

July 2009

WILLIAMSBURG'S

# Next Door Neighbors

VOL. 3, ISSUE 7

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FIFER

Pat Winter  
SCULPTOR

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Meredith Collins, Publisher

Creative talent is subjective. What one person rates as average, another raves over. This is what makes the “world go round” as they say. Our own likes, dislikes and interests influence how we experience creative talent and to what degree we enjoy it.

For example, I have drawing abilities. People have told me that I am talented. However, I see the kind of work others

can do - those who are far more talented - and I do not see things the same way. I consider my drawing skills to be very average. How could I have improved my drawing abilities over the years? Practice.

This is where the talented individuals in this issue get high marks. While I have only dabbled in drawing over the years, the locals we have highlighted within these pages have made their creative talent a very passionate and engaging part of their lives. They have honed their crafts, picking up their instruments of choice time and again, year after year. These are some of your Williamsburg neighbors who you may or may not know but who have found a love for their own particular creative talent and nurtured it over many years. Hopefully, you will know them a bit better after reading their stories. NDN

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**Inside**

PAGE 3  
**Mark Frankel**  
*Master Silversmith*

PAGE 18  
**Denny Mathias**  
*Poet*

PAGE 6  
**Ken Johnston**  
*Fifer*

PAGE 22  
**HEALTH**  
**Walker Thompson**  
*Kayaking For Fun!*

PAGE 14  
**Florence Moore**  
*Pianist & Singer*

PAGE 24  
**HOME**  
**John D. McFarlane**  
*Backyard Ponds*

 Lisa Cumming  
 Photography

lwcphoto@cox.net commercial industrial architectural portrait  
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MARK FRANKEL

# Master Silversmith

By Rachel Sapin

“You have to be a little crazy to want to become a silversmith,” explains Mark Frankel, a Master Silversmith who has been practicing the craft for over 30 years. If you have to be a little crazy to become a Master Silversmith, you also have to be extremely dedicated to become an accomplished one.

Mark received his silversmith training from The Sir John Cass School of Art in London, a 4-year intensive program that involved being immersed in the trade five days a week from 9am to 8:30pm. “I spent 90 percent of my time in the trade either taking art classes or working in related fields,” he remembers of the experience.

As one of three people to graduate from his class with distinction, Mark went on to work for Colonial Williamsburg where he served as a silversmith for 15 years. His last five years with Colonial Williamsburg were spent managing the silver production shop, the blacksmith production shop, and the hand-engraving shop.

The title “Master” often designates a silversmith who has attained the highest level of craftsmanship in the trade. According

to Mark however, being a Master Silversmith is not only about attaining a certain skill level, it’s also about knowing the best way to

create a piece, and that knowledge can be acquired only through experience. “For me, it’s the creative process that determines how the end product will turn out,” he says. “It’s about knowing how to produce a product that will measure up to its intended use.”

Experience is something that Mark has in abundance. He’s been commissioned to create hundreds of silver pieces throughout the course of his career, including a replica of the prestigious PGA Championship Wanamaker trophy, a 27-pound silver symbol that has been a part of the PGA since 1916.

“The PGA wanted to retire the original one because it had suffered so much damage over time,” says Mark. The original Wanamaker endured plenty of wear and tear in its heyday. In 1925, golf legend and socialite Walter Hagen was rumored to have once lost the trophy by entrusting it to a taxi driver. He gave him \$5 with the intention that the driver would drop it off at his resort while Hagen went out and celebrated his seventh major championship win. Although the trophy was not recovered in time for Hagen to pass it on to his successor, it was eventually found in the 1930s gather-



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“They wanted me to make a replica that could be used on tour that would be a little more bullet-proof,” says Mark with a laugh.

Something else that makes Mark’s profession unique is that he creates pieces that often go beyond the purpose of utility. While many mainstream consumer products are expected to last for a couple of years, Mark creates pieces that last for generations. Not surprisingly, the response that Mark receives from his customers often goes beyond the quotidian as well.

Mark recently received a touching letter from a priest he had made a chalice for in 2007. “The priest’s father made him a wooden chalice, and the priest asked me if I would make a silver liner for the chalice,” he explains. “Most people aren’t going to get involved with that because it’s very difficult to incorporate someone else’s work into your work based on their skills. I felt I could do the job and I was really pleased with the results. The priest was too, because he wrote, ‘Everyone I show the chalice to almost inevitably gasps and exclaims how beautiful it is.’ It was very gratifying to me to create something for him that he might have for the rest of his life.”

Another unique aspect of Mark’s profession is that even in an age where one of the most important skills seems to be how well you know HTML, he still spends most of his time working with his hands without a computer screen in front of him. “I just love working with my hands,” he says. “Everything you do, every motion you make, is either right or wrong. You get immediate feedback from working with silver, and that’s very gratifying to me. It’s not like someone in a business who is assigned to work on a project for a year and a half and then someone will look at it and decide whether they like it or not, or whether the work was worthwhile.”

Working with his hands seems to suit Mark. His years of experience working with silver have helped him not to be afraid to literally reinvent the wheel when prompted. In 1998, Mark opened his own studio in Williamsburg where he took the craft of silversmithing out of the Colonial era and into the 21st Century. Although Mark still enjoys working on traditional silver pieces, he also enjoys the challenge of taking on unorthodox projects. Mark’s silver endeavors run the gamut: from constructing a 4 ft. by 2 ft. tabernacle, to crafting Faberge style eggs, to reconstructing George Washington’s original wine coolers at Mt. Vernon.

“I will take on unusual jobs,” he laughs. “Right now I’m working with somebody who wants to make a fine silver golf putter. It was a job that nobody else wanted to do, but to me it sounded like fun.” Mark attributes much of his willingness to take on unusual projects not only to his years of experience working with silver, but also to his English-based training. “I have to say that my training in England could not be duplicated in the U.S.,” he adds. “I was able to work with and see many different aspects of the trade that most American silversmiths never get exposed to.”

English-trained or not, the silversmiths who Mark admires the most have one thing in common, and that’s a dedication to the craft. “You have to be a little bit crazy to try to make a career for yourself in the arts,” he thoughtfully remarks. “I think it’s easy to give up. When you start out in the trade, you only have enough money to eat macaroni and cheese. But over time your accomplishments speak for themselves and success follows. All of sudden, it’s worth every minute of it.” <sup>NDN</sup>

\* [www.pga.com/pgachampionship/2008/news/wanamaker\\_080308.html](http://www.pga.com/pgachampionship/2008/news/wanamaker_080308.html)  
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# KEN *Fifer* JOHNSTON

By Alison Johnson

For Ken Johnston, marching and performing in front of crowds is fun, not scary. But as a child, Ken wasn't naturally outgoing. In fact, he credits music – specifically the Fifes and Drums of Colonial Williamsburg – with pulling him out of his shell.

“I was pretty shy,” he says. “My mother always used to tell this story where she took me to a birthday party and the other kids kept coming up to her and saying, ‘Kenny no talk. Kenny no eat.’ It took me a while to warm up, but it was easier to perform with a group. The experience really helped me.”

That's one reason Ken has never given up playing the fife - a small, high-pitched flute used mainly to accompany drums in military or marching bands - and why he loves to see children who want to learn the instrument.

After working with Colonial Williamsburg's group from ages 9 to 16, he later founded his own organization, Williamsburg Field Musick Fifes & Drums, which has given performances across the United States and in Germany. Now 51, the James City County resident also serves as President of the Colonial Williamsburg Fifes and Drums Alumni Association, which organizes two events each year.

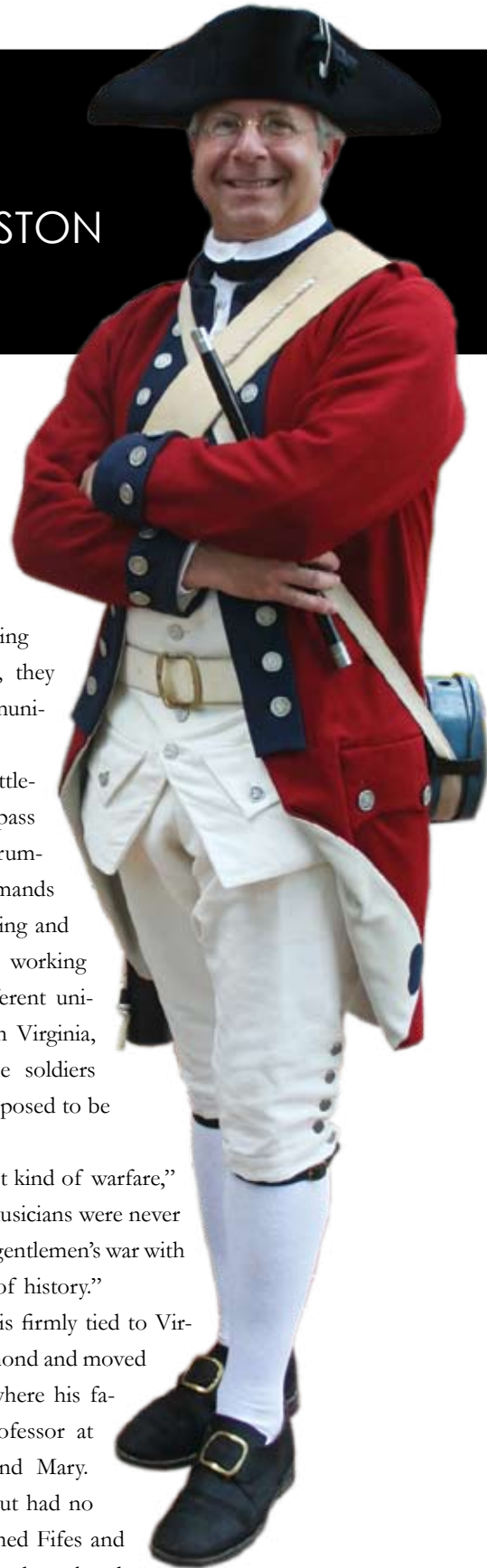
Passing along musical history is a passion for Ken, who by day works as an agent with Middle Peninsula Insurance & Financial Ser-

vices in James City County after a 25-year career in banking. Not only did American Colonial musicians entertain troops during long marches, he explains, they were a crucial part of communication during battles.

On loud and packed battlefields, music was a way to pass along orders: fifers and drummers gave specific commands for loading, firing, cease-firing and retreating that kept armies working as one. Musicians had different uniforms than infantrymen. In Virginia, they wore red coats while soldiers wore blue and were not supposed to be targets.

“It was a totally different kind of warfare,” Ken says. “It didn't mean musicians were never injured or shot, but it was a gentlemen's war with rules. It's a fascinating part of history.”

Ken's personal history is firmly tied to Virginia. He was born in Richmond and moved to Williamsburg in 1963, where his father was a Psychology Professor at the College of William and Mary. He always enjoyed music but had no formal training until he joined Fifes and Drums, where his older brother played



the drums. That naturally steered Ken to the fifes. "It was that brotherly competition thing," he laughs. "I had to do something to set myself apart."

Like all new recruits, Ken took two classes a week, an hour-long session on a weekday and two-to-three hour lessons on music and marching on Saturday mornings. After about a year, he was good enough to begin marching on the streets and, on what was one of the more memorable days of his childhood, to get fitted for a corps uniform.

"The performances are easy for me now, but back then just memorizing the music was the hardest part," he remembers. "It takes a while before you can see a note and your fingers automatically know what formation to use. Marching and playing at the same time also was a little hard at first. It's definitely a time commitment and you've really got to treat it as a job. But when you can put that uniform on, it's really exciting."

Fifes and Drums, which began in 1958,

draws musicians from a waiting list of applicants in the community. Boys and girls can begin learning military music at age ten and stay in the group until they have graduated from high school. In addition to performing, they speak to the public about 18th and 19th century musicians and teach younger members music and history lessons.

"I liked that leadership role you could take on," Ken says. "That and performing in front of crowds – that's just lots of fun. There is a real sense of camaraderie."

After leaving the group at age 16, Ken graduated from Lafayette High School in 1975 and Hampton-Sydney College in 1979, with a degree in Psychology. He and his wife, Mary, a Williamsburg native who is now a

third-grade teacher at Walsingham Academy, raised two sons, Eric and Matthew.

As an adult, Ken realized he missed performing and bet that many other Fifes and Drums alumni did as well. So in 1998, he

founded Williamsburg Field Musick Fifes & Drums, now a 14-member group that gives more than 300 performances a year. Its musicians entertain at corporate events, schools, private parties and weddings, using

authentic regimental instruments and uniforms.

Some of the gigs have brought out very famous audience members, including George W. Bush at a hospital administrators' convention in Washington, D.C., and Bill Clinton at a Democratic caucus at Kingsmill. U2 lead

**"It's definitely a time commitment and you've really got to treat it as a job. But when you can put that uniform on, it's really exciting."** - Ken Johnston

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singer, Bono, was also at Kingsmill one year. "I was within arms' length of him," Ken says. "We played an Irish tune, but I'm not sure he noticed. He was busy politicking. It's fun to see some of the more famous people."

Ken, who has never learned to play another musical instrument, hopes children will keep joining Fifes and Drums despite the tug of so many other extra-curricular activities.

His own son, Eric, played fife in the corps for many



years and also learned to drum. Ken already has his eye on Eric's 9-month-old son Andrew, his first grandchild, as a future recruit.

"To have music in your life is such a joy and a release," he says. "It can take your mind off other pressures you face, and it builds character. It creates a well-rounded person." The corps is great for discipline, too, he adds: "It's amazing to see kids transform when they know it's time to do their job," he says. "Then when their uniform is off, they're just goofing around again. It shows them that if they put their minds to it, they can do something really special."

It's also something they can do for the rest of their lives. "If you were a high school athlete, you might go to games and wish you could be back out there on the field just like you once were," Ken says. "With music, you can play forever." **NDN**

## Next Door Neighbors

**Publisher**  
Meredith Collins

**Managing Editor**  
Joe Collins

**Copy Editor**  
Al White

**Lifestyle Editor**  
Greg Lilly

**Cover Photographer**  
Lisa Cumming

**Writers**  
Linda Landreth Phelps, Suzi Drake, Rachel Sapin, Brandy Centolanza, Sara E. Lewis, Muna Killingback, Natalie Miller-Moore, Charlene Smith, Alison Johnson

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# PAT WINTER Sculptor

By Natalie Miller-Moore

During her career as an artist, Pat Winter has gone through many phases: the Bone Period, the Wave Period and the Bronze Period. She's worked with copper enamel and clay. There was also a brief Chainsaw Period.

"A phase is over when it gets dull and loses its vitality," Pat said. It's no surprise that she's been through a lot of different materials as a sculptor. She's nearly 80 years old. Today, she's working in paper and iridescent acrylic paint.

Pat's work is displayed



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locally in the meditation labyrinth at the new Sentara Regional Medical Center, at the Williamsburg Library and at Jamestown High School.

Pat's work has become known around town, perhaps because she's been a Williamsburg resident for more than 45 years. "Usually, I work on a piece until it's finished. I seldom visualize it ahead of time. When I'm commissioned to do a piece, I keep in mind who it's for. For Jamestown, I went with unfolding leaves as a metaphor for students as unfolding human beings," Pat said.

She wanted to be an artist from an early age, and took classes at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh where she grew up. "When I discovered sculpture in high school, it was through summer classes at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon.) We did a lot of group learning, working from a model in clay, usually objects together in different juxtaposes," she said. During one exercise, Pat had to mold a skull out of clay from memory when the subject was hidden behind a curtain.

Pat moved to Williamsburg with her husband, Rolf, and three children in the 1960s, when he accepted a job as a Professor of Physics at the College of William and Mary. While he helped build the newly formed Physics Department, she investigated the local art scene.

"Well, it used to be called the '20th Century Gallery,' but now it's called the 'This Century Gallery' for obvious reasons. It was only a couple of years old when I got here, but part of a lively art community," Pat said. "You had to travel though, to the Peninsula and Norfolk. There were outdoor shows like 'Occasion for the Arts,' and CW [Colonial Williamsburg] encouraged its people to be involved in the art gallery. There wasn't a lot of public art though."

Pat joined the teaching staff at William and Mary during the late 70s. She enjoyed teaching 3-D design to undergrads. She believes taking art classes today may be a different practice then it was then. "Now, there is so much art work done on computers. Plus I think that kids are exposed to more now, and more sophisticated about their own culture," she said.

Pat's advice to a sculptor now would be: "If you absolutely love it, do it, but you have to love it." She clearly does. Her home is full of art – her own, that of other people she knows and collected pieces from years of traveling. She has a series of what she calls "celestial spiders" which are long twisty pieces of styrofoam, covered in paper and painted, that hang from the ceiling in her dining room. They hang near a wall with three viscosity etchings, round and colorful, entitled "Morning", "Dawn" and "Night." There are pieces of African art in the doorway, and a bronze working stove that she created in the living room. Everywhere, there are little bits of art, coils of metal waves, figurines, and wall hangings.

One of the most striking things about Pat's home is that she has a bronze front door. Its embossed copper molded and hammered to appear like a pine tree's bark. To top that off, the inside is also covered with copper molded in a wood grain pattern, and aged with a specific patina that Pat applied with chemicals.

For years, Pat worked in a studio on campus. Now, she has a

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studio attached to her house. "It's important to have your own space - a place of your own, where you can feel your works and thoughts around you. Then, you can reconnect with them when you step in there," she said. Even when Pat was busy raising her three children, she would still go down to her studio and look at what she was working on. "You need to keep it fresh. That's the hardest part. You don't want to get stale. Having raw materials around helps, but if there's too sparse a space or too much stuff, it's inhibiting."

Many people may wonder if sculpting is an old-fashioned art form. In Pat's opinion, the importance of sculpture has only grown as we've become a society more dependent on two-dimensional stimulation like computers and TV. "One of the roles of a sculptor in society is to stimulate people's brains," she said. "Body participation is more important now, since so much of things are in 2-D visual stimulation. You have to anticipate and experience the piece. Even if you can't actually touch it, it needs to be available to your sense of touch, and the sense of space between you and it. In today's world, that is missing."

Artists are often asked: Where do you get your inspiration? Pat says that she is inspired by nature. Sometimes, however, ideas come to her from a combination of places. One time, an idea struck her on the bus returning home with her students from a field trip to the National Gallery in Washington, DC. She was inspired to make a series of enamel pieces called 'Moon Toast.'

"I guess it was just the two images together. We were eating bleu cheese and sea toast crackers, and I saw the moon out the window of the bus, and it just came to me," she said. Pat also admits that artists collect ideas from many places, sometimes too many ideas to execute in a lifetime.

Another natural part of an artist's life is displaying art in a show or installation. Pat has had several shows at Art Space in Richmond in the 1990s. She's also done shows in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Washington DC, New York and Oxford, England.

"I used to have shows, less so now. That's what you do - create a body of work so people can respond to it. People project what they think it is. I name my pieces but others don't. You can just leave it up to pure interpretation," she said. About her work process, Pat said that she often doesn't know what something is until it's done, and she gets to a point where she knows what she was looking for has emerged.

For example, during her chainsaw phase, she had a small piece of poplar in her studio while she worked on a big piece, and she gave it some thought, and then did it fairly quickly. "If you do too much planning, it's not fresh," she said.

As Pat has grown older, she loves and appreciates art, but her creation of it has slowed down some and turned more two dimensional. After all, smelting and hammering bronze are heavy-duty activities, not to mention wielding a chainsaw. Her lively heart and mind as an artist are still apparent. Pat's legacy of creating public art in Williamsburg continues. Her fans will just have to wait to see what kind of phase she enters next. NDN

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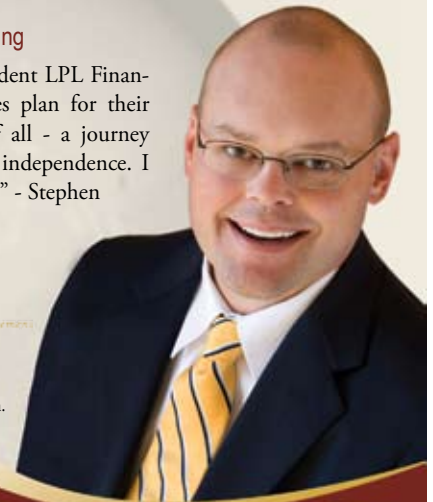
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DR. JULIAN PITTMAN

# JUGGLER & MAGICIAN

By Brandy Centolanza



**D**r. Julian Pittman received his first magic kit when he was about four years old, and was immediately intrigued. Growing up watching the various illusions and juggling acts at Busch Gardens further impacted his decision to pursue a hobby as a magician.

“I would say the influence of those at Busch Gardens was certainly profound,” Julian shares. “Seeing the performances there was definitely an inspiration.” His favorite performers were famous world champion juggler, Albert Lucas, and magician, Mark Wilson.

“Both my mom and grandfather were patient enough to let me watch both of these men hundreds of times when we had season passes,” Julian recalls. “Seeing how they handled mistakes in front of a live audience was invaluable. I picked up the magic and juggling fairly quickly. Both were fairly natural to me.”

Julian began juggling as a preteen, practicing first with scarves and beanbags. Within a year, he says, he was at a performance level worth watching. He started Pittman Productions Co. in 1990 when he was in high school, and entertained at birthday parties and other events to earn extra money.

He continued working as a magician and juggler while attending the College of William and Mary, and later, the veterinary schools at Virginia Tech and Mississippi State. Julian holds a Doctorate in Toxicology, and currently works as a Professor of Animal Physiology at

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William and Mary, though he still keeps busy entertaining on weekends.

"I just love the audience reactions, and coming up with new and different ideas to try," he says. "Right now, I perform a lot at Great Wolf Lodge, and I love to see all the kids' faces light up when I do a trick."

Julian is a four-time finalist in the International Juggling Championships and won the silver medal in 1993. His act includes juggling balls, clubs, knives, rings, and spinning balls, as well as ping-pong balls in his mouth. An audience favorite is playing the xylophone while mouth-juggling. He's also done juggling acts while ice skating.

"Of the two [juggling and magic], juggling certainly requires more work, and still does to this day to keep up to a performance level," Julian points out. "The basics of juggling are like riding a bike; you never forget them. But consistent practice is required to maintain high numbers, seven or more objects. With regard to the stage illusions, those are a team effort, and require constant practice in order for them to be performed smoothly. Good communication skills and

chemistry while on stage with my assistants are a must."

The Pittman Productions Co. website boasts several magic tricks that Julian and his assistants routinely perform. His favorite is a trick called "Origami," based on the Japanese art of paper folding in which his assistant enters an unfolded box. The box is then folded into a 12-inch cube and the audience is left to wonder where the assistant has gone. Three swords are pushed through the box from all directions, and then the assistant magically reappears.

"Very few people have performed it," Julian says. "It's a mind teaser. It's so deceptive, so hard to wrap your mind around where the girl could be."

His other popular tricks include: "Cube Zag" in which an assistant is placed in a small box and he cuts through the box with large cylinders and steel blades, then folds the box in half; the classic sawing a woman in half trick; "House of Cards," in which his assistant magically appears within a house of cards made from large, flat playing cards; and a Houdini inspired underwater escape trick.

Julian has performed thousands of times over the years on national stages, including in Reno and Las Vegas, as well as in Quebec. His company specializes in birthday parties, weddings, school functions, cruises, fairs, and other occasions.

He also enjoys running and cycling, but, for now, "It's the juggling and magic that keeps me busy," he says.

"I would certainly like to see the company continue to grow in the future, particularly expand with more novel stage illusions and fresh presentation themes," he adds. "I am not sure its something I would want to pursue full-time, but should the opportunity present itself I would be open to it. I have had some amazing opportunities to perform in some prestigious venues over the years. However, I would say my 'ideal venue' would be an opportunity to have a resident show in Williamsburg. Having a local performance space designed for regularly scheduled magic/juggling shows, and bringing in other variety artists to this venue as well, a "mini Cirque" if you will, would be a dream come true." NDN

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## FLORENCE MOORE

# Pianist & Singer

By Muna Killingback

In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul speaks about kinds of gifts such as prophecy and healing. Had he known Florence Moore, he might have added music.

Florence Moore, 74, began her career in liturgical music more than 60 years ago. A pianist and singer, she has served numerous Williamsburg area churches directing junior, adult, and senior choirs.

Since the age of five, Florence has been performing publicly. Her father was a minister at St. John's Baptist Church in Toano and Shiloh Baptist Church in Croaker and her mother was a choir director. Under her mother's tutelage, Florence began her long career in music: "It was something that I wanted to do and my mother recognized my intent on playing. So she taught me to play the

piano and read music."

Florence is known to many and has made her mark on the community. As a choir director, Florence says she "interacted with many a young folk. I see them in the community now, some I know, some I don't remember. Some come up to me and say, 'Mrs. Moore, you don't know who I am, do you?' Many have children of their own and even grandchildren." She also has some time-tested advice she has



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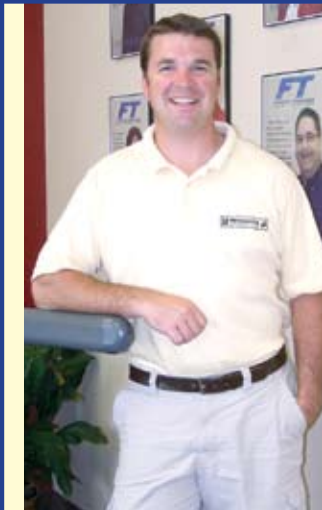
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for parents of children with musical ability: "Give them time to prepare themselves - give them the time and training to develop that talent." Sharing her love of music with others has given her a lot of satisfaction: "It has been a joy to teach people to sing - and to perform myself," says Florence.

Julia Churchill, president of the senior choir at St. John's Church in Williamsburg has known Florence for 30 years. "Florence is just a talented person," she says. "She is a dedicated musician who is very knowledgeable about church music. She has been a staple in the church and community. Whenever you said you needed a musician,

the first name you thought of was Florence Moore."

**"It has been a joy to teach people to sing - and to perform myself."**

- Florence Moore

"Music really is my life," says Florence. "Music is in my heart. If music had been taken away from me, I don't think I would be the person that I

have become. It is a means of communicating with others. You don't have to know the people you're performing to; it is still a joy to perform. Everyone always tells me, 'Florence, you know that music is your life; if you didn't have music, you would be nothing.' I wouldn't have anything. My pleasure is my playing; that's my joy in life."

Inspired and informed by her faith, Florence's music expresses her strong beliefs. "I accepted Christ at an early age and remain a dedicated Christian. The songs that I use interact with the sermons of the ministers. The choir sings selections that reflect the words in the scriptures just as the minister preaches from the scriptures. That's the musical aspect of the church - the songs that we sing relate through scriptures and prayers," says Florence. "Him and hymns - it all goes together - it's about Him, Jesus Christ."

A versatile musician, Florence can play and direct all types of music - contemporary, spirituals, gospel, and hymns, which she prefers. "Contemporary and gospel tend to be more for entertainment than for congregational worship where people join in and sing together. But it is all part of the plan of worship," she explains.

Florence also has a special gift of interpreting music and if she has any difficulty with a piece, the solution comes to her nocturnally: "Oftentimes, when I have challenging music to be performed that I can't get straight in my mind and my heart, it will come to me in my

sleep. I'll wake up, leave my bed, and go to the piano and play it correctly. It is something that happens to me. Sometimes I can catch myself playing a piece that I don't know. I've heard it and I may have seen the music, and have struggled with it although I'm not quite sure how it should be read. Over a period of time, it comes to me in my sleeping hours. I lie there and hum it to myself."

St. John the Baptist Church in Williamsburg recently held a reception to honor Florence's 30 years of service. She gave her last public performance there in December. She says that she is still ready to help any church that needs her assistance. Florence was also active in the community in other ways, working for county elections, and for many years, helping seniors get to their appointments working as a volunteer medical escort for the James City Triangle Senior Center.

Florence's music has also helped her through very difficult times. Her husband passed away a year and a half ago after 51 years of marriage. In 2005, after coming through two bouts of pneumonia, she had a stroke that affected her ability to play.

"When I woke up from the stroke," says Florence, "my right hand was balled up in a knot and I said, 'I can't play the piano like this.' I started rubbing

my fingers and  
by the time I  
left the house a  
week later, my  
fingers were  
completely  
straight. But  
I still couldn't  
play for three  
months. I still  
have weakness  
in my right  
hand, but the  
Lord has al-

**As we age there are some uncertainties, but I still plan to play the piano and sing until I die."**

- Florence Moore

lowed me to continue to do what I was meant to do."

Her daughter, Gwenevere Marshall, recalls that when her mother was still going through physical therapy following the stroke, she came home from the hospital at Christmastime and went straight to the piano.

"I looked at my dad, and both of us said, 'I think she's going to be all right,'" Gwenevere says. "The music has been a good healer."

Looking ahead, Florence says, "I'm still standing up. I say thank God I'm blessed. I'm not retired. I'm still playing. I still have the mind to play until the Lord calls me to my heavenly home. As we age there are some uncertainties, but I still plan to play the piano and sing until I die." **NDN**

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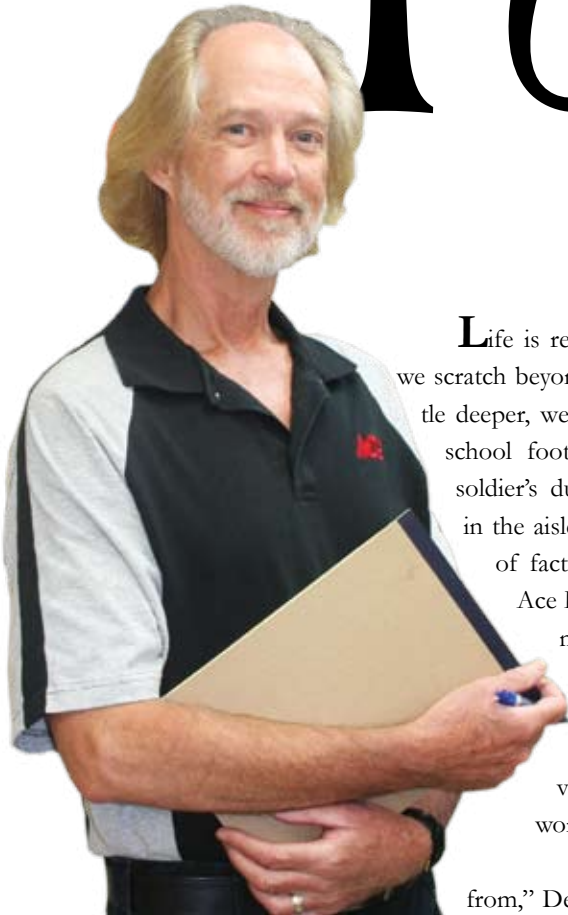
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DENNY MATHIAS

# Poet



By Linda Landreth Phelps

Life is ready to surprise and delight us if we scratch beyond its surface. If we dig just a little deeper, we might find a singer on the high school football field, a sculptor under the soldier's dusty camouflage, or even a poet in the aisles of Ace Hardware. As a matter of fact, Denny Mathias, manager of the Ace Hardware on Williamsburg's Richmond Road, is so prolific a poet that poems sometime flow from him effortlessly, three or four at a sitting as if he has opened a vein and bled words. His body of work stuffs three loose-leaf binders.

"I don't know where they come from," Denny declares. "It's like the poems

are already there just waiting to get out."

Love and the beauties of nature often figure in his work, reflected in themes of sunshine, flowers, and rain. His sensitivity to these things made him more or less a fish out of water in his first job, more ideologically aligned as he was with the tie-dyed Hippie worldview than with his coworker Men in Black's.

Due to impressive test scores, Denny, now 60, was recruited by the CIA while still in high school; he began work at 18, just after graduating. Six years working with computers for the agency was enough to keep him out of the jungles of Southeast Asia, allowing him to stay in Northern Virginia, marry

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his first wife and have a son, all by the time he was 20. Denny, however, was not happy. An excerpt from one of his poems expresses it best:

I see a whole lot of fighting  
I hear screaming out loud  
That I want no part of  
I just wanna feel proud

Just trying to find a place  
A place where I belong  
I belong to Mother Earth  
Mother Earth keeps rolling on

His CIA job chafed and his marriage fell apart. "When I left there, I'm sure I walked away from one of the best career opportunities that would ever come my way, but by that time my friends had either started coming home from Viet Nam in body bags or were college kids crashing on my couch while in town for the DC protest marches. I became a very confused young man. I quit my govern-

ment job, grew my hair long again, started working with coin-operated laundries, and eventually landed in the hardware business, which I really love."

Now many years later the work still suits him well. An outgoing, friendly, and articulate man, Denny enjoys interviewing people for new positions at his store. "I like to just chat with applicants," he says. "I look for personality and attitude. I can teach people how to do things, but I can't teach intelligence or change their basic character."

Denny and his second wife, Pam, a dedicated Special Education teacher with the Williamsburg-James City County school system, have lived in rural areas most of their married life. For the last ten years they've made their home in Toano on a generous amount of land which allows Denny to commune with nature and draw inspiration from his surroundings.

"I had a period of about 15 years when I didn't write at all," Denny remembers. "When I moved to Williamsburg, I was sud-

denly inspired. I was listening to a country music station, thinking about how those songs often involve fighting and cheating and drinking, when a title popped into my head: 'I've Almost Always Been True'. I sat down and wrote, imagining Randy Travis' voice as I did. Once I got started again, I never stopped. I've written more in the last ten years than I did in the first fifty years of my life."

Denny's style has changed over time. His very first poem was more negative in content and intent than his current work.

"I was in high school - remember, this was the '60s - and I was fighting with my parents about the length of my hair. My parents said unless I got a haircut, I couldn't use the car, so I went upstairs and wrote an angry poem as a way to protest. Poetry is a great way to express emotions safely," he says.

After discovering his gift, Denny wrote more for his girlfriend and so impressed his English teacher with an assigned poem that she at first suspected Denny, an admittedly

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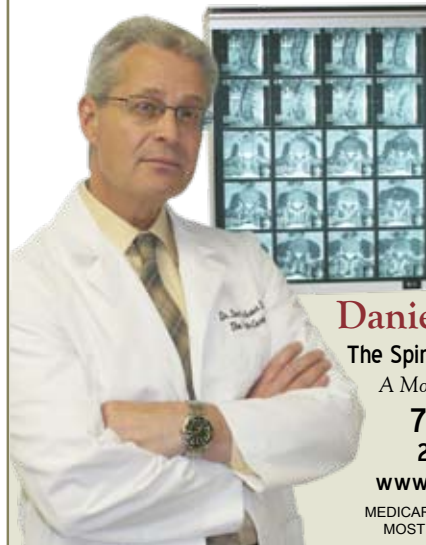
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FIVE STAR SENIOR LIVING



lazy student, of plagiarism. "I showed her the other stuff I had written and she not only gave me an 'A', but gave me extra credit, too!" he laughs.

"I played around with Bob Dylan's style at first, very abstract and with different spellings. Of all the poems I've written - 280-plus - they all rhyme except maybe five. I'm able to put myself in the place of different people when I write, and some are from a woman's point of view. "Pam reads them and says, 'How did you do this? How do you know how a woman thinks?' 'Well, I live with one!' I tell her." Less than two years from retirement age, Denny will soon have more time to devote to his writing.

Until now, Denny's work has been kept fairly private and shared only with family and a few close friends. The most meaningful poetry can be so personally revealing that the author can easily feel vulnerable and exposed when read by others. It takes courage and confidence to go public. Some have compared it to streaking - people suddenly get to know you in an intimate and dramatic way.

Just recently Denny has begun to collaborate with a songwriter in Virginia Beach who was looking for a lyricist. "It's very different, writing lyrics," he says. "There's a lot of repetition, and the rhythm changes. I'm having a blast with this new challenge!" According to Denny, his collaborator has an "awesome" voice and some promising contacts in Nashville, so it may not be long before the poet is unveiled and becomes better known. Denny has begun to think of his talents in a new, confident way. "It might be fun to write a song with another Williamsburg guy - Bruce Hornsby," Denny declares. "Maybe he'll read this and I'll get a break!" Who knows? After all, life is just full of delightful surprises. NDN

### Mother Earth Keeps Rolling On

I can't tell a story	I can feel the weather
Can only tell what I see	I love the summertime
I see a lot of lovers loving	Wanna feel that warmth inside
Could anyone please love me?	Cause it makes me feel so fine

I see a whole lot of fighting	When I hear that lovin music
I hear screaming out loud	Feel the sunshine of the day
That I want no part of	Have a honey here beside me
I just wanna feel proud	Then I'll know I found the way

I read a lot of good stories	The way to living the good life
But the newspaper brings me down	Smiling and laughing each day
I listen to lovin' music	Kissin' and a huggin' and singing
But I hate that screaming sound	And happiness is my pay.

Just trying to find a place	Just trying to find a place
A place where I belong	A place where I belong
I belong to Mother Earth	I belong to mother earth
Mother Earth keeps rolling on	Mother Earth keeps rolling on

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## Come Back to Stay

(song lyrics)

Sometimes things just happen  
Why, we never know  
Why people come into our life  
While other people go

A loss can be heartbreaking  
When a lover leaves  
Can't count the teardrops falling  
Feeling ill at ease

Along comes the sunshine  
To warm a brand new day  
And why that smile made me  
See life a different way

Sometimes things just happen  
Why, we never know  
Why people come into our life  
While other people go

Then life can be a circle  
One's gone and come again  
Can come back as a lover  
Or re-enter as a friend

I have been so lucky  
Most good friends have stayed  
The ones who faded out  
Were meant to go away

Sometimes things just happen  
Why, we never know  
Why people come into our life  
While other people go

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# Get Wet!

## Walker Thompson Keeps Mind & Body Fit on the Water

by Greg Lilly, Lifestyle Editor

“You will get wet,” Walker Thompson says about kayaking for fun and fitness. “I love it.” When Walker moved to Williamsburg from Florida in 1996, he explored the area, strolling Duke of Gloucester Street then traveling Williamsburg’s streets in many directions. “I saw beautiful waterways as I drove around the area,” he adds. “I thought it was a shame not to get out in them.”

He had seen travel shows on television where people kayaked lakes and rivers. “The adventurous, giant five-year-old in me took over from there,” Walker laughs. “I bought a kayak, threw it in the water, and started paddling.”

For him, it’s an in-town vacation. The waterways, creeks and rivers offer many opportunities to paddle. “You just get a whole other view of the place than just from the land,” he says. That change of perspective on the calm water soothes Walker’s nerves and his soul. “The biggest health benefit I’ve gotten from kayaking,” he says, “is stress relief. Human beings are about 65 percent water, so being out on the water is an ethereal connection.”

Another benefit he’s found is equilibrium. Not just in work and recreation, but in his physical balance. The kayak forces you to keep your core balanced and to move with the paddling and turns of the boat just to keep from tipping into the water. This translates into a better awareness of body balance and maneuverability both on water and land.

Paddling delivers solid aerobic and upper-body workouts that can easily be adjusted to your fitness level depending on how fast you want to go. “Watch the tides,” Walker advises. “You don’t want to have to



fight it at the end of your trip when you’re most tired. Try to time it so the tidal flow helps you return to your starting point.”

One of his favorite ‘paddles’ is to launch from the Colonial Parkway and paddle around Jamestown Island. “It’s close to home - a beautiful paddle - and we have a lot of nesting eagles and ospreys around here so it’s a great chance to view wildlife as well,” he says. On the other side of the peninsula, he likes paddling the York River and launching from the York River State Park. “It’s a beautiful expanse of area,”



he explains. “There’s not a lot of people, not a lot of boat traffic.”

Walker tends to kayak in the rivers more than the creeks because at low tide the possibility of getting stuck runs high. “I had to wade out of muck one time,” he recounts. “That’s a lesson you learn once.”

The weather can play a part in the waterway selection too. “When the weather is kicking up,” Walker says, “College Creek and Powhatan Creek are nice because they’re shielded from the wind, unlike the rivers. Unless you’re an accomplished paddler, you need to avoid the rivers when they’re rough.”

For people comfortable in the water, Walker suggests obtaining the right equipment and just get started. “Buy a kayak, throw it in the water, and start paddling – it’s that easy,” he says. Although he does admit there are tips and etiquette to know, and beginners would do well to attend a class or a kayaking school, or even a group tour since they offer basic instruction with several people to help get everyone started. A cell phone, food, water and an identification card are always essentials for any outdoor activity, plus plenty of sunscreen. “The water reflects the sun back onto you, so that’s double the exposure,” Walker explains. “That’s another lesson you learn once.”


A good neighbor on the waterways knows the rules and regulations. “Be sure of where you are launching,” Walker says. “No private property.” There are plenty of public sites where a kayak can be safely launched. “A safe launch is when you have a beach or a low dock where you don’t have to step down,” he explains. That makes entering and exiting the kayak easier and more comfortable. For those public access areas like the Parkway, always get a copy of all rules and regulations from the Park Service and abide by them. “They’re for your safety,” he adds.

“For people who don’t like to get wet, don’t kayak,” Walker laughs. “You will get wet.” The clear air, the cool water, the up-close wildlife all add up to a one-of-a-kind experience from the wet side of the Williamsburg area. “It’s peaceful being out on the water,” he adds. “I love it. I couldn’t be without it now.” NDN

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# Tranquil Waters

by Greg Lilly, Lifestyle Editor

John D. McFarlane Understands the Lure of Ponds in a Landscape



Water draws people. The hushed sounds, the reflection of the light, and the tranquil setting water produces washes away stress and allows the mind to flow to fanciful thoughts. Backyard ponds, by creating that setting, have become popular additions to homes throughout the area. One of the original 'backyard ponds' in Williamsburg is the College of William and Mary's Crim Dell pond, a place of solitude, contemplation, quiet and serenity. John D. McFarlane is the Associate Director of Gardens and Grounds for the college, and he's a fan of the college's legendary Crim Dell and the lure it has on visitors.

John's fascination with the outdoors started with his grandparents. "I had a love of gardening through my grandmother and grandfather," John explains. "My grandmother's yard in Norfolk was really pretty and well organized." The attention his grandparents paid to their lawn

and gardens made an impact on John. Even though he never knew his late grandfather, he saw the importance the land held for both his grandparents and his mother. "I just loved the yard," he says. "It was always a cut above other yards. I guess that's where I got the love of it."

At Virginia Tech, John found his niche and received his degree in Horticulture. "I worked in a retail nursery out of college," he says. "I started my own landscaping business, and then worked for the state in the early 1990s." Then a co-worker told him about a job opening at William and Mary. "I was lucky enough to get the position," John says. "I am one of those people who love their job."

The campus and grounds of William and Mary held many interesting aspects for John. "We plant trees for the future," he says of the trees lining the Sunken Garden. "The historical landscape between here and the Crim Dell pond, well there's not a lot you can change. We just replace with in-kind trees and shrubs. From the Crim Dell through the newer campus, there's a little more freedom of design and planting."

The pond seems to be a transition on the campus for John and his crew as well as for the students, faculty and visitors. Each year, the graduating class walks across the Crim Dell pond's bridge on their way to the commencement ceremonies. Also, legends of the pond promise a foreshadowing for other transitions. It's said that couples who kiss on the peak



**Frank, in the last issue you talked about the first Quarter as it relates to home sales locally. Can you give us an update on that?**

**HUGHES:**

Let me approach your question from three different areas: sales, pricing and finally, trends and what I see for the future.

Sales are closed transactions meaning it is a recorded deed change – the houses have actually exchanged owners. In the first Quarter our sales were down about 30%. The second Quarter to date, which is only April and May, is actually trending down about 28%. When you look more closely, you will see that condo and townhome sales declined by 35% while single family detached home sales are experiencing a 25% decrease. Overall, there has been very little change in the first five months of the year.

Second, pricing is down about 7% this April and May as compared to last year. Again, the largest preponderance of pricing changes is in condos and townhomes which are down about 17% - triple the decrease that we are experiencing in detached homes.

Finally, the best way to determine a trend is to look at pending sales. These are contracts that have been agreed to by both parties but haven't proceeded to settlement. If all goes well they will close in the next month to six weeks and this is where I see the first positive signs in this market. Pending sales are down only 5% as compared to

zation in the market.

To recap, sales are off about 28% year to date, pricing is off about 7%, but the pending closings are only off 5%. I still see price and sales contractions for probably the next five to eight months, but I'll be keeping a very close eye on the pending contracts. Homes are still selling. There is no doubt about that. But they have to be competitively priced and they have to show well.

The statistics I am quoting are posted for any interested party on our website: [www.waarealtor.com](http://www.waarealtor.com). The first Quarter is available now. The second Quarter will be posted by the end of July. Any questions can be directed to your Realtor® or the Association office at 757-253-0028.

**What is selling today and why?**

Properties under \$350,000 are still moving, particularly if priced under \$300,000. Homes over a half a million dollars are still far behind. The \$8,000 First Time Home Buyers Credit has had a substantial impact on the \$300,000 and under market. There are elements of the program that some may not be aware of. For example, "first time home buyer" doesn't mean you have never owned a home before. By definition, it says that you haven't owned a home in the last three years. There are other criteria – gross income for an individual cannot exceed \$75,000. If you file jointly it can be up to \$150,000.

# Q & A

## An Interview with Frank Hughes

PRESIDENT OF WILLIAMSBURG AREA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

Email Frank at [info@waarealtor.com](mailto:info@waarealtor.com)

April and May of last year. If that trend continues for the next three to four months then I think we'll begin to start seeing some stabiliza-

tion in the market. Even that is not capped. If you have an income up to \$90,000 as an individual or \$170,000 with a joint return, you are still going to receive a portion of that credit. You must remain in the house for three years. If you move, you will have to pay back the amount of the tax credit. Charges are nominal for paperwork and processing.

I would very much like to see this First Time Home Buyer Credit extended. Right now it expires on December 1st. If you don't close by November 30th you will lose that tax credit. In many instances builders can't build a new home for somebody because it won't be completed until after December 1st so therefore the homeowner wouldn't receive the credit. I would like to see Congress extend the tax credit at least another year. In addition, I'd like to see them open it up to all buyers. The housing market can be stimulated as has been shown with this First Time Home Buyers Credit. By extending the tax credit to everyone, perhaps we could get those \$400,000 and \$500,000 homes moving as well. Furthermore, consideration should be given to increasing the amount beyond \$8,000, the maximum credit amount under this plan.

I'd also like to mention that VHDA has just instituted a program where you can use the tax credit as a down payment on a VHDA mortgage. It's done through a second mortgage with no interest through the first year and it allows you to receive your tax credit and pay off the second mortgage if you desire. More information is available, including VHDA requirements, from Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors or by contacting your local Realtor®.

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# Next Door Neighbors Home

of the bridge are destined to be together for life. If for some reason the life sentence needs to be revoked, the girl must toss aside (and off the bridge) her ex-beau. Similarly, those who cross the bridge alone will remain alone forever.

The facts of the pond are a little less romantic and less dark. The Crim Dell was named for John W.H. Crim from the Class of 1901. The pond was formed when road construction dammed a gully. "That pond is part of the storm water drainage of the college. Two ravines go into that pond," John explains. "The water that drains off eventually goes into Lake Matoaka." Funds from the Class of 1964 alumni and friends re-landscaped the area around the pond in the mid-sixties and created the current oriental-style bridge. "A lot of the plants are non-native and exotics," he says. "You can see there is a sixties style in the plantings: azaleas, rhododendrons, pieris, and a lot of Japanese natives." He says the plant material is typical for that time period.

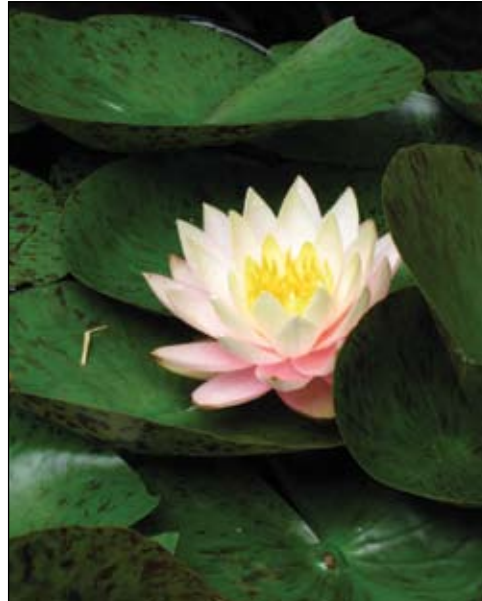
Current style landscaping for ponds is indigenous plantings according to John. "Plant native species," he recommends. "They're disease tolerant, drought tolerant, easy to grow. It just makes sense."

Plants provide the pond with ecosystems for other life. John explains how dif-

ferent plants like varied depths of water, some growing along the edge and some fully submerged. Turtles, a few resident snakes and goldfish have been spotted in the Crim Dell pond. "Some of the goldfish have gotten quite large," he says of the fish that students have deposited over the years. Sometimes the ecosystems reveal more than expected.

Earlier this school year freshmen from the biology department discovered a new bacterial organism living in the Crim Dell. "It's wonderful that the college uses the pond for academic study," John adds.

All of these elements contribute to the pond's vibrancy. "The water requires plants, fish, bacteria (known and unknown)," explains John, "to keep the pond from becoming stagnant." Flowing water helps oxygenate the water, and in backyard ponds, pumps circulate water through waterfalls and spraying out fountains. John calls the Crim Dell's aeration system "Mr. Bubbles" and explains that it helps to keep the water moving.



With technical information aside, John seems to enjoy the quiet refuge of the Crim Dell. "It's such a natural, organic part of the grounds," he says. "Other parts of the campus appear more urban, but this area is quiet and peaceful."

The addition of a water feature to a backyard produces similar effects: the soothing trickle of water over rocks, the play of sunlight reflecting off ripples, the blooming water lilies, and the lazy laps of goldfish.

"It's a beautiful campus to work on," John adds. "Mother Nature made a beautiful place without any of us doing anything to it. We're just here to enhance it if we can."

Ponds can enhance the aesthetics of a yard by appealing to the senses with sights, sounds and splashes, and maybe, by creating a few personal legends and tall tales. NDN

*To find the Crim Dell Pond look west of the Sunken Garden and south of the Student Center.*

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## Hey Neighbor!

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Hosted by local Independent Longaberger Consultants. Social time starts at 11:30 AM with lunch at noon, to be held at the Williamsburg Hospitality House, 415 Richmond Road. Ticket price is \$30 to include lunch, tax/service and table favors. Guest speakers are Mary Beth Gibson and Rene' Bowditch, Co-Founders of Beyond Boobs, Inc. In addition to breast cancer education, please join us for a fun afternoon of Basket Bingo, Raffles, Make-&-Take Craft Project, Door Prizes, Holiday Displays and our Hope Tree for Special Remembrances. All net proceeds go to

the American Cancer Society for Breast Cancer Research. Reservations are required by August 10, 2009 - those received by July 24 go into a special prize drawing. For tickets or more information, please contact Cindy Albert, 229-2020 or [cinalbert@aol.com](mailto:cinalbert@aol.com).

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### ATTENTION NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS!

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## READERSHIP SURVEY UPDATE

Dear Reader,

At press time, I have received close to 300 surveys - 166 readership surveys via my website and over 125 surveys that have been mailed in. By the time you are reading this update, however, the survey will have concluded. The recipient of the \$500 gift certificate will be determined June 30th.

You may have noticed that I specified that the gift certificate be made out to a 2009 advertiser from *Next Door Neighbors*. For those of you who are not familiar with the business side of producing a publication like *Next Door Neighbors*, the businesses who pay to advertise within the pages of the magazine are the very reason you receive it free in your mailbox. After *Next Door Neighbors* is written, edited, and produced each month, it costs several thousand dollars in additional expenses to have it addressed to almost 35,000 Williamsburg area homes, sorted, trucked to the local post offices and delivered to your mailbox by your carrier. The many businesses who place advertising inside *Next Door Neighbors* do that because they hope you will do business with them. I do too. During a tough economy it is even more important than ever to patronize the businesses of your friends and neighbors.

Your responses to the survey are overwhelmingly positive and candid. I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and ideas about topics you would like to see covered. I have a long list of exciting ideas that I will use to plan the themes for 2010. While I won't be able to cover all of them next year, I certainly should be able to include a number of them into future plans.

I am grateful to be able to bring *Next Door Neighbors* to your homes each month. My writers, the outstanding creative talent we have and my family deserve the credit, but ultimately you are the reason we stay in business. Your readership and feedback is very important. You don't need to wait for a Readership Survey to share your thoughts when you have something on your mind. I look forward to hearing from you anytime.

Best Regards,

  
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