

# NORTH OF THE JAMES®



## CHRIS *Brown*

was railroaded by a corrupt justice system when he was just fifteen years old. He could have been institutionalized for life, but there were good seeds among the bad—a counsellor and a probation officer. And through it all, Chris read widely, and gravitated toward people who were intelligent, curious, and, like himself, outsiders. For much of his professional life he ping-ponged between the United States and China. Ten years ago, Henry Holt and Company published his first novel, “Hoppergrass”, a coming of age story that evolves into a full-fledged murder mystery. Like the novel’s protagonist, Bowser, Chris Brown has come to understand that central to all humanity is compassion. Without it, we are sunk.

*continued on page 14*



# TRIMMERS

NO OTHER STRAIGHT  
SHAFT TRIMMER IS  
MORE FUEL EFFICIENT  
**THAN THE SRM-225!**

21.2 CC PROFESSIONAL-GRADE,  
2-STROKE ENGINE

59" STRAIGHT SHAFT WITH  
FLEX CABLE DRIVE

i-30™ STARTING SYSTEM REDUCES  
STARTING EFFORT BY 30%

RUBBER OVER-MOLD GRIP

DURABLE DEBRIS SHIELD  
WITH CUT-OFF KNIFE

SPEED-FEED® TRIMMER HEAD



**\$199.99**

**ECHO**  
OUTDOOR POWER EQUIPMENT

**5 YEAR**  
CONSUMER WARRANTY  
**2 YEAR**  
COMMERCIAL WARRANTY

**Arthur's Electric Service, Inc.**

8910 Brook Road • Glen Allen, VA 23060 • 804-264-2513

## TABLE of CONTENTS

- 4 BUSINESS PROFILE Brooks Diner: Kathy Deleguardia's Family**  
Kathy carved out a perfect niche in the lower North Side—a classic diner. She serves up comfort food with a Southern flair and absolutely no pretensions. All the food is fresh, and the pricing affordable even for the slimmest billfold. And this, too: Breakfast is available all day long, with lunch overlapping, so it's as if brunch is served up seven days a week.
- 8 BOOK REVIEW No Walls, No Borders**  
"The Line Becomes a River" is an exquisite book about a heart-wrenching and timely subject. It is not merely an eye-opening description of a Border Patrol agent's life, but also a treatise about integrity, compassion, and one's own moral compass. This thought-provoking book is remarkable for its spare, poetic language and its insights into the unending tragedy along our border with Mexico.
- 10 HIDDEN HISTORIES Time's Up! A Short History of the NRA**  
The words National Rifle Association (NRA) are now synonymous with inflexibility on any suggestion of reasonable gun laws—but that wasn't always the case. In fact, the early NRA helped to craft some of the most important gun control legislation ever passed in this country.
- 12 COVER STORY Chris Carlton Brown: Coming Full**  
Circle Chris was railroaded by a corrupt justice system when he was just fifteen years old. He could have been institutionalized for life, but there were good seeds among the bad—a counsellor and a probation officer. Ten years ago, Henry Holt and Company published his first novel, "Hoppergrass", a coming of age story that evolves into a full-fledged murder mystery. Like the novel's protagonist, Bowser, Chris Brown has come to understand that central to all humanity is compassion. Without it, we are sunk.
- 18 RESTAURANT REVIEW HobNob: Real-Life Perfection**  
It's kind of perfect. Or rather, it's the real-life version of perfect: it's just right. Classy, not pretentious; innovative, not trendy; cozy, not cramped; casual but not too. It's just the right amount of everything. Kristin and Tracey Thoroman made sure of that when they bought and re-did the old Hermitage Grill on Lakeside Avenue and opened this Northside treasure in November 2017.



COVER PHOTOGRAPH  
by REBECCA D'ANGELO

# NORTH OF THE JAMES

editor/publisher

**CHARLES G. MCGUIGAN**

art director

**DOUG DOBEY** at Dobby Design

account executive

**A NORA BLAKE**

contributing writers

**DALE M BRUMFIELD  
BRIAN BURNS  
ORION HUGHES  
JACK R JOHNSON  
ANDREW CHURCHER  
ANNE JONES  
CATHERINE MCGUIGAN  
JUDD PROCTOR  
FRAN WITHROW**

contributing photographers

**REBECCA D'ANGELO**

editorial: charlesmcguigan@gmail.com

advertising: amandanorablake@gmail.com

Independently owned and operated.

**NORTH of the JAMES**® magazine is published every month. Letters to the editor are welcome, but become the property of **NORTH of the JAMES**® magazine. Letters may be edited for clarity and length. Although we invite unsolicited manuscripts, we cannot be accountable for their return. The publisher is not responsible for errors. Copyright 2018® by **NORTH of the JAMES** magazine®. All rights reserved. Views and opinions by our writers do not necessarily represent those of **NORTH of the JAMES** magazine®. **NORTH of the JAMES** magazine® is not responsible for claims made by our advertisers.

For media kits and ad rate information, write or call:  
**NORTH OF THE JAMES MAGAZINE**®

PO Box 9225  
Richmond, VA 23227  
(804) 218-5265

[www.northofthejames.com](http://www.northofthejames.com)

# NorthSide Grille

Chart a course to Richmond's  
finest family neighborhood restaurant  
in the heart of Bellevue

Monday through Saturday: 11am till closing\*

Sunday: 10am till closing\*

Join us **early for brunch** or **dollar tacos** later in the day

\*limited menu after 10 pm

Your Family Friendly Neighborhood Restaurant  
Join Us for Happy Hour Specials 3-6pm, Mon-Fri

1217 Bellevue Avenue • 266-4403

# Classic Touch Cleaning

Simplifying Lives

One House

At a Time!

**Residential Cleaning**

**1229 Bellevue Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23227**

**(804) 262-6979**

**E-mail: [classictouchcleaning@verizon.net](mailto:classictouchcleaning@verizon.net)**

**Website: [www.classictouchcleaning.com](http://www.classictouchcleaning.com)**



# Brooks Diner: Kathy Deleguardia's Family

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**E**VEN BEFORE Kathy Deleguardia was born, there was foreshadowing of things to come, hints about the diner she would one day open, and the industry in which she has spent her entire adult life.

"My father owned a diner in the fifties," says Kathy. "When my parents got together and married, my dad owned a diner. It was in the town where I grew up—Fairport, New York." She pauses for a moment, remembering something else. "My great-grandparents on my English side owned a bakery in England," she says. "They also peddled baked goods out of a truck. So both sides of my family worked in hospitality. And I do love the hospitality industry."

It's Sunday afternoon, a full hour after Brooks Diner closed, and a dozen customers linger at two four-tops, a booth, and three of the barstools that line the counter. They're finishing off deserts and coffee, still telling stories, but they're not being rushed along. This is, after all, a Southern diner, and the jawing and the japing are almost as important as the eating.

Kathy's two sons, Javen and Blake Thomas, join us for a time at the booth that commands a view from the south side of the diner, offering one of the most distinctive views of Richmond's skyline anywhere in the city. And then Jason Naggles comes by our booth and talks for a while. "I don't have any family here other than my boys," Kathy says. "But so many people who work here are family now. And a lot of our patrons, too. Jason's been coming in for about a year now and he's definitely family. On Sundays he comes in, helps out, and then we end the day with a prayer. I am really blessed."

Eight years ago, on June 2, Brooks Diner opened its doors for the first time. Kathy received the key to the restaurant on her birthday in late March. Then it was a mad scramble to get ready for the opening. They deep-cleaned and painted, added chairs and booths, light fixtures, and all the other trappings of a diner. The day after all their licensing and zoning was approved by the respective city offices, Kathy and her former business partner opened for business. "We wrote the menu in the eleventh hour over

the Memorial Day weekend," says Kathy. "And we were working until the moment we opened the front door that first morning."

And even that first day, they did surprisingly well. "When I opened that first day, I didn't know anything about business and managing people," she says, laughing. "But I learned."

Kathy did know a thing or two about diners. "My first job at eighteen ever was in a diner," she says. "It was called the Country Club Diner, and I was working my way through college. It was in Rochester, New York. I did the bar rush, ten at night till six in the morning, and I went to college during the day. We had thirteen waitresses and it was a 250-seater."

She later worked at a Chinese restaurant, a Thai restaurant, an Indian restaurant. She also worked at two upscale restaurants, Hogan's Hideway and Charlie's Frog Pond, but her last waitressing gig in Rochester was at a diner called Jim's Restaurant.

When she and her former husband decided to pull up stakes and head south, they checked out Richmond, and as they were driving out West Broad Street, Kathy caught a glimpse of a restaurant out of the corner of her eye. It was a fleeting image, but something registered with her. "This was even before we made the decision to move to Richmond," Kathy says. "We drove by McLeans and I saw the business hours and I thought to myself: That's where I want to work. The hours were perfect—morning to early afternoon."

When they settled in Richmond, Kathy painted watercolors for the frame shop where her husband worked, and glazed Pogs in the studio of North Side ceramic artist Mary Garber. Kathy also landed a job at McLeans. They brought her on to fill in for a server who was out on maternity leave, and the position eventually became full-time. Kathy would work there for the next nine years, until she opened Brooks Diner.

"McLeans was family to me," she says. "It was a lucrative job, and there wasn't a lot of turnover." Even the name of her diner came through McLeans. "Brooks Diner is actually named after Ann Brooks who worked at McLeans for 35 years and she raised five kids as a



Top: Kathy Deleguardia flanked by her sons Javen and Blake Thomas.

Above: Brooks Diner, after the lunch rush.

single mother, and I adored her," Kathy says. "We worked together for seven years, and I partnered here originally with her granddaughter, Connie."

Kathy ended up carving out a perfect niche in the lower North Side—a classic diner. She serves up comfort food with a Southern flair and absolutely no pretensions. All the food is fresh, and the pricing affordable even for the slimmest billfold. And this, too: Breakfast is available all day long, with lunch overlapping, so it's as if brunch is served up seven days a week.

Beyond all that, though, it's the place itself, its warmth and ambiance. It feels like family here, and that has every-

thing to do with Kathy.

"I feel like I'm welcoming people into my home and I love setting my own environment," she says. "I love playing my own music." Incidentally, the music is always perfect.

"And then I have the social interaction," says Kathy. "The satisfaction of knowing that someone has been nurtured, and that they feel welcomed."

Earlier in the day, eight people celebrated a birthday here, three four-tops slid together to form a table that could comfortably seat the entire party. "Those are my proudest moments," Kathy says. "When people choose my restaurant for celebratory occasion, it



# Fin & Feather Pet Center, Inc.

Established 1959



www.fin-feather.com

**OPEN 7 Days a Week**

**RICHMOND**  
5208 LAKESIDE AVE  
(Convenient to I-64, Powhite & I-95 interchange.  
Just off Exit 80, across from Franco's)

**262-6681**



# Professional Pet Grooming by The Barking Lot

All Breeds Of Dogs And Cats

**SHOP LOCALLY, BUY LOCALLY!**

## Cute Dogs & Cats For Adoption

Through Area Rescue Groups

Check out our website or facebook page for adoption stands.

### Pond Center Open Year Round

**ALL PONDS AND POND SUPPLIES \$50 OFF**

\$50 OFF any purchase of \$300 or more  
\$25 OFF any purchase of \$199 to \$299.99

For use in Pond Center only. Not valid with any other discounts, with other coupons, discounts, sale items, cat litter and dog or cat food. Expires 6/6/18



**PONDMASTER**



**PondMAX**

### Dog & Cat Food



**\$2.00 OFF** Dog or Cat food up to 8 lbs.  
**\$3.00 OFF** Dog or Cat food of 12 lbs. to 25 lbs.  
**\$5.00 OFF** Dog or Cat food of 26 lbs. or more

Valid for Precise, Eukanuba, Natural Balance and Iams brands, only. Not valid with sale items, other coupons or discounts. Expires 6/6/18

**\$4.00 OFF GROOMING**



**(New Customers Only)**

With Coupons Only. Not Valid With Any Other Offer. Expires 6/6/18



**FREE PARAKEET**

With Purchase Of Parakeet Set-Up

Not valid with sale items, other coupons or discounts. Expires 6/6/18

### FREE TROPICAL FISH



**Buy One at Reg. Price, Get One of Equal or Lesser Value Free**

Limit \$5.99 value. Not valid with sale items, other coupons or discounts. Expires 6/6/18



**15% OFF REPTILE SUPPLIES**

With Purchase Of A Reptile

Not valid with sale items, other coupons or discounts. Expires 6/6/18

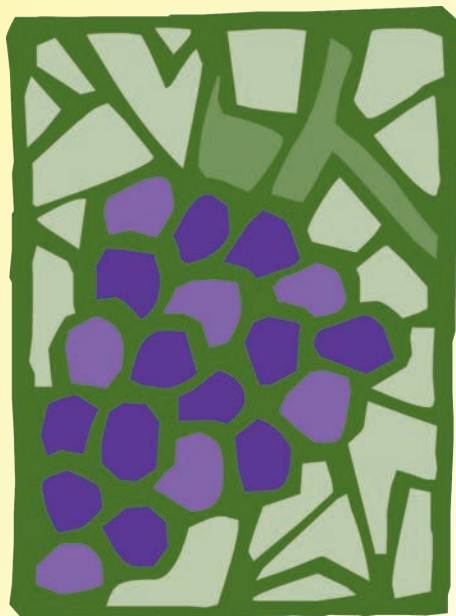
### SAVE ON PET SUPPLIES

**\$10 OFF**





\$10 OFF any purchase of \$60 or more  
\$5 OFF any purchase of \$35 to \$59.99  
\$2 OFF any purchase of \$15 to \$34.99

Not valid with sale items, other coupons or discounts, cat litter, dog or cat food. Not valid on Frontline or Advantage. Expires 6/6/18





# Once Upon a Vine

-  Wine Tastings Every Friday Night!
-  One of the most extensive wine and beer selections in Richmond... something to fit every wallet.
-  Nostalgic candies for the kids.
-  Selection of cheeses, crackers, chips and sauces.

**14th Anniversary Party**  
**May 12, 1-5 pm**  
**Food, Wine, Beer, Music, Contests, Raffles**  
**\$15 all you can eat and drink**

**Order Your Kegs For Summer Parties**

**An Additional Discount For Wedding Parties**

**Free Friday Night Movies**  
 (Requests For Your Favorite Movies Encouraged)

**Summer Beers Have Arrived**

**Beer & Wine Tastings Every Friday 5-8 pm**

**Open 7 Days A Week**

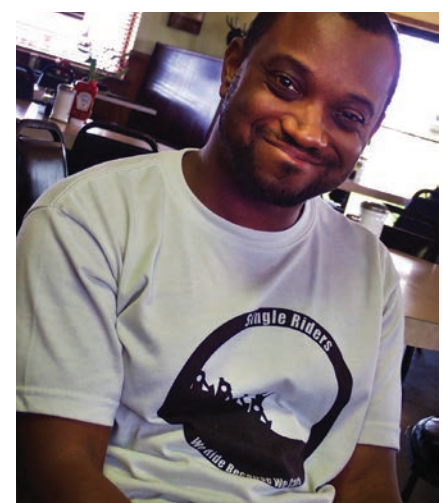
Sunday - Thursday 11 am - 9 pm | Friday & Saturday 11 am - 11 pm.

**4009 MacArthur Avenue Phone: 726-WINE (9463) FAX: 726-VINE (8463)**

To get on our e-mail list log on to [onceuponavine@aol.com](mailto:onceuponavine@aol.com)

Look For Us On Trinkin, Follow Us On Twitter

**JOIN US ON FACEBOOK** 



*Jason Naggles, one of the family.*

makes me so proud. It really is such an honor to me.”

“And the other thing that I love is the comfort level my diners have,” she says. “A single woman, alone, can come in her sweats, and feel at home, because to me a diner is the home of a community. There is a social connection. It’s a community-based restaurant.”

Kathy looks to the future. “Now, it’s time to branch out a little bit,” she says. “More vegetarian selections, and gluten-free and sautéed dishes.” There may one day be outdoor dining, and beer and wine.

When she considers the past eight years, says Kathy, “I’ve been running a family business without a family.”

Then she stops herself in mid-sentence. “I’ve been blessed that so many angels that have come to help me over the years,” she says. “I’ve had tremendous support.” Kathy gestures toward her two sons, and the young man who sits at our booth. “Javon found a family here,” she says, and Javon nods.

She mentions her employees, Carly, Jo and Aimee, Kenny and Terrence, and all the others. And then she tells me about two retired brothers—Herman and Jerry Hicks—whose parents used to run the Chesterfield Diner on Hull Street. “They were customers, and from day one they have stepped in to help on the floor when we’ve needed people,” Kathy says. She lists others still, patrons and friends alike, who have become an integral part of the Brooks Diner family.

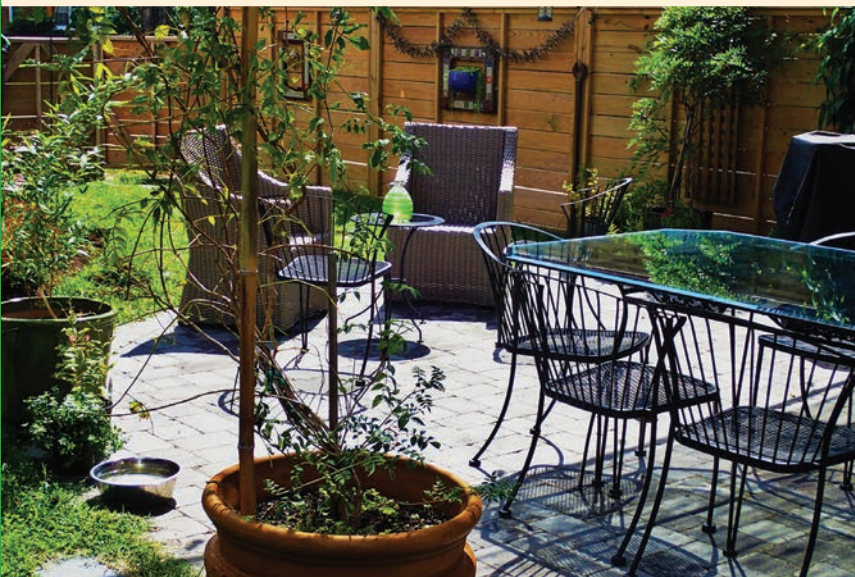
“I’ve been very blessed,” says Kathy Deleguardia. “Lovely, lovely people. A lot of good people in our lives. And it has become family. It’s beautiful.”

**Brooks Diner**  
 Mon-Fri, 7-3; Sat & Sun, 8-2  
 1600 Brook Road  
 Richmond, VA 23220  
 (804)-225-8577



# My Outdoor Project

Let Victor Make Your Outdoor Project, His Outdoor Project



**HARDSCAPING** patios, walkways, raised beds, stairs

**LANDSCAPING** no job too large, or too small

**CUSTOM-FENCING** and **MULCHING**

Contact

**VICTOR AYALA**

master mason and landscaper

**804 912 9789**

[my\\_new\\_project@outlook.com](mailto:my_new_project@outlook.com)





## STIR CRAZY CAFÉ

4015 MacArthur Avenue  
Richmond, VA

Monday - Friday  
7am - 5pm

Saturday - Sunday  
7:30am - 5pm

Now Offering Breakfast and  
Lunch Catering, and Space Rental

Contact Stephanie at  
stephanie@stircrazyrva.com  
or 804 864 0264

804 864 0264  
jordan@stircrazyrva.com

facebook.com/stircrazyrva  
instagram.com/stircrazyrva

## BOOK REVIEW

# No Walls, No Borders

by FRAN WITHROW

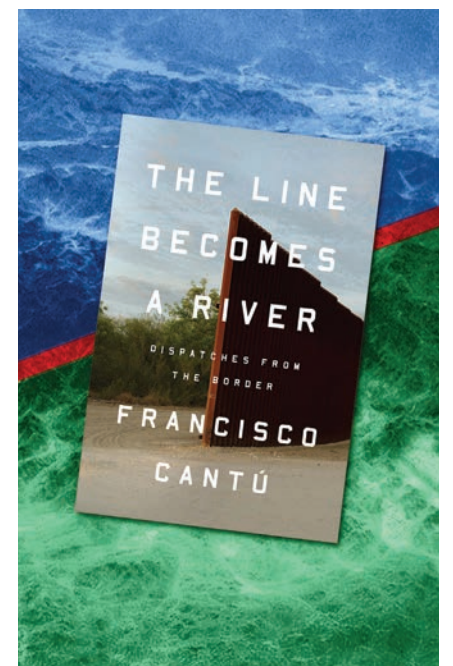
**T**HE LINE BECOMES A *River* is an exquisite book about a heart-wrenching and timely subject. It is not merely an eye-opening description of a Border Patrol agent's life, but also a treatise about integrity, compassion, and one's own moral compass. This thought-provoking book is remarkable for its spare, poetic language and its insights into the unending tragedy along our border with Mexico.

Cantu is a United States citizen with Mexican heritage. He decides to join the Border Patrol to help him understand immigration, and is immediately thrown into the task of retrieving dead bodies from the desert and returning survivors to detention, as well as destroying everything that might support the migrants on their journey. (Think basic necessities like food supplies and water. What a waste.)

After observing the suffering of migrants and his response as a Border Patrol agent, Cantu is plagued by nightmares. His mother, a former park ranger, can tell he is conflicted. "The government took my passion and bent it to its own purpose," she tells her son. "I don't want that for you." She knows a job like his can steal one's soul.

Cantu continues to wrestle with the morality of what he is doing for four years, knowing that the majority of crossers are not drug runners but people trying to escape the horrors of Mexico's most murderous cities. Between 2000 and 2016, for example, the Border Patrol reported over six thousand deaths of people trying to cross. Can you imagine how horrendous life must be for you to leave your home and risk traveling across such a deadly desert? Yet murder, kidnapping, and extortion are so rampant in many cities that people feel they have no other option. The peril is real. And so is the desperation.

Even after leaving the Border Patrol, Cantu remains haunted by his dreams and profoundly affected by what he has seen. But the plight of



migrants follows him when his co-worker, Jose, an illegal immigrant who has lived quietly in the U.S. for thirty years, risks everything to cross the border and say goodbye to his dying mother. Where is the justice for people like Jose and their families? This part of the story is difficult to read. Jose's children are U.S. citizens. His wife is here, and he has lived here most of his life. What can he do? He is well aware of the danger of crossing: death in the desert, imprisonment, deportation. How many families are torn apart because of the border? And are Border Patrol agents the answer? If not, what is?

This is a book you will carry with you after turning the last page. It is a courageous, hauntingly written reflection that never mentions a border wall. Cantu never speaks about Trump. But he offers hope that someday the border will become just a blurred and fluid line, the river not a boundary but a landmark, a place where Mexicans and Americans are not "the other," but are, in fact, all one and the same. **NJ**

***The Line Becomes a River:  
Dispatches from the Border***  
by Francisco Cantu  
250 pages  
Riverhead Books  
\$26.00



**MAIN STREET LAW**

**John G LaFratta**

**Criminal Law  
Traffic Violations  
Estate Planning  
Family Law**

**EDUCATION:**

University of Richmond,  
TC Williams School of Law, JD  
University of Richmond, Robins  
School of Business, MBA  
North Carolina State  
University, BA

**PROFESSIONAL  
ASSOCIATIONS AND  
MEMBERSHIPS:**

Richmond Criminal Bar  
Association  
Virginia Bar Association  
Richmond Juvenile Bar  
Association  
Caroline County Bar  
Association

**john@mainstlaw.com  
804.355.1800**



**AXSELLE**

*An  
Old-Fashioned  
Service Station*

**Family Owned And  
Operated For 65 Years  
Full Automotive Service  
And Repair**

**266-3574  
5515 Lakeside Avenue**



**GINTER PARK  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**LIVING OUR BELIEF,**

we are a member church of  
More Light Presbyterians,  
affirming God's love for all those  
in the LGBTQ+ community.  
Locally, Side by Side has  
recognized GPPC with its  
annual Catalyst Award.

We are a diverse, caring, and  
inclusive congregation.

Our music draws from cultures  
across the globe, from centuries-  
old traditions and from fresh  
expressions of faith.

Our sermons begin in scripture  
and speak to our lives today.

Our ministries strive for justice  
near and far.

We open our arms to you.

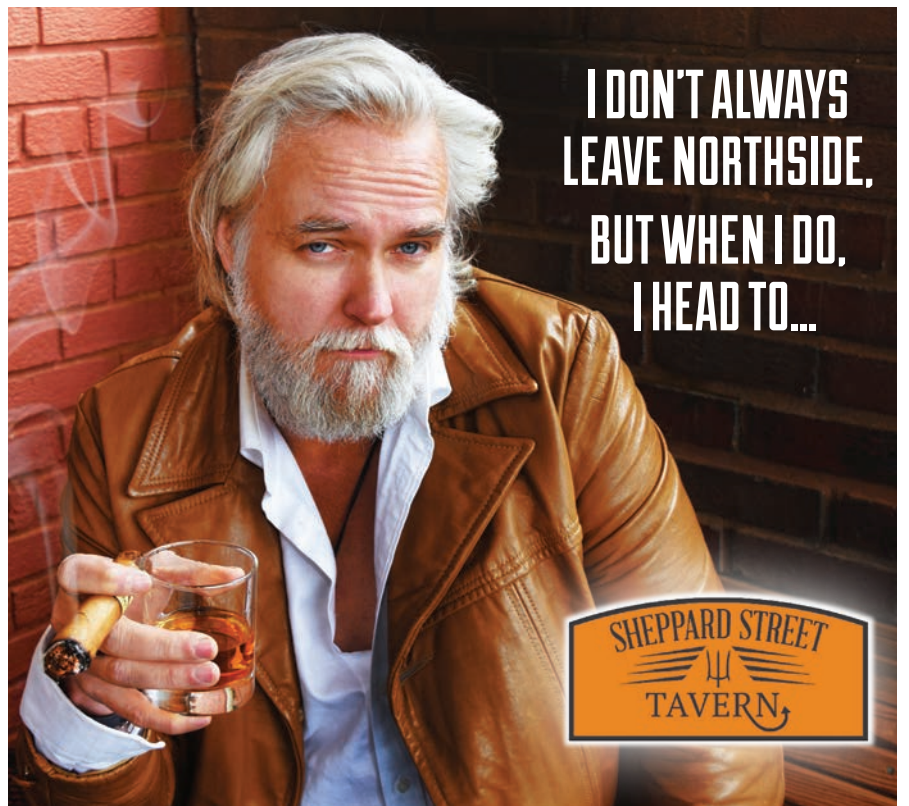
**Sundays through May 20**  
Church School 9:30 a.m.  
Worship 11 a.m.

**Sundays May 27  
through September 2**  
Worship 10 a.m.

3601 Seminary Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23227

[ginterparkpc.org](http://ginterparkpc.org)

Ministers: all members  
Pastor: Carla Pratt Keyes



**I DON'T ALWAYS  
LEAVE NORTHSIDE,  
BUT WHEN I DO,  
I HEAD TO...**



**COME EAT, DRINK AND PEOPLE WATCH  
ON OUR DOG-FRIENDLY PATIO**

**2920 PARK AVENUE**

LOCATED IN THE HEART OF THE DEVIL'S TRIANGLE

JOIN US FOR WEEKEND BRUNCH, AND THE BEST BURGERS IN TOWN

NORTHSIDE OWNED AND OPERATED



[SHEPPARDSTREETTAVERN.COM](http://SHEPPARDSTREETTAVERN.COM) | 804 340 2920



**Rebecca D'Angelo  
REALTOR®**



**Creating Community  
One Home At A Time**



**dangeloRVArealtor**

**804.874.9709**

**dangeloRVArealtor  
@gmail.com**

**Virginia Capital Realty  
1106 N Thompson  
RVA 23230**



**VIRGINIA CAPITAL  
REAL ESTATE**





# Time's Up! A Short History of the NRA

BY JACK R. JOHNSON



**T**HE WORDS NATIONAL Rifle Association (NRA) are now synonymous with inflexibility on any suggestion of reasonable gun laws—but that wasn't always the case. In fact, the early NRA helped to craft some of the most important gun control legislation ever passed in this country.

In its inception the NRA had little or nothing to do with so-called 'gun rights' and was far more concerned with using rifles and pistols well. The organization was birthed by two Civil War Union veterans, Colonel William C. Church and General George Wingate, who were dismayed by the poor training and marksmanship of fresh Union troops. They formed the National Rifle Association in 1871 and its primary goal was to "promote and encourage rifle shooting on a scientific basis." They wanted to improve the marksmanship of urban northerners which they believed was inferior to the marksmanship of their rural southern counterparts, and which they suspected helped to prolong the Civil War.

Their motto during this time was a simple enumeration of this goal: "Firearms Safety Education, Marksmanship Training, Shooting for Recreation." No concern about the Second Amendment, or access to weapons.

When prohibition kicked in during the late 1920s, crime escalated throughout the country and one of the main problems was easy access to dangerous weapons like machine guns, capable of

spewing multiple rounds per second, or sawed-off shotguns.

The NRA assisted Franklin Delano Roosevelt in drafting the 1934 National Firearms Act, and the 1938 Gun Control Act, the first federal gun control laws that regulated, banned and taxed machine guns, sawed-off shotguns and silencers. Gun sellers and owners were required to register with the federal government, and felons were banned from owning weapons. Karl T. Frederick, the president of the NRA, testified before Congress stating, "I have never believed in the general practice of carrying weapons. I do not believe in the general promiscuous toting of guns. I think it should be sharply restricted and only under licenses."

Throughout the New Deal years, and for a long time thereafter, the NRA stood alongside politicians who favored tight Federal regulations on weapons.

When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald using an Italian military surplus rifle purchased from a NRA mail-order advertisement, NRA Executive Vice-President Franklin Orth immediately supported a ban on such sales. According to Time Magazine, at a congressional hearing Orth said, in part, "We do think that any sane American, who calls himself an American, can object to placing into this bill the instrument which killed the president of the United States." Even as late as 1967, the NRA supported a ban on carrying loaded weapons in public as enacted by California's Mulford Act. One should note that this support

may have had as much to do with the Black Panthers impromptu march on the State Capitol to protest gun control legislation on May 2, 1967, as any sense of civic duty, but to be sure, there were no loud calls of Second Amendment disenfranchisement, or overreaching by the nanny state.

Even the Gun Control Act of 1968, which updated the original law passed by FDR to include minimum age and serial number requirements, was tacitly accepted. The law extended the original gun ban to include the mentally ill, and drug addicts. In addition, it restricted the shipping of guns across state lines to collectors and federally licensed dealers, and certain types of bullets could only be purchased with a valid ID. The NRA blocked the most stringent part of the legislation, which mandated a national registry of all guns and a license for all gun carriers, but in an interview in American Rifleman, Franklin Orth stated that despite portions of the law appearing "unduly restrictive, the measure as a whole appears to be one that the sportsmen of America can live with."

The NRA was still a far cry from producing hyperbolic television videos threatening "clenched fists of truth", accusing liberals of treason, and telling media outlets that their 'time is up.'

In 1971 that all began to fall apart. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, raided the home of longtime NRA member Kenyon Ballew who had been reported stock piling weapons and hand grenades.

He was a collector who happened to have on hand a few deactivated hand grenades that functioned as paperweights. When the BATF agents broke into his apartment after Ballew refused to answer his door, he picked up his revolver and they exchanged fire. He was wounded and left paralyzed.

Following the incident, NRA board member and editor of New Hampshire's Manchester Union Leader William Loeb referred to the federal agents as "Treasury Gestapo" from which we can already hear echoes of "Jack Booted thugs." To address the incident, the NRA's top managers in 1975 created the group's first lobbying organ, the Institute for Legislative Action.

According to NPR, the ILA was headed by a Texas lawyer named Harlon Carter, an immigration hawk who had headed up the Border Patrol in the 1950s.

"You don't stop crime by attacking guns," he said. "You stop crime by stopping criminals."

Or the now infamous, "Guns don't kill people, people kill people."

Carter was soon at odds with the Old Guard of the parent NRA, who downsized his ILA staff. He fought back by organizing an uprising at the annual NRA convention in 1977 and in the end, Carter won, ascending to NRA's de facto leadership as its executive vice president. He installed another hard-liner, Neal Knox, to head the ILA. The new marching orders were to oppose all forms of gun control across the board and lobby aggressively for gun owners' rights in Congress and the legislatures.

The NRA subsequently came to view attempts to enact gun-control laws as threats to the Second Amendment. It was only a few decades later that Charlton Heston would become famous in his role as NRA president, hoisting a rifle, and proclaiming vehemently, "From my cold dead hands!", at their yearly convention.

From that moment to Wayne LaPierre insisting that "the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun," is a straight line. Now NRA spokesperson Dana Loesch insists that arming school teachers across the country is a suitable response to the Parkland High School shooting in which 17 people were killed by a semi-automatic AR-15; a weapon the NRA would once have banned. **[N]**



# ESCAPE MASSAGE & SALT THERAPY ROOM

MEMBERSHIPS, GIFT CARDS &  
SALT PRODUCTS AVAILABLE



## SALT THERAPY

45 Minute Session at Westchester

Coming Soon to Rutland

Halotherapy or Salt Therapy helps reduce stress & headaches, increases energy & promotes a better sleep pattern.

### ALSO HELPS WITH RESPIRATORY ISSUES

- Asthma & COPD • Smoker's Cough • Cystic Fibrosis
- Sinus & Ear Infections • Coughs, Colds & Flu
- Sleeping & Snoring Problems • Allergies

### & SKIN CONDITIONS

- Psoriasis • Rashes • Eczema • Acne • And More

## MASSAGE

- Therapeutic • Couples • Prenatal • Deep Tissue
- Hot Stone • Aromatherapy • Corporate Chair

Our massages are full 30, 60, 90 & 120-minute "hands-on" sessions.

## WESTCHESTER COMMONS

15500 Westchester Commons Way  
(across from Target)  
Midlothian  
794-0445

## RUTLAND COMMONS

9225 Atlee Rd. Suite 5103  
(across from Kroger)  
Mechanicsville  
730-6777

[WWW.ESCAPEMASSAGE.COM](http://WWW.ESCAPEMASSAGE.COM)

OPEN M-F 9AM-9PM, SAT 8AM-6PM, SUN 12PM-6PM

*Come join us...*

Off the Beaten Path



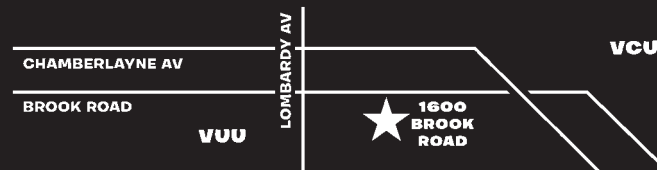
## Straight Up Comfort Food Without All the Hype

7 Days A Week • Orders to Go  
Monday-Friday 7-3 • Saturday & Sunday 8-2

Breakfast and Lunch Served All Day

1600 Brook Road • Richmond, VA 23220

804.225.8577



## COME DANCE WITH US!



(Natalie and Audrey) at

## SCOTT BOYER TEACHES DANCE

Ages 3 to adult, priced from \$210.

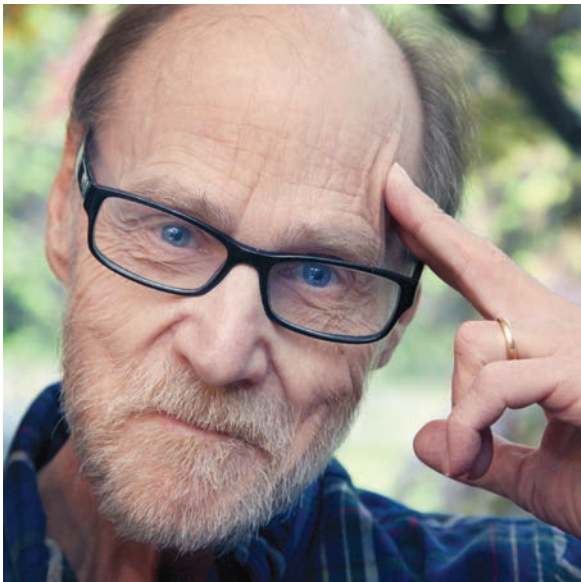
804-798-9364

[scottboyerteachesdance@yahoo.com](mailto:scottboyerteachesdance@yahoo.com)



# Chris Carlton Brown

## COMING FULL CIRCLE



### ON AN ENDLESS SUMMER NIGHT

in Falls Church, Virginia some fifty years ago, a group of ten teenage boys made their way into King David Memorial Cemetery on West Street. Each one of them carried a single, neatly folded pillowcase fresh from a family linen closet. They had a plan, and the eternity of the early morning hours to carry it out. With voices hushed to whispers, they crept across the close-cropped grass of the cemetery moving toward their objective—a silver rectangle of water with a fountain sprouting from its center. Half of the boys flanked one side of the pond, standing steady on its bank, pillowcases unfurled and open. The other five stood on the opposite bank, and silently stepped into the water, then began walking forward in a straight, steady line. Thirty or forty ducks awakened and swam ahead of the moving flank of teens. The stationary column manning the other shore waited as the ducks paddled toward them. Then the boys scooped them up, and stuffed them in the pillowcases. Chris Brown and his friends flung the squirming, duck-heavy sacks over their shoulders, and skulked through the streets of the small, sleeping Northern Virginia town, a band of beardless Santas with more mischief than merry on their minds. They released ducks in motel swimming pools, or in lobbies. They checked front doors of homes in their own neighborhoods, and if unlocked, the boys released a duck or two in the foyer. They moved from house to house. Some ducks ended up in backyards. As day broke gray on the horizon, about twenty-four ducks had found new and temporary homes, and some of the lawns of Falls Church were strewn with duck feathers like an improbable summer snow.

### IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH, LIFE COMES FULL CIRCLE.

Chris Carlton Brown and his friends were never caught or charged for the prank they pulled half a century ago. But not long after that escapade, Chris would be caught and charged with another crime, and his life would change forever.

Chris and his wife, Sue, live in what may be the last unmolested chunk of land along Broad Street in Henrico's west end, not far from the Goochland County line. It is a heavily wooded tract on a series of rolling hills, an enclave of several homes accessed by a narrow gravel drive. A branch of Little Tuckahoe Creek carves a winding ravine through the property. The Brown's home, which the couple built almost thirty years ago, is surrounded by woods and overlooks a pond that is luminescent green with algae and duckweed. A cool, spring rain filters through the canopy of trees, and mingles with the petals of cherry blossoms which are falling constantly in the front yard.

We sit at the kitchen table, where Chris does the majority of his writing. His laptop is shut, and he wears

a blue-plaid flannel shirt. His face is lean with sharp-cut features, and he sports a thin beard, and heavy black-rimmed glasses.

"What people say about me is none of my business," says Chris Brown. "Hoppergrass' (the novel Chris penned more than a decade ago) is a lot about that. The protagonist at the beginning thinks he's a piece of s\*\*t at the very center of the universe. So the problem is not the piece of s\*\*t part. The problem is the center of the universe part. He is tormented because everything is focused on his problems. That's all he can think about. And then as soon as he has to help somebody else, then he doesn't have time to be center of the universe anymore."

Now that he is a teacher who holds a master's in special education, Chris can look back on his own childhood with a diagnostic scrutiny. "I had some sort of a very pronounced learning limitation and a difficulty relating socially to other people," he says. "In my case, it was ADHD, I think. My biggest memory is sitting outside in the school hall, but I swear, for the life of me, I can't remember a single infraction that put me

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN  
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO





there. It was probably due to impulse control. I was so disruptive that they would just put me out there and forget about me.”

Chris remembers two incidents of skylarking that both occurred in seventh grade. The first was during a French class. “I was daydreaming and looking out the window and right into my own story,” he says. “And it was like coming out of the influence of morphine. And there was my French teacher with her face about an inch away from me. She’d been trying to get me to repeat a line in French, and I wasn’t even aware of her

presence. So they transferred me into a special education class where all they did was remedial reading.”

The other incident occurred in that special ed class. “The same thing happened again,” says Chris. “As I was daydreaming, this woman, my teacher, who was really ferocious, screamed in my face.”

The following year, the family moved from Silver Spring, Maryland to Falls Church, Virginia. “By then, I was given the label juvenile delinquent,” Chris says. “That was my solid identity. That I’m not going to do

well in school, try as hard as I can, it’s not going to happen. It’s going to be hard for me to make friends, so I sought an outside group that I could belong to, because we were all outsiders.”

As both a special ed teacher and a wordsmith, Chris has come up with his share of aphorisms. “If a kid is bad at being good, he will want to be good at being bad,” says Chris. “That’s almost a universal paradigm.”

In Falls Church he attended George Mason High School, and though he never stole, or intentionally damaged property, or seriously injured anyone, he did get into his share of fights. “I got into fair fights, though” Chris says. “Sometimes at inappropriate times, but I wouldn’t hit anyone with a two-by-four when they weren’t watching.”

He developed two strong friendships in Falls Church, and both friends shared qualities that Chris admired. “They were highly intellectual, they read a lot, they had really interesting ideas,” he says. “And they were outsiders. And those were the people I think I most liked. They were smart and really enthusiastic about what they liked. But they also couldn’t fit into the mainstream.”

One of those two friends would play a role in what led to Chris’s incarceration. He had purchased a bag of off-white powder from this friend, and was told it was synthetic mescaline. Chris would cap the powder and sell it for two or three dollars a tab. His intent



**WILLARD  
PAINTING**

*From the Berkley Hotel  
to a Single Bedroom Wall*

**42 YEARS EXPERIENCE**

*No Job Is Too Big Or Too Small*

**743-8237**

**GREG WILLARD**

**Licensed & Insured  
Quality Painting  
Guaranteed Results**

**FREE ESTIMATES**



**BACK IN THE NORTHSIDE**

**1221 BELLEVUE AVENUE RICHMOND VA 23227**

**119 NORTH ROBINSON STREET RICHMOND VA 23220**

**TUESDAY-FRIDAY 7AM-1PM SATURDAY 7AM-NOON**

**804 335 4570**

**EARLYBIRDBISCUIT.COM**



was not to make money, but to share the drug. Turns out it wasn't mescaline at all, but DMT (dimethyltryptamine).

Chris, who was just fifteen at the time, met a young man named Charlie, six years his senior, at the lunch counter of a drug store on Broad Street in downtown Falls Church. Chris didn't know this man very well, but they would periodically hang out, kill a Friday evening cruising for burgers. One night they were parked in front of The Pizza Box, where the crust was thin and the pies rectangular. They were planning to ride around Falls Church, pop a few pills, smoke some weed, and then go spelunking in caves along the palisades of the Potomac River. There were two things Chris didn't know about the driver, but he would find out in short order. Before they could pull out of their parking space, two cars with their headlights off pulled into the lot and blocked their way. And then the headlights came on, and the beam of a flashlight came through the windshield, and Chris and his friend heard a man bark out: "Get out, and put your hands up."

As Chris tells the story, he slowly shakes his head, and a wry smile creeps up his face. "The drugs in the car were not hard to find," he says. "One thing I didn't know is that Charlie had a 50-caliber tripod machine gun in the trunk of his car." The other thing he didn't know about Charlie would be splashed across of the front page of The Washington Post in the morning.

They were taken to the nearby Falls Church Police Station and processed separately. Chris, still a minor, would end up at Fairfax County Jail because there was no room for him at the local detention center. Charlie was probably released on his own recognizance, because, as it turns out, he was the son of D.C.'s chief of detectives, according to Chris.

Three days after Chris was arrested his father bailed him out.

"You got yourself in a heck of a mess, didn't you son?" his father said.

"Yep."

"Well now we have to concentrate on how to get you out."

His father was a good man, but did not understand the legal justice system. He hired a real estate attorney, the only lawyer he knew, to defend his son.

The case went badly. Chris would ultimately be charged with possession and sale of a stimulant or depressant, and possession of marijuana. The judge was a mean-spirited man, rotten to the core, who decided to throw the book at Chris. "The judge gave a little bit of a talk about what a juvenile



delinquent I was," Chris says. "By the time I got to trial, there was no trial." In the meantime, Charlie's case had already gone to trial, and he had walked on all charges, Chris tells me.

But there is karmic justice in the universe. "Later, I found out the judge was thrown off the bench for criminal corruption," says Chris. "Falls Church was a good old boy network at that time."

The judge turned Chris over to state custody until his eighteenth birthday. Chris finished out the year at a private school in D.C., and then on an early June morning, alone, carrying a small duffle bag, he turned himself over to authorities at the police station. "I didn't feel any great sense of injustice," Chris tells me. "So going there alone seemed perfectly natural to me."

A man drove him to a place called the Diagnostic Center in Goochland County. "That's where they determine what facility best suits your needs," says Chris. "They give you a bunch of tests. And with a lot of help from me, a similarity between me and Bowser (the protagonist of his novel), I figured the quickest way I was going to get out of there is if they thought I was stark-raving mad. I told the psychologist that I have sixteen souls and half of them are an Army for Jesus Christ, and the other half are an Army for Satan."

They couldn't quite figure out where to send him, but while at the Diagnostic Center, Chris spent his days reading. He read all the Herman Hesse novels, Dante's "Inferno," a book by Joan Baez called "Daybreak."

Ultimately, he was sent to the worst facility in the state—Beaumont up in Northern Virginia. His first day there he received a buzz-cut, and pants and a shirt the color of a brown paper bag. Chris was lucky, though. Instead of being sent to one of the numerous shops to learn a trade, he was assigned to the library, where he read even more. "I got to pick out the books for the library and order any books I wanted," he says. "And the librarian didn't bother me, and I didn't bother her. I basically just sat there and

read." All the while he was collecting details and incidents that would help him years later create "Hoppergrass," grist for the mill, as they say.

He spent a total of four months at Beaumont, and then something kind of wondrous happened. "There were several adults there that really thought I was an okay kid, and that I wasn't really a delinquent, and didn't really try to hurt people, and that I read and made good use of my time, and was generally kind to the other people around me. So they were willing to go out of their way to help me out. One was my probation officer, and the other was a counsellor at Beaumont."

Unbeknownst to Chris, they had struck a deal with the judge who had sentenced him. One evening on his way to the showers, Chris's counsellor walked up to him and said, "Get your street clothes on." And beyond the walls and razor wire, his father was waiting for him.

Chris finished his high school education at the private school in D.C. and then his father moved the family to Richmond. Chris worked labor and began taking English and Chinese classes as a special student at VCU. He excelled academically, and was invited to become a full-time student. "Right away I was recognized by my professors for my writing, so I started getting a lot of encouragement," says Chris. "Gary Sange was the first one who started me off writing poetry."

Somewhere in there, a woman driving under the influence broadsided Chris who was on a motorcycle at the time. His leg was bent up like a pretzel, and the femoral artery was severed. A chunk of his femur lay on the sidewalk. Had it not been for a passerby who happened to be a medical student, Chris would have bled to death at the corner of Grace and Meadow streets in the heart of the Fan. The medical student pressed the spurting artery to stop the bleeding until the ambulance arrived and carried Chris to Johnston-Willis Hospital, then located on Sheppard, just off the Boule-

vard. Ordinarily, the leg would have just been amputated, the injury was so severe, but the orthopedic surgeon on call at that time was a fighter. He worked on the leg all day and all through night. He later told Chris, "It was the worst day of my life."

To further his education in Chinese, which had become a passion for Chris, he applied to Georgetown University and was accepted with a full scholarship. He graduated from Georgetown two years later, and was selected to become a member of Phi Beta Kappa. "That's the only thing I ever won," says Chris.

He then moved to Taizhong, China where he studied Mandarin at Fudan University. "I lived in dorm room with five Chinese guys and none of them spoke English, so I learned the language quickly," Chris says.

Upon returning stateside, Chris landed a job as a senior staff writer for Washington Business Review in D.C., and then took a job in Richmond with The News Leader as business editor. He also met Sue D'Angelo, his wife now of 34 years.

Shortly after the pair were married, Chris took a job with National Council for United States-China Trade, and became their director of China operations. The couple spent years living in China, absorbing its culture.

By the early 1990s they returned to Virginia, and Chris went to work for AMF in Mechanicsville. Toward the end of that decade and into the first few years of the new millennium, life dealt the Browns a one-two-three punch.

"My wife was diagnosed with Stage 3 ovarian cancer and it was very advanced," Chris says. "She had a very slim chance of survival." But Sue pulled through, beating all odds.

A few years later, however, the cancer returned. "The first time I was able to tough it out, but the second time it was just devastating," Chris recalls. "It was as if the entire universe had betrayed me. The cancer had cleared up and we had gotten through this trial. We held on by our fingernails, and then the other boot drops. That just sent me into a deep, deep depression. And that second time there was even less a chance for her survival."

Sue, though, pulled through again, and has been cancer-free ever since.

During that same period Chris would also develop cancer, a very rare form of the disease. His tonsils were infected with naso-pharyngeal cancer. "This cancer is exquisitely sensitive to radiation," says Chris. "The radiation literally disintegrated my tonsils." But there were side effects to the treatment. "I now have dysphasia which





# DEMI'S

MEDITERRANEAN KITCHEN

4017 MACARTHUR AVENUE  
RICHMOND, VA 23227  
(804) 525-4576  
INFO@DEMISRVA.COM

Tuesday – Thursday 5pm – 10pm  
Friday & Saturday 5pm – 11pm  
Sunday 5pm – 9pm



# DOT'S



# BACK INN

4030 MACARTHUR AVENUE ★ 266-3167

Monday thru Saturday  
9 am to Midnight  
Sunday 10 am to 3

NOW SERVING  
SUNDAY  
BRUNCH



All Saints  
Catholic School



## Accepting Applications for Pre-K, Kindergarten & First Grade.

- Experienced teachers and aides
- Language Arts & phonics-based word study
- Levelled reading and mathematics groups
- Hands-on STEM projects including a school garden
- Weekly specials in Spanish, Technology, Music, P.E., Art, and Library with certified teachers
- Daily Religion, weekly Mass and monthly Community Service
- Regular field trips
- Structured After-School Program until 6 pm
- Average class size of 18-22 students with aide
- Classroom technology including Chromebooks, iPads, interactive whiteboard

**VISIT US AND DISCOVER WHY ALL SAINTS IS AN INVALUABLE INVESTMENT IN YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE.**

All Saints is an accredited pre-kindergarten through eighth grade Catholic school of high moral expectations and academic rigor located in Richmond's vibrant Ginter Park. It is a parochial school that values cultivating an exceptionally active and culturally, socio-economically and ethnically diverse student body.

**CALL 804 329-7524 TO SCHEDULE A TOUR OR VISIT [WWW.ALLSAINTSRIC.ORG](http://WWW.ALLSAINTSRIC.ORG)**



ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC SCHOOL  
3418 NOBLE AVENUE, RICHMOND, VA 23222





*Wonderful food, best  
brunch in Richmond.*  
— Urban Spoon

Serving locally farmed  
produce, poultry, and  
meat with vegetarian,  
vegan, & gluten free  
options available.

OPEN 11am-10pm Mon-Fri  
9am-10pm Sat & Sun

## DINE IN • TAKE OUT

**ENJOY BRUNCH**  
Sat & Sun 9am-2pm

**Weekly Specials:**  
**Sun** • Specialty Burgers  
5pm-close

**Mon** • Vegetarian & Vegan  
Specials all day

**Tues** • Family Style Pasta Night  
6pm-close

**Wed** • Wing it Wednesday  
with \$5 wing specials

**Happy Hour** • Mon-Fri 3-7pm

Located in Richmond VA's  
historic Bellevue District at  
**4023 MacArthur  
Avenue**

**804 716 1196**

[www.themillrva.com](http://www.themillrva.com)

means I can't swallow," Chris explains. "And there's silent aspiration meaning stuff that goes into my mouth, goes into my lungs, and causes infections like pneumonia. There are also some complicated mechanics affecting my vocal chords that are supposed to close up, but they stay open. There's no sensation down there, which is why I have this speech impediment."

Amid all those trials, Chris had returned to school. This time he earned a master's in special education from VCU. He also began work on his novel. He remembers the moment he decided to write the book. He was on a jet returning from China, and a series of words lodged themselves in his brain, words that would become the two opening line of "Hoppergrass".

"It's always a clean white car—this time a Ford. It's always a young man who drives it, a student of social work or corrections," Chris says. "On that stone I was going to build the book."

Eight years after he wrote those first two lines, "Hoppergrass" was published. It is a book that vibrates with the acts of self-discovery only adolescents can ever really know, and it speaks to the relationships that develop between outsiders who seem unlikely to ever be-

come friends. More than anything else though, the novel traces the emergence of a moral conscience. When Bowser reaches this moment in his young life, his heart, soul and mind finally merge, and all is clear and coherent. His rational mind works with Sherlockian expertise to solve a crime that will punish the real offenders and set his friend free.

Chris has also spent a lot of time in the classroom working with adolescents on the cusp of adulthood. He did his residency at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children, and had his first teaching position at Short Pump Middle School. He also taught at Oakland School in Fluvanna, and Lucille Brown Middle School in Richmond.

But his favorite post by far was at Dominion Academy on Richmond's North Side, a position he had to resign from earlier this year because of health problems.

"I had been there for four years," says Chris. "I was so gratified when they said, 'Anytime you want to come back the door is always opened.' And if I were to get better I would do that, but I think this is irreversible."

He mentions the principal at Dominion Academy, Joshua Lutz. "Beyond being a nice guy, he just knows what

he's doing, and he focuses on what the school should focus on, which is, 'Are these kids learning?'" Chris says. "And Josh has a very strong philosophy about therapeutics, which I find absolutely sound."

When I ask if he misses teaching at Dominion, he nods vigorously. "Every day," he says. "One of the big surprises is that you would expect that there would be slow incremental changes. I was finding that the changes were like lightning from the sky. Some kid would be affected by getting good grades on his writing. So some days I would come in and say, 'I just can't believe that a person can turn around like that.' But the kids do, if they're encouraged, not discouraged."

Chris is putting the finishing touches on his next novel—"And the Bones Begin to Rise."

"The weirdness of my past never ceases to amaze me," says Chris Brown. "I know I've had a very strange life. I'm pretty amazed by it all and I never lost the sense of how the hell I got from Point A to Point B." **NR**

If you'd like to contact Chris visit [www.chrisbrown.com](http://www.chrisbrown.com) his novel "Hoppergrass" is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

# SHE SPOILED YOU...

*This Mother's Day  
Spoil Her with  
One-of-a-Kind  
Jewelry*

*Compliments of  
Mother Nature*



Monday-Friday 10-6  
Saturday-Sunday 12-5

3141 West Cary Street  
Richmond, VA 23221

804 254 4653

[kambourianjewelers.com](http://kambourianjewelers.com)



**KAMBOURIAN**  
JEWELERS

Artfully Yours.



# Berry's Produce

**SPRING'S IN FULL BLOOM!**  
 Fresh Vegetables, Flowers, McCutcheons Jam,  
 Jellies and Pickles, Montana Gold Breads

**Everything You Need for the Garden**  
 Seeds, Vegetable Plants, Flowers, Potting Soil and Bagged Mulch

9592 Chamberlayne Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23116  
 804-569-9005 • Open every day 10-7



## Thinking about selling your home in Northside?

Contact me for a **FREE** market analysis.  
 I have expertise in Market Valuations, Negotiations, Advertising, Home Staging, Inspections, Appraisals, Investing & Mortgage Financing.



**Chris Hollister REALTOR®**  
 Hollister Properties  
 5407 Patterson Ave., Suite 101 Richmond, VA 23226  
 804.240.9415  
 chris@hollistersales.com



[www.HollisterSales.com](http://www.HollisterSales.com)



**ENRICHING  
 LIFE'S  
 JOURNEY**

**M**et Judy – artist, singer, mother of three and proud resident of Hermitage Richmond. For 70 years, we have been connecting with residents, families and loved ones to fulfill our mission of Enriching Life's Journey – whether you live independently or require assistance, memory support or health care services, our approach encourages you to set your own pace. Enjoy an outing to many attractions, stroll down our tree-lined streets, or express yourself in our creative arts studio – the choice is yours.

**HERMITAGE**  
 RICHMOND  
 PINNACLE LIVING

CELEBRATING  
**70**  
 YEARS

804 474 1800 | [HERMITAGERICHMOND.ORG](http://HERMITAGERICHMOND.ORG)





# HOBNOB

eat. drink. socialize.

Tuesday-Friday 11am-11pm  
Saturday 5pm-11pm, Sunday 9am-3pm

**Lunch, Dinner  
Sunday Brunch  
To-Go Orders**

**6010 Hermitage Road  
Richmond, VA 23228**

**hobnobrva.com**

**804.264.7400**

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

# HobNob

by ANNE JONES

**I F I COULD BE A RESTAURANT** when I grow up, I'd wanna be HobNob. It's kind of perfect. Or rather, it's the real-life version of perfect: it's just right. Classy, not pretentious; innovative, not trendy; cozy, not cramped; casual but not too. It's just the right amount of everything. Kristin and Tracey Thoroman made sure of that when they bought and re-did the old Hermitage Grill on Lakeside Avenue and opened this Northside treasure in November 2017.

First impressions matter and mine were a predictor of the greatness to follow. The look and feel of the room made me want to live in the place – white beadboard with dark accents, interesting art, wood floors: everything is clean lines and refreshing. It's instantly comfortable and inviting, many notches above homey, and certainly not the over-used Pottery Barn décor so prevalent in new places. Also absent is the forced-quirky clutter found in so many neighborhood spots. HobNob is true to itself through and through, which makes it unique. Even the sound system is done just right, according to my musician friend and dining companion. The music is at the perfect volume and projection to be heard clearly and enjoyed, but never comes close to encroaching on the conversation. That alone is an achievement.

But HobNob's most impressive achievement is its exquisite food, and consistently so. In four visits in two months there was not one disappointment. Not a one. Chef Tracey has designed a menu that's, in his words, approachable. Again, it's just the right amount of options, prices, tastes. From Southwestern chicken soup (\$4) and a NC bbq sandwich (\$9) to Penne Bolognese-braised short rib, brisket, tomato sauce, penne and shaved parmesan (\$17), the fare is varied and affordable. On my most recent visit I tried the crab cakes, at the recommendation of Craig, our perfect server (she was just the right amount of attentive professional and funny/friendly). The crab cakes were a heavenly mound of pure crab meat and a little filler, in perfect proportions. I know my crab cakes, and am reluctant to order them out because I'm so picky. These tasted scrumptious, especially dipped in the delicately zesty creole remoulade. The



accompanying cole slaw tasted fresh and crunchy with a nice flavor—more like a salad than your standard gloppy slaw. M's fish and chips managed to be both fried and light, with just the right amount of spice. M's usual order is the beer-brined grilled pork chop with roasted potatoes and grilled asparagus. Never prone to hyperbole, M. claims they are the very best he has ever eaten, due to their tenderness and savory flavor. Every time.

I may be prone to occasional semi-hyperbole myself, but trust me on this one. The mocha torte on my latest visit was in my top three desserts of all time. Described as mascarpone mocha mousse/thin chocolate layer/chocolate chip cookies, the flavor was indescribable, the texture perfect, and again – rich and creamy without being too heavy. Just the right everything.

HobNob lives up to its name. It's the perfect local spot to mix it up with friends and neighbors, the perfect combination of casual vibes and elegant tastes. **NJ**

**HobNob**  
6010 Hermitage Road  
(804) 264-7400



**Zorba's  
EXPRESS**  
Pizza - Pasta - Subs

### FULL ITALIAN MENU

N.Y. Style Pizzas  
Baked Spaghetti  
Fettucini Alfredo  
Lasagna - Manicotti  
Ravioli - Tortellini  
Veal Marsala  
Chicken Marsala  
Veal Parmigiana  
Eggplant Parmigiana  
Calzone - Stromboli  
Selection of Subs  
Selection of Salads  
Tiramisu - Canoli  
And Much More!

### FREE DELIVERY

Monday-Thursday, 11am-10pm;  
Friday & Saturday, 11am-11pm;  
Sunday, Noon-10pm

4026 MACARTHUR AVENUE  
264-5370

## DECATUR'S GARAGE

Round the Car Service

Bellevue's Full-Service  
Auto Repair for 25 Years

Bobby Shore

4031 MacArthur Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23227

(804) 262-7582

## Pet Sitting Services



**DONNA DUFFIELD**

(804) 397-6720

*Loving Care where your  
pet is most comfortable-  
their own home!*





# FARMERS' MARKET

## Open Year Round

More Info at [www.LakesideFarmersMarket.net](http://www.LakesideFarmersMarket.net)

WELCOME TO THE ELEVENTH SEASON AT LAKESIDE TOWNE CENTER  
6110 LAKESIDE AVENUE | HENRICO/RICHMOND VA 23228

OFFERING FARM RAISED PRODUCTS, BAKED GOODS, FRESH SEAFOOD,  
AND PLANTS AND FLOWERS

YEAR ROUND FARMERS' MARKET

OPEN SATURDAY MORNINGS 9AM-NOON and WEDNESDAYS 9AM-2PM



Lakeside  
Business  
Association



[www.BackToTheMarket.com](http://www.BackToTheMarket.com)

Visit us on FACEBOOK for the latest seasonal hours 



# Beautiful homes are created at the Corner of Lakeside & Dumbarton.



NOW PROUDLY  
OFFERING  
**Winndom**  
Mattresses

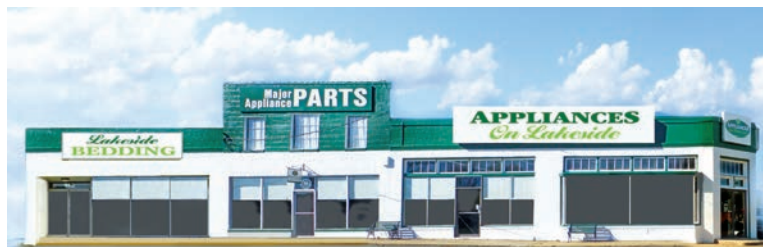


Voted Richmond's  
Best  
Appliance Store.

From Appliances On Lakeside to Lakeside Bedding, our consultants will work with you to create your beautiful home. And, we're all under one roof! 5418 Lakeside Avenue in Richmond. Parts for all major brands, too! **(804) 266-7621**



LakesideBedding.com



AppliancesOnLakeside.com