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I could tell from the number of patients seen with allergic conjunctivitis that Spring arrived early – around the end of February. We always see our fair share of allergy eyes, but this is already shaping up to be a banner year. The spike in numbers of patients suffering from allergic conjunctivitis coincided with the appearance of pollen on our cars – which isn’t so surprising.

Those sensitive to allergen particles in the air may experience a rapid allergic response because receptor cells release histamines upon contact with the surface of the eye. The release of histamine causes itching, redness, tearing, swelling and irritation of the eyes.

Though rubbing itchy or irritated eyes may seem reasonable, doing so will cause the release of additional histamine – thereby increasing the itching and irritation. A far better solution is to wash your face and hands and apply a cool compress or cold washcloth to eyelids to calm the allergic response.

In addition, there are many over-the-counter allergy treatments and eye drops available. Select a product labeled as an “anti-histamine.” Avoid drops that claim to “get the red out” as they only address one symptom and will not help resolve an allergic response. Inflammation or redness is not a condition, but a symptom of an ongoing issue.

To resolve the itching component of an allergic response, histamine release must be inhibited. This can be accomplished with the use of an anti-histamine or mast cell stabilizer. These medications will help block the response of histamines and prevent further release of histamine. Allergy shots and oral anti-histamines may also help year round allergy sufferers.

If our mild winter and pollen covered vehicles are any indications - this might be one heck of an allergy season. Trying to avoid the pollen in Hampton Roads is like trying not to get wet when jumping in a pool, so focus on managing symptoms is important. Should you require assistance with seasonal allergies, schedule an appointment with your Primary Care Provider to discuss using anti-histamines. If your ocular symptoms are difficult to manage, be sure to schedule an appointment with your eye care professional for additional support.
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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 as 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 still remember and happy memories, such as her buying my kid sister rings for every finger. My daughter’s name and friends. It was a poignant they were, and she has given me permission to share this avocation of hers with our readers. 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.

The Shopper is a monthly, direct-mail, magazine serving 8 community editions in Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Southfield, Carrollton, and Virginia Beach in Virginia and communities in northeastern North Carolina. The Shopper has a circulation of at least 10,000 direct mailed in each zone, totaling over 80,000. Additional issues are placed in our advertisers’ stores and in professional offices in our circulation area. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily the opinion of this publication. ©2019
When the spouse who handles the finances dies first

The Wall Street Journal printed a great article on a subject close to our heart. Because of decades of experience, we are the preferred advisor to many widows.

Many marriages have a division of labor, with one spouse being the primary manager of the family finances. From the article:

“It’s common for surviving spouses who took a back seat on money matters to find themselves with an incomplete picture of their net worth or where the accounts are held.”

To prepare for this, married couples should take the following key steps:

- Hire an estate attorney to draft or update wills and other estate-planning documents.
- Hire a financial adviser both spouses like.
- Set up banking and other financial accounts a surviving spouse will need immediate access to in both spouses’ names or as “transferable on death” from one spouse to the other.
- Order a copy of Before I Go and Before I Go Notebook (available at Amazon).

A surviving spouse should:

- Order at least 15 copies of the death certificate. These will be needed to retile financial accounts and settle the estate.
- Contact the financial advisor, the estate attorney, and the accountant in that order.

Rather than making a long list of things to do during a terribly stressful time, the surviving spouse is going to be overwhelmed and should have a professional to lean on.

The financial advisor is the one individual the surviving spouse will have the closest relationship with. Taxes are handled once a year and estate plans should be reviewed every few years. Financial issues are ongoing, and conversations will be frequent.

If you don’t have an adviser already, you probably need to hire one; an advisor who understands the needs of the surviving spouse and will provide holistic advice and guidance.

Find an advisor you can feel comfortable with. A large percentage of widows end up firing advisers they inherit because they are not comfortable with their husband’s advisor.

Find a financial advisor who is a fiduciary, who is legally obligated to put your interests first. One who is willing to discuss your needs and who is not simply an investment manager.
A business’s name can make a big first impression on potential customers. As a case in point, consider Smiley’s Heating & Cooling. Many would assume that the company’s name and smiley-face logo have something to do with the way customers feel about the service it provides. While employees insist that this impression is 100 percent accurate, this company is actually named after its owner.

Larry Smiley started his company 33 years ago in Portsmouth. In February, he opened a second location in Virginia Beach. The new location in the Lynnhaven area will have six HVAC specialist technicians to complement the 14 already at the Portsmouth location. When thinking about the company’s growth, Larry and his dedicated staff can’t help but...well...smile.

“Our business philosophy is based on a strong belief in being fair, providing quality work, making our customers happy and putting smiles on their faces,” Larry insists. “We accomplish these goals by hiring quality people who do quality work.”

“One of the ways that we access our performance is to take multiple photographs of projects before the work begins and after it ends,” Larry continues “These pictures are sent to the office and reviewed by the entire team at our morning staff meetings. The team knows what management expects and they deliver!”

The company’s commitment to excellence is evident in the feedback that it receives from customers.

“We are proud of our high customer service ratings,” Larry declares. “Smiley’s received a 4.9 score from Google, a 4.8 rating from Facebook, an A+ grade from the Better Business Bureau, and a five-star ranking from Trane Comfort Specialist. In 2016, Smiley’s Heating & Cooling was the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year. According to Consumer Reports, Trane is consistently the industry leader in manufacturing HVAC units. In the very rare instance that we receive a low score from a customer, we make every effort to find out why we didn’t meet their expectations.

Our commitment to customer satisfaction is underscored by offering a money-back guarantee.”

“Our customers are happy because our employees are happy,” Larry believes. “We have a great group of experienced technicians and other staff members who enjoy what they do. Having a positive work environment is essential to the success of this company. Our newly constructed Portsmouth headquarters has a well-appointed, professionally designed kitchen, which is where we frequently have our staff meetings and relax during our downtimes. The upstairs recreation room has comfortable furniture facing a 72-inch flat-screen TV (a great venue for the team to watch sporting events such as the Super Bowl), a ping-pong table, two stepper machines and space for weight lifting.”

“We have a great group of experienced technicians and other staff members who enjoy what they do. Having a positive work environment is essential to the success of this company.”

—Larry Smiley

Smiley’s team is committed to helping their clients save money through routine maintenance checks on HVAC units.

“Homeowners should get their furnaces checked at the beginning of each heating and cooling season,” Larry points out.

“New heating and cooling systems are much more energy efficient than they used to be. Newer units provide energy efficiency that exceeds 96 percent. In other words, less than four percent of the energy generated goes unused. HVAC units 10 years or older could be candidates for replacement. Gas furnaces, particularly the heat exchangers, are more susceptible to the effects of wear and tear. Depending on their age, the efficiency of older units is 80 percent or less. Homeowners should not be paying for energy they don’t use. With a new energy-efficient unit, average monthly savings could be in the $100 to $200 range. If a customer is financing a more modern system, those monthly savings could be used to pay off the loan. Fewer carbon-dioxide emissions is another advantage found in newer HVAC units.”

“Replacing your ductwork is another way to reduce energy costs,” Larry adds. “Ductwork components expand and contract as they transport hot and cold air. Eventually, these movements cause the seams in the ductwork to leak air.”

Taylor Smiley, Larry’s daughter and Vice President of Operations, dispels one myth that is commonly accepted by many homeowners.

“A lot of people believe that they save energy by drastically adjusting the thermostat when they leave the house to go to work and then switching it back again when they return home. Actually, this practice increases energy bills, as the HVAC system works harder to achieve the desired temperature. It’s more cost-effective to leave the thermostat alone when leaving the house.”

“Smiley’s Heating & Cooling is passionate about providing great customer service experiences,” Larry insists. “In a way, we’re arrogant and humble at the same time. Our team is very proud of the high-quality service we provide our customers. On the other hand, our customer satisfaction guarantee keep us humble. When it comes to serving our clients, we know who’s the boss. We offer flexible hours and recognize that our clients may not be available to come home during a regular workday. Therefore, we plan service calls around their busy schedules.”

Larry recalls a bittersweet moment when someone called late on a sweltering, summer evening: “The husband said that their household air-conditioner stopped working and his wife was extremely ill. He contacted several other heating and air conditioning repair businesses, but no one had the time or technicians available to respond.”

As Larry continues, his eyes glisten and his voice quivers with emotion: “The next day, this loving husband called to inform the Smiley’s team that his wife died that night. He wanted to thank them for coming over when no one else would. He was grateful that Smiley’s made the waning moments of his spouse’s life cool and comfortable.”

“Customers come first at Smiley’s Heating & Cooling,” Larry concludes, “and we look forward to bringing this strong spirit of customer satisfaction to Virginia Beach area residents.”

“Customers come first at Smiley’s Heating & Cooling,” Larry concludes, “and we look forward to bringing this strong spirit of customer satisfaction to Virginia Beach area residents.”
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.

If the building is a large, multi-storey project, drones can be an excellent way of safely checking each floor from the outside as they are completed, rather than suspending a worker in a crane.

Using this approach is also much faster: as the drone moves around the building, it can shoot 4K hi-resolution video, which can then be played back and inspected from the comfort of an office.

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.
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.

Katie Duke, Great Bridge High School’s field hockey coach, was honored as Chesapeake High School Coach of the Year.

Morgan Murphy, softball player from Grassfield High School, was named Chesapeake High School Female Athlete of the Year.

Jackie and Al Davenport

Glenn Hampton, with his daughter Jaclyn and wife Becky

Dick Wright and Charlie Taylor

“Goose” Gossage with 2019 Jamboree presenting sponsor, Nathan Beck

From left: Adam Winkler, “Goose” Gossage, and Dennis Ellmer

The key barriers for children’s immunizations are related to the time it takes for insurance companies to cover immunizations once it has been recommended by the Centers for Disease Control. At times, Vaccines for Children program will need six month after a vaccine is covered by the CDC before it is available at the physician office. In addition, private insurers will often take longer and not all insurance companies will come on board at the same time, which may cause confusion for physicians.

Physicians may also hold back from giving a new vaccine because they don’t know if a particular insurer is covering the vaccine in question. And, at times, vaccines are administered and do not get covered by insurance, or when they are covered the insurance company will cover a cheaper vaccine. Typically, physicians must negotiate and enter into collaborative agreements with manufacturers in order to obtain vaccines at competitive prices just so that the vaccines they administer can break even with insurance payments.

As part of your care, you may encourage your primary care provider’s office to review your immunization history. Patients may also schedule physicals and be informed regarding their insurer’s coverage for physicals and immunizations.

Although the barriers for our children and adults to get immunized differ, most would agree that thousands of lives could be saved each year if we can increase the number of adults who receive routine immunizations. One third of adults ages 65 years and older did not receive the pneumonia vaccine. During the winter of 2018, 80,000 Americans died of the flu. Annually, 50,000 die of pneumonia.

The health care system is not set up to deliver preventative services and many adults don’t have regular check-ups. Many physicians who only care for adults are not accustomed to providing vaccines in their office. Primary care physicians are more likely to immunize their patients versus other providers, yet many adults only receive medical care from specialists.

One third of adults ages 65 years and older did not receive the pneumonia vaccine. During the winter of 2018, 80,000 Americans died of the flu. Annually, 50,000 die of pneumonia.
Managing Your Own Website

How difficult is it?

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 techie, 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 notably 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.

Terry Young is the founder and CEO of Internet Marketing and Design. Since 1997, his computer programming and graphic design knowledge have kept his company at the forefront of the latest technology in web development.

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H.E.R. Shelter 2019 Gala

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Peggy Matthews, H.E.R. Shelter co-chair of the event, and her husband, Howie

Hobbs Studio’s Photographer, Jeanie Hobbs, with her mother, Delores Hobbs

From left: Mayor Rick West, CEO of EdLogics, Thomas Chamberlain, and Chief Administrative Officer of Chesapeake Regional Healthcare, Robert Culpepper

The Shopper Editor Rob Lauer and Carey Whitley

Chesapeake Mayor Rick West and his wife, Vicky

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Nauticus Salutes Battleship Wisconsin
Year-long celebration honors historic ship’s 75th anniversary

By Candance Moore

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 Kuwait, Battleship Wisconsin witnessed America’s transition to a military superpower, forging a unique identity.

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 hotbed 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.

“This ship really belongs to all Americans. It’s 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 outtings provide funds to serve the underprivileged. Then there’s the annual bash known as Frisky on the Wisksky, 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!”
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Fantastic Lunch at Your Pie!

The Shopper team had a fantastic lunch at Your Pie’s newest location in Greenbrier.

From left: The smiling team from Your Pie – Mercedes, Nicole, and Ciara – are preparing our orders.

General Manager
Holly Vesey

From left: Office Manager Julie Burley, Senior Account Executive Martha Frugard, Account Executive Laura Seawell, Shopper Publisher Jean Loxley-Barnard, Editor Rob Lauer, Production Manager Karah Angeli, and Graphic Designer Jennifer Tolarchyk. The Shopper team thoroughly enjoying their lunch.

See these and other photos at Theshopper.com

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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.

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

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
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 extract from Coconuts for Hammocks.

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

Imagine how your story might read...

Coconuts for Hammocks

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, 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 started making tentative plans for the building’s construction. It would be 18 by 32 feet, with a thatched roof and walls of concrete blocks from Columbia and Panama. We also decided that it would be better to build the building as a cooperative effort with the San Blas Indians: they would construct the thatched roof while we erected the walls.

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...
CREATIVITY DISCOVERED IN HANDWRITING

What makes a person more creative than the general public? Creativity — the ability to produce something new and original — can be seen as early as a toddler’s scribbling.

Creativity makes reality.

The creative nature itself hangs on a few important qualities —

Openness: An open-spirited nature is shown by “loose” writing. Note that the strokes in the letters and the spaces between them are not close together. Circle letters (a, d, g, o, q) are well-rounded and the open e shows broad-mindedness.

Intuition allows the expression of the “little voice within.” Look for breaks between letters where they would not usually be found.

Imagination (both theoretical and practical): Upper loops bring inception to the thinking processes, while the lower loops set the cogs in motion to bring creativity to life.

Imagination is the spice of life.

Other creative traits (above) include the following:

Depth of feeling: Note the “heaviness” of the writing. This trait expresses itself in terms of color, tone, and diction.

Rhythm: Look at the even returning of the strokes to the baseline. Rhythm renders balance and order to creativity.

Thinking Processes: Creative persons employ various thinking methods, but cumulative thinking (rounded m, n, h) lends method to the creative process.

Fluidity: This trait enables the writer to express his talents with grace and accuracy. It enhances the verbal eloquence of artistic skills. Look at the “figure 8” g’s and t-bars flowing into the next letter.

Manual Dexterity: This trait enhances the desire to use one’s hands and feet in creative expression. Find the flat-topped r’s.

A creative person does not do things by accident; he or she is a directed person on a path down the road of life.

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 exercising 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.
**Relationships**  
**by Dr. Bill Austin**

**Need a Spot?**

“And there are those who have the truth within them, but they tell it not in words.”  
— The Prophet, Gibran

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.

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.

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**Monday**  
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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.

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.

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.

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.

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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**Need a Spot?**

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FROM BATTLING A STROKE TO BACK ON THE WATER

LifeWorks Rehab designed a custom recovery program that made sure he wouldn’t miss the boat. Look out, fish!
A trip to Freemason Abbey is more than a night out at a great restaurant—it’s an event to be remembered. The historic exposed-brick landmark on the corner of West Freemason and Boush Streets has been dazzling tourists and turning locals into regulars for 30 years. It sits in the center of downtown Norfolk’s modern amenities, steps away from the Chrysler Museum, MacArthur Center, Nauticus and more. Yet it’s also part of Norfolk’s historical sites tour, bringing together the best of old-world charm and contemporary dining.

Built as the Second Presbyterian Church in 1873 with vaulted ceilings and beautiful stained glass windows, the Abbey went through several incarnations before becoming one of Norfolk’s most famous eateries. In 1902 it was transformed into the First Church of Christ, Scientist, and then at mid-century became home to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows—a spiritual group proclaiming the virtues of friendship, love, and trust, and the belief that all of humanity was created as a single harmonious structure. They eventually forfeited the building. Without some intervention, the city would likely have torn it down.

In early 1988, the next evolution of Freemason Abbey began, as skilled craftsmen took a year to transform the 145-year-old house of worship into an unforgettable meet-and-eat, while retaining as much of the original material as possible. Real stained glass from the 19th century now looks down on a full bar, while dramatic wooden beams in the vaulted ceiling watch over diners at quiet second-story tables. With renovations complete, the restaurant opened in 1989.

The first menu introduced its now-legendary award winning she-crab soup. Each offering was crafted to give guests a posh meal accessible to casual diners. The unique atmosphere could best be described as casual, yet elegant.

Lori Maddux joined the restaurant as the general manager in 1997. “We hold this structure in very high respect,” Lori says. “It represents many great things about Norfolk’s history, and it’s still as beautiful as ever. All our decisions are driven by that respect.” Lori’s leadership helped propel the restaurant into becoming a local favorite. Now she serves as Executive General Manager over a team of more than 50. Along the way, she recruited General Manager Colleen Jowers and Executive Chef Robert Norfleet, hardworking employees who earned advancement opportunities as management prefers to promote from within.

Today, about 80 percent of the total staff is made up of long-term employees. This means the food is consistently prepared and served by an experienced team. Service is genuinely friendly and effortlessly efficient.

“Our culture definitely shows in our people. When we invest in them, they are loyal to us, and it trickles down to how guests are treated,” Lori explains. “We’ve been fortunate to build such a great team.”

That goodwill manifests itself in giving back to the community. Gift cards pour from the restaurant in support of worthy causes, such as auctions that benefit organizations like St. Matthew’s School, the Hebrew Academy of Tidewater and the Bra-ha-ha. A few other recipients of their philanthropy are A Taste of Chesapeake, a fund raiser for the Chesapeake Care Clinic, and different community charities in the area.

“We have high standards when it comes to food and service, and our employees are really proud of that fact. They really enjoy working here! Their devotion shows in the way they treat our guests.”

—Lori Maddux, Executive General Manager

To ensure continued success, Freemason Abbey proactively engages guests to hear their feedback. Every comment from a guest is valued as the leadership team plans for the future. On rare occasions when something goes wrong, the restaurant works to make it right—but Lori is pleased to report that compliments remain the strong majority.

“We want to be a restaurant that everyone in Norfolk is proud of,” she says. “It’s what drives us. When locals are showing off their city to visitors, we want Freemason Abbey to be part of that conversation.”

In support of so many locals who consistently dine there, the restaurant has unveiled a Dedicated Diner program. It allows regular patrons to earn points for each visit. The points can be spent directly on future meals. Like everything else at Freemason Abbey, the program is generous, transparent, and simple.

Ken and Judy Fischer of Chesapeake are regulars at Freemason Abbey, and have been dining at the restaurant since it opened. “Freemason has the best salads,” Judy says. “I usually order the salmon or shrimp salad and they are cooked to perfection. The she-crab soup is wonderful too.” For his part, Ken loves the specials of the day and the desserts. They always recommend Freemason Abbey to their friends because of the broad range of excellent choices on the menu.

“We have high standards when it comes to food and service.” Lori notes. “And our employees are really proud of that fact. They really enjoy working here! Their devotion shows in the way they treat our guests, and in how long they’ve been at Freemason. It’s really a fun place to work.”

Monday features half-price wines, that would perhaps pair nicely with the seafood fantasy dish, or the melt-in-your-mouth stuffed pork chop. On Tuesday nights, the she-crab soup gets special pricing. Scott Hitter is another regular. “I come here all the time,” he says. “I’ve been treated like family since the first time I walked in, so I come back for stellar service. The wild game specials on Friday nights are always creative and delicious,” he adds. Whether it’s alligator, buffalo, kangaroo or rabbit, each dish has been expertly prepared. Every week is a spontaneous treat as the restaurant searches for new discoveries.

Locals are often delighted to find an assortment of Norfolk draft beers to enjoy. Half-sandwich combos allow for mixing and matching. Club sandwiches piled high with ham and bacon lend themselves to a cool bite of coleslaw. On chilly days, nothing beats a French dip with a steamy cup of soup.

While casual diners are always welcome, Freemason has come to be the restaurant of choice for rehearsal dinners, anniversaries, promotion celebrations, holiday parties and small business meetings. Parties of up to 50 are invited to make reservations. “We’re here to be as friendly and accommodating as we can,” Lori smiles. “That was the spirit behind this building from the start, and we’re happy to keep it that way.”

With its delicious food and friendly service, Freemason Abbey has always been a gathering place of fellowship and friendship in one form or another, and that tradition continues today for all who cross its threshold.
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SATURDAY MAY 4
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SATURDAY, MAY 4
Springfest In Afton Square | 9 am - 3 pm

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Meet & Greet (Fish Fry)
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6 pm | The Edmonds Center
SATURDAY, MAY 18
9 am - 8 pm | Day-long activities for the entire family.
SUNDAY, MAY 19
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2 - 6 pm | Truxtun Field
For full calendar, visit: facebook.com/Truxtun-100-year-Reunion

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