

A DIVE INTO THE CREEK BENEFITS CAMP OCCOHANNOCK

Polar Duck Dip fundraiser is scheduled for Jan. 21 | Page 11



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The monthly journal of Eastern Shore life

Vol. 6, No. 9 | January 2023

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FROM EASTERN SHORE AUTHOR

Curtis J. Badger

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WILDERNESS REGAINED

The Story of the Virginia Barrier Islands

Curtis J. Badger

Second Edition

One of the most popular local books of 2021 was “Wilderness Regained – The Story of the Virginia Barrier Islands” by Curtis J. Badger. For 2022, Badger has taken his history of the islands to another level. “Wilderness Regained” has been re-issued and greatly expanded to include even more information on the islands, including:

■ A chapter titled “Peninsulas in Repose” examines the history of the necks of the Eastern Shore, the wooded areas accessible by water where the English settlers first set up homesteads. The Eastern Shore’s “necks of the woods” were America’s original communities.

■ Thomas Downing was born to slaves on Chincoteague Island and became known as the Oyster King of New York, one of the wealthiest businessmen in the city, who just possibly provided a stop on the Underground Railroad as well.

■ The Broadwater Club on Hog Island was built by Joseph and Elise Farrell from Germantown, Pennsylvania who bought hundreds of acres on Hog in the 1880s and also attempted to develop Parramore. They also began the first shellfish aquaculture operation on the Shore.

■ The crew of the Life-saving Service on Hog Island were given medals of honor by the King of Spain for the heroic rescue of the ship San Albano, saving the lives of 26 men, and the ship’s cat.

■ The University of Pennsylvania football team had summer practice on Hog Island in the 1890s, and followed up with a National Championship.

The new, expanded edition of Wilderness Regained can be purchased through the publisher, Salt Water Media of Berlin, Maryland. For online purchases visit www.saltwatermedia.com or phone 443-513-4422.



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Eastern Shore Anglers Club looks back at 2022



Once again in 2022, the Eastern Shore Anglers Club held a number of successful events. Above, the Saxis free fishing day for kids was held Sept. 18, and at left, the Onancock Bay Challenge was held on Sept. 10. Look for more events in 2023 sponsored by the Anglers Club for fishermen and fisherwomen of all ages.

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Founding Principles

1. Serve businesses, agencies, nonprofits and the public by offering cost-effective, high-value advertising in a publication committed to promoting the Eastern Shore's attributes to residents and visitors.
2. Serve the community by highlighting the people, businesses, places, events and amenities that make the Eastern Shore a great place to live and visit.
3. Be a relentless, active and giving community partner in all ways possible.

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Information contained herein believed accurate but not warranted.



ESCC Oyster Roast fundraiser slated for Friday, Jan. 27

Now in its fourth year, Eastern Shore Community College Foundation is hosting its annual Oyster Roast fundraiser on Friday, Jan. 27 from 5-9 p.m.

All proceeds support scholarships and services for students. The event is held on campus, both outdoors under a tent with heaters, and inside the Workforce Development Building and Great Hall.

ESCC Foundation's Oyster Roast has become a fast favorite in the early part of each calendar year, tapping into the rich Eastern Shore oyster roast tradition with a cause that has lasting impact on local students. This is ESCC's top fundraiser for scholarships and services to help local students enroll and complete at ESCC.

Attendees enjoy locally sourced oysters and clams roasted and steamed on site along with homemade clam chowder all provided by ESCC Alumni Sylvester Martinez, veteran of Eastern Shore Events and Rentals. Wendell Distributing will provide local craft beer, plus wine and sodas. To round out the menu, Exmore Diner will feature BBQ and side dishes, served by ESCC's own student ambassadors.

ESCC is adding a new Silent Auction this year with items donated by local and regional businesses including:

- Luxury picnic by Boss Lady Events
- Chatham Vineyards wine tasting
- Billy Crockett Miniature Shorebird Carving
- Peter Egan Carving
- ODU basketball - second rows seats and VIP

Lounge passes

- Golf package at ESYCC
- Gift Basket from Cape Charles businesses
- Reiki and Life Coaching session with Dr.

Darrien Jamar

- Gift Basket from Onancock businesses
- Gift certificates from various shops and restaurants all over the Shore



Attendees enjoy the Eastern Shore Community College Foundation Oyster Roast. It is set for Jan. 27.

In addition to the great menu, live music has become a staple at the event. This year's featured entertainment will be Hampton Roads favorite The Jason Cale Band.

Recently voted top guitar talent for 2022 by the Tidewater Music Association, Jason and his band produce a broad palette of sound ranging from original rock and blues, to soulful funk and jazz. Cale has toured the world with both Army and Air Force bands and has collaborated with a range of artists including Grace Potter, Blues Traveler, Joe Bonamassa, and many others. His deep southern roots stretch from New Orleans to Mobile, Alabama.

A great evening of food and music is planned. Executive Director of ESCC Foundation Patty Kellam explains:

"We are so appreciative of our sponsors, friends

and business partners who support our Oyster Roast, especially Lead Sponsor Taylor Bank and Major Sponsor Wilbanks Smith & Thomas Asset Management. We also thank our businesses and artisans for helping us launch a silent auction this year. There are lots of great items to bid on."

We hope the Eastern Shore community will join us for a great evening of local seafood, live music and camaraderie to support Your Eastern Shore Community College so we can keep our classes and job trainings accessible and available to all."

Tickets are \$65 and can be purchased online at es.vcc.edu (with a service fee) or by calling Dena Lyons at 757-789-1741. A limited number of tickets are sold, so those interested should move fast for availability. For more information please contact Patty Kellam at 757-789-1749.

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Arts Enter rings in the new year with a number of events

Arts Enter in Cape Charles is ringing in the new year. The 25-year-old non-profit fine and performing arts center is planning an enjoyable array of performances.

After an elegant black tie musical program and party at the beginning of January, more events are following quickly.

The Harbor String Quartet will be performing Sea Interludes on Sunday, Feb. 12 at 2 p.m. in the Lemon Tree Gallery.

The quartet was formed in 1997 by members of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra as part of an expansion of the individual's musical interests. Members of the group have played with such artists as Josh Groban, Mannheim Streamroller, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Idina Menzel and the Turtle Island String Quartet.

Comfortable with performing Bac, Handel and Mozart as they are with the music of the Beatles, Bruno Mars to John William's Star Wars Saga, the quartet has been honored to represent the Virginia Symphony and the Virginia Arts Festival on numerous occasions, performing at benefits and other events. The cost for an adult is \$25 per person.

Elvis is in the House on Saturday, February 25 at 7:30 p.m. features Jesse Garron's Tribute to Elvis. It is ranked among the most respected acts in local and nationwide venues. Acclaimed as "The Closest Thing to the King," Garron has been performing his Tribute since 1997.

Garron possesses the voice, looks and charisma that made Elvis a superstar and draws audiences in from the minute he walks on stage.

Jesse performs songs that cross three generations of rock, pop, gospel and oldies music, so the act has universal appeal. This Vegas-style rendition is a con-



Elvis is in the House on Saturday, Feb. 25 at 7:30 p.m. features Jesse Garron's Tribute to Elvis.

sistent fan favorite that has earned a reputation for professionalism as well as countless standing ovations.

Jesse is a natural front-man, interacting with the crowd at all times and signing autographs after the show. This act is the most authentic recreation of an Elvis concert available in today's market...Garron-teed. Tickets are \$30 and the performance is sponsored in part by Chesapeake Properties, dedicated to helping you find your own little piece of paradise is rooted in a deep appreciation for the Eastern Shore and for the people of our community.

A one Act Play Festival on March 24, 25, 26 will

feature several directors from Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore.

During the popular Stars on Stage youth musical theatre summer camp, students will be performing Annie Jr. The camp is scheduled for July 10-22 and is limited to 30 children. Registrations will be open soon. The two week camp culminates with two performances open to the public on July 21 and 22.

For more information about any of these events visit or call 757 331-4327 for details. Arts Enter, the Lemon Tree Gallery, the Historic Palace Theatre and Experimental Film Virginia help to keep the arts alive in Cape Charles.

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12 | 2:00
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At Northampton High, using potatoes to study projectile motion

BY ADOLPHUS AMES

A group of Northampton High School students gathered near the Yellow Jackets' softball field recently for a hands-on experiment. The students tested how far they could launch potatoes using cannons made from PVC pipes.

Chase Baxa, who teaches physics and biology at Northampton, was instrumental in the development of the project. Baxa is no stranger to creating launchers for physics class.

"When I was in high school, we created launchers using air cannons," he said. "I did it again during my student teaching. I wanted to do something similar with my students, but with a combustion element."

Creating the potato launchers was a community effort that took a little over a week and a half. Supplies were funded and donated by the Northampton County Education Foundation and Onancock Building Supply.

The students used the supplies to make the launchers and three targets to hit. The targets resembled Sonic the Hedgehog, the Yellow Jacket mascot, and Albert Einstein.

The physics students also turned to Billy Davis' carpentry class to build a cannon holder. The holder allowed the cannon operator to change the launch angle from 30 degrees to 45 degrees or 60 degrees. Starting fluid was used to fuel the launchers.



Above, Northampton High School teacher Chase Baxa loads the launcher. Below, targets included a Sonic the Hedgehog look-alike. Adolphus Ames photos.



During the launch, students used a timer to record how long the potato soared through the air. Then they used the recorded time alongside the angle of the launch to calculate how fast the potatoes traveled through the air.

"It's the perfect project for studying projectile motion," said Baxa. "It's also a great way to blow off some steam."

Polar Duck Dip will benefit Camp Occohannock on the Bay

BY ADOLPHUS AMES

Camp Occohannock on the Bay Camp and Retreat Center will host its 15th annual Polar Duck Dip Saturday, Jan. 21. The event will take place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the camp near Craddockville.

The Polar Duck Dip serves as a fundraiser for the camp and its programs. "Last year we raised more funds than we ever have in the history of the camp," said Joel Coleman, camp director. "This year we hope to exceed that amount."

Participants will take a quick dip in Occohannock Creek and then have lunch, which will include soups and desserts. There will also be a silent auction and an open mic where people will be allowed to sing or read poems. The dipper that raises the most donations will receive one quart of ice cream for a year from the Island Creamery.

Camp Occohannock, which is affiliated with the United Methodist Church, started in 1958 as a summer camp ministry. It has evolved to include year round retreats for guest groups, families, and kids. Individuals without church or religious affiliations are also welcome to attend the camp.

The camp offers an array of activities. It has an archery range, a frisbee course, kickball field, and a basketball court. It also offers kayaking, canoeing, and a biking program and re-



Children enjoy water recreation at Camp Occohannock.

cently added a brand new playground and climbing equipment. The playground renovations came to fruition thanks to grants from the Eastern Shore of Virginia Community Foundation and GameTime, an organization that manufactures playground

equipment.

Coleman, who is originally from Pennsylvania and has been an ordained pastor for several years, came to Shore to help strengthen the camp and make a difference in others' lives.

"We want Camp Occohannock to

be a space where people can come together and enjoy themselves," Coleman said. "Our staff loves being involved in the community."

For more information about Camp Occohannock and the Polar Duck Dip visit www.ootbay.org.



Vinicio Diaz stands in his Melfa shop, Emmanuel Store, which was formerly Doughty's Market.

building that once housed Doughty's Market, itself a bona-fide Eastern Shore treasure.

The inside ambiance these days, however, is different — even if the counter and the kitchen are in the same place as the old days.

The store sells everything from piñatas to sweatshirts, from steamer pots to convenience-store candy.

Doughty's Market was known for its hot dogs and chicken-salad sandwiches. Emmanuel Store has a trifold menu with breakfast sandwiches and burritos, and a selection of sandwiches and subs for lunch and dinner.

Diaz said the store is known for its cheesesteak subs — in a nearby refrigerator, there was about 50 pounds of choice Angus bottom round slabs ready for slicing and grilling.

It also serves Mexican specialties — tacos, tortas, burritos, quesadillas, and pupusas, all made fresh.

The store's name, Emmanuel, means "God is with us." Diaz's faith served him well — he opened the market as the coronavirus pandemic began.

"It was a very difficult time," he said.

But Diaz is accustomed to overcoming obstacles.

He and his wife are originally from Guatemala. He came to the United States in 1999 as part of a vegetable-harvesting team.

He worked at a chicken-processing plant for several years before taking a job in Berlin, Md., doing construction work.

Diaz commuted from Accomack County each workday for 15 years and learned the importance of places that provide quick meals fast.

He was a customer at Doughty's

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

In Melfa, wide selection and triumphant food

Emmanuel Store, owned by Vinicio and Norma Diaz, has everything — and tasty tacos

Without overstating it, the taco was a triumph of freshness and taste, with warm, tender steak under colorful toppings, wrapped in a corn tortilla that perfectly held it all.

The toppings included cilantro, pico de gallo, avocado, lettuce, and cheese, in perfect quantities.

It was a true culinary discovery, food to brag about, a dish to drive for. It was a taco that will brighten a day, improve a mood, and ease worry.

And at just \$3 apiece, the steak tacos at the three-year-old Emmanuel Store in Melfa are affordable in pairs, trios, or more.

Vinicio Diaz, who owns the store with his wife, Norma, said all the food they serve is fresh, scratch-made, and popular.

"The customers started asking for tacos," Vinicio Diaz said, and he delivered.

Emmanuel Store occupies the

Wide selection, and triumphant food

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Market when longtime owner Jeff Doughty gauged his interest in opening a business there.

“I kind of liked the idea and went home and talked to my wife about it,” he said.

When Doughty’s Market closed, he missed an initial opportunity to open his store there. But the opportunity presented itself again.

Diaz and his family are members of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Onley and relies on his deep Faith. The store is closed on Sunday but open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. every other day.

The kitchen closes daily at 5 p.m., so it is best to order the famous tacos earlier in the day.

For the Diaz family, hard work and strong faith have led to a successful venture.

“I really like it here,” he said.

WRITTEN BY TED SHOCKLEY



Steak tacos at Emmanuel Store in Melfa.

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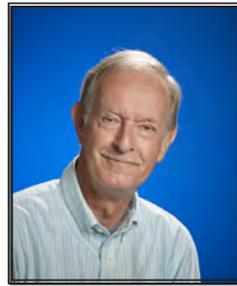
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Brandon Sterling and Erica Custis, who now have careers on the water, were boating from a young age.

Kids who rescued parents were boating prodigies

Shore natives Brandon Sterling, Erica Custis now have careers on the water

BY BILL STERLING

Living one gut apart on Nandua Creek, the families of Paul and Wanda Custis, and Glenn and Sherry Sterling, have many boating memories over the course of their lifetimes, including a voyage far up the bay that was once chronicled in the Chesapeake Bay magazine.

But the story they often bring up when getting together was a simple cruise 33 years ago to the mouth of Nandua Creek when they were rescued by their children.

Paul Custis tells the story. "It was a beautiful summer evening when we decided to ride out to the mouth of the creek from our dock with Glenn and Sherry in their boat to watch the sun-

set. Our daughter, Erica, was about 12, old enough to leave for about an hour but not for too long. We left her at our house with the Sterlings' son, Brandon, who might have been about 9 or so. When it was time to come back, the drive shaft on Glenn's boat broke, stranding us at the mouth of the creek. Getting worried, we called on our VHF radio — this was before cell

phones — and told the Coast Guard of our predicament, asking them to call and check on the kids back at the house, also giving them the phone numbers of boating friends who live nearby.

"Before long, we see this boat coming to us at the mouth of the creek. I assumed it was a neighbor coming to help us, but as the boat got closer, I told Glenn that it looked a lot like my boat. He said, 'It looks like your boat because it is your boat.' I said, 'If that is my boat, then who is driving it.' We didn't see anyone behind the wheel until it got closer, and a head popped up, which was Erica. Brandon was right at her side. When the Coast Guard called and told her about our plight, she decided to go to the dock and start the boat and drove it to the mouth of the creek to rescue us."

Little did the couples know at the time that they were raising some boating prodigies.

Erica Custis started as third mate on commercial vessels, then became a tugboat captain at The Port of Virginia, one of the busiest ports in the world. She recently took a position where she is the general manager for Moran Towing in Wilmington, N.C., leading a staff of about 15 who crew the tugboats assisting vessels into the harbor.

Brandon Sterling went on to serve in the Coast Guard four years and is now head of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission on the Eastern Shore, supervising a staff of 15 officers who protect the Eastern Shore marine and natural resources.

Their upbringing of being on the water at an early age reinforces the notion that where you live often has a huge impact on the course of your life.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Kids who rescued parents were boating prodigies

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Erica recalls, "I had driven that boat many times with my parents, but never alone, but I remember when we got the call it just felt natural to take the boat and drive to the mouth of the creek."

Brandon said, "I was driving my grandfather's skiff all over the creek by the time I was 12, but I was only 9 then and remember thinking whether this was a good idea because it was almost dark. I would be lying if I said I wasn't a little nervous, but I trusted Erica."

Erica Custis

Erica still remembers the advice given to her by a high school guidance counselor. "He told me I should be a nurse — not a doctor, mind you — but a nurse, so I could follow my husband wherever he got a job."

She attended Radford University, where she was offered a scholarship for field hockey, choosing to major in art and psychology, and considered pursuing grad school.

Upon graduation, with no job offers, she decided to go sailing to distant locations with her uncle, Ray Nordstrom. "We sailed to the USVI, the Bahamas, the Leeward Islands and other great locations. I loved everything about it."

Her uncle, seeing her love of the water, told her about maritime academies. "I never knew there was such a thing," said Erica. "So I checked around and wound up going to Texas A&M in Galveston and majoring in marine transportation."

Erica joined Moran Towing, a prominent tug company founded in 1860, after sailing for two years on her Third Mate Oceans License. She was excited about transitioning to harbor ship assist work, and found, after some time, the men accepted her as a talented boat operator.

Erica agrees that growing up on a creek with a boating family had a huge influence on her career choice, although it was not obvious at first, maybe

because she was a female entering a world dominated by men. "It's not about gender; it's about the ability to do the job, and Moran has supported and contributed to my success every step of the way," she said.

Erica said being a ship assist tugboat captain does not usually require physical strength, even when guiding the largest ships in the world — the 1,300-foot Ultra Large Container ships — into the harbor. It does require precision, a natural ability and focus.

Not long after she accepted the competitive job as general manager in the Wilmington, N.C., port, Erica got a call from Jamie Scott in Miami, who sent congratulations for joining her as only the second woman to hold such a position within the company.

Erica said her priorities in Wilmington are keeping a positive healthy morale within the team, supporting the tug crews and keeping the vessels in top condition. With one key staffer absent due to a medical situation, Erica is finding herself busier than ever and tied to a desk more than she would like, given her love of boats.

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Kids who rescued parents were boating prodigies

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Erica's father gives her credit for suggesting the idea for one of the most popular fundraisers on the Eastern Shore, the Bayside Poker Run sponsored by the Pungoteague Ruritan Club for 13 years and held jointly with the Onancock Rotary Club for the last three years.

Paul Custis, who was principal of Northampton High School when Erica was a student there, is a longtime member of the Ruritan Club. He proposed the idea of the maritime poker run after his daughter told him of a similar event in the Galveston, Tex., area. "She said it was a lot of fun and raised money for a good cause. I presented it to the club and was met with a bit of skepticism, but it caught on and proved to be a great fundraiser that has helped a lot of organizations on the Eastern Shore," said Custis.

As Erica and her wife Berkley get more settled into their new surroundings, they hope to bring their

center console MayCraft down to Wilmington from the Shore, where her family is looking after it. "We've rented a boat a couple of times here, and the recreational boating opportunities are vast, with tons of inlets and beaches to explore," Erica noted.

Brandon Sterling

Brandon Sterling grew up next door to his grandfather, Garland Sterling, and recalls he was either on a tractor or going fishing with him at a very early age.

"I remember many summer days Pop-Pop and I would take his skiff and catch a mess of fish in the creek. With some saltine crackers, Vienna sausages and a Coke, we would stay out there most of the day. He often let me drive his skiff, and by the time I was 12, I was allowed to take it out on my own if I stayed in the creek. By the time I got my driver's license I had been running boats for years with friends, pulling them on hydro slides."

When Brandon entered Eastern Shore Community College after graduating from Northampton

High School in 1998, he was only there a week before "I knew this wasn't for me."

Following his love of the water, Brandon joined the Coast Guard. "Obviously, my love of being on the water influenced me, but my other grandfather on my mother's side had been a retired Coast Guard chief, and I had heard stories about him growing up and remember a few things about him, even though he passed away when I was 5."

Stationed at Little Creek for four years, Brandon soon put his boating skills to use, rising rapidly to the rank of boatswain's mate, where he operated boats ranging from a 21-foot Zodiac to a 47-foot Motor Life Boat in search-and-rescue efforts and law enforcement missions.

"Little Creek is in an active boating area, and there were numerous calls to assist boaters or be involved in law-enforcement activities," recalled Brandon. "There were some nights we were out in extremely rough seas, but being on a boat from an early age certainly was a big help to me in the Coast Guard."

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Kids who rescued parents were boating prodigies

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After four years, his commanding officer tried to convince Brandon to remain in the Coast Guard, telling him he would be assigned to the 87-foot cutter, *Albacore*.

"I was very tempted, but my love of the Eastern Shore and all it has to offer won out. I didn't want to move every four years and get farther and farther away from the Shore. I do think sometimes that if I stayed in for 20 years, I would have been retired four years now, drawing a pension," said Brandon, 42.

But another 16 years seemed like a lifetime when you are 22 and wanting to see what is out there beyond the Coast Guard. And I guess things turned out pretty good for me. I probably wouldn't have my wife (Nan) and our two boys now."

The older son, Garland, 6, is named after Brandon's grandfather, his constant companion as a child. "Garland certainly takes after his namesake. He loves the outdoors and wants to go hunting and fishing with me every chance he gets," said Brandon, whose younger son, Walker, is 2.

After leaving the Coast Guard, Brandon worked for Floyd Energy briefly before being told by friends that he would be a good fit for an opening with the University of Virginia Ecological Research Station. "The position involved taking graduate students out to the barrier islands for their research. I also kept the boats in good working order and made sure safety regulations were being met."

Brandon also used the GI bill to attend night school at Eastern Shore Community College.

In 2005, he learned of an opening in the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. "I had always thought about the VMRC because growing up I spent a lot of time in the home of a VMRC officer, Sid Adams, whose step-son Scott was a really good friend. I applied and got the job."

Again, Brandon's love of being on the water steered his career choice, and after being promoted to first sergeant in 2013, he became captain in 2015 following the retirement of Bruce Ballard. "Bruce has had a huge influence on my career, and before him there was Randy Widgeon, who was captain until he passed away in 2012."

The VMRC manages saltwater fishing and associated habitat for both recreational and commercial species. As an agency, the Marine Police are responsible for 7200 miles of shoreline, and the Eastern Shore division with its 15 officers patrols the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's seaside.

Not surprisingly, Brandon has found he spends less and less time on a boat, often being tied to a desk and handling other supervisory responsibilities for the staff. "I try to get out on the boat with the officers when I can because I would be out there every day if I could, but that's just not possible," he said.

Brandon does enjoy recreational boating, having owned a Parker and then a Carolina Skiff, but with two young children, he and his wife and brother-in-law and wife now own a family pontoon boat. He knows there will be plenty of fishing trips in his future with his two sons as he passes down his love of the water to another generation.

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FIRST Curtis Badger

Anne Toft — Mysterious queen of Gargaphia

BY CURTIS BADGER

One of the wealthiest and shrewdest of the early landowners on the Eastern Shore was a woman named Anne Toft, who supposedly came to the peninsula from England as an indentured servant when she was a small child. By the time she was 17, she had patented 800 acres on the Eastern Shore. By the time she was 21, she owned land in Gloucester County, Westmoreland County, the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and on the Caribbean island of Jamaica.

Anne Toft was by all accounts a woman of beauty and charm who was a cool hand when it came to negotiating a contract. She was also a woman of mystery. In legal documents of the day, she was referred to as Mrs. Toft, but there was never an appearance of a Mr. Toft, nor is there a mention of her maiden name. She had three daughters — Arcadia, Attalanta, and Annabella — but the identity of their father is likewise a mystery.

She had a close relationship with Colonel Edmund Scarborough II, a prominent landowner, officer of the militia, and member of the House of Burgesses, who coached her in business matters. The colonel patented his first land in 1635 on Ma-

gothy Bay shortly after arriving from England, where he went to school. According to Susie Ames's "The Eastern Shore in the Seventeenth Century," he amassed more than 30,000 acres of land on both the seaside and bayside. Chief among his holdings was land on the northern shore of Occohannock Creek (now Scarborough Neck) and in what is now Gargatha Neck. Mrs. Toft was not far behind. According to Ames, she patented 19,250 acres in the 1660s.

A partnership existed between the colonel and Mrs. Toft, but more than 350 years later, the nature of that relationship is still uncertain. In 1664 Col. Scarborough gave Mrs. Toft a patent for a 1,200-acre tract they called Gargaphia, a name taken from Greek mythology. The land is on the seaside bounded by Whites Creek and Gargatha Creek and is known today as Gargatha Neck. They built a substantial plantation on the tract, with Scarborough retaining lifetime rights to use the plantation for business purposes. Scarborough had multiple industries on the property, including a saltworks, tannery, and facilities for manufacturing shoes.

Ralph T. Whitelaw's 1951 classic Virginia's

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The writer of this piece, Curtis Badger, grew up on Virginia's Eastern Shore, attended Emory & Henry College, spent four years in the Air Force, and immediately returned to the islands and salt marshes of his home. He is a writer and photographer whose work is widely published. He and his wife live on Pungoteague Creek and have an adult son.

Anne Toft — Mysterious queen of Gargaphia

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Eastern Shore is an exhaustive documentation of property transfers on the Eastern Shore, but Whitelaw also includes several pages on the mysterious Mrs. Toft. Regarding her relationship with Col. Scarborough, Whitelaw writes, "On the basis of circumstantial information, which is all that is available, the exact form of her relationship with Colonel Edmund Scarborough is still an unsolved problem...."

The circumstantial information includes the fact that, at the time, Gargatha Neck was far removed from civilization. The nearest settlement was several miles to the south. In addition, court records indicated friction between the colonel and his wife, Mary. Did their partnership involve something other than patents and land grants?

The Toft-Scarborough relationship began to un-

ravel on May 8, 1670, when the colonel went to Gargaphia to oversee some of his businesses there, and he was publicly confronted about his relationship with Mrs. Toft and the business being conducted at Gargaphia.

An altercation ensued, Col. Scarborough was injured, and the case went to court. Depositions from witnesses agreed that a workman had attacked the colonel, vowing he "would work no more for Scarborough's whores and bastards."

The case went public and it no doubt affected Col. Scarborough's reputation in the community. Whitelaw wrote that it was the beginning of the end for him. "Five months later, for another matter, he was relieved of all offices and about twelve months from the above date he was dead."

Scarborough died in 1671 at his home, Hedra Cot-

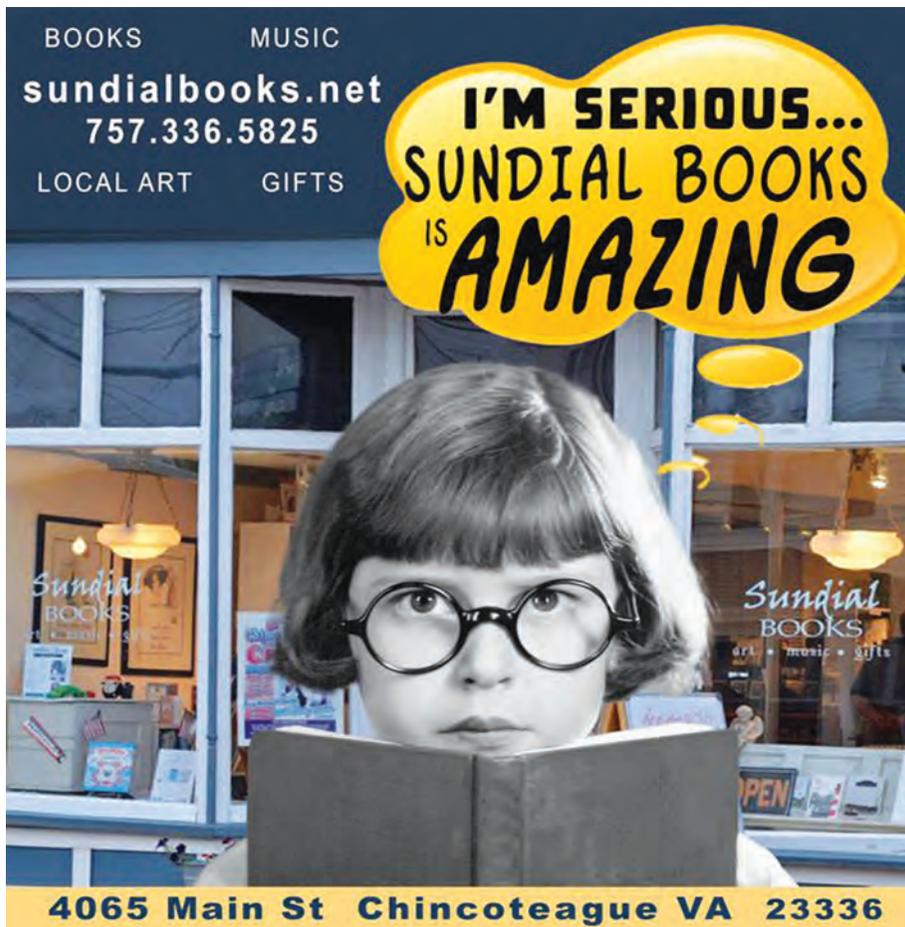
tage, but Mrs. Toft did not grieve for long. Before the year was out, she had married Daniel Jenifer, a man from St. Mary's, Maryland, who was as ambitious and driven as she was. Together, they patented more land along the seaside, including Chincoteague and Assateague Islands, selling portions of it at times. The last joint signature on a deed of sale was February 15, 1687. After that date, Daniel alone signed. And Mrs. Toft drifted away as mysteriously as she had arrived.

Note: Eastern Shore genealogist M.K. Miles of Saxis has done exhaustive research of the Scarboroughs, Tofts, and Jenifers. For additional information visit the website <https://espl-genealogy.org/MilesFiles/site/>.

WRITTEN BY CURTIS BADGER

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The Hotel Wachapreague's opening in 1902 was a gala day-long event with banquets and boat rides.

History of an icon of Wachapreague

Hotel finished in 1902 attracted both anglers and royalty to Eastern Shore's seaside

Wachapreague was founded in 1872, and in 1881 one of the first houses in town was enlarged into a boarding house or, as they were often called on the Eastern Shore, a "hotel." In 1902 local merchant and seafood dealer A. H. Gordon Mears (1861-1944) moved that building aside,

and in its place erected a full-fledged hotel.

Locals watched with amazement as builder G. Wellington Coard (1852-1924) and his workers raised a building far larger than any other in town, an ornate four-story structure framed by porches and topped by dormers, with stained glass windows, an

elegant dining room with a view of the waterfront, and materials salvaged from the famous Hygeia Hotel across the Chesapeake at Old Point. In a day when most Eastern Shore "hotels" had a dozen rooms or fewer, the new Hotel Wachapreague

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Copyright 2008, 2016 by Kirk Mariner. This is reprinted from his book, "Glimpses of a Vanished Eastern Shore," with permission of Miona Publications and Gail Harding. Mariner, a retired United Methodist minister and local historian and writer, died June 8, 2017. His work is featured monthly in Eastern Shore First.

History of an icon of Wachapreague

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boasted 30 guest rooms, and cost \$30,000. Its opening on September 18, 1902, was a gala day-long event with banquets and boat rides, speeches and music, and an exhibition of that latest marvel, the “picture and talking machine.”

Not without reason did many locals greet Mears’ hotel with skepticism. Wachapreague had fewer than 500 inhabitants and was well off the beaten path, accessible by no paved road and no regular boat.

Undaunted by predictions of failure, Mears advertised in northern newspapers and magazines and was soon attracting a “refined patronage” of leisured northerners. When his guests alighted from the train in Keller, a carriage awaited to escort them straight to the hotel, where they could enjoy “splendid” meals, rent a fishing boat and guide, play

tennis or billiards or, in formal attire, simply lounge on the porch and enjoy the view.

Over the years Hotel Wachapreague’s “steady procession of repeat customers” put the small town on the map. Some of its guests were from the ranks of the rich and famous, among them Walter Chrysler, silent screen star Evelyn Nesbit, British actor Ronald Coleman, Thomas Edison, Jr., several Virginia governors, former president Herbert Hoover, and the prince of Thailand.

Yet, lamented one guest, “one could not [even] get an occasional drink in it,” for Mears was a devout Methodist, vice president of the local chapter of the Anti-Saloon League, and adamant that his hotel be “dry.”

Mears died in 1944, and the hotel remained in his family’s hands until 1972, by which time an adjacent motel and a marina had been added to the business. Rates in 1974 included \$28 for a double room, \$39 if it came with breakfast and dinner, and charter boat fishing from \$75 a day.

In 1977 the building was purchased by Randy Lewis, who planned to refurbish it, but on July 1,

1978, a fire of electrical origin broke out on the top floor. Seventy-five firemen from 10 local companies managed to contain the blaze, but the fourth floor was virtually a total loss and the rest of the building sustained heavy water damage. When the estimated \$500,000 needed to restore it could not be raised, the building was demolished in January 1980.

The motel, erected in 1961, continues in operation today, as does the Island House Restaurant on the waterfront, both of them direct lineal heirs of the hotel.

The late lamented hotel stood at the end of Main Street overlooking the water, a site, at the corner of Main and Atlantic Avenue, empty but well-maintained today and the site of a park.

Many predicted that the disappearance of the hotel would spell the end of Wachapreague itself, but the little town endures, and still enjoys a renown disproportionate to its small size (population 291) and off-the-beaten-path location.

WRITTEN BY KIRK MARINER



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100 years ago
January 1923

Cape Charles

Miss Rebecca Scott, of the high school faculty, who has been sick, is improving.

Mrs. W. F. King left Wednesday afternoon to spend the remainder of the winter in Los Angeles, Calif.

Miss Adelaide Wise, of Cherrystone, was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton P. King, this week.

Mrs. William F. Delaney, of Patterson, N.J., is the guest of Mr. Charles A. McKinney.

Miss Jewel Holland, of Eastville, who is acting as substitute on the high school faculty, is the guest of Mrs. F. T. Wilkins.

Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Scott and children spent Sunday with relatives at Onley.

Miss Louise Milbourne, of Norfolk, spent last week with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Milbourne.

Mrs. Charles E. Milligan, of Long Island, N.Y., was called here last week by the death of her mother, Mrs. C. A. McKinney.

Mrs. Robert K. Pratt and son, Robert Jr., have returned from Eastville, where they spent the last two weeks with Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Tayler.

Mr. and Mrs. George M. Ritzell, of Peninsula Junction, Md., who have been visiting Mrs. John Goffigon, have returned home.

Mr. and Mrs. Elton Guy and Miss Maria Gray spent Sunday in Hampton.

Emmett Topping, Jr., of Amburg, Va., was the guest last week end of Mr. and Mrs. J. Warren Topping, Jr.

George B. Tilghman spent Tuesday in Norfolk. Mrs. L. B. Ward, of Norfolk, was the guest this week of her daughter Mrs. George Guy.

— *The Virginian-Pilot*

Given 15-year term

Contending that a drink of moonshine whisky had temporarily crazed his client, Jesse Webb, a

Newport News man charged with the killing of Melton Johnson last August, J. Thomas Newhome, his attorney, succeeded in getting the him a second-degree murder verdict, and Webb was sentenced to fifteen years in the penitentiary in the circuit court at Eastville today.

It was brought out at the trial that Webb has a bad record in Newport News.

— *The Virginian-Pilot*

May not meet at Chincoteague

Because it is feared Chincoteague is too far and lacks the necessary accommodations to entertain the Wilmington Methodist Conference in April, prominent members of the conference urge that the decision to meet at Chincoteague be revoked and that the conference accept the hospitality of Salisbury, Md.

Rev. L. B. Morgan, pastor of Chincoteague Church, insists that the conference meet there according to its decision, and says the island can accommodate all of the ministers who attend.

— *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*

75 years ago
January 1948

Exmore elects mayor and 10 town councilmen

This Northampton County town of 2,000 population, recently incorporated after a fight which dragged through the courts for more than a year, today held its first election to name a mayor and six members of the Town Council.

John C. Mapp, who was unopposed, was selected as mayor by a total of 205 votes, while named from a field of 10 running for seats on the Town Council were Harry James, who received 150 votes; Ashby Turner, 163; Grace A. Weston, 138; Harold Parks, 148; M. J. Duer, 138; and Richard Dix, 175.

Defeated candidates for council office were Wade Walker, Dr. J. E. Gladstone, E. D. Brown and H. L. Gilden.

— *Peninsula Enterprise*

Potato market expansion aim of conference

Leaders in the Virginia commercial potato industry will meet in Cape Charles Friday to receive reports on far-reaching proposals for rejuvenation of the \$22,000,000 Irish and sweet potato market in this State.

Potato growers, handlers, equipment manufacturers, seed houses, railway men and government specialists—numbering about 100 in all—have been invited to the meeting, set for 11:45 a.m. at the Cape Charles Municipal Building. The gathering is being sponsored by the Association of Virginia Potato and Vegetable Growers jointly with State and Federal agricultural agencies.

Dr. J. L. Maxton, agricultural economist at Virginia Tech, will present a report recommending revolutionary changes in technique of growing and marketing potatoes to meet stiff competition now being felt from other potato-growing sections. The report was worked out by Dr. Maxton along with county farm agents in this section, Virginia Truck Experiment Station specialists and leaders of the growers association.

The report is expected to stress changes in marketing procedures, especially washing and drying, plus standardization of sizes grown and improvement of quality.

— *The Virginian-Pilot*

50 years ago
January 1973

Northampton quits planning districts

Eastville — Northampton County is the first local governing body in Virginia to withdraw from the State's relatively new planning districts.

By a 2-1 vote, the Northampton Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday to end its support of Planning District 22. The District is made up of Accomack

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and Northampton counties.

J. T. Holland, a Northampton supervisor and a member of the Planning District Commission, said he felt the planning districts in Virginia were leading toward State control of local government.

He was joined by supervisor T. Hume Dixon in voting the county out of the district. Board chairman Harold Westcoat of Eastville voted against the motion, saying he feared it would jeopardize the county and town from getting federal funds.

The planning districts were authorized by the 1970 Virginia Legislature. They must be made up of two or more local governing bodies and District 22 has to be concentrating primarily on working for federal and state funding on local projects.

Recently some in Accomack said the district was being used by the State to bypass local government. One complaint was that letters and other documents formerly sent to county officials by the State were now being routed through the planning district.

Tuesday, before the Northampton Supervisors voted to withdraw, James E. Douglas, president of the Northampton County Farm Bureau, urged withdrawal. He said the districts were "an unnecessary duplication of local government . . . and attempt to create a new layer of government."

— *The Daily Times*

Northampton quits planning districts

Accomack — In an attempt to save the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, the Accomack County Board of Supervisors has voted to ask for legislation for Accomack County to continue alone in the Planning District.

Early this month Northampton County, the only other member of the commission, said it was ending its support of Planning District 22 on July 1.

Accomack County Supervisors chairman said that if this happens under present law the Planning District would be disbanded. Law requires two or more counties in a Planning District.

On a motion by C. D. Marsh, Election District

4 supervisor, the board members voted 8 - 1 Wednesday to ask for legislation in the general assembly to save the Planning District.

The legislation requested would allow Accomack County to form a Planning District with that county as the sole member.

The no vote to the motion came from Chincoteague Supervisor Paul B. Merritt who expressed strong opposition and charged the Planning District with attempts to take over local government.

There was some reflection of this theme from members of the board of supervisors who voted for the motion.

C. E. Porterfield of District 4 said, "The Board of Supervisors has been effectively by-passed . . . there is not enough communication." Porterfield charged too little local control over the planning district and indicated he would lead a fight to get more elected officials on the Planning District Commission.

Porterfield said there should be at least six elected officials from Accomack County on the commission. Presently there are only four, he added. These are all Accomack County Supervisors.

The board members generally expressed the position that more local control was to be exercised if the district was to continue in existence.

— *The Daily Times*

Conant retires on Chincoteague

Chincoteague — Warren Conant, postmaster in Chincoteague for over 30 years, retired last week.

George Milton Clear, former assistant postmaster here, has accepted the position of officer-in-charge of the Chincoteague Post Office, pending the appointment of a new postmaster.

Conant, 69, began service in the Chincoteague Post Office on May 1, 1936. A few months later he was appointed postmaster there. He said Friday he was retiring because he was reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70 next year.

Conant has been an active member of the town council, is a member of the Appeals Board of the Chincoteague Zoning and Planning Commission, a

former President of the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce, and a leader in the fight for Chincoteague's new high school several years ago.

He and Mrs. Conant live at 517 South Main Street and they have a son, Roger W. Conant, Trust Officer with the Virginia National Bank in Charlottesville.

Clear, the new officer-in-charge, is a Chincoteague native and has served with the Post Office on Chincoteague since the late 1930s. He has 34 years of service compared to 37 years for Conant.

Clear started as a mail carrier on Chincoteague and his only break came during World War II when he served in the armed forces. He is a Past Exalted Ruler of the Pocomoke City, Md., Elks and a Past Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Chincoteague.

— *The Daily Times*

Woman dead in house fire in Accomack

Accomack — Mrs. Virginia Melson died as fire destroyed her home in a fashionable residential area of Accomack this morning.

The blaze was reportedly discovered at 8 a.m. by a neighbor who made an unsuccessful attempt to enter the smoke-filled house.

Firemen found Mrs. Melson's body at the top of a stairway at about 8:30 a.m. The north side of the two-story frame dwelling was collapsing at the time.

Mrs. Melson was the only occupant of the house, neighbors said.

When firemen first arrived they did not know which of four upstairs bedrooms she might be in. Later they probed their way through dense smoke and said it appeared she had been able to reach the top of the stairway.

Mrs. Melson was the widow of Clive Melson.

Fire was raging out of control when the first units arrived at the scene, just south of Drummond-town Baptist Church.

Fire and rescue units from Tasley, Onley, Wa-

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FIRST Area headlines of yesterday

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

chapreague, Onancock and Parksley were called in.

The blaze was brought under control about 9:40 a.m. There was no indication how the fire started.

The upstairs north side of the house was totally engulfed in flames when firemen arrived.

Mrs. Melson was a lifelong resident of Accomac.

She was pronounced dead at the scene by Accomack County Coroner Dr. E. W. Bosworth. The body was taken to the Lilliston Funeral Home in Accomac.

— *The Daily Times*

Accomack County plans subdivision ordinance

Accomack County will have its first subdivision ordinance March 1 unless unforeseen objections arise, county officials say.

At the most recent meeting of the Accomack County Board of Supervisors it was agreed unanimously to present the ordinance at their Jan. 17 meeting at 10 a.m. for public hearing.

So far there has been no public objection to the ordinance and, if it is adopted Jan. 17, it will become effective March 1.

Prepared by the Accomack County Planning Commission under Paul B. Merritt, chairman, the ordinance marks a first step toward serious planning and zoning for Accomack County, officials here say.

The subdivision ordinance is primarily designed to place certain quality, size and health controls on plats of land scheduled for sub-division into two or more lots.

The ordinance will not control division of land for family dwelling sites within a family or similar situations. It is designed to control development of commercial sub-di-

visions to "facilitate the orderly beneficial growth of the community."

Included in the ordinance is a specific section covering Virginia Department of Health controls. This would provide various lot sizes the department considers adequate for lots with and without central sewage systems and water facilities.

A lot with central water and sewage must have 100 feet or more width and 10,000 square feet or more area, with either central water or sewage, 100 or more feet and 15,000 or more square feet and without either central system, 100 or more feet and 20,000 or more square feet.

— *The Daily Times*

Private plane believed down

The Coast Guard here is in its second day of searching for a small private plane believed to be down somewhere off the Atlantic Coast.

The plane, piloted by a man and his son en route from Indianapolis to Baltimore, reported having generator and navigational aid difficulties over Whitesburg, Ky.

The aircraft was last seen on radar in this vicinity.

The Chincoteague Coast Guard station was notified Sunday night and began searching procedures Monday morning.

Two aircraft and two cutters are presently being utilized in the search.

— *The Daily Times*

25 years ago January 1998

Fugitive arrested in Virginia

Chincoteague, Va. — A former Cam-

bridge resident wanted on multiple charges in Dorchester County was arrested here earlier this week.

Michael Preston Tolley, 23, has been the subject of an intense investigation by the Dorchester County Sheriff's Office since September 1996, according to Deputy James Phillips.

He said Tolley was involved in a high-speed chase that ended near East New Market when Tolley lost control of the car he was driving, ran into a ditch and fled on foot.

Tolley was arrested this past weekend. The arrest was the result of a joint investigation between the Dorchester County Sheriff's Office, the Chincoteague Police Department and the Accomack County Sheriff's Office.

Tolley was tracked down to a restaurant in Chincoteague where he had been employed under an assumed name, according to Chincoteague Police Chief Willis J. Dize, who said Tolley had been living in Chincoteague and working in a restaurant under his brother's name, Billy Marshall.

Chincoteague police did not become involved in the case until November 1997.

Almost a repeat performance of his eluding police 18 months ago in Dorchester County, Tolley fled Chincoteague police this time as well. As a result of this most recent incident, he has been charged in Chincoteague with felony unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, felony malicious destruction of property, failure to stop for a police officer and impeding a police officer.

Authorities in Chincoteague arrested Tolley after executing a search and seizure warrant at his residence in Virginia. He is currently being held without bail in the Accomack County Jail.

— *The Star Democrat*

FIRST Little Box of Thoughts...continued

Ripples

Change is an inevitable constant in our lives. It is the one certainty we all live by, yet have difficulty understanding on many levels.

True change starts on the inside, an individual journey that can spread like ripples in a pond, for good and unfortunately for bad. You are the one that makes the choice on how those ripples will be perceived.

I have examined my life in the past few months and have started making some of my own changes, positive ones, to help me adapt to the tidal wave of change that is happening for all of us.

I have stopped watching the news and participating in social media, I am cleaning out and organizing the "stuff" of my life giving particular focus to meaning and purpose, and I am learning to be present in the moment.

Family, spirituality, and gratitude have become the anchors with which I choose to ground myself. I encourage all of you to examine your own ripples, understand how they are perceived, and make some changes for the better; we are all capable of positive change.

"Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings"

—William Arthur Ward

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek"

—Barack Obama

"So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet will not take the initiative to change their situation because they are conditioned to a life of security, conformity, and conservation, all of which may appear to give one peace of mind, but in reality, nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit."

—Christopher McCandless

"Every human has four endowments - self awareness, conscience, independent will and creative imagination. These give us the ultimate human freedom... The power to choose, to respond, to change"

—Stephen Covey

"Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world"

—John Milton

"A great attitude does much more than turn on the lights in our worlds; it seems to magically connect us to all sorts of serendipitous opportunities that were somehow absent before the change"

—Earl Nightingale

"We all have life storms, and when we get the rough times and we recover from them, we should celebrate that we got through it. No matter how bad it may seem, there's always something beautiful that you can find"

—Mattie Stepanek

"The miracle comes quietly into the mind that stops an instant and is still"

—"Time for Joy" by R. Fishel

"It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere"

—Agnes Repplier

"One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon - instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today"

— Dale Carnegie

COMPILED BY MELANIE FREEZE MASON



The writer of this piece, Melanie Freeze Mason (left), is an Eastern Shore native whose paternal grandmother, Barbara Sturgis (far left), compiled a feature for the Eastern Shore News called "Little Box of Thoughts." Sturgis died in 2017 and while looking through some of her keepsakes, Mason found her books and clippings and decided to continue her grandmother's tradition of curating wise sayings and sage advice. Her monthly compilation, "Little Box of Thoughts...Continued," will appear in Eastern Shore First.

You may be over COVID, but COVID isn't over!



If you haven't been vaccinated against COVID-19, please get vaccinated. If you are not up-to-date with your COVID booster, get a booster, the new bivalent booster targets two strains of the COVID-19 virus: the original strain and an Omicron strain.

Call the Eastern Shore Rural Health center near you to schedule an appointment!



www.esrh.org

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