

MAY 2007

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors

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PRICELESS

VOL 1, ISSUE 2

"Our Jamestown" Rolling Out the Red Carpet

**Local Authors
Share Their Stories**

Taxi! Taxi!

**Leroy Stoutingberg:
A Lifetime of Service**



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Williamsburg Area
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Margot Creviaux-Gevertz,
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If you flipped through these pages before you started to read you may have noticed a common thread found throughout this issue. Everyone you

this historic celebration.

Who is it that serves as host for the hundreds and hundreds of visitors who will pass through our city? Who are

“Our Jamestown”

will read about is a Williamsburg local who either provides a valuable service tied to the 400th Anniversary, or possesses a talent or skill that you and our visitors will enjoy. This issue of *Next Door Neighbors* is dedicated to “Our Jamestown”.

As it is, the entire nation and much of the world has a keen awareness of and an appreciation for the historical significance of Jamestown as the place where our nation began in 1607. With the 400th Anniversary comes the culmination of some well planned events and literally years of developing, building and executing so that we can open our arms to thousands of visitors who want to be a part of

the men and women who take care of these guests – house them, feed them, and give them rides? Entertain them, teach them and serve them in countless ways?

It is you.

It is your friends, family – even your next door neighbors - who are extending themselves to provide valuable services to those who are staying a short while in our great city. Hats off to Williamsburg area locals who set the standard for the kind of exceptional service we are proud to share with all who come to celebrate the 400th Anniversary and “Our Jamestown”.



Meredith Collins, Publisher

Red carpet in front cover photo courtesy of



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Rolling Out the Red Carpet for 400th Anniversary Visitors

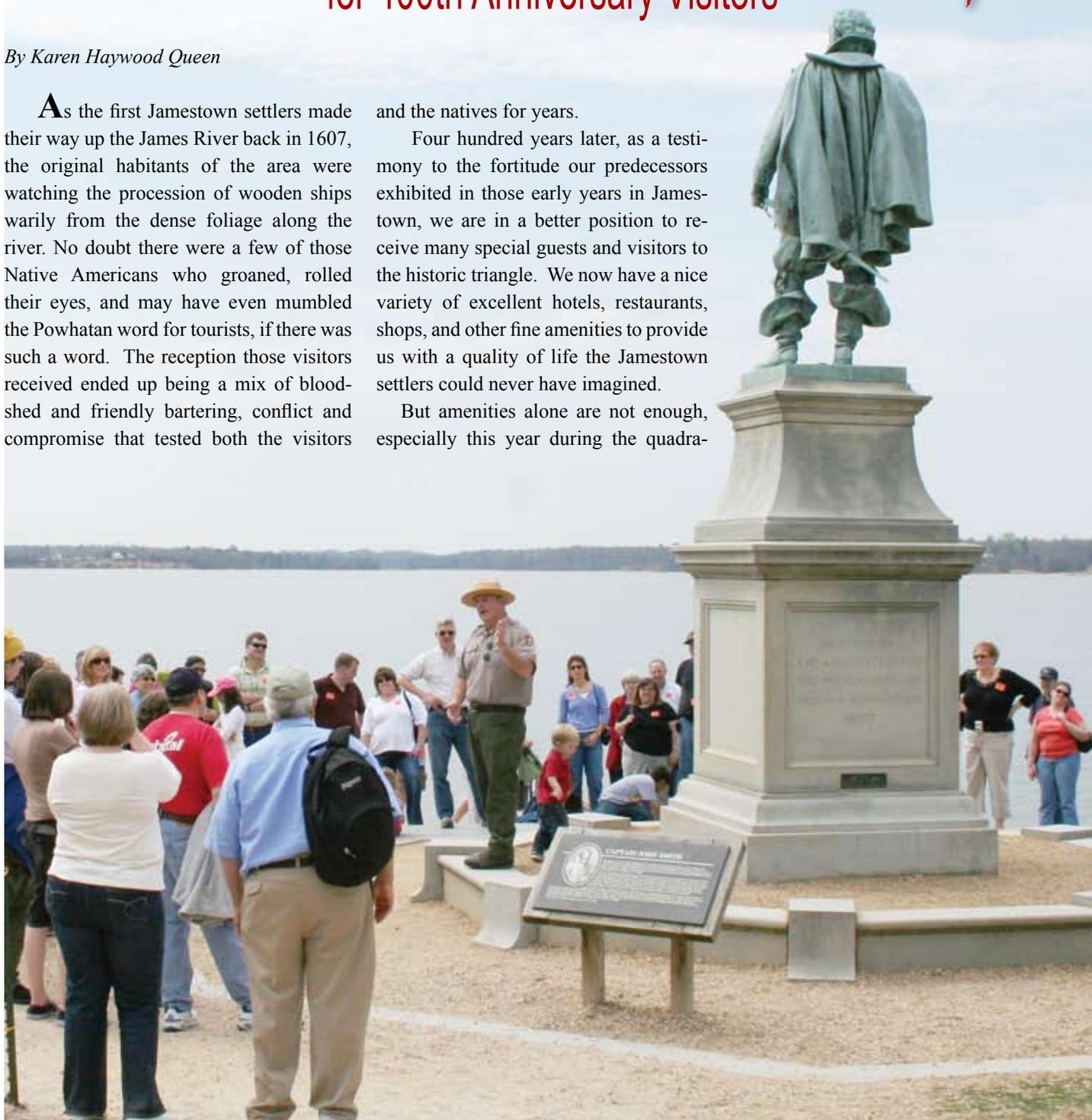
By Karen Haywood Queen

As the first Jamestown settlers made their way up the James River back in 1607, the original habitants of the area were watching the procession of wooden ships warily from the dense foliage along the river. No doubt there were a few of those Native Americans who groaned, rolled their eyes, and may have even mumbled the Powhatan word for tourists, if there was such a word. The reception those visitors received ended up being a mix of bloodshed and friendly bartering, conflict and compromise that tested both the visitors

and the natives for years.

Four hundred years later, as a testimony to the fortitude our predecessors exhibited in those early years in Jamestown, we are in a better position to receive many special guests and visitors to the historic triangle. We now have a nice variety of excellent hotels, restaurants, shops, and other fine amenities to provide us with a quality of life the Jamestown settlers could never have imagined.

But amenities alone are not enough, especially this year during the quadra-



centennial celebration of the founding of Jamestown. The world will be knocking on our door, bringing widespread attention and opportunities to show what we already know: this is a beautiful area and a warm, wonderful, and welcoming community.

“The spotlight is going to be on us,” says Margot Creviaux-Gevertz, director of interpretative training for Colonial Williamsburg and one of several key people involved in the Prepare-Care-Share training program. The program is one way we are rolling out the red carpet for our visitors and it’s being used to train front-line workers in the local hospitality industry. We all can take away and apply a few tips from the program for making our guests feel welcome.

The objective of the Prepare-Care-Share program can be summed up in one simple rule of thumb: as Creviaux-Gevertz puts it, “It means treating every guest who comes here as if he or she were your best friend.”

The first step under the program is to prepare yourself. The more knowledgeable you are about what there is to see and do here the easier it will be to help others. Brush up on things like the location, features, and background on the different Jamestown, Yorktown, and Williamsburg historical sites. Know the directions to and basic facts about popular family entertainment spots like Busch Gardens, Water Country, and the many parks and trails in the area. And an easy way to set a visitor up for a truly memorable vacation moment is to share knowledge of a really good restaurant that is off the beaten path and how to get there.

The next step is to care about the visitors who cross your path during their visit. These are people you’ll see on the sidewalk holding maps, driving with those out-of-state plates, and taking pictures at every turn. Caring about their welfare and comfort is easy if you remember that rule of thumb: treat them as you would your best friend.

It’s also important to remember that the visitors you encounter will more than likely be different in some way. The Jamestown

celebration is sure to attract an international audience and a kaleidoscope of personalities and cultures, which doesn’t mean they are clueless or careless.

“We tend to judge,” Creviaux-Gevertz says. “Don’t assume because people are dressed differently, that they don’t know anything.”

For this reason, take care in how you approach people who appear to be lost. Just a slight change in how you phrase something can make a big difference. Instead of asking ‘Are

you lost?’ ask ‘Is there anything I can help you find?’ Creviaux-Gevertz suggests.

And “If you go up to someone and say, ‘Do you speak English?’ that’s not good,” she says. “But you can’t go wrong if you go up to someone with a smile and say, ‘Is there anything I can help you find?’”

You can show that you care in many ways that require little effort. Perhaps you can take that extra step, literally. “Instead of just pointing and saying ‘The ATM machine is over there’... take them there,” she says.

The step that is sometimes most challenging is to share. It can be rewarding to share our home with strangers. The easiest thing to share with a guest is also the least expensive: your enthusiasm. “It makes people feel good and it doesn’t cost us anything,” Creviaux-Gevertz says. “It’s sharing enthusiasm and excitement because that shows pride. When you have pride in your community, that’s catching. If our events are successful, and I feel they will be, it will be because we as a community are taking care of people while they are here.”

Speaking of sharing, you can do your friends and family from outside the area a favor by spreading the word that the entire Historic Triangle has been updated over the last few years.

“It means treating every guest who comes here as if he or she were your best friend.”

“So many people have been here before, as children or as adults who have brought their children,” says Dick Schreiber, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Alliance. “But they haven’t seen what this place is now because of the investment of over half a billion dol-

lars that has been made in the last 10 years getting ready for this year. If you have not been here in five years, you won’t have seen the dig of the original fort at Jamestown Island. You won’t

have seen the new visitor center. You won’t have seen the Archaearium. You won’t have seen all the remarkable new galleries at Jamestown Settlement. You won’t have seen Revolutionary City at Colonial Williamsburg. Out at Yorktown, George Washington’s campaign tent is there. Riverwalk is new. This summer, Busch Gardens will open the world’s largest vertical drop roller coaster. If you haven’t been here in the last few years or so, you don’t know this area. The old two-day stay is not adequate. To enjoy all that is here, you’ll need four or five days.”

If the impending crowds and activity have you tempted to leave town to miss the onslaught, you really should think again.

“People who leave town are missing out on a tremendous opportunity of a lifetime to participate in a historic event that people will be talking about for the next 50 years,” says Williamsburg Mayor Jeanne Zeidler, who also is executive director of Jamestown 2007. “People who were here in ’57 and were able to take part in that event continue to find that an exciting part of their life.”

So do yourself a favor, stick around and find a way - big or small - to get involved in the celebration. You’ll be glad you did and, hey, it’s only every 100 years!

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SHE'S DIGGING UP BURIED TREASURES

Jamie May

Jamie May, Senior Staff Archeologist for the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA)

Mary Anna Richardson carefully scrapes the top layer of soil to uncover artifacts.

By Meredith Collins

If we follow our instincts, or maybe listen to that inner voice that guides us, we may just end up making a living from doing what we love. I know that I have entered that arena again after 25 years in the newspaper business and I tell people it is like I've pulled out a box of crayons for the first time in a long time. I'm coloring!

When I met Jamie May, Senior Staff Archeologist for the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), it became immediately apparent that this was a woman who was "coloring" as well. Jamie spends her days working at what she enjoys. While there are days she's in an office setting in historic Jamestowne, there are many days that she spends outdoors kneeling in dirt and sifting through the "sands of time".

"A good day when you are an arche-

ologist is when you get to dig," Jamie beamed.

"The thing that is most likable about what I do is just the thing that would excite a little kid," Jamie explained. "And we're no different.

It's when you dig something up and you pick it up and it's something that was lost out of somebody's pocket and you realize that you're the first person to lay eyes on that thing since somebody dropped it there 400 years ago or very close to that."

What was it that led Jamie to become an archeologist? She grew up in New York in a suburb not far from the New Jersey border – not with the history of the first American



Jamie enjoying her first experience "in archeology" as she and a friend dig up toys in a sand box at a church bazaar.

settlement at her back door. But there were other events and influences that found their way into her life and her heart. She recalls that even as a young girl she was fascinated by digging

to uncover simple treasures.

Her earliest memory of such an experience was when she and a friend dug in the sand at a church function.

"It was a church bazaar and you paid a dime and you could dig little plastic toys and things out of the sandbox," she reminisced. "And I was just thrilled. I dug around in there and you can see my mom's hand giving them another dime in the photograph. So I had my little plastic shovel and I'm digging."

As she got older, her parent's love for adventure and the unknown also helped plant seeds of passion in Jamie for becoming an archeologist. Her parents were very interested in history and they used to bring their children to Colonial Williamsburg and other historical places to learn and enjoy.

"A good day when you are an archeologist is when you get to dig."

"We have pictures sitting on every cannon in Yorktown and Gettysburg and everywhere," Jamie remarked.

But while many families have visited well trodden paths to historic destinations in the United States, few would have gone off the beaten path to discover less obvious treasures the way Jamie's parents did.

"My dad would stop when he saw old houses that were ruined or something," Jamie explained. "They were clearly ar-

chitecturally interesting or something, and abandoned. We would sometimes even go inside. I was always really excited when you could see something that happened a long time ago that was in these buildings. Like there'd be a calendar still on the wall and it was from 1950 or sometimes even something older – a fountain pen or a shoe with shoe buttons would be lying on the floor."

As I chatted with Jamie, I witnessed her childlike exuberance as she talked about finding things that no one but she had seen in a long while.

"So I always was really excited about that kind of thing you know, like nobody has been in here in a really long time and we found these things

and I had this little box of precious items – you know, a deer jaw bone, and a crawfish claw and a little handle to something I found. I kept them in a little cigar box I had."

When Jamie was in her late teens, she chose to attend college at Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA. In 1984, Mary Washington was one of the few schools that had an undergraduate degree in Historic Preservation, something that keenly interested her. From her education and her work experiences, Jamie has both an art and historic preservation background, which makes her a well-rounded archeologist.



"I came at it a little differently," she said. "I was interested in the old architecture and the museum stuff and the material culture,

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but the archeology really ended up peaking my interest in college.”

It turned out Jamie was in the right place at the right time to join the Jamestown Rediscovery Project which began in the spring of 1994. Individuals who are a part of this project are investigating the remains of 1607-1698 Jamestown on the APVA property on Jamestown Island. She has worked with some of the people who were involved on previous projects and she knew Bly Straube, curator, and Dr. Bill Kelso who was leading the effort, from field school at Monticello in 1987.



A Bartmann Mask from a piece of stoneware called a Bartmann jug.

“This site is like no other site,” Jamie offered. “It has been and continues to be just an amazing treasure trove. And I don’t mean that in terms of ‘we get a lot of stuff’ because we do, but it’s the information. Everything we get is all so packed. None of us has ever worked on a site that was this prolific before.”

What is so significant

about what they are uncovering in

historic Jamestowne is that until that time, everyone thought that all of it was gone. Most archeologists believed that the fort site at Jamestowne had eroded into the river.

“It’s amazing to think that it wasn’t just here,” Jamie remarked. “It was here in volumes.”

Jamie thought back to 1996 when the announcement was made that the corner of the fort had been located and that it was definite that the fort site had been found. “I remember that day,” Jamie recounted. “There was a reporter out here, and I found a ring and I just wanted to take it in to the



Mary Anna takes a break from the slow process of uncovering artifacts.

curator, to Bly, and I stuck it on my finger to carry it in and I just thought: ‘Wow. How personal is that to think that I just did that without even thinking about it and nobody has had that thing on their finger for 400 years.’”

I visited the site where the archeologists were currently working and I watched Mary Anna Richardson, a colleague of Jamie’s, carefully using water sprays in window screens and at times, a trowel, to sift through the dirt one thin layer at a time. Jamie explained the process as I watched.

“What we usually do is we dig the overburden down,” she said. “Overburden being anything from road gravel and plow zone deposits – that’s where everything is agriculturally churned up.”

Generally, the archeologists work in 10 ft. square increments. When they get below the plow zone, they can see those features and they can see where someone may have dug before them. "At that level, the undisturbed soil is visible and anything that may have cut through it such as post holes, fence lines, ditches and pits," Jamie added.

Mary Anna was digging in an early 17th century deposit while we spoke. She slowly scraped a layer of dirt with her trowel and patiently sifted through the dirt with her hands as though she had found something.

"When we are digging in sealed contacts where nobody has been for 400 years, we use our little trowels and we scrape into buckets," Jamie continued.

The treasure that is uncovered could be a piece of armor, a coin, a tool or maybe even a stoneware jug called a Bartmann Mask, showing the face of a little man. It could be any number of things – all of which help to tell the story of historic Jamestowne.

At that moment, Jamie encouraged me to look closer where Mary Anna was digging. She had made a discovery and was



Mary Anna begins to uncover a round object in the soil that very likely had been there for 400 years.

carefully removing dirt and sand from around it. What was it? I wanted to know. I, too, felt like that little kid who was about to witness something truly amazing. I had my camera and began taking photos of the circular shape that was just barely visible

above the soil. But I was not to find out that day, as the work of an archeologist is tedious – no, "painstaking" as they would say, and the treasure that peeked above the earth would remain a hidden treasure for at least one more day. ■

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An interview with... Curtis Shipman

Taxi Driver for
Williamsburg Taxi
Service



Curtis Shipman is a large man with a large voice who drives a taxi in the Williamsburg area. On any given day, he will drive people from all walks of life to their destinations providing a valuable service to both locals and visitors alike.

Next Door Neighbors met with Curtis at the Williamsburg Transportation Center and spoke with him about his life, his work and his views on the upcoming weekend celebration for the 400th Anniversary.

NDN: Are most of your fares local?

CURTIS: Yes, sometimes they ask for a ride to the airport after leaving a particular event they were here for - either for vacation, or a meeting or I had somebody that was here yesterday who was here for a seminar over at the Crowne Plaza. I took them to the airport.

NDN: Do you have certain places you wait for your next fare?

CURTIS: This is where all the taxis usually sit (the Transportation Center) over in the cab area. Sometimes it's one of the Merit gas stations. Where I live is kind of localized so sometimes I even sit in my own

parking lot at my apartment complex and wait for calls to come in.

NDN: I noticed you are wearing Philadelphia Eagles attire.

CURTIS: Yes, I'm a die-hard Philadelphia sports fan. I lived there before moving here.

NDN: Did you also drive a taxi there?

CURTIS: For a short time after I came out of the military.

NDN: You were in the military? What branch?

CURTIS: I was in the Army for 4 years active and 2 years reserves.

NDN: Have you worked elsewhere in the area?

CURTIS: I have bartended in a couple places here in town - one was a hotel. I have bounced in a few places - security or bar bouncer, being a big guy of 6'8" medium - well large build - not huge.

NDN: What do you weigh?

CURTIS: About 290 lbs. I like to take care of business if need be but I'm a gentle

giant basically.

NDN: I've ridden in taxis in some larger cities and it can be pretty hectic but I would think in Williamsburg it's not quite the grind that it would be in some big cities. Tell me what it is like in a day of your life as a taxi driver.

CURTIS: Well, since I've been back driving I've driven both night and day, and literally the clientele is different for both night and day. The day you start off taking people to work. Since this is Williamsburg, you have a lot of folks who work for the hotels. And you take people from their hotel to where they are having a meeting at - say for instance the Williamsburg Inn or some of the conference places around. Or you take them to the airport - Williamsburg/Newport News Airport right down I64. As the day progresses, you deal with local people with anything from people who may have gotten hurt and are going to therapy, grandmothers - the elderly going to the store, people just going around.

NDN: I would think that there might be people who are intimidated by such a

large guy. Have you ever had people who were hesitant to ride?

CURTIS: I have had people who didn't realize how tall I was until I came around and opened the door for them and they just look straight up and go -"ok, how tall are you?" I get the famous questions of a tall person: How tall are you? Do you play basketball? How's the weather up there?

NDN: Have you ever given somebody a ride and they didn't pay you?

CURTIS: I had a young man who was under the influence of God knows what who tried to do that, but that's what automatic locks are for.

NDN: You have a nice deep voice. Do you also do some work utilizing that voice?

CURTIS: Well, I have done some things for Busch Gardens back when I first came to Virginia in 2000. I did a few things for them. I've done some work for the Hal-lowscream program that is in October. It was really fun to do and they used it for a couple of years. I'm always looking for people who can use my voice.

NDN: Do you sing?

Yes, I do. I used to sing in high school. I used to sing acapella with a bunch of guys who are near and dear to my heart to this very day. We could have gone profession-

al but it was kids from the ages 15 to 18. When graduation hit we all scattered to the four winds. I think I have only kept contact with two and it was a group of six. It was fun. I love to sing in a group or by myself. I love to sing karaoke.



Curtis has a good sense of humor which is an asset for a Williamsburg cab driver who deals with people from all walks of life.

NDN: Going back to your job as a taxi driver, what do you forecast for the 400th Anniversary - especially the big weekend in May?

CURTIS: It falls directly on Mother's Day weekend which is notoriously a heavy day for the restaurants. For the Jamestown settlement they are pushing the advertising pretty well on the radio and all

the media markets. Being someone who survived the Bicentennial Celebration in Philly, the Constitution Celebration again after that, and a few other big events I think this town is going to be very much inundated but there is always an X factor - and that's the weather.

NDN: One last question. What have you learned about people giving them rides and talking to them?

CURTIS: People - now that is a complex question. I think Jim Morrison said it best: "People are strange." (Laughter) People's moods swing with the weather, almost literally. You have folks that are blessed to be in this life for a

long time, you have young ones who are wise beyond their years, you have older ones that want to be young again and acting like it, then you have people that just don't care. Unfortunately, like any city or town in the United States now a days you do have an underlying element of folks who are addicted to whatever. And you want to just grab them and say, "Why are you doing this?" ■

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Leroy Stoutingberg

A lifetime of serving others.



Leroy Stoutingberg standing in the Regency Room of the Williamsburg Inn - his "home away from home".

By Meredith Collins

In the Williamsburg area, there is probably no enterprise as tied to serving others as the hospitality industry. Both locals and visitors alike enjoy the variety of restaurants in the Williamsburg area with cuisine ranging from seafood to ribs and service from fast to formal. Any and all tastes are accommodated for anyone with an appetite and a credit card. With the 400th Anniversary celebration, we have opened our doors – and our dining tables – to visitors from all over the United States and the

world. For most of us, eating out is an enjoyable experience and we have our favorite local restaurants we like to go to for a satisfying meal and some good conversation. But for those who are in the hospitality business there is so much more that goes into the service we experience and may even take for granted. For many, serving others in the restaurant business is a passion and a life-long profession. That is exactly what it has been for Leroy Stoutingberg, restaurant manager at the Williamsburg Inn.

Leroy has worked for the Williamsburg Inn for the last six years,

but he has been in the restaurant business for over 40 years, most of which has been with Colonial Williamsburg. When he first entered the restaurant business, there were really only three main places to get a start - William & Mary, one of the hospitals - Eastern State Hospital or Community Hospital - or Colonial Williamsburg.

His first job was with Christina Campbell's Tavern in 1967, where he worked part time during junior high school, high school and during his first year of college at Hampton Institute. He started in the dish room and then became

a baker and later worked his way to host. He then moved to the Williamsburg Inn.

"When I came to the Williamsburg Inn I was a bus person," Leroy said. "That was the first time I came from the tavern over to the Williamsburg Inn."

Leroy later joined the Navy and served his country for 8 years. He then served 8 more years as a maritime seaman. But whenever he was in port, he always came back to work for Colonial Williamsburg.

"I always had a great love for Williamsburg," Leroy remarked. "Williamsburg was a small chateau, what I liked to call it, for a number of years."

When he returned to Williamsburg after his time at sea, Leroy became a Captain at the Williamsburg Inn working in the Regency Dining Room.

"A Captain is the gentleman who oversees the floor service – table-side service here at the Williamsburg Inn," Leroy explained. "I was Captain for reservations and seating at that time."

While the work was similar to the work of a Captain now, Leroy reflected on the differences that have evolved over time – one, that there seemed to be more people to serve back then, and two, people's expectations have changed considerably over time.

"Things were very different in those years," he continued. "The numbers that we used to do were considerably more than what we are doing now because we have sort of diversified Williamsburg. There are so many hotels and restaurants everybody has their pick as to where they want to go and when."

He continues to see both locals and tourists dine at the Williamsburg Inn for a number of reasons.

"Regency dining right now – you have a lot of clientele that are used to coming here and will continue to

come here," Leroy said. "Most of our locals come to do special occasions. They find us to be the premiere hotel and restaurant in Williamsburg. So they come here to do their anniversaries and birthdays. We see quite a few of those most nights during the week and on weekends especially. We get quite a few of our leisure guests who stay in the hotel as well."

According to Leroy, many Williamsburg Inn guests will stay an average of 3 or 4 nights so they will want to visit a tavern or another area restaurant during their stay. Many enjoy their "grand finale" meal in coat and tie in the Regency Room.

To Leroy, the fact that customers' expectations have changed over time means that the service industry has to be more prepared to meet the varying and constantly evolving needs of the customer. For a Captain in the restaurant industry, understanding how to best serve clientele and seeing to the individual needs of the customer are critical skills.

"Once a Captain, you are always a Captain," Leroy said, even though he now also serves as Restaurant Manager. "I mean, you really have to have an eye for detail. You really have to have an eye for service – service standards. The biggest thing is the guests. Guest expectations are quite different today than what they were years ago. They are quite higher. Time seems to be of the essence. In the earlier years, people were a lot more leisurely

and a lot more casual about time. Where service for a party of two in the Regency Room's fine dining environment once lasted an hour and a half to two hours, today people would like to get in and out in an hour."

This kind of attention to detail and level of service is best performed by people who have made the restaurant business their profession. Leroy began that journey forty years ago and has grown over the years from his varied experiences.

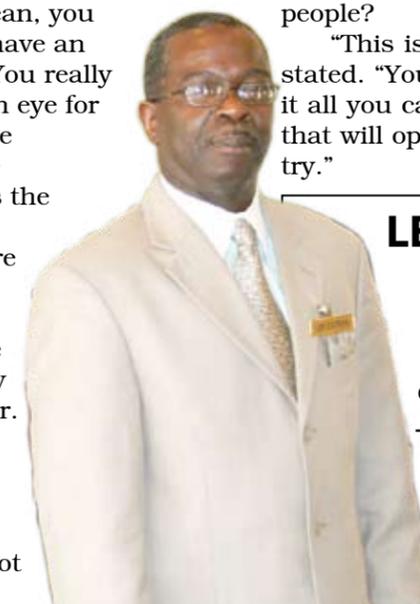
"The management stage has grown on me as I have gotten older and been into it," Leroy said. "It is a profession. It is truly an art - not just a profession." He adds that in order to make this a lifelong journey, you have to be guest oriented. "I've always had the old way of Southern hospitality. I'm probably one of the last of the dying breed of what we call in the service industry, the Captains."

But to the end of continuing that tradition of high quality service, Leroy does his part to teach and mentor others who may be just entering the industry. He has taught etiquette classes for William & Mary Law School and recently spoke to Virginia State students who are going into the hospitality industry.

What does Leroy tell these young people?

"This is a great profession," he stated. "You can grow with it. Give it all you can give. There are doors that will open to you in this industry." ■

"I've always had the old way of Southern hospitality."



LEROY'S PICKS

There are many excellent dining experiences in the Williamsburg area. Here are some of Leroy's favorites outside Colonial Williamsburg:

- The Whitehall Restaurant
- The Whaling Company
- La Yoca
- Seafare
- Aberdeen Barn



Jennifer Devore is ...

the creator of
the only
cultured

Colonial Squirrel

who speaks
French,
reads Latin
and plays
the violin

PHOTO BY GARY DEVORE

By Suzi Drake

When Williamsburg resident Jennifer Devore sees animals, she can't help but imagine them in costume and engaged in theatrics.

"When I see mice, I just think, 'Why can't they be wearing little pants?'" she quipped.

This kind of wild imagination is curiously joined with a love of European and American history, a penchant for all things silly and an innate skill for creative writing. It has lead Devore, a television and film writer by trade, down a path to becoming

the hand behind the locally set string of "historical fantasy" novels known as "The Savannah the Squirrel Series of Books."

This innovative series, geared toward the same sector of folks drawn to the "Harry Potter" saga, centers around, as the title suggests, a squirrel named Savannah who Devore has developed to be a fusion of some of her favorite women from history and fiction.



"Savannah is from London and very well-read. She takes the paper and goes for coffee," Devore described her title character. "She is a little Miss Piggy, a little Scarlett O'Hara and a little Amelia Earhart. She is a high-concept squirrel who speaks French, reads Latin and plays the violin."

And to where, in 1705, should this ex-

ceedingly cultured squirrel wish to migrate? None other than Colonial Williamsburg, where she begins her adventures and makes her mark in history alongside some of the nation's most famous and infamous characters such as Colonel William Byrd II and the pirate, Blackbeard.

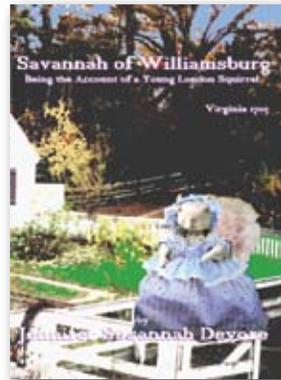
With two books published and on the shelves and one more in the works, Devore admits when this story was first conceived, she had no idea it would lead to a six-book series.

"Coming to visit here, I was struck by just how many squirrels there were," Devore, a native of southern California, said. "On a trip to D.C., my husband and I saw a particular squirrel on the grounds of the Capital. We just started talking about how funny it would be if it crept into the pocket of a senator and got a tour of the Capital."

A writer since she can remember (her parents had her first book of short stories

bound for her when she was in just third grade), Devore began writing a story about a squirrel, which she expected to be no longer than 25 pages.

"That just didn't feel right," she said. "So I started



doing more and more research and it just grew into the first novel."

In fact, fueled by "espresso after espresso," Devore developed *Savannah of Williamsburg: Being the Account of a Young London Squirrel* into approximately 250 pages that detail her experiences during

Williamsburg's initial period of growth and touch on many issues of both historical and political relevance.

Mixing in her unique style of humor and ardor for the fantastic, Devore has succeeded in creating what she sees as the perfect story.

"The Savannah books are my way of putting rabbits in waistcoats," she quipped. "I mix fantasy and history because I am obsessed equally with both realms."

Her second book *Savannah of Williamsburg: The Trials of Blackbeard and his Pirates*, sees Devore skillfully take on social issues such as freedom of the press, the Stamp Act, and piracy and slavery. She portrays each event with complete historical accuracy all the while adding a colorful, cartoon-like spin of comedy and absurdity to lighten the load.

"Each book is diligently researched. I've spent countless hours in the Rockefeller Library scouring for maps and diaries,"

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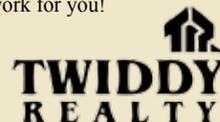
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Devore said. "I have always loved history, but there is a lot of Rocky and Bullwinkle going on in my head, too. Yes, there are serious issues being addressed in the books, but there are silly things happening in the midst of it."

Much like her character Savannah, Devore is also an adventure seeker. First with her parents and later with her filmmaker husband, Gary, she has seen much of the globe, from Africa to Asia and countless small burgs that dot U.S. highways.

"I have traveled since I was in utero, literally," Devore said. "My parents traveled constantly. My mom was the kind of person who, over breakfast, would say to my father, 'I don't think we've ever been to Toledo, Spain. Want to go?' The next thing I knew I would be out of school for two weeks and headed to Europe. They definitely helped culture my interests in all fine arts and all disciplines of world history."

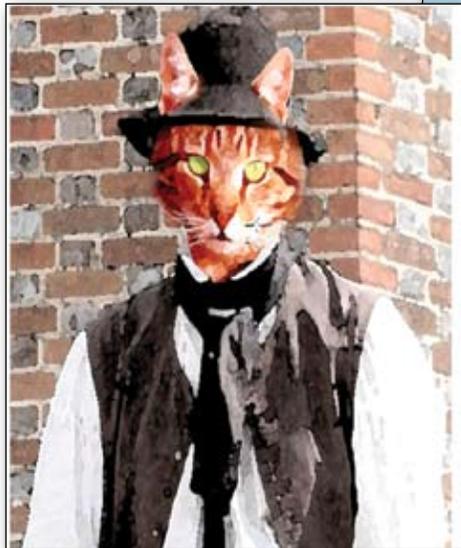
It was this genetically transferred traveling bone that first led Devore and her husband to Williamsburg, and ultimately inspired them to uproot from their southern California home and head east to pursue the couple's shared passion of documentary filmmaking.

"Everywhere we looked here, there was inspiration and content - the architecture, the trees, the people, everything is just inspiring," she said. "This may sound vapid, but I honestly am still amazed at how

look at it. There was a lot going on that we don't always hear about."

She expects the film to be out on DVD by June. The third book in her Savannah series is slated to hit shelves before Christmas.

Down-to-earth, socially conscious, witty, brimming with vigor and joy, Devore is forever grateful to have stumbled upon Williamsburg. Constantly inspiring and eternally welcoming, she admits that it didn't take long for her to fall in love with this city. In fact, her move here helped her to check off a childhood ambition



old everything is and how much history is behind every brick."

In Devore's two years in Williamsburg, she and Gary have nearly completed, "Jamestown: A New Look."

"It has the traditional feel of a Jamestown doc(umentary), but from the view of Native Americans and women," Devore said. "Not to decry anything the Englishmen did, but I don't really believe they 'discovered' Jamestown. It was always here, we were just party crashers who they let stick around. It's just a different

– moving to a place that, for her, is equal parts history and fantasy.

"I always wanted to live at Disneyland," she said in all seriousness. "I worked there during the summers in high school, went there for breakfast with my parents as a kid – I spent a lot of time there. When I moved to Colonial Williamsburg, I called a friend in California and said 'I did it. I moved to 'Colonial Land.'"

For more information about Devore and Savannah the Squirrel, visit her web site at www.historysqureel.com.

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MEET WILLIE BALDERSON

a.k.a. Anas Todkill



Photo courtesy of Adam Stackhouse

by S. S. Lanier

William R. Balderson was born in Westmoreland County, which was also home to George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, Robert E. Lee and James Monroe, and the scene of countless historical events dating from the 1600's. Raised in neighboring Richmond County, Balderson's own legacy in this country began with an immigrant ancestor who was indentured to Landon Carter, son of Robert "King" Carter, one of the wealthiest landowners on the northern neck during colonial times.

Balderson has had a fascination with history, and especially Jamestown, since he was a child growing up on the north-

ern neck in the early 1960's. As a boy, he rode a bus with other students to the Jamestown 4H Camp each summer, and young Willie "lived for that experience". Years later, while reading about the early years of Jamestown in his studies, he would stumble upon accounts of a soldier who traveled with Captain John Smith during his explorations of the Chesapeake Bay. He would have never imagined that one day he would become a costumed interpreter for Colonial Williamsburg and portray that soldier, and that his depiction of that character would take him through the doors of the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C.

Balderson's journey of discovery began during his sophomore year in high school. He landed a job as a disc jockey for WNNT

100.9 FM, a hometown radio station in Warsaw, VA. For a year and a half, he hosted Teen Time at Night on WNNT. His on-air personality caught the attention of competing station WRAR 105.5 AM across the Rappahannock River in Tappahannock, which also happened to be the home of his high school sports teams' archrivals. Balderson, not one to shy away from a challenge, left the job at WNNT, crossed the river and took the job at WRAR hosting a request line. Those years on the radio piqued his interest communication and helped hone his skills. In 1974, he enrolled at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond to study journalism. He returned to Tappahannock every weekend for two years to host the show on WRAR.

Two years into his college education, Balderson met a fellow journalism student who worked part time at Colonial Williamsburg. The student asked Balderson if he had done any interpretation and gave him some insight into that type of work. That conversation opened the door to a career that integrated the journalism skills he loved with the study of colonial history that would become so much a part of his life.

Once Balderson gained the initial experience in interpretation, he was constantly looking for historical figures to develop into character portrayals. He learned about Henry Spellman who, at the age of 14 and having just arrived from England, was sold by Captain John Smith to Powhatan's son to learn the language and serve as an interpreter. Spellman later spent time with the Patomek Indians on the northern neck near the area where Balderson grew up. Balderson developed the character of Spellman and portrayed him through 2002. By that time, it would be necessary for him to look for an older character to portray since Spellman was only 28 when he was killed on a trading cruise up the Potomac River in

1623. Balderson was in his 40's and needed to find a historical character that was closer to his age.

As he studied Smith's journals, a soldier named Anas Todkill appealed to Balderson. Todkill was among the original settlers of Jamestown, and sailed aboard a shallop with Captain John Smith on both of his explorations of the Chesapeake Bay. Todkill's experiences with Smith were lively and dangerous.

In August 1608, he was taken prisoner by the Rappahannock Indians near the area of Piscataway Creek, just south of present day Tappahannock. He was rescued later the same day during a skirmish between the Rappahannocks and Smith's crew. The following day, Todkill nearly lost his life in an ambush when the Rappahannocks lured Smith's boat into a narrow tributary - probably Mount Landing Creek, a few miles north of Tappahannock. Smith and

his men fired a volley of shots and the Rappahannocks fled into the woods. Balderson related to this character and realized that as a boy, he probably walked the very ground where these events took place, or fished and swam in the same creeks.

Balderson began portraying the character of Todkill working to give audiences his best idea of what the man was like. His mastery of the character led him to an opportunity to perform for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. They needed a historical interpreter

to portray a character who could talk objectively about John Smith.

The Gateways Network is a partnership of historical sites and organizations that help the public understand, appreciate and conserve the natural, historic and cultural values of the Chesapeake and its rivers. This experience began opening more doors for Balderson.

“It is rejuvenating to me to see the light bulb go on, to give visitors a new perspective and to enlighten them about their own history.”

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The Gateways project led him to another opportunity to lecture at St. Johns College in Annapolis on Smith's explorations of the Chesapeake. In attendance was Patrick Noonan, founder and Chairman Emeritus of The Conservation Fund and a member of the board of National Geographic. Noonan was involved with Sultana Projects, Inc., the group that was building a replica of the shallop that Smith used during his two explorations of the bay in 1607 and 1608. This reproduction shallop is now being used during the Jamestown 400th Anniversary Celebration and for the reenactments of Smith's voyages on the Chesapeake.

Noonan was impressed with Balderson and invited him to portray Todkill to a crowd of nearly 400 at a National Geographic *Live!* presentation in Grosvenor Auditorium, part of the National Geographic facility in Washington, D.C. The presentation included a behind-the-scenes look at the 17th century shipbuilding skills used to reproduce the shallop, followed by Balderson (Todkill) discussing what life was like aboard the original shallop and the impact and influence of Smith's explorations of the Chesapeake. According to Balderson, this

presentation was one of the highlights of his career.

Most recently, Balderson has served as the liaison from the design team to the Vice President overseeing Colonial Williamsburg's Revolutionary City project. He is now the Manager of Public History Development at Colonial Williamsburg and his responsibilities include ongoing "Rev City" planning as well as coordination of all other programming in the historical area. He misses character portrayal, but hopes to return to it.

"I am enthralled with how journalism skills can be used to teach people," Balderson said about his career as a costumed interpreter. "There are so many possibilities to teach different topics, to utilize emotion and drama to convey history and to create a sense of import of sites and people to guests and visitors. History taught in such a way empowers the guests to become crusaders on their own. It charges them up and gets them enthused about something they hadn't been interested in before. It is rejuvenating to me to see the light bulb go on, to give visitors a new perspective and to enlighten them about their own history." ■

Anniversary Weekend

May 11 - 13, 2007

Activities and observations honoring the quadricentennial milestone are planned at three sites:

Anniversary Park: Across from Jamestown Settlement, this park will feature multiple stages with continuous programming. Also planned for this location is Anniversary Village, which will focus on destinations and history throughout Virginia.

Historic Jamestowne: The site of the original James Fort and an active archaeological excavation where new discoveries are unearthed almost daily. The newly-built Archaearium displays hundreds of artifacts discovered in the dig; tools and trinkets last held in the hands of the colonists.

Jamestown Settlement: A year-round museum which features outdoor living-history areas and a new "World of 1607" exhibition which examines the cultural intersection of settlers, Native Americans and enslaved Africans at Jamestown. Daily programming will include military drills, flag-raising, cannon-firings and dramatic readings.

For more information visit:

www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/

OR

www.jamestown2007.org/

The information above came from the Colonial Williamsburg web site: www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/



View to the Manor House from the Lily Pond, by Charles Neal

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Hal Giesecking

A 21st Century Man of Words

By Muna Killingback

Perhaps Hal Giesecking is Williamsburg's answer to Andy Rooney. They have a lot in common, and not just the eyebrows and grandfatherly nature. Hal knows how to tell a story, and he is full of them, drawn from his long and colorful career.

A prolific author, Hal Giesecking, 75, has also been a travel correspondent at CBS, where he worked with Diane Sawyer and Bill Curtis. He has been president of the Society of American Travel Writers and in the course of working in TV and radio journalism and public relations, he has traveled to 45 countries, and lived in Hawaii.

Jamestown 2007, his most recent book, is a project that was dear to both his heart and home. Co-written with three other authors, including two other past presidents of the Society of American Travel Writers, the book is a user's guide to the Jamestown Anniversary events meant for tourists and locals alike. The book contains some of the most up-to-date information about the festivities.

More than just a guide, it is unique in telling the human story of the history being celebrated - from the vantage point of those who lived it. A fictionalized diary and hypothetical photo album of William Laxton, a real Jamestown settler born in Lincolnshire, England

provide insight into what Laxton may have thought and seen.

But Hal is not only enthralled with the written word. Photography is his other love, and he shares this love with students in a course he teaches through the Learning Tree.

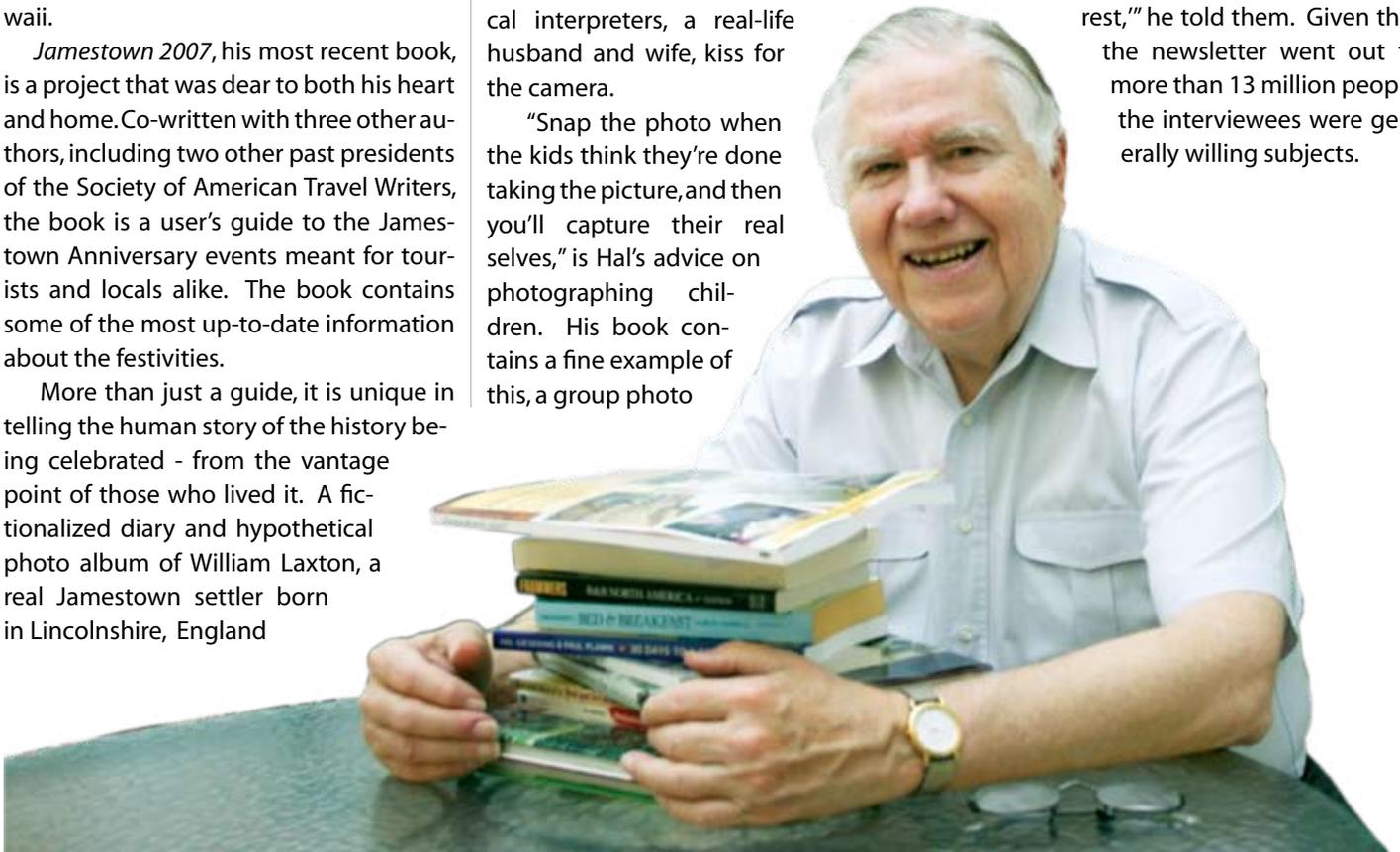
"Photography is the handmaiden of writing. Photography has inspired a lot of my writing," says Hal. In his Jamestown book he applies a unique eye to this art and comes up with original results. Real love is captured as two costumed Colonial Williamsburg historical interpreters, a real-life husband and wife, kiss for the camera.

"Snap the photo when the kids think they're done taking the picture, and then you'll capture their real selves," is Hal's advice on photographing children. His book contains a fine example of this, a group photo

of kids just being kids.

As CEO for Giesecking and Clive, a New York marketing firm that later became the house agency for American Express, Hal revolutionized the AMEX newsletter, which had insufficient readership. He told AMEX execs that the reason people weren't looking at it was because it was filled with even more ways to spend money, and, since it came with their bill, people didn't want to think about that just then.

"Put an interesting interview with one of America's most successful people in the front and it will lead people to the rest," he told them. Given that the newsletter went out to more than 13 million people, the interviewees were generally willing subjects.



This became Hal's dream assignment: "It was my PhD in life - I made a list of the 80 people I most wanted to talk to."

His project resulted in a golf lesson from Jack Nicklaus, a talk with James Michener about writing, and a discussion with Walter Cronkite about the role of public television in education. When he visited Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter in their modest home in Plains, Georgia, the former president recounted an amusing tale about a ride on a very unwilling camel near the pyramids of Giza.

Realizing that he had gleaned many gems from these great people that could help others, Hal compiled the lessons he learned into his book: *Reinvent Yourself: Interviews with More than 40 Successful Americans* tying together many threads of life.

One of the most satisfying things he has ever done was to organize a fundraiser in 2001 for the Red Cross that helped both victims of 9/11 and bolstered the beleaguered travel industry, which had been stymied by people's fear of travel at that time.

To use the airline seats and hotel rooms that were going empty, Hal thought of organizing an on-line auction for them on e-Bay.

"The enthusiasm for the idea just snowballed," Hal recalls. First, e-Bay donated its services, then credit card companies dropped their charges just for the event, and a well-known ad agency promoted the auction in the media free of charge. The auction raised \$44,000 for 9/11 victims in about seven days.

Hal knew he wanted to be a writer at the age of 12. However, his early career zigzagged a bit. His first job at age 18 was packaging machine tools. He decided this wasn't for him and went to college, earning his way by working as an announcer for a Lutheran radio station in St. Louis. When a minister couldn't make it to the station to give the daily sermon, Hal enjoyed selecting one from the contingency box of sermons and reading it himself.

When he was 21, he worked in a dangerous part of St. Louis as a police reporter. His career took other twists and turns as he

"My view is that I'm an average writer and an average philosopher but every day I wake up with a new idea. Most of them, 99% are terrible, but I survive on the other one percent."

was drafted into the army and stationed in Puerto Rico. There he became a reporter in the public information office. He has also worked in Chicago, writing radio jingles for Sears and in Hawaii, doing PR for Sheraton Hotels while housesitting in mansions for wealthy Hawaiians visiting the mainland.

With this range of experience, Hal is well-placed to advise and encourage aspiring writers, which he does freely. His strongest advice to them is: "Hitch your name to an idea. That's most important thing anybody can do in writing, or in marketing or business, or anything. If you tie your name to an idea, if the idea - or book - takes off, by association your name will go with it."

"My view is that I'm an average writer and an average philosopher but everyday I wake up with a new idea. Most of them, 99% are terrible, but I survive on the other one percent," says Hal.

He also encourages new writers by publishing their books. His website describes these publications.

They range from a thriller about the dark side written by a financial journalist with an interest in evil who was invited to view two real Church of England exorcisms and a book filled with phrases guaranteed to get your e-mails and blogs noticed.

In Hal's next book, *A Sermon for my Eight Grandchildren*, he advises them (and everyone else) how to walk a middle road between bragging and hiding their achievements. Self-promotion

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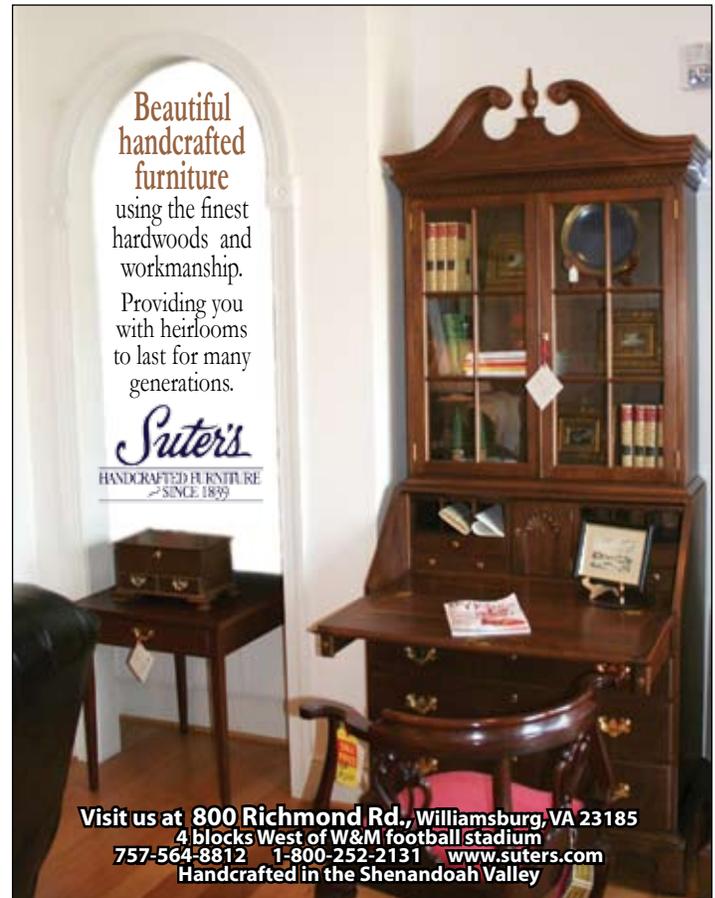
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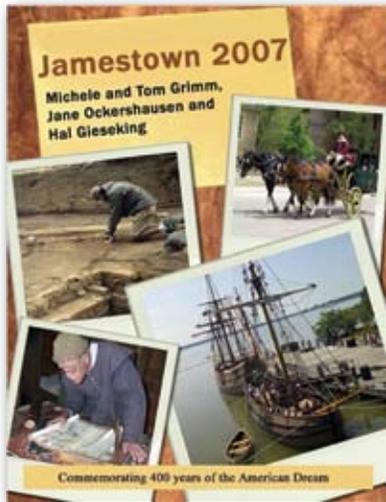
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is necessary, he believes, for everything from jobs to relationships, but it is important to do it right.

"It is important to let people know what you can do, without being blatant or being hated by your neighbors," quips Hal. "A German grandmother - not mine - once said, 'Self-praise stinks,' but I don't agree. I tell my grandchildren to hide your achievements under a blanket, albeit a transparent one. Telling jokes about yourself is one way to seem humble."

Hal has certainly achieved that middle ground. Although his accomplishments are impressive, and still growing, he manages to recount them without a hint of bigheadedness or conceit. He is indeed a storyteller in the truest sense.



Hal's most recent book on the Jamestown celebration.

Visit Hal's web site at: www.virginiahospitalitysuite.com ■

Want to know more about the Learning Tree?

The Williamsburg Area Learning Tree (WALT), a Public Service Project of the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists, is a not-for-profit education program that brings you and your neighbors together to share in the excitement and fun of learning. Individuals in our community have stepped forward to offer their knowledge of a subject that they love so that the rest of us can learn from them. Classes are offered to everyone in the community from teenager to senior citizen.

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Dear Reader,

I would like to request contributions from you for the next issue of *Next Door Neighbors*. This upcoming issue will focus on local women who extend themselves for others in ways that may go unnoticed by many, but are a blessing to the individuals who are the recipients of those good works. The story ideas must be about Williamsburg women. They could be well-known in the community or someone quietly serving others behind the scenes. If you know of a woman who is doing some interesting work for others, please send me an email with your name and telephone number, the name of the person you think we should interview and why. Thank you!

Meredith Collins
Publisher
meredith.collinsgroup@cox.net

The next issue of *Next Door Neighbors* publishes May 24th. Advertising Deadline - Tuesday, May 8th.



Charles Falls,
Williamsburg

A. "Oh, definitely because I was there in 1957 when the Queen visited in October. I was in the 8th grade at the time. We went there as part of a school field trip."



Debra OConnor,
Williamsburg

A. "No, I will not be going but my parents are coming in from Indiana and they will be attending. I'd rather not go because I don't really want to get involved with all of the big crowds."

in the open

Q. Will you be attending the 400th Anniversary weekend celebration in May? Why or Why not?



Stan Ecton,
Williamsburg

A. "Well I hope to. At the Governors Land we are going to have buses running which will make the whole thing a lot easier and that's what I hope works."



Kelly Kidd,
Williamsburg

A. "Unfortunately I probably will not attend. I love the tourists but this is the time of year when we get extremely crowded. I just don't like crowds. I have small children and I just don't feel that they would be comfortable. We get thousands and thousands of tourists in this area and I just don't think I would enjoy having three times that amount of people in such a small area."



Stuart Park,
Williamsburg

A. "I will not be going. I'm going to be with my fiance in Hampton."

"We'll be there!"

Members of the
James City County Fire Department



Miles Pettengell

Jason Robins

Kris Emond

THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE

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