

The Monocacy

MONOCLE

Keeping an Eye on Local News

A Biweekly Newspaper

February 5, 2021 • Volume XVI, Number 22



This girl was up to the challenge. More snow photos in Family Album on page 2.



Because she's a health worker, dental hygienist Shannon Myers of Pike and Valega's got her vaccine. Read more about the vaccine on page 3.



Real history takes many forms. The proof is in Tidbits on page 13.



Civil Rights and the CCC, a history that rebuilt the C&O Canal. Learn more on page 16.

Commissioners Hear Case for New Willard Plan But Delay Vote

By Link Hoewing

The Willard family presented their new design for the thirteen-acre property they own next to Poolesville Town Hall to the Town of Poolesville commissioners at their regular meeting on February 1. As reported previously in this paper, the Planning Commission had reviewed the preliminary site plans for the property and recommended to the commissioners that they approve the use of the town's Overlay Rules for the Willard property. This means the commissioners would be approving new zoning for the property to allow for a potentially more innovative plan that could include more public benefits than the traditional zoning for the land would allow.

If the commissioners approve the use of the Overlay Rules, the proposed plan then goes back to the Planning Commission which will continue to negotiate with the Willards before a

final plan is approved. Town Attorney Jay Gullo said that the Planning Commission can press for changes in the plan as presented to the commissioners, but they may not accept "material" or major changes that significantly alter its makeup.

In comments before the commissioners, James Clifford and Dave Agar provided an overview of the new plan. Clifford pointed out that the use of the Overlay Rules for the property is appropriate because the project is considered to be an infill development, meaning that it is in the center of town surrounded by already-existing commercial and residential developments. He said the Overlay Rules allow for flexibility and innovation in how the initial plan has been developed. It meets the Master Plan's requirement for the use of Overlay Rules, according to Clifford.

Before he could discuss in more detail some of the plan's provisions, which were previously reported by this paper, Town Manager Seth Rivard added that the sixty-four homes projected in the new plan were "locked in." It could not be increased but could be decreased. In response to a question from Commissioner Martin Radigan, Rivard said that the plan would have a "priority" for water and sewer allocation. He made this comment in the context of previous discussions with the commissioners in which he suggested that without a possible new Impact Fee for new development, there might not be enough sewer capacity for some future development.

Clifford responded that "there had never been a discussion that there may be capacity issues" in the past. He further said that "it wasn't until just

Continued on page 8.

Montgomery County Council Votes to Advance Solar In the Ag Reserve with Care

After nearly a year of discussion and debate, a virtual town hall, and with the recommendations of a council-appointed stakeholder work group, the Montgomery County Council voted on January 26 to approve, with amendments, ZTA 20-01—a bill to allow siting up to three square miles (1,800 acres) of industrial solar arrays in the county's Agricultural Reserve. The robust discussion of the best way to balance solar generation and natural resource protection featured the value of the Ag Reserve now and in the future for the region's food security.

Councilmember Craig Rice offered an amendment to designate solar as a conditional use, thereby alleviating stakeholder concerns that the ZTA would undermine agriculture as the primary land use in the Ag Reserve. The original ZTA would have allowed

solar as a permitted use on an equal par with agriculture in direct conflict with the Agricultural Reserve and Open Space (AROS) Master Plan. Rice reported that he had consulted with Baltimore County staff where their conditional use process has facilitated a number of ground-mounted solar projects to move forward. Howard County also uses this review process for commercial solar projects. Because the language was in draft form, the council elected to take a straw vote on conditional use with the final vote coming at next week's council session. The conditional use amendment passed 6-3, with Councilmembers Jawando, Rice, Navarro, Friedson, Katz, and Alborno voting in favor.

Councilmember Andrew Friedson introduced an amendment to prevent solar array siting on the most productive

soils actually farmed on the Ag Reserve (Class II). The original draft of the ZTA only prevented solar array siting on Class I soils which are mostly stream buffers and islands in the Potomac. The vote was 5-4; Councilmembers Navarro, Katz, Alborno, and Rice voted in favor. This amendment does not protect all productive soil, thirty percent of Ag Reserve farms are on Class III soils, but it does protect the best and leaves hundreds of acres available for five- to fifteen-acre commercial solar installations.

Councilmember Will Jawando offered an amendment that would set a pausing point for solar installations three years after passage to involve the county Office of Agriculture in an assessment of how the installations

Continued on page 7.

Family Album



This Brightwell Crossing family was on their way to the "hill" nearby: short, but sweet and perfect for practicing snowboarding.



Mark Simmons proved you never outgrow the love of snow tubing.



The joy of snow tubing and sledding cannot be hidden, not even by a mask.



The Rotellas, father and son, cleared the sidewalk in front of their home.

Snow Days



Emma Hershcopf was undaunted by her large driveway. The girl knows how to get 'er done.



Garrett, Mark, and Caroline Simmons enjoyed sledding at Bretton Woods.

Local News

I Was Part of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine Testing Process

By Dr. Margaret Valega, DDS

When the announcement was made that Moderna was to begin Phase I testing of its COVID-19 vaccine, I knew I wanted to be part of it. My father worked at NIH, and I grew up with science discussions at the dinner table, so I wanted to contribute to this cause by participating. I found it quite interesting that the consent form was twenty pages long and that the information therein will be archived for thirty years.

I contacted an NIH scientist (who studies AIDS) about signing up for the Moderna trial, to be held at the University of Medical School in Baltimore. He said he had been a participant in many Phase 3 trials held at NIH and had no qualms about participating in the Moderna trial. He said he really thinks the mRNA platform is the wave of all future vaccines, as mRNA can be produced in bulk in the lab.

Satisfied, I signed up. My first visit was in the beginning of September. The process was as expected. I had a physical, the nose swab test (unpleasant but not all that bad), my blood drawn, and then I was given the first shot. As I had no reaction, I figured I had gotten the placebo. They provided an app for my phone which allowed me to record my temperature and any symptoms for the next seven days. Subsequently, once per week I get a prompt from the online diary (called Patient Cloud) to answer questions, and then once per month a nurse called me to ask questions.

At the beginning of October, I had my second visit with the test medical staff in Baltimore. After a brief checkup, including the nose swab test and the blood draw, they gave me the second vaccine shot. Again, I had no adverse symptoms and, once again, I assumed I had received the placebo; however, that night I did not sleep well as my arm became sore, although not enough to use Advil. Upon waking, I took my temperature and recorded it a bit high at 99.3. I did not feel sick, and recording my daily temperature in my e-diary was my routine for next week.

My final visit occurred at the beginning of November, but this time there was no nose swab, only some blood work.

We received an email from Moderna one day before their request for an EUA (emergency use authorization) informing us that they anticipated approval for the use of the vaccine.

The email said that if I needed to be "unblinded" (to know whether I had received the placebo or the vaccine), to please let them know. When Montgomery County opened up the vaccine to dentistry staff, I called Baltimore, and the nurse informed me that I had received the vaccine during the test; I did not need to get another.

In the test in which I participated, there were four hundred total participants, evenly divided between vaccine and placebo; 220 of the total were healthcare workers. At this point, those who got the placebo were informed and authorized to receive the vaccine immediately. Those of us who received the vaccine will have to report back to Baltimore once more for a nose swab and final bloodwork with the follow-up to extend for the next two years.

I assume the bloodwork will monitor the efficacy of the vaccine over time.

My hope is that readers will find this up-close personal report on the participation in the test process a comfort and that it will reassure them to not be afraid to receive the vaccine at the earliest time possible.

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Rande(m) Thoughts The Ferry to Nowhere Isn't Going Anywhere Soon

By Rande Davis

If White's Ferry is to open again, now is the time for the elected officials of Montgomery County, Loudon County, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia to step up. I appreciate that both groups allowed room for the private parties to negotiate, to work out differences, and to strike a deal, but time is running out. With the ferry employees being paid only until mid-February, no solution soon may mean no solution ever. The details over the past four weeks of negotiation can be frustrating, but it all boils down to a simple reality: Overtures by the Brown family have not advanced the ball (even after an offer of a payment of \$400,000 for perpetual landing rights was made by the Browns), and the divide on selling the operation is far too wide. A partnership between the two parties, we can safely say, will never happen.

Poolesville officials have done all they can to recruit county support with Jim Brown even reaching out to the mayor of Leesburg. Citizens have sent emails and have rallied in their support of getting the ferry running again. With time running out, the ball is now in the hands of county and state officials, especially on the Virginia side. On our side of the river, we should demand and expect our county and state representatives to get involved and press the Virginia folks forward. They need to report back to

us, not remain silent. I don't know if the ferry can be saved, but we shouldn't lose it for lack of trying. Now is precisely the time for the Loudon County Board of Supervisors and Virginia state government to take action.

The real problem began when Virginia secured a public landing on its side of the river in 1871 but was sloppy in recording the precise location; hence, the confusion and frustration today. Virginia officials could still specify a public landing today to correct their past error. There is nothing stopping them.

Not being a lawyer, I am not sure whether eminent domain is the legal path or not. If there is any doubt that the state understands a public landing exists, why then did they recently spend an estimated \$140,000 to repave the road leading to the river (see Stu Collins's letter to the editor this issue)? Did they intend to upgrade a road to a public landing or just to the entry of private property? It begs the question: Is that a path, a road, or a driveway. If there is no ferry, then that road becomes nothing but a long driveway to Rockland Farm, LLC property. Is anyone asking Rockland Farm to re-imburse the state for the expense of paving its driveway?

Public interest demands a solution. The solution will come through eminent domain (Rockland will never get from the state anything near what the Browns have offered) or some kind of unification effort to purchase the operation by Loudon and Montgomery Counties, or some other creative legal remedy. This is the kind of problem elected officials on both sides of the river are in power to solve, not to look upon impassively from the sidelines.

Letter to The Editor

As a forty-eight-year resident of Barnesville and frequent user of the ferry, I have not seen mentioned the fact that VDOT recently resurfaced White's Ferry Road in its entirety. Assuming that this was at Virginia taxpayer expense, it seems that taxpayers no longer have use of the last 4,200 feet of roadway (Twin Maple Lane to ferry landing). A down and dirty approximate estimate of that cost:

18-foot width multiplied by 4,200-foot length equals 8,400 square yards of pavement. Surface prep at \$4.00/sy for milling and edgework = \$33,600

plus assumed 2.5" bituminous overlay at \$85.00 per ton (8,400 square yards x 293 pounds = 1,231 tons) = \$104,635.00 for a total of \$138,235.00 for which taxpayers receive no benefit.

Maybe the landowner should cough that up to the Virginia taxpayers. The best scenario, considering the ferry has been a commercial conveyance for over two hundred years, is for Virginia to seize the landing property (they already own the road) and get the ferry back in business. That's my opinion for anyone who's interested.

Stu Collins
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Call Rande Davis at 301-509-9232

Op Ed

A Banner Day for the Agricultural Reserve

Editor's Note: In the January 22 issue of the Monocle, we published a report by Doug Boucher on a compromise Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) for Agricultural Reserve solar array projects. We should have identified Boucher as one of the committee members of one of the working groups that developed the compromise. He was on one of the sides identified in his article. Here we publish a report from two organizations on another side of that discussion. The Monocle welcomes all responsible opinions on this and other issues of interest.

For more than a year, the Montgomery County Council has been considering a bill, a Zoning Text Amendment, to open the door to commercial solar projects in the Agricultural Reserve. Farmers, the Montgomery Countryside Alliance, Sugarloaf Citizens' Association, and partner groups strongly opposed changing the law to allow commercial solar projects to become a permitted use of farmland on equal par with agriculture. The council finally came to the same conclusion and modified the proposal to protect agriculture as the primary use of the Ag Reserve.

The coalition pushing for soil protections and solar arrays as a "conditional use" included farmers, environmentalists, climate activists, and over sixty local and state civic groups. Together, this coalition rallied thousands of concerned residents from all parts of the county who wrote the council in support of compromise amendments that preserve agriculture as the primary use of the Reserve while allowing thoughtfully-planned solar development. The amendments passed on Tuesday, January 26, 2021.

The robust council discussion of the best way to balance solar generation featured the value of the Ag Reserve now and in the future as a resource for the region's food security. Councilmember Navarro gave voice to the role the Reserve can play in meeting the food security challenges laid bare by the pandemic, in food distribution to our most vulnerable neighbors. In addition, MCA's highly successful Land Link Program, matching landowners with farmers, has expanded dramatically to include an array of table crop farmers who will help this effort.

Each solar project can produce up to two megawatts of clean energy. Up to 1,800 acres of land in the Ag Reserve can be used. Councilmember Craig

Rice introduced the key amendment that requires that each project be reviewed under the "conditional use" approval process which includes a community hearing. This will ensure that streams, forests, and other sensitive areas are protected; neighbors and surrounding community members will be allowed to weigh in; and the cumulative effects of each project will be assessed by a county hearing examiner. Existing MoCo law already requires other industrial-use projects like pipelines and cell towers to be approved through the "conditional use" process as well.

The Office of Agriculture will work with each solar project developer to assure that soils are protected from erosion and degradation. The council voted on another protective amendment presented by Councilmember Andrew Friedson to exclude our most prime farmland (class II soils) from solar development. This will assure that the most productive farmland does not get supplanted for industrial use. The bill sponsor, Councilmember Hans Riemer and industry representative, Leslie Elder, pushed back against this protective measure saying that it would restrict available land to just a few hundred acres. The table they presented, however, only showed available land in fifteen contiguous-acre parcels. In fact, hundreds of more acres are available for projects on six-to fourteen-acre parcels. The industry estimates that six acres are needed for a one-megawatt community solar project—much like the installation Poolesville developed several years ago. "Soils make farming work; that is how agriculture works," said Councilmember Friedson. "Yes, this will restrict solar, but it doesn't mean no solar," said Councilmember Alborno.

The ZTA also promised to bring low-priced clean energy to low-income residents of the county, thus helping the county reach its carbon reduction goals. The fine print is somewhat more nuanced. Only thirty-two percent of potential subscribers to these community solar projects live in Montgomery County. Thus, sixty-eight percent of the power produced will flow out of the county and even out of the state. Of those subscribers, the regulations only require that two percent of them actually be low-income residents. That is not much use to either our county or to our low-income residents and a very weak reason indeed for the county to give up our limited farmland.

In summary, this new bill represents one of the most important decisions regarding land use in the Ag Reserve

Continued on page 14.

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Senior News

Poolesville Seniors Sponsor Virtual Programs

Would you like to join activities that refresh your interest in exercising, socializing, and learning new information? Visit the Poolesville Seniors website, poolesvilleseniors.org, to see their schedule of virtual programs, via Zoom, which are open to the entire community.

Save the Date

Saturday, March 13, 7:00 p.m.

Virtual St. Patrick's Day Party

Open to the Community! This is still in the planning stages, so check the Poolesville Seniors website for updates and details.

Mondays

Tai-Chi with Maureen Ivusic, 10:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Tuesdays

Trivia Game Night

One team plays on Tuesday, and another team might be formed. If you're interested in joining a trivia team, email Poolesville Seniors at info@poolesvilleseniors.org. 7:00 p.m.

Wednesdays

Chair Yoga with Twyla Insalaco. 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Zumba Gold with Karen McPhatter. 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

February 11

Mystery History: Abe Lincoln's Attachment to Poolesville

Rande Davis of the *Monocacy Monocle* will share a few stories about Pres. Abraham Lincoln's connections with Poolesville, including how Poolesville

became internationally known during the Civil War. 7:00 p.m.

February 18

Agricultural Reserve History

Kenny Sholes continues his series on the history of the Ag Reserve. For this presentation, he'll discuss historic maps of the area. 7:00 p.m.

February 22

Book Club

February's book is: *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See. All are welcome to join this social and intellectual discussion. 7:00 p.m.

February 25

All You Want to Know about Insurance

Patricia Dorn is a lead staffer in the Consumer Education and Insurance Advocacy Unit of the Maryland Insurance Institute. She'll present a slide show about the various types of insurance available in Maryland, with an emphasis on senior needs. Ms. Dorn will also answer questions. 7:00 p.m.

March 4

Montgomery County Cemeteries

Glenn Wallace, a cemetery archivist, returns with a program about Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory. He will discuss the process of coordinating volunteers for assessing the 324 cemeteries throughout the county. 7:00 p.m.

Pop-Up Walks with Jon Wolz

Back by popular demand, Jon will be narrating and leading more walks in the coming months. These will be planned and based on the three-to-five-day forecast. Be prepared to join his walks by completing the Poolesville Seniors Liability Release Form on their webpage and emailing it to them to indicate your interest. Watch your email, the Poolesville Seniors calendar,

Continued on page 7.

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Continued from page 1.

Montgomery County Council Votes to Advance Solar in the Ag Reserve with Care

were impacting agriculture in the Reserve. This amendment passed with unanimous approval.

Despite broad agreement on the need for a thoughtful approach to encouraging solar in locations where it has the fewest costs to the environment and the community, in the days leading up to the council session, supporters of the ZTA as written called the common-sense amendments a “poison pill” that would result in little to no solar being allowed in the Reserve. The majority of councilmembers rejected this characterization. “This is not a poison pill,” said Councilmember Sidney Katz, “we want solar, and we want ag, and we can have both.”

With these compromise protections in place, the Ag Reserve is now poised to allow reasonable solar development while upholding the Ag Reserve’s purpose of protecting local agriculture.

In addition to this ZTA, the county has other clean energy programs in the pipeline such as the Community Choice Energy (CCE) program that could bring affordable clean energy to all county residents. If this bill is passed in Annapolis, County Executive Marc Elrich has pledged that Montgomery County will be one of the first acceptors. Right here in our own backyard, GenOn has an industrial solar project planned to replace the recently-closed coal-fired power plant in Dickerson. It is projected to come online in 2024.

Continued from page 6.

Senior News

and their Facebook page for dates, times, and information as the walks are scheduled.

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For more information or to register for any of the programs listed here and to receive the Zoom link for each, visit the Poolesville Seniors website: poolesvilleseniors.org. You can also join in the live presentations via their Facebook page. In addition, each program is recorded and later put on YouTube. Did you know that you don’t need a computer to participate? You can join the Zoom presentations using your smartphone or listen in using the local telephone number from Zoom and the Poolesville Seniors meeting ID and password. Call or text them at 301-875-7701 to find out how.



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Monocacy Health Update

COVID-19 Update as Of February 2, 2021

By Sam Hardwick

Wear masks, keep a social distance of six feet, wash hands often, and avoid group gatherings as much as possible.

COVID-19 testing is now available at CVS and doctor's offices.

In Poolesville, the Poolesville Family Practice (301-972-7600) also has the rapid fifteen-minute test available.

Cases of reported positive tests for COVID-19 by zip code:

20837 – 202
20838 – fewer than 15
20841 – 335
20842 – 63

Montgomery County

(source: [Coronavirus.maryland.gov](https://www.coronavirus.maryland.gov))
Total of all cases reported positive: 59,292

Total deaths: 1,269

Status of Vaccination in County

(source: [Coronavirus.maryland.gov](https://www.coronavirus.maryland.gov))

Phase 1A to 1C: Frontline healthcare workers, staff and residents of nursing homes, and first responders, residents 65 and older, and those with specific medical conditions.

Doses Administered – 32,400
(1st dose 29,380)

1st dose % administered – 90.7%

Schedule of Vaccination Schedule of implementation

Current: Phase 1A

Frontline Healthcare workers, staff and residents of nursing homes, and first responders.

Phase 1B

Residents over 75, frontline essential workers.

Phase 1C

Priority Group 1C Tier 1 (65-74) will be invited to preregister by February 5.

Phase 2: People with critical infrastructure roles.

Phase 3: General population.

Continued from page 1.

Commissioners Hear Case for New Willard Plan but Delay Vote

now that we found out there may not be enough capacity." He estimated that the project might need 21,000 gallons of capacity when completed.

As he did before the Planning Commission, Clifford said that the Willard family had consulted with a wide array of stakeholders as they developed their plan. Dave Agar, a planning consultant for the Willards, said the land was originally "split zoned" with part of it residential and part commercial. The Overlay Rules allow for a completely residential development that includes a range of amenities including dedicated "pocket parks," numerous walking paths including one connecting Whalen Commons and the center of the "old town," and green buffering around much of the development.

While the commissioners seemed very receptive to the new proposal, it was also iterated that this is a major development for the town and a key part of its future, including how the Streetscape Plan is implemented. The commissioners were surprised by the fact that no public commenters had signed up to offer their views despite the fact that the plan had been under review by the Planning Commission since early last fall. They decided not to approve the use of the Overlay Rules for the new plan until they allowed for further written comment to be submitted to the commission. Comments will be accepted until February 12, and the commission plans to review the proposal again at its February 16 meeting.

In the Public Comments segment of the meeting, local citizen Joy Zucker-Tiemann pressed the commissioners to answer a series of questions she presented. She first said, "I would like to know the outcome of the independent investigation this past fall into the misconduct of Town Manager Seth Rivard. Other than the articles published in the Monocle, there needs to be disclosure of what performance improvement plan or any measurables that have been instituted, so we can track his progress."

She asked commissioners whether they had privately and confidentially discussed the work environment for employees to see if they had concerns. She noted, as mentioned in a previous edition of this paper, that a six-month performance review was supposed to have been completed for Rivard last June, but it has never been released to the public if it was finalized.

Zucker-Tiemann expressed strong concern for the welfare of town employees, adding that staff had been told at the beginning of the pandemic shutdown that they were being denied a two percent budgeted cost of living increase. She pointed out how low average salaries were for town staff, especially in comparison with other nearby municipalities, and highlighted the work town staff does in emergencies, particularly such things as plowing roads for long hours.

Finally, Zucker-Tiemann said that a number of town reports that should be public were not available on the town's website. She said, for example, that the 2020 budget closeout report was not posted to the town's website nor was the update to the town's Master Plan, which was supposed to have been completed last month.

In response, the commissioners asked Zucker-Tiemann to submit her detailed comments to them for review. It was not clear what response they plan to make.

In the Town Manager's report, Seth Rivard reviewed a proposal to ask town citizens for their views on what message to place on the town water tower that is slated to be repainted. A request for public comment will be released soon.

Finally, the commissioners discussed a proposal to rename Bodmer Park which is actually a part of Halmos Park and is at the end of the park fronting on Bodmer Avenue. A proposal to rename the park in honor of William Taylor, an African American who helped found Sugarland, a settlement of former slaves freed after the Civil War, was discussed, but the commissioners decided to send the matter back to the Parks Board for consideration.

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Local News

Carjacking on the Rise

By Jack Toomey

The Montgomery County Police Department (MCP) is concerned about the increase in the number of carjackings that have occurred in Montgomery County and the greater metropolitan area in recent months. In January, to date, there have been nine carjackings in Montgomery County (one of those being an attempt), and MCP officers and detectives have charged the suspects responsible for six of these offenses: A nineteen-year-old male of Washington, D.C. and a twenty-one-year-old male of an unconfirmed address, arrested for an armed carjacking they committed in Silver Spring on January 11; a nineteen-year-old male of Oxon Hill, Maryland, arrested for a carjacking he committed in Chevy Chase on January 14; a fourteen-year-old male and fifteen-year-old female of Washington, D.C., arrested for two carjacking they committed in Chevy Chase on January 21 and 22 (two cases); and two sixteen-year-old males of Washington, D.C. and Temple Hills, Maryland, arrested for an attempted carjacking

and a carjacking they committed in Germantown on January 26 (two cases).

Investigators continue to work to identify the suspects involved in these crimes, and because suspects often cross jurisdictional boundaries when driving the stolen vehicles, investigators are coordinating with region law enforcement agencies.

In September, MCP issued an alert about carjacking and vehicle thefts occurring in Silver Spring, and explained that the majority of these carjacking/vehicle thefts were occurring because drivers were leaving their vehicles running and unattended. The victims were confronted by the suspect(s) as they left or returned to their vehicle. Many of the victims were picking up food from restaurants as indoor dining was closed or reduced due to the pandemic.

Investigators have recently noted new and different commonalities among these carjackings in the county: the suspects are often young, some not even of a legal driving age; and the suspects often use violence—they present handguns or assault the victims.

The department wants to remind residents of steps they can take to minimize their risk of victimization:

Continued on page 14

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Focus on Business

Poolesville Mobile Computer Services

By Rande Davis

It used to be that everyone wanted to have at least one doctor or lawyer in the family. Times have changed, though, and something even more helpful may be having a certifiable computer expert as a close friend or relative.

It can be nerve-wracking to be on a long-distance call and opening up your computer's entire system to a stranger that doesn't even live in the country. If something goes wrong, the legal remedy would be too prohibitive to even consider pursuing. In Poolesville, we have a solution in Joey Bettinger.

Joey grew up in Poolesville and graduated from Poolesville High in 2006. His aunt is Kathy Bettinger, long-time PHS science teacher. Today, Joey is happily married to his wife Ana Paula, and they're ecstatic about their two-year-old daughter Elara and the family's six-month-old puppy.

Joey's introduction to computers and computer technology started at a young age. He remembers his father, who at the time had been working in construction, went back to school to learn about the growing tech field. Many nights, he would bring home what he had learned that day, and he would show his family the parts of the computer and how everything worked.

From there, Joey's love of technology began to grow, although he drifted into the world of music. The result was that he graduated from the Art Institute of Washington with a Bachelor's in Audio Production. After spending years trying to work his way in the audio engineering world, he realized that the lifestyle required was something he didn't want. He refocused to consumer electronics. Ultimately, he became a CompTIA A+ certified IT technician.

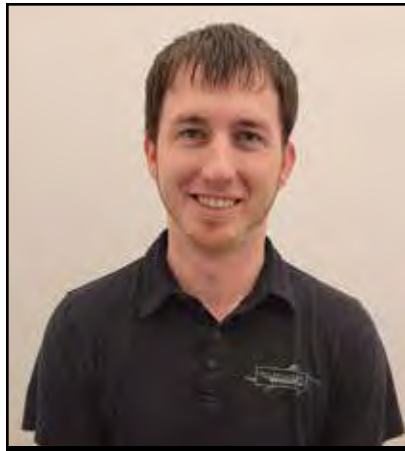
Before making the transition back to computers, Joey spent a year in San Diego, California working as a Game Master of Sony Online Entertainment. He eventually decided to return to Poolesville and, in 2015, a friend of his needed help setting up an Xbox Live account. The business evolved from that point on. For the first few years, he was still working at Cugini's while taking on new clients in his off time. As the IT business grew, he reduced his scheduled days at Cugini's to allow more time for the business until he was able to make a transition to full-time computer technician.

Today, he can help with a range of residential and small business computer/technology issues. This includes virus removal, regular PC maintenance, software repair or installation, hardware repair, SOHO network repair, data recovery and transfer, new PC setup, remote support, printer installation, tape to DVD and digital conversion, A/V electronics setup, and much more.

He is very grateful for all the support he has received along the way, especially to all of the other small businesses in the area that have supported him, and each other.

Recently, I faced an extremely overloaded computer system that was slowing down to something like turtle-speed. I called Poolesville Mobile Computer Services (PMCS). Joey didn't need to even come to my office, as he could work through a program called TeamViewer. It is a secure option that allowed him to work on my computer while I watched. The curser bounced around, making adjustments and corrections, and only occasionally did I have to get involved with a password entry to keep things on track. Joey was very polite, easy to understand, and efficient.

I have had the need for his services twice now and each time came away extremely pleased with this professionalism and service. Now when my computer starts to act up, those anxiety attacks subside. After all, I (and all of us in the Poolesville area) now have a friend in computer services.



Joey Bettinger of Poolesville Mobile Computer Services.

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Garden

The Art of Bonsai

By Maureen O'Connell

As we enter the second month of the new year, we all look hopefully forward to new, brighter, calmer, and healthier times. Our outdoor gardens are hibernating and storing up energy for the coming spring, but we still have the joy of our indoor garden of house plants. May I suggest a new and interesting addition: a Bonsai Tree.

By definition, a bonsai is a potted tree; it is not a kind of tree, but a way of growing trees. It is an art form that one can use to grow almost any tree. Many people think that bonsai trees are genetically modified dwarf-tree species, but that is not the case. They are ordinary trees that are artificially stunted by pruning their roots and branches.

While the art of bonsai has long been associated with Japan, it originated first in China around the year AD 700, and then it spread to Korea and Japan. For Buddhist monks, this was their way of bringing the outdoors into their temples. There is evidence that the first "tray tree landscapes" were brought from China to Japan at least twelve hundred years ago as religious souvenirs.

Many species of trees are signature bonsai subjects, depending upon their flexibility and ability to be trained. The most popular ones are Chinese elm, junipers, flowering tea trees, flowering Satsuki azaleas, miniature boxwood, Japanese red maple, hemlock, cedar, mugo pine, and Golden Gate ficus.

Bonsai trees can live for hundreds of years with constant care and maintenance. It is believed that currently the oldest known bonsai tree, the *Ficus retusa* 'Linn,' is over one thousand years old, and it lives in the Crespi Bonsai Museum in the Italian village of Crespi d'Adda.

I became interested in bonsai trees in 1980. While I was in Maui, the second largest of the Hawaiian Islands, I bought a ten-year-old ficus Benjaminia bonsai. He is very healthy; he has lived now for forty-one years on the sunny counter next to my kitchen sink. He is different from many other bonsai, as he lives on a rock and not in soil. This is the growing technique of root-over-rock, a melding of roots and stone together. He is extremely low maintenance. It is an excellent choice for beginners as it is tolerant of low humidity and is very resilient to my lapses of water and fertilizer. Not all bonsai are this forgiving. If you want to successfully grow one, you should consider which tree species suits your needs, climate, and circumstance. The single most important technique to bonsai is pruning. It is a crucial practice used to shape trees and keep them miniature. Your goal is to create a bonsai that accurately replicates a miniature version of a full-scale tree in its natural environment.

This past October, I thought that my ficus needed a companion tree on the other side of the counter. I had seen some in garden centers, but their quality was not good. Going online, I found Eastern Leaf Nursery in Chino, California. They featured many different species at very fair prices. I ordered a flowering tea tree (also known as the Carmona or Fukien Tea) and it arrived in excellent shape. It has been trained to an S shape and it produces tiny white flowers and berries. It thrives in a sunny, warm temperature and requires watering about every two to three days. It grows in soil, and it (I must admit) is much more attractive than the ficus. He just might outlive me.

We in the D.C. area are fortunate to have near us the wonderful National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, in partnership with National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. It has an interesting history. In 1976, the country of Japan gave a gift of fifty-three bonsai trees to America for the United States Bicentennial. The trees arrived at the Potomac Bonsai Association. Many volunteers worked with the staff of the U.S. National Arboretum to keep the trees in good display condition. In 1979, Janet Lanman (mother of Lynn Sheehan of Barnesville) discussed with Dr. John Creech, Director of the National Arboretum, the possibility of adding American bonsai to the museum. Bonsai authorities reviewed private bonsai collections and, in 1986, the ten-year anniversary of the gift from Japan, the National Bonsai Foundation announced that they would be building the



The author's flowering Fukien Tea Tree.

Continued on page 17.



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Tidbits

Proudly Celebrating Black History Month, Even during a Pandemic

Even during a pandemic, it is important to celebrate Black History Month and our local African-American heritage. With this in mind, the Boyds Negro School will be open on February 20 and 21 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. to celebrate and acknowledge the important history of education in our area.

Guests will be part of a controlled tour group that will be limited to six people at a time, all of whom must wear a mask and remain six feet apart. The door of the school will be kept ajar for ventilation purposes. Guests will be invited in on a first come, first serve basis. There will also be an outdoor tour of the property to expand on that history. There is a new replica outhouse built by Poolesville Boy Scout Troop 496 under the direction of Zach Ransom who will obtain his Eagle Scout badge for his achievement of planning and directing the entire process.

Homes for Our Vets to Build Home in Poolesville

The large sign at the corner of West Willard Road and Westerly Avenue in Poolesville says it. The national organization, Homes for Our Troops (hforusa.org) has the mission to build and donate specially-adapted custom homes nationwide for severely-injured post-9/11 veterans to enable them to rebuild their lives. The one in Poolesville is being built for Sgt. Emmanuel Melendez-Diaz, a veteran selected by Homes for Our Troops organization.



Homesite for Sgt. Emmanuel Melendez-Diaz, a veteran selected by Homes for Our Troops organization.

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Continued from page 5.

A Banner Day for the Agricultural Reserve

in many years. Advocates for farming in the Reserve can rest easy with this compromise proposal; it ensures protection of the best soils and a conditional use" review process that

retains the primacy of agriculture but allows commercial solar projects after careful review.

Sugarloaf Citizens' Association
www.sugarloafcitizens.org

Montgomery Countryside Alliance
www.mocoalliance.org

Continued from page 10.

Carjacking on the Rise

- Do not leave your vehicle running and unattended.
- Lock your vehicle and keep your vehicle keys with you at all times.
- Never leave a spare key or valet key in your vehicle. Note: Valet keys can be used to start the vehicle.
- If your vehicle has a push-button ignition system, make sure that the vehicle is turned off and locked before you leave it unattended.
- Use a vehicle locator device.

If someone demands your vehicle keys, let them take your vehicle. Do not risk serious injury.

Anyone with information about any of the suspects involved with these carjackings in Montgomery County is urged to call Major Crimes detectives at 240-773-5070. For those who wish to remain anonymous, Crime Solvers of Montgomery County is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 for any information that leads to the arrest of the homicide suspect(s). Anonymous tipsters can call Crime Solvers of Montgomery County toll-free at 1-866-411-TIPS (8477) or submit a tip online or via the P3 Tips app.

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Remembrances

Steven G. Gibson

Steven C. Gibson, 84, of Boyds, passed away on January 20, 2021.

He was the loving husband to Virginia Gibson.

Born on January 10, 1937 in South Hartford, New York, he was the son of the late Harden and Florence Barbara (Neff) Gibson.

Along with his wife, he is survived by his children, Steven (Deneen) Gibson and Michelle Duchowny; stepchildren, Wendy (Brian) Sutch-Kiser, Amy (Bobby) Sutch Gupta, and Mark Sutch; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; his brothers, Phillip Gibson, Bruce (Barb) Gibson and Andrew (Sharon) Gibson; and sisters-in-law, Jane Gibson and Diane Gibson.

He was preceded in death by two brothers, George Gibson and Kenneth Gibson; and one daughter, Beth Harriet Gibson.

Steven graduated from Cornell University with an Agricultural Engineering degree. He taught junior high science and driver's ed, then joined the U.S. Air Force. He worked for the New York State Department of Transportation as a computer programmer/systems analyst for traffic studies. For the next thirty-two years, he worked as a consultant for various federal and state highways and transit administrations. In retirement, he drove school buses for MCPS.

His extensive community involvement included Boy Scouts of America leadership and training for over forty years, treasurer of Boyds Federal Credit Union, Boyds Historical Society, American Legion, and church treasurer at Boyds Presbyterian Church. He also assisted with publishing a book by Arthur Virts, Boyds: A Character Study by Arthur Virts and Friends.

His interests included reading, travelling in his RV to bluegrass festivals and a memorable trip to Albuquerque, New Mexico for hot air balloon festivals, and family caravans/reunions.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Boyds Presbyterian Church, 19901 White Ground Rd, Boyds, MD 20841.

A memorial service will be at Boyds Presbyterian Church with interment to follow at a later date.



Steven G. Gibson

Mary Ann Powell

Mary Ann Powell, 87, of Hagerstown, formerly of Poolesville, passed away on January 21, 2021.

She was the loving wife to the late Donald L. Powell.

Born on April 27, 1933 in Washington, D.C., she was the daughter of the late Thomas Ketner, Sr. and Edna (Gilbreath) Zevely.

Mary was a prolific author, writing mostly about her favorite animal, the horse. While many of her stories were geared toward girls, readers of all ages enjoyed them.

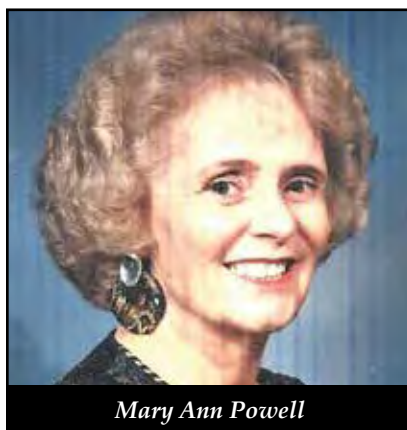
Mary is survived by her three children, Donna R. Irby, Candi Weddle Staley, and Richard D. Powell; three grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by Harrison Dutton, her companion of twenty-eight years; one sister, Jean Baden; and one brother, Thomas "Buddy" Zevely, Jr.

Mary was a Career Counselor at Poolesville High School for twenty-eight years and was a former member of the National Quarter Horse Association.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Alzheimer's Association.



Mary Ann Powell

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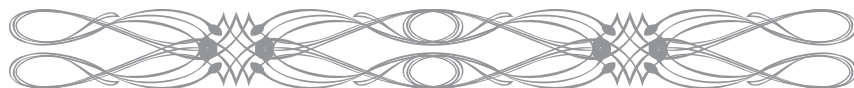
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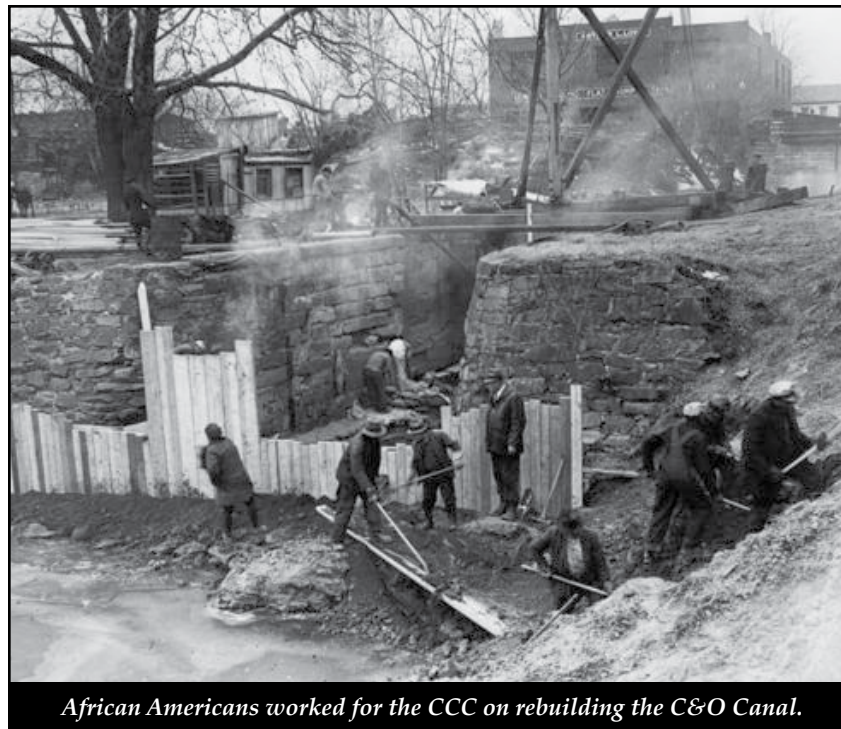
The Civilian Conservation Corps Along the C&O Canal

By Jon Wolz

On a cool, windy, and partly sunny day in November, I visited the Carderock Recreational Area along the C&O Canal off of the Clara Barton Parkway. Volunteers from the C&O Canal Association were there along with National Park Service employees to install three wayside historical signs that described work done by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers who rebuilt the canal from Georgetown to Violette's Lock from 1938 to 1942. I wanted to see how the signs were installed because I am interested in pursuing having a sign made and installed that tells the story of Benjamin Latrobe's marble quarry. The three wayside signs were installed at Carderock because that was where the CCC had two camps for the workers who worked on the canal. In reading the signs, I found that the two CCC camps housed workers who were all African Americans.

The C&O Canal permanently closed in 1924, and nothing was done prior to 1938 to restore any parts of it. Frederic Delano, an uncle of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the chairman of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, thought that restoring the canal would make for a great project for the CCC. The canal was owned by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad which was hard hit during the depression in the 1930s. In 1937, the railroad applied to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for an additional loan of \$8.2 million that would be added to its standing debt of \$80 million. As collateral for its increased indebtedness, the railroad offered some of its property holdings, some of which included the C&O Canal. The railroad was willing to dispose of the entire canal to the federal government, and a transfer of ownership of the canal was made for \$2 million. The proceeds were applied to the debt the railroad had with the government.

All parties signed a sales contract on August 6, 1938, thus allowing the federal government to deploy CCC enrollees to their new canal worksite. After the federal government acquired the canal, it established two CCC camps at Carderock. The camps were known as NP-1-MD and NP-2-MD and were home to Companies 325 and 333 all of which were African American men aged eighteen to twenty-five,



African Americans worked for the CCC on rebuilding the C&O Canal.

recruited from the local area, including the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

The CCC was segregated, and at its height in the District, Maryland, and Virginia, there were 324 Civilian Conservation Corps companies; however, only three consisted of African American companies. By its actions, the CCC program provided for the wellbeing and economic recovery of white men over minorities.

The NAACP complained about the lack of CCC opportunities for African American men in Maryland, so the CCC decided to open the two camps at Carderock for African American men, bringing the total number of African American camps to three in Maryland. A reason for selecting African Americans for the canal project was the minimal contact these camps would have with the general public.

The camps logistics were managed by white army reserve officers, and the work performed along the canal by the CCC workers was supervised by white National Park Service employees. Working along with the army officers was the camp Educational Officer, C. Rushton Long, who was the only African American administrator.

The men were issued uniforms and, for four years, about four hundred men worked five days a week, renovating the first twenty miles of canal property with special care given to the area around Great Falls. By 1940, newspapers reported flowing water at Great Falls for the first time in sixteen years, thanks to CCC workers. They were also responsible for twenty-two miles of waterway, telephone lines, and walking paths created all along

the canal towpath. Using primarily shovels, picks, and wheelbarrows, these men cleared debris, repaired and resurfaced the towpath, removed rocks, removed overgrown vegetation, and constructed buildings, including restrooms and parking lots that made the canal into a recreational site, especially around Great Falls. They also repaired canal breaches and built lift locks. They restored Lockhouses 5, 7, and 10. When the water began flowing down the canal from Violette's Lock, local citizens saw that the results of the labor of these men was a benefit to the nearby community. These men participated in living history programs for park visitors at Great Falls where they led mules that pulled canal boats, manned the boats, and operated the locks. Workers were paid \$30 a month, and \$25 was sent home to their families. The workers were allowed to keep \$5 a month for spending money.

Life at the two canal camps was hard, regimented, and modeled after the military. The following was a typical workday schedule for the men:

- 6:00 a.m.: First Bugle, get out of bed
- 6:30 a.m.: Reveille, Flag Ceremony
- 7:00 a.m.: Breakfast
- 7:30 a.m.: General cleanup of camp buildings and grounds
- 7:50 a.m.: Work Call
- Noon: Dinner
- 4:00 p.m.: Return from work project
- 5:00 p.m.: Retreat, Flag Ceremony
- 5:10 p.m.: Supper
- 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.: Classes
- 9:00 p.m.: Lights extinguished in barracks
- 10:00 p.m.: General lights extinguished



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Under the guidance of C. Rushton Long, men did have time for fun. On weekends, the men played baseball, basketball, boxing, ping pong, pool, and swam in the Potomac River. Long coached the sports teams, and they traveled to other CCC camps where they played African American teams. There was a camp newspaper with articles written by men of the camps, and Mr. Long served as the editor. There were weekly movies, and men of the camps gave musical performances. The men were allowed to visit Washington, D.C. on weekends.

There were twenty-six classes taught in the evening during the week by a variety of instructors. Students received instruction via "demonstrations, illustrations, talks, lectures, and discussions" during the week after supper. There were classes in stonework and carpentry.

To find instructors for vocational courses, Mr. Long recruited men employed at the camps, CCC or army administrators, and sometimes experienced enrollees themselves. For academic classes, Long either taught these himself or hired teachers, usually women, who were recent Howard University graduates. There were courses in African American history, mathematics, reading, writing, and English.

Continued on page 17

Remembrance

William Kamachaitis

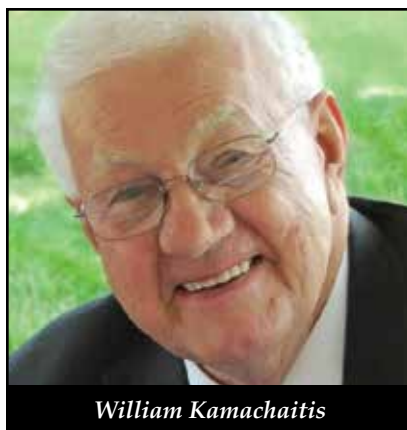
William "Bill" Kamachaitis, age 89, of Boyds, passed away on January 13, 2021. He was born to Peter and Anna Kamachaitis on August 7, 1931 in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania.

William met his wife of sixty-six years, Marie Kamachaitis, at Lakeside, a local swimming facility, amusement park, and concert hall frequented by the community. After a short walk and a first kiss, it was love at first sight. They dated throughout high school and were married at twenty-one. They had seven children, six girls and one boy.

Bill will be most remembered as the devoted husband and patriarch of his family. He valued his family above all and gathered them close year-round to celebrate occasions and enjoy time together. He was a generous man who loved his Lithuanian heritage—polka music and foods from his childhood—and celebrated it with friends and family as often as possible.

He left his hometown at the age of eighteen to join the United States Air Force and served from 1950 to 1953 in the Korean War. His professional career spanned over twenty-five years in aeronautical engineering beginning at Fairchild Industries and spanning decades for various organizations within the aerospace industry. His aptitude for management led him to positions as CEO. One of his proudest moments was being selected as the CEO of SPACECOM. Bill earned a Bachelor's of Science from American University and a Master's of Space Aeronautical Management from Loyola College.

William was preceded in death by his wife Marie Kamachaitis; daughter Patty Hardekopf; grandson Samuel Moore; four sisters and one brother; and his mother and father. He is survived by sister, Dorothy Boley; children Marie Vandermolen, David Kamachaitis, Karen Kamachaitis, Nancy Walker, Carol Moore, and Sue DeSantis; twenty-one grandchildren; and twenty-two great-grandchildren.



William Kamachaitis



Continued from page 12.

The Art of Bonsai

American Bonsai Pavilion to showcase a collection of North American bonsai. It was to be called the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum. It is located on the 446-acre campus of the U.S. National Arboretum on New York Avenue in northeast D.C.

On Mrs. Lanman's death in 2018, she was honored for her over-forty years of volunteer work at the museum. "She was a model for all museum volunteers."

We owe a debt to the Japanese and Chinese artists for developing this beautiful art and fostering it for almost 2,500 years. Their patient stewardship allows us today to enjoy the Bonsai Experience.

Continued from page 16.

The Civilian Conservation Corps Along the C&O Canal

The CCC did such a wonderful job in restoring the first twenty-two miles of the canal that there was talk about restoring and rewatering the entire canal; however, events of December 7, 1941 pushed the United States into World War II, and by 1942, the CCC camps began to close across the country, and the United States began focusing on the war effort. Also, in 1942, another major flood did further damage to the entire length of the canal. After the war, it was not until 1971, when the canal became a National Historical Park, and subsequent years that periodic restoration projects began to occur. The entire canal will never be rewatered because it would be cost prohibitive.

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Police Blotter: Past and Present

By Jack Toomey

Present Crime

Assault: 19500 block of Jerusalem Church Terrace.

Auto Theft: Fisher Avenue townhouses. Two cars stolen from the same address at the same time. On the same night, several unlocked vehicles were entered. The problem with thieves entering unlocked cars continues in Poolesville.

Past Crime: 1915 to 1920

Lockkeepers on the C&O Canal threatened to go to the sheriff of Montgomery County to complain about young women using the canal for

pleasure instead of commerce. It seems that young women from D.C. had discovered that paddling up the canal in canoes was a nice experience. The trouble came when they arrived at the various locks where spectators sometimes gathered. The women usually wore one-piece bathing suits, and the lockkeepers were united in saying that the attire was acceptable at bathing beaches but not at the canal. Things came to a head when John Speaker, who had been around the canal since the Civil War, blocked the passage of a canoe piloted by a young man with a girl sprawled out in the back.

Raymond Haines of Potomac was in the hospital after being found unconscious on the tracks of the Bradley Hills electric line. Sheriff Gaither interviewed Haines and gained

enough information to deduce that he had been beaten by two youths. Gaither went to Rockville where he obtained warrants for the suspects.

The lower portion of the county was in an uproar after four attacks against women were reported in a short period of time. Men formed possies and set out through wooded areas in search of the suspect. It was believed that the assailant was a young man named "Woodenhead." This man had been last seen running across the golf course at Chevy Chase Club by two caddies.

Deputy Sheriff Gray was resting at home, and it was said that he had a chance for survival. Gray, who had been on the force for several years, startled passersby by walking out of

his office, standing on the front steps of the courthouse, and swallowing a vial of poison. He collapsed and was attended to by a pharmacist and two doctors. It was believed that Gray was in a state of depression after the disappearance of his wife ten days earlier.

Sheriff Aud was investigating the burglary of the Silver Spring Post Office from which about \$1,000 was stolen. Aud determined that tools, taken from the nearby Baltimore and Ohio yards, were used to pry open a window in the rear of the building.

Some of the material in this column was obtained from the archives of the Washington Post.

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Why Do Cats Knead?

Adapted by Peter H. Eeg, BSc, DVM, CVLF

Most cat behavior is entertaining or very confusing. Perhaps the most obvious example is kneading. We also call it “kneading dough” or “making the biscuits.”

Feline owners watch their furry children do this all the time, but what’s really going on here? Researchers don’t have one concrete explanation, but they’ve got some pretty compelling ideas about the science of kitty kneading.

Kneading is an instinctive feline behavior kittens display shortly after they’re born. The reason for the movement in kittenhood is to stimulate the flow of milk from the mother’s mammary glands. Cats who knead in adulthood could be showing contentment or simply marking their territory since cat’s paws contain sweat glands, and the sweat is used for marking objects as owned.

While there’s always the chance the kneading is your cat’s attempt to claim you as their own—which, of course, you know you are—expert animal behaviorists say kneading is probably as tender and adorable as it looks.

If you do have a cat who kneads its bedding, or better yet you, it’s because he or she is feeling very loved and comfortable. You should absolutely take this as a compliment.

Even if kneading is just a sign of cats marking their special spots, that’s a very positive behavior. It signals your kitty feels safe wherever they’re making biscuits.

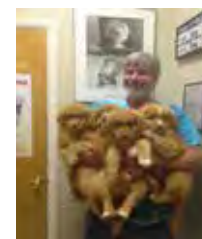
It is interesting to note that cats can produce a chemical for marking between their toes that they can release when they flex their toes, so your cat could also be labeling you as a safe part of their territory, but don’t get a big head because you will note they also knead the chair, the dog, the kids, etc. It is just that as we all know Cats “have staff” and they like to keep their staff under control.

There may also be some emotional advantage to the humans that are being kneaded. Studies have shown that humans’ blood pressures and heart rates go down when their feline friend is purring and kneading them. Next time you’re a little stressed, go hang with your cat.

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