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## Northside RUC Food Pantry

operates out of Ginter Park United Methodist Church, St. Thomas Episcopal Church and St. Paul Catholic. Volunteers at these faith-based ministries provide food for those without it in what may be the most essential act of kindness that one human being can bestow on another. And while corporate food sellers made record profits in recent quarters by raising prices, many folks found it impossible to put enough food on the table for their families, and so they turned to the Food Pantry.

*continued on page 10*

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## TABLE of CONTENTS

- 4 DIVERSIONS These Are a Few Of My Favorite Things**  
To combat the self-pity I occasionally like to revel in, I've been practicing gratitude. I'm taking the time to be more present and celebrating the little things that make life sweeter.
- 6 MONUMENT REMOVAL A.P. Hill Coming Down**  
In the not-too-distant future, the last statue still standing in Richmond of a man who betrayed his country and fought to uphold the institution of slavery will finally come down and join many of his bronzen co-Confederates at the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia.
- 7 CITY BEAT November**  
Free Parking Eliminated on Saturdays, Scottish Rite Temple Sold, Arthur Ashe Mural Vandalized, Central Virginia Waste Management Authority
- 8 PRESERVATION A New Use For Thirteen Acres**  
For more than a decade now the building that sits behind Holton Elementary School has been in a state of ever-rapid decline. So what should the city do with this architecturally and historically significant building?
- 10 COVER Cover Northside RVA Food Pantry**  
Food. The most basic of all human needs. Without it we perish. The United States is the wealthiest nation on the planet, and yet one in every seven Americans goes to bed hungry each night, not knowing where their next meal is coming from. Many of them are children. Fortunately there are groups like the Northside RVA Food Pantry that ensure nourishment for all.
- 14 HIDDEN HISTORIES November: the Most Frightening Month**  
Halloween may mark October as scary, but by far our most terrifying month is November.
- 16 BRIEFS November Briefs**  
Christmas on MacArthur Returns December 10, 5th Annual Northside Art Sale, Concert Ballet of Virginia's Nutcracker 46th Season, Jo Kennedy's Latest Chapbook
- 17 FROM THE ARCHIVES Christmas Magic On MacArthur Avenue**  
This was from Christmas on MacArthur held 17 years ago.
- 18 BOOK REVIEW The Murder of a Teenaged Bride**  
I was captivated last year when I read Maggie O'Farrell's book, "Hamnet," a fictional account of the short life of William Shakespeare's son. Now she is out with another story from the same time period: "The Marriage Portrait."

## NORTH OF THE JAMES

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## DIVERSIONS

# These Are a Few Of My Favorite Things

by FAYERUZ REGAN

**H**APPINESS IS LIKE good health. You never think about it when you're in the midst of it, but as soon as it's gone, it's all you can think about.

To combat the self-pity I occasionally like to revel in, I've been practicing gratitude. I'm taking the time to be more present and celebrating the little things that make life sweeter.

Last year around Thanksgiving, I wrote a piece for NORTH of the JAMES about a few of my favorite things in Richmond. So in the spirit of gratitude, I'll make it a November tradition to list the things in RVA that I'm grateful for.

### The Foods!

I could live off the tuna tartare tacos at East Coast Provisions, the dirty chai at The Smoky Mug, the Greek street fries at The Greek Taverna, and bacon maple doughnuts at Sugar Shack.

### Hotel Greene

I may never star in a Wes Anderson film, but I can have an immersive experience at Hotel Greene. From the bell hop uniforms and vintage suitcases to the faded wallpaper and secret peepholes, it's a reverential nod to the indie director.

Even those unfamiliar with Wes Anderson will be seduced by the cocktails and mini golf course that winds through the bowels of this historic hotel, which is rumored to be haunted. From Turkish baths to a hotel bedroom with a ringing phone, you've never seen thirteen holes like these.

### Lee's Famous Recipe Chicken

Of all the places in Virginia that Lee's could have planted their flag, they chose Richmond. The next closest location is in South Carolina. Lee's understands spice, and their zesty chicken wings and potato wedges will have you coming back for more.



From left; Jacklyn Baldwin, Sarah Nicholas, and Fayeruz Regan at Brambly Park.

### RVA Fashion Week

Did you know that Richmond hosts a fashion week every spring and fall? Many who have recently discovered it are blown away by the bold designers building a reputation in the region. The week-long event features a different experience every night. This year's standout was SneakerFest, with "sneakerheads" snatching up collectibles and limited-edition kicks.

But no matter what, the week culminates in a jaw-dropping fashion show that will make you want to revitalize your closet, and brag about all that creative energy flowing out of Richmond.

### Lebanese Food Festival

There may be some bellyaching about "woke culture," but as a Middle Easterner, I am celebrating how it's helped us. It's hard to believe that people used to think it was clever to joke that I was a terrorist, and await a polite laugh from me. I even used to cut my first name in half, going by Faye just to minimize my "otherness."

But these days? Arabs are loud and proud. We go by our birth names and can eat hummus with reckless abandon, now that overpriced tubs are sold at Whole Foods. And The Lebanese Food Festival is more than just incredible food. There's music, dancing, performances, and most importantly, a sense of community. It's a celebration of culture that feels like family.

Get the frozen spinach pies and meat pies to go. They defrost beautifully and come in handy long after the

weekend is over.


### Brambly Park

Brambly Park reminds me of George Seurat's most famous painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* – I promise that the online image will jog your memory. In the painting, people are out en masse enjoying the beautiful weather – a woman dressed in black with a black parasol is the focal point. It's a place to see and be seen.

Brambly Park feels the same way. It's sprawling, and unlike a restaurant, where we are sequestered to a small slice of real estate, we are free to roam. If you reserve a picnic table with friends, you are still free to play bocce ball, dance in front of the stage, lay a blanket down for a picnic, or lounge on an Adirondack chair in the shade. It's a park, but one that delivers beer and truffle fries.

### The Mary Munford Playground

I know Soar 360 (formerly Arc Park) is considered the gold standard for Richmond playgrounds, but anyone who has been to Mary Munford might beg to differ. Like Germany, which truly has the best playgrounds in the world, Mary Munford features towering wooden structures, tunnels, multiple slides, swings, a wooden suspension bridge and little painted houses.

There's an adjacent non-wooden playground as well, which challenges kids with balance, climbing, and plenty of contraptions to keep them dizzy. 

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# MONUMENT REMOVAL

## A.P. Hill Coming Down

by **CHARLES MCGUIGAN**

**I**N THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT future, the last statue still standing in Richmond of a man who betrayed his country and fought to uphold the institution of slavery will finally come down and join many of his

bronzen co-Confederates at the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia in Jackson Ward. The statue stands in a rotary across from Linwood Holton Elementary School where the majority of students are Black. And that rotary makes the intersection of Hermitage Road and Laburnum Avenue among the most dangerous in Richmond.

When we die most of us are buried just one time. That wasn't the case though for Confederate General Ambrose Powell Hill. To date he's been buried on three separate occasions. And fairly soon he'll be re-interred once again.

It all started back in 1865 with the fall of Petersburg. On April 2, just seven days before Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Union troops broke through the Confederate lines and during the melee that followed a Union soldier shot Hill. The single bullet severed the general's left thumb, plunged through his chest, and exited above his right shoulder blade. He died almost instantly. Interesting to note: Hill, a week before he was killed, said he had no desire to live to see the collapse of the Confederacy. A dying wish, if ever there was one.

Hill was hastily buried in a family graveyard outside of Richmond on the south bank of the James River just off Cherokee Road. Here's the funny thing: he was buried standing up, something he had requested well before his death.

After moldering in the earth for two years, gravediggers grabbed their spades, shovels and mattocks, dug him up, then carted him over to Hollywood Cemetery where he was interred in among other Confederate officers.

Then, in 1891, Lewis Ginter, who had served as a Confederate major, spearheaded the relocation of Hill's remains once again. This time Hill was buried at the juncture of Hermitage Road and Laburnum Avenue near the neighbor-



*Statue of A.P. Hill at the intersection of Hermitage and Laburnum Avenues.*

hoods Ginter was at the time just laying out. By then there wasn't much left of Hill, just a few bones and some tattered cloth. On top of the burial mound Ginter had a statue of Hill erected.

Like the hundreds of other Confederate memorials that cropped up across the country, primarily in the South, the A.P. Hill statue was erected at the dawn of the Jim Crow era that would see the lynching of more than 3,000 Black men, and the terrorizing of Black communities across the country by white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camelia.

Hill's scant remains will be re-interred at Fairview Cemetery in Culpeper County, making it the fourth time the dead Confederate will have been buried.

And thanks to a recent ruling by Judge David Eugene Cheek, Sr., the city is free to relocate the statue to the Black History Museum where it will be rightly interpreted for the first time in its history.

Says 3rd District Councilwoman Ann-Frances Lambert: "I am extremely happy about his decision and, barring an appeal, I hope the administration moves forward with the removal expeditiously so that we can make the intersection of Laburnum and Hermitage safe for children. Making this intersection safe has always been my top priority." **N9**

# Monthly Update

## With Third District Council-woman Ann-Frances Lambert

by BRIGETTE KELLY

CITY COUNCIL & 3RD DISTRICT MEETINGS

F

**FINANCE MEETING:**

Thursday, November 17 at 1 p.m.

**Public Safety Meeting:**

Tuesday, November 22 at 12 p.m.

**Land Use, Housing, and Transportation Meeting:**

Tuesday, November 22 at 1:30 p.m.

**Government Operations Meeting:**

Wednesday, November 23 at 2 p.m.



Ann-Frances Lambert

ners, comes weeks after videos showed two people defacing the mural nearly a year after the vandalism took place.

### FREE PARKING ELIMINATED ON SATURDAYS

A two-hour time limit will be imposed on the following roads on Saturdays:

- North Arthur Ashe Boulevard between West Broad Street and West Moore Street
- Belvidere Street to the Interstate 95 interchange
- Leigh Street to Franklin Street

This new rule is intended to make it easier for drivers to find street parking and visit local businesses.

### SCOTTISH RITE TEMPLE

The old Scottish Rite Temple has been sold and will soon be the new Virginia Reparatory Center for Arts and Education, where it will host the nonprofit's Children's Theatre. The property will also host theatre camps and workshops for kids.

Virginia Reparatory plans to use the dining facility for special events such as themed character meals for families.

### ARTHUR ASHE MURAL

Two Richmond residents are suing the white supremacist group accused of vandalizing the Arthur Ashe mural in Battery park, claiming this was a violation of their civil rights and led them and their children to lose sleep and avoid the park.

The federal civil lawsuit, filed in the Eastern District of Virginia on behalf of the residents by the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and part-

### CENTRAL VIRGINIA WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

CVWMA's residential recycling program is the largest in Virginia, serving 275,000 households in nine jurisdictions. Recycling is collected twice per month by CVWMA's contractors. Visit CVWMA's website for these self-service options:

- Find out if CVWMA serves your home
- Look up your recycling day
- Request a recycling collection schedule
- Sign up for recycling day email reminders
- Order a new recycling cart or bin

Collection begins at 7 a.m. and ends at 7 p.m. If your bin is missed by collectors, report the missed collection to CVWMA at (804) 340-0900.

### SALVATION ARMY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Salvation Army needs volunteers from the Richmond Community for this holiday season. Volunteer opportunities include bell ringing, sorting gifts, and hosting a virtual red kettle. For more information, visit [salvationarmypotomac.org](http://salvationarmypotomac.org).

### NEW CHIEF OF POLICE

With the resignation of Police Chief Gerald Smith, Major Rick Edwards begins his transition into taking over the role. **NJ**



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## PRESERVATION

# A New Use For Thirteen Acres

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**F**OR MORE THAN A DECADE now the building that sits behind Holton Elementary School has been in a state of ever-rapid decline. Eight years after the elementary school opened, the building, commonly called Thirteen Acres, was put on a back burner, and time and the elements have taken their toll.

One of the oldest structures in the Hermitage Road Historic District (HRHD), it is now ringed in six-foot high hurricane.

Thirteen Acres, a brick farmhouse, was built in 1885, making it the second oldest house among the forty-or-so homes that make up the HRHD. It's a handsome structure, featuring a broad wrap-around porch, wide eaves supported by decorative dentils, four chimneys, and a hipped roof of slate.



Thirteen Acres

Way back in 1967, the house and its accompanying thirteen acres (the land now occupied by Holton Elementary School) was sold to the City of Richmond for \$475,000 by the Virginia Methodist Home for the Aged, which operated its facility there. Richmond Public Schools (RPS), at that time, planned to build an elementary school there, but there was fierce opposition from the adjoining neighborhoods. They argued that the location was too close to the dense traffic along Laburnum and Hermitage, and children might be hit by speeding cars. Which, incidentally, is still a concern today.

For the next four years, the old house served as a school for children with special needs. Then, from 1973 until 1978 the building became home to the RPS community relations department. In 1978, RPS proposed



Photo of Thirteen Acres

using the site as a residential school for adolescents. The surrounding communities—Rosedale, Bellevue, Ginter Park—were vehemently opposed to the proposal, but two years later Thirteen Acres opened a five-day residential program for emotionally disabled students, ranging in age from six to twelve. It continued as a residential school until 2007, eight years after Holton Elementary School first opened its doors.

Another note of interest: during the Second World War, Thirteen Acres was home to one of the largest victory gardens in Richmond. That victory garden continued producing vegetables for the full duration of the war.

Since the time RPS vacated the property, the building has fallen into a state of disrepair.

So what should the city do with this old building?

There have been a number of proposals about what to do with the old Thirteen Acres building.

More than ten years ago former Holton Elementary School Principal David Hudson suggested the old Thirteen Acres building be used as an ancillary structure for classrooms to accommodate the burgeoning student population at the elementary school. "We put together a proposal to get it as a school for humanities during the regular school day," David told me. "And then to use it for the

extended, after-school programs in the afternoons."

Third District Councilwoman Ann-Frances Lambert said recently, "I really like the idea of about it being used for after-school program."

Kenya Gibson, Third District School Board representative, definitely wants the building preserved and put to use. "The property has been sitting vacant for over a decade, so first and foremost it's time to do something," she said. "As for my preference. I went to architecture school so I'm always going to sit on the side of preserving a building with historic value like Thirteen Acres. So I really hope that whatever happens, the building itself can be preserved. The ideal use is something that really complements the activities that are happening in the school. It's been over a decade, it's time to do something, and it's important to preserve the historic fabric of our community."

And the following, in a letter to the School Board, came from Robert L. Balster, president of the Hermitage Road Historic District Association: "Leave and repurpose for an appropriate use . . . or relocate to front on Hermitage Road . . . This would create a suitable location in the northwest corner of the current school property and create an attractive residence after restoration and improvement of the building." **NJ**



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# NORTHSIDE RVA FOOD PANTRY

"FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD..."

## FOOD. THE MOST BASIC OF ALL HUMAN NEEDS.

Without it we perish. The United States is the wealthiest nation on the planet, and yet one in every seven Americans goes to bed hungry each night, not knowing where their next meal is coming from. And many of them are children. Still, some major grocery store chains this past year recorded record-high quarterly profits. Corporate greed does not feed; it steals food from the mouths of babies. Fortunately there are groups like the Northside RVA Food Pantry that ensure nourishment for all. Made up of three churches—Ginter Park United Methodist, St. Thomas Episcopal and Saint Paul Catholic—this consortium was formed about five years ago, and recently I paid a visit to the folks at Ginter Park United Methodist.

Every Wednesday morning, rain or shine, wind or snow, volunteers at Ginter Park United Methodist Church assemble in the Food Pantry and begin loading grocery bags with food, and then it's out to the parking lot where cars drive up from ten till noon and accept these bags that will help feed families.

On a warm autumn Wednesday morning just past eleven I arrive to watch these volunteers deliver food to the cars that line up in the parking lot. I speak briefly with two of them—Sam Wilkinson and Laurie Follmer, Northsiders both. He's been volunteering fifteen years; she's been at it for two years.

In the basement of the church, I meet up with two volunteers who are working in the Food Pantry, filling brown paper bags with spaghetti, and cans of corn, tomato sauce and tuna fish, along with sundry items from bar soap to toilet paper. There are mounds of sacks filled with sweet potatoes in one corner, a tier of peanut butter in another corner, and a freezer filled with large plastic packets of frozen ocean perch filets.

Kimberly, though not a member of the congregation, has been volunteering here for seven years; Daniel Perry just started here a month ago. "I am getting something out of helping others," says Daniel. "I also come here as well to get products when I run out of stuff so I know it's not just the homeless who are in need; it's everybody now. What



*Volunteers at the Food Bank toting bags of food for families.*

they're doing here is a God-sent lesson."

In a nearby office, I join the man who serves as director of this church's food pantry, which may be the oldest of its kind in the city.

It all started back in 1972 with a small closet in the church. Shelves were lined with canned goods and dry goods, and anyone in need

could come and select whatever they desired.

"Our sexton handled it to begin with, and it was for people who would show up who needed food," Horace Ford tells me. "When I first started working here as a volunteer fifteen years ago on a good day we had 25 clients. Now we serve 150 households."

A core group of 18 volunteers work at this food pantry, unloading trucks, stacking goods in the pantry, bagging the groceries and later distributing them in the parking lot.

Much of the food at the pantry comes from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through FeedMore. A truck load

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN  
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO



Last minute check of the bags and their contents.

of food had arrived earlier in the day. “The food over by the window and the fish we got came in today,” says Horace. In that shipment, the pantry received 25 cases of ocean perch, each case containing 20 bags of six to eight filets of frozen fish. That’s where the orange mesh bags with sweet potatoes also came from.

“We get a USDA delivery from

FeedMore the second Wednesday of every month,” Horace says. “We used to get more than we get now.” A couple years ago the amount of USDA donated food was cut in half. “So there was less food available,” says Horace. “What we’ve had to do is buy more food and we use FeedMore for most of our purchases.

Those purchases are extremely rea-

sonable. For instance a case of peanut butter containing 12 jars costs \$1.17, and a case of canned tuna fish was just 68 cents.

Some of the food is donated. “River Road United Methodist Church in the West End has been very good to us,” says Horace. “They bring us food on a regular basis, they’ve also contributed money to us, and then several of their members volunteer



Horace Ford, director of GPUMC Food Pantry, flanked by a stack of peanut butter.

here as well.”

And the freshest of all the foods the pantry offers to its clients comes from the church’s next door neighbor. “We also pick up produce from Shalom Farms that they donate, and that’s been a big help to us,” Horace tells me. “This gives us the opportunity to provide fresh vege-

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tables, which is greatly appreciated by our clients.”

So throughout the spring and summer months, fresh vegetables—from lettuce and spinach to tomatoes and cucumbers—end up in the grocery bags packed at the Food Pantry. Even now Shalom Farms is able to donate some leaf products and peppers, though that will wind down in the next couple weeks.

Included in the weekly bags of food are various toiletries, and these are not donated items, though you wonder why corporate entities like CVS or Walgreens aren't lining up to offer these products to this pantry. “We have to purchase toilet tissue and soap, and we give that as well,” says Horace. “We buy soap from a Dollar Tree and the toilet tissue we get from Rutherford Supply.”

Horace, who spent most of his professional life in procurement with the State of Virginia, is always looking for new pathways to expand



Grocery bags packed with food and toiletries.

the scope of the pantry, and novel means of obtaining funds to keep it all going.

“For the past few years we've gotten some grants from our denomination, both from the conference level and the district level,” he says. “So we are not sure those grants will be available this year. We've got to be a little inventive on how we are going to get the money this time.



Peanut butter and sweet potatoes.

I've got to make a presentation to the church council next week and suggest that we may need to put this in the church budget and fund it that way. I'm guessing we'll need between twelve and fourteen thousand dollars.”

Horace considers the Food Pantry and the impalpable way it affects all volunteers, himself included.

“People will come to us and they are very appreciative,” he says. “And

it lands in your heart that you are able to help them.”

He tells me about two sisters who had been coming to the pantry for a good while now. Not long ago only one of the women appeared on a Wednesday morning. When Horace asked her where her sister was, she said, “Well, she got a job so she doesn't need to come any more.”

“It was nice that we were able to tie

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Volunteer conversing with a client.


her over for a bit," says Horace.

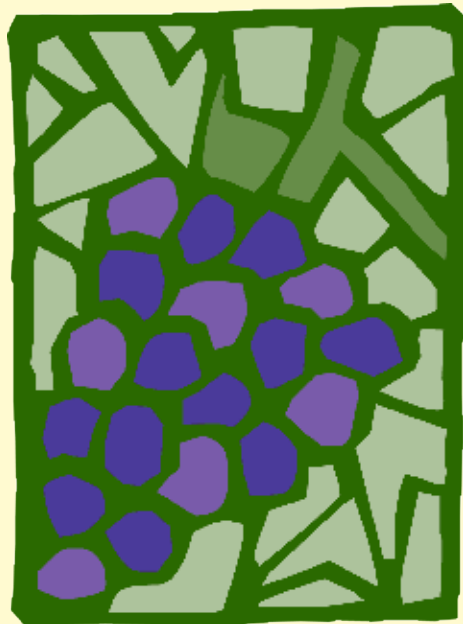
And then he mentions Jesus Christ and his ministry here on Earth.

"If you follow His footsteps then that's the main thing you do," he says. "You take care of other people. That's the mission of the church. It's nice to get together and have a community, but the church is not set up to be a social club, it's set up to serve. That's what I think is important."

The pandemic has heightened the needs of those who were already living on the economic edge. "It's gotten worse with COVID and climate change has affected things," says Horace. "I read just recently what is happening in some areas of Africa where there is such a drought that kids are dying. One woman was having to decide which child she fed and that's because of climate change, not caused by them, but caused by industrialized countries like the United States. It shouldn't be that way. We're supposed to be a wealthy nation, so why can't we help our brothers and sisters all over the world?"

And then Horace Ford says this: "We've been doing it for fifty years, and I think it will go on forever."

If you're interested in volunteering or supporting the Northside RVA Food Pantry please visit <https://ginterparkumc.org/northside-rva-food-pantry-partnership> 



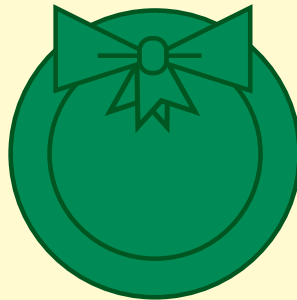
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# November: The Most Frightening Month

by JACK R. JOHNSON

**H**ALLOWEEN MAY mark October as scary, but by far our most terrifying month is November. Come that first Tuesday, the fate of our nation's Democracy can hang by a thread; and this upcoming election is no different.

According to a recent study by the Brookings Institution, about one in five Americans support strong men "authoritarian" rule. They also support political violence with 30% of Republicans, 17% of Independents, and 11% of Democrats agreeing that they might have to resort to violence in order to "save" our country. Just last week, in a classic case of stochastic terrorism, Nancy Pelosi's husband, Paul Pelosi was bludgeoned with a hammer by an addled Trump supporter. He's still in the hospital.

At the local level, death threats are being made against election administrators. The Today show recently reported up to 30% of election officials surveyed saying they are concerned for their safety. A 64-year-old Iowa man was arrested earlier this month for threatening to kill election officials in Arizona's Maricopa County —where former President Donald Trump lost by about 10,000 votes. According to CNBC the man left a voicemail that said, "When we come to lynch your stupid lying Commie [expletive], you'll remember that you lied on the [expletive] Bible, you piece of [expletive]. You're gonna die, you piece of [expletive]. We're going to hang you. We're going to hang you."

Worse, some states are considering laws that would bypass the long-established institutions for certifying the vote-count and give partisan legislatures the authority to determine which slate of electors will represent them in the Electoral College.

We've been here before, and it's dangerous territory for any Democracy. Especially ours.

As an example of how badly things can go, take the election of 1876, perhaps one of the most conten-

tious elections in our nation's history. Like today, our country was deeply divided. The Civil War had officially ended in 1865, but the Southern states were angry and resentful of Northern troops occupying their land. More importantly, many white Southerners rejected and feared the voting rights of the newly emancipated free men. Like today, questions of electoral integrity hounded the process. The Southern states, used the threat of violence by organizations like the Knights of the White Camilia, the White League and the Klu Klux Klan to intimidate and suppress the black vote. Even with the presence of Northern troops, incidents like the New Orleans Race Riot of 1866 or the Colfax Massacre of 1872 meant freedmen were often casting their votes in an oppressive and deadly environment.

Republicans managed to maintain control of the national polity until the early 1870s, when an economic depression and political scandals like the Whiskey Ring tainted their popularity. By 1876, the Democrats thought they had a shot and a national win. Both the Democratic presidential candidate, Samuel Tilden, and the Republican, Rutherford Hayes were fairly conventional politicians for their time, but the polarized party apparatus on either side sought to demonize the opposing candidate. Tilden's opponents painted him as a diseased drunkard who planned to pay off the former Confederacy's debts; Hayes's enemies claimed he had stolen money from his brothers in arms during the war.

Although Tilden won the popular vote, there were wide allegations of electoral fraud, election violence, and other disfranchisement of predominately-Republican Black voters. After a first count of votes, Tilden had won 184 electoral votes to Hayes's 165, with 20 votes from four states unresolved. In Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina, both parties reported their candidate to have won the state. Meanwhile, in Oregon, where Hayes had won the popular vote, the Democratic governor claimed one of the state's three Republican electors was ineligible



because he was employed by the postal service. (Federal employees are not allowed to serve as members of the Electoral College.) As a result, the state submitted two competing certificates of the final electoral vote tally, one signed by the Democratic governor that showed two votes for Hayes and one for Tilden, and another signed by the secretary of state that showed three votes for Hayes.

Like Trump's "Stop the Steal" calling for a march on the Capitol on January 6th, Henry Watterson, a journalist and Democratic member of the Kentucky House of Representatives, used his platform to call for a "peaceful" army of 100,000 men to march on Washington unless Tilden was declared the winner. As Mark Twain once remarked, history doesn't repeat itself, but sometimes it rhymes.

Finally, an informal, "back-room" deal was struck to resolve the contested votes: the Compromise of 1877. The Democrats would concede the 20 electoral votes to Hayes, resulting in a 185-184 victory; in return, the Republicans agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South, marking the end of Reconstruction. Amid fear of assassination, Hayes was sworn in during a secret ceremony the next day.

For the newly freed Black population, the cost of this compromise was enormous. A second Civil War was avoided by essentially forsaking the gains in civil rights for Black freed

men across the South. Nearly another century would pass before Blacks began to operate with the same level of freedom and rights that they had directly after the Civil War's end.

In many Southern states, active voter suppression and tactics to intimidate minority voters never really went away. Indeed, as of 2021, in Florida, Georgia, and Texas there are new voter suppression laws and tactics being enacted. There are also new and ridiculously punitive penalties for minor infractions. In Arizona, for example, this year an election worker was sentenced to 30 days in jail for merely mailing in mail-in ballots for four other individuals because they didn't have access to a mail box (the prosecutor wanted a year in jail). Election officials in Yuma County confirmed that the ballots were legitimate and the mail-ballot envelopes were signed by qualified voters, so they were counted, but the worker was nevertheless sentenced to jail time. The judge explained that he felt the worker wasn't sufficiently contrite.

As the Brookings Institution notes, if democracy fails in America, it will not be because a majority of Americans demand a non-democratic form of government. It will be because a deluded minority seizes strategic positions within the system in order to subvert it. The horror of Halloween is mild by comparison.

■

GRAPHIC BY CATHERINE MCGUIGAN



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**BRIEFS**

# Christmas on MacArthur Returns December 10 from 10am-2pm

**A**FTER A TWO-YEAR hiatus, due to the pandemic, Christmas on MacArthur is back from 10 am till 2 pm on Saturday, December 10. This annual holiday celebration benefits Toys-for-Tots, so please drop off new unwrapped toys to collection boxes that will soon be available at locally owned Northside businesses. Or bring a toy the day of the event.

A full family-fun day featuring kid-friendly activities, bagpipers, street vendors selling handmade arts and crafts, and a visit with St. Nick who will listens to all your Christmas wishes. Plus: some of Richmond's finest female vocalists—Laura Ann Singh, Elana Lisa and Evy Watts—accompanied by guitarists Jerad Romero and Dave Schieferstein, will be singing your favorite Holiday carols.

This Northside tradition is made possible by the Bellevue Merchants Association, the Bellevue Civic Association, Linwood Holton Elementary, and NORTH of the JAMES, which has been a proud sponsor of this event since its inception.



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*St. Nick with one of his elves at a Christmas on MacArthur past.*

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All the artists will be there at different times throughout the day so you can speak with them and ask questions about their creations. Everyone is welcome to this event. Great way to you get an early start on your Christmas shopping.

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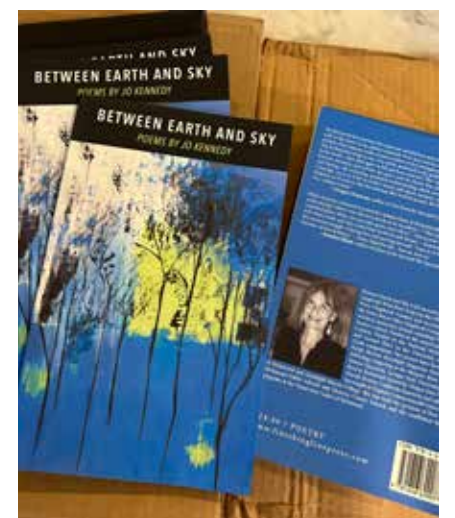
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**JO KENNEDY'S  
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Finishing Line Press recently published Jo Kennedy's latest collection, "Between Earth and Sky". Excavating memory, dream and imagination, poet Jo Kennedy, in her second chapbook, grapples with the universal question of the human journey—what does it mean to live, to love and, finally, to let go of "the world we are adrift in."

Jo's poems have appeared in Hawaii Pacific Review, Kansas Quarterly, Georgia State University Review, and other publications. The book is available for ordering online at [finishinglinepress.com](http://finishinglinepress.com). Price is \$14.99 + \$3.49 shipping. It can also be ordered directly from Finishing Line Press, P.O. Box 1626, Georgetown, Kentucky 40324. 



*Photo by Scott Elmquist.*



# Christmas Magic On MacArthur Avenue

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

January 2006

**K**AITLYN OVERMAN, age 4, dropped seven gifts into the Sgt. Santa box at Dot's Back Inn, which made her eligible to win one of two bikes purchased by Bob Kocher, owner of Once Upon A Vine, and one of the organizers of the first annual Christmas on MacArthur. As fate would have it, Kaitlyn won one of the bikes a week later on Christmas Eve at the time of the drawing.

Now, Kaitlyn's grand-mother, Barbara Clark, is a waitress at Dot's Back Inn, and knew full well that Santa Claus was planning to put a bicycle under the tree for her granddaughter that very night. So, Barbara and her husband, David, explained to Kaitlyn that come Christmas morning she wouldn't be needing a second bike. Kaitlyn decided to give the bike to someone who really needed it.

Barbara walked over to Once Upon A Vine, picked up the bike and pushed it back up MacArthur Avenue to the restaurant where she leaned it in a corner. In the early afternoon, as Barbara hovered around tables, taking orders, delivering lunches and drinks, she couldn't help but notice that a man kept eyeing the bike, going over to it, admiring it. "I know a boy who would love that bike," the man told her.

As it turned out the man was a Big Brother and the child he mentors is a ten-year old boy by the name Lucas.

"Well, if Lucas can get here before five o'clock, the bike's his," Barbara said.

At quarter till five an old Chevrolet pulled up in front of Dot's Back Inn. Lucas and his mother, Pam, entered the restaurant and picked up the bike. And Lucas brought his old bike as a gift to Kaitlyn.

Remembering the events, Barbara told me that there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Even the



cooks—Jamie and Mike—were tearing up. "It was quite a Christmas Eve," said Barbara. And it wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for the kindness of a little girl and her grandparents, and Christmas on MacArthur.

Christmas on MacArthur held December 17 from noon to 4 p.m. was a booming success. Hundreds strolled along the Avenue throughout the day. A fire truck, courtesy of Richmond Fire Station # 16 on Chamberlayne, was on hand, and kids got a chance to sit in the driver's seat and pose with real firefighters to the general clicking of digital cameras.

Santa Claus made a two-hour visit, and the kids swarmed round him, then climbed up on his lap as he tilted his head and pricked up his ears listening carefully and nodding to their Christmas wish lists. He handed out small toys and sweets to every child who visited him.

Amy Henderson and The Orderlies, harmonizing perfectly, entertained the crowds with scores of original tunes and popular covers along with a couple of car-

ols. Local artists displayed their wares alongside Rich's Stitches in the parking lot of Once Upon A Vine.

Stir Crazy offered warm, seasonal beverages—hot cocoa and hot cider, and Carytown Books allowed kids to decorate their own holiday cookies and then consume them. In the kid's book room parent's read to groups of enthralled children. Three kids who entered a contest to draw a likeness of Santa Claus each won a \$25 gift certificate to Carytown Books.

Every shop on Bellevue collected new, unwrapped toys and by the end of the day more than two large pickup truckloads of toys were delivered to Sgt. Santa just in time for Christmas. Everyone who donated a toy was, of course, eligible to register to win a bike. And one of the bikes that was given away added more than a little magic to Christmas on MacArthur.

The event, which was sponsored by the Shops on MacArthur and North of the James magazine, is destined to become an annual event.

PHOTOS BY JOHN MACLELLAN

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## BOOK REVIEW

# The Murder of a Teenaged Bride

by **FRAN WITHROW**

**WAS CAPTIVATED LAST**

year when I read Maggie O'Farrell's book, "Hamnet," a fictional account of the short life of William Shakespeare's son. Now she is out with another story from the same time period: "The Marriage Portrait."

"The Marriage Portrait" centers around another tragically short life: that of Lucrezia de' Medici (1545-1561). O'Farrell states in a historical note that Lucrezia was fifteen years old when she left her home in Florence, Italy to begin life as the wife of Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara. She died less than a year later. Though she was officially declared dead of natural causes, rumors persisted that she had been murdered by her husband.

Even though I knew the ending, I was transfixed by this novel. O'Farrell's writing is just so supremely good. Lucrezia narrates her own story, and I felt great sympathy for her plight as a victim of her time period and its expectations for daughters of powerful men.

Lucrezia de' Medici is the fifth child of Cosimo de' Medici, wealthy ruler of Florence, and right off the bat she is different from her siblings. She doesn't want to sit quietly, learning her lessons. She is fascinated by birds and trees. She touches the tiger her father keeps in a zoo in the lower regions of his palazzo without injury. She can draw and paint with remarkable skill.

But she is a girl, and girls of that time period are expected to marry at the whim of their fathers, who seek to use their daughters to strengthen alliances and cement their power. This is the fate that awaits Lucrezia.

When Lucrezia's older sister, Maria, dies before she can wed the Duke of Ferrara, Lucrezia is offered in her stead. At first, her new husband seems kind and patient with his very young bride, but as the weeks go by, Lucrezia discovers that Alfonso has

a dark and sinister side. Aside from his cruelty, Lucrezia begins to realize she is but a pretty puppet for her husband, and, more importantly, the means for him to continue his dynasty.

O'Farrell's writing style is exquisite: her sentences flow seamlessly one after the other, a delight to read. Details of Renaissance life are vividly recreated and effortlessly become part of the story. O'Farrell's description of how Lucrezia is dressed for her wedding and for her marriage portrait are especially fascinating.

O'Farrell skillfully moves back and forth between the days in 1561 when Lucrezia realizes her husband means to kill her, and her 1545 birth and upbringing in Florence. As her past and present begin to merge, the reader can't help but wish there is some way out for this young teenager who just wants to paint pictures.

Despite the fact that I knew her murder was looming, I emitted a squeak of surprise as I turned the last few pages. O'Farrell cleverly throws in a plot twist at the very end that I never saw coming. It is an ingenious closing to this remarkable book. I hope she returns to this fascinating time period with another novel soon. I'll be waiting eagerly. **NRJ**

*"The Marriage Portrait"*

By Maggie O'Farrell

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