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Rachel Siddall

specializes in low-incidence disabilities, working with students at Albert Hill Middle School. She teaches children on the autistic spectrum, and others with intellectual disabilities, mobility impairments or any combination of these. Even disabilities that have no names, as she says, “puzzles that nobody’s figured out yet.” When she is teaching, Rachel is completely engaged with her charges, guiding them to success, ushering them along as they conquer one problem posed after another. She brings her knowledge to the classroom, and understands her students’ disabilities on a very personal level, which she exhibits through a profound compassion I have rarely witnessed. *continued on page 18*

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Cover photograph by Rebecca D'Angelo

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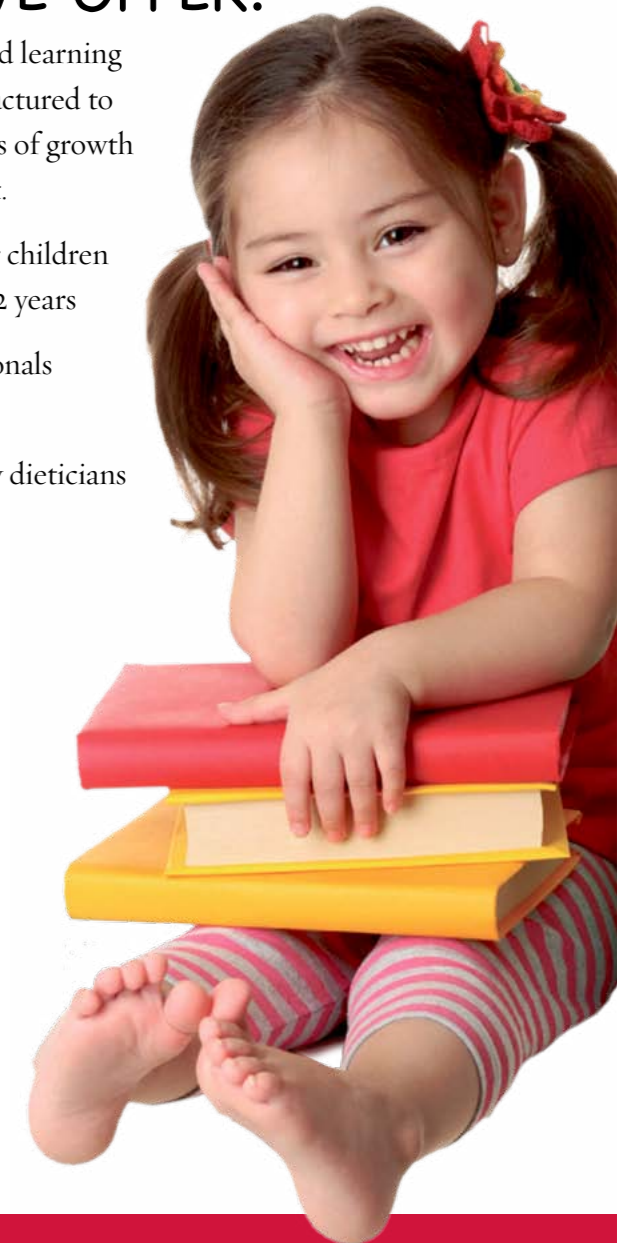
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Walker and Son Creating Timeless Jewelry

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

EJ WALKER AND Will Watkins are talking with a tall woman who radiates confidence and style. She faces them across the counter and lays out two gold necklaces, both of which are severed, the thin metal crimped at the break. These necklaces, flat and braided, seem to float, like contrails, above the rings, pendants and loose gemstones that rest in the showcase below them. EJ picks each necklace up. Peers at them through a loop he holds close to his eye. He examines them diagnostically, looking for the right protocol.

They can be repaired, he tells the woman, but the breaks will be noticeable. He recommends turning them into bracelets. Will brings out a catalog that is filled with pictures of hundreds—maybe, thousands—of other gold chains, and this woman considers one and then another. She'll have to think about it, but she leaves her own necklaces with Walker and Son Jewelers and then talks at length with the father of the two men who helped her. When she leaves, Ernie Walker, Sr. turns to me. "We don't need to make the sale today," he says. "We need to make the sale this month. The jewelry business is conducted with a handshake. You don't exchange cash until you finalize the deal. It's all about trust." A trust he's established over the course of his life in the business.

But Ernie became a jeweler almost by accident. After receiving his bachelor's in political science from Virginia Union University his plan was to study law at Howard University. He had already been accepted into the law school there—the same school that had turned out such noteworthy graduates as Thurgood Marshall, Oliver Hill, L. Douglas Wilder—but because his wife at the time was making too much money, Ernie was no longer eligible to receive the scholarships and grants he needed. So he took a job with Best Products, and because in both high school and college he had been a champion sprinter, they put him in the sports department.

During inventory, Ernie was moved to the jewelry section, by far the largest department at Best Products. As



Will Watkins, IV with EJ and Ernie Walker.

he sorted through boxes of cards that tracked the merchandise, Guthrie Cannard, who managed the jewelry department, examined the cards and then scattered them, shaking his head. "This is all wrong," he said

"If you're going to chew me out about it, give me the responsibility," said Ernie.

"Okay," Guthrie said.

Right then and there Ernie became assistant manager of the jewelry department. He learned everything and anything about gem stones and precious metals. He became a gemologist and master jeweler. Out in California he ran his own successful shop called O'Neal Jewelers, but when his father had a massive stroke, Ernie, the eldest son, returned to Richmond.

Back on his home turf Ernie took a job with Gordon's Jewelers. It was to pay the bills, of course, but Ernie used it as an opportunity to scope out the Richmond market where he planned to open a jewelry store of his own. He was able to move from one Gordon's store to another, from Chesterfield Towne Center to Regency Mall, and he discovered a trend in the buying habits of the customers of each store.

"In Chesterfield there were always

charge card receipts in the register," he says. "In the Regency store there was always cash in the drawer. I decided the best place to go was the West End because people had more spendable income. It allowed me to do my own marketing survey."

That's when he opened The Gold Rush at the corner of Woodman and Hungary roads out in Laurel Park. It was a 2,000 square foot building only ten percent of which was a showroom.

"Our main operation was in the back of the house," Ernie says.

And quite an operation it was. Fourteen jewelers worked at their benches in that shop, doing mainly repair work. Twice a week Brink's armored trucks would pull up and unload boxes and boxes of jewelry. "Based on my relationship with Best Products I became their only jewelry service center," Ernie says. "We serviced all the stores from all over the country. It was crazy money."

Ernie always kept a well-trained eye on business and when he read the writing on the wall he changed his tack. "When we saw the Best Products work drying up and they were not doing very well and were

getting ready to liquidate we decided to put our emphasis on retail and custom rather than on repair," he says.

That's when The Gold Rush moved into a house near the corner of Parham and Staples Mill Roads. "We were there for six years," Ernie says. "We did work for most jewelers around town. We did buying, very aggressive buying. And we did a lot of custom work."

After the shop closed Ernie went to work at Henderson Middle School where he taught history, science and math. He still teaches there today.

Throughout Ernie's career as an independent jewelry store owner, one man stood loyally by his side. His name was EJ. Even before he could walk EJ stood in a playpen near the bench his father worked at when he owned O'Neal's out in Northridge, California. And this little guy was taking it all in. He watched closely as his father picked away at wax with carving tools, sculpting a ring. His eyes widened when his father fired a chunk of gold, turning it into a liquid that could conform to any shape he chose. EJ was fascinated by the process and his brain was shaping images

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BUSINESS PROFILE



EJ, Will, and intern Veronica Llano stay busy at their workstations, creating, cleaning, and repairing fine jewelry.

of his own jewelry.

Young EJ, just five years old at the time, had a fascination with Super Glue and conceived of a way to use it in making what would become his first two pieces of jewelry. Using a metal roller, under the supervision of his parents, EJ flattened two pennies into large ovals of copper about an inch across and less than a millimeter thick. He found two old gemstones and a couple of pearls and decided to glue them to the flattened pennies. EJ didn't understand that Super

Glue was unlike Elmer's Glue, so he squeezed a dab of it into his left palm and smeared it with his right hand but when he tried to bring his hands apart they were fused. Acetone finally did the trick and once his small hands were unglued, EJ affixed the stones and pearls to the discs of copper and they became earrings that his mother, more than twenty-five years later, still keeps in jewelry drawer.

Even after he started attending school, EJ was a permanent fixture in his father's jewelry store. When they

moved back to Richmond and his father opened The Gold Rush, EJ took his place next to his father. "From kindergarten on, when I left school for the day, I went to the jewelry store," EJ tells me. "It was a family business and it's the way family businesses should be, in my eyes. You don't eat unless you're in there making money which is probably why I was comfortable at thirteen talking with customers and designing stuff for them. I had my own customer base at thirteen where people would walk past dad and walk past mom and

say I want to talk to him."

By the time he was eight he had begun to learn to carve in wax, the hallmark of a real jeweler.

When he was just ten years old he traveled with his father to a trade show in Atlanta where he gravitated to the wax table which was run by one of the top wax carvers in the country. "I sat there and I started carving waxes and this lady fell in love with me and fell in love with my talent level," EJ says. "She wanted me to travel out of state to study with her." Ernie nods as his son tells the story. "He was too young for that," says father of son.

When EJ came of age, he struck out on his own going to work for Chris DeCapri, who died last February. "Chris gave me my first management job when I was eighteen or nineteen years old," EJ says. While working as a sales associate at the Capri store at Virginia Center Commons, Chris offered to pay EJ ten dollars an hour plus commission once he had sold \$200,000 in merchandise. Chris figured he would hit that mark by year's end. Within three months EJ had sold a quarter million dollars in jewelry for Chris. "So he promoted me

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BUSINESS PROFILE

up to manager and gave me a salary," EJ remembers. "I appreciated that responsibility and I was with Chris for two years. I left on great terms with him. Chris was a magnificent guy."

From there he went to Kay's Jewelers, later managed a Gordon's jewelry store, managed shops for Zales, and Marks and Morgan. This kind of movement from one corporate store to another is common in the jewelry business. "Everybody knows everybody else in this business," EJ says. "You know who the strong people in the business are and literally every time a regional manager comes around they steal your employees. So you bounce around to get your salary up."

When the economy tanked and a number of the corporate stores shut their doors, EJ got out of the jewelry business and went to work for a furniture store. At work there one day, a little over a year ago, EJ got a call from his father.

"I'm getting married," Ernie told his son. "When?"

"Tomorrow. And I need you to get me a wedding band."

By now, both Ernie and EJ are laugh-

ing. "I told Pops, 'I'm not going to buy you a stock wedding band; let's get a bottle of wine tonight and we'll make something. And when I got off work that night we created the wedding band that he wears today.'" Ernie holds up his left hand and displays the ring.

Two days after they made that ring, Ernie called his son and said: "I think it's time for you and I to go ahead and open a store of our own." Within a week they had a business license and within a month they had a lease on MacArthur Avenue. Renovations took less than a month and Walker and Son opened on November 1 before the holiday season. "The reception in the neighborhood has been absolutely tremendous," Ernie says. "And we have two of the finest designers in Richmond right now—EJ Walker, our master designer and jeweler, and my other son Will."

Will Watkins, IV, an insurance broker by trade, had studied graphic design in college at Howard University. "I saw the opportunity to bring Will on board," Ernie says. "And he is a natural jewelry designer."

Will joined the staff at Walker and Son last February and took to it like a

bird to the air. "This place gives me an opportunity to meet different people and I get a creative outlet where I'm doing things for people, which is compelling to me," he says. "We start with a sketch book and pencil, and really a lot of it is listening to the client."

"You learn what it is they really want," Will explains. "It comes down to this: how can I make what's going on in their head translate first to paper so we can get an idea of the concept. That's when we move toward the method of construction. It's design as well as balance, using two-dimensional and three-dimensional concepts, so I get a chance to actually use my degree quite a bit. This place has given me a tremendous opportunity to address a part of my life that was getting ignored."

Just a month after Will started working here Veronica Llano came on board as an intern. She had known EJ in high school at J.R. Tucker and last November was at a crossroads in her life. "I really didn't know what to do, so I called EJ and said, 'Will you teach me.'" By the time summer rolled around, Veronica came on full-time. "I learn something new every day," she says.

EJ and his father are proud of the staff they've assembled and the welcome they've received in Bellevue. "When our customers leave they literally hug us and say that they love us," says EJ.

The jewelry created at Walker and Son is immutable. The jewelry that was found in the old Egyptian times still looks the same as when the pharaohs wore it," EJ says. "It's like the stuff we make here which is timeless. It's not commercial stuff that's going to get refurbished and refactored and melted down later. The stuff we make today is solid and heavy and truly pieces that folks cherish and will keep in their family for generations upon generations."

"I truly believe the design team that we have in this studio can compete and beat any design team in Richmond, Virginia," Ernie says.

Ernie's sons nod, and EJ says, "There's nothing that walks in this door that we're afraid of doing. Nothing. If someone wanted a house on MacArthur built of gold, I'd say, 'Let's get to melting some stuff right now.'" **NR**

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Little House Green Grocer Reopening by November 1

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

EARLY ON THE morning of September 8, Joe Stankus visited the home of Jessica Goldberg. At the same moment, Joe's wife, Brenda, knocked on Erin Wright's door. It was not good news. The popular neighborhood business Erin and Jessica had raised from the seed of an idea had caught fire. They rushed over to Little House Green Grocer, accompanied by their business neighbors, Brenda and Joe, who own Classic Touch Cleaning. When they arrived the fire was out, but the damage was extensive.

"The firemen were still there when we got here," Jessica says. That was shortly before one in the morning and the fire had probably started around eleven o'clock at night. Firefighters from Engine Company Number 6 responded a couple minutes after the call was placed and extinguished the flames twenty minutes after their arrival.

"It was a big powerful fire but they were able to put it out quickly so it didn't spread too far," Jessica says. "They were here superfast and went to work right away."

Erin nods. "The night of the fire we were very tired and overwhelmed and bewildered so we just wanted to thank them for saving our store, I mean, they really did. They saved our business."

"We gave them a bushel of honey crisp apples," says Jessica.

Here's what authorities think happened: Someone lit a pile of cardboard boxes on fire. These boxes were stacked along the back rear wall of the building, just off the alley. In turn the flames migrated to cordwood that was being seasoned for sale this winter. Being in a contained space, the fire reached extremely high temperatures. "It melted our electric system and our HVAC system," Jessica says. "It got into our back room so we have to rebuild the back of our store. All the electrical wiring was melted."

Fortunately though, the fire did not breach the brick walls because firefighters acted quickly. They also



Top: Erin and Jessica three weeks after last month's fire. Above: A promotional photo of the shop before the fire.

punched holes in the tin-tiled ceiling and sprayed water among the roof rafters to insure the fire would not spread to the front of the building. A few days after the fire, Jessica and Erin were shown photos of the fire as it burned. "The flames were higher than the building," Jessica says.

When they arrived that morning with Joe and Brenda Stankus, the firemen were still there, along with the fire chief, a fire investigator and the fire marshal, according to Jessica. "They kind of knocked a little bit of sense into us and they shined a flashlight on the file cabinet while I looked for the insurance policy," Jessica says. "I called our insurance company from the fire marshal's van and then it was suggested to us that we should get restoration services involved immediately." There was a fair amount of water on the floor throughout the store. So that same night Erin and Jessica called a restoration service and they cleaned it up immediately. "If we hadn't gotten them in the water would have ruined all of our shelving," Erin says.

For the next 24 hours Jessica and Erin worked around the clock. The first thing they did was make a list on a grocery bag. They slept in shifts that day. One of their top priorities was to post on Facebook early that morning so their customers would know exactly what happened. That same morning they called the landlord, and later Erin called the department of agriculture, which turned out to be a very good thing.

The HVAC system, before it shut down, had spread thick wood smoke throughout the store and the refrigeration units inhaled it. A department of agriculture agent inspected all of the food, everything from steak to potatoes. All of the produce, every item in the walk-ins and the freezers was tainted with smoke. And though this was a loss for the grocer, most of this food was fit for human consumption, so Erin and Jessica donated more than 500 pounds of food to Feed More, which sent over a truck that same day to pick it up.

Erin and Jessica were fortunate they had sufficient insurance in place. When their friends at Sub Rosa

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REOPENING

Bakery on Churchill had a fire, just four months after they'd opened, a fire which kept them closed for about year, the owners of Little House took no chances. "We learned from them how important it is to have the right insurance coverage," Erin says

"After their fire the first thing I did was to increase our policy," Jessica adds. "We got business interruption insurance, which has helped a lot."

If all goes well they will be open in plenty of time for the holiday season. "Holidays are a tradition at Little House, especially Thanksgiving," Erin says. As a matter of fact a turkey was the very first thing they ever sold at Little House, says Jessica.

What was most amazing about this incident was the amount of money people raised for Little House. Their own Facebook campaign raised


\$6,400. A pizza party fund-raiser netted \$1,700, and a poster that was done gratis by a local artist has already raised \$900. Even their competitors have shown them extreme generosity. Ellwood Thompson is currently holding a fund raiser and they will match each dollar donated.

"We get love notes taped to the door every day," says Erin.

"We are feeling so much gratitude,"

Jessica says. "We've made lists and we thanked everybody."

"And we'll be open by November first," Erin says.

They've got a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. 

Little House Green Grocer

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Broad Rock Brookbury Worthington Farms	11/10 - 11/21 11/17 - 11/21
Westover Hills Forest Hill Woodland Heights	11/17 - 11/28
Windsor Farms Far West End University of Richmond	11/17 - 11/28
Bellemeade	11/24 - 11/28
Newtowne Carver Jackson Ward	11/24 - 11/28
North Side Highland Park	11/24 - 12/05
The Fan Shafer	12/01 - 12/06
Westover Gardens	12/01 - 12/12
Museum District	12/08 - 12/12
Church Hill Fulton	12/08 - 12/19
Stratford Hills Willow Oaks	12/08 - 12/19
Bellevue Ginter Park Washington Park	12/22 - 1/02
Stony Point	12/22 - 1/02

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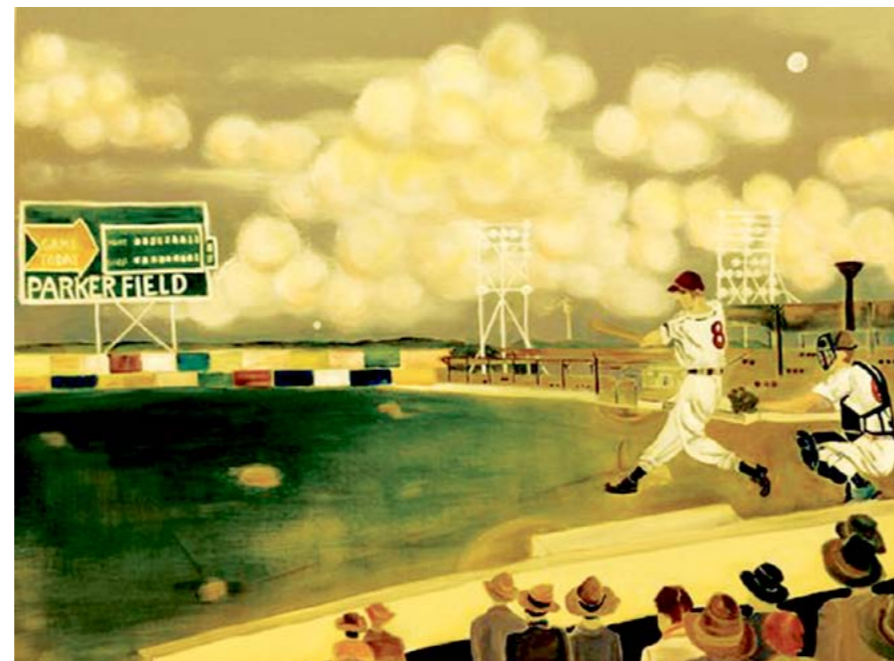
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BRIEFS

October 2014

**Winter Painting Classes
With Brenda Stankus**



Brenda Stankus is again offering classes in painting at her expanded studio classroom at 1229 Bellevue Avenue. Wednesday afternoon classes will be held from 1:30-4:30, January 21 through March 18; Thursday evening

classes will be held 6:30-9:30, January 22 through March 19. Brenda is a working artist who has painted many commissions. For more information call 262-6979 or visit www.thepainting-class.com

**Art Vendors Reserve
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Jumpstart your holidays with Christmas on MacArthur, a day of family fun that benefits Toys for Tots. So make sure to bring an unwrapped toy with you. Over the past few years Christmas on MacArthur has become the largest single donor in Central Virginia to this annual toy drive sponsored by the United States Marine Corps.

Festivities begin with the Santa Parade down the 4000 block of MacArthur Avenue. This year's parade features kids choirs, kids bands, students of Holton Elementary School and Albert Hill Middle School, St. Andrew's Legion Pipe and Drums Corps and the Benedictine Honor Guard, U.S. Marines, Fireweed Farms Alpacas, antique cars, trucks and much, much more, including a visit from St. Nick who will hear kids' Christmas wishes after the parade. The event, sponsored by the Bellevue Merchants Association and North of the James magazine, will be held

11 till 4 on Saturday, December 13, rain, snow, sleet or shine.

There will also be scores of vendors offering their handmade arts and crafts. Vendors interested in participating should contact Teri Phipps at vendor@bellevueweb.org as soon as possible. Booths are 10'X10'. Indoor spaces cost \$45; outdoor spaces cost \$35. Vendors must be on site by 9 am the day of the event and have their vehicles off the street by 11 am. Make your reservations now; space is limited.

And don't forget: Kids who bring an unwrapped toy can register to win one of six brand new bikes! These bikes are purchased each year by Bob Kochoer of Once Upon A Vine and Tim McCaffrey of The Cottage Gardener.

For more information contact Charles McGuigan at northofthejames@gmail.com

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THE CLASSROOM WE'RE IN HERE AT Albert Hill Elementary School features massive windows with many panes; aged oak trim, dark as raw honey; a ceiling that seems lofty as the sky. We are sitting on a couch facing one another and beneath her desk, which I face, there is a pair of high-heeled shoes with a wide leathery grain. She wears flats, opened-toed shoes, in her classroom, because other shoes bother her feet. School's just ended for the day and the room is silent.

"This classroom that we're in right now, my classroom, is actually the same classroom that my grandmother was a kindergartener in," Rachel Siddall says. "Her name was Patricia Parnell." That was back in 1929 on the eve of the Great Depression, just three years after the school first opened when it was still called The Normal School. "So the universe is trying to tell me something," Rachel says.

"You're home?"
"Yeah, I'm home."

Above the blackboards and built-in closets that line the walls opposite the windows there are pieces of construction paper each with a sort of message written on it. They're kind of like the Ten Commandments, but there are close to a hundred of these. And these laws were not handed down on stone tablets from on high. Each one was conceived just a week before by the students themselves. Among them are: Keep your hands to yourself. Walk in the hallway. Ignore people who bug you. Take turns. Follow the rules. Be polite to everyone. No throwing food. Mind your own business. Respect other people's property. Stay focused. Walk on the right side. Be responsible. Keep calm. Share. Eat your vegetables. Make good choices. Stand up for yourself. It strikes me that if adults followed half these rules we wouldn't find ourselves in the messes we are often in. Rachel tells me they're called Rules for a Happy and Healthy Life.

Within this classroom for about six hours every weekday, Rachel teaches nine children with special needs. Most of them are on the autism spectrum, meaning anything from Rett syndrome to Asperger's to disorders

Rachel

PUTTING THE

that don't even have names. There is commonality among them though—three fields of symptoms. "Some sort of social skill deficit, a communication deficit, and a pattern of restrictive or repetitive behavior interest," Rachel says. "When you diagnose a child with a disorder or a disability you're always looking for the severity of the symptom. It has to negatively impair their everyday life and functioning."

Sometimes, and perhaps increasingly too often, some children are pinned with a diagnosis that does not really fit. "Everybody has their own foibles, their own challenges, their own obstacles," says Rachel, who is both special education teacher and case manager. "I don't want to use the word fad, but autism is one of those disabilities that is over-diagnosed."

Rachel's students are all definitely on the spectrum with different levels of functioning. "I teach all core subjects in here for sixth seventh and eighth graders," she says. One child, who doesn't really talk has been using a Springboard, a sort of iPad that shows images which enable this child to communicate. "Basically it's a small computerized system with pictures," Rachel says. "Students can push a sequence of pictures to tell you what they want to say because they don't necessarily have the ability to formulate and express that in their heads."

Recently her student who uses the Springboard surprised Rachel. "I was talking with the instructional assistant about food and I used the word rice," she recalls. Seconds later Rachel felt a gentle tap on her shoulder. And this boy, who had never uttered a word in her class, said: "I eat rice."

"He really wanted to share that with me," says Rachel. "So we kind of had a little conversation about rice. I asked him, 'Would you eat rice with apples or with chicken?' And he was able to respond with the correct answer. I was pleased and surprised."

I sat in on her class and was drawn in by the way she communicates with each child, pulling them along to learn

fairly basic math concepts. She is like nine teachers in one. It's an extraordinary feat to witness, as this woman tailors every lesson for every child. I have said this often enough about teachers, particularly those in our public schools: there is no group of people who work harder, and there is no group of workers who are paid less for all they offer to a society. And in this culture we have it all backwards.

Rachel tells me about another one her charges. This girl was functioning at a much higher level in kindergarten than she is now in middle school. "She's one of the puzzles that we don't really know much about," Rachel says. "They're still working on defining different syndromes within the spectrum and identifying them and naming them because there are children with patterns of regression like this girl. And you worry when things happen and you don't know if it's just a bad day or if it is a sign of further regression that calls for an intervention."

The overwhelming majority of her students are boys, and Rachel looks beyond their various disabilities and sees them for who they really are. "Their IQs and abilities may vary," she says. "But that doesn't matter all that much. The fact is they are boys; the fact is that they're a middle schoolers. Their personalities are really what matter the most when you're teaching them. And I think that most teachers would find that to be the case. I spend a lot of my time worrying about making things age appropriate and making things gender appealing to them. I spend a lot less of my time worrying about the level of the material and what is appropriate for their cognitive abilities. They're just other kids when it comes down to it. They're just other students in our school."

When I suggest she possesses a rare gift, Rachel blushes. "This doesn't make me special," she says. "It makes me uncomfortable when people say, 'Oh you must have such a special heart' or, 'you must be an angel to do the job that you do.' It's really what

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN

PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO

Siddall

PUZZLES TOGETHER



I'm good at. That's all. I don't think I could be a gen ed teacher."

And one of the reasons Rachel's good at it is that she enjoys fitting the pieces together. "It's a puzzle," she says. "I mean it's more fun when you've got kids that are harder to figure out. The fun part is really getting to know them in a way that nobody else has gotten to know them yet. It's definitely trial and error to a certain point. You go in and make educated guesses based on kids that you've had before and other things that they've reacted to and their general behavior. For the most part, though, you just take a crack at it, and if it doesn't work you tweak it."

Rachel remembers a student she had

last year. "She had a lot of difficulty making eye contact," Rachel says. "I couldn't get her to look at me by saying, 'Look at me' or, 'I need you to pay attention'. Then Rachel tried something different. 'I simply said, 'Eyes, eyes.' And she would immediately lock eyes with me."

Sometimes kids on the spectrum don't respond to certain language because the words used are triggers of one kind or other. Rachel tells me about a young man she had tutored and given swim lessons to for years. "His trigger word was fun," she says. "You didn't ever suggest that something was going to be fun for him. If you did say it, he would respond as loudly he could, over and over, 'NO

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FUN, NO FUN.' He would hate it." So she began using other words or phrases like, we'll have a good time. And that worked fine. But by digging a little deeper Rachel was able to find out why the word fun had become a trigger. "When he was in third or fourth grade so many people had said that so many things were going to be fun that didn't turn out to be fun," she says. "Fun became a suspicious word to him. He knew somebody was going to try to talk him in to doing something that was anything but fun."

Part of her success in her chosen field teacher probably comes from her own experience in school. "When it comes to me," Rachel says. "If I was my own case manager in middle school I would immediately have said, 'Ah, she seems like she's somewhere on the spectrum.' I really had a lot of difficulty with social skills and communication skills, particularly with organization."

But she toughed it out and made it through high school. Once in college though she was finally evaluated. "That's when we realized there was actually something going on with me," Rachel says. After a full battery



of tests with a licensed clinical social work, she saw a psychologist who also tested her. Rachel had always been fidgety and had trouble staying focused and paying attention, so it came as no surprise when she was diagnosed with ADHD. The psychologist told Rachel that her IQ was very impressive. But perhaps even more impressive was her ability to make it as far as she already had. "The psychologist told me that my ADHD was very severe. She told me that people on this end of the spectrum don't usually make it to college on their own. They have difficulty getting out of high school on their own. Which was really validating after eighteen years of just muddling through."

Rachel doubts that she would have made it at all without the constant nurturing of her parents. "My parents are awesome," she says. "They were incredibly supportive, and they knew when to watch me like a hawk. They knew when somebody needed to sit on me in order to get something done. They really knew what I needed and were always there for me. But it was a long process getting to that point."

Middle school was particularly hard

for Rachel and her ADHD reared its head in fury. "Academically my grades tanked," she remembers. "Socially my closest friends had gone to another school so I was sort of left on my own. I had one friend, who is a friend of mine now actually, but in sixth grade she told me, 'I think I just don't want to be your friend anymore', which is pretty crushing for a sixth grade girl."

And some time during that period she was in a conference room around a massive table with her mother and father and teachers and a guidance counsellor. "So everybody's looking at me going 'what's up, what's wrong with you?' People knew something was wrong. My parents at some point even asked school officials if something else was going on psychologically. Somebody said to my father, 'No, she just needs to apply herself.'" Which, of course, was not true: Rachel had ADHD but nobody knew about it at the time.

Through those stormy middle and high school years Rachel found safe harbor in water. "Really, the thing that saved me was swimming in seventh grade," Rachel says. "I

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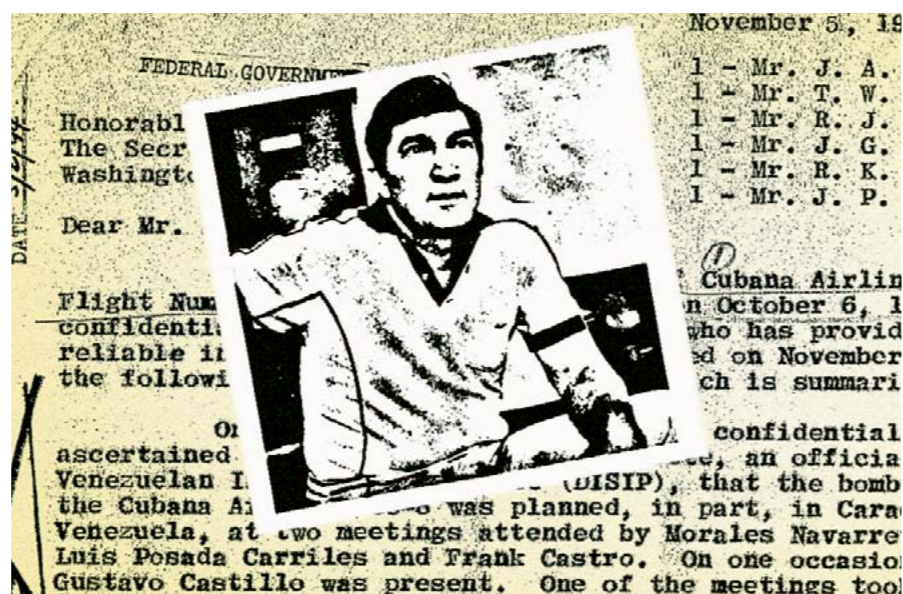
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HIDDEN HISTORIES



The Terrorist That Got Away

ALTHOUGH YOU don't hear much about it, 38 years ago on Oct 6, 1976 the US government assisted one of the deadliest terrorists in the world in murdering 73 people on board Cubana flight 455, including the national fencing team of Cuba.

CIA documents released in 2005 indicate that the agency "had concrete advance intelligence, as early as June 1976, on plans by Cuban exile terrorist groups to bomb a Cubana airliner." Former CIA operative Posada Carriles was implicated.

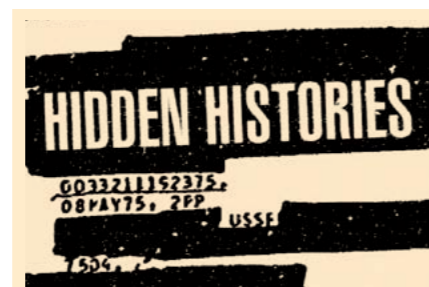
According to Jose Luis Mendez citing the CIA documents, "The U.S. authorities know that international terrorist Orlando Bosch Avila and his organization of which Luis Posada Carriles is a member hatched the plot to blow up this plane...Posada stopped being a CIA asset in 1974, but there remained 'occasional contact' until June 1976, a few months before the bombing."

After these bombings, Posada fled to Panama and then to the United States. In April 2005, a new warrant for Posada's arrest in connection with the bombing was issued in Venezuela by the government of Hugo Chávez. However, a U.S. immigration judge ruled that Posada should not be deported to Cuba or Venezuela. Ironi-

cally in this age of extraordinary rendition, the judge feared that Carriles might be subject to torture in those countries. Congressman Bill Delahunt and Jose Pertierra, an immigration lawyer representing the government of Venezuela, said that Venezuela had no intention of torturing Posada, and that the US was practicing a ridiculous double standard allowing extraordinary renditions of suspected terrorists to Syria and Egypt, for the explicit purpose of torture, while refusing to allow a wanted criminal like Carriles to be tried in another country on grounds that this country had once practiced torture.

In an interview with the New York Times Carriles also took responsibility for 1997 bomb attacks against Cuba's tourist industry, which killed an Italian tourist in a Havana hotel, but later recanted the confession.

To this day, Posada Carriles lives as a free man in Florida after being acquitted in a 2010 Texas trial not for murder or terrorism but for fibbing to immigration officials about the method by which he entered the U.S. The Texas jury deliberated for just three hours before coming back with a not guilty verdict. His attorney, Miami-based Arturo Hernandez said that Carriles has since returned to his first love outside of planting bombs in Cuban Hotels or on Cuban airliners, which is, apparently, oil painting.



Hidden Histories is written and produced by Jack R. Johnson and airs every Wednesday and Friday at 10 am on WRIR- 97.3 FM. It is also webcast at wrir.org

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RAINBOW MINUTES



The Great Gay Holiday

OCTOBER IS AN important month in the LGBT calendar. For one, October is LGBT History Month – a month devoted to heroes, heroines and our past. And October 11th is “Coming Out Day.”

And then there's Halloween. Lesbian poet Judy Grahn dubbed Halloween “The great gay holiday,” and made her case in her book *Another Mother Tongue*.

Halloween that was tied to gay culture began in the 1950s and 60s in the Tenderloin area of San Francisco, where most of the gay bars were located. Huge street events occurred in the 1980s there in The Castro, as well as Key West, Florida, Christopher Street in New York, and Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood.

As Richmond drag icon Joanna Powers put it, “It used to be Halloween was the only day you could dress in drag and not get arrested.”

Female Pirates Off the Virginia Coast

In the early 1700s, legendary pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read sailed and plundered all the way from the Caribbean to New England.

Raised as a boy, Mary Read went by the name Jack Reid, cross-dressing and passing as a man during her careers as a sailor, soldier and pirate.

At 16, Anne Bonny fled her father's plantation in the Carolinas, eventually

sailing with pirate Calico Jack Rackham as his fearless second in command. Known for her sexual conquests, she approached Jack Reid. Calico Jack became jealous and burst in on the two of them lying half undressed in bed together, discovering Mary Read's true identity.

The two women remained inseparable until their capture and trial. Stories vary, but they both may have escaped to New Orleans.

Cleopatra's Odyssey

A two-ton marble masterpiece by famed American sculptor Edmonia Lewis was nearly lost forever. First exhibited at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, Lewis put it into storage and then it disappeared.

Before long, it turned up on display in a Chicago saloon, and ended up at a racetrack as a grave marker for a racehorse named Cleopatra. After the racetrack shut down, the statue lan-

guished in an Illinois storage yard. By then battered, it was claimed by The Historical Society of Forest Park, and with the help of Lewis's biographer was turned over to the Smithsonian Institute.

Restored to its former glory in 1995, it was displayed for all to see at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C. The sculpture's title? “The Death of Cleopatra.”

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ROB WILLIAMS AND HOTEL X COMING TO STIR CRAZY CAFE

ARTFUL SONGWRITER and high-energy guitarist Rob Williams will perform at Stir Crazy Café Thursday October 23 at 7:30 pm and premiere the music video of his song “Strange Way”, which was featured on “A Place in the Sun”, his latest CD, released last summer.

Hotel X, a world music/jazz group founded by Tim Harding and Ron T. Curry, will perform 7:30 pm Thursday October 30 at Stir Crazy Café. Since 1998 Hotel X has been mining the musical wealth of Africa and Latin America by using rhythms and melodies inspired by traditional music and contemporary composers from those regions.



JAMES RIVER ART LEAGUE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Formed in 1964 by local artists to encourage the visual arts in Richmond, the James River Art League's debut activity was participation in Thalhimer's Department Store's third annual “Focus on Art”, also known that year as the “Virginia Artists Salon Des Refusés.”

The League celebrates its 50th anniversary this year with special exhib-

its, including a kick off exhibit at Crossroads Art Center and a judged show at the James Center. The year's commemoration culminates with its 50th Anniversary Gala at the Richmond Country Club on October 16th. The League will continue to exhibit art throughout the Richmond area in many public forums. Artists apply and are juried into the League, which currently has over 100 members. The League provides motivation, opportunities for shop-talk, and continuing education through programs that feature qualified artists and art professionals and area art exhibitions regularly.

For more information about the James River Art League and its 50 Years of Art, visit jamesriverartleague.com.



Debbie Quick, Genesis Chapman, Amy Chan, 22 x 30", mixed media at 1708.

1708'S FAMILY FUN DAY AND DAY OF THE DEAD PARTY

1708 Gallery invites everyone to two events coinciding with Exquisite Corpse, an exhibition and silent auction featuring works created by nationally recognized artists from Richmond and beyond in the spirit of the Surrealist game of the same name.

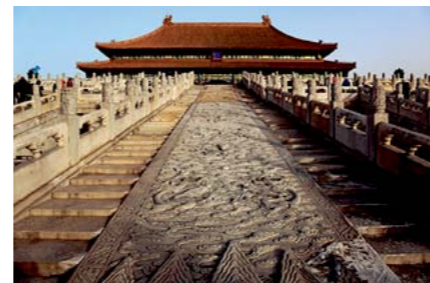
Please join us Saturday, October 18th, 1 - 4 p.m. for a free Family Fun Day where you'll be able to collaborate on exquisite corpse drawings with artists featured in the exhibition! Fun for all ages, there will also be lantern-making, sidewalk chalk, balloons, and a bake sale by the VCU Photo & Film department.

On the evening of November 1, join us in celebrating the conclusion of the Exquisite Corpse exhibition with a Day of the Dead party & silent auction at 6 p.m. Come early for drinks and delicious food from La Milpa. Purchase your tickets via our website or phone for \$10 in advance or buy them the night of the party for \$15.

Funds raised from the auction will help provide space for early career artists to realize new work.

Exquisite Corpse was inspired by long-time 1708 supporters Jay Barrows and the late Cindy Neuschwander.

For more information and a complete list of participating artists please call 643-1708 or visit 1708gallery.org.



FORBIDDEN CITY: IMPERIAL TREASURES FROM THE PALACE MUSEUM, BEIJING OPENS AT THE VMFA

Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing will offer the opportunity to experience nearly 200 exquisite objects – including portraits of emperors and empresses, court paintings, and religious sculptures. Forbidden City illuminates life inside the ancient imperial palace during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. Featured works include large portraits, costumes, furniture, court paintings, religious sculptures, and fine decorative arts such as bronzes, lacquer ware, and jade. Through January 11, 2015.



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CALENDAR

Gulak Lecture in Urban and Regional Planning at VCU on October 1, 2014. Proceeds from the sale of his art will benefit the Morton B. Gulak Associate Professor Emeritus Fund at the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at VCU. Through November 30 at Rick's Custom Frame + Gallery, 5702 Patterson Avenue, 288-0001, ricksframe.com



6TH ANNUAL BOOTLEG SHAKESPEARE ANTHONY AND CLEOPATRA

In partnership with Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare present one of the most famous tales of passion and war. This play comes alive in bootleg fashion one night only—November 1, 7:30 pm—in the Leslie Cheek Theatre. Mark Antony is torn

between his love for the volatile, irresistible Cleopatra, and his duty to the vast empire he helped to build. Bootleg Shakespeare brings together some of Richmond's finest talents for one crazy day of rehearsal, and presents it to our community for a single night, free of charge.



THE ADVENTURES OF HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON ALICE JEPSON THEATRE

Sunday, October 19, 2014 at 3:00 p.m. Harold is a curious four-year-old boy who, armed with his trusty purple crayon, has the power to create a world of his own simply by drawing it. This imaginative musical mixes breathtaking animation, inventive puppetry, video projections, and live, original music to bring Harold's purple-hued world to life. Entertaining adults and children alike, Harold and the Purple Crayon will amaze, delight and captivate. Recommended for ages five and up. Alice Jepson Theatre at University of Richmond 3 pm, October 19. For more information visit <http://modlin.richmond.edu/events/modlin-arts-presents/harold-and-the-purple-crayon.html>



BASETRACK LIVE, A MULTIMEDIA PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE AT U OF R

BASETRACK Live draws on the power of individual stories to examine the collective experience of modern-day Marines and their families. Two performances will be held at Alice Jepson Theatre at University of Richmond on October 22 and 23 at 7:30 pm.

Through theatre, music, new media, journalism, and technology, BASETRACK Live looks unflinchingly and honestly at the legacy of war upon our veterans and our communities. Adapted from the popular Facebook

page and website of photographs and videos taken in Afghanistan by embedded journalist Teru Kuwayama, combined with a live score by Michelle DiBucci, and text adapted by Jason Grote, BASETRACK Live brings to life the harsh realities and intense darkness of combat. Be privy to the first-hand accounts that have yet to be told about the history of America's longest war. For more information visit <http://modlin.richmond.edu/events/modlin-arts-presents/basetrack.html>

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