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Down East North Carolina

skews perspective to such a degree that to get your bearings is almost impossible if your eye is your only guide. It's a trick of the coast's configuration defined by Core Banks, a slender chain of barrier islands almost sixty miles long and shaped exactly like a harpoon down to the distinctive barb at Cape Lookout. Unlike most of the North Carolina coast, this region in Carteret County is undeveloped and the people here still make their living as watermen and boat builders, as they have done for more generations than you can count, if you include the Coree Indians who called this area home for hundreds of years before the Europeans began arriving in the 16th century. It's the way Roanoke Island was before the gentrification of Manteo; the way Colington Harbor was before they added a "u" and erected the gates of exclusivity.

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The Westwood Tract Battle For Hallowed Ground

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

NOT FAR FROM the exact spot where Confederates 150 years ago repulsed a raid on Richmond by Union cavalry, battle lines have again been drawn. This time both forces are entrenched—Ginter Park homeowners and Union Presbyterian Seminary. What they're fighting over is North Side's largest intact green space outside of Bryan Park. Encompassing some 34 acres, the Westwood Tract has for years been used as a park by area residents. It includes an exercise course, open land and stands of hundred-year old oaks. Near the southern edge of the property stands an old stucco house with brick chimneys and a tin roof. Though unoccupied for years, the house has historic significance. It was the summer cottage of Dr. Hunter McGuire who had been General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's personal physician and was instrumental in creating what later became the Medical College of Virginia.

Late last winter, the Seminary announced its plans to develop the entire 34 acres and Ginter Park was stunned. For a hundred years the Seminary and surrounding neighborhoods had always had a friendly relationship. But that trust seemed to have been violated.

Fact is, before Ginter Park was even developed, the Seminary here existed. It was part of developer Lewis Ginter's strategy to attract homeowners out to the community that would bear his name. He had given the Seminary the land it now occupies. In 1910 the adjacent Westwood Tract, once owned by Hunter McGuire and later purchased by a group of businessmen, was deeded to the Seminary. In the intervening years that tract has seen little development, outside of student housing and an exercise course. Many homeowners had assumed the property was a municipal park.

The Ginter Park Residents Association Task Force made recommendations and the Seminary came back with another plan that would only use 15 of the 34 acres. The remaining 19 acres would remain as is, at least for the time being. This second plan of development

also met with opposition from homeowners. Recently, the Seminary came back with yet another plan, which calls for a number of three-story (instead of four-story), two-story and single story buildings that will ultimately house 310 rental units, about 60 of which are slated for Seminary students. But what of the remaining 19 acres on the west side of the tract?

Seminary President Brian Blount tells me the Seminary hopes that area remains a green space. "My hope is that we're going to find a good alternative in terms of public use for it," says Brian. "It's in our self-interest that the 19 acres remain a green space. It will make the apartments more attractive."

Brian is a Ginter Park resident himself, living on Hawthorne Avenue behind St. Paul's Catholic Church. When I ask if he'd have concerns if he knew a similar project was going to be built across the street from his home, he nods. "Yes I'd have concerns and I'd be asking the same kinds of questions the neighborhood is asking us. I knew going into this that there would be questions and anxieties."

Chee Saunders, a member of the neighborhood's task force, has many questions about the plan, one of which is rhetorical: "The Westwood Tract is like an emerald, one of North Side's only remaining green spaces. And what's more valuable, one big emerald, or taking a hammer and cracking the emerald into a bunch of little pieces?"

His concerns, like other residents in the area, are many. For one thing, the developers of the project have yet to show what the proposed structures will look like. "They haven't shown us any elevations," says Chee. "I can't understand that."

By building housing for 310 residents and a parking lot for almost 600 cars, the amount of traffic generated will cause congestion and possibly accidents. Under the current plan there will be only one entrance to the property. "That's on Brook," Chee says. "And that's a huge concern. Anybody looking at the situation would say that is not the best place for getting cars in and out of that area. There's a good potential for accidents there."

Instead of this single entrance, the Task Force would like to see additional entrances, one off Westwood Avenue and another off Rennie Avenue. "These are things that I don't think detract from the Seminary's goal, but they would make the neighborhood feel better," says Chee

Chee is also concerned about storm water. Ginter Park's storm sewers already seem stressed to capacity. With the addition of more concrete and asphalt the situation would just become worse. "When the Westwood Tract is developed with the large amount of impervious area there could potentially be a large increase in volume of storm water and increased time of concentration to an area where the existing infrastructure is not adequate," he says.

There's also something less palpable: the plan does not, at least aesthetically, seem in keeping with the feel of Ginter Park. "They're not building something that takes advantages of the attributes the North Side has," Chee says. "It feels like somebody made a plan without strolling through the neighborhood."

On top of that Chee and the Task Force have concerns about the agency that will be managing the property. Called Drucker and Falk, the company, home-based in Newport News, currently manages 30,000 apartments in the Southeast. "When we asked them if they any experience managing upper end apartments, which is how the Seminary described the apartments, the example they gave us is an apartment complex in Tidewater that is not even built yet," says Chee.

Chee wonders, too, if there is enough demand to fill the apartments, which will range in size from three-bedrooms to one-bedrooms with rents



Dr. Hunter McGuire's summer cottage on the Westwood Tract.

from \$1,700 to \$890 per month. Only thirteen percent of the apartments will have three bedrooms. "If they can't rent them, what then," asks Chee. "Do they reduce rents? Will it be a downward spiral? Will they fall into ruin?"

Brian thinks not. "Even if you look at pure self-interest on the part of the Seminary," he says. "It's in our self-interest for us to have a really nice project over there. Our students aren't going to want to go and live in a situation that's chaotic. The reason we're doing this is so we can have housing that is the kind of housing students have as options at other Presbyterian seminaries. We have the same self-interest in that regard as the rest of the neighbors."

Chee believes more time should be put into the planning before development begins. "Once you do it, it's done," he says. "Once it's built, there's no going back. You need to be thoughtful and deliberate about what you do and that's the point. The neighborhood feels this is not happening. We want the Seminary to stay and be sustainable. We don't want them to go away. But I wish there were ways we could work together."

Groundbreaking will begin early next summer and construction will be completed by the fall of 2016, according to Brian Blount. **N3**

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RAINBOW MINUTES



The Power of Frida Kahlo

DURING HISPANIC Heritage Month, America celebrates the culture and traditions of residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations in Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

Originally observed in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Johnson, it was expanded by President Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period starting on September 15 and ending October 15. This year, The Rainbow Minute remembers Frida Kahlo.

Mexican-born in 1907, Frida Kahlo's international iconic status is attributed

to the strength and power of her work.

Childhood polio and severe injuries in a streetcar accident left her with a life dominated by a struggle with severe pain and disability. Kahlo started painting after the accident, creating over 200 paintings and drawings depicting her life experiences, physical suffering, and her on-again-off-again marriage to muralist Diego Rivera.

While she had affairs with both men and women, her incorporation of male drag projected power and independence in her works that centered on herself.

When asked why she painted so many self-portraits, she said, “Because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best.”

It's a Puzzle

People collect all sorts of things, from postage stamps to antique Christmas ornaments. Lesbian activist Loretta DiLoggio of Philadelphia has amassed a huge number of pin-on buttons related to lesbian and gay pride.

In June 1983, she spread them out on the table and thought, “A picture of this would make a great puzzle.” The idea took root. Along with her friend,

Isabelle Lacey, they formed Coming Out Enterprises to produce and market the 500-piece, 16 by 20 inch puzzle.

They named the puzzle “Gay Pride.” It retailed for \$10 at Giovanni's Room at 12th and Pine Streets in Philadelphia.

Today, more than 31 years later, the puzzle has made its way to the John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives at the William Way LGBT Community Center in Philadelphia.

It's Only Natural

Zookeepers who have long observed homosexuality in caged animals believed that stressors such as confinement, unnatural living conditions and diet were at work. But when behaviorists began reporting the presence of homosexuality in animals in the wild, it was found to be not only common, but even more prevalent than in humans.

Homosexuality has been observed in more than 1,500 animal species.

Giraffes, penguins, beetles, parrots, whales and dolphins engage in pair bonding that's as committed and long lasting as with heterosexual pairs.

Homosexuality has also been identified in 130 species of birds and bees.

But this isn't just a recent phenomenon. Apparent homosexual behavior among hyenas was observed 2,300 years ago by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. **N9**

GAY AND LESBIAN HEROES
 HISTORY AND CULTURE

the
**Rainbow
 minute**

The Rainbow Minute is produced by Judd Proctor and Brian Burns and can be heard every weekday at 7:59am, 12:29pm and 4:59pm on WRIR—97.3 fm in Richmond, Virginia and webcast at wrir.org. It's also heard internationally on over 200 stations.



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Clutter Solutions

Clutter Solutions by Beth and Elizabeth

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

SOMETIMES THINGS just come together the way they should. Without a real plan in mind, people prepare themselves for an unforeseen future that when it finally arrives makes perfect sense. That's kind of what happened with a fairly new business that operates out of a tidy, minimalistic house in Glen Allen.

Called Clutter Solutions by Beth (though it might more accurately be called Clutter Solutions by Two Beths after the founders and equal partners, Beth Forsyth and Elizabeth Caffrey), this business helps people, regardless of their needs great or small, dig out of the trappings of a home, things accumulated over decades that sometimes all but suffocate the inhabitants.

Six months ago, over coffee at the same island we sit before now in this spotless and pared down kitchen, Elizabeth and Beth decided to launch Clutter Solutions. "We wanted to open a service business that would help people de-clutter their homes," says Beth. "We know there's a huge, huge demand for this kind of service and people often don't know where to start, and both of us happen to be extremely organized."

What's more, each of these two women possesses innate gifts, schooling and human compassion that combined make them ideally suited for this business. Beth holds a degree in interior design and is one of the co-owners of Consignment Connection, the most popular and successful consignment shop in North Side. Elizabeth, along with a wealth of financial knowledge and an education in fine arts and art history, has worked for years with children who have special needs. For the past seven years Elizabeth has worked daily with Christopher Thomas Corsello who rounds out the staff at Clutter Solutions. He also works regularly at Consignment Connection and Diversity Thrift. Christopher is engaging and loves to be helpful. Says Elizabeth of Christopher: "He is delightful. I've never had so much joy."

One of the biggest jobs Clutter Solutions has thus far tackled was a two story home with a full basement and full garage in Bellevue. "We had



Above: Owners Elizabeth Caffrey and Beth Forsyth.
Below: Christopher Thomas Corsello.

to clear that house out completely in three days and it was full to the brim," says Beth. About ten percent of the contents were sold through Consignment Connection which benefitted the owner of the house. "It's a good link between Consignment Connection and Clutter Solutions," Beth says. Fully half of the contents of that house ended up in a commercial dumpster. The remaining portion was donated. The entire job cost \$500. "The owner was very happy," says Beth. "And we made the deadline."

Other clients are ongoing. They require time in letting go of the things they own. "These are people who happen to be hoarders," Beth says. "We might visit them once a week and we can't do more than five or six hours at a time because it's so overwhelming."

She mentions one client who hadn't been in her own dining room for four years. "She had paths around her house that she could barely get through," Beth says. "She is the sweetest woman you could ever meet but it was family stuff she was an only

child and she just kept everything that came from her parents' estate. Then her aunt died so she kept everything from her aunt's estate and it just built and built until it got to the

point where she couldn't even enjoy her own house."

At times like these the women behind Clutter Solutions become counsellors





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BUSINESS PROFILE

as much as anything else. “We know what causes hoarding,” says Beth. “It’s an emotional need and you need to fill that emotional need with something other than possessing items. It’s usually caused by a death in the family, something like that.”

Elizabeth, who has done her share of counseling in a professional capacity, nods along as Beth speaks. Elizabeth is a very patient woman and a keen listener. “It’s emotionally draining for them because it’s hard for them to part with things,” she says. “Sometimes these things may seem irrelevant.”

Elizabeth mentions someone who has twenty measuring cups, keeps Styrofoam packaging materials, old magazines. “It’s very sad, and you know you want to think you’re astute enough to help people and sometimes love’s not enough and trying to get them to part is not enough,” she says.

Elizabeth remembers one house in particular. “There was no bed to sleep in, no bathtub to take a bath in, you couldn’t see the floor of the home,” she says. “We spent a whole day in her kitchen alone.”

Elizabeth pauses, reflecting. “These are people who have pains and wounds that are deep seated. There is a hole somewhere,” she says. “They’re grasping for things to make them feel complete and whole. That’s how I look at it.”

So, when someone calls Clutter Solutions either for themselves or a family member who has a hoarding problem, both Beth and Elizabeth approach the client with compassion and understanding. “You have to understand that there’s probably been some sort of catalyst, a loss, whether it’s a death or another traumatic event,” Elizabeth says.

With one of their ongoing clients who is a hoarder, Beth set a goal. “We hug on her, we love her, we tell her that we want to help her, we’d like for her in one year to have a family reunion at her house,” she says. “That’s what we’re working toward.”

During their visits to this client’s home, they remove old newspapers, some them four years old, and other clutter. They fill a large black lawn and garden bag with these discards, and before they even load it in their car, the client goes through it one more time just to make sure nothing important was taken. Other items end up at Consignment Connection. “She’ll even come to the store and look at her boxes of things when she’s already given us permission to sell

them for her to turn them into cash and she’ll take half of that back,” says Beth. But bit by bit they are making progress and their client is slowly reclaiming her home.

Beth gestures toward Elizabeth. “She can sit down with a person that’s really having a hard time letting go and make it make sense in a nice, sweet wonderful way,” she says of her business partner.


“A lot of it’s about nurturing,” Elizabeth says. “Everybody needs it.”

Some clients need only suggestions of ways to make their homes more livable. “Some of it’s organization,” says Beth. “I had a client and they really couldn’t make sense of their house. It was a large space, too, but they were in a crowded bedroom.” Beth spent time listening to the couple’s wants and then made recommendations. “It was basically helping them feel comfortable in their environment, rearranging it,” she says. “I’m an interior designer by education and I could help them make sense of their house. I love advising people. It’s fun to sit down with them and listen.” During that interview, Beth will take copious notes, asking the clients what they want and need in their home. “And then I address each item and come up with solutions,” she says.

In some instances, Clutter Solutions is called in to simply empty a house and prepare it for sale. “I personally like this situation best,” says Beth. “The person that owns the house is not even there because there’s no emotional attachment to anything that’s lefts. We always suggest to the family to take out anything that they want to keep before we even go there. So it’s simple, simple, simple. We may take a few pieces for them to Consignment Connection and we’ll decide what is viable for donation, and then we make everything else literally go away. Broom sweep it, call in the contractors and the painters.”

Both Beth and Elizabeth agree that the most rewarding part of their job is to help a client and to work side by side with Christopher Corsellos. He is a masterful worker who packs china and crystal with the care you might use when handling a baby bird.

“We are so lucky to have him working with us,” says Elizabeth.

“And everyone loves Christopher,” Beth says. 

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WHAT'S NEW

RVA Antiques Not Grandma's Antiques Mall

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

TAMMY GURDIN took one of the largest retail spaces on Lakeside Avenue that lay empty and cavernous for well over a decade, and breathed new life into it.

Called RVA Antiques, the place is now home to about 50 vendors and even in the middle of the week there are shoppers roaming among the booths.

It's all in that massive yellow-brick rectangle of a building joined to the CVS just across the parking lot from Lakeside Towne Center and the Lakeside Farmers' Market.

"I've been shopping over here in Lakeside since I moved to Richmond in 1993," says Tammy. "I've always called this Antique Alley because there are so many shops where you can buy vintage and antiques here that you can go from one to another to another to another." She ticks off a list of businesses on Lakeside Avenue that includes The Robin's Nest, Consignment Connection and Whispers of Time. "You want to be where other stores like yours are because it makes it a destination," she says. "People will come from further away if there are more shops here."

As we walk along the aisles, looking at the offerings of her vendors, Tammy tells me she is very selective in choosing her vendors. "I strictly interview every vendor," Tammy says. "I want pictures of their booth if they have a booth somewhere else. I want to make sure that they're the right fit for us. I don't want a booth filled with just glassware and bookcases and just knick knacks that you would find at the Goodwill or the thrift store. There's a need for those but this store is not that type of store."

When I ask her the criteria, Tammy says, "I like to tell people, 'We're not your grandma's antique mall. We have a range of vendors from mid-century booths all the way to industrial booths. We have a few true antique booths that are full of everything you can think of, and we have a lot of local artisans who work on repurposed materials such as boards and windows.'"

Even after a vendor opens a booth at RVA Antiques, Tammy continues



Above: Owner Tammy Gurdin.

Below: RVA Antiques is home to more than 50 vendors.

to scrutinize the items they sell. "If I come through and find something that is not meeting our criteria I will pull it and I have done that since we've been here. I've pulled it put it in the back and when the vendor comes I will let them know that this isn't really the quality of what we're looking for." She pauses, then adds, "Somebody brought in a collection of teddy bears and I don't want teddy bears or baby dolls so we pulled them. Somebody added floral arrangements and it just wasn't the fit that we were looking for. All our vendors understand the need for these criteria because they want to see their booths do well."

At the time of this interview about three-quarters of the space was already filled with vendors, the remaining 3,000 square feet was undergoing extensive renovation. When completed, it will house, along with additional vendors,

classroom space. "I'll be teaching classes for Miss Mustard Seed's Milk Paint and American Paint, which are both a hundred percent natural," says Tammy. "I'll be teaching different techniques and how to achieve any of the looks we have in here. There will be beginner classes all the way up to advanced. I'll be teaching how you do crackles, layering, chipping—many different techniques." And Tammy should know a thing or two about these things: she's the northeast regional trainer for Miss Mustard Seed's Paint.

Before she opened RVA Antiques (the formal Grand Opening was held September 6, a couple months after the unofficial opening) Tammy owned Yesterdays and Today on Route 1 in Ashland. "I did consignment there and then I ended up scaling that back and just doing local artist consignment," says Tammy. "It kept it at the top-notch. I was there for two years and had a wonderful following, but I wanted to do something bigger which is why I opened RVA Antiques."

Tammy Gurdin was born into the business. Her mother, Denise Ballance ran a shop down in Castalia, North Carolina. "It was called something like Ballance Junk and Trunk," she remembers. "It was a true junk shop."

Before opening her own shop up in Ashland, Tammy had booths at Cold Harbor Antiques and Midlothian Antiques.

"I absolutely love this business," she says. "And I love being in Lakeside." **NR**

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National Night Out on MacArthur Avenue

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

HUNDREDS ATTENDED THIS YEAR'S National Night Out on MacArthur Avenue in Bellevue held August 5 from six till eight in the evening. Many of the merchants on MacArthur participated. Bob Kocher and the Rich sisters served hundreds of ice cream floats, using 32 gallons of vanilla ice cream and 15 1/2 gallons of root beer. At times the line for the floats was twenty deep. **NJ**

Right: MacArthur Avenue's own Good Humor man, Bob Kocher, served up the ever popular root beer floats, hundreds of them.

Far right: Josh, co-owner of the Mill, spoons dollops of fresh whipped cream on homemade peach cobbler, still warm from the oven.

Below, left: Staff of Omega Grecian Restaurant dished out loukoumades—Greek donuts.

Below, right: Children love feeding the Fireweed Farm alpacas, who live with the Phipps right here in Bellevue.



Below, left: Stir Crazy owner Claire McGowan offered cool drinks and sweet treats.

Below, right: Proud mother Page Bauder with her daughter Skylar.

Below: Radio personalities Phil Ford and Alane Cameron Miles.





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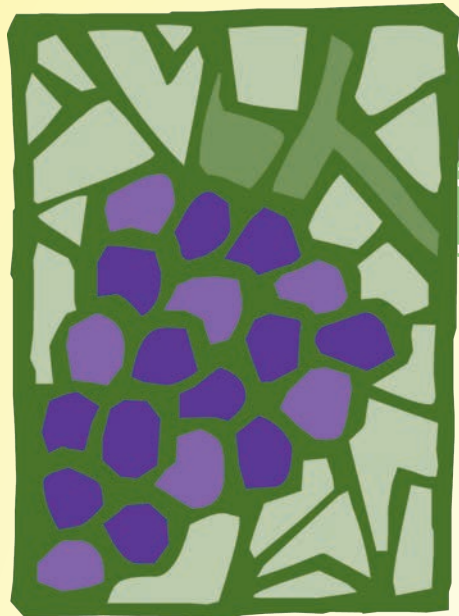
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Maine coast, Down East wins hands down. It starts just above Bar Harbor and continues up to the St. Croix River. It's where the real Maine is; men and women still work the water and don't compromise their lifestyle for the sake of tourists. So Down East North Carolina seemed like a good call when we were scoping out places for a vacation this summer. We couldn't travel very far—not one of our odyssey trips hugging the shore up to Prince Edward Island or down to the Florida Keys and out the Gulf Coast. My daughter Catherine would start college in a couple weeks and Charles was getting ready for seventh grade.

As is our custom we visited VRBO online, a great site to find rental houses or cottages virtually anywhere the world. What's nice about these rentals is that you deal directly with the owners so you forego rental agents and their built-in fees. When I key-entered Down East North Carolina, hundreds of possibilities appeared and we applied a filter that categorizes the rentals from lowest to highest weekly rates and found a gem of cedar-clad house standing on stilts right next to the bridge over to Harker's Island. Our house fronted on The Straits, an arm of Core Sound, with a dock 200 feet long that ends at deep water. The owner had told me you can crab from that dock, and fish as well as shrimp, so along with the crab pot we brought rods and reels, and a cast net. I'd never shrimped before and looked forward to the prospect. "If you hit the tide just right," the owner told me. "You can fill a gallon bucket in an hour." That's a lot of shrimp.

It's only a five-hour drive to Down East North Carolina, a straight shot south on I-95 and then southeast on Route 70. When you hit the Neuse River the air thickens with salt enticing you ever downward to the shore. We arrived shortly before dark, unloaded our gear and headed out to the dock with a menhaden-baited crab pot in hand.



Top: Approaching Cape Lookout and the Diamond Lighthouse.

Above: Double rainbow after a late afternoon thunderstorm from our dock.

After dropping the crab pot off the dock and securing it to a piling, we took in a sunset that fairly took our breath away. Always in the evenings for the next seven days we would be on that dock at dusk, overlooking The Straits and salt marshes, looking westward to where the sun

slipped over the horizon, to witness skies that could have been painted by John Constable, ever-changing from one day to the next, dramatically, as if we were on a different world every night of our stay. It was an active sky, pulsing with life and change, framed by wind-sculpted

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wax myrtles and live oaks. All the native grasses in the foreground were always wet with daily tides and nightly rains, and above this line of green that glowed yellow at the base as if there were light beneath the spongy soil, clouds would stratify, layered like the ancient sandstone bluffs of the Painted Desert. They were the most spectacular skies we had ever seen each and every day, one rivaling the next for pure energy, inventiveness, and color.

That first night we ate dinner on Harker's Island, at one of only two restaurants there, a place called the Fish Hook Grill, a no-frills restaurant that serves all local seafood and specializes in soft-shell crabs, among the best I've ever eaten. Early the next morning, before sunrise, I went down to the dock with the cast net and a five-gallon pail. Cast netting is an art that requires practice and patience, but once you get the hang of it you can cast that net so that it forms a perfect circle above the water every time. To do it right, you need to keep your body in one position, moving your torso at the waist in a clockwise motion, and



Every night we were treated to skies akin to the paintings of John Constable.

then simply flinging the weighted net over the water. Cast nets are designed to spill out as a circle once you release it from your grip. Then you simply wait several seconds until the weights strike bottom. With a quick wrench you haul it in


hand over hand and train it over the bucket, half-filled with water, and release the catch. By the time we'd left the island I'd become proficient at it like a wrangler with a lasso always inscribing a perfect circle. I learned, too, that the best time

to shrimp is on a low tide at dusk or dawn. That's when you catch the big ones, four inches or better. They're translucent, and through their flesh and chitin shell you can see a red dot, perhaps, their heart. I'm not sure. If some of them miss

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Chris A. Hilbert

Councilman, Richmond City Council
Northside 3rd Voter District



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the bucket and end up on the deck you have to get a grip on them or they'll snap their hinged bodies and flick themselves right back in the water. The second day there we hit the tide just right and I carried the bucket into the kitchen and poured the shrimp and sound water into a large pot and brought it to a rolling boil for two minutes, snapped the head, peeled them and we all ate. There is nothing like shrimp just out of the water. What you get in seafood stores locally, or at grocery stores, doesn't begin to suggest what fresh shrimp really taste like. Fresh shrimp tastes just like the tail meat of a live Maine lobster. Seriously.

On our second day there we caught a small passenger ferry at the tip of Harker's Island and headed out to Cape Lookout which is on one of the two main barrier islands that make up Core Banks. We skirted Shackleford Banks and watched the wild Spanish mustangs there feed in fields of spartina and other marsh grasses. Through recent DNA testing, they now know that these horses are the offspring of the same mustangs brought to the barrier islands by Spaniards back in



Blackbeard's occasional home on a side street in Beaufort.

the 16th century. Several years ago I visited Shackleford Banks and it has one of the largest maritime forests on the East Coast, and down at the western tip there is a "ghost forest" an amazing thing to behold. The trees there are like the sun-bleached

bones of giant animals, silver as the sand they rise up out of, the remnants of a maritime forest killed by migrating sands and the scalding salt of the Atlantic.

We made landfall just below the Cape Lookout Lighthouse. The cap-

tain on the ferry gave us a brief history of the lighthouse. He was a "hoi toider", born and bred on Harker's Island, and spoke with the same rich brogue of a native Ocracoker. He told us the first lighthouse here was built in 1812 of wood and con-

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tained a single lantern made up of 13 oil lamps which warned seamen of the shoals that had grounded many a vessel. The current lighthouse was built in 1859 of brick, nine-feet thick at the base. Atop the tower there was lantern with a Fresnel lens that sent out a beacon that could be seen 18 miles offshore. It wasn't until 1873 that the lighthouse was painted with its distinctive diamond pattern that acts as a navigational aid in daylight. When you see the black diamonds you're running either north or south; when you see the white diamonds you are traveling east or west. It is the only lighthouse on North Carolina's coast painted in this fashion. When I asked the captain where we might go fishing, he gestured to his left and said, "Right over on that point. There's lots of feesh." That's just how he pronounced it.



Jellyfish at NC Aqaurium in Pine Knoll Shores.

So we headed to the point on the inlet and Catherine stripped out her own squid, baited the top-and-bottom rig and christened her brand new surf rod and reel, which she cast with ease a solid fifty yards into the shipping channel. No sooner did the weight hit the water than she had a strike,

one after another, sometimes reeling in deuces. She'd hit into a school of white grunts who were coming into the inlet on a running tide and she released every one of them.

We then moved to the beach where the sand was so white it blinded

us momentarily. Charles, eyes blinking, broke out sand toys and began sculpting the willing sand. Catherine and I alternated on her surf stick and we caught a few flounder and two small black tip sharks. We combed the beach for a while

and left late in the afternoon. The next morning, Charles and I rose at four-thirty and made our way out to the dock. We pulled up the crab pot and counted 20 blue crabs, Jimmies all not a sook among them. Cobalt blue claws and sea

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green shells, underbellies whiter than rice. I flipped open the hatch on the underside of the crab pot, re-baited it with menhaden, and dropped it back in the water. That night we had two dozen, boiled them orange-red and coaxed meat from their bodies. Both my kids, I'm very proud to say, are skilled crab pickers. If you work for a meal it tastes ten times better.

I caught a dozen finger mullets in the cast net on one toss and hooked one

through both lips then cast into the emergent grasses. Caught one puppy drum, about four pounds and released it. Charles found a spot on firm marshland near the water's edge where he played with the fiddler crabs, luring them out of their muddy burrows.

"Why can't I pick one up?" he asked.

"They'll nip you with their claws."

"Will it hurt, will I die?"

"It'll hurt, but you won't die. Not unless it's a very large fiddler."

Charles returned to the burrows and played contentedly until we made our way back to the house. Catherine had just gotten in from a run, sweating, and we sat down to breakfast then drove the ten miles over to Beaufort.

Beaufort, the third oldest town in North Carolina, is located on the Inner Banks, fronting Taylor Creek and buffered from Bogue Sound by Carrot Island, which runs parallel to the town's entire waterfront.



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This village looks just like a hundred towns in Down East Maine. It's peppered with two hundred-year-old homes of clapboard that sport cupolas and widow walks. We walked the streets all morning and came across the Hammock House

Far left: Charles at Indian Beach on Emerald Isle.

Left: Catherine hits a school of white grunts, sometimes hooking deuces on the top and bottom rig.

which is where Edward Teach, alias Blackbeard the pirate, lived, occasionally. In a little museum on Front Street we saw artifacts from Blackbeard's Queen Anne's Revenge, which was discovered in 1996 just below Beaufort off of Fort Macon. No gold, but lots of ammunition and canons.

Over the next couple days we would spend time down on Emerald Isle, shelling on the western tip near Fort Macon, fishing at Indian Beach and

then discovering the broadest beach we'd ever seen, at least a half mile wide, facing Bogue Sound and the Atlantic. This beach is only accessible through a gated community, but we finagled our way in and a woman, who was renting a house there, let us park in her drive. She harbored us and told the security police we were guests. We all felt a little like pirates and then headed back to our sunsets over Harker's Island, up Down East. 



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Directed by Dr. Jan Powell, this co-production with Virginia Repertory Theatre at the November Theatre runs September 25 through October 19. The year is 1606 and Shakespeare, in service to King James, has been commanded to write a propaganda play about the Gunpowder Plot. Will he agree to be a pawn in the cynical gamesmanship of the king's spymaster, or will he equivocate.



Esther Mahlangu with murals at her home, May 19, 2014.

Photo by Richard B. Woodward

NDEBELE ARTIST ESTHER MAHLANGU TO PAINT AT VMFA

VMFA has commissioned South African artist Esther Mahlangu to create two large-scale paintings that will become part of the museum's permanent collection. Mahlangu is the most renowned artist of South Africa's Ndebele people, and she has developed the art of mural painting from a tradition of designs painted on the exterior of rural homes to projects created in a global, contemporary art context.

Mahlangu and her team will arrive from South Africa in early September 2014 and will remain in Richmond for a month, working daily on the commission. Ndebele painted designs echo the patterns found in their beautifully beaded vestments and jewelry, such as Mahlangu regularly wears to proudly assert her heritage. The public is welcome to observe her while she works on the paintings.



Susan Greenbaum performs at Shady Grove on November 15.

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