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A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is blurred, showing green foliage and a brick wall.

JOHN *LaFratta*

didn't start practicing law until he was in his thirties. He had studied business and English literature as an undergraduate, and worked for almost a decade as a broker for Dean Witter. Then a couple things happened that made John reconsider his career. He's never looked back, and is fascinated by the motives of his clients, the precision of language, the art of prosecution, and has an appreciation for the varieties of human imperfection. He also sees himself for what he truly is—a defender. And a police of the police. *continued on page 14*

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH by REBECCA D'ANGELO

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NOTJ Wins Two Writing Awards From State Press Association


NORTH OF THE JAMES magazine received two awards for feature writing in this year's Virginia Press Association Awards competition for work that appeared in 2015.

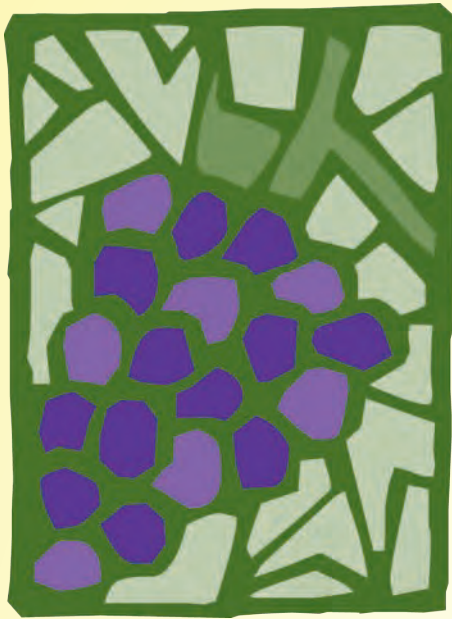
A judge praised the June 2015 cover







story by Charles McGuigan titled "Live Art: Sounds of the Human Soul" by writing, "The people served and those doing the serving in this program come alive here, thanks to the creativity and storytelling skills of the author."

Another cover story by McGuigan, "John Shinholser and Honesty Liller: The Faces and Voices of Recovery also won a feature writing award. "This story is an artful introduction to a really enterprising approach to drug rehab," a judge wrote. "Too often, reporters take a conventional approach. This reporter does not. The writer gets kudos for curiosity and enterprise. A good read!"

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Steve Culler, The Birdman of Lakeside

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN



STEVE CULLER WEAVES water-softened rush—up, down, back and forth—to create the seat of a ladder back chair. At a work table across the room, Cynthia, his partner of many years, is hand-caning another chair, weaving threads of cane in an intricate pattern. This, after all, is the Cane Connection at the Hub Shopping Center on Lakeside Avenue, where weaving rush and cane is all part of a day's work.

But Steve weaves more than this. He weaves a story about love and adoption, becoming a mother, and the agony of loss. It all started on the eve of Independence Day last summer.

"We've got a staining center in the back of the shopping center," says Steve. "So I'm walking back there and I see this little bird on the ground. I mean it didn't have any feathers; it had some quills that would turn into feathers, it had some fluff. It was just laying there, wiggling around and opening and closing its mouth."

It was a nestling, a couple days old at most, and its skin pink and so translucent you could see its internal organs at work.

Steve hustled back to the shop, grabbed a dustpan and whisk broom, and returned to the baby bird. Gently, he ushered the baby bird with the

whisk broom onto the dustpan, then returned to the shop. "We didn't have much of a sense that we were going to be able to save it," Steve says. "I mean it was awfully young, and it had a bad foot, it had one toe that wasn't working right. So we put it on some paper towels and I hustled up a lamp to keep it warm."

The next step was nutrition. "We weren't exactly sure how to proceed, but we figured mama bird is gonna feed it worms," says Steve. "Probably chew them up and spit them into the bird's mouth. So we went and got some worms and we kind of squashed them up and I sucked them into a clean glue syringe (a tool of his trade) and stuck it in its mouth and kind of squirted it in. After a bit the baby bird opened up and was taking this liquid of squashed up worms."

All that afternoon, Steve and Cynthia fed the bird as much as it would ingest, and then they took it back to their

house in Lakeside. "Cynthia went into the garden and the next door neighbor went into the garden and we're looking for worms and no one can find worms," Steve remembers. So, he purchased worms at Fin & Feather. "These were really nice worms, and we squashed them up and slurped it up into the glue syringe and piped it into her mouth," Steve says. That went on for two days and then they began cutting the worms in small pieces and feeding them to the baby bird with a pair of tweezers. "We probably went through a hundred worms, feeding the baby every two hours, day and night," says Steve.

That went on for another week, until the small bird began sleeping through the night. "Then we would feed it when it was hungry, and then after a while it declined the worms," says Steve. In a short time, the bird began eating seeds. "So we figured we were home free," he says.

In time, the tufts of down and the quills matured into feathers. "Eventually we named it Sparky and it turned out to be a female house sparrow," says Steve. "We were assured that house sparrows are not protected so that we could actually legally raise this bird."

Every morning, Steve would place Sparky in a small carry cage, strap it to the pillion of his motorcycle and head off to work. Once inside the Cane Connection, Sparky was released from her temporary cage. "She would hop around and Cynthia had made a kind of play land with twigs and mirrors and plants, right over there," says Steve, pointing to a corner of the room where a microwave now sits. "She would fly over to a caner and sit on the chair and watch for a while and then fly over and sit on my chair."

At home, in the evenings, Sparky would climb up Steve's chest and perch on his shoulder as the man played his





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FEATURE

guitar. "And then at night time when I was watching TV, she would fly from the dining room where her cage was, hit the floor and then flutter up to the couch," he says. "She would crawl into my hand and I would pet her head while I was watching TV and she would go to sleep. It was incredible."

This relationship went on uninterrupted for five months and the ties between man and bird became stronger with each passing day. Then, just before Christmas, Steve rose from bed one morning and looked for Sparky, who was nowhere to be found. In the bottom of the sparrow's cage there was a small pile of fluff. Nothing else.

"I think a snake must have gotten in the house," says Steve. "There was no blood trail or anything, and that's what snakes do, they ingest the bird and spit out the fluff. I was destroyed. I had made this connection with this bird. When I would walk up to this bird it would flap its wings in a way of greeting. It knew that I was the one, I was his mother or something."

Cynthia remembers the day Steve called her with the bad news. "He was crying," she says. "He called me up at six in the morning and said, 'Come and help me look for the bird.' It was very sad." As she speaks her eyes water up.

"It rips your guts out," Steve adds. "And this bird had not only been a pet of mine, it was a pet of the store's. People were amazed at how this bird would warm up to people."

For a good two months, Steve was raw and numb with the loss. "It really affected me," he says. "And so, once I got to feeling better, I started making plans. I was thinking, 'I'm gonna rob a nest and do it again,' but thankfully I got counselled against that."

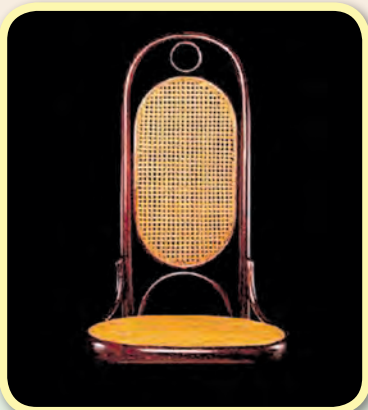
Instead, six weeks back, he bought one of three cockatiel chicks at Fin & Feather. Steve wanted to take the bird home immediately, but was told that wouldn't be possible. "It has to be raised up till it doesn't have to be hand fed anymore," he says. "I go in every day after work and visit my bird."

And this new bird is getting to know Steve. "It comes up to the front of the cage when I come into the room and I open the door and it hops on my finger," he says. "It does feel better."

These days when Steve is out and about, he might hear a singular voice coming out of a bush. "Sparky didn't talk all that much, but she made some natural sounds," says Steve Culler. "I now recognize the sound of a house sparrow. I still like to hear it."

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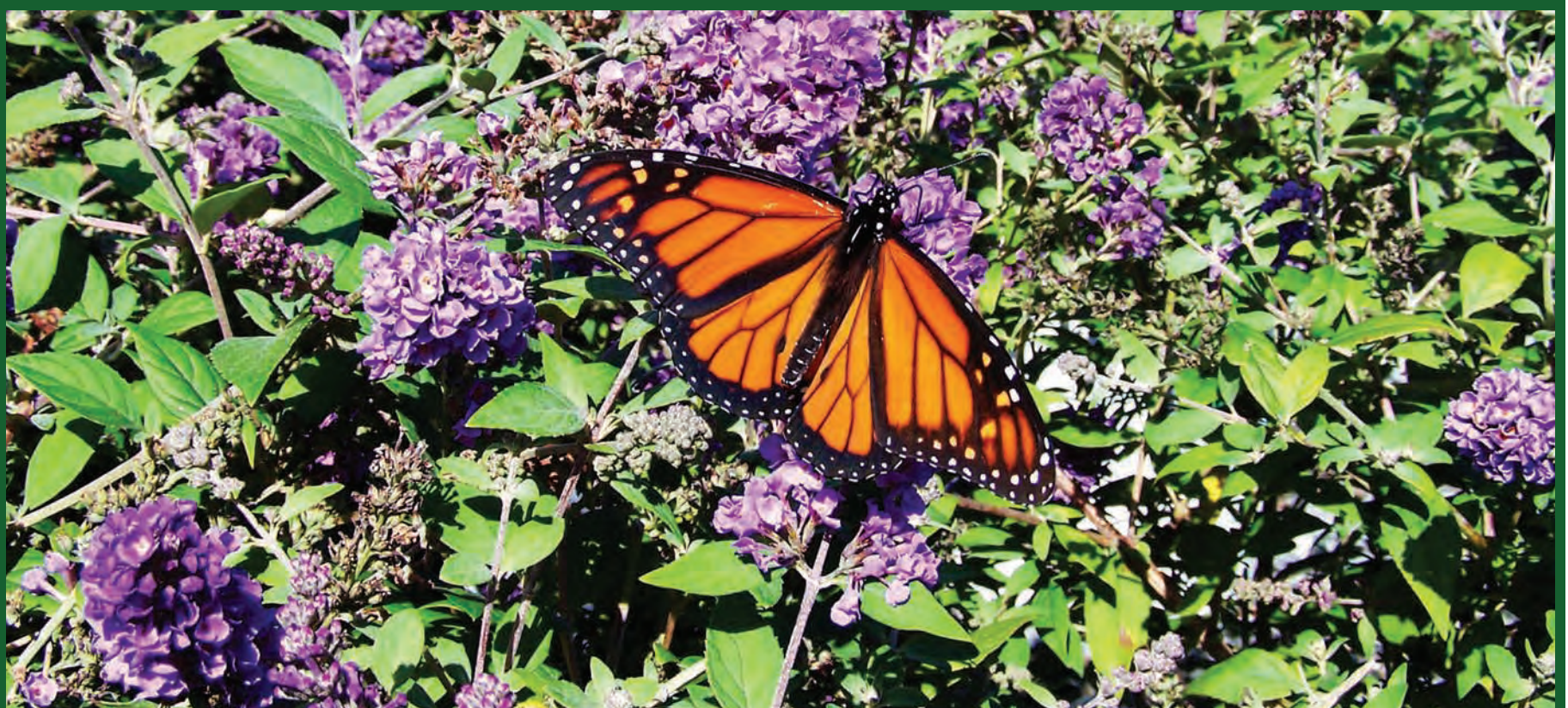


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SCHOOLS

Students Protest School Closings And Budget Cuts

by ANDREW LINDSAY

ABOUT ONE HUNDRED Richmond high school students, on a balmy April afternoon, left their respective schools 45 minutes early and marched on City Hall.

The students were there to let city officials—from the mayor on down—know how opposed they are to proposed budget cuts and school closures. Many students assembled downtown showed solidarity by wearing red T-shirts and waving placards at passing vehicles, all the while chanting a series of phrases that could be heard from the top floor of the towering City Hall. The majority of those present were from Community and Open high schools, although there was also representation from Maggie Walker, Franklin Military, and other city schools. As a participant of this event, I was able to witness the iron will of RPS' student body manifested in the continuous marching around City Hall.

After the event I spoke with Maya Flores, a junior at Community who contributed to spreading awareness of the protest at her school.

"I received a text from a friend at Open about it," she said, describing how she first learned of the protest. Maya went on to explain how she let the rest of the school know about the event. "I made an announcement in morning meeting and told everybody about wearing red and the protest at City Hall" she said. "I didn't encourage the walkout because it might look bad for the school board, but I'll let people do what they want."

When asked if she felt that the protest had achieved its goal, Maya said: "I don't think it completely achieved what we want, but it started change. We'll have to wait and see what happens if it is just the beginning." She then agreed that future demonstrations may be necessary if the city council fails to adequately assist the state of the schools.

From early on it became clear Community High School administration would not actively dissuade students from walking out of classes early. Myself and about 40 other students wore red that day (quite a large number, considering the size of the school), in accordance with the announcement



that Maya gave on the previous week. The administration permitted us to leave the school grounds provided that we had a signed parental consent form for exiting the property.

Most of the students who participated had a ride to take them to City Hall, but I went on foot with several other people. The police department must have also learned about the walk out, as we were followed by around four truancy officers who always stayed about a block behind us. We arrived at City Hall after about an hour of walking, which was where we joined up with the crowd from Open, who had begun the protest earlier. One of the Open students carried a megaphone that they would use for call and response messages to the crowd.

By five that evening, parents, teachers, and students from middle and elementary schools arrived for the main rally. An elementary drumline performed early on, while speeches from various students and teachers occupied the remainder of the time. All the while countless drivers honked their horns to show their support for our cause. Once the protest outside ended, we flooded into the City Council chamber. I heard from several people there that we even broke the attendance record for a City Council meeting, which is a testament to how strongly we are willing to resist any further damage to our school system.

Critics of the protest have been quick to label us as having a lack of under-

standing on the nature of the issue. Some take to writing snarky commentaries in the Times Dispatch about how we would still be clamoring for more money even if the budget was increased. Others have pointed out that the school closings and mergers are no more than a rumor, and reacting in this way will make us look like we can't be taken seriously. However the reason for the student march was not limited to just one or two issues. The fact that the school board even considered such a plan shows that we're treated as secondary priorities. And we'll continue to fight until that changes.

Editor's Note: This story was written by Community High School student Andrew Lindsay, a resident of Bellevue, on Richmond's Northside. It is a pleasure to know young people of Andrew's caliber, courage and talent. Like all other Richmond public school students I have ever met, Andrew understands how very important the funding of our schools is for every single student. These young people are challenging the powers-that-be, who see fit to spend money on boondoggle projects while allowing our schools to close their doors or to fall into ruin. To pay for professional football camps while short-changing the teachers in this school district, who are second to none. These young people, seemingly much wiser than the adults who represent them both in council and on the school board, have made demands that need to be met. Oh learned elected officials who grip our purse strings and control the municipal till: Listen. **NJ**



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John LaFratta

POLICING THE POLICE

WE'RE SITTING IN THE SAME CONFERENCE ROOM at the law office on West Main Street, where John LaFratta has heard countless clients insist on what really happened the night of the crime. A long table, six or eight chairs, a Persian rug, some artwork on the walls, a place where John and his colleagues can gather with a client if they need to bring out the big guns. John has a lawyerly presence—clean-shaven, clipped hair, crisp white shirt, striped tie and navy blazer. Twenty minutes into the interview, we're talking about what may very well be the best film ever made about the law, and the way it's really practiced in the courtroom.



John LaFratta at home with his wife Lisa, and their dogs, Stella and Bianca.

"I watch that movie every Christmas when I go on vacation to Italy with my brother and his family," says John. "Every single year during that vacation, at least once, if not more than once, somebody jams in 'My Cousin Vinny' and we watch."

And he can watch it over and over, because there is, for all the inherent comedy, a realism about the judicial system uniquely captured in this film. "It was very, very accurate," John says. "I mean they probably had some real people familiar with the law telling them what to do because of the way objections

are made, and the citing of things and the courtroom procedures. It was all very accurate."

John then does a flawless impersonation of Fred Gwynne (Judge Chamberlain Haller) saying, "I'll let the record reflect she's holding up two fingers." And then, in an instant, John's persona changes, and he is Vinny Gambini. With vocal intonation and

facial expression, he mimics Joe Pesci to perfection, as he says, "Mrs. Johnson and only Mrs. Johnson."

"My Cousin Vinny" came out back in 1992, around the time John started law school at University of Richmond's T.C. Williams School of Law. Just after passing the bar (unlike Vinny, it only took him one attempt), John, who was waiting to begin a one-year clerkship with the Supreme Court of Virginia, took a part-time job with a Chesterfield County attorney. "Ten hours a week ended up being as many hours as I could be in there, she wanted me there the whole time doing everything," John remembers.

A couple days after he began working there, she handed John a file to represent a client who had been charged with burglary. And here's where it starts sounding like "My Cousin Vinny".

"I had never been to court before," says John. "I barely even did the moot court stuff in law school because I didn't figure I'd be doing that sort of thing. My client was charged with burglary grand larceny, which I can do in my sleep right now, but at the time I didn't even know where to stand in the courtroom. I knew where the courthouse in Henrico was, but I didn't even know which parking lot to use, which courthouse I was to appear in. I had never met my client, and the woman I worked for literally just gave me the file and said, 'The trial is today and I told them you'd take care of it.'"

John entered the courtroom, armed with a stack of case law. "I thought every time I opened my mouth I had to substantiate it," he says. "And my client said that she didn't do it and I'm in there with all this case law, passing it around to everybody and they're looking at me like I'm crazy, but that's what they taught us to do in law school. 'Burglary is breaking into someone's house with the intent to commit larceny therein,' I said. And they were all thinking, 'We all know that.' It literally took two hours, whereas I know that if I tried to pull that today they'd give me the hook. I didn't know what I was doing."

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO

John smiles, tight-lipped, and shakes his head. "Now, I realize how ridiculous I probably looked, because with these exact same facts and circumstances the prosecutor and I would have sat out in the hallway and scratched out on a napkin a couple of misdemeanors. We would continue the case to be dismissed if the person did this or that, but I didn't know any of that at the time."

Of course, he knows better now. "I've tried that exact same case a hundred times" says John. "I know how it would play out in Henrico County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. And in that case so many years ago, the judge concluded that she didn't do all these serious things. True, she had gone to the boyfriend's house and kicked the door in; but that's not burglary, it's only unlawful entry. She did destroy some property; but it didn't amount to a thousand dollars, so that's a misdemeanor. And she didn't threaten to burn the house down, she was just yelling and screaming. He continued it for six months, made her do some stuff, and it was dismissed because she didn't have a record."

John became an attorney later in life than most. He did his undergraduate work at NC State in economics and English literature. When he returned to Richmond he began looking for work, and ended up waiting tables for a time.

He finally landed a job with United Virginia Bank (now defunct), and then went to work for Dean Witter as a broker. Nights, he took classes at U of R working toward an MBA.

John continued working for Dean Witter for eight years, and during that time something occurred that nudged him toward a career as an attorney. While working as a broker, John was subpoenaed to testify against his biggest client, and the man doing the questioning had been retained by Dean Witter. His name was Robert E. Payne, a partner at McGuireWoods, who would later become a U.S. District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia.

"So I go up to D.C. and they put me up at the George Washington Hotel and we go to The Palm for dinner and I have a T-bone the size of your head," John tells me. "And we're all over the hotel rooms because it's a multi-million dollar lawsuit."

Following the proceedings, Robert Payne approached John. "After I did my little spiel, Judge Payne goes, 'You really ought to go to law school,'" John recalls. "He told me that when I was testifying my demeanor and manner



was the kind of demeanor and manner a lawyer should have."

There was this, too: For years, many of John's friends, some of whom had become lawyers themselves, urged John to become an attorney. "They were the things that pushed me over the edge," he says.

Because he was already attending U of R, studying business for his master's, he had already accumulated a fair amount of credit hours. "I had a zillion hours of MBA credit and they had this dual degree at T.C. Willams and the Robbins School of Business," says John. "So I would get out in two and a half years instead of three."

His plan was to merge the two fields of study. "I just assumed I would be some kind of securities lawyer," he says. But fate would lead him in another direction.

"I graduated in 1994 and since I got out in December, I took the February bar and Steven Dalle Mura (director of legal research for the Supreme Court of Virginia) was interviewing on campus for a one-year clerkship and he offered me a job so I did one year at the Supreme Court," John says.

Steven Dalle Mura showed John the ropes. "He's a very, very smart man and a great boss," says John. "He's a researcher, a book guy. His area helps the legislature draft bills, but it's also an open resource to smaller jurisdictions in Virginia that don't have their own law clerks."

John was immersed in law and honed his research skills while working beside Steven Dalle Mura. When the

internship ended, John began looking for work again.

A friend of his told John to try a small practice at Boulevard and Broad run by Pia North and Chris Cowan. They hired John and almost immediately.

"They are both fantastic lawyers," John says. "They were experienced and I got lucky because a lot of people get out of law school and sign up with these firms where you would split your fees in exchange for working with some seasoned attorneys while you got on your feet. They just charged me a minimal amount of money to defer some of their costs. We did criminal and domestic relations and whatever else walked through the door. We did everything. We ran a yellow page ad."

Almost from the get go, John began taking cases, making a name for himself, and he took to trial law like a fish to water.

"Pia drove me around getting me on court-appointed lists and they started letting me take the phone calls that came in through their ad," says John. "I mean it was great and they're both fabulous lawyers. My start up time was very, very quick. And very quickly, I went, 'I can keep doing this.'"

Earlier, he had often thought of working for a large firm, but those desires vanished rapidly. "Hunton and Williams, that's the kind of place I thought I would be," he says. "But then I'm with these two cool cats doing their own thing, smart as a whips. I walked into courthouses all around Central Virginia and everybody liked them and everybody knew they did a good job.

I was like, 'Pretty cool, I'll do this.' And if I don't want to work a Friday afternoon, I don't work a Friday afternoon."

Within two months, John already had his third month booked with court dates. "It's just not easy to do that," John says. "Chris and Pia made it easy. That was culture shock for me. It was not what I thought I was going to do, but it was a breath of fresh air. We worked long, long hours, but we might work long hours in shorts and T-shirts."

For more than twenty years now, John LaFratta has tried hundreds and hundreds of case, working 80 percent of the time as a court-appointed attorney, mainly in the cities of Richmond and Petersburg, and in the counties of Henrico, Chesterfield, Caroline and Charles City.

Unlike some court-appointed attorneys who limit what kinds of cases they will litigate, John does it all. "I take everything," he says. "Some attorneys say, 'I will not take sex cases.' Why am I not going to take a sex case or a murder case? Because it's going to be a lot of work? I like the work and the variety makes the work more interesting"

But the work can be draining, and in some cases, even consuming. Without naming names, John mentions a highly publicized case from a few years back.

"It was a multi-day jury case, politically motivated from all sides," he remembers. "A political person was charged under very suspicious circumstances. There was no way anybody could have known what really happened because the allegations were so many, many years old. And everybody had axes to grind."

At night, during the trial, John would often lie awake in bed, well after his wife had fallen asleep, and stare up at the ceiling, trying to figure it all out, creating strategies, sometimes just ruminating. "And if I lose, the stakes are really high, and the dude's going to go to jail for twenty or thirty years," John would think.

"There was no physical evidence whatsoever," John explains. "Nobody could corroborate what somebody was saying that happened to them fifteen years ago."

In the end, the man lost his case in the jury trial, and the sentence was of the length John had feared. But John made a motion for a mistrial.

"I said, 'We laid some rules down before the trial started that I thought the other side stepped over,'" John says. "And the judge went (looking at the

prosecutor), 'I think I was pretty clear. I said we weren't going to go here and we weren't going to go there and you kept trying and he kept objecting and you finally just blurted out what I said we weren't going to go into and so I'm declaring a mistrial.'

Just a breath later, the judge added, according to John, "You two guys are at each other's throats so much that I don't think y'all can try this case again."

So the man was tried in another jurisdiction with a different prosecutor and another defender. In the end, John's client—who had been facing three decades in prison—got off with time served, about six months.

"The system goes to hell if you can't trust the prosecutors and the cops and some of them in that case had axes to grind," says John.

Technology has proven that what a police officer says happened is not necessarily what happened, at least in some instances.

"Putting the body cam on them changes it a lot," John says. "Our idea before is different than it is now since everybody has iPhones and stuff where you can record what happens.

I've heard what policemen actually say and what they claim they said. A guy plays me what they really said because his buddy had a phone in the back seat and recorded it all."

People sometimes ask John this simple question: "How can you represent people who break into other people's houses, or murder someone?"

And John responds: "Because I don't want it to be easy for someone to walk in a magistrate's office and say, 'My next door neighbor came over and punched me in the face or raped my wife.' Prove it. Because the window's always opened. You can go to the magistrate's office anytime you want and you can say anything you want and they're going to write the warrant out. But it ain't going to pass the test of beyond a reasonable doubt, because defense attorneys put them to the test, and if we didn't, then it'd be too easy."

John doesn't really understand why certain prosecutors are so negative about the function of defense attorneys in a healthy legal system.

"They will say to us, 'How can you be so passionate about representing this guy that you know is a dirt bag?' And I go, 'How many times has somebody

asked you, Don't you feel paranoid that you're going to send an innocent person to prison sometime?' And nobody ever asks them that question. But they ask us all the time, 'How do you represent dirt bags? How do you represent killers, robbers, rapists?' But they're not worried about the dude that just pulled thirty fricking years for a crime he did not commit."

Good prosecutors, however, welcome a diligent defense attorney. "They'd rather do business with somebody who knows what they're doing," says John. "I've seen too many times where an incompetent defense attorney enters a court room. You can just see the body language of the prosecutor who's thinking, 'I don't know if this guy is guilty or not, but he's going to be if that person's representing him, because that person doesn't know what they're doing.' And unfortunately the level you have to prove to be competent as a defense attorney is very low."

There is a strange paradox in the legal system. "The whole system would break down if you didn't walk into court with everybody assuming the police were telling the truth," he says. "If we all walked in on equal foot-

ing and you said, 'I was not going seventy miles an hour'; and the cop said, 'I clocked him and he was'; and the judge didn't side with the cop, the whole house of cards would come down. So you start from the premise that the police are being honest, and if not, you've got problems."

Sometimes, it would seem, the police are not telling the truth. "I've said it a million times, and I wish twenty years ago I had clipped out every newspaper article in the Richmond Times Dispatch where a prison guard, a deputy sheriff, a cop, an ATF guy did something wrong," says John. "Every other day there's an article in the paper about one of them doing something shady, but they still are galvanized. They walk into court and what they say is one hundred percent believed. And unless I can catch them in a lie, on tape, admitting it, then everybody's going to believe what they say because the rationale is why would they have an axe to grind? Why would they say your guy was going seventy if he wasn't going seventy? They may be telling the truth. But, they're not always right. They're not. Yet, they get the free pass."

"It's my job to police the police," says defense attorney John LaFratta. **■**



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BRIEFS



New Work by Tim Harriss at Eric Schindler Gallery

NEW WORK BY TIM HARRISS IS on display at Eric Schindler Gallery, 2305 East Broad Street. 804.644.5005. Gallery hours: Wednesday through Saturday, 11-5pm; or by appointment. Show runs through May 14.

Left: After Abbott Handerson Thayer - 'A VIRGIN', 2016, oil on canvas by Tim Harriss

Bicycle Friendly Saturdays Begin at Northside Businesses

Businesses in Bellevue are hoping to encourage nearby residents, and other Richmonders, to use bicycles to shop and go out to eat. Beginning April 30, six merchants will offer discounts every Saturday to patrons who arrive by bicycle. Participating businesses will display a green decal with a bicycle logo in their window.

A Bicycle Friendly Business District is typically accessible by bicycle, has amenities like bike racks, and seeks to encourage customers to use bicycles for shopping. This can boost sales, free

up car parking, and enhance neighborhood identity and quality of life.

"I heard of Bicycle Friendly Business Districts in other places and thought the commercial areas on MacArthur and Bellevue Avenues would be perfect for it," says Jason James, a resident of Bellevue who recruited businesses for the program. "It's a very bicycle friendly area, but some people might need a little extra incentive to get on a bicycle rather than jumping in their car."

For a map of participating merchants visit bitly.com/BellevueBFBD

Shady Grove Coffeehouse 15th Anniversary Gala with Dave Nachmanoff

Shady Grove Coffeehouse concludes its fifteenth season on Saturday, May 14, with a Gala 15th Anniversary Celebration featuring Dave Nachmanoff. Doors open at 7:30 pm and the concert begins a half-hour later.

Nachmanoff, who headlined the first Shady Grove concert in 2001, is a singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist who grew up in the sixties and seventies surrounded by the active folk scene of northern Virginia and Washington, DC and was inspired by Pete Seeger, country rock, early revival. When he's not touring on his own, you're liable to find him as a sideman for Al Stewart at venues as far ranging as The Bottom Line, Glastonbury Festival, and the Edmonton Folk Festival.

Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Children under twelve admit-



ted free. Teens, 13 to 18, are admitted at half price. Net proceeds benefit UUCU. For advance tickets, or more information, call (804) 323-4288, visit the Shady Grove web site at shadygrovecoffeehouse.com, or send an e-mail to info@shadygrovecoffeehouse.com

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BRIEFS

Glen Allen Library Friends' Spring Book Sale May 20 and 21

The Glen Allen Library Friends' Spring Book Sale will be held from 10 to 5 Friday, May 20 and Saturday, May 21 in the large public meeting room at the Glen Allen Public Library at 10501 Staples Mill Road.

A huge selection of over 2,500 well sorted items will be available at fantastic prices, from \$0.25 to \$2.

The collection includes hard cover, paper backs, children's books, elementary books, young adult books, magazines, DVDs, CDs, and Audio Books. Subjects include cooking, science fiction, hobbies, large print, westerns, military, civil war, decorating, how-to, popular authors, romance, parenting, relationships, classic literature, and more.


A special collection of unique, antique, and rare items will also be offered at slightly higher prices. This collection is highlighted by over 100 pieces of antique sheet music from the late 1800s and the early 1900s, most priced for \$3 or less.

All proceeds from the Book Sale directly benefit the Glen Allen Library and its programs. Shoppers are asked to come prepared with cash or checks and their own shopping bags, if possible. For more information, call the library at 804-290-9500.

Hanover County Seeking Volunteers for Fire and EMS

Hanover County's Rescue Squads and Fire companies are seeking new members. This is a great opportunity to engage community service, civic duty, learning opportunities and richly rewarding experiences.

Hanover provides the training needed to become an Emergency Medical Technician, or to earn Virginia firefighter certifications. This rewarding commitment provides challenge, achievement, self-satisfaction, teamwork, camaraderie, feelings of helpfulness, and other benefits.

People who are dedicated, able to commit the time, and willing to learn, will find fire and rescue an excellent volunteer activity. Hanover Fire - EMS welcomes ages 16 and up. We also have some administrative positions and welcome volunteers with the skills necessary for running a business. For more information and to arrange a tour please call (804) 365-6195 or visit www.hanoverfireems.org 



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BOOK REVIEW

Who Wins the Game of Life?

by **FRAN WITHROW**

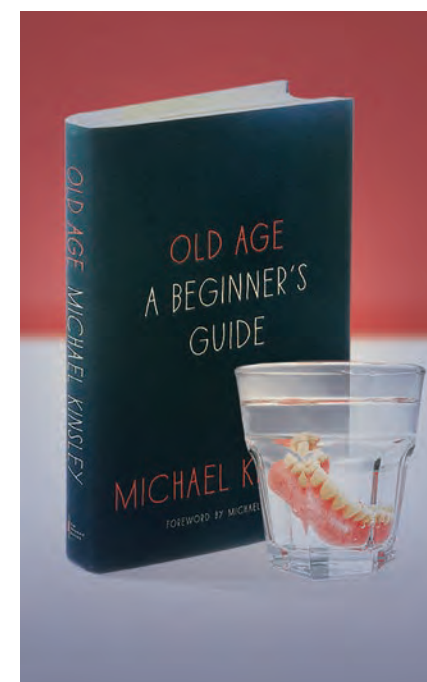
I WAS IMMEDIATELY DRAWN to Michael Kinsley's book, "Old Age: A Beginner's Guide," because of the amusing title. "Old Age," a collection of essays on topics of particular interest to those of us looking in the mirror and seeing ever-increasing hints of lost youth staring back at us, is a quick but thought-provoking read. And despite the seriousness of the topic (who wants to think about mortality?), the book has a humorous bent to it. I laughed frequently as I read it.

Kinsley is not only a Boomer himself but was also diagnosed with Parkinson's disease twenty years ago. He says this diagnosis has pushed him faster into the realm of old age. "I feel like a scout...sent out ahead to experience in my fifties what even the healthiest boomers are going to experience in their sixties, seventies or eighties," he writes. Though Parkinson's figures into several of his essays, the crux of the book is about how we Boomers view life and death: what is important and meaningful? How do we approach the end? What should our legacy be?

From the first few witty pages, Kinsley had me hooked. (Check out the only joke he knows about Parkinson's.) Boomers, he says, are known for being competitive, and we are all trying to figure out who has won the game of life. But how do we define a win? Is it longevity, or having "the most toys?" Is it dying "with all your marbles?" It is an interesting question to probe, and he does this admirably.

This surprisingly cheerful little book tackles some other big issues, like how to handle that almost inevitable time when we receive a serious diagnosis. How does one deal with it? Kinsley says everyone hopes his physician will say something positive, as Kinsley's doctor did when Kinsley received his Parkinson's diagnosis. ("You still have to floss.")

But eventually we all have to go, and Kinsley offers thoughts about the different ways it might happen (not that you typically have a choice, he notes). "Death before dementia" for instance,



is "...your best strategy, at the moment, since there's no cure for either one." Can you imagine anyone else discussing death or dementia in a way that makes you laugh? He discusses heart disease, mental issues and cancer without flinching, and in a way that didn't make me squirm with dread either. It was refreshing to read his honest commentary about these questions we typically shove into the back of our minds.

Kinsley's last chapter is devoted to how Boomers might want to be remembered. We have a tough act to follow: the Greatest Generation won World War II. How do we top that? Others have come up with some ideas: legalizing marijuana, or reinstating the draft. Kinsley's suggestion surprised me, and I think it will you, too. The idea is certainly one worth considering, but I won't spoil it by revealing it here. You'll just have to pick up your own copy of this clever book and read it for yourself. **NJ**

Old Age: A Beginner's Guide

By Michael Kinsley

160 pages

Tim Duggan Books

\$18.00

May 1st is Loyalty Day

by JACK R. JOHNSON



YOU MAY KNOW THAT May 1st is traditionally celebrated as Labor Day in practically every country of the world except the United States, Canada and South Africa, but did you know that America specifically declared May 1st, a 'loyalty day' in an effort to offset Labor day celebrations elsewhere?

According to the Veterans of Foreign Wars website, Loyalty Day was first observed in 1921 as "Americanization Day," and was intended to counterbalance the international celebration of May 1st, which was perceived as being socialist because of its marking of labor rights and, in particular, the Haymarket Riot for an eight-hour work day in Chicago.

The push for Loyalty Day began as a committee to organize a so-called 'Americanization Day' way back in June of 1915. According to the New York Times, "Members of a National Americanization Day Committee" were formed, with headquarters at 95 Madison Avenue, in the home of a certain Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, wife of Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the wealthiest plutocrats of all time.


Americanization Day was designed to "promote general education in citizenship and civic affairs throughout the country". The commemoration of the day evolved into Loyalty Day which was made an official holiday by Congress on July 18, 1958—during during

the height of the red scare—and read into the congressional record as Public Law 85-529. Following the passage of this law, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed May 1, 1959 as the first official observance of Loyalty Day.

No mention of whether or not the proponents of Americanization Day and Loyalty Day favored an eight-hour work day.

But I suspect that Cornelius Vanderbilt—whose fortune rested squarely on the shoulders of workers of almost any age and nationality toiling along his railroad lines 24 hours a day, seven days a week—may not have found the idea especially compelling.

Loyalty Day has been recognized with an official proclamation every year by every president since its inception as a legal holiday in 1958. Even President Barack Obama, a purported socialist, has issued a proclamation for Loyalty Day. You can read the 2016 proclamation on The White House website at the following url <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/27/presidential-proclamation-loyalty-day-2016>

Observances began in 1950 on April 28 and climaxed May 1 when more than five million people across the nation held rallies. In New York City, more than 100,000 people rallied for America. In 1958 Congress enacted Public Law 529 proclaiming Loyalty Day a permanent fixture on the nation's calendar. 

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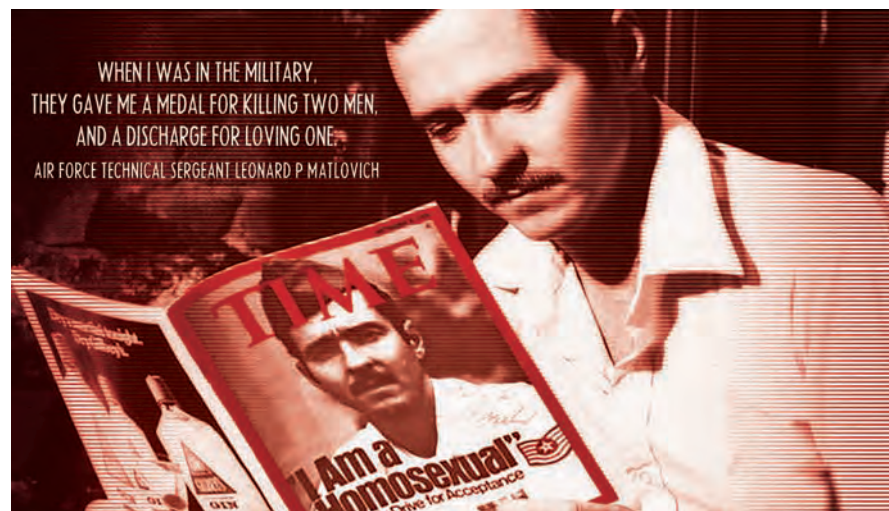
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RAINBOW MINUTES

by BRIAN BURNS and JUDD PROCTOR

Leonard Matlovich— Decorated Soldier



Leonard Matlovich was born in 1943. After high school he enlisted in the Air Force, requesting service in Vietnam. He survived three tours of duty, earning a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for meritorious service.

He continued in the service as a race relations instructor. In 1975, following his own lessons on equality and social acceptance, he came out to his commander – and was promptly dis-

charged. His story made national news.

He took his case to court, and in 1980, a federal judge ordered Matlovich reinstated into the Air Force with back pay.

Upon his death in 1988, he was interred in Washington, D.C. with full military honors and a twenty-one-gun salute. On his headstone were the words he himself had spoken: “When I was in the military, they gave me a medal for killing two men, and a discharge for loving one.”

Victim Number One

Tens of thousands of gay service members have been kicked out of the U.S. military both before and after the adoption of the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy. And with the U.S. Senate’s December 2010 vote to repeal that policy, it is fitting we remember the very first discharged – Lieutenant Gotthold Frederick Enslin.

It all started when Enslin arrived in Philadelphia from Rotterdam in 1774. Three years later he joined the Conti-

mental Army. In 1778, he was brought to trial and tried for attempting to commit sodomy. Found guilty, General George Washington himself approved the sentence.

On March 11, 1778, Lieutenant Enslin was drummed out of the military. With his coat turned inside out, and all the drums and fifes in the army in full cadence, he marched away over the horizon, never to be seen again.

Colonel Cammermeyer Wins the Battle

Born in Norway in 1942, Margarethe Cammermeyer became a U.S. citizen in 1960. She joined the U.S. Army’s Student Nursing Program, earning a B.S. in Nursing in 1963.

During her military career, Cammermeyer served a tour in Vietnam, and earned a Bronze Star, as well as many citations.

After her marriage ended, she met Diane Divelbess, who became her life partner.

In 1987, Cammermeyer was promoted to full Colonel. Two years later, she acknowledged she was a lesbian. Despite praising her as “one of the great Americans,” the military discharged her. She filed suit, and in 1994 a Federal District court ruled the ban on gays in the military unconstitutional, ordering Cammermeyer’s reinstatement.

That same year, she published her autobiography, *Serving In Silence*, which became a made-for-TV movie.

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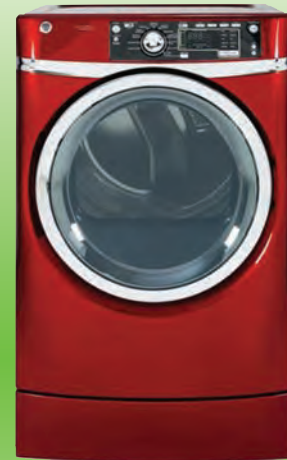
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