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mother and daughter, know a thing or two about uphill battles where every inch of gained ground costs dearly. Each in her way has combatted ignorance and intolerance, and outright judgment, sometimes by those who claim never to judge anyone. Dogged determination has kept the pair moving ever upward toward the summit of a mountain that at times seemed unattainable. Victory, now, seems close at hand. *continued on page 14*

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BRIEFS

Ginter Park Library Reopens



Kerry Phillips, Yusuf Brown and Natalie Draper.

After seven long months, the Ginter Park Public Library is scheduled to reopen in mid-March. The library, which has been an integral part of the Northside community for decades, has been completely renovated at a cost of about \$1 million dollars. And the results are amazing.

“They basically overhauled the whole building,” says Kerry Phillips, branch manager. “We’ve got a new generator, new lighting, new electrical work and some new windows, and the bathrooms are much larger.”

And although the building’s footprint is the same, there is considerably more space. “They turned the carport (which adjoins the building) into nice meeting room,” Kerry says. “It’s going to be the largest meeting room in the system, outside of the Main Library.”

“The completely reconfigured the restrooms over to one side, put in a janitor’s closet, a data room, a children’s

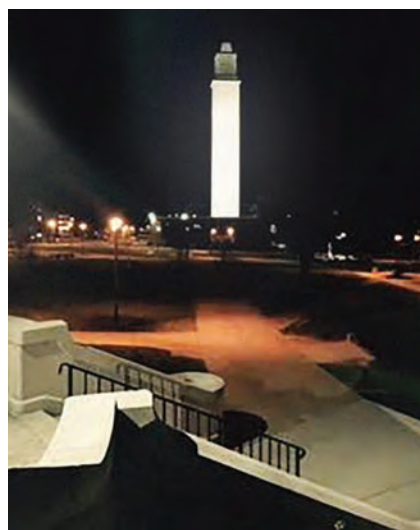
office and a storage area,” adds Natalie Draper, circulation supervisor. “And all the furniture is new and all the carpet is new.” Blinds and a film were applied to some of the south-facing windows. “The sun bleached the book spines and we were blinded by the light in the afternoon,” says Natalie.

“We have much better data access and outlets,” says Yusuf Brown, library assistant. “We have more computers for adults and children.”

In the new meeting room there will be a Monday night fitness program and a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program that uses Legos, among many other programs, including the ever-popular Story Time that will begin this April, every Tuesday and Thursday.

“I’m ready to get back seeing our patrons for one thing,” says Kerry Phillips. “I miss the variety of people we have here.”

Illuminating Vann Memorial Chapel At VUU



Bells for Peace.

Richmond’s nighttime skyline now has a grandly illuminated member that can be seen far and wide. Bells for Peace, an organization founded by Dianne Watkins in 2004, recently presented Virginia Union University with a full lighting of the Vann Memorial Tower of the Belgian Friendship Building. The gift comes through a partnership between Bells for Peace and the Musco Electric Company of Iowa, the late Dr. Allix B. James, and the Art Deco Society of Virginia. Now VUU will be visible to the entire greater Richmond community, night and day. People traveling from Maine to Florida along I-95 will also be able to see VUU’s beacon for education and peace.

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Binford Students Getting The Word Out About Homeless Animals







Binford students drawing.

Students at Binford Middle School are learning that academic subjects extend beyond the walls of the classroom and flow into the community and the world at large. Through a partnership with Richmond Animal League, students are lending their voices to local animals without a voice.

This student-led initiative began small and ended with a major impact on the school and the Richmond community. It all started with a persuasive writing assignment that took hold of Binford's new arts integrated curriculum. The school embraced the concept in all forms. While English classes wrote essays and produced public service announcements, business classes created business models and marketing information. The entire student body participated in a STOP and DRAW, when each student paused for an hour or so and created a pet portrait of a cat or a dog up for adoption through the Richmond Animal League. All of that artwork is currently on display at Binford. 

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BOOK REVIEW

The Brilliance of Bryson

by FRAN WITHROW

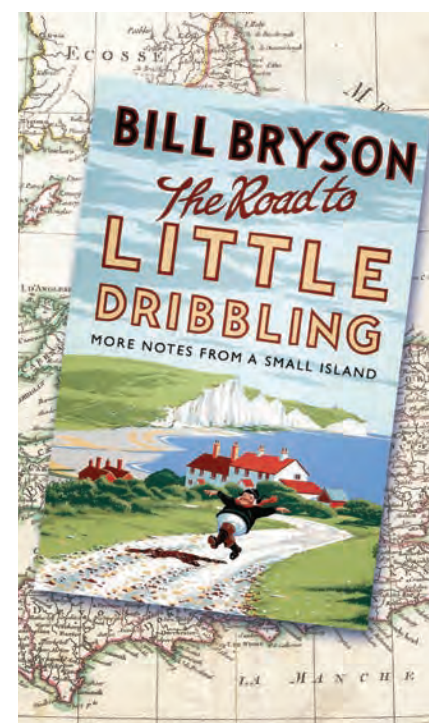
IF I HAD TO LEAVE MY HOUSE in a hurry and could only take a few of my books, I would definitely grab my Bill Bryson collection. If your only exposure to Bryson is the recent, bland "A Walk in the Woods" movie based on his book by the same name, don't write him off. You won't be sorry.

I have been eagerly awaiting his newest book for months, and it does not disappoint. Bryson (who was born in Iowa but lives in Britain) has written on a variety of subjects, including history, grammar, and science, but he was initially known as a travel writer. His first book about journeying through Britain was published twenty years ago. "Notes from a Small Island" captured his observations about his adopted country. In his latest offering, "The Road to Little Dribbling," Bryson revisits this land again.

One of Bryson's charms is his ability to write unabashedly about himself. "The Road to Little Dribbling" opens with a hysterical description of how he was hit on the head by an automatic parking barrier in France, and how that incident led to the idea for this book. It's hard to imagine correlating a parking barrier with a trek on "The Bryson Line" (his name for the British route from Bognor Regis at the southernmost point to Cape Wrath at the northernmost tip), but Bryson does it superbly.

I tend to be a speed reader, but Bryson forces me to slow down, rereading passages frequently, marveling at his exquisite writing, the clever turns of phrase, and his droll and cynical sense of humor. His books usually have me rolling on the floor, hooting happily and clutching my stomach. (Be sure to read his description of what a whelk tastes like and why he's not a beach person.) But the humor is balanced with a current of cynicism, a deep appreciation for nature, and a lamentation for the poor way we so often treat the earth.

Britain has such a rich history—Stonehenge, Cambridge, Liverpool—and Bryson visits them all, with wry



and sometimes poignant observations about what has changed in the last two decades. I referred frequently to the map in the front of the book, though not every place he visits is listed there.

Bryson's journey is a grand exploration of villages, shops, parks and monuments. He often shares the history of an area in an intriguing way, or shines the spotlight on some interesting but little known facts. In discussing the unstable Dover cliffs, Bryson notes that one casualty was a man named Richard Anning, "who tumbled over a cliff in Lyme in 1810 and never got up again." His daughter Mary, however, became a dedicated excavator, finding the first British pterodactyl, among other artifacts. I had never heard of her.

Twenty years after his first journey around Britain, Bryson remains an advocate for this island country: he pulls no punches about what disillusioned him, but also does not hesitate to celebrate positive changes. Armchair travelers as well as frequent flyers should enjoy his latest offering.

The Road to Little Dribbling: Adventures of an American in Britain by Bill Bryson, 400 pages, Knopf Doubleday, \$28.95

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HIDDEN HISTORIES

Woody Guthrie and Fred Trump

by JACK R. JOHNSON



FOR TWO YEARS FROM 1950 to 1952, Woody Guthrie, the famous balladeer and activist who gave us such classics as “This Land is Your Land”, leased an apartment from Donald Trump’s father. It was not a happy arrangement. The two-year stay on Fred Trump’s property produced some of Woody Guthrie’s most bitter writings, according to Professor William Kaufman. Fred Trump took full advantage of FHA’s euphemistic guidelines for avoiding “in-harmonious uses of housing” which was as Trump biographer Gwenda Blair puts it, “a code phrase for selling homes in white areas to blacks.” As Blair points out, such “restrictive covenants” were common among FHA projects. For Guthrie, Kaufman writes, Fred Trump came to “personify all the viciousness of the racist codes that continued to put decent housing – both public and private – out of reach for so many of his fellow citizens.”

Here are some of his more damning lyrics:

*I suppose Old Man Trump knows
Just how much Racial Hate he
stirred up
In the blood pot of human hearts
When he drew that color line
Here at his Eighteen hundred
family project.*

According to Kaufman, in his notebooks Woody Guthrie conjured up a scenario of smashing the color line at

the apartment complex to transform Trump’s whites only real estate venture into a diverse cornucopia, with “a face of every bright color laughing and joshing in these old darkly weeperish empty shadowed windows.”

But nothing changed and Guthrie reworked his signature Dust Bowl ballad, “I Ain’t Got No Home” into a broadside against his landlord:

*Beach Haven ain’t my home!
I just cain’t pay this rent!
My money’s down the drain!
And my soul is badly bent!
Beach Haven looks like heaven
Where no black ones come to roam!
No, no, no!
Old Man Trump! Old Beach
Haven ain’t my home!*

Unfortunately it seems as if Woody’s words to Fred Trump might as easily apply to his son, Donald Trump, today. After all with sweeping racist generalizations, Donald Trump has accused Mexico of sending rapists and other criminals across the border; called for rounding up and deporting 11 million illegal immigrants; falsely claimed thousands of Muslims celebrated the 9/11 attacks in New Jersey; and approved of the roughing up of a black demonstrator at one of his own events. Or to quote Donald Trump more directly, as he announced last year, “My legacy has its roots in my father’s legacy.”

Indeed. **[N]**

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Elishveva

AN ARMY OF TWO

THEY LIVE ON A CUL-DE-SAC IN RICHMOND'S WEST END

where the urban gives way to the suburban—small brick ranchers with fenced-in backyards, tree-lined streets. It is a cold rain that falls, and at the end of the street there's still a small hill of gray snow, the work of plows from a week before.



Elishveva Atara Marks opens the door and beckons me in. It's a warm and tidy interior with no clutter. There's a vintage Wonder Woman poster on one wall, a framed photograph of Leonard Nimoy on a bookcase. At the dining room table where we sit and talk, Elishveva's daughter, Amaris, has already taken a seat. Mother and daughter share manes of curly hair and their eyes have the same limbic spark.

After a brief introduction, Amaris retreats to her room, closing the door behind her, and from where her moth-

er and I are sitting, we can hear the careful plucking of strings on a concert harp, each note crisp. This vague, almost dreamlike music, drowns out the sound of rain pelting the roof.

Elishveva takes me back to her daughter's earliest hours in this world seventeen years ago. Just after Amaris's birth, a nurse carried the swaddled infant back to the nursery.

"After she was born, you know, they give you the option of rooming in or putting her in the nursery and my whole thing was, 'I'm going to have her for eighteen years, she's going in the nursery,'" Elishveva remembers. But that didn't last long. Within an hour, the nurse brought Amaris back to the arms of her mother. "Amaris was screaming, she was keeping the entire nursery up," says Elishveva. "Not even putting her in the swing helped. So she had sensory issues right from the get go."

Those sensory issues only intensified when Amaris and her mother came home. "When she was little she couldn't stand loud noises, she would start screaming," Elishveva says. "We couldn't even go to birthday parties because once people started singing Happy Birthday, she would scream. And I had this friend who had this very spontaneous, infectious loud laugh and Amaris would scream anytime she walked into a room."

Elishveva brings both of her hands above the crown of her skull, pushing gently down on a cushion of black hair. "Amaris obviously has very curly hair like mine and you have to comb it or you end up with dreadlocks and she did not like being touched," she says. "And she did not like having her hair combed."

Amaris began walking when she was about year old, but speech came slowly. "So I took her to a speech therapist and they did an assessment and said global developmental delay," says Elishveva. For a time Amaris attended Second Presbyterian Day Care and Preschool in downtown Richmond. "It was through them we started the whole assessment program and early intervention programs and that's when the whole thing really kicked into gear," she says. "Along with speech therapy they started doing occupational therapy."

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO

and Amaris



The light filtering in through the windows has a pale green cast to it that seems to shimmer. The heater kicks in and whenever there is a lull in the conversation you can hear Amaris steadily playing on her harp down the hallway behind the closed door of her bedroom.

“Dealing with children like Amaris and trying to help them is like being in a dark room, a black room, trying to find the light switch on the wall,” says this mother. She pauses for a very long time and then adds: “Advocates are not born, they’re made.”

Advocacy comes slower to some parents than others. It came pretty quickly to Elisheva and the catalyst that propelled her was the way the educational system is set up to supposedly help children with special needs.

At first, Elisheva enrolled her daughter in kindergarten at a private school. “Literally two hours after I dropped

her off,” she says. “I get a call saying, ‘We can’t handle her, she has to go.’”

That’s about the time the real nightmare began. Elisheva enrolled her daughter in a public elementary school in the city of Richmond, a school, incidentally, which was considered to be one of that district’s best at the time.

When Amaris entered first grade, a “team” composed of educators and education specialists performed what they call “an assessment”. A week after that meeting, they presented their findings to Elisheva. “It said Amaris was mentally retarded,” says Elisheva. “They wanted me to sign this paper, they wanted me to sign off. I refused. I told them, ‘I love my daughter, and I would love her even if your assessment were correct. But it is not correct. I know that.’”

Even at a very young age, Amaris had exhibited a great imagination. And language was coming to her. “Some-

thing was there, even with the sensory issues, something was there,” Elisheva says. “I could see behind her eyes what was going on back there, but there was just no way for her to get it out.”

Elisheva dug her heels in, held her ground. “That’s when I really started diving into it,” she says.

On about that time, her estranged husband (the pair are now divorced), unbeknownst to Elisheva, set up an appointment with a neurologist. When Elisheva reviewed the results from the neurological report, she realized no one, including the neurologist himself, was getting the full picture of her daughter.

“I looked at the tests and one of the things that blew me away was that she was very low on certain things, but when you got to spatial intelligence she scored at a sixteen year old level even though at the time she was only eight,” Elisheva says. “That’s when it

clicked on for me: she has autism.”

But the neurologist would tell her something different. “He said, ‘She’s mentally retarded. She will never live a normal life, she is a pretty little girl and you better keep an eye on her.’ That came from a neurologist. I went home that night and got drunk.”

At that time, Elisheva was teaching preschool at MCV and one of her charges was the adopted child of a Richmond School Board member. “We had become friends and after I told her about what was happening in the school, she said: ‘This happens a lot at certain schools in order for them to pass the SOLs,’” according to Elisheva.

That’s when a harsh reality began to dawn on Elisheva. “You go into this situation that these people with the schools are your friends and they’re there to help you, and at some point in the process a light goes off,” she says. “So at that point I hired an advocate named Dr. Linda Woolrich.”

Dr. Woolrich immediately recommended that Elisheva take her daughter in for a private evaluation. Dr. Ellie Cobb diagnosed Amaris with Asperger’s syndrome, the same diagnosis a Richmond city school speech therapist had suspected. “So we presented the report to the school and they basically said, ‘We will send somebody in from the department of education and we will have her assess Amaris,’” according to Elisheva.

Time passed. Weeks. Months. And seven months later, Elisheva had still not heard from the school about the assessment. All she knew was the name of the woman who was supposed to do the assessment.

As fate would have it, Elisheva was at MCV’s Nelson Clinic for an annual physical when she heard this woman’s name announced. Elisheva approached her and asked point blank when she was planning to do the assessment. The woman looked surprised and said, “Amaris is such a sweet child.” Turns out the assessment had been done months before, yet the results had never been given to Elisheva.



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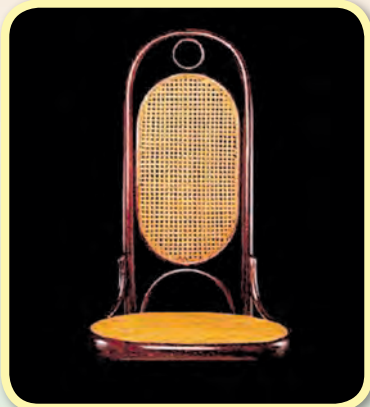
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Advocate Linda Woolrich demanded to see the report, and sure enough, just like the assessment made by Dr. Cobb, this one had also found that Amaris had Asperberger's syndrome.

For Amaris, elementary school was a living hell. For one thing, she had been placed in a self-contained class, which essentially segregates kids with special needs from the general education population. Then, too, Amaris suffered constant bullying. "There was one boy who was torturing her very day," Elisheva tells me, and she is holding back tears as she speaks. "He was there for emotional problems and was threatening to cut her hair off and set her on fire. He was punching her, hitting her. And the administration and the teacher were doing nothing to stop it. They basically blamed her. There was one time she came home crying. 'Mommy, what's wrong with me?' she said and I said, 'Baby there's nothing wrong you, the problem is them.' At school they talked about social skills. Amaris's social skills were fine, they needed to teach these typical kids social skills."

The school system wanted Elisheva to sign a waiver that would allow them to award Amaris a special education diploma. Again, Elisheva refused to sign.

"I finally got them to sign the Asperger's thing because they had no choice and then we set up the proper IEP," says Elisheva. "It took more than two years to get that IEP and only after a lot of fighting."

Once the IEP was in place, nothing changed. Accommodations, says Elisheva, were not met. So with the stroke of a pen, Elisheva removed Amaris from the Richmond Public Schools for good and all.

She began the search for an appropriate private school. The Faison School was out of the question—yearly tuition there is \$65,000. So Elisheva placed her daughter in another school, one that was not nearly as expensive as Faison, though it still cost about \$20,000 a year. "I kept Amaris there for about two and a half years," Elisheva says. "She was safe, but she was picking up other kids' behaviors and at that school they don't push the kids academically. I had one of the teachers actually try to get me to sign off on a special ed diploma because that's what they push their students towards. I know other parents who have the same feeling about this school. It's a safe place, it's a kind place, it's a nice place, but if your kid is capable, it may not be the right place. When Amaris was fourteen, they told me at that school that she could never

get past eighth grade math. Well, now she's doing geometry and algebra."

The sole reason Amaris has made such progress is because her mother decided to homeschool her. But the cost has been dear. Money is always an issue and there are few supports in place.

"Families with special needs kids can really suffer from depression," says Elisheva. "It can be extraordinarily isolating. My life is not like all my other friend's lives. I watch my friends' children who are the same age as Amaris and getting ready for college and this and that and dating and proms and I feel very much on the outside." She pauses and rubs her forehead.

"There's an amazing woman in our community who has a food bank," Elisheva says. "And there are times, I'll be completely honest, I have I had to get food there in order to make ends meet. I don't have internet; I can't afford it. My computer broke down; I don't have one. We don't have cable. My car is older than my daughter. Money is stressful, getting her to all her therapies, getting her to do the things she does, homeschooling. It takes its toll."

Not long ago, Elisheva was told by her new landlord that he would not renew her lease. "We have until the end of March, so I have to find a place," she says. "And we love where we live. What I like about this area is that it's safe and I do have several friends in the community. Around the corner is my friend Heather and nearby is my best friend Rachel. Here, Amaris can take the bus. She can go to Starbucks. She can go to the library, right down the end of the street. She can walk to synagogue by herself. This is me trying to teach her to be as independent as possible."

Elisheva is both religious and spiritual. "I am a Jew and I love being Jewish," she says. "What I have found across the board is that faith communities, who you would think would step up to the plate, don't. There's this program called Freindship Circle, and they hook up a typical kid with an untypical kid, and they come over once a week and they play in the house. But Amaris needs to be a teenager, she needs to get her nails painted in the mall. They ignore that. She has been blown off twice by the girl she had been set up with. They get high school kids who are looking for community service points. It's not real friendship, and it's not advocating"

"It makes it tough on my daughter," says Elisheva. "If she was at the local day school she would be involved in all that stuff. She's not. And even though

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she goes to shul on Saturdays, these kids have all these relationships with one another, and she is not included. It breaks my heart, and then I get really pissed. I get really angry at my community, and the community in general, because it doesn't seem to be that important to them."

Elisheva remembers a time when her daughter approached a group of girls at shul and asked if they could all get together. "Amaris was very brave, and went up to a bunch of the girls there and asked to hang out with them," her mother says. "It hasn't happened. Amaris has never gone to a birthday party, Amaris has never gone to a sleepover. There is no inclusion."

When she uses the word inclusion, Elisheva shakes her head as a wry smile crosses her lips. "Well they use words like inclusion, and they use words like acceptance," she says. "So you accept they exist, great for you. But do you accept them as fellow human beings? Even the most well-meaning don't seem to understand that. I've seen people treat their animals better."

Amaris as I have come to discover is a sweet child and kind to a fault, not a mean bone in her body.

"She is such an amazing person and she sees the world in such a different way," Elisheva says. "I have never heard her speak bad about one person, ever. Think about that for one second. But kids her own age don't want to hang out with her. And she wants friends; she wants them. And they'll kind of patronize her, and that's very difficult for me to watch. Some people see children like my daughter as less than human. They don't see them as human. Do you not understand what it is that you're communicating when you do that?"

Elisheva mentions Rabbi Shlomo Periera, a friend of hers who teaches economics at William and Mary. "One of the things he said about Amaris is that when she walks into a room everybody should stand up because her soul is that pure," says Elisheva. "I am often amazed by this child and the personality that she has. Unlike some people on the autistic spectrum, Amaris emotionally connects with others. A couple years ago she decided to be a vegetarian because she couldn't stand the thought of animals being hurt. She loves children. She reaches out to people when she goes to synagogue and sits down and connects with them. Amaris is just an amazingly gentle, empathic child. She is a far better human being than I can ever hope to be. She has the purest Neshama (soul) I have ever seen."

For years now Elisheva has juggled homeschooling with work and all the chores of daily life. She has been trying to find a balance, to ensure her daughter will succeed. "I'm forging things as I go on without a blueprint to follow," she says. "It's the Lewis and Clark Expedition of special needs and I'm Sacagawea."

On her expedition of Discovery, Elisheva found that her daughter has both an affinity and a faculty for music. It all started with Live Art, which is sponsored by SPARC. "Live Art was a jump start for Amaris and I will always support them," says Elisheva.


Live Art indirectly led to harp therapy classes. "Amaris just rocketed and she began taking harp lessons," says Elisheva. At first she took lessons from a student. She used a little Celtic Harp her mother had purchased for seventy-five dollars. When the student graduated and moved on, Amaris began studying harp from one of the assistant music directors at the Academy of Music. "Her name is Aponi Brunson and she is an angel," Elisheva says.

Amaris excelled. She moved from troubadour (for beginning harpists) to lyra in under two years. Somewhere in there a friend of Elisheva's presented Amaris with a seven thousand dollar concert harp. And today Amaris is teaching harp to another student.

Amaris's teacher, Aponi, now wants her pupil to audition for intermezzo harpist this June at Carnegie Hall. That's one step before touring harpist. "And they perform everywhere," says Elisheva. "They tour Australia, Ireland, you name it."

A minute later, we hear the bedroom door open and Amaris makes her way up hall to join us at the table. When I ask Amaris how she likes to spend her time, she says, "My favorite thing about life is playing the harp." She mentions some of her favorite tunes to play on the harp—Scarborough Faire, Jerusalem of Gold, and Greensleeves, her top choices.

Then she tells me this: "When a song gets in my head, I get excited, and it's like I'm talking with God."

The following week, my son Charles and I watch Amaris perform a solo recital in Windsor Farms. She is poised and elegant as she takes the stage and wraps her arms around the harp. She plucks music from the strings, a Japanese air that seems a fitting piece of music for these waning days of winter. It's called Sakura, which means cherry blossoms. I close my eyes as I listen to see a shower of pale pink petals. And to hear the voice of God. 



rebecca d'angelo
PHOTOGRAPHY



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Zosaro's Cakes & Pastries

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

ROBERT AND LISA Ratliff, owners of Zosaro's Cakes & Pastries, are both bakers. But they're more than that. They're artists who use sugar as their medium, which they mold and carve and etch.

"What we do is artwork," says Lisa.

"Some of the fondant pieces are actually hand-cut with a scalpel," Robert adds. "Some are cut with an electronic die cutter. We do a tremendous amount of work in Adobe Photoshop. It all depends. We also make sugar flowers, hand-sculpted sugar pieces.

"There's basically nothing we can't make in sugar," Lisa says. "If it can be done, we can do it."

The bakery, which opened at Lakeside Towne Center this past September just in time for the UCI 2015 Road World Championships, is named for the Ratliffs' three daughters—Sarah, Zoe and Rose. "It's the first two letters of each of their first names," Robert explains. "Zosaro's just flowed very well.

The Ratliffs, both Virginians, called Australia home for seven years and returned stateside a couple years ago. While in Australia, Lisa ran her own bakery, and over the years has refined her skills and taught her husband about the art of baking and cake making.

"Basically we're a custom-cake and dessert shop," says Robert. "Our main line of business is custom cakes for weddings and special events."

But the couple also has a well-stocked counter at the front of their bakery. "It's an offering for the neighborhood and whoever drops by," Robert says. "It's stocked heaviest Wednesday through Saturday."

On any given day the bakery case is stocked with chocolate chip cookies, cheesecakes, canollis, key lime pies, macaroons, beignets, lemon bars, and just about any other kind of baked treat you can imagine.

Two of their signature baked goods, which the Ratliffs hope to soon begin selling wholesale, are Anzac biscuits (cookies) and Australian mud cake.

"Our mud cake is a cross between a brownie and a cake," says Robert. "It's a very high-powered cake with a choco-



Proprietors Robert and Lisa Ratliff


late ganache on top. We use only Barry Callebaut, one of the finest chocolates in the world."

Anzac biscuits originated down under. There's even an Anzac Day, celebrated in Australia and New Zealand to commemorate the landing of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) at Gallipoli, Turkey, where soldiers—underequipped by the British—were butchered like lambs at the slaughter.

"An Anzac biscuit is a non-perishable cookie that was used during World War I and II," Robert says. "They used to put them in the soldier's pack." They are made simply of molasses, coconut, butter, flour and rolled oats. Both the mud cake and Anzac cookies are also available at the counter.

Lisa and Robert enjoy the Lakeside area and the customers who come daily to see what's in the case. But their main business will always be custom cakes for any special occasion. "One cake may take three days to make and we may put twelve hours into it," Robert says.

"And we both love the art of it," says Lisa.

"It makes sense to do an upscale bakery counter in this business because it exposes the clients to the cakes and we also get to meet people from the community," Robert says. "It helps grow the business and it's a natural progression. It's worked out good for us." 

Zosaro's Cakes & Pastries
Tues-Fri, 10-5; Sat, 8-5, 6920 Lakeside Avenue, (804) 564-9450

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RAINBOW MINUTES

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Mary's Medal



AFTER HER SERVICE as a surgeon in the Civil War, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker resumed her unconventional lifestyle, even wearing men's clothes. Yet she was the first woman in history to receive a Congressional Medal of Honor.

In 1917, the U.S. Congress changed the criteria for the Medal to include, "Actual combat with an enemy," and Dr. Walker's medal was revoked. Walker

refused to return the medal, and wore it illegally every day until her death in 1919.

For years, friends and family lobbied to have Walker's Medal reinstated, and in 1977 President Jimmy Carter signed an order doing just that – citing Walker's "distinguished gallantry and self-sacrifice, despite the apparent discrimination because of her sex."

Today, Dr. Walker's medal is on display at the Pentagon.

The Lesbian Decorator

While interior decorating is a stereotypical career for gay men, it was Elsie de Wolfe who gave the profession some traction.

Born in New York City in 1865 to a wealthy family, she began her adult life as an actress. Her partner of 30 years, Bessie Marbury, was a prominent Broadway producer and agent.

At age 40, de Wolfe followed Marbury's advice and began decorating interiors

for wealthy members of her social circle. She abandoned the dark, heavy Victorian look, in favor of airy spaces with light colors – especially beige. In fact, after seeing the Parthenon in Greece, she exclaimed, "Beige! It's my color."

De Wolfe's ideas on decor became mainstream through her newspaper and magazine columns. She's also famous for another idea: the blue hair rinse, popular among elderly ladies.

Sculptress, Emma Stebbins

Considered the first notable American woman sculptor, Emma Stebbins was born in New York City in 1815. Her family encouraged her studies at various American studios. A trip to Rome would secure the love of the highly-successful and charismatic actress Charlotte Cushman, who was involved in the bohemian and lesbian-feminist scene.

One of Stebbins' early commissions was a bust of Cushman herself, completed in 1860. Five years later, her

bronze statue of educator Horace Mann was installed outside the State House in Boston.

By far, Stebbins is best known for "Angel of the Waters," located on the Bethesda Terrace in Central Park in New York City.

Unfortunately, when her beloved Charlotte died in 1876 of pneumonia, Stebbins's days of creative inspiration were over. **NS**



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CALENDAR

March King Lear at the Quill Theatre



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in partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is proud to present *King Lear* by William Shakespeare. Directed by Dr. Jan Powell and starring Richmond award-winning actor, Joe Inscoe, this play will run March 31 – April 23 at VMFA's Leslie Cheek Theater.

Joe Inscoe stars as King Lear, perhaps Shakespeare's most tragic figure, an aging king who plans to divide his kingdom among his three daughters, two of whom are utterly treacherous. Lear's entire world ultimately unravels.

For tickets visit www.QuillTheatre.org or call (804) 340-1405.

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March 10, The Bush League
(pictured left)

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March 31, Small Merrit

Stir Crazy Café, 4015 MacArthur Avenue, (804) 864-0264

A Sober Irish Festival



The McShin Foundation, in association with Sober St. Patrick's Day®, will again host a Sober Section at the Church Hill Irish Festival from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday March 19th, 2016 and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday March 20th, 2016. The McShin Foundation will set up a large sober section in the family-friendly area of the festival offering coffee, tea, soft drinks, snacks, guest speakers, recovery information, scheduled recovery meetings, and more.



Erin Frye and Drew Kullman will be performing March 24 and April 21 at the Tin Pan, 8982 Quioccasin Rd, Richmond, VA 23229, (804) 447-8189



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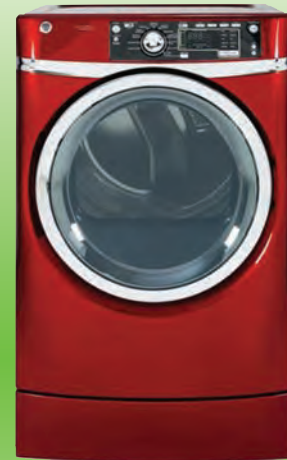
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