might feature it in a future issue! Email us at [LaurelHistoryBoys@gmail.com](mailto:LaurelHistoryBoys@gmail.com).



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