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**BOOMERMAGAZINE.COM**

# BOOMER

FALL 2020

## YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD

## To Tri

*Mastering Triathlons After Age 50*  
*Record-Breaking Triathlete Will Turner*  
*The Aging Adventurer Takes Up Cycling*

### FALL TRAVEL

*Feel Like a Kid in the Smokies*  
*Pumpkin Travel*

### NOSTALGIA

*A Western Lampoon*  
*'Night of the Living Dead'*

Plus

*Book Reviews • Music Trivia*  
*Birding at Home • Fresh Perspectives*  
*Healthy Living Habits*





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Biking in Sawtooth National Recreation Area during Ironman #71. Photo by Chris DeStefano. All images from the book *Journey to 100*, by Will Turner and Chris DeStefano, available at [LiveYourBold.com](http://LiveYourBold.com).



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# Mastering triathlons after age 50

By Ed Kelleher

Triathletes training and competing with no age limits



*These Richmond, Virginia, athletes have one thing in common. Or maybe three things. They all continue to enjoy competing in triathlons after age 50.*

Got an itch to stretch your physical limits?

As triathletes say, you’re never too old to “tri.”



Lenora Mariner at triathlon winners' ceremony

Just ask Lenora Mariner, who at 65 has been competing in triathlons for 15 years. Or Tom Waldrop, 74, a 14-time finisher at the Ironman World Championship in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Or Angel Moyer, 60, a financial controller who offsets days at the desk with free time running, swimming and biking.

For Mariner, it was a matter of achievement as she reached mid-life.

“I say I like to have goals,” said Mariner, director of employee development and training at Estes Express Lines. She sets the big ones in five-year increments. “So, I said, ‘When I turn 50 I’m gonna do a triathlon.’”

Fair enough. First, she had to learn to swim.

As an African-American growing up in inner city Dayton, Ohio, Mariner didn’t have the luxury of a neighborhood pool. After settling in Richmond in 1980 as a chemical engineer, she began working out and ultimately became a part-time fitness instructor.

She was comfortable on land but not so much in the water.

“And I’ll tell you, as an adult it was very hard, not being around water and having that fear,” she said. “It was a challenge. And I’m still working on it.”

Her first triathlon – the Victory Nissan Sprint Triathlon at Shady Grove YMCA in 2005 – featured a 300-meter swim, a 12.4-mile bike ride and a 3.1-mile run.

“It was exciting,” she said. “I was the last person in the pool. I basically swam, ran, floated. And the race director said, ‘Do you want a kickboard?’ And I said ‘No, can I have some fins?’ And she said, ‘No, keep going.’”

She did, and the bike portion turned out to be her strength, Mariner said. “It was quite a challenge. I liked it so much I stuck with it.”

## Tri Clubbing It

These days, she serves as membership coordinator for the Richmond Tri Club, an all-volunteer group that supports RVA’s multisport community. The organization holds socials, monthly meetings and, from April through October, open-water swims twice a week in the James River.

Lilo Navales, the club’s president, says the area’s multi-sport community includes a vast range of athletes, from “newbies” to extreme performers such as record-setting Will Turner and Waldrop, a periodontist and professor at VCU who was a competitive marathoner before turning to triathlons.





One popular entry point for triathlon newcomers is to join a team and do just one of the legs – swim, bike or run.

“It’s a great way of an introduction,” Navales said.

“Some relay teams are really loaded,” she said, with “a really fast runner, a person who was born in the water so is a fantastic swimmer, and then you have somebody that just loves to ride their bike fast.”

## Training to Tri



Tom Waldrop at Ironman World Championships, Kona, Hawaii

The Richmond Tri Club does not have its own training teams but rather serves as a “feeder” to its sponsoring organizations that specialize in training – Endorphin Fitness, Zachin-Boaz Triathlon Training and Tri RVA (formerly TriGirl), Navales said.

“We are a facilitator of club members to go to those organizations, that also put on special clinics for us as well,” she said.

Mariner has trained at Endorphin Fitness for the past 14 or 15 years, she said. But Moyer, the controller at Virginia Premier, prefers to train on her own. She swims at the YMCA, but hooks up with friends for runs and bike training rides.

“Some people have online coaches, and then there are different coaching groups here in Richmond with triathlon training,” Moyer said. “They’ll coach people on how to do the first one, or how to do an Ironman distance. ...

“But then there are other people who say, I’m just going to go out there and run and swim and bike and do the best I can.”

And, she added, have fun.

Triathlon distances								
	Swim		Bike		Run		Total	
	Meters	Miles	Meters	Miles	Meters	Miles	Meters	Miles
Sprint	300 m	0.19	20 km	12.4	5 km	3.1	25.3 km	15.7
Half	1.9 km	1.2	90.12 km	56	21.1 km	13.1	113.2 km	70.3
Olympic	1.5 km	0.93	40 km	24.8	10 km	6.2	51.5 km	31.9
Ironman	3.8 km	2.4	180.25 km	112	42.2 km	26.2	226.4 km	140.6

## Hooked on Competitions

Waldrop, the periodontics professor, is one who likes big challenges. Son of an Air Force officer, he was much traveled as a youth and was a rabid surfer. Later, as an Air Force periodontist stationed at Lackland AFB, Texas, he was challenged by a colleague to run a marathon.

“When I started running, I weighed about 215 pounds,” said Waldrop, who weighs in now at about 170. “I trained for three or four months or so, (and) I think I ran a 2:59. So I kind of got hooked on running.”

More than a dozen marathons later (with a top time of 2:39), he was assigned to Wiesbaden AFB in Germany. Instead of marathons, he found himself competing in Europe on Air Force track and cross-country teams, as well as doing competitive cross-country skiing.

“And I just never did another marathon,” Waldrop said, “until the first Ironman I did, about 10 to 11 years later.”

Since then, he has completed more than 100 triathlons, including 30 or so full Ironmans.

That first Ironman, at Kona, was the toughest. In those days, the competitors all started the 2.4-mile swim event at once, rather than staggering their starts in waves.

“It was pretty intimidating,” he said.

“Actually, just getting out the water in that first Ironman I felt was pretty much of an accomplishment,” Waldrop said. “I had never swam that distance in my life.”

His 15th Kona attempt, in 2017, was the first he failed to finish. A bike mechanism malfunction during the ride put him out of the race.

## Pitfalls & Perks of Triathlons After Age 50 – And Before

Which brings up the subject of injuries.

“I have broken a few bones over the years,” Waldrop said. “I broke my left collarbone biking. And then, about six or seven years ago, in Ironman Utah, a water bottle came out and got caught in my spokes and flipped me off, and I collapsed my right lung about 90 percent. I ended up in the hospital with a chest tube.

“If you ride a bike a lot and you haven’t had a fall,” he said, “something’s wrong.”

Triathlons might include some aches and pains, but they offer camaraderie and lots of humor as well.



Lenora Mariner during swim training

When Mariner traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2010 for the ITU Duathlon World Championships – run, bike, run – she said Waldrop loaned her his bike box so she could take along her own bike.

She readily pokes fun at her slowness in the water.

At age 55, she did her first half Ironman, in Augusta, Georgia. To test the river flow, organizers put an empty bag of Cheetos in the water at the start and timed it to see how fast it got to the finish.

“My first time, the bag of Cheetos beat me,” Mariner said with a laugh. “I wasn’t the last one out, but close to it.”

“So,” she said, “my goal was, I went back the next year and I beat that bag of Cheetos.”



# Triathlete Will Turner

By Ed Kelleher

Breaking records at age 60 and beyond



**L**ive Your Bold, proclaims triathlete Will Turner, breaking records in his sport. The inspirational phrase denotes his coaching and motivational speaking business – and the way he lives his life.

They call him “Iron Will,” and for good reason.

Will Turner, a Hanover County native, smashed a Guinness World Record in 2018 by completing 61 Ironman-distance triathlons within a year. That’s roughly one 140.6-mile triathlon every six days.

The previous record was 44.

Turner’s goal was 60 Ironmans, to be achieved in the year of his 60th birthday. He added one for good measure.



Will Turner running through Park Avenue in Arches National Park during Ironman #82. Photo by Chris DeStefano

Then, urged on by his photographer “sherpa,” he did 40 more Ironmans in 2019 to hit the century mark. (He tagged on four extras, to total 105 for the two-year span.) His intent was to draw attention to the country’s national parks as the federal government was slashing funding for the parks.

“I love the parks,” Turner said, speaking by phone from Glacier National Park in mid-July. “There’s just some of the most incredible land that we have in this country.”

“And to be able to spend time outdoors in the parks is just a way to feed my soul.”

He estimates he has done one or more Ironmans in at least 30 national parks. In 2018-19, he and his tow-along camper logged more than 150,000 miles.

## No Better Way to Live Boldly

A peak performance coach and motivational speaker, Turner and photographer Chris DeStefano have produced a coffee table book of his adventures, *Journey to 100*, and Turner is working on a more-detailed book-length account. Details are available on his website, [Live Your Bold](#). (See more pictures from the book below.)

DeStefano would help plot out the Ironman courses in the parks, often to reach heights that would provide spectacular photographic angles, Turner said. “He definitely made my races a lot harder.”

*Ed Kelleher, retired deputy news editor for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, is both a sports fan and active runner. He served as editor for the Richmond Road Runners Club’s award-winning bimonthly magazine and occasionally plies his skills and experience through freelance writing.*



From *Journey to 100*, by Will Turner and photographer Chris DeStefano

Breathtaking images of triathlete Will Turner breaking records as he bikes, swims and runs across America

Available at Turner’s website, [Live Your Bold](#).



*Will Turner running at Big Sur, California. Photo: Chris DeStefano*



*Will Turner climbing up Daylight Pass in Death Valley National Park in Ironman #100. Photo: Chris DeStefano*



*Will Turner swimming in Jackson Lake at Grand Teton National Park during Ironman #73. Photo: Chris DeStefano*



*Will Turner running at Shasta-Trinity National Forest coming down Mount Shasta during Ironman #98. Photo: Chris DeStefano*



# Cycling after 50 brought adventure, health, and joy

By Emily Kimball

Granny gear, biking companions, and a new later-in-life hobby



Emily Kimball, the Aging Adventurer, began biking in her 40s and kept on going! Here she shares some of her experiences, as well as challenges and joys, of cycling after 50.



Emily Kimball and fellow cyclists in Colorado

As I struggled up the steep Maine hills on my first loaded bike tour, fellow biker Andy hollered, “Emily, you need a granny gear.”

“What’s a granny gear?” I asked.

Thus came my introduction to the essentials for participating in serious bicycle touring – a granny gear for conquering hills and a proper touring bike, not a heavy steel one like mine. Even though I was the last one to arrive at our campsite each day, I simply adored riding my bike from place to place, carrying all the essentials for life on the road, being immersed in nature, cooking my meals outdoors, and gazing at the stars as I fell asleep in my tent. It was my kind of life.

## The Journey Toward Cycling After 50

I started biking with the Richmond Area Bicycling Association (RABA) in my 40s. It was a way to get exercise, enjoy nature with companions, and have some personal time. After riding local routes, I joined an overnight ride to Williamsburg and back – a total of 100 miles. Even though my legs were so sore when I returned to Richmond that I had to crawl up the stairs to my bedroom, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

After the Maine trip, I became enamored with loaded bike touring and bought a Fuji touring bike with a granny gear. Eventually, I toured 1,500 miles in New Zealand and 1,500 miles in Great Britain. The biggest challenge of all was my retirement dream of riding across the United States. I accomplished that monumental undertaking at the age of 62, traveling 4,663 miles with companions.



Camp site during a cycling road trip in Washington

## The Scenery Along the Way



Emily Kimball’s cycling route across America

Biking kept my body in good shape and added adventure and excitement to my life. Having the wind at my back, the sun shining, and beautiful scenery flashing by gave me such a sense of freedom. I felt exhilarated and curious at what lay around the next curve. When we were challenged by thunderstorms, excessive heat or bike breakdowns, town folks often came to our rescue.

It also provided a great antidote for life’s hard times. If I was feeling sad, a bike ride would usually cheer me up. There was no time I was happier than when riding my bike. My son, Josh, and I rode many bike tours together in Florida. Our most recent one included my 16-year-old grandson, Xavier. What a wonderful way to share time with family.

These bike trips brought so much joy into my life. They allowed for spontaneous meet-ups – like chatting with the Irish mailman delivering mail on his bike, or being invited to stay at a Kansas farm to help bring in the hay, or stopping to talk with a tobacco farmer in Kentucky. Bicycle touring allowed me to experience firsthand places that I had only read about, like Ireland’s Galway Bay and England’s Stonehenge.

There was always something to look forward to and plan for. “What tour should I join next?” I asked myself over the years. Participate, with 30,000 others, in Bike New York? Ride down the Avenue of the Americas with police escorts, and over bridges, all closed to cars? (Yes.) Or Ragbrai in Iowa, with a big rowdy crowd? (No.) How about the Erie Canal ride where the group follows the canal and visits historic places along the way? (Yes.)

Experiencing the world from the seat of my bicycle truly shaped who I am as a person. I am grateful to Andy for introducing me to the granny gear.

Emily Kimball, the Aging Adventurer, biked until she was 87 and balance issues compromised her safety. You can read about her bike trip across the U.S. at [AdventureCycling.org/blog/true-companions](https://AdventureCycling.org/blog/true-companions).





Emily Kimball entering Glacier National Park



Emily Kimball driving a tractor to bring in hay, Kansas



Emily Kimball entering Yellowstone National Park



Bikes and cows, Ireland



Stonehenge, on trip through England



# A Horse with No Name

By Gene Cox

Remembering and lampooning the Western genre



*In this light-hearted look at a classic TV and big-screen genre, Richmond, Virginia, broadcaster Gene Cox gives readers a taste of the Great American Western genre humor.*

The cowboy rode into town out of the desert on a horse with no name. Had the film been made 40 years ago the horse would have not only a name but a personality, an intelligent horse capable of coming to the aid of his master should that be necessary. Gene Autry’s horse Champion in fact had turned down a scholarship because he knew Autry needed him.

Anyway, modern Westerns, with which I have become familiar since Covid-19 won’t let me leave my house, feature horses that are just horses. They don’t do tricks. They wait patiently outside the saloon while the cowboy ... actually he has nothing to do with cows and he’s not a boy. He’s a man on an unnamed horse ... a horse man, you might say.

Gene Autry and Champion were always neat and clean. Autry had some sort of little scarf around his neck for some reason; I guess it helped him feel good about himself. He carried a gun, of course, and occasionally shot at somebody who no doubt deserved it. But the gunfights in those days were clean events. The shot person didn’t bleed, he just fell to the ground. A bloodless massacre, if you will.

Autry did a lot to protect his image. In one scene he walks up to a saloon bar and orders a glass of milk. “What!” says the barkeep. “Milk,” says Autry. “You know that white stuff that comes from cows.” In *Gunsmoke*, Marshall Matt, the Doc and Miss Kitty just drank beer. A compromise so to speak. But back to the horse man.

And what do you think happens next?



We usually don’t know why horse man rode out of the desert into the little town, or why we went straight to the saloon and without benefit of sentences said, “Whiskey.” He’s given a shot, downs it, then orders another. By then he’s probably unable to shoot straight but has no problem gunning down three troublemakers, all of whom drew on him first. Having done that, and walked away under the guise of self-defense, he mounts his unnamed horse and rides out to the edge of town where a beautiful woman is taking care of a small ranch all by herself. The

conflict comes from a group of ruffians who are trying to steal her ranch because a railroad is coming through.

There’s a bit of shooting that follows where horse man kills all the bad guys and saves the beautiful woman.

Now at this point the film can take many directions, but the most likely is a final shootout in the town where horse man shoots about everybody who is left and the beautiful woman swoons all over him.

He bids her farewell and returns to the saloon for more whiskey. The ladies who work the saloon make several advances, but he rebuffs them all because, well, he’s just not that kind of guy. He could marry the beautiful ranch woman but then he’d end up running a ranch, with a dozen kids underfoot. And he’s not that kind of guy either.

There are other little towns in the west that horse man has to visit. His work is not yet done.



# ‘Night of the Living Dead’ still lives for Judith O’Dea

By Nick Thomas

More than 50 years later, ‘Barbra’ recalls the film



When Halloween returns each October, so do the 50-year-old memories for actress Judith O’Dea, who starred as Barbra in the 1968 horror classic **Night of the Living Dead**, as one of several characters taking refuge in an isolated farmhouse under attack from flesh-eating ghouls.

O’Dea remembers watching the film on the big screen for the first time when it premiered in her hometown of Pittsburgh, where the film was also shot, although she recalls identifying more as an audience member rather than one of the cast.

“I looked at myself and began critiquing my performance,” said O’Dea from Los Angeles. “Then suddenly I found myself forgetting it was Judith O’Dea up there and became wrapped up in the storyline. That was a wonderful indication of a powerful story that could hold people’s attention.”

Over the years, O’Dea has also learned to look beyond the film’s horror scenes and appreciate director George Romero’s filmmaking skills.

“There’s a scene where I’m pressing the button on a musical box which George was shooting from the floor up,” she explained. “He was shooting right through the box, and for a fraction of a second you see Barbra’s eyes, which I thought was a beautiful artistic shot. Then at the end, when it alternates between still shots of the bodies and live-action, that was a great effective use of the camera.”

## Milestones and memories

The film, says O’Dea, broke barriers in the industry.

“As an independent movie made outside Hollywood, it raised its own money, which I guess you could call one of the first Kickstarters for a film,” she says. The film was shot on a shoestring budget of just \$114,000. “It was also filmed almost like a docudrama – unusual for the ’60s – and there’s no happy ending because everybody died.”

O’Dea says her final scene, being dragged from the farmhouse, still haunts her.

“In your mind it’s all pretend, but you get involved in the scene,” she said. “With all those ghoulish hands grabbing at me, it was actually quite frightening and took me back to the fear I felt as a child when I saw Vincent Price’s face fall apart in the (1953) House of Wax. That scared me so badly my folks had to take me from the theater. Whenever I’m called upon to be frightened in a role, I just think of that Vincent Price scene.”

Another memorable scene from the film produced one of the classic lines in all horror films, said to O’Dea’s character by actor Russell Streiner, who plays her brother in the opening cemetery scene shot at the Evans City Cemetery in Pennsylvania.

“I don’t think a week goes by that someone doesn’t come up to me and say, ‘They’re coming to get you, Barbra!’” says O’Dea, laughing.

So has she grown weary of hearing the quote through all these years?

“How could I be tired of hearing something that has changed my life so considerably?” she says. “I love it when fans repeat the line to me. I feel so lucky to have been a part of something that was so different and has lasted so long.”



*‘Night of the Living Dead’ actors, front from left, Duane Jones and Karl Hardman, Judith O’Dea and Marilyn Eastman. Photo provided by Judith O’Dea*

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama, and has written features, columns, and interviews for over 850 newspapers and magazines. Besides this look at Judith O’Dea in Night of the Living Dead, he has written numerous “Where Are They Now?” articles for Boomer.



# Memories of Actress Natalie Wood

By Nick Thomas

Actress Natasha Gregson Wagner recalls Thanksgivings with her mother



Actress Natasha Gregson Wagner shares memories of her mother, Natalie Wood, in *Miracle on 34th Street*, and a new Natalie-inspired fragrance.

With the holidays approaching, seasonal movie favorites will soon be inching their way into television schedules. While considered perennial Christmas entertainment fare, the opening scenes of *Miracle on 34th Street* actually take place at Thanksgiving with the annual Macy’s parade. The 1947 movie and Thanksgiving festivities hold special significance for actress Natasha Gregson Wagner.



Natalie Wood and daughter Natasha Gregson Wagner in the early 1970s. Photo provided by Natasha Gregson Wagner

“I don’t recall the first time my mother showed me *Miracle on 34th Street*, but I remember as a child knowing she was in the cast and enjoyed watching her as a little girl,” said Gregson Wagner from Los Angeles. That child actress in the movie was her mother, Natalie Wood.

“The first time I saw my mom on the television was on one of those big old square box sets and I actually found it a little scary,” she recalled. “I even went around the back to try and figure out how she got inside!”

Thanksgiving meals with her mother remain memorable for Gregson Wagner.

“She loved Thanksgiving, which was always very festive, and our house was filled with a large extended family. But my mom was not a big cook so a lovely couple, Helen and Gene, would prepare the dinner every year. And the lady who helped raise us, [housekeeper and nanny] Willie-Mae, would make sweet potato puree in a hulled-out orange shell topped with marshmallows – delicious!”

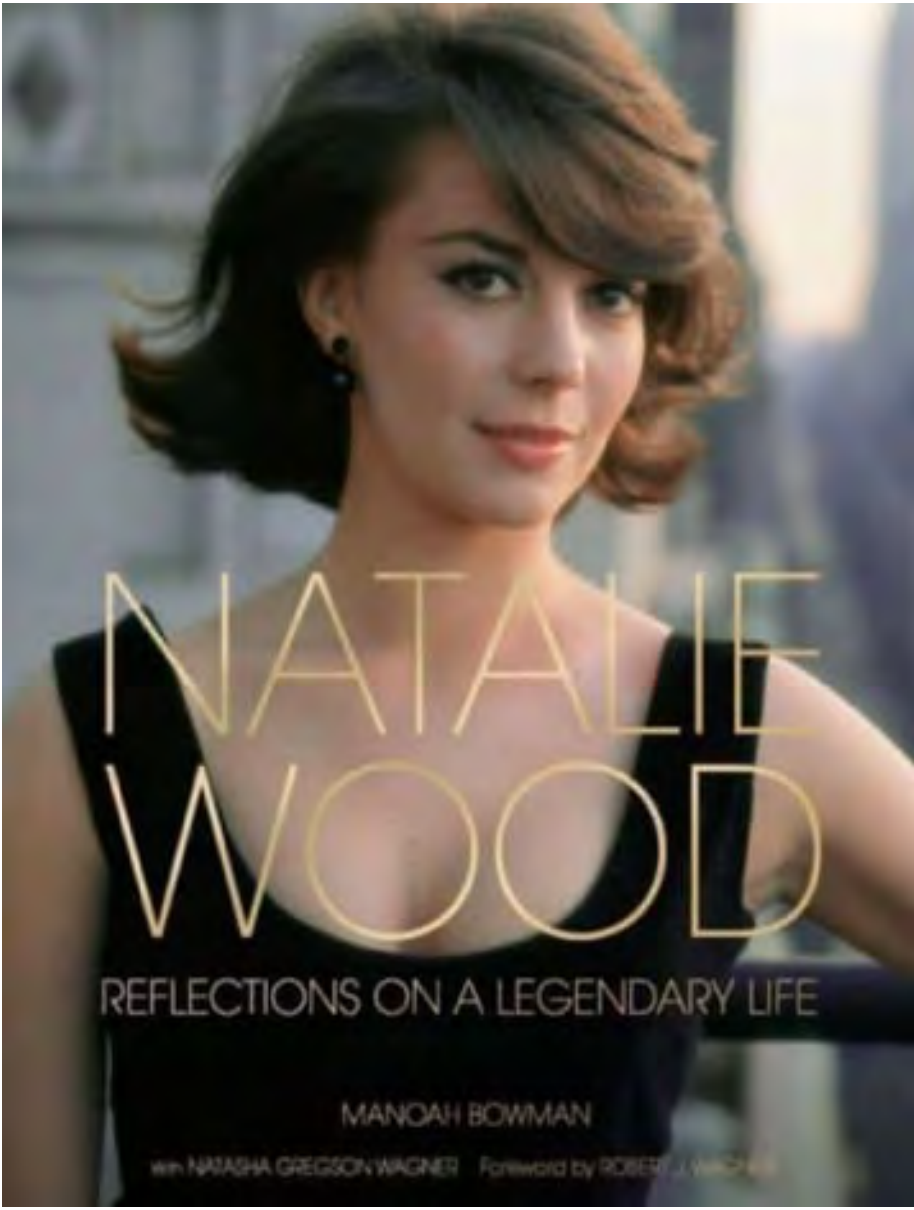
## Other Memories of Actress Natalie Wood

Natasha has shared other memories of her mother by contributing personal photos and thoughts to Manoah Bowman’s 2016 book, *Natalie Wood: Reflections on a Legendary Life*, as well as co-producing the 2020 TV documentary, *Natalie Wood: What Remains Behind*. And two years ago, she created a line of products Natalie Wood fans might enjoy, including a gardenia-scented candle and perfume.

“When I was growing up, my mom always burned scented candles, and gardenia was her favorite scent. Our ‘Natalie’ perfume [is] gardenia based, too, with my favorite citrus notes added such as orange blossom.” [Learn more, including retail locations, at [www.nataliefragrance.com](http://www.nataliefragrance.com).]

But with fragrances from contemporary entertainers such as Mariah Carey and Kim Kardashian dominating today’s market, could a perfume named after a classic film star compete?

“You’d be surprised,” says Gregson Wagner. “A lot of young people seem to know who my mother was, especially if they grew up with parents watching her movies. But it’s also a modern fragrance that speaks to young women. And for those familiar with my mother, it’s a way to celebrate her life.”



Cover of Manoah Bowman’s book. ‘Natalie Wood Reflections on a Legendary Life.’ Photo provided by Natasha Gregson Wagner

Sign up for our Nostalgia newsletter or other Boomer-focused newsletters.

Or read more Where Are They Now? content on BoomerMagazine.com now!

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama, and has written features, columns, and interviews for over 850 magazines and newspapers.



# 'Escapology' Book Showcases Escape-to-Nature Homes

By Annie Tobey

Inspiration and information on jaw-dropping rural houses



If you would love to live surrounded by nature, this book is for you. If you have a passion for creative home architecture, this book is for you. If you have ever even thought about having a second home in a beautiful location, this book is for you. The collection of escape-to-nature homes in *Escapology: Modern Cabins, Cottages and Retreats* provides inspiration and information on rural escapes all over the world.

Authors and interior designers Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan have been designing homes for more than 25 years. They’ve plied their trade in the UK, France, Spain, Canada and Australia. They’ve been featured in newspapers, magazines, and TV shows. Eight years ago, they renovated a Canadian log cabin and became hooked on rural homes that embrace the outdoors. Now, they are sharing a collection of such gems with the rest of us.

## A guide to escape-to-nature homes

The 256-page book begins by pulling at your heart and informing your mind. The authors’ passion for nature, escape, and natural decompression comes through as they simultaneously provide practical guidance.

They provide an overview of common rural retreats: log cabins, post and beam, modern minimalist, Scandinavian, mid-century modern, and shabby chic. They offer wisdom on where to purchase property; whether to build or renovate; and power and septic. They suggest preliminary considerations on design – lighting, furniture, textiles, etc. And they offer tips on designing on a budget.

Also scattered throughout the book are ideas for enhancing the home’s getaway features.

## The escapes

The pièce de résistance is the collection of 24 diverse, amazing rural homes. All are surrounded by nature, fusing into the surroundings with a variety of techniques: seamless architecture, floor-to-ceiling windows, exposed wood and stone, muted colors, nature-themed décor, and more. The book provides delightful pictures of each home and engaging descriptions. Those looking for inspiration, ideas, and guidance will want to absorb the notes on design as well as construction.

Architecture ranges from log cabin and chalet to a variety of contemporary designs. Building materials, too, run the range: log and limestone, steel and glass, aluminum, native rock and reclaimed wood, concrete and clay brick, corrugated steel, and other utilitarian and aesthetic materials.

Unique designs include the AirShip 002 spacecraft lookalike; The Treehouse; the Vipp Shelter with sliding glass walls; the Cabin at Norderhov, a “rectangular curved cabin” with expansive floor-to-ceiling windows on one side giving way to dim recesses of bedrooms; and Go Home Bay, resting on a whaleback rock outcrop and covered by a living roof (which both camouflages the home and enables an irrigation system that helps to cool the living quarters).

And of course, given McAllister and Ryan’s decades of experience in interior design, the book also shows off décor from rustic to contemporary, for inspiration that can be applied no matter where your home is located.

The photos themselves deserve admiration, not only showcasing the unique nature-loving architecture but also capturing the beauty of the surroundings. Whether as a planning book for your dream house or simply in admiration of these creative gems, *Escapology* deserves your attention – and perhaps a permanent spot on your coffee table.

Figure 1 Publishing, Nov. 17, 2020

Hardcover, 256 pages



Old MacMommy outdoor space (Page 150). Photo by Greg Cox / Bureaux



A tiny sampling of other *Escapology* homes



Bridger Canyon Guest House exterior (Page 48). Photo by Audrey Hall



The Bunker living room (Page 60). Photo by David O. Marlow



Go Home Bay exterior (Page 106). Photo by Tom Arban



Sucker Lake Cabin bedroom (Page 200). Photo by Brandon Barré

And the authors



'Escapology' authors, Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan . Photo by Jeremy Kohm, 'Great Canadian Cottages / Cottage Life'



# Birding in a Pandemic

By Jerry Uhlman

A chance to observe our backyard birds’ behaviors



*Flyways & Byways columnist Jerry Uhlman reflects on the birds he was able to observe in his own backyard, in lieu of this year’s birding travel plans. Birding in a pandemic brings opportunities and lessons in life.*



*In Jerry Uhlman’s backyard, where he was birding in a pandemic*

sorties to neighborhood parks well before the arrival of joggers and dog walkers. Others chose to hunker down in their own backyards, content to witness spring’s arrival close to home, and perhaps to rediscover overlooked pleasures.

For stay-at-home birders, the importance of well-stocked feeders and a water drip became crucial to attracting more species and increasing birdlife activity. Suet and sunflower seeds became hot items for most species.

## Bird Battles and Tolerance

This was a spring and summer during which I paid much closer attention to the similarities and differences among various species as they crossed paths in the backyard. Claiming one’s territory, building and defending a **nesting** site, and feeding in close proximity were activities that created challenges.

Avoiding Richmond’s heat and humidity during late spring and summer, I stood guard early mornings and evenings, when birdlife would be most active. In-demand feeders and sought-after birdbaths presented plenty of opportunities to observe an array of behaviors: boldness and timidity, bullying and pitched battles, as well as gentler signs of tolerance and accommodation.

The most pugnacious species were European starlings and common grackles, glaring at other feeder birds and threatening havoc if any dared to interrupt their noisy feeding. They, however, fed side by side together without squabbling much. Smaller birds quickly learned to avoid both species. Next in the hierarchy of feistiness were house sparrows, which, despite their small size, terrorized all but the largest birds in the backyard. Red-bellied woodpeckers, too, sent most other species fleeing when they approached feeders. In general, larger species displaced smaller ones, sometimes with threats and intimidation and other times simply by their sheer size.

The most polite and genteel species were chickadees, titmice, hummingbirds, catbirds and thrashers. The smallest birds relied on quickness and an acute sense of timing; it adroitly darts to the feeders and suet when bullies briefly were away.

## Bird Life Goes On



*Brown thrasher family*

chicks fledged, tumbling out of the nestbox; in rapid-fire, flying off in different directions, their startled parents called in vain to corral them. And the fledglings quickly disappeared from sight.

In early summer, suet was the food of choice for gray catbirds and brown thrashers, whose chicks settled under the suet cage, mouths agape, waiting for parents to fill their hungry gullets. Too soon these fledglings vanished as well.

Later in this surreal and bittersweet summer, our restlessness swelled and we longed for a road trip or a food or music festival. Then, right on schedule, **goldfinches** swarmed to coneflowers and black-eyed susans in the backyard, a balm that heralds their late summer nesting. Nature’s realm benignly follows ancient seasonal rhythms, seemingly indifferent to human vicissitudes. Our backyards bring not only joy and solace, but also grant us a reassuring safe haven during times of uncertainty and anxiety.

What a strange and surreal time we’re living through – and it may be far from over. Yet, in nature’s realm life goes on, seemingly with little awareness of the angst that we humans experience in our daily lives.

While illness has been an overarching concern, the ripple effect of the pandemic’s disruption seeped into the many corners of day-to-day events. My travel plans for a trip to the Midwest during spring migration were scrapped. For many of us, finding alternatives closer to home became a reality.

While some birders continued to roam byways, many confined their birdwatching to brief morning



*Starling and chickadee on a suet feeder*

On my watch, there were disappointments as well as unexpected delights. For the first time in many years, no house wren blessed our backyard. This welcome visitor often took up residency in a nestbox next to the patio; it gives us joyful rambling songs and exuberant nest-building behavior each spring. Sadly, not one dropped by this year.

Instead, Carolina chickadees settled into the nestbox and raised three chicks just a few feet from the feeders. Within about two weeks, the



# Giving Back with Soar365

By Lisa Schaffner

A pandemic update on a Richmond nonprofit serving the special needs population



Like so many other area nonprofits, Soar365 is feeling the effects of the pandemic. Covid-19 closed its summer camps, shut down Park365 indefinitely, and put on hold many client programs. But Soar365 continues to serve those with disabilities the best it can, counting down the days when volunteers can return to *Giving Back*.

Soar365 serves those with special needs through pediatric therapy, respite care, workforce development, and programs for children and youth as well as adults. Based in Richmond, Virginia, the nonprofit, formerly known as Greater Richmond ARC, has been around for 65 years. Last year, more than 700 volunteers gave 9,000 hours of service in four different areas: event support, administrative, beautification opportunities, and program support, which allows volunteers to work directly with those Soar365 serves.

“So many of our program support volunteers have been with us for over a year,” explains Alison Jones-Nassar, the volunteer engagement manager. “The program support opportunities are so meaningful because of the interactions you have with those with significant disabilities.”



Volunteer Gordon Russell helping Jeremy, Giving Back at Soar365

That’s what hooked Gordon Russell, who volunteers with the Art on Wheels program at Soar365. “I’m fascinated by the human mind, and I find there is much more to people with ‘challenges’ than what they’re often given credit for. I enjoy finding that and building it,” explains the 77-year-old Midlothian resident. Program volunteers like Russell are asked to make a minimum three-month commitment because those served get attached to volunteers as a result of the close interactions.

This past year will be remembered – by Soar365, its volunteers, and by many of the

rest of us – with three words. Resilience. Courage. Faith. The organization is hopeful volunteers will be able to return in the late September to November timeframe, but that’s only if social distancing, mask-wearing, and all other CDC guidelines can be followed.

Russell, who hasn’t volunteered since March, misses the people he works with at Soar365. “I worry about them. I hope they’re doing OK and they understand what’s going on and understand why I’m not there. Why we’re not there right now.”

## SOAR365

**HOW IT HELPS:** Provides programs and services for those with disabilities

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** Volunteer for an event, beautification project, administrative support, or program support

**WEBSITE:** [Soar365.org](https://soar365.org)

**CONTACT:** Visit the website under “Get Involved” for volunteer opportunities, or email [Alison.Jones-Nassar@soar365.org](mailto:Alison.Jones-Nassar@soar365.org)

*Lisa Schaffner, a former WRIC-TV anchor, is public relations and marketing director for UNOS, United Network for Organ Sharing. In every issue of Boomer, Lisa’s “Giving Back” column explored the stories of inspiring people and organizations that are making a difference in our community.*



# Fall Pumpkin Travel Destinations

By Annie Tobey

Great gourds and good times



“There are three things I’ve learned never to discuss with people: religion, politics, and the Great Pumpkin,” said Linus in the 1966 classic TV special, “It’s the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown.”

These days, the plethora of pumpkin spice lattes and pumpkin-flavored baked goods might tempt us to follow Linus’s advice. But don’t let pumpkin commercialism squelch the real meaning of real pumpkins! Get in the spirit at these fun-filled destinations for fall pumpkin travel.

## A little bit of everything, y’all!

Harvest Festival & Great Pumpkin LumiNights

Dollywood, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee



Great Pumpkin LumiNights held at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, TN. © Curtis Hilbun / AFF-USA.com

As the days get shorter and the nights grow longer, Dollywood theme park goes aglow as dusk falls.



Great Pumpkin LumiNights at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, TN. © Curtis Hilbun / AFF-USA.com

The annual Harvest Festival, Sept. 25 to Oct. 31, offers a colorful autumn atmosphere; bluegrass and Southern gospel music on open-air stages; fall foods; homemade crafts from top artisans; and Great Pumpkin LumiNights, a glowing pumpkin experience that lights the nights with thousands of pumpkins. Dollywood offers treats, not tricks – nothing scary or spooky.

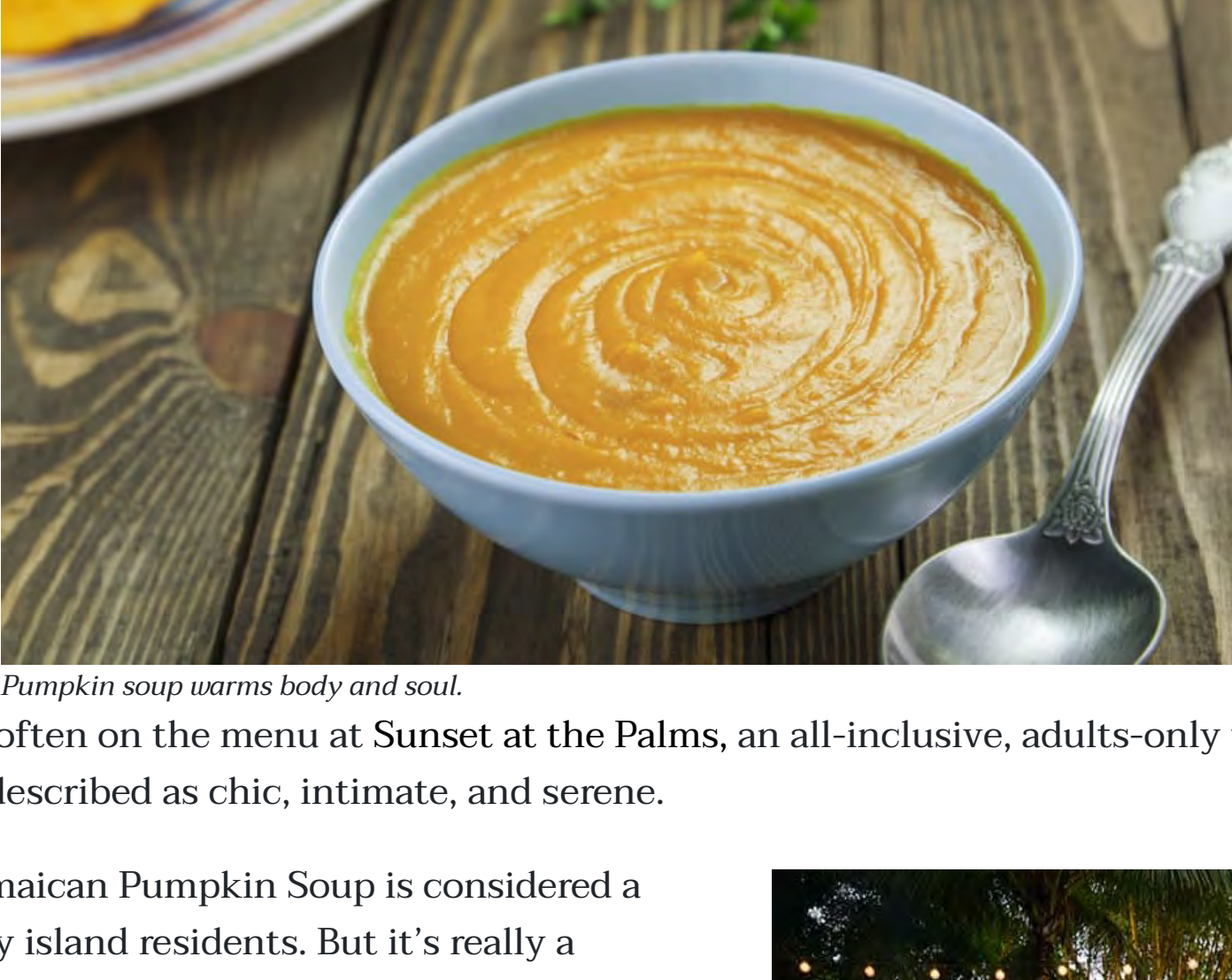
Dollywood’s chief pumpkin carver, Jaimie Christian-Houser, provides expert tricks for pumpkin-carving at home:

- Know what you want to carve in advance so you can select a pumpkin with the right-sized surface area.

- Don’t buy a pumpkin without a stem; it won’t last as long! For that reason, never pick up a pumpkin by its stem.
- Before you carve, completely wipe down the pumpkin and then wipe it down again after carving to avoid mold.
- For lighting, consider using an LED bulb on a cord (cut a notch in the back of the pumpkin for the cord). This method is safer than a candle.
- Heat makes pumpkins rot, so try to find a shaded spot to display them or bring them inside when it’s hot out.

## Stir up some Jamaican Pumpkin Soup

Sunset at the Palms, Negril, Jamaica



Pumpkin soup warms body and soul.

This tasty soup is part of the menu at Sunset at the Palms, an all-inclusive, adults-only treehouse-style resort that’s best described as chic, intimate, and serene.

The traditional Jamaican Pumpkin Soup is considered a “Saturday Soup” by island residents. But it’s really a delicious treat to curl up with on chilly autumn evenings ... any day of the week!

- ½ cup chopped onion
- ¼ pound butter
- 2½ pounds pumpkin, peeled and diced into medium chunks
- 2¼ quarts chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 Scotch bonnet pepper, whole
- 3 scallions, sliced thin
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 to 3 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Sauté onions in butter in large pot until transparent. Add pumpkin and fill with stock. Add the remaining ingredients except the Scotch Bonnet pepper and bring to a boil. Then, add in pepper whole and reduce heat. Allow to simmer for approximately 30 minutes, or until desired consistency. Finally, remove the Scotch Bonnet pepper and serve hot.

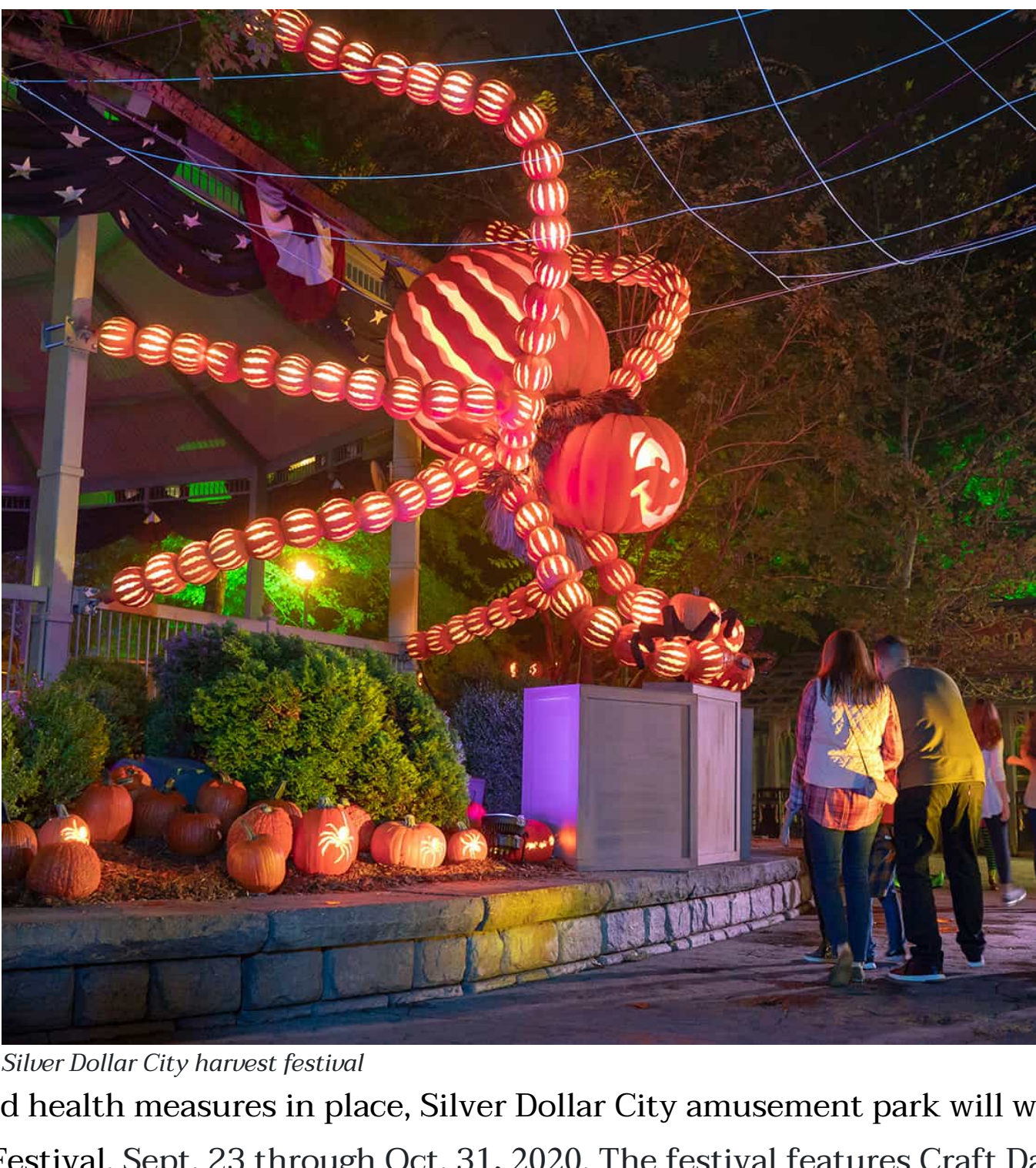


Dining at Sunset at the Palms, Negril, Jamaica

## Fall Pumpkin Travel for Crafts, Crafted Gourds, and Ghosts

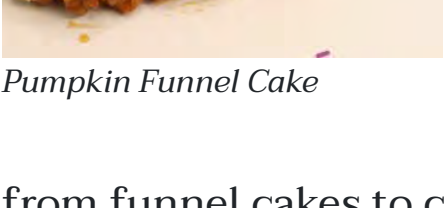
Harvest Festival & Pumpkins in the City

Silver Dollar City, Branson, Missouri



Silver Dollar City harvest festival

With a host of added health measures in place, Silver Dollar City amusement park will welcome visitors for its annual Harvest Festival, Sept. 23 through Oct. 31, 2020. The festival features Craft Days and more than 10,000 carved pumpkins throughout Pumpkins in the City.



Pumpkin Funnel Cake

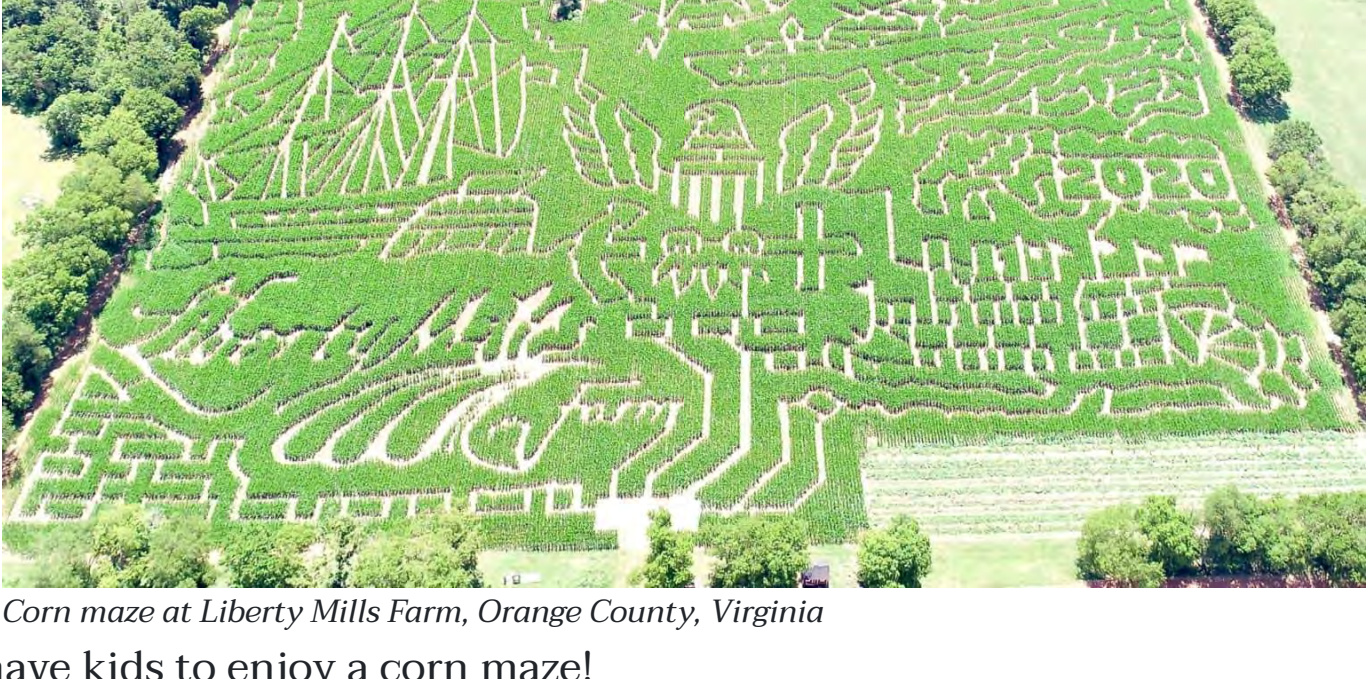
By day, the park is home to artisans demonstrating and selling their work. By night, Silver Dollar City hosts non-frightful fun for the entire family. The park is transformed by more than 10,000 of glowing pumpkins, featuring the work of master carver Jerry Brown. It’s filled with family-friendly, larger-than-life scarecrows, cats, owls, and other fall characters. The evening also dishes up a nightly dance party at Pumpkin Plaza. Rides? Yes, all day and into the night.

Including the new [Mystic River Falls](#). And food? Why, pumpkin everything,

from funnel cakes to churros, of course!

## The largest corn maze in the U.S.

Liberty Mills Farm, Orange County, Virginia



Corn maze at Liberty Mills Farm, Orange County, Virginia

You don’t have to have kids to enjoy a corn maze!



Corn maze. Photo by Rich Koele

The privately owned farm and its themed corn maze include four trails featuring over seven miles of walking paths, navigational challenges, trivia challenges, activities area, hay wagon rides, and a pumpkin patch (in October).

The 2020 Corn Maze theme is Anchors Aweigh, paying tribute to those who have sailed the seas, from the pilgrims of the Mayflower to the sailors of the US Navy. The Corn Maze opens Sept. 12.

Plus, you’ll have plenty of room to distance yourself in the 34-acre maze.

## Pumpkins with a side of history

Berkeley Plantation, Charles City



All year, visitors can tour house, gardens and grounds of the birthplace of Benjamin Harrison, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and President William Henry Harrison, “Old Tippecanoe.”



Lantern tour. Photo from Berkeley Plantation

Fun fall additions, from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30, include a Corn Maze and Pumpkin Patch. Children’s brochures and picnic area available.

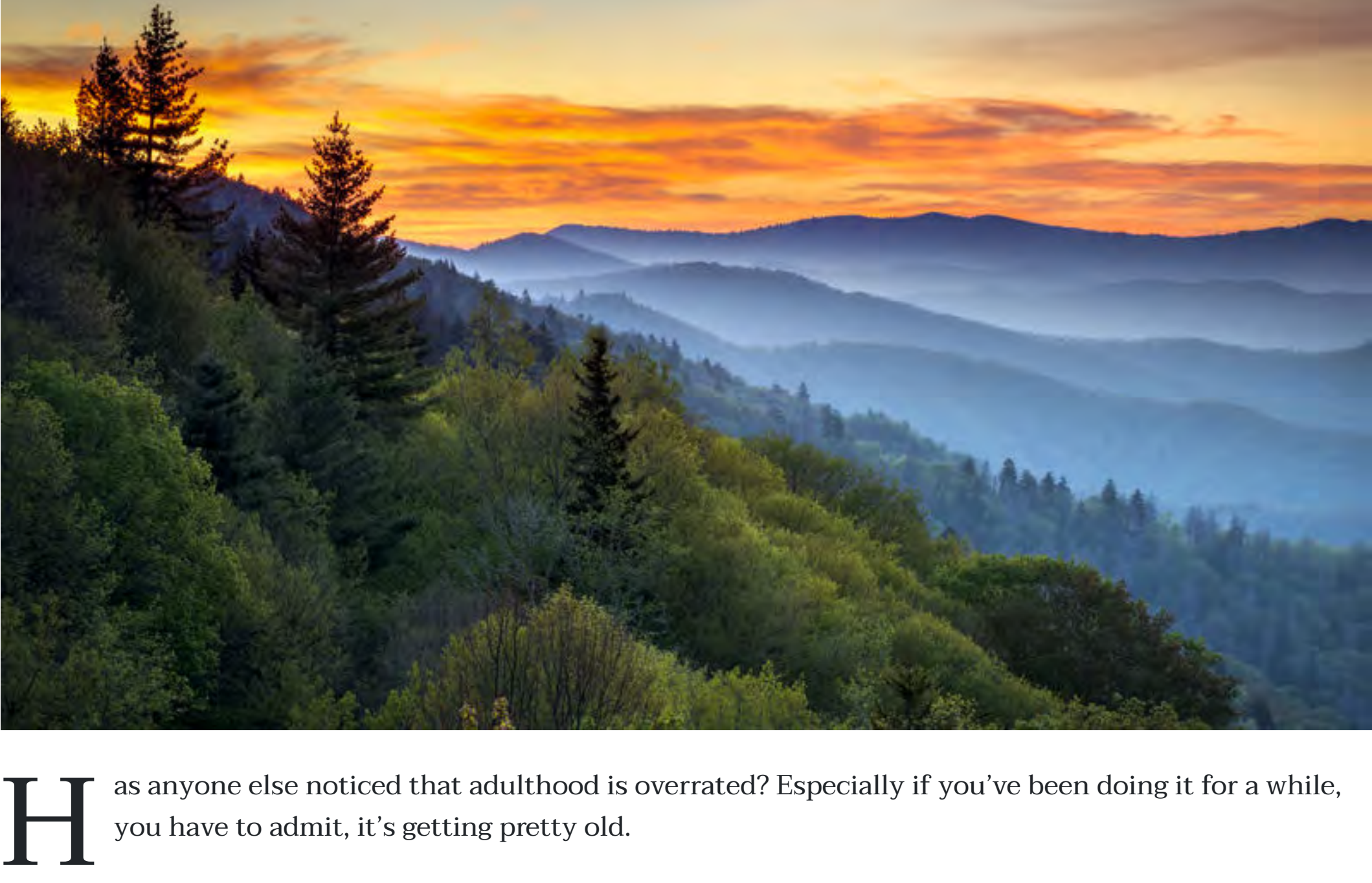
On Oct. 16 and 23, stay a little longer for Berkeley’s History and Hauntings (reservations required). Hear tales of the plantation’s paranormal activities with a guided tour through the 1726 mansion, followed by a lantern-led walk through the gardens, grounds, and cemetery. You can finish the ghostly experience with Berkeley’s challenging corn maze – by lantern light.



# The Great Smokies: Live Like a Kid Again!

By Rachel Marsh

Travel to a world where adulthood is childhood



Has anyone else noticed that adulthood is overrated? Especially if you’ve been doing it for a while, you have to admit, it’s getting pretty old.

If you need a break from all of the expectations, stigmas, and responsibilities that come with adulthood ... pack your bags and head to the land where kids can be kids, and adults can – also be kids.

The Great Smoky Mountains and its neighbors – Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Sevierville – would *love* to take you back to the days of childlike amazement and amusement. From enticing attractions to unique experiences, you get to feel like a kid again. In the most adult way possible.

## ‘Darling, It’s Better, Down Where It’s Wetter’

Named the number one aquarium in North America by Tripadvisor patrons, Ripley’s Aquarium of the Smokies naturally encourages childlike awe from visitors of all ages. Especially since this is far from your average aquarium. The building, in fact, holds 32 aquariums altogether; combined, they house over 150 types of fish, and over 10,000 living animals total. Find all of the usual suspects here: penguins, sharks, moray eels, and sea turtles, to name a few.

But, *believe it or not*, Ripley’s also touts a slew of unique experiences: from a glass bottom boat tour, to a jellyfish petting tank, to – yes – swimming with the stingrays.

And, thanks to Ripley’s “go big or go home” attitude, they don’t do anything halfway. Glide along, for example, the moving pathway inside their 340-foot-long tunnel filled with ... sharks; likely (and hopefully) the closest you’ll ever get to a sea of sharks without ending up on one of those “I survived” shows.



## Anakeesta: The Treehouse Experience You Never Knew You Were Missing

If you were one of those kids who loved treehouses and tree climbing ... **Anakeesta** may bring back memories of those days. Extreme, heightened versions of those memories, perhaps, but memories nonetheless.

This 70-acre attraction sits among the Great Smokies in downtown Gatlinburg. It aims to give visitors unique ways to experience nature within the mountains, among the trees, and close to the sky.



First, of course, Anakeesta offers many unique nature- and adventure-related experiences – including ziplining, rope swings, and the *chondola* (like a mix between a chairlift and a gondola – generally the preferred way to get up there!). Overall, the entire destination offers so many varieties of attractions, it’s easy to spend the day among the trees. Sift through Anakeesta’s different gift shops; soak in their enchanted botanical garden in the sky; or unwind with a drink and a meal at one of the half dozen eateries and bars.

Featuring both unique attractions and Instagram-worthy views, Anakeesta was voted Best Attraction of the Year by Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association – just one year after it opened in 2017.

## Eat Like a Kid Again

Once a huge logging town, the Great Smokies area used to house a teeming number of lumberjacks back in the day. And the cheapest, easiest, most delicious way to keep them well-fed through their day of log-slinging? Pancakes.

Though the lumberjacks are now long gone, the flapjacks remain.

Take your mind (and your taste buds) down Saturday morning memory lane with the area’s greatest pancake offerings.

Pancake Pantry is a great place to start. For over 60 years, this local legend has kept residents and visitors satiated with every type of flapjack imaginable: wild blueberry, sweet potato, or pigs in a blanket, anyone? They feature other breakfast staples as well, including a wide variety of crepes, waffles, and omelettes.

Or fill up at Crockett’s Breakfast Camp. Dedicated to the legacy of local frontiersman and soldier David C. “Crockett” Maples, this spot has been successfully feeding the hungry since 1840. Their menu boasts thick griddle cakes, Cherokee sweet corn pone, and “hen fruit” (eggs!). Or indulge in heartier fare, like chopped steak and eggs or signature corned beef hash: a breakfast assortment would make even the burliest lumberjack proud.



Five Oaks Farm Kitchen

### Beyond the Flapjacks

But as they say, Tennesseans cannot live on pancakes alone – and fortunately the area has a wide range of other cuisines on which to feast – and imbibe.

Get your Southern fix at Five Oaks Farm Kitchen in Sevierville. Home to hearty from-scratch fare and quite possibly some of the largest cinnamon rolls out there, the one thing nobody ever leaves with is an empty stomach.

Or swing by The Old Mill, a centuries-old (and still operating!) gristmill in Pigeon Forge. Beyond the flour, their restaurant serves up classic deep-fried deliciousness like catfish, barbecue, and chicken ’n’ dumplings.

## Act Like a Kid Again

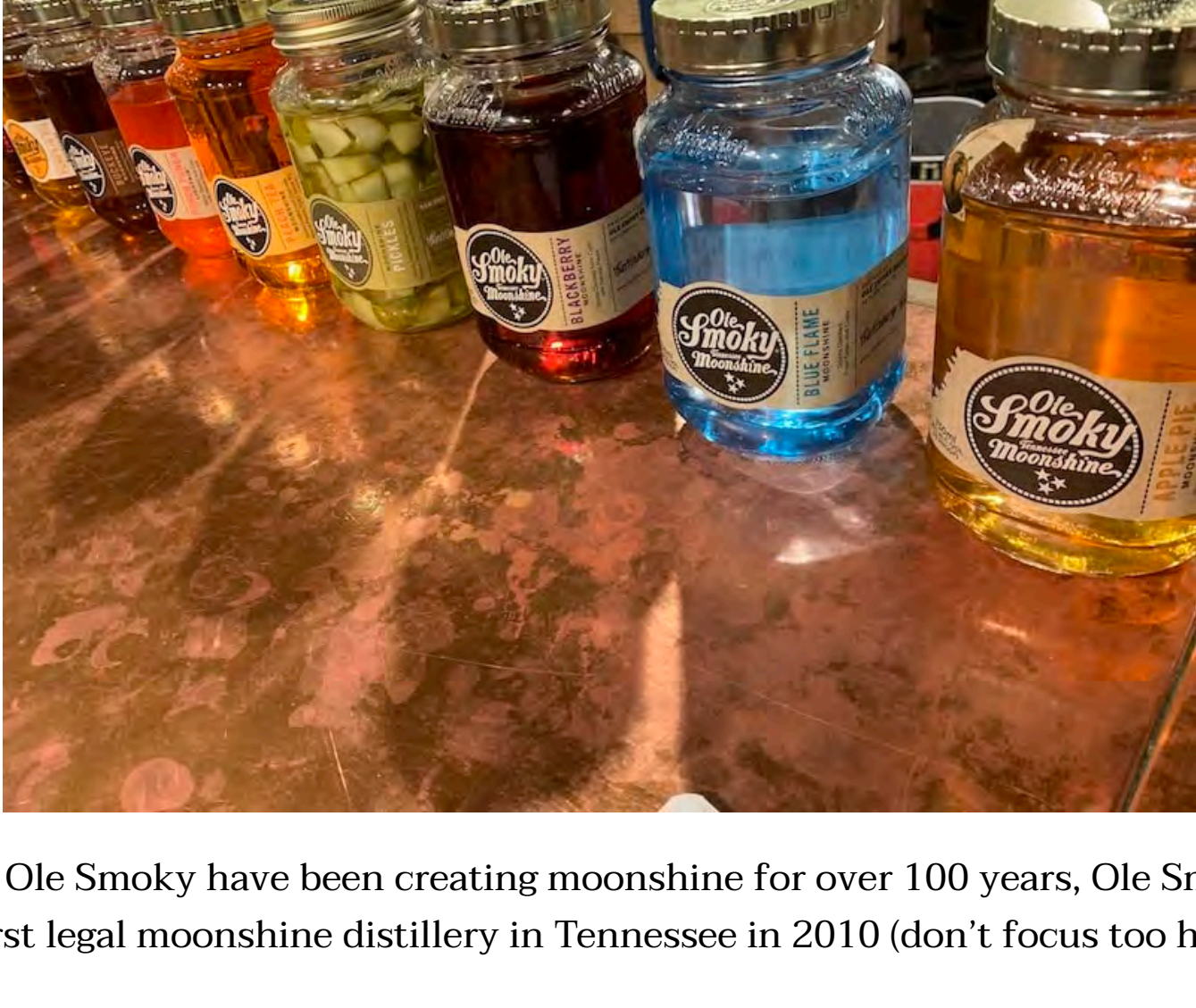
But if there’s one thing Tennessee knows more about than most anyone else, it’s – okay, well it’s Dolly Parton. But if there’s *another* thing Tennessee knows more about than most anyone else – it’s moonshine.

To really feel like a kid again (or at least behave like one), sip your way through the area’s iconic moonshine distilleries.

### Doc Collier Moonshine Distillery

If it’s doctor prescribed, it must be good. Doc Collier, located in Gatlinburg, boasts the most unique array of flavors guaranteed to appeal to moonshine-lovers and moonshine-occasional-drinkers alike. Try traditional sips or more unique flavors like blackberry, root beer float, and *’naner* (bananal) – great alone or in cocktails. Slushies available, too!

### Ole Smoky Moonshine



Though distillers at Ole Smoky have been creating moonshine for over 100 years, Ole Smoky officially opened up as the first legal moonshine distillery in Tennessee in 2010 (don’t focus too hard on the math).

They started with four flavors, but now boast over 60 – including jars of moonshine-soaked peaches, cherries, and pickles.

### Old Forge Distillery

Located just a few feet away from The Old Mill (remember them?), Old Forge Distillery moonshines are made with freshly ground grain straight from the nearby mill. And four years after launching in 2014, they opened up a cocktail bar, boasting moonshines and other liquors (gins, rums) made in the distillery. They even incorporate products from their own herb garden!

## Adult-Approved Kid Fun

In a world where we grow up getting told to act our age, you can escape to a world where you don’t have to! The Great Smokies offers adult amusement topped off with childlike delight that you can enjoy unabashedly and without shame.

Hey, no one’s going to tell your parents.

*Award-winning travel writer Rachel Marsh enjoys traveling, writing, and winning awards for travel writing.*



# Review: Round Barn Estate’s Cream Wines

By Rachel Marsh

Like a bottle full of melted ice cream



For an entirely new vino experience this season, sip and savor a bottle of cream wine from Round Barn Estate.

Located in Baroda, Michigan, this winery-brewery-distillery combo touts a variety of tasty products. Their cream wines, however, are among the most notable; like cream liqueur made with wine, each bottle has a unique (and dangerously delicious) flavor that makes it all too easy to forget about its 13.9% ABV.

## The Flavors

### *Mint Chocolate Cream*

Just when you thought nothing could get better than a Thin Mint – you discovered the secret of putting them in the freezer. And just when you thought nothing could get better than frozen Thin Mints – you discovered Mint Chocolate Cream Wine. The perfect mix of mint,

chocolate, and booze, this creamy treat pairs well with ice cream, chocolate anything, and – Thin Mints.

### *Black Walnut Cream*

Distinctive yet delectable, the Black Walnut Cream Wine has so many different flavor experiences in one bottle. With a velvety undercurrent of nutty black walnut, this cream wine also has strong notes of coffee, chocolate, toffee, and mocha.

### *Salted Caramel Cream*

The savory salted perfectly balances out the sweet caramel, for that creamy, boozy, autumn-in-a-glass kind of taste. Enjoy this limited-edition delight whenever you can; Round Barn releases their Salted Caramel Cream Wine every fall, as they feel it pairs best with crunchy leaves and bonfires.

## How Best to Imbibe

Want to get the most rich, delicious bang for your rich, delicious buck? There are many ways to enhance other products in your life with this wine-infused treat.

### *Coffee*

Add a little buzz to your buzz: substitute a splash or two of cream wine for the cream and sugar in your daily java. (Or, hey, add a splash or two of coffee to your glass of cream wine, depending on the kind of day you’re trying to have.)

I’d recommend Black Walnut for this specific endeavor, but really, you can’t go wrong.

### *What Your Ice Cream Has Been Missing*

Even better than [insert any ice cream topping here], these cream wines have just changed your ice cream sundae game forever. Drizzle over a scoop or two of your favorite flavor for maximum dessert experience: they’re creamy enough to add an extra boost to the taste, but subtle enough not to overpower the original flavor.

Alternatively? Throw a shot or two into a milkshake. You’ll have more boys in your yard than you’ll know what to do with.

### *Cocktails*

Any mixed drink that calls for a cream liqueur can easily be replaced by your choice of cream wines. Give your White Russian a salted caramel twist; make it a minty mudslide instead; or just raid your liquor cabinet and let your imagination run wild (after all, they say alcohol increases creativity).

### *Step One: Glass; Step Two: Pour*

Or, simply pour, sip, and savor. These creamy dreams work perfectly well on their own: enjoy as an after-dinner dessert, fireside sipper, or pre-sweet-dreams nightcap. You can even replace that milk-and-cookie tradition with something a bit more ... well, *adult*.

## Where to Get Your Hands on Some

Order online [here](#) (distribution limited in some states per laws and regulations). Or pop into Round Barn Estates to say hey! They’d just love to hear what you think about their products.



# Virginia Spirits History from Colonial Days to Prohibition

By Annie Tobey

Virginia spirits celebrate 400 years and a growing liquor industry



The year 2020 marks 400 years of distilling in Virginia, from the early colonists to contemporary craft spirits.

## Colonial Beverages and the Beginnings of Bourbon and Moonshine

When colonists arrived in Virginia, safe drinking water was hard to come by, especially in the coastal areas where the English first settled. Alternative “treated” beverages such as beer and liquor, however, were totally safe. And a lot more enjoyable! Early ships that came to the site called Jamestown carried necessary staples such as beer and spirits (called “aquavitaē”). To ensure an ongoing supply, the colonists soon brought in experienced brewers as well as stills for distillation.



Indian maize. Photo credit Thanasak Boonchoong

Some historians have suggested that an English settler in Virginia produced the colony’s first batch of whiskey – maybe even the first batch of whiskey distilled in North America. The Reverend George Thorpe wrote to John Smyth on Dec. 19, 1620:

“We have found a way to make some good drink of Indian corn ... [even better than] good strong English beer,” or, in Thorpe’s direct words, “*Wee haue found a waie to make soe good drinke of Indian corne as I ptest I haue diuerse times refused to drinke good stronge Englishe beare and chosen to drinke that.*”

Given the evidence – Thorpe was a distiller back in the Old World and he owned a copper still – this “good drink” is likely to be whiskey. And given that it was made of “Indian corn,” it’s possible that it was the predecessor of bourbon and moonshine.

As further evidence, the colonists who inventoried Thorpe’s possessions 12 years after his death found a copper still and three casks of a drinkable alcoholic beverage. Only distilled liquor could have survived 12 pre-refrigeration years and still be palatable.

## Yo, Ho, Ho

As the colonies expanded, so did the colonists’ selection of alcohol. They could satiate themselves with rum, whiskey, fruit brandies, hard cider, and beer.

Rum was a New World creation from Caribbean sugar cane and its byproduct, molasses. It was so popular in the colonies that Britain’s attempts to control the trade of sugar, molasses, and rum through the 1733 Molasses Act contributed to the American Revolution.



New world rum. Photo credit Konstantin Kirillov

Chesapeake colonists “were distilling extraordinary amounts of fruit alcohols and rum,” says Sarah Hand Meacham in *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake (Early America: History, Context, Culture)*. “By 1770, the average white male drank more than three pints of rum per week.”

Home distilling predates commercial distilling in America, adds Bill Dodson, owner of the history-focused 8 Shires Distillery in Williamsburg and a student of Virginia spirits history. In fact, Dodson says, distilling even provided an effective means of preserving beer, which had a more limited shelf life.

Founding father and first U.S. president George Washington used rum and rum punch in campaigning for the House of Burgesses in 1758 and to boost morale among Revolutionary War soldiers. For his inauguration celebration, Washington ordered two barrels of fine aged Barbados rum.

## From Pirates to Plows

After the American Revolution, whiskey began to replace rum as America’s distilled beverage of choice. Whiskey could be made using locally grown grains – wheat, barley, corn and rye – rather than imported molasses.

Also in the 1700s, Scottish and Irish immigrants came to Virginia, bringing their distilling know-how and their recipes for “uisce beatha” – “water of life.” Traditional Appalachian whiskey has roots in those recipes for unaged whiskey.

In 1810, reports the Virginia Distillers Association, U.S. census records show more than 3,600 distilleries operating in Virginia; many of these, however, were destroyed during the Civil War.

Besides Thorpe’s early distillation of Indian corn, Virginia has a second claim to the birth of bourbon: Elijah Craig, a name recognizable to bourbon aficionados. Craig was born in Orange County, Virginia, in 1738, and became an entrepreneur in an area of Virginia that later became the state of Kentucky. He is credited by some (including the Elijah Craig distillery) as being the first to age whiskey in charred oak barrels. This is the aging process that transforms whiskey into bourbon.

## Booze from a Forefather

Beginning in 1797, George Washington began operating his own distillery; it eventually became the nation’s largest whiskey distillery. The profitable distillery at his Mount Vernon plantation used five copper pot stills for 12 months of the year (versus one or two stills, used one month out of the year, at the average distillery of the time). “In 1799, Washington’s Distillery produced almost 11,000 gallons of whiskey, valued at \$7,500 (approximately \$120,000 today),” reports the Mount Vernon estate. “The average Virginia distillery produced about 650 gallons of whiskey per year which was valued at about \$460.”

The Mount Vernon distillery made rye whiskey, whiskey flavored with cinnamon or persimmons, wheat whiskey, and apple, peach, and persimmon brandies. Today, visitors can tour the historic distillery and purchase brandy and whiskey produced using 18th-century distilling methods and techniques.

## A Rebellious Spirit Marks Virginia Spirits History

Another Virginia liquor point of pride arose during Prohibition.

Prohibition came early to Virginia, which went dry on Nov. 1, 1916 – three-and-a-half years earlier than the national Prohibition. No, that’s not the Commonwealth’s point of pride – moonshine is. The new restrictions inspired many Virginians, especially in Southwest Virginia, and Franklin County became known as the “Moonshine Capital of the World.” The residents of the region resisted federal restrictions on alcohol production and distribution. They made and transported whiskey, skirting the “feds” in new and creative ways.

The trade in moonshine wasn’t merely a way to flout authority. Corn whiskey was an important source of income for many Virginia residents; especially the case for those in rural areas with limited road networks. Given transportation challenges, it was more efficient to move corn if it was first converted to whiskey.

Once corn whiskey became illegal and distillers had to hide their operations, the liquor became known as moonshine. After all, figuratively and often literally, it was produced and transported at night, illuminated only by the moon.

The new need to transport the corn whiskey while eluding the revenueurs gave rise to souped-up cars. These cars looked ordinary (i.e., “stock”) so as not to arouse suspicions, but they had hidden advantages. They could carry plenty of bootleg cargo. They were equipped with heavy-duty shocks and springs to keep glass jars from rattling and breaking. Added horsepower for higher speeds and improved suspension for better handling travel helped drivers escape the authorities. Some cars even had tricks that would make James Bond envious; flipping license plates and toggle switches to shut off the taillights, for instance. Once Prohibition ended, these cars and their drivers started another long-running craze: the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, known as NASCAR.

## Word of Mouth

The contentious history of alcohol over the centuries, in Virginia and throughout the United States, has made for colorful tales and long-lasting effects, especially surrounding American Prohibition.

EXPLORE THE  
BIRTHPLACE  
OF AMERICAN  
SPIRITS

Fast forward to the 21st century. Besides Virginia spirits history, citizens of the Commonwealth have much to be proud of. Their distilleries have become part of the wave of independent craft beverages; this includes wine, beer, cider, mead, and liquor. Which brings us to today. Next up, we explore the liquor industry in the Commonwealth!

Boomer editor Annie Tobey flexes her freelance muscles regularly by writing for numerous local and national publications, primarily on craft beer, cocktails, and active travel. Annie’s slogan? A breeze on my face and a draft on my lips!



# 21st Century Virginia Spirits

By Annie Tobey

Virginia Spirits Month celebrates contemporary craft distilleries



## IT'S 5 O'CLOCK FOR 30 DAYS.

As part of a proud 400-year distilling history, 21st-century Virginia distilleries have joined the wave of independent craft beverages. Virginia wineries began their ascent in the 1970s, craft breweries in the 1990s, followed by cideries and meaderies. In 1934, A. Smith Bowman Distillery began turning grain into whiskey, followed by Belmont Farm Distillery in 1988. But the big craft distillery burst began in 2005, with Copper Fox Distillery, which is still making fine spirits in 2020. Many other craft distilleries followed suit. Which brings us to today, with 73 licensed distilleries and 11 licenses pending. And to Virginia Spirits Month, officially celebrated every September.

Distilleries across the Commonwealth of Virginia produce a diversity of spirits. Consumers can enjoy an abundance of whiskey – including rye, single malt, bourbon, and moonshine. They can please their palates with gin, rum, brandy, liqueurs, aquavit, and absinthe. They can even pour a sprinkling of tasty creative and historic liquors as well as ready-to-drink canned cocktails.

Thanks to Virginia's agriculture industry, many distilled products are made with local ingredients, from botanicals in gin, to fruit in brandy and flavored spirits, to corn, barley, wheat, and rye in whiskey. Virginia's climate brings out the best in barrel-aged spirits. The humidity and the daily and seasonal temperature fluctuations encourage the wood to expand, contract, and “breathe,” pulling the liquor into the wood and squeezing it back out.

### A Vision of Tasting Rooms

While there exists no typical Virginia distillery tasting room, you can imagine a typical visit. While the outer shell may or may not bely the fine spirits that await you, the inside most certainly does.



*The Virago Spirits tasting room includes a wall mural by artist Emily Herr. Photo by Sarah Der Photography*

A friendly, knowledgeable bartender is waiting to serve you. On the tasting room menu, you can choose from straight alcohol samples or cocktails. The cocktails are often creative drinks made with fresh ingredients, house-made mixers, and quality tonic. In whatever form you choose, you can sample up to three ounces of alcohol per visit (per day). What's more, these bartenders know the distillery's products, and they can provide you with distilling details as well as tasting notes.

And when you're ready to go, you can purchase bottles of the liquors that landed as your favorites.

### Where Distilleries Call Home

The settings of distillery tasting rooms across Virginia vary as distinctly as the Commonwealth of Virginia. Some members of the Virginia Distillers Association reflect this diversity:

- Catoctin Creek Distilling, in a classic old storefront building on Purcellville's Main Street
- Vitae Spirits, in an attractive, creative Charlottesville space matching the creativity of the spirits
- Caiseal Beer & Spirits, in a grand military building in Hampton
- Three Crosses Distilling, in small-town Powhatan Courthouse
- A. Smith Bowman Distillery, in a large red-brick building near Fredericksburg that reflects the distillery's substantial operations
- Copper Fox Distillery's Williamsburg location, repurposing a 20th century motel (Copper Fox also malts its own barley, for unique, taste-bud-tingling flavors; original location operating out of Sperryville, Virginia)
- Reservoir Distillery, in Richmond's historic Scott's Addition
- Virago Spirits in Richmond, in an unassuming industrial strip but with a comfortable bar vibe and amazing hand-painted wall murals
- Tarnished Truth, for tours and tastings inside the majestic, historic Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach
- Virginia Distillery Co., nestled in the bucolic Blue Ridge Mountains of Nelson County

Not all Virginia distilleries choose to operate tasting rooms, so be sure to verify operations and times before you visit.

### The Commonwealth Climate

Over the past few years, the rise in craft distilleries has come hand in hand with changes in Virginia ABC regulations, such as allowing tasting rooms and sales at the distillery. The changes have served to encourage the burgeoning industry while still protecting the ABC's mission of promoting public safety and generating revenue for the Commonwealth.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the industry and laws have continued to adapt. (Not everything about 2020 has been bad!) Some distilleries shifted part of their production to hand sanitizer, as a meaningful contribution to public health. Regulatory advancements have also helped distilleries to be sustainable during the economic challenges. Such regulatory changes include direct shipping from distilleries to consumers (within Virginia), delivery, curbside pickup, and to-go cocktails at distilleries and restaurants.

### Economic Impact

The distilling trend is beneficial for consumers and for local economies, too.

According to the American Craft Spirits Association (reporting on 2018), the direct economic impact of distilling in Virginia amounts to 221 jobs and \$575 million in output. Extend that economic impact to distilling associates, wholesaling, and on- and off-premising retailing and the total comes to 891 jobs and \$693 million in output.

The supplier impact and induced economic impact extends those benefits. Industries that see positive results from craft spirits include business and personal services; manufacturing; transportation and communication; finance, insurance, and real estate; construction; and agriculture. Tourism benefits, too, with approximately 30 percent of distillery visitors coming from outside of the state. And Commonwealth coffers received total taxes of \$254 million.

### Experience Virginia spirits month for yourself



*It's 5 o'clock! Enjoy some Catoctin Creek Roundstone Rye Whisky. Photo by Wild Heart Co. / Aubrey Gee*

more. The virtual passport also links to websites and provides phone numbers. At [VirginiaSpirits.org](http://VirginiaSpirits.org), consumers can also download a copy of the passport.

### Purchase Virginia spirits

Sure, you can go to the each distillery store to get Virginia spirits. But if you can't make it, many are available at Virginia ABC stores, on shelves and by special order. You can also find some at fine bars and restaurants throughout the state. And for now, many offer direct shipping (within Virginia).

In the spirit of celebrating history, supporting local businesses, and embracing life's pleasures, get to know Virginia distilleries. During Virginia Spirits Month, the Virginia Distillers Association reminds you, “It's 5 o'clock for 30 days.” During the remaining 11 months? “It's always 5 o'clock somewhere!”

There's no better way to learn about craft spirits in the Commonwealth than to try them for yourself.

### Visit distillery tasting rooms

The Virginia Spirits Trail & Passport Program guides you to some of the state's top distilleries. Get your passport stamped at 10 participating distilleries and earn a Virginia spirits T-shirt.

You can score your passport in several ways. Pick up a hard copy of the passport at any participating Virginia distillery. Avail yourself of the virtual Virginia Spirits Trail, which can filter for tours, tastings, curbside delivery and



# Healthy Aging Tips

By Eric J. Wallace

Securing quality of life can be as simple as cultivating a few good habits



*Medical experts offer tips for healthy aging habits for better sleep, healthier eating, physical activity, and mental exercise.*

Did you know small tweaks in daily routine can drastically improve your quality of life at nearly any age? The health benefits of adapting even one or two positive habits can be profound, says Carol Manning, University of Virginia Memory & Aging Care Clinic director. We're talking shifts around how we prepare go to bed, eating a side salad with lunch, going for evening walks, reading more.

Though simple, such changes can boost overall happiness, alleviate aches and pains, protect later-in-life mobility, and more. In fact, Johns Hopkins University led a study that showed regularly practicing certain healthy habits reduced risks of death from medical ailments by 40 percent among those aged 45 to 64.

Still, altering lifelong habits can be tough, says Manning. Major life transitions – like kids leaving for college, retirement, or pandemic-related shutdowns – provide excellent opportunities for implementation. Committing to positive lifestyle changes during such times can build happiness, confidence, and momentum moving forward.

Below, Manning details four of her favorite healthy aging habits. If adapted, they can help you slow the aging process both inside and out.

## Sleep Better and Age Better



What not to do for better sleep. Photo: Raupixelimages

For most people, says Manning, getting a good night's rest gets harder with age. Issues like less time spent in restorative deep sleep cycles and interruptions due to anxiety or discomfort from aches and pains make matters worse.

Too little sleep has been linked to countless medical issues, says Manning. They range from difficulty concentrating to increased risks of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

How does one secure better sleep? Manning says most problems stem from snoring, side effects from medication, or underlying medical ailments. So, start by

consulting your doctor. Next, try DIY behavioral modifications:

- Fine-tune your body's circadian rhythm with sleep schedules: go to bed at the same time each night; the same goes for waking up, including weekends.
- Limit naps to 20 minutes in duration. Don't take naps after 3 p.m.
- Avoid caffeine or alcohol late in the day. No nicotine, period.
- Exercise in the afternoon, but not within three hours of bedtime.
- Make your bedroom a sleep palace. Ramp up comfort levels, maximize quiet and darkness, and avoid temperature extremes.
- Relax before bed. Start by turning off screens one hour before hitting the hay. Calm yourself by breathing meditatively, reading, writing in a diary, or listening to soft music.

## Eat Better for Multiple Benefits

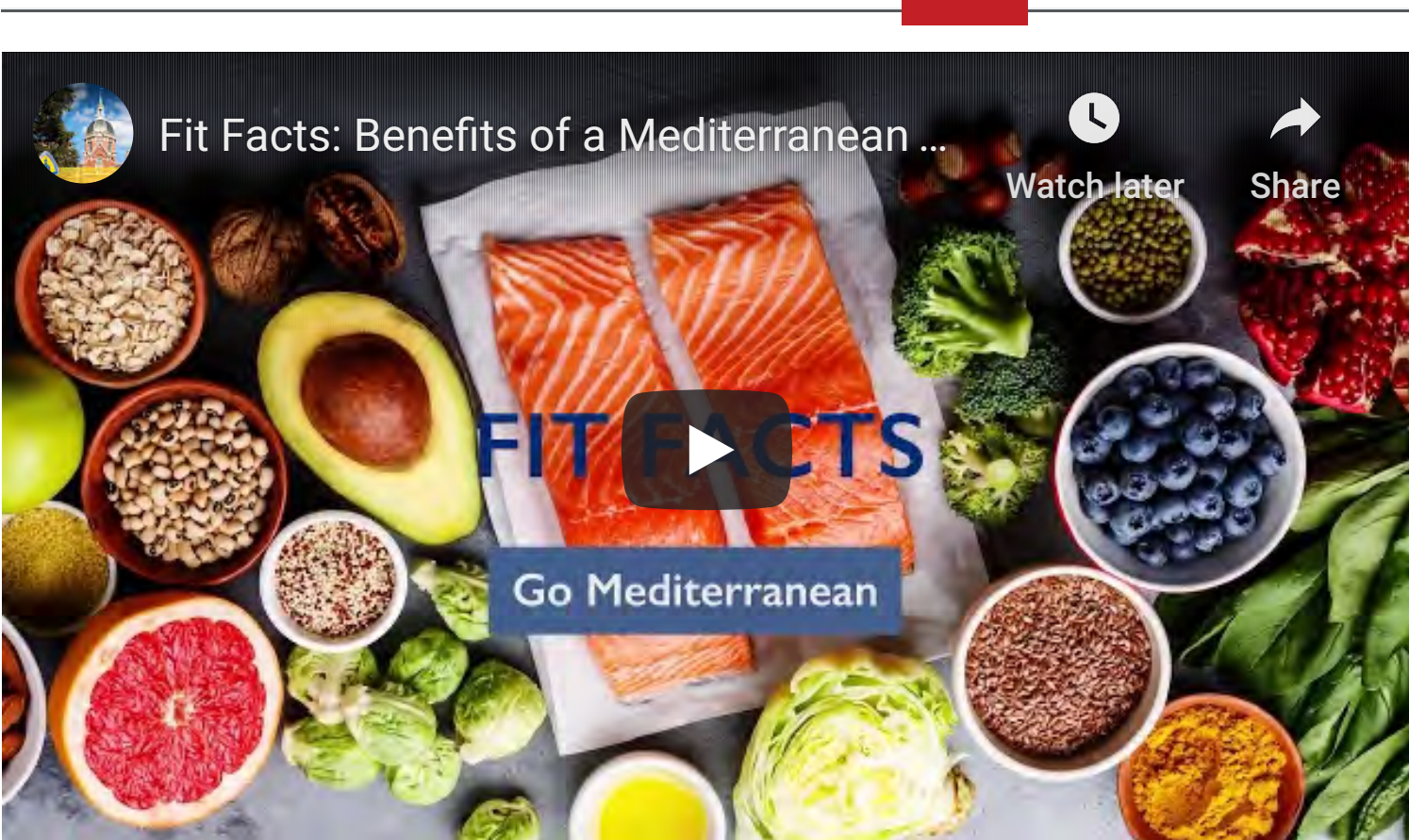
By now most people have heard of the Mediterranean diet. It's based on the foodways of pre-1960s southern Italy and Crete, which were responsible for inhabitants enjoying some of the world's lowest rates of chronic disease and highest life expectancies.

Back then, families in these areas kept vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, and nut groves, writes Dr. Haitham Ahmed, a cardiology specialist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, in an email. Meats took the form of fresh seafood and farm-culled livestock.



A Mediterranean diet can help with healthy aging. Photo: David Cabrera Navarro

Adapting a similar diet brings incredible benefits. For example, Ahmed led a long-term study of U.S. men and women aged 44 to 84 that showed practitioners were 80 percent less likely to suffer an early death.



Still, transitioning from fried chicken and white-flour tortillas to pan-seared fish and quinoa can be tough, says Manning. That's why she recommends starting with easy changes.

- For breakfast, sub oatmeal, fresh fruit, and a splash of fat-free milk for bacon, eggs, and pancakes.
- Start lunches with a veggie salad drizzled with olive oil and balsamic vinegar.
- Forgo after-dinner ice cream for a dessert of fresh fruit.

The goal, says Ahmed, is to simply switch one unhealthy item for a healthy one. Allow a few weeks to get used to the changes, then try another.

## Get More Physical Activity, More Often



Regular exercise improves quality of life. Photo: Trong Nguyen

The link between exercise and later-in-life health is well established – it significantly lowers risks of developing Type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, heart disease, and more. But the past decade has brought exciting new findings regarding beneficial impacts on aging processes.

For instance, UVA researchers recently discovered regular exercise “increases the ability of skeletal muscle cells to remove damaged components and other cellular debris.”

Zhen Yan, a UVA professor of cardiovascular medicine, compares the process to a bodily janitorial service. Imagine a crew coming to

clean up your cells' work environment each day in order to maintain functionality. Regular exercise boosts both the number of janitors and their efficiency.

That keeps waste from piling up and causing problems and leads to what experts call “compression of morbidity.” In short, you stay healthy longer in your late years versus spending the final 5 to 10 years battling chronic illness, says Manning.

Luckily, exercise doesn't have to be vigorous to be helpful, she says. Instituting an after-dinner walk, for instance, is perfect. From there, adding physical activities like gardening, swimming, or pickleball increases benefits.

Thirty minutes of daily physical activity is ideal, wrote Yan. But it doesn't have to come all at once. Three 10-minute sessions spread throughout the day is equally effective.

## Healthy Aging Habits to Exercise Your Mind

Advances in the mid-2000s revolutionized doctors' understanding around age-related cognitive decline.

“Essentially, we realized regularly exercising your brain can help you maintain healthy cognitive function deep into your golden years,” says Randy Merchant, former Virginia Neuroscience Initiative director. Follow-up studies have shown further benefits, like decreased risk of dementia or Alzheimer's.



Exercising your brain helps to keep it healthy. Photo: Martina Berg

Adding a social element – like a book club – amplifies the effect. It also helps protect against loneliness, which in older adults has been linked to higher rates of depression and cognitive decline.

*Adopt these healthy aging habits – small tweaks to your daily routine – to improve your quality of life.*

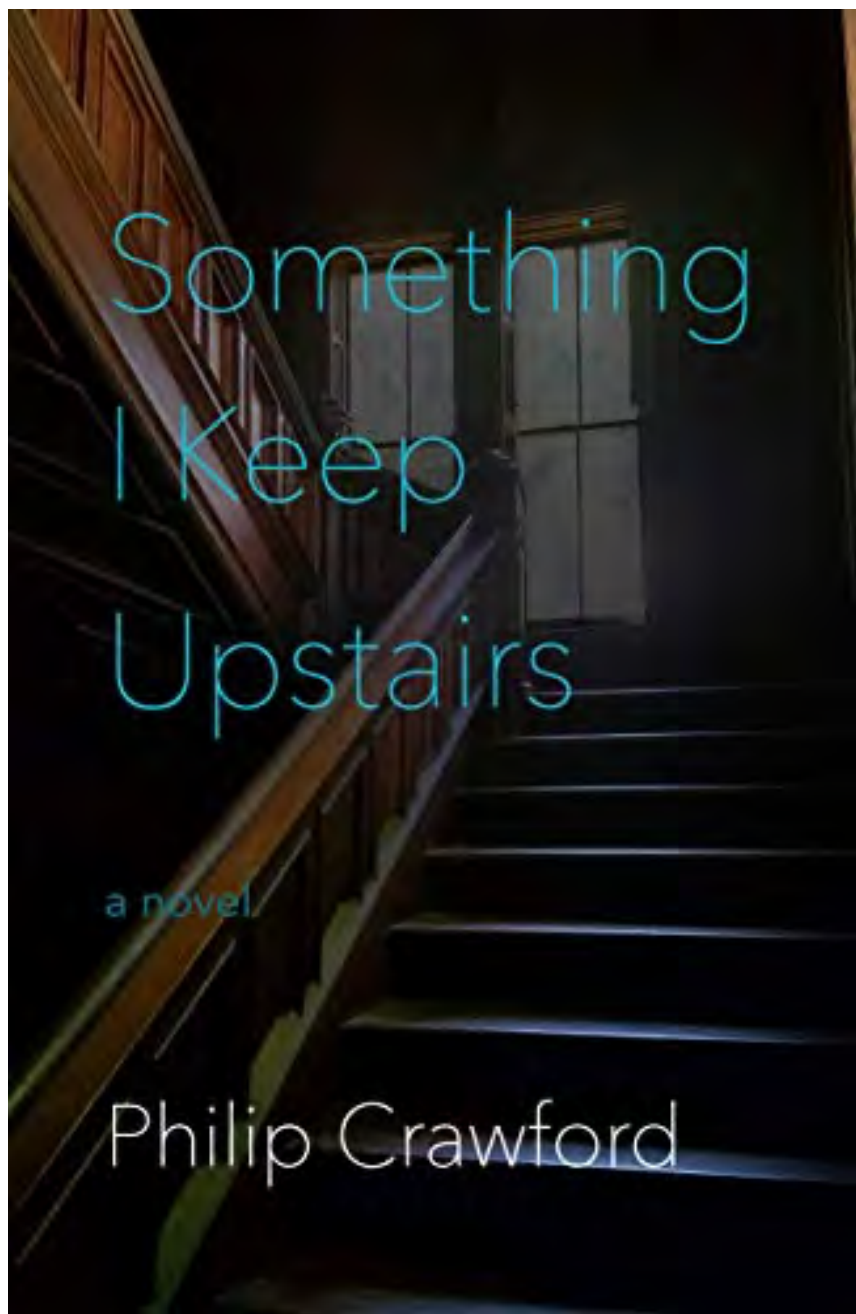
*Eric J. Wallace is a freelance journalist whose work has appeared in more than 50 local, regional and national media outlets. He is a contributing editor for Gastro Obscura.*



# ‘Something I Keep Upstairs’ Book Review

By Annie Tobey

Psychological fiction blends wit with suspense



The concept seems grim. The cover is dark. Yet the quirky but winsome and witty protagonist keeps this murder mystery light. Author Philip Crawford, former reporter and editor, weaves an engaging story in *Something I Keep Upstairs*, psychological fiction that blurs the distinction between who qualifies as mentally ill.

## WHAT TO EXPECT ...

The protagonist and narrator, Coleman Cooper, sets the stage with his botched suicide. Thanks to time limits at the mental hospital where he resides, he transitions to a new mental hospital, the Buchanan Institute, in a new town, Pierrevert, Maine – where the townspeople are abuzz about the recent murder of a prominent attorney. More seemingly unrelated murders follow in this sleepy little town, which hadn’t seen a homicide in decades.

Coleman settles in to his new home, with a new therapist, new friends, and even a surprising, well, girlfriend. (Although the seductive, color-coordinated Cheryl probably would not have used the term “girlfriend” to describe their relationship.) And Coleman’s job as a

bartender gives him access to local gossip, a music mentor, and the colorful characters that populate Pierrevert.

Although most of the book is seen through Coleman’s first-person narration, occasional chapters are excerpted from a fictitious nonfiction book, *The Maine Murders: What Really Happened in Pierrevert*. The book was written by Hayley Blossom, a British reporter who roams Pierrevert looking for news. The chapters – and the reporter – serve as useful, nonintrusive sources of background information.

## A LOW-STRESS MYSTERY

Don’t pick up *Something I Keep Upstairs* looking for a whodunit that drops shaded clues as to the murderer’s identity. The reader gets only minor glimpses into the town detectives, local media or amateur sleuths as they investigate the crimes. It doesn’t offer a *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* critique of mental health hospitals. It doesn’t delve deeply into the psychological lives of the characters, excepting Coleman Cooper, who has a challenging past to overcome.

Instead, *Something I Keep Upstairs* offers a pleasurable read without requiring depth of thought. It gives you a likeable protagonist along with a colorful mix of admirable characters and a few despicable ones. And it provides a satisfying conclusion that’s perfect for the optimistic reader – or for an escape from the stresses of 2020.

Published by Provençal Press, July 28, 2020

Available in paperback (257 pages) and e-book



# Book Review: Dream Big, Stella!

By Rachel Marsh

A delightful page-turner written by Ashley Farley



They say not to judge a book by its cover, but the cover of *Dream Big, Stella!* perfectly encapsulates the type of story its readers can expect. Its sunny, vivid backdrop features a beaming Stella Boor letting herself get caught up in the countryside breeze after having biked uphill on a long, winding gravel pathway.

Though this feel-good novel, written by Ashley Farley, is filled with gravely twists and turns, it ultimately touts the happiness and optimism that the world craves these days.

## What You’ll Find Beyond the Cover

A single, 30-year-old woman living in New York City, Stella Boor has been bouncing between jobs for months.

Out of nowhere, she receives the news that her birth father has died and left her an inn in Hope Springs, Virginia. Raised by a lesbian couple, Stella had always considered her birth father as merely a “sperm donor;” so the fact that he leaves her such an immense inheritance is merely the first big surprise of Stella’s journey.

Realizing there’s nothing keeping her in New York City, she decides to take a leap of faith and move her life to Virginia.

We walk the path with Stella through her steep life changes and growth spurts. As she tries to get used to life in the countryside, she works hard to figure out how to successfully transform and manage a business. And all the while, Stella begins to discover the biological family that she never knew ... and, incidentally, discovers a new side of herself.

## The Perfect Escape

The novel offers up a wide cast of likeable characters – the greatest being Stella, whom you can’t help but root for. Look elsewhere if you seek an insightful and thought-provoking book; but if what you need is a delightful and intriguing beach read where everything seems to eventually go right one way or another – grab a glass of wine and join Stella on her journey.

Filled with secrets, plot twists, and unexpected developments around every corner, *Dream Big, Stella!* refuses to get bogged down in predictability – resulting in an easily devourable page-turner.



Author Ashley Farley



# Two Richmond Men Begin Unexpected Dialogue

By Annie Tobey

‘The Tale of the Tee: Be Kind and Just Believe’



On June 14, 2020, two men from Richmond, Virginia, connected: one an African American, and the other a white Jewish American. The summer of 2020 was roiling with racial protests, nationally and in Richmond. Over the course of a week, BK Fulton and Jonathan Blank shared their stories honestly and openly. This interracial dialogue on racial matters solidified a commitment to cooperation. It also resulted in a book, *The Tale of the Tee: Be Kind and Just Believe*, and a golf tee memento.

## Setting the scene

The conversation began after Jacquelyn Stone, a lawyer at McGuireWoods LLP, had been photographed by a local newspaper while cleaning a graffitied historical marker. The marker honored Oliver Hill St., a civil rights attorney who was instrumental in overturning segregated schools through the Brown v. Board of Education case. Hill had been a friend and mentor to Stone’s father, the Honorable William T. Stone, Virginia’s first Black judge.

After seeing the article, Jonathan Blank, a colleague at McGuireWoods, sent Stone an email of appreciation. “The article made me proud to be your friend and partner,” Blank wrote. “I have always felt that small acts have ripple effects.”

In her email response, Stone shared a link to the virtual commencement address that her husband, BK Fulton, had presented at Virginia Commonwealth University da Vinci Center for Innovation. She also shared a link to Fulton’s recent film, *1 Angry Black Man*.

## The interracial dialogue on racial matters

The commencement address and the film opened the conversation between Fulton and Blank.

Coincidentally, during the week they began corresponding, both men had published essays about racial matters. Fulton’s appeared on the Bacon’s Rebellion website. Blank’s was published as a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* letter to the editor.

A golfer, Blank made note of a comment by Fulton that that the tee had been patented by a Black man, George Franklin Grant. Blank determined to begin “carrying around a golf tee to serve as a conscious reminder of my own ignorance and learning curve.”

The men are making a custom golf tee to symbolize their shared commitment to the work for racial justice. The tee is engraved with their initials, extended with extra meaning: “BK” for “be kind” and “JB” for “just believe.”

## Publishing the dialogue for all to see



In large part thanks to the pandemic, their interracial dialogue on racial matters was entirely recorded through the email exchange. Fulton combined the emails, a transcript of his commencement address, his film, his essay, and Blank’s letter to the editor in a book, *The Tale of the Tee*. Fulton augments the words with numerous visuals – from historic to contemporary – infusing the text with extra meaning. Images include photos from the recent Richmond racial protests as well as historical pictures of people of African descent, whose inventions, art, theories and other contributions have been left out of history books. He uses pull-outs and font emphasis to highlight essential messages.

*The Tale of the Tee* reminds us of the value of dialogue; but its biggest strength is in the reprints of the published works. Each one provides an encapsulated overview of salient points in the case for racial equity. It provides a springboard for expanding one’s beliefs, for learning and growth.

The commencement address, “Remembering Those on the Margins,” makes the case for “the poor, people with disabilities, women, minorities, the undereducated, and people outside the economic mainstream” by showcasing more than a dozen such people who were responsible for important breakthroughs and inventions.

The film *1 Angry Black Man* highlights a young Black man, Mike, and his college classmates during the course of a Black literature class. The film opens after Mike was arrested for rape, accused by a white female friend. The young woman quickly recanted her story and apologized, but not before the viewer saw how the police treated this clean-cut, articulate Black man. Much of the film features the class discussion, a range of viewpoints from a diversity of students.

Fulton’s essay, “The Divine Puzzle of Life,” describes how American culture underplays the accomplishments of Blacks while overplaying the accomplishments of whites. It shines a light on the “pecking order of humanity,” on white frailty, and on the need to search for truth and question inequality.

Blank’s letter to the editor, “Confederate Symbols Must Go at Freeman High School,” referenced a current controversy at the Henrico County high school he had attended. “During high school,” he wrote, “I heard no one question those symbols. I heard no one question when our African-American classmate was handed a Confederate flag and asked to wave it while ‘Dixie’ played ... We were wrong. Saying those words does not change our past. But I hope it starts a healing process.”

The book is short and a quick read. But it’s long enough to communicate important messages for today’s volatile climate. It’s long enough to provide a base for making a long drive for change.

Owl Publishing, Aug. 4, 2020



# Memories of The Regency Room at The Hotel Roanoke

By Patrick O'Connor

Kindness and generosity remain after four decades



*Emeritus professor Patrick O'Connor shares memories of The Regency Room in Roanoke, a tale of family, friends, and generosity.*

Sue and I lived in Dublin, Virginia, for seven years – a beautiful place filled with many wonderful people. Two of our four children were born there, and Sue and I both earned college degrees there. We had many wonderful times living on a small farm which we enjoyed very much.

Time, friends, and laughter were abundant, but money always seemed a bit dear. I used to joke that everything we had was “tied up in next week.” Still is in some ways. We would save our change so we could afford to go to The Regency Room at The Hotel Roanoke for dinner once a year. This place was “the bomb,” as our kids might have said. It was very elegant, especially by our standards. Food, service, and atmosphere were outstanding. Indeed, for us, it was the go-to place for special events. It was about a 45-minute drive from Dublin, but that was fine as the scenery along the way was wonderful.

Sue was graduating with her bachelor’s degree from Radford College (a bit later, Radford University) in June of 1981. She was a non-traditional student. Her graduation would include our 4-year-old son, Patrick, and daughter Erin would be born about three weeks later. Sue’s parents and other family members would join us. She was the first in her family to graduate from college. It was a very special time, for sure.



*The Regency Room at The Hotel Roanoke: Photo from The Hotel Roanoke*

I had the idea that this would qualify for a graduation dinner at The Regency Room. I envisioned a really special graduation celebration for the graduate and for those who had been so supportive of her. Sometimes, people forget graduations are as much about family, friends, and loved ones as they are about the graduate. I really felt like it would be appropriate for us to invite everyone as our guests for the celebration.

Since the out-of-town family members were already spending money to travel to Dublin/Radford for the ceremony, it seemed a bit presumptuous to expect them to pay for dinner, even a graduation dinner, at such an expensive

restaurant. So, I figured it would be up to me to secure the funds to swing it or just cancel the idea. I really wanted to do it because I felt it would mean so much to Sue. As was previously mentioned, we would save our change for an entire year to go there for a special event such as birthday or anniversary. Once a year ... that’s all we could afford. Usually, our dinner with beverages and gratuity was around 50 dollars for two (keep in mind this is 1980). Quick math told me that I would need about 175 to 200 dollars to pick up the check for a group of seven. I figured I’d better plan for 200 – I had 75 dollars with graduation 2 weeks away.

## Generosity meets merit

At the time, I was working on a doctoral degree at Virginia Tech and teaching at a local community college. I had met and worked with so many kind and generous people at both places. I happened to meet a Tech administrator at a backyard barbecue. His son and I taught together at the local community college and became (and still are) good friends. The administrator and I were making small talk and somehow our conversation turned to Sue graduating from Radford in a few weeks. I mentioned I really wanted to take her and her family out to dinner at The Regency Room to celebrate, but the budget was a bit tight.

He was familiar with The Regency Room and agreed it was a special place for special events. In his quiet unassuming way, he asked me how much the dinner would cost. I told him I thought it would be about 200 dollars, which was a staggering amount of money at the time. The rent on our farmhouse was 140 dollars per month! One dinner that was the equivalent of about one and half month’s rent! Over-the-top for sure. He then asked me how much I had available to cover it. I sort of whispered that I had about 75 dollars. He didn’t respond, and we returned to the barbeque, which went on nicely.

A few days later, I received a call from one of my doctoral committee members. He worked at Tech with my friend’s dad, the Tech administrator, for several years. He oversaw industry training programs offered by the university. I had done similar training as part of my role at the community college. He said he wanted to talk with me about a training program that was coming up in a week. He said he might need someone to assist and would I be available and interested.

“You will also get paid,” he informed me.

“Really?” says I. “I am most available and most interested. And I will get paid? That would be great. How much will it pay?” I asked.

He replied, “125 dollars.”

## Epilogue of memories from The Regency Room & Roanoke

I did the training program and earned my 125 dollars, which was the way it was supposed to be. We should always earn our way. I added the newfound income to my 75 dollars, and off we went to The Hotel Roanoke to have the dinner of a lifetime at The Regency Room. Sue was so happy, as were her parents and family members. Me too.

I learned so much from that experience. I learned about the generosity of people who see someone who is willing to work to achieve a goal. I felt the warmth that comes with celebrating a major accomplishment. The kindness and generosity of those involved remains with me to this day. That was the last time we went to The Regency Room, as we moved to Pennsylvania a year later.



We will stop there again as the Roanoke hotel and The Regency Room are both still there, just as elegant as ever. I am sure it will be just as special as we remember it from over 40 years ago. I am sure it is still expensive, but hopefully less than a month-and-a-half rent.

Thanks to Dr. W.E Skelton and Dr. Bill Giegold for providing me with this and many other opportunities.

*Patrick J. O'Connor is currently OEO (“Only Executive Officer”) of the Life-Long Learning Connection (L3C) based in Kent, Ohio. He is an emeritus professor from Kent State University with stops in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Georgia in an education career spanning 45 years. He has authored college textbooks, the Road Less Traveled series, numerous scholarly articles, monographs, the Think You Know America series and Meet Me at Ray’s. His bachelor and master’s degrees are from Bowling Green State University with a doctorate from Virginia Tech. His work can be viewed at LifeLLeaning.com.*

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# Saying Goodbye to a Decade of ‘Boomer’ Columns

By David L. Robbins  
When life changes course



*Author and playwright David L. Robbins wrote for Boomer’s print edition from its early days. In bidding adieu to Boomer magazine, he reflects on saying goodbye and life transitions.*

In summer, I grow geraniums. Red, white, and pink puffball blooms, they last through heat and neglect, the two constants of my summer gardening.

Weeks ago, during a windy night, three leggy stems snapped off. They lay like little tragedies, pastel baby birds that had leaped too soon from the nest and could not fly. I gathered them up, not knowing what to do. I couldn’t throw these twisty limbs away – they’d worked too hard for me. They’d colored my isolation and insisted I care for them, a reminder how vital to me caring is.

I lack real gardening knowledge and skill. I pour potting soil into a pot, dig a hole, stick a plant in, then water the thing when it slumps. I don’t have a green thumb but am mostly all-thumbs. With these three torn-off boughs, I did the simplest thing: cut the bottoms off cleanly, then pushed them into the dirt. I gave them a drink and expected them to wither.

Instead, all three stems took root, stiffened, and made new flowers. Red, white, and pink. Despite myself, I make things grow. Therein lies a lesson.

## The Lesson of Farewell

Life, as it turns out, insists.

We cling, we living things. It may be our most consistent trait.

We don’t like saying goodbye. I won’t break into my usual song-and-dance of examples from my own life: my mom and dad, my dogs, my lovers. You have a big enough library of your own, of loved ones, pets, plants that stayed by you past all reason, that hung in there, perhaps even blossomed when they might otherwise have withered. You, yourself, may right now be someone else’s powerful example, and good for you.

The more years we pile on, the more experience we gain at saying goodbye. It doesn’t get easier, these sendoff waves and parting tears, but each farewell joins a growing list and doesn’t feel so prominent. We’ve let go of friends, some to death, many to circumstances. We’ve moved beyond marriages, jobs, cars, houses, the wrenching departure of four-legged friends; we’ve lost money and opportunity, maybe a trophy, maybe a memory. Too often, we’ve measured ourselves by what slips our grasp more than what we hold onto. That’s our nature. A hole will always feel deeper than a mound is high.

I’ve said my share of goodbyes. I’ve heard more than I like to recall. I might be in many different places in my life were it not for goodbyes. But here I am, and here we are.

## Saying Goodbye and Life Transitions

For a decade, I’ve been honored to write the back page for *Boomer’s* print magazine. This magazine has clung for a long time and admirably so. But, at last, the print magazine has succumbed to the realities of the times, moving to the new world of digital. I will no longer have this pot of soil for my stories, my Native Sons.

On the pages of *Boomer*, I’ve grown well into the second half of my life. As your correspondent, I’ve tried to be candid and heartfelt, to explore the courses of life where you and I might find commonalities. I’ve shared honestly, in the hope that I might inspire and, at my best, illuminate something in you from what light I can focus out of myself.

Fashioning these columns has invited me deeper into myself. For 10 years, I filled a basket from my own garden rows, to bring it back to you in 700 words. To a little surprise, I discovered that I’ve grown very little inside me that can be called distinct. In 60-plus essays, I’ve plumbed the depths of who I call “David,” to inevitably discover that you and I share much more than what separates us. In the end, my mother was yours, your father was mine, your loneliness rests on my shoulders like your laughter shakes them, my follies are yours and your children’s, the sound of your hearts sound like mine. I did not know how much we are alike, you and me, until I wrote for you for a long time in *Boomer* magazine.

I owe you thanks for reading and teaching me. I’ll cling somewhere else; no worries. I’ll sink more roots. It’s what we do, we living things. Goodbye.

*As long-time columnist for Boomer, David L. Robbins has reflected on a variety of topics. Besides saying goodbye and life transitions, he has examined fallen heroes, strong women, family relationships, freedom and patriotism, and so much more.*

*Robbins is also a best-selling author, founder of the James River Writers, co-founder of The Podium Foundation and creator of the Mighty Pen Project writing program for veterans and first responders.*



# Making Music Trivia Quiz & Crossword Puzzle

How deep is your musical knowledge?



Test your musical knowledge with this trivia quiz and the crossword puzzle. Go to [BoomerMagazine.com/music-trivia-crossword-puzzles](http://BoomerMagazine.com/music-trivia-crossword-puzzles) for an interactive version of the crossword.

## Trivia Quiz

**1. FILL IN THE BLANKS:** American singer Tiny Tim was known for playing the \_\_\_\_, a small guitar-like instrument that originated in \_\_\_\_.

**2. MATCHING:** Match the musical instrument with the country with which it is usually associated.

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| I. Sitar         | a. Latin America       |
| II. Balalaika    | b. India               |
| III. Steel drums | c. Australia           |
| IV. Didgeridoo   | d. Trinidad and Tobago |
| V. Castanets     | e. Russia              |
| VI. Marimba      | f. Spain               |

**3. PICK ONE:** Which of the following instruments is not associated with Appalachian bluegrass music?

- a. Banjo
- b. Dobro
- c. Harpsichord
- d. Washboard
- e. Mandolin
- f. Spoons

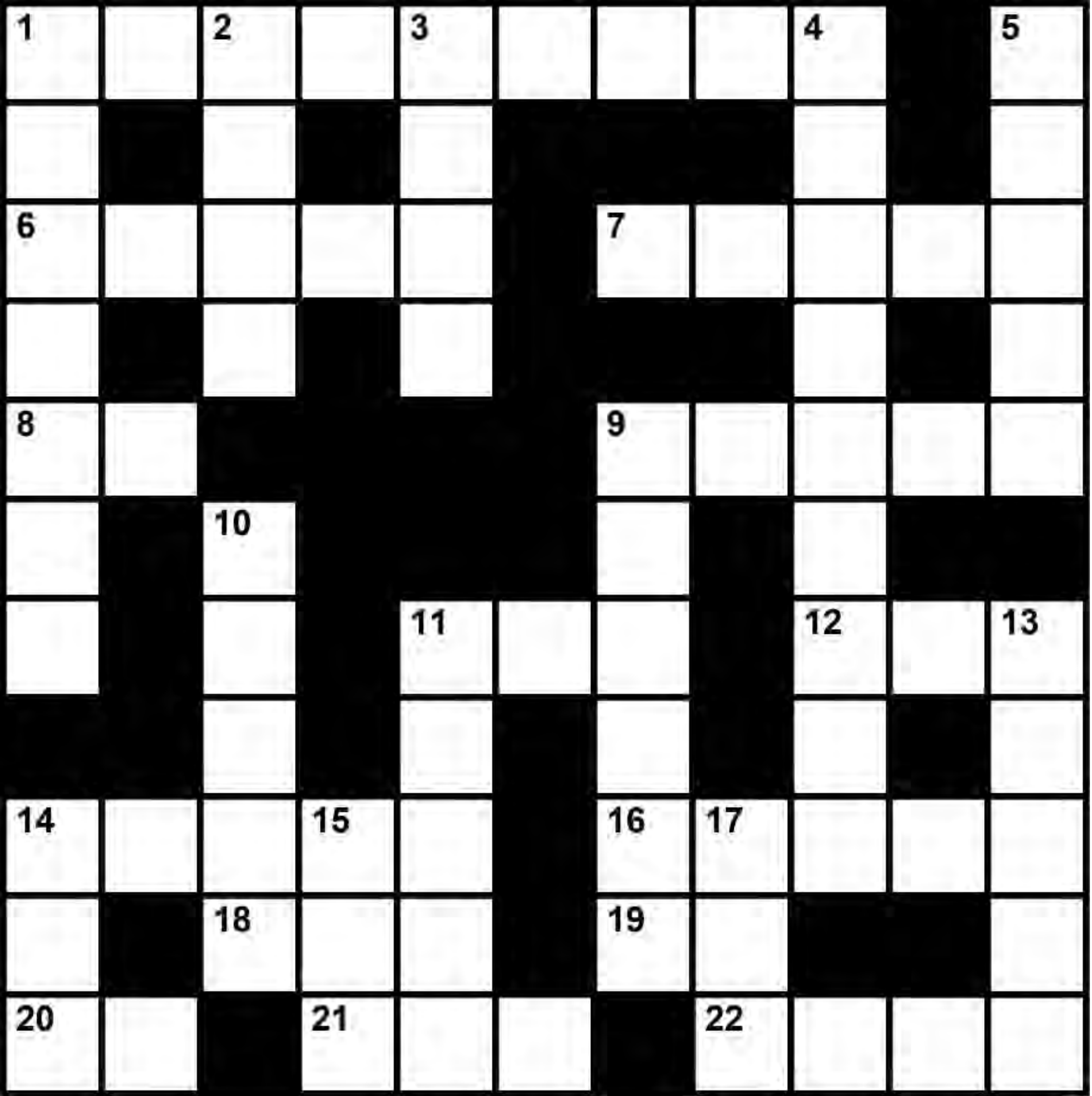
**4. TRUE OR FALSE:** The “MTV Unplugged” 1959 Martin D-18E acoustic guitar played by Kurt Cobain with the Grateful Dead sold for \$6 million at auction on June 20, 2020, breaking the record for the most expensive guitar ever sold on June 20, 2020.

**5. UNSCRAMBLE:** Richmond’s Byrd Theatre is known for what instrument?



Crossword Puzzle

Go to [BoomerMagazine.com/music-trivia-crossword-puzzles](http://BoomerMagazine.com/music-trivia-crossword-puzzles) for an interactive version of the crossword.



Across

- 1 Mouth organ
- 6 Country music singer, \_\_\_\_ Travis
- 7 Related to singing
- 8 Happening, as an event
- 9 Seductress in the “Odyssey” who played a harp or a lyre
- 11 Indy 500 racer
- 12 Hotel and motel relative
- 14 Sing softly
- 16 Group of nine musicians
- 18 Website address ending
- 19 Very large size of clothing, abbr.
- 20 Wall \_\_\_\_, abbr.
- 21 Frequent karaoke setting
- 22 The Carpenters and Sonny and Cher, for example

Down

- 1 Barbershop quartet specialty
- 2 Sound of a bell
- 3 Banded agate
- 4 Squeeze box
- 5 ’60s rebel singer, Bob \_\_\_\_
- 9 Nymph who inspired Pan’s pipes, in the Greek myth
- 10 Kid’s musical instrument
- 11 Drum or dance
- 13 Do, re and mi, etc.
- 14 D.J.’s stack
- 15 Christmas tree décor
- 17 No longer current

How do you think you did? Flip the page for answers.

Or go to our [online answers at BoomerMagazine.com/music\\_trivia\\_crossword\\_puzzles\\_answers](http://BoomerMagazine.com/music_trivia_crossword_puzzles_answers).



# Trivia Answers



## ANSWERS

How did you do on our music trivia & crossword puzzles?

1. The ukulele originated in Hawaii.
2. I. b. II. e. III. d. IV. c. V. f. VI. a.
3. c. The harpsichord is associated with Renaissance and Baroque music.
4. False – all of the information is true except that Kurt Cobain was a member of the rock band Nirvana.
5. Mighty Wurlitzer Organ.

## SCORING

**YOU ANSWERED ALL QUESTIONS CORRECTLY**

Hallelujah!

**YOU BOTCHED THE CROSSWORD & GOT 1-2 INCORRECT TRIVIA ANSWERS**

Keep the car windows rolled up.

**YOU MISSED A BUNCH**

Can you carry water in a bucket?

Try **more themed trivia puzzles** at [BoomerMagazine.com/arts-entertainment/fun-games!](http://BoomerMagazine.com/arts-entertainment/fun-games!)



# Name That Caption

Boomer features monthly caption contests like this. Visit [BoomerMagazine.com/contests](http://BoomerMagazine.com/contests) to enter or vote!

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We provide the cartoon, you give us the caption! Enter the “Name That Caption” contest by for your chance to win.

1. Frank DeGaetani for caption "This suggested alternate route to the office is a croc(k)."
2. Mary Lou for caption "It looked a lot easier in the Tarzan movies!"
3. Linda Skorackyj for caption "I KNEW ZIP-LINING WAS A BAD IDEA."