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Publisher’s Point

Family and Friends

With both Mother’s and Father’s Days, plus all the weddings, graduations, and celebrations that touch so many of us throughout May and June, we are reminded of family at every turn. I came from “clans” on both sides and always had relatives around me as I grew up in New England. I did not know that my environment was not the norm until I was in college.

Having grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins galore was something I took for granted. Now I realize what that loving childhood did for me. I never thought of myself as poor, although I was aware we were not rich. Wrong! We were rich beyond belief in caring families, looking out for one another. We had Sunday dinners with my mother’s clan, full of wit and laughter. Holidays with my father’s clan centered around endless food and games of cards and croquet. Cousins were plentiful enough to have our own softball team.

My dad loved to cook and made Boston baked beans every Saturday night and delivered servings to family and friends. It was a Happy Days kind of world.

Keeping people in our lives was ingrained and I retained both high school and college friends, probably filling some of the empty places left when I moved to the south, leaving all those Yankee relatives I still love, but see now mostly at funerals. I still visit with old school friends, vacationing with some when traveling. It’s true that real relationships pick up as if together yesterday, no matter how long a separation.

One such relationship that I have treasured since freshman days at George Washington University is with one of my first roommates, Nathalie Dupree. I had never known anyone like her. She was an energetic, interesting, fun and kind a person as I’d ever known; still is. We have adventures we still remember and happy memories, such as her buying my kid sister rings for every finger. My daughter’s name is Natalie; Nathalie forgives me for leaving out the H.

Nathalie became a famous chef and is known now as the Grand Dame of Charleston! She has authored 13 cookbooks, which made her world famous and brought her accolades galore. And she is getting ready to release her newest book. Stay tuned!

Years ago, I read some of her columns. I was struck by how poignant they were, and she has given me permission to share this avocation of hers with our readers. A Matter of Taste is my favorite, and is included on the next page.

If you are not familiar with Nathalie Dupree, Google her before you tell anyone. You’ll never again admit that you have not known her forever.
A special breakfast helps bring shattered family together again

They’d been divorced nearly 40 years when he telephoned their daughter, asking her to help him see his former wife together with their children. His second wife and her second husband were dead, and they were each alone.

Surprisingly, the mother agreed to the meeting, “for the sake of your children.” Her rancor at being left with three demanding children had cooled in the slow oven of time, and now it rarely flared, only sizzled.

He had suggested they have breakfast—his favorite meal—at his local diner. At age 82, he rises before dawn and eats before the sun is up. When he waits until 7 or 8 in the morning, it is a grave concession.

The mother, 75, still works three days a week in the church library. In her heart of hearts, the world would be a better place if everyone slept a bit later (at least until dawn), ate breakfast after the sunrise, and came gently into the world only after reading and praying.

The daughter knew that diner only too well, for that is where she met her father at barbaric hours of the morning for grits and eggs and bacon. They served cheap margarine and the waitresses parceled out the sugar and Sweet’N Low packets from their apron pockets, only upon request. There was always a crowd there, salesmen calling to each other across the red vinyl booths, always a din.

What kind of a meal, what kind of a place for them all to meet 40 years later? A place where they wouldn’t have to shout. Because if they started to shout only to be heard, would it continue, voices spiraling above them all with stifled anger of bygone years?

No, it had to be a place where the atmosphere would temper those feelings if that pot was uncovered, with no room for unspoken passions. And they had to serve butter, the bread had to be warm. The children, grown, terrified of the event, had to be able to leave without bolting, if the pain was too great.

It was agreed. They would meet at 9 at a small, elegant hotel. Mercifully, they were greeted expeditiously and seated in the rear of the room.

He ordered the same breakfast he always had. The mother was swept up by the occasion, the splendor of the room, the length of the menu. She vacillated, unsure of what would be the best, wanting to remember the best. The children ordered the safest. No crumbled croissants or unmanageable eggs for them.

Breakfast came. The bread was hot, the butter was real. It melted easily, as uncertain hands barely grasped knives to spread it. It was terrifying to them all to find that they were civilized, polite, that they liked each other.

“You do miss your husband?” he asked. “Yes,” she said, “he was good to me. And we had the church.” She paused, and asked shyly, “Do you miss your wife?”

“Yes,” he answered, “although she wasn’t herself for a long time. Your husband wasn’t either, was he?”

“No,” she said, “he didn’t know me for some time.”

They looked at each other from lowered eyes. The children faded, shadowed and didn’t know the people their parents had just become.

He said to her at last, “I see you still drink too much coffee.” She said, “Yes,” and laughed a small, delicate bell-like laugh, never heard before by the children. It surprised even herself. As she raised her hand to cover his mouth, her napkin fell to the carpet.

“I,” he said, “only drink one cup a day.” He stooped to retrieve her napkin. “You still have the most beautiful legs of any woman I have know,” he remarked, wiping the drops of his single cup of coffee from his smile.

“I’ve always liked your moustache,” she returned, watching as the napkin left the mouth she used to know. Everyone started talking at once, sharing memories, laughing, teasing the pot of emotions now bubbling like a good soup. They took pictures.

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“You did a good job with the children,” the father said. Turning to the children, she said, “God helped me. They are my jewels.”

They called for the check. “Next time let’s go to my favorite diner,” he said. “A bit earlier. I can’t afford this expensive restaurant again.”

She smiled and nodded her head as he took her arm, the children only moments behind them, dazed with the wonder of it all. They were a family. Maybe they always had been.

Nathalie Dupree is the author of fourteen cookbooks and syndicated columnist who, since 1986, has hosted hundreds of cooking shows on PBS, The Food Network, and the Learning Channel. Honored as the 2013 Woman of the Year from the French Master Chefs of America she is known for her understanding of Southern cooking and started the New Southern Cooking movement. Two of her books New Southern Cooking and Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking are on the 2017 Southern Living 100 best cookbooks of all time list.
**Maid For You offers big benefits of convenience & insurance**

Advises choosing a company, not an individual

By Christine Knapp

With the busy lives most lead today, keeping the house clean can quickly become an overwhelming task. For the last 30 years, Maid For You has allowed clients across Hampton Roads to focus on what they love to do—play with their kids, go to Busch Gardens, work on the yard, or even paperwork—rather than clean the house.

Dennis Thompson, the owner of Maid For You, finds great satisfaction in running a company that helps families and businesses free up time. He points out the big benefit of choosing a company for cleaning services versus hiring an individual. "Convenience and insurance," he says with pride. "With hiring a professional cleaning service like our Maid For You, there are definite advantages. We have over 30 trained staff members who can jump in and pick up a job if someone is out sick. We also have insurance, covering a wide range of any accidental damage that could potentially occur."

"On the other hand," Dennis points out, "if an individual cleans your house regularly, but his or her child is out sick, your house won't get cleaned that day. Additionally, if the individual was to accidentally break something in the home, or ruin your floors, that either comes out of your cleaner’s pocket, or you simply won’t be reimbursed for the damage."

Because Maid For You is independently-owned, it is able to offer flexibility to clients. Specific house or business cleanings can be set up on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis. A thorough walk-through is conducted prior to a cleaning, so all the client’s needs are established, and every request is met when service starts. Then, a customer profile is set up in the system, so that anyone cleaning can be aware of the client’s preferences, such as certain cleaning supplies to use or an item that must be cleaned in a specific way.

"Because customer satisfaction is number one," Dennis insists, "we pay attention to our clients’ needs. We conduct thorough background checks and drug screenings prior to hiring applicants onto our team, and each employee wears a uniform and drives a company car so that they can be easily recognizable to neighbors. We also train our employees in tricks of the trade—which I can’t share here," he smiles, "and inspectors follow up from time to time after cleaning services are completed to ensure they meet Maid For You standards. This keeps customers happy, and

some have been with me for over 20 years!"

In addition, comment cards are left for customers to complete after cleanings. All these steps help Dennis maintain his reputation for excellent customer service and satisfaction. He attributes this to the work ethic that was ingrained in him as a boy.

"Growing up on a tobacco farm, with eight of us kids, we spent a lot of time helping our parents. I think they may have had so many of us so that they’d have help on the farm!" Dennis quips.

This early principle carried over into Dennis’ former sales career as well, prior to launching his cleaning services’ business.

"I would spend hours in the car covering large territories," he recalls. "I was burnt out and had very little time for my family. Finally, I came home late one Thursday night and told my wife I just couldn’t do it anymore." That’s when Dennis began dreaming of owning his own company.

"They are so professional and do not miss a thing. They are also very accommodating and flexible if I have to change the day for my house cleaning."

—Debra Kwasny

He started by cleaning for neighbors and local businesses. Over the course of a few months, Dennis made door hangers and placed over 7,000 of them around local shops and neighborhoods, promoting his services. Once he built up his book of business, he combined it with an already established company called Maid For You, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Serving customers across Hampton Roads and beyond, Dennis and his team serve customers in Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Williamsburg, and go as far north as Henrico County and as far west as Smithfield, Courtland, and Franklin. His team even works a few days a week in Moyock, NC, just south of Chesapeake.

"We have some teams that cover specific territories so that other teams stay closer to home and cover more in a day that way without having to travel too far," Dennis describes. "This hopefully helps keep our employees happy, too!"

Though Dennis is primarily in a management role—overseeing day-to-day operations and managing staff—he is never afraid to get his hands dirty—literally!

"There were times when we were first getting started when I would have to jump in and help clean houses," he remembers. "If a team was failing behind schedule, I would step in and offer an extra set of hands. It’s teamwork."

Susan Hatter, the office manager in Virginia Beach, agrees with the teamwork philosophy.

"We’re more like a family," Susan says. "Dennis is considerate and understanding of people’s wants and needs. It doesn’t even feel like I’m going into work or a job every day. We all look out for each other."

Whether for home or business, Maid For You offers free estimates to anyone who calls and requests an appointment. They also provide move-in/move-out and construction cleaning.

Debra Kwasny is a satisfied client of Maid For You. She has tried other cleaning service companies in the past, but none who compare to Dennis’ tried-and-true business.

"They are so professional and do not miss a thing," Debra says. "They are also very accommodating and flexible if I have to change the day for my house cleaning."

Hiring a cleaning service is meant to brighten the customer’s day and free up time in one’s hectic schedule. The feeling that one gets when walking into an expertly-cleaned home or business is what Maid For You is all about.

"We clean for the customer as if they’d cleaned for themselves," Dennis smiles. "That’s the Maid For You promise."
Enable him to create amazing high quality images.

Experience in pre- and post-production of both still photographs and video, coupled with the latest equipment, enable him to create amazing high quality images.

**Up and Away**
By Terry Young

**Tracking construction progress by drone**

While real estate was one of the first fields to embrace aerial photography to capture a property from the air, there are many other ways that drones can be useful in the day-to-day world of business.

One of the fastest growing industries using drone photography is in the field of construction. Drones are used to monitor buildings during the construction process. This type of monitoring is becoming more common, growing by about 250 percent annually.

Using a drone to capture weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly photos and/or video is a great way to show progress over time. If the construction time line is long, and photos are taken every day or two from similar positions, drone footage can also be used to create time lapse videos of the project, from an empty lot to the finished building.

The appeal of using drones is simple. They are small and light, and in the right hands, safer than other methods previously used.

A drone can also get into places that an aerial photographer in a helicopter would have trouble reaching. If the construction site is surrounded by obstructions like tall buildings or cranes, a helicopter may not be able to get to it at all.

Using drones for this service has proven very useful and time-saving. It is a great way to keep investors, board members, and project managers up-to-date on the progress of the project.

Several things have to be considered when using aerial photos and video to promote a construction project. This is where an experienced, licensed and insured photographer can really make your construction projects stand out from the crowd.

Terry Young is an FAA licensed drone pilot and professional photographer and videographer. His 30 plus years of experience in pre- and post-production of both still photography and video, coupled with the latest equipment, enable him to create amazing high quality images.

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**Children First**
By Dr. Becky Adams

**Why Support Educators**
Teacher Appreciation Week takes place each May. This is a time when parents and community members can show their thanks for the importance of the people who help raise their children. While the gift cards and homemade pastries are certainly appreciated, we need to think about the long-term answers to the questions facing our current education system.

According to recent news reports, there have been strikes in West Virginia, South Carolina, Colorado, and California. Why would teachers and support personnel take to the streets on a school day? Perhaps they wanted to point out that this is a demanding job with low wages, and that many teachers are burdened with student debt from their own undergraduate education.

It often requires securing a second job to pay that debt. How a government or any other group spends its money sends a strong message about what they believe is important.

The budgets for public education are funded primarily from state and local taxes. A very small percentage comes from the federal government. When legislators annually vote on those budgets, education has to compete with many other necessities such as public safety, infrastructure, libraries, health and welfare, ever-changing technology, and economic development—services that citizens have grown to expect. Budgets are always very challenging. How a government or any other group spends its money sends a strong message about what they believe is important. A recent article about the Oklahoma state budget indicated that they spent five times more on incarceration than on education.

What about the student debt incurred by prospective teachers? Advertisements support the plan of completing the first two years of college at a local community college for about one-third of the cost of the last two years at a four-year state institution.

The present Virginia Teaching Scholarship Program is limited to those who are studying in the top five critical shortage disciplines; who are nominated by their institution, and agree to teach in school districts where a minimum of 50 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Some years ago, the state of Virginia had a loan forgiveness program that encouraged students in state universities and colleges to become teachers. A tuition scholarship was given to students who agreed to teach in a Virginia public school upon graduation. For each year they received such a scholarship, the student had to teach a year for loan forgiveness to take place. Such a program would certainly encourage students to enter the profession and not incur heavy debt.

Support for beginning teachers is critical. Short retention rates are typical throughout the country. An overwhelming number of demoralized teachers leave the profession in the first five years. All school systems should have a mentorship program, pairing a specially selected experienced teacher with each new teacher for the first three years.

Assistance is needed from legislators, school systems, and parents to provide answers to the challenges of our schools. By the year 2053, it is expected that 52 million students will be in United States schools. They are counting on excellent teachers to provide their education.

A career educator, Dr. Rebecca Adams has served as a teacher in grades two through graduate school, reading specialist, principal, and an educational foundation administrator. She was selected as Chesapeake’s First Citizen 2016 for her community service.

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I
t is 8:00 on a Monday morning and as on most days, Mark Taylor, owner of Landscape Plus, has been in the office for hours. The Administrative Coordinator has also been busy at her computer, in addition to manning the phones and greeting visitors with an energetic smile. Otherwise, the offices at this moment are empty and quiet. But this was not the situation just an hour earlier.

“We start our days early around here,” Mark explains, taking a sip of coffee. “On most mornings, I’m usually here at six. Our crews are in by seven for our morning huddle. We review the schedule for the entire day; we go over details, get everyone excited about their assignments for the day, and then send them out to the yards. The lawn mower blades are usually running by eight. Later, throughout the afternoon, our managers drive out to the yards, checking on our crews and speaking with our clients to make sure that they are completely satisfied with the job being done. The next day is Ground Hogs Day: we do the same thing all over again.”

“We all work endlessly and tirelessly, following up on every single job,” Administrative Coordinator Elayne Summerell adds with a grin. “If we’re laying down fertilizer, we don’t just open up a package, dump it on a client’s lawn or flower bed, and then leave. We talk to the client; ask if they’re pleased with the way the job is being done. We are one hundred percent committed to giving great customer service. Even when our managers are out checking up on our crews, we always have someone here in the office answering the phones. When our clients call, they know they will talk to a real person in the office—not to a computer.”

“Not only are we easy to work with, but we’re actually very easy to communicate with,” Mark observes. “Besides myself, we have three fantastic women as our office manager, sales manager, and operation manager. They pay attention to details; they are great communicators and they serve as the liaisons between our work crews and our clients. Sometimes in this line of work, a client will call the person they’ve hired to care for their lawn, and they’ll get him on his cell phone while he’s mowing someone else’s yard. That’s not how we operate at Landscape Plus. Our clients will always talk to a manager.”

This approach to customer service has obviously worked: Landscape Plus has enjoyed a growth of about 20 percent annually—evidence of which can be seen on Mark’s computer screen: it is a photograph of a veritable army of lawn crews—ten in total, each composed of up to five men—dressed in company uniforms, posing with the company’s fleet of mowers. Seven of these crews are lawn maintenance crews, and three are installation crews. “Our bread and butter—about half of our business—is commercial and residential lawn maintenance,” Mark explains. “The other half is landscape renovation and installation.”

The company’s growth prompted a recent move. “For years, our office was in Virginia Beach,” Mark says, “but now we are in the Greenbrier area. We’re very excited about this new location and how it will help us continue serving all of Southside Hampton Roads.”

As the owner of Landscape Plus, Mark often finds himself behind his desk or in a meeting, but he is no stranger to mowing and lawn work.

“Like a lot of kids, I earned money mowing lawns. You can’t get more American than cutting grass.”

—Mark Taylor

“Like a lot of kids, I earned money mowing lawns,” he recalls with a smile. “You can’t get more American than cutting grass. I was always entrepreneurial-minded and I liked being outdoors. Later, in high school, I worked in a garden center.”

After graduating from college in 2003, Mark worked as a finance manager, but he found few options for other jobs in the field. For a while, he sold insurance by day while working in restaurants by night. Eventually, he began working as a landscaper, opening Landscape Plus in 2006.

“If there is anything that needs to be done outside—whether we’re talking about someone’s yard or a business property—we can do the job,” Mark says. “We design landscapes, hardscapes and outdoor lighting; take care of drainage and irrigation issues; do pressure washing, mulching, spray fertilization and weed control—as well as lawn and bed upkeep. Say there are homeowners whose lawns are overgrown,” Mark continues. “They want their property to look good, but either they hate doing yard work, they’re physically unable to do it, or they have difficulty finding the time needed to do the work themselves. That’s where we come in.”

Mark maintains that Landscape Plus’s services are not only affordable but can also be something of a lifesaver for seniors. “Older folks are ready to pay in order to stay in their homes longer,” he points out. “Having a company like ours come out and do their yard work, allows them to continue living independently without the worries of outdoor upkeep.”

As the winter season passes, there is a growing demand for the services offered by Landscape Plus. “We have a saying in this business: ‘Spring is king,’” Mark declares. “With the warm weather, people start spending more time outside. As summer moves in, there are cookouts, kids’ birthday parties, weddings, visits from friends and family, Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day celebrations—and all of these tend to take place outside in backyards.”

“This is the perfect time of year for people to give us a shout-out about getting their yards ready for summer parties and cookouts—no matter where they live on the Southside,” Mark concludes. “On a beautiful summer weekend, being tied down to yard work is the last thing most of us want. There’s no better feeling than driving home on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening and seeing that all of the yard work for the week has been done. For a little bit of money, not only can people have beautiful yards, but they can also have their Saturdays back.”

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Lost in the Kitchen

For what seemed like an eternity after Rob was gone, each evening I would go through the same experience. I’d go home shortly after five and stand in the middle of the kitchen floor. I turned around slowly, looking for something. I didn’t know quite what it was that I was looking for. Everything felt different, and I kept looking for something that would feel the same.

The kitchen was the same, the sunroom hadn’t moved. But they felt empty. It seemed that I did not belong there any more. But I didn’t belong anywhere else, either. It was as if I had died and was visiting the place where I had lived.

I would try to think what to do next, or, rather, what to do in that very moment. Standing and turning slowly seemed ridiculous. I just didn’t know what else to do.

There is something comforting about the familiar, even the familiar that one does not like. Knowing what we are experiencing and what will likely follow has an advantage over not knowing what to do next, let alone what to expect.

It was not the same as having free time to use any way I wished. It was having the rest of my life free. That was what was dismaying.

The thought of freedom can be exhilarating. The actuality of freedom can be frightening.

I thought of the countries that had revolutions followed by years of hardship. I remembered newscasts reporting on how the average citizen soon wished for a return to the old, known system, however dreadful it had been. I understood how that could happen.

For years life had seemed to have too few hours to get everything done that needed doing. Now, life seemed to have endless hours. I wondered how I could fill even a small portion of those hours. Each moment felt like forever.

The house seemed so large during those first weeks alone. Much too large for just one person. I wondered how two people could seem like a crowd, compared to just one person.

Additional text from this excerpt is available on TheShopper.com
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2019 Gold Award Girl Scouts!

In order to receive this highest award in Girl Scouts, each awardee has dedicated more than 80 hours to a sustainable community service project. Ranging from raising awareness about human trafficking, or creating recycle programs for a greener world, to addressing the need for more mental health resources at our high schools, these projects make an impact on lives.

Maylea Beasley  Ashley Forbes  Nicole Monroe
Claire Belesimo  Frances Frederick  Nicole Nguyen
Savannah Bowers  Megan Gillespie  Suparnamaaya Prasad
Marielle Buchy  Shelby Guzman  Paula-Ann Robertson
Emma Cameron  Ariel Hafman  Kayla Roboski
Jenna Crumley  Kaylee Keegan  Amy Schleicher
Olivia Dayag  Samantha Kimmel  Ann Staskin
Isabella De Vita  Desmone Logan  Corryn Sunders
Briana Ferebee  Arianna Mackey  Katherine Welch

Visit www.gscoc.org to read about all of the 2019 Gold Award Girl Scout projects.

This month, consider visiting A Place for Girls, the headquarters program center for Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast, and enjoy the outdoors. Hike through their nature area, The Outback. Climb the observation tower that overlooks Bells Mill Creek and explore the tidal wetlands. Call for hours and details: 757-547-4405.

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Sometimes kids are raised right but just don't do right. Perhaps money runs through their hands like sand, or they abuse drugs or alcohol, or gamble out of control. What's a parent to do?

Sometimes parents will disinherit children with these problems. After all, their inheritance will be gone in just a few months, or worse still, the money will support their gambling, drug, or alcohol abuse. However, I have a different solution if you have a problem child.

You can leave an inheritance to a problem child in a way that is totally protected from them but can be used for them. Your gift can ensure that they have medical and dental care, food, and even a roof over their head when you are gone. Your gift can even be protected from their creditors or a divorce settlement.

It's possible to word your estate plan in such a way that the child will be rewarded if they stop their gambling or alcohol or drug abuse. Your gift could become an incentive for a lasting change in their behavior.

You can find out more about possible estate planning solutions that allow you to love and protect your adult child even after you are gone. Call now to reserve time with me to find out how.

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Chesapeake Sports Club
8th Annual Jamboree

There was a packed house for Chesapeake Sports Club’s 8th Annual Jamboree at the Chesapeake Conference Center. WTKR’s Barbara Ciara served as the mistress of ceremonies and the keynote speaker was Baseball Hall of Fame member, “Goose” Gossage. Great Bridge High School’s Katie Duke was honored as Coach of the Year, while Grassfield High School’s Morgan Murphy and Oscar Smith High School’s Cam’Ron Kelly were honored as the outstanding female and male athletes respectively. Glenn Hampton was recognized as the Robert G. “Buddy” Bagley Chesapeake Sports Club member of the year.
I’ve had prospective clients voice concerns about their abilities to update their own websites using a content management system. They are afraid that it will be too time consuming and difficult, especially for those who are not tech savvy.

This is a complete reversal from years ago when clients didn’t want to have to depend on a web designer every time they wanted some text, a photo, or a special offer changed on their site.

This is why we created our WebUpdate system, which has been used with ease for over 17 years by our clients, regardless of their technical abilities. We have had clients who could barely turn on a computer to being a total techy, and all of them use our WebUpdate system with complete confidence.

Most of them are beyond surprised at how easy it is to use. Our WebUpdate system really is as simple as copy, paste, and upload to add or change content. Clients love the control they have, and they don’t have to wait, or pay, to have changes made.

Our WebUpdate system really is as simple as copy, paste, and upload to add or change content. Clients love the control they have, and they don’t have to wait, or pay, to have changes made.

Website owners today are concerned about updating their own sites because they think it will be too complicated. This is not only the case with people who are using WordPress or similar programs to manage their site. Because WordPress was created to be everything to everyone, it can contain features which the owner will never use. This leads to a much more confusing interface.

However, our WebUpdate sites are custom created for each client, and when the site goes live, it contains only the features needed by that client.

This lack of bloat makes the site control panel much simpler and more intuitive to use. Our clients literally make changes, additions or corrections to their sites in seconds from anywhere.

This update ability is a great time saver, especially for a fast changing business; rather than having to call or send an email requesting a change, the client can just log in and make the change.

Another advantage to our WebUpdate system is that clients can see their visitor traffic, including where visitors came from, who came from a search engine, and even which search words they used. The clients can also keep an eye on the performance of their own keywords, and even compare their keywords to those on competitor sites. Having this information really puts full control in their hands.

If you have concerns with your web presence reaching your widest customer base, now is the time to look into our WebUpdate system sites. Not Open Source, they take advantage of advanced SEO, social, and responsive features to give your business the best competitive edge online.

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One of life’s lessons I have learned at the gym has to do with spotting. Spotting is defined as the act of supporting someone during a particular exercise, with an emphasis on allowing them to lift or push more than they could normally do safely. There are times when we are lifting a barbell, get stuck, and need more than just a presence. In those cases, the spotter keeps their hand beneath the barbell and lightly touches the bar. Just that touch encourages us to continue lifting. The spotter will keep their hand beneath the barbell in case we run out of energy—or, more importantly, if we cannot lift any more.

There are times in life when the weight of our problems are too heavy to carry alone. Those times might be when we lose a loved one or experience some other traumatic event. We need someone who will help us carry the load.

In life when we find ourselves facing a difficult situation that we feel is beyond our strength, it is wise to ask someone to be our spotter. Often the spotter’s presence and encouragement is all we need to get through a difficult and taxing time. We may not remember what was said, but we remember they were there. Their presence is beyond words. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness—rather it is knowing our limitations. The people who make a difference in our lives when we are trying to deal with a difficult situation are the ones who believe in us and help us use our own strength. They don’t take the weight away from us, but they touch it in a way that empowers us to lift. They help us use the strength and abilities that are within us.

We have all experienced times when what we are trying to lift is too heavy for us. It is then that the spotter grabs the barbell and we lift it together. We need more than encouragement and presence in those situations. We need to rely on the spotter’s strength as well as our own. There are times in life when the weight of our problems is too heavy to carry alone. Those times might be when we lose a loved one or experience some other traumatic event.

We need someone who will help us carry the load. There is a great analogy of a significant relationship in Hebrew Scripture. It compares a relationship with three strands of a rope. A strand by itself can easily be broken but when we wrap another strand around it, it is almost impossible to break. It is during times of trouble that we must use each other’s strength to face our hardships and challenges.

Dr. Austin has decades of experience dealing with relationships. He charges clients on a sliding scale according to their ability to pay. His first book, Creating Our Safe Place: Articles on Healthy Relationships, published in 2004, and his second book, Keeping It Safe, published in 2009 can be purchased through Amazon, publishamerica.com, and at the Parrish Book Store in Virginia Beach. He is also a sought-after speaker.

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“And there are those who have the truth within them, but they tell it not in words.”
— The Prophet, Gibran
One night while visiting Dean Flora and his family, we started talking about the San Blas Indians. He told me that on the island of Carti Tupile there was a need for a building that could serve as a school for 177 children, a church for 60 adults, and a medical clinic where teams of visiting doctors could see their patients. This was his dream. We started brainstorming and our excitement grew as we explored possibilities for constructing the building. I suggested having a youth work camp build it. It would be good for them to feel they were doing something important for others.

The purchase of the hammocks was quite interesting. They had to be bought with coconuts...

Sixteen youth would be chosen from the Atlantic Youth Fellowship—an area youth group I had formed that year. When word of the project got out, an Army Engineer from Fort Gulick volunteered to serve as Work Director, supervising the construction of the building. A registered nurse, also from Fort Gulick, volunteered to serve and was able to obtain medical supplies from the United States Army. The other staff members came from the other churches. I served as Camp Director. A thousand dollars was raised for the project, and other things, such as transportation to the islands by boat, were donated. The Commander of the Army provided the transportation as well as the men to operate the launch to and from the islands.

The question of where the youth would sleep while on the island was answered by Eladio Gracia. He arranged for the girl campers to sleep in the chief’s home and for the boys to sleep in the medicine man’s home. The campers would sleep in handmade hammocks from Columbia.

The purchase of the hammocks was quite interesting. They had to be bought with coconuts, which were worth a nickel each. Of the money that was raised for the camp, $98 was used to purchase coconuts which, in turn, were traded for hammocks.

We all have a story to tell. Do you need help telling yours?

The Shopper is pleased to announce that Dr. Bill Austin’s new book will be published this year by Press Pass Agency. This fascinating memoir recounts his experiences in the mid-1960s among the Kuna—a people living on an isolated island in the Caribbean whose culture is one of the most ancient on earth. Please enjoy the following excerpt from Coconuts for Hammocks.

Here’s an excerpt from Dr. Bill Austin’s forthcoming book, Coconuts for Hammocks.

Imagine how your story might read...

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Use the Bricks

A truth commonly accepted by writers is that you can’t wait for inspiration to come. You must, as said by novelist Jack London, “go after it with a club.” When a writer can’t think of anything to write about, it can be tempting to say, “I’ll try again tomorrow.” But if writers gave up whenever they felt daunted by a blinking cursor or a blank page, they’d spend considerably more time waiting than they would writing. The alternative is to write anyway, to force oneself to put words on the page. This doesn’t always result in quality work. So what makes poor writing better than no writing? Why should writers write when it’s hard, instead of waiting for when it’s easy?

There has to be a building block. Writing only in perfect circumstances is like building a house but refusing to use bricks because you’d rather use bars of gold. The average person does not find it easy to exercise, yet they push themselves to do so because of what they get in return. And the more often they do exercise—the more used to exercise their body becomes—the easier it becomes. Writing when it is hard to write makes it easier to write the next time and the next. It becomes a habit.

The goal is not to get it all perfect right away—it’s to keep moving.

Those dedicated to their craft learn to push through writer’s block, laziness, or outside distractions and write anyway. By doing this they find it is still possible to put words on the page. The goal is not to get it all perfect right away—it’s to keep moving. Not to wait, but to work. To go forward so it’s possible to come back and renovate, instead of having nothing to build on at all. Whether it’s a hobby you want to start, a project you need to finish, or a change that needs to be made, waiting for inspiration could be the dirt on the coffin of that goal. The most difficult things are often the most worthwhile; don’t let difficulty be the death of your goals. Grab your club, your bricks, and whatever else you need to excel, not only when it’s easy, but even when obstacles are standing in the way.

Breonna Loxley is an animal care technician at an animal shelter. She is an avid artist, writer, and animal-lover. She lives with her parents, a younger brother, two cats, and one dog.

The guest speaker, Brian Mitchell, former running back for the Washington Redskins, was the guest speaker.

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Chapter in U.S. Naval history, 75 years in the making. 

Kuwait, Battleship East. From the jungles of Luzon to the deserts of America.

It’s been called the last great battleship. Born of hard-fought lessons learned in bloody Pacific conflicts, it integrated emergent technology to fight a new enemy in the Cold War. It was resurrected for modern service in the Middle East. From the jungles of Luzon to the deserts of Norfolk, Battleship Wisconsin was part of America’s transition to a military superpower, forging a unique chapter in U.S. Naval history, 75 years in the making.

The story of the Wisconsin is the story of how America learned to win wars. So, when Nauticus on Norfolk’s downtown waterfront planned to celebrate its 75th anniversary, a simple slogan seemed most appropriate: “Their Stories, Our History.” Those who served on this vessel are now sharing their stories with the public.

To honor this battleship’s 75th birthday, Nauticus is hosting a year-long celebration with a series of diverse events and attractions that has something for everyone. Spaces of the ship which were previously restricted are opening, replete with all the trappings and equipment. Most amazingly of all, veterans who served on the ship during combat are coming forward to connect with future generations.

“This ship really belongs to all Americans,” Battleship Operations Manager Clayton Allen remarks. “It’s the history of us, and we ought to know the story.”

Battleship Wisconsin’s journey began at the height of World War II. Naval technology was improving by the day, forcing engineers to make quicker, more accurate vessels. Air superiority drove up the value of aircraft carriers as traditional battleships lost their prominence. Along came the Wisconsin, a new Naval vessel fresh off production that reflected the transitional feel of the moment. The U.S. Navy had cut off production of new battleships while the Wisconsin was finishing up. She barely survived the cut, making her the last battleship ever produced by America.

Ships were ravaged in battle so often that no one could predict how long a vessel would last. As dozens of ships met their doom in the waters around Okinawa, the Wisconsin valiantly held her own against a kamikaze onslaught. She left the Pacific with a collection of stars and medals.

After serving in Korea, the Wisconsin retired from combat and carried out training programs. Ronald Reagan’s famous 600-ship Navy to oppose the Soviet Union brought her back into action. Then came Desert Shield, thrusting the Wisconsin into battle once more.

She was a hodgepodge of old and new. Guns that pounded Japan immovably dominated her deck, so obsolete by the time of Desert Shield that retired veterans were called upon to explain them. Down below in mission control, computers were hurriedly installed alongside antique equipment. Paintings, sketches, and hidden gems of the past waited to be discovered by inquisitive young sailors. The result was a battleship with an identity all its own.

“Tis the history of us, and we ought to know the story.”

—Clayton Allen

By the mid-1990s, the Wisconsin was simply too old for effective use. She floundered in a Naval shipyard; her fate uncertain until the City of Norfolk offered to host her. In the early days, she was still technically U.S. Naval property, which meant no civilians inside. She was fully bequeathed to Nauticus at last in 2009. Since then, administrators have made impressive gains in allowing the public to see more and more.

On May 18 and 19, Battleship Wisconsin will unveil several new sections including the hospital, the barbershop, the library, and other spaces. Festivities will include recruit-style haircuts, musical entertainment, and a flag ceremony. Wisconsin veterans will be present to talk about combat operations. It’s an excellent opportunity for young people to encounter American history in a fun, upbeat atmosphere.

“If you’ve never seen the Wisconsin, this is the perfect time to visit.” PR Specialist Beth Bilderback notes. “So many great resources will be on hand to share information. If you saw her several years ago, it’s time for another visit to see how much the tour has grown. We’ve doubled the explorable space.”

General admission grants access to all public space (discounted on unveiling weekend to $7.50), with optional guided tours for an additional fee that illuminate an incredible wealth of knowledge. There’s even a room for limited mobility visitors to enjoy virtual tours. Guests who enjoy a challenge can book an escape room adventure in the Admiral’s cabin.

In July, Hampton Roads’ own Hurrah Players will perform the 1930s-themed musical production Dames at Sea on the fantail. September brings an innovative BBQ tasting event on the deck with refreshments, live music, and entertainment. For visitors who might enjoy a more low-key outing, the Wisconsin is currently open for general admission six days a week. Beginning May 27, it will be open seven days a week.

Battleship Wisconsin is operated by Nauticus, Norfolk’s maritime science museum. Visitors enjoy a wealth of educational exhibits, interactive programs, touchable marine life, and special events. Children relish the thrill of a scavenger hunt that takes them in every direction.

Nauticus and Sail Nauticus have become prominent advocates for helping underserved children gain access to STEM knowledge and participate in maritime activities. Summer sailing camps for children and adult sail outings provide funds to serve the underprivileged. Then there’s the annual bash known as Frisky on the Wisky, a sellout event that benefits the Sailing Center. July 22 will be special this year as Nauticus celebrates its 25th anniversary with a birthday party. Much like the Wisconsin, Nauticus has grown in recent years to include a broader spectrum of activities. First-time visitors to Nauticus are encouraged to relax and take their time.

“People often tell me they’ve been to Nauticus,” Clayton says with a smile. “Then I mention some of the amazing programs here, and they say they had no idea.” Beth explains that this is why the anniversary events are so valuable. “If you wonder what’s so special about the Wisconsin, come visit this year and find out!”

The Chief’s Mess aboard the Wisconsin
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FROM BATTLING A STROKE TO BACK ON THE WATER

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