

The image is a book cover for 'Bay Heritage'. The background is a photograph of a marina. In the foreground, there are tall, thin grasses with feathery seed heads, some in focus and some blurred. The water is a deep blue. Several boats are docked at a wooden pier. The most prominent boat is white with a red hull and has 'Maria B' written on its side. It has a tall, thin metal mast. To its right, another white boat is docked. In the background, there is a dense line of green trees under a blue sky with light clouds. The title 'Bay Heritage' is overlaid on the top half of the image. 'Bay' is in a black, elegant cursive font, and 'HERITAGE' is in a green, all-caps, serif font.

Bay HERITAGE

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Bay HERITAGE

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A family business



Throughout the publication historical photos from Middlesex, Lancaster and Northumberland counties appear.

Photos courtesy of Larry S. Chowning, Kilmarnock Museum, Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society, or otherwise listed.

On the cover

Traditional Chesapeake Bay workboats are moored on Antipoison Creek in Lancaster County.

Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi





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In this, our third edition of Bay Heritage, the Rappahannock Record and Southside Sentinel reflect on the traditions and people that have shaped the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, specifically Lancaster, Northumberland and Middlesex counties.

In this on-demand world of making things better and faster, many of the crafts, industries and people that have made our area what it is today are lost or overlooked.

The craft of making a crab pot is one that's been done by watermen on our local rivers for decades. It's a dying art. We show you how it's done.

We've also highlighted businesses and people who have contributed to our heritage, including a family-owned, seafood processing company in operation since 1908 and a man who's dedicated his life to promoting and supporting the lower Northern Neck. We've also spotlighted the tiny towns and villages that once bustled with commercial activity.

For those who may have just found our waterfront communities, and for those who have called this place home since birth, we hope you enjoy this celebration of our history.

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This Texaco service station was located where IsaBell K. Horsley has a real estate office today in Urbanna on Cross Street. Photo courtesy of Arthur Carver

BH | What's in a name?

Freeshade, Middlesex County: A crossroads where goods were sold. The area was marked by a huge shade tree and the market used to attract buyers with posters that advertised "Free Shade."



The Brent Building, North Main Street, Kilmarnock. Courtesy of Kilmarnock Museum

The loss of a pet is immeasurable. But so is the love left behind.



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“I love selling real estate. The job requires meeting market challenges head-on and attention to detail. I utilize my knowledge of the region to help my listing clients receive the best possible price. And, it's still a thrill when I help buyers find their ideal Northern Neck primary or second home,” says Hargett.

Hargett launched her first real estate firm in 1995 while still working as a local appraiser. After 25 successful years, Hargett merged her firm with Liz Moore & Associates based in Williamsburg.

“Sandra and I are like-minded business owners,” says founder Liz

Moore. “The merger was a good fit for both of us.”

Hargett has been recognized repeatedly by her peers and real estate associations. She has earned the Ruby designation, the pinnacle sales performance award from the Northern Neck Association of Realtors, each year since 2017. Before that, Hargett received the Diamond award for 25 consecutive years.

Hargett moved to the Northern Neck in 1985 with her family. “The Northern Neck is my home. It's been my pleasure to share this beautiful place with others.”

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CORNER Bygones

Sites of forgotten towns
dot Northern Neck and
Middle Peninsula areas

Kayan Post Office opened on Feb. 20, 1920 on the Little Wicomico River across the river from Sunnybank Post Office and closed March 31, 1933. It still stands today. Photo by Larry Chowning

by Larry S. Chowning

During the 1880s-90s, the U.S. Postal Service expanded service throughout the United States creating little post offices in country stores, gristmills, steamboat landings and places where the public frequented.

The major drive was to have a post office within walking distance of as many people as possible. If the location already had a name, it got a new post office. But if there was no name for the location, it often received a post office and a name too.

As transportation improved, the need for a post office on every corner went away and often when the post office went away the commercial life that had developed around it went away too — along with the memory of its name.



Library of Congress records state that Thomas F. Hundly was postmaster of Amburg Post Office from June 1893 to March 1914. This photo of his store and post office was taken sometime during that period. Amburg Post Office was established March 1891. Matthew Glenn was the first postmaster. Photo courtesy Nola Watson

Amburg

Amburg today is part of the Deltaville community. The only physical reminder of the name is the all-Black church named First Baptist Church of Amburg.

Matthew Glenn was the first postmaster of Amburg Post Office founded in 1891. The post office was located in Thomas F. Hundly's General Merchandise store and it was later run by the Gemmill family. The family operated the post office in the store from 1914 to 1960.

The last active postmaster was Ivy T. Gemmill and the post office closed on July 31, 1960 when it was consolidated with Deltaville Post Office.

Although some people might have forgotten Amburg, the name is etched in maritime history. Boatbuilder Linwood Price built boats in the 1920s and he lived in Amburg. Price built a ton of boats in the mid-1920s and specified the location of where each one was built as "at Amburg, Va."

One of the most valuable sources in identifying boats is the United States Coast Guard National Vessels Documentation Center in Fall Waters, W. Va. The information lists names of the boats and the location of the builder. Although most people think of Deltaville as being the primary site of commercial wooden boatbuilding, before Amburg became Deltaville, it was a boatbuilding center too.



This is an interior photo of the old Hundly Store at Amburg. The little boy is Warren Johnston. Photo courtesy of Middlesex County Museum

Regent

The community of Regent is located on Locklies Creek and at the end of the 19th century was a thriving little neighborhood. It got its name in 1894 when John Cornelius Clarke, while filling out a post office application, heard a customer in the store order a box of Regent starched man's collars. Clarke wrote down the name Regent as a suggested post office name.

Regent Store was built on a peninsula overlooking Locklies Creek and many of its customers came by water. There was a strong water-related commerce near the store with two railways and a blacksmith shop close by.

The post office closed July 31, 1955 with mail from that neighborhood being transferred to Syringa Post Office.

The old Regent Store and former post office still stands today as a reminder of a once thriving little neighborhood.



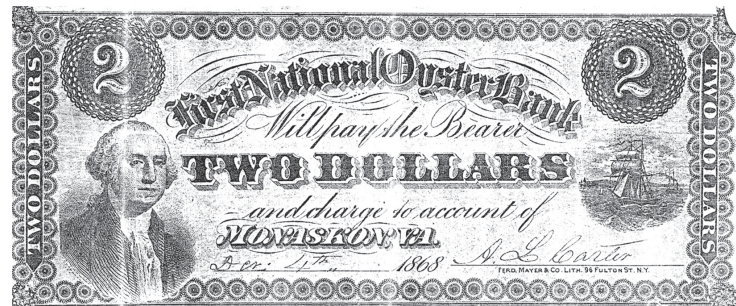
When filling out a United States Post Office application, storekeeper John Cornelius Clarke put as the name of the proposed post office, Regent. At the same time he was filling out the application, a customer came into the store and ordered a box of Regent starched men's collars and Clarke wrote on the application Regent as his location of business. Pictured above is the store Clarke was operating when he filled out that application. Regent Post Office was open from 1894 to 1955. Photo by Larry Chowning

Monaskon

Monaskon in Lancaster County was a busy place in the late 1860s. Addison Lombard (A.L.) Carter ran a flourishing general merchandise store and oyster-packing business there and provided his own printed notes to local oystermen for store credit in exchange for oysters.

Under his own "First National Oyster Bank" Carter went to some length to lithograph one and two dollar and 10 and 25 cents bills. After the Civil War, there was a real shortage of money on the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula and entrepreneurs like Carter had to be creative in finding ways to keep cash flowing and the local economy moving forward.

A center of Monaskon economy was Monaskon Wharf. Raymond Dobyns and wife Jennie purchased the wharf in 1920 and ran a successful business consisting of a store, post office, vegetable canning factory and oyster packing house. The once flourishing commercial business associated with steamboats and oysters at Monaskon is gone today and the shoreline is now composed of residential homes and agriculture fields.



Addison Lombard Carter ran a general merchandise store in Monaskon in Lancaster County and provided printed notes to local oystermen for store credit in exchange for oysters. He owned a sail powered schooner and bugeye used to buy oysters and to haul freight. His store was one of the largest in the area. Photo courtesy of Louise Jesse

Streets

The only thing left that would alert a passerby the community of Streets ever existed is three miles west of the Town of Urbanna. It is a narrow paved road named Streets Lane going into Hampstead Farm.

For years the building that now houses Big Oak Cafe was known as Streets Post Office. There was a United States Post Office at Streets from 1889 to 1932.

The first postmaster was Edward W. Beazley, who was confirmed on Feb. 9, 1889. Streets remained the name of the community until post office officials renamed the post office Remlik on Feb. 1, 1932.

Quintus C. and Richard F. Hillard were the second and third postmasters from 1896 to 1901, which may mean that Streets Post Office was located at Hillard's Gristmill for a while, which was at Hillard's Millpond



The pilothouse of the Herman M. Krentz is the centerpiece display on the grounds of the Reedville Fishermen's Museum. It was built at a boatyard in Kayan. Photo by Larry Chowning



The Herman M. Krentz was built at Kayan in 1928 by boat-builder Herman M. Krentz. The photo was taken in August 1930. Photo courtesy of George and Becky Butler

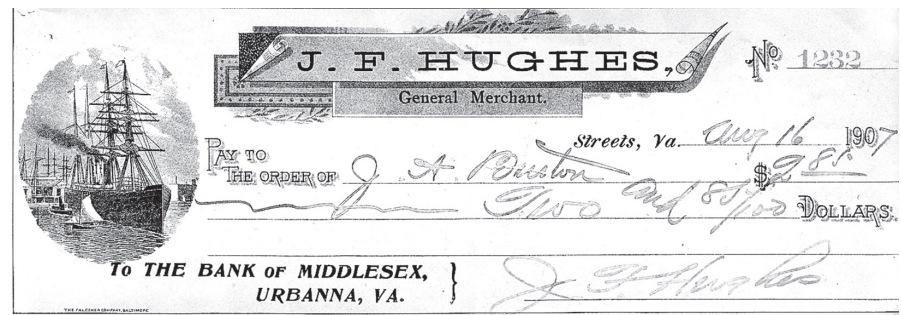


When this photo was taken, Streets Post Office was owned and operated by Julius F. Hughes. The post office and community was renamed Remlik in 1932. Remlik is Kilmer spelled backwards. It was named for Willis Sharpe Kilmer of Binghamton, N.Y., who purchased a large farm near Streets. Dr. Kilmer's Swamproot Liver and Bladder Cure was the avenue that made the Kilmer family wealthy. Photo courtesy of Otis Ryman

owned by the Hillards.

At the turn of the 20th century, Julius F. Hughes was owner of Streets General Merchandise store. He was confirmed as the postmaster on Feb. 9, 1901. Many people remember the store being run by James M. Derieux, who was postmaster from 1920 to Feb. 1, 1932 when the name changed from Streets to Remlik.

Although, it is unclear as to how Streets got its name, the surname Street was very common in Middlesex and Essex counties. The family generationally was in the general store business. Maynard Street owned one of the largest stores in Middlesex County in Saluda. A member of the Street family could have started out in business in a smaller store such as at Streets.



General merchant Julius F. Hughes ran Streets Store and post office from 1901 until it was sold to James M. Derieux in 1920. This 1907 Bank of Middlesex check confirms that J. F. Hughes and Streets, Va. was there on Aug. 16, 1907. Photo courtesy of Mary and Danny Loving

Kayan

Kayan in Northumberland County was one of the gateways to Reedville. A ferry across the Little Wicomico River still connects to Sunnybank on the road to Reedville.

Kayan Post Office opened in 1920 and Straughan Richardson was the first postmaster. He operated a general merchandise store at the ferry landing. The post office closed in 1933 and mail was moved to Ophelia Post Office.

Like Amburg, Kayan has an interesting boatbuilding history. Before moving to Harryhogan where he opened Krentz Marine Railway, Herman M. Krentz

built boats at his boatyard at Kayan.

Krentz built large boats on the shore and documentation of this is in the United States Coast Guard Documentation Center. One of the largest boats built at Kayan was the Doswell S. Edwards an 80-x 24-foot menhaden steamer built in 1926. It was owned by Beaufort Fisheries, N. C. in 1946. Over its life, the boat worked out of Reedville, Beaufort and New York ports.

Probably the most well known of the Kayan-built boats is the deck boat Herman M. Krentz. She was built and named at Kayan in 1928. The pilothouse of the Herman M. Krentz is today the centerpiece of

the Reedville Fishermen's Museum's outside maritime collection.

Today, Kayan is just a stop when waiting for a ride on the Sunnybank Ferry, but 100 years ago it was the commercial hub of that area where people came daily to work at the boatyard and shop at the Kayan Store.

History is scattered up down the roadsides of the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula and is often forgotten and ignored. Whenever there is an isolated roadside sign with very little activity around it — it's a good bet that life was once busy there. It has a name for a reason!



Julius Rosenwald School originally known as Northumberland County Training School, photograph date unknown. This high school for Black students near Reedville opened in 1917 and closed in 1958. It is still standing. Photo courtesy of the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society



The steamboat Potomac coming into Urbanna Creek. Photo courtesy of Dr. A.L. VanName collection

BH | What's in a name?

Presley Creek, Northumberland County:

Named for William Presley, a member of the House of Burgesses in 1647, who had a patent on 1,150 acres of land there—long before the song, “Blue Suede Shoes.”

Morattico, Lancaster County:

The anglicized version of the Native American tribe, Moraughtacunds.



Chesapeake National Boat'n Bank. Photo courtesy of Kilmarnock Museum

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Greater Kilmarnock area is a better place for the love of ‘multipotentialite’



Carroll Lee Ashburn

Carroll Lee Ashburn has perfected the art of getting older without getting old. The active octogenarian turned 89 in July.

“I don’t feel a day over 88,” he said with a smile when I caught up with him a few weeks ago at the Kilmarnock Museum, where he serves as president. “I keep thinking I’m not gonna be able to keep doing [all of] this much longer.”

For the few folks who don’t know Ashburn, he’s the epitome of a ‘multipotentialite,’ a term coined in 2010 by career coach and author Emilie Wapnick. A multipotentialite is someone with many interests, talents and creative pursuits, any one of which could make for a great career for that person. There’s no better description for Ashburn. From coaching and umpiring to organizing festivals and parades and serving as the longtime radio voice of the Red Devils, Ashburn’s ubiquitous influence has been felt by generations.

The folks who do know Ashburn—and I mean really know him—will tell you they’ve never seen him wear shorts; that he still mows some of his lawn with a push mower; that he’s a proud father and grandfather; that more often than not when he goes into a business in Kilmarnock it’s to solicit volunteer help or funding for one of his countless projects; that he loves

a good softball or basketball game but doesn’t care to watch wrestling or soccer; that when he’s passionate about something,

he works tirelessly to make it happen, and that he has spent his life acting as an ambassador for Lancaster County.

“I don’t see anybody that could take his place,” said Kilmarnock business owner and museum board member Fred Burke. “He’s a unique personality. He’s more than a person, he’s a personality.”

He’s laid back and so calm, but he loves to celebrate this community and its people,” added Burke. “And if he latches on to an idea, he will make it happen, some kind of way. Whatever he’s doing, it’s always for the good of the community, not for his own glory.”

Ashburn spent 40 years as a car salesman in Kilmarnock for TD McGinnes but perhaps missed his true calling as a professional promoter. He officially “retired” in 1997 but is not one of those older adults who tend to become relatively inactive after retirement. In fact, his weekly schedules of acting as a tour guide, volunteering at the museum, broadcasting games, writing columns for the newspaper and

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

organizing promotional events would tire most folks 50 years his junior.

But Ashburn hasn't done any of this for the accolades. In fact, he's very modest about his contributions to local athletics and the community.

"None of this stuff, I could have done by myself," he said. "And I just do it because I enjoy it."

The son of Zack and Gladys Ashburn, he grew up in Indian Creek and aside from a four-year stint serving his country, he never wandered far from his homeplace.

After graduating from Kilmarnock High School, Ashburn took the advice of friend Winter H. "Shorty" McCrobie and enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard, where he studied aviation electronics. "I was going to be drafted and Shorty talked me into the Coast Guard. I got to do what I wanted to do which was fly, and I love to fly." Every chance he gets, he still takes to the sky with Davy Nichols, owner and pilot of Coastal Sky Taxi.

A high school baseball and basketball player, Ashburn played in the Chesapeake League when he was on weekend leave. He also married his wife of 64 years Catherine while serving in the Coast Guard. When he returned to Kilmarnock in 1956, he played in a fun, yet competitive, fast pitch game between Rappahannock Record employees McCrobie and Sonny McCarty. It was from that game that the Kilmarnock Texaco men's fast pitch team was born.

Ashburn was a sometimes player, manager and coach of that team from 1957-72 and during that time brought numerous "show teams" such as the California Cuties, The Philadelphia Hobos, The Queen and her Maids and The King and His Court to area sandlots. The history and memorable team stories are chronicled by Ashburn in his book, *Tales of the Legendary Texacos*, which he published in 2015.

During the Texacos' heydays, Ashburn started the three-day spring festivals to open the softball season. The events included two parades as well as

"I don't see anybody that could take his place. He's a unique personality. He's more than a person, he's a personality. He's laid back and so calm, but he loves to celebrate this community and its people. And if he latches on to an idea, he will make it happen, some kind of way. Whatever he's doing, it's always for the good of the community, not for his own glory."

— Fred Burke

the crowning of Miss Texaco. When the Texacos moved their home field to the Upper Lancaster Ruritan Center in Lively, his Fourth of July ballgames brought hundreds to a celebration that included beauty contests, picnics, swimming and a spectacular fireworks display. He contracted a group of synchronized swimmers from Richmond to perform in the Lively pool.

Ashburn even brought a rodeo to town to perform at the high school grounds in Kilmarnock.

"It was the first and only time we've had a rodeo here," he said.

When he became involved with the Kilmarnock Chamber of Commerce, promoting local shopping events with his Dog Days, Kilmarnock Days, Scottish Days and Rivahfest celebrations, he solicited clowns, dog trainers, impersonators and musicians to come to the area. The actor who portrayed "Cooter" on the Dukes of Hazzard made an appearance as did a very



Carroll Lee Ashburn may be best known for his days as the coach and manager of the Texacos fast pitch softball team.

A multipotentialite is someone with many interests, talents and creative pursuits, any one of which could make for a great career for that person.

Carroll Lee Ashburn has spent his life as an ambassador for Kilmarnock.

Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



believable Barney Fife impersonator, whom a diner at Lee's Restaurant "was convinced was the real Barney."

Now remember, this was all before the internet and social media. Ashburn put boots on the ground in search of performers and talents to come to little ole' Lancaster County.

"Now, I go online, of course, but I used to just go to Christmas parades, events, check all the papers from around the state they'd have at the Record office, and everywhere I'd go I'd look for things or people to bring here."

Ashburn's love of softball, and sports in general, also led to him founding the Textettes girls softball team and coaching high school softball from 1957-61. Perhaps his most famous celebrity visitor was Lynda Bird Johnson, the daughter of U.S. President Lyndon Johnson and the wife of former Virginia Governor Chuck Robb. She came to Lively to throw out the first pitch for a Textettes' game.

He has spent much of his life umpiring, both as a volunteer with the Little League and for the Virginia High School League. He received a 30-year umpire plaque from Little League.

He also started the now popular Stars of Tomorrow Little League tournament, which brings thousands to Dream Fields every summer. The tournament was initially for girls softball only but it has grown under other directors to include baseball and now features teams from across the state.

He even created a mini olympics for Little League softball players with strictly softball-related competitions and held that event for 10 years.

As the organizer of Lancaster County Little League's opening day ceremonies for decades, he started the tradition of hosting a team from Saitama City, Japan, in an international exhibition game. He organized that for eight years.

For all his Little League-related efforts, the Carroll Lee Ashburn Field at Dream Fields was named in his

honor in 1990.

Forty-five years ago, he started his part-time radio career as a sportscaster for Lancaster High School's basketball games. He partnered then with Dean Loudy. He's still making that scary climb up the narrow ladder to the broadcasting booth at LHS, but now he calls the game alongside Demetrius Means. Over the years, he's broadcasted for three stations, locally for WKWI and WNNT, and for the Eastern Shore's WESR.

When Lancaster High's boys basketball team won the state championship, Ashburn jumped into action, doing what he does best, and organized a celebration with a parade through Kilmarnock.

When he hasn't been in the broadcasting booths, he's been on the court as a basketball referee for 20 years for middle and private school games.



Carroll Lee Ashburn serves as president of the Kilmarnock Museum.
Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Even when his coaching days ended, Carroll Lee Ashburn was still on the field as an umpire. Here, he's discussing a play with CD Hathaway.
Photo by Yours Truly Photography

Carroll Lee Ashburn has been an advocate for our community his entire life. People like Carroll are truly unique. He serves our community volunteering countless hours for so many causes while never wanting or accepting any type of acknowledgement or accolades. He is truly irreplaceable.

—Joe Hudnall
Kilmarnock businessman
who has umpired with Ashburn for 35 years

“I can say, without a doubt, the community I grew up in is a better place because of Carroll Lee,” said CD Hathaway of Kilmarnock, who’s worked with Ashburn as a volunteer umpire and at the local radio station. “He’s passionate about everything he does. He was a driving force behind my umpiring and I’ve always thought of him as a mentor.”

Anyone who’s ever seen the Kilmarnock Lighted Christmas Parade can thank Ashburn for growing the event to what it is today. “When I jumped in, it was small. But it grew to 100 units,” he said.

He stopped working on the local Christmas parade about 10 years ago, but continues to volunteer with the Richmond Christmas Parade. He started helping with that over 35 years ago when it was organized by the Richmond Jaycees and his daughter, Gayle Stone- man, was chair of the committee.

“I love helping with that parade,” he said.

The current president of the Kilmarnock Museum, he started the organization’s biggest fundraiser, the Dance Extravaganza, 22 years ago. The show, which brought dancers, singers and performers from across the state for a night of entertainment, once included an appearance by a reigning Miss America. He also was the driving force behind the museum’s Memorial Garden and Wall of Valor, which memorial- izes fallen first responders.

“You’re not going to find anyone more dedicated to preserving that museum,” said Burke. “He believes in memorializing things.”

The museum board hopes to get funding to install an interactive kiosk highlighting African-American history of the area. Ashburn is spearheading that project.

He also founded, along with Dr. James Norris, the Fishermen’s Memorial in Reedville. Dedicated in 2016 at the Reedville Fishermen’s Museum, it honors the Northern Neck menhaden watermen who died at sea.

“I just like to do things to get people to come to town, a reason to visit,” he said. “I still enjoy doing it and still work at it.”

His weekly Do you Remember? pieces in the Rappahannock Record are

a favorite among readers.

Founder and member of the Lancaster County Sports Wall of Fame, Ashburn is organizing a second wall of honor for Northern Neck residents, this time one honoring those promoting and involved in the arts. An awards ceremony planned for fall to introduce the honorees has been put on hold because of the pan- demic.

He has also volunteered with the annual Wings, Wheels and Keels event at Hummel Field in Topping. Many don’t know he even managed a local rock band, the Immortals, in the 60s and 70s.

He recently resurrected on a smaller scale the shop local events, Dawg Days and Kilmarnock Days, sponsored by the museum and several business partners.

“I’ve decided I’m giving up umpir- ing,” said Ashburn. “I stopped doing that anyway last year with all the sports being canceled, but the rest I’ll do as long as I can.”

In his spare time, he serves as a tour guide for residents at Commonwealth Senior Living in Kilmarnock and Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury in Irvington. He organizes tours of local points of interest— Windmill Point, Kilmarnock/White Stone/Irvington, Reedville, Morat- tico, Mathews County, Middlesex County. There’s a church tour and a tour of a horse farm.

“None of this stuff, I could have done by myself. And I just do it because I enjoy it.”

—Caroll Lee Ashburn

“I’ve been doing this for several years,” he said. “The activities directors are looking for things to do and I give them a list of places we can tour.”

Many of the residents—many younger than Ashburn— didn’t grow up in the Northern Neck or Middle Peninsula and are interested in local history.

For all of his years of service, Ashburn has an arm’s length list of awards from organizations like the Red Cross, Shriners, Rotary, Jaycees, NAACP, DAR, fire departments and town governments.

The quintessential philanthropist, Ashburn proves you don’t have to have a lot to give a lot. You just have to love what you do.

I can say, without a doubt, the community I grew up in is a better place because of Carroll Lee. He’s passionate about everything he does. He was a driving force behind my umpiring and I’ve always thought of him as a mentor.”

— CD Hathaway

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Jennifer Bowhey, Director,
Northern Neck Middle Peninsula
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Visiting Angels is celebrating its 15th year in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. Located in Kilmarnock, the company employs over 100 professionally trained caregivers across 7 counties. They help people stay independent and safe in their homes with a little extra help cooking, getting to appointments or remembering medication times.

Jennifer Bowhey and husband Steve are the owners, living a few miles up the road in Irvington, VA with two daughters. Being part of the local community is important; employing 100 caregivers and serving the families of the Northern Neck is fulfilling to Jen especially. The company offers Dementia Care Classes to the public and provides

help navigating for families in the area with care needs as they are full of resources to refer people to.

Watch for Visiting Angels staff donning angel wings at Halloween and passing out candy at local Halloween events. The Visiting Angels staff work closely with The Rivah store in Kilmarnock to help store and distribute giving tree donations to families in need each year and the staff at Visiting Angels love to dress up the windows at Christmas and other holidays. “We are so proud to try and spotlight this beautiful region and the people here nationally,” Jennifer said. “This year we nominated one of our local caregivers for an award in care—she beat out over 20,000 caregivers around the United States and won!”



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CYNTHIA LEA BALDERSON,
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The vision began when the unmet need was recognized, creating monumental change for Northern Neck and Upper Middle Peninsula families in need. In 2010 the Food Bank began in the back of a pickup truck, assisting area pantries by transporting food from Richmond to the Northern Neck. *Simply... people helping people.*

Eleven years, two moves and an extraordinary level of growth later, Healthy Harvest Food Bank, headquartered in Warsaw, Virginia and serving Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, Middlesex, Essex and Westmoreland Counties, including Colonial Beach, offers comprehensive hunger solutions that target the region's most vulnerable. The mission, to provide hope in the communities we serve through

the *right food and education*. The vision, to create *healthy, self-sufficient and thriving* communities.

The food bank serves over 7,600 individuals monthly through 30 partner pantries, distributing over 2 million healthy meals each year as the only organization of its kind in the region. Community partnerships extend the hands of help further through programs that focus on children, seniors, college students and those fighting chronic illness. We even make sure pets in need get food and supplies.

Cynthia Balderson is Vice President & Development Director at HHFB and has been part of the local nonprofit community for over a decade. She was born and raised in Kilmarnock and currently resides in White Stone.

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Heritage and livelihoods

intertwine from a sheet of wire

Before any boat can be untied from the dock, any pot can be baited with bunker, or any buoy can be thrown, there first must be a crab pot crafted with enough precision and skill to attract and hold peelers, sooks and jimmies. That's where Brandy Kennard of Deltaville comes in.

Kennard has been crafting crab pots for watermen for over 10 years while also working on the water himself. Like many watermen, Kennard's connection to the water runs deep as it's been a tradition for his family to work on the water.

Kennard said he grew up crabbing with his father and his grandfather and continued working on the water into his adulthood.

Building crab pots is also familiar to his family. Kennard said, back in the day, his grandmother used to build the crab pots his grandfather would use.

Once Kennard's own family started growing, he was looking to do something that would allow him to spend more time at home to watch his kids. When he saw an ad from Chesapeake Bay Crab Pots looking for a crab pot builder, he hopped on the opportunity and converted his porch into his work space.

by
**AnnGardner
Eubank**

After receiving his first lesson in building crab pots, which took over six hours, he was apprehensive of his new line of work, said Kennard. It took him nearly six months of practice until he felt comfortable building the pots on his own without any guidance.

"I was terrified I would be putting in so many hours and wouldn't make a worthy profit," he said.

Quickly, however, Kennard taught himself a few tricks and designed his own algorithm for building pots.

Kennard said unlike many of the "old heads" who build pots, he works mostly seated instead of straining his back and joints. While he says he's saving his back, Kennard noted the toll the process takes on his wrists.

After years of practice and fine tuning his craft, Kennard can whip out a rectangle pot in less than fifteen minutes and can build a hexagon pot in about twenty

Brandy Kennard has made signage out of crab pots that display his craftsmanship and showcase the tradition and heritage of the working waterfront region. Photo courtesy of Brandy Kennard



Brandy Kennard's first step when crafting a crab pot is taking sheets of wire and bending them to form the shape and cage itself. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank



After Brandy Kennard bends the corners of the pot inward and cuts out the openings in the upstairs of the pot, he works on the funnels which he says are the hardest part of the process. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank



Coming together: While Brandy Kennard says shaping and attaching the funnels are the hardest part of the process, he says the most aggravating part is making the bait holders. "It's the longest 10 minutes of the day," he said. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank



In his at-home work space, Brandy Kennard has a variety of tools he uses to make the process more efficient. Here, he uses a tool to bind the edges of the pot together. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank

minutes time.

On average, Kennard builds anywhere between 2,000-2,500 pots a year. He doesn't spend much time building in the summer months since he is out on the water fishing pots of his own, but he stays busy building crab pots, peeler pots and oyster cages for about six hours daily in the cooler months.

"It's very much a dying art," Kennard said.

With fewer watermen on the water each year, there's been less demand as well as less of an interest over time. Kennard said his 14-year-old son has taken a bit of an interest to the craftsmanship of it all and has been building different projects himself using the tools and wire at his disposal.

Additionally, Kennard teaches new builders who may join the Chesapeake Bay Crab Pots Team, and it's his design work and techniques all of their pots are built upon.

While it is a dying art and is becoming more of a niche skill, Kennard says with patience and persistence, anyone is capable of producing pots.

"It's like changing oil or waxing a boat. We all think we can do it, and we probably all can, but if you don't have all of the tools and don't know a whole lot of the tricks to it, building them won't be very efficient," he said.

While Kennard has had years of practice and tons of hours logged into building the pots, he is able to craft a pot so swiftly and with ease that anyone can follow along with his step-by-step process.

First, Kennard takes a sheet of wire and bends the corners inward using a wire-bending machine.

The wire they use at Chesapeake Bay Crab Pots come in 150-foot by 2-foot rolls. Kennard said he can typically yield between nine to 13 pots per roll.

It's crucial Kennard and other builders maximize the use they get out of the wire because of the continuously rising prices of materials. According to Kennard, the cost of wire has doubled each year for the past seven years, and has quadrupled in the last year.

Second, Kennard takes the upstairs of the pot and cuts out the openings for the crabs to enter.

After, he shapes and rolls the funnels which he says is the most difficult part of the process, he shapes and attaches the bait holders. This is the most aggravating part of the process and is "the longest 10 minutes of the day."

Once all of the individual pieces are built and attached, he connects the sides using a tool that is similar to a staple gun. The tool uses pieces of wire to clip the pot's edges together.

"It's kind of a game to me to see if I can build the next one faster than I did the last," he said.

"It's like changing oil or waxing a boat. We all think we can do it, and we probably all can, but if you don't have all of the tools and don't know a whole lot of the tricks to it, building them won't be very efficient." —Brandy Kennard

With proper care and maintenance, a pot used for recreation purposes has a life span of typically four-to-five years, said Kennard. A commercial pot can usually hold up for about three years. According to Kennard, pots range at retail price on average \$45-\$55.

While Kennard clearly has a deep rooted interest and investment in the heritage of the working waterfront life he and his family have always known and lived, he said as time goes on he's hoping to get more involved in the creative aspect of his craftsmanship. When he's not building crab pots for commercial and recreational use, he enjoys getting creative and working on other projects like furniture made from crab pots, like rocking chairs and love seats. Kennard also has built "LOVE" signs and Christmas tree displays out of pots.

Despite ever-changing ecosystems, regulations and circumstances that are causing traditions like pot building and waterfront industrial work in general to seemingly diminish,

people like Kennard are using skills and familial values and traditions to keep the heritage of the working-watermen alive.

Because crab pots are not mass-factory produced and still solely made by hand, while some techniques may update and evolve, the craftsmanship, spirit and skill of pot building remains intact today as it did generations ago.

"It's kind of a game to me to see if I can build the next one faster than I did the last."

— *Brandy Kennard*



Brandy Kennard's craftsmanship goes beyond just functioning crab pots. He also makes toys, decor and furniture, such as this rocking chair, out of crab pots and crab pot materials. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank



Fresh out of the pot, Chesapeake Bay blue crabs are ready for steaming. Photo by Tom Chillemi

Kathleen M. Hall, CPA, PC

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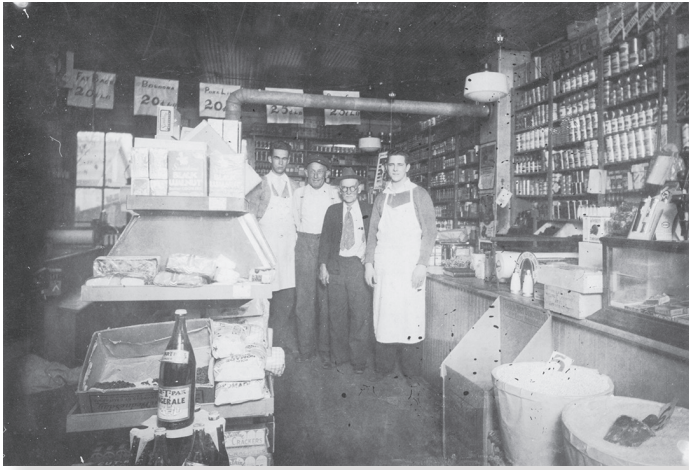
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Albert Noblett's Store, Kilmarnock. Photo courtesy of Kilmarnock Museum



This launch was used by Ross House Hotel in Urbanna in the early 1900s to pick up passengers and mail from the steamboats when the tide and wind made it difficult for steamers to get inside the creek. Photo courtesy of Emily Chowning

Meet Your Local Merchants!

What **LOCAL** means to **RAL ART CENTER:**

As a permanent resident of the Northern Neck and as a professional artist, it is important to me that the RAL Art Center be an active participant in the community not only to promote art and education but to ensure we give back to our friends and neighbors. Being local, it is imperative that the RAL Art Center establish strong relationships with fellow business leaders. These relationships will provide for long-term support financially, will encourage strategic partnerships, will provide for mutually beneficial programs, and will promote our love of art to everyone.



RAL
Doug Mock, Executive Director
19 N. Main St.
Kilmarnock VA
804-436-9309



Established in 1949, the RAL Art Center provides our community with a premier fine art gallery along with educational opportunities for all ages and stages in life. As a non-profit organization, RAL relies heavily on the community and has maintained a tremendous presence in the Northern Neck and surrounding area as a result of our amazing volunteers and supporters.

Representing over 50 co-operative artists, the Gallery exhibits a wide variety of artistic media to include paintings, pottery, sculpture, fiber, glass, jewelry, photography, and much more. In its newly renovated Pike Studio, RAL Art Center offers community members and visitors a variety of art classes from the very beginner to the most advanced skill level.

Every year RAL Art Center has an exciting line-up of monthly themed exhibits. Each exhibit is celebrated with a First Friday reception that is always free and open to the public.

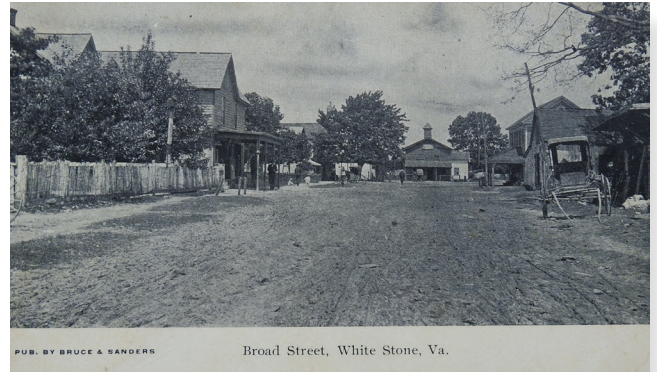
For 72 years, the RAL Art Center has promoted local art, has provided arts education for all, and has established itself as a community leader in bringing

more art to our friends in the Northern Neck.

My name is Doug Mock. I am the Executive Director of the RAL Art Center and a full-time resident of White Stone, Virginia. I have been a member of the RAL Art Center for three years and the Executive Director for the past year. I am a professional artist and instructor, teaching beginner to advanced painting in all media, especially watercolor. I am a signature member of the Virginia Watercolor Society and the Southern Watercolor Society.

I began my professional career at the Xerox Corporation working in sales, marketing and management. After that I established my own business for twelve years teaching children from the ages of 3 ½ to 12 to draw and cartoon. Upon selling my business, I began the exciting and difficult journey of becoming a full-time artist.

It is my goal as Executive Director to utilize my vast experience to bring about positive change for the RAL Art Center, to maintain the energy and enthusiasm within our membership and to encourage all residents of our wonderful community to become a part of this amazing organization.



Broad Street, White Stone. Date unknown. Photo courtesy of the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society



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Cowart Seafood:



Cowart's operations are still at the same location on the Coan River, building upon previous generations. The low cinderblock building on the left is one of the original oyster shucking houses. Photo by Jackie Nunnery

— a tradition of adapting —

For a family business to last a generation, you need an idea and to put in the work. For a family business to last four generations and over 100 years, you also need a fair amount of fortitude and a little bit of luck.

For the family behind Cowart Seafood in Lottsburg, it has also meant near constant adaptation to changes in markets and mother nature, even when trying new ventures has meant not always succeeding.

by Jackie
Nunnery

“You have to do something,” said fourth-generation Lake “Lakey” Cowart Jr. “We have customers relying on us for product” in addition to keeping the shuckers, hatchery employees, packagers, watermen and office staff employed in the three businesses.

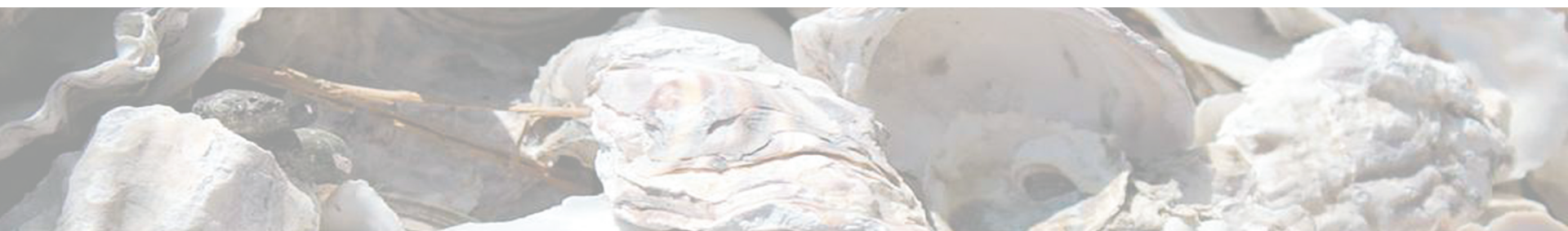
Cowart currently helms Cowart Seafood as well as Lake Packing Company and Mid Atlantic Bait, two complementary businesses.

A foundation built on cans

In addition to shucking oysters, the first two generations, A.B. Headley and son-in law William John Cowart, started their canning business, Lake Packing Company in 1908, one of the many tomato canning factories that were so prevalent in the Northern Neck prior to the depression.



A man of many hats, Lakey Cowart, manages the many moving parts that come with running the three businesses. Photo by Jackie Nunnery



“Everybody had a tomato patch back then,” Cowart said. Families would bring in their tomato crop to earn some extra money and Cowart recalls a line of peelers, mostly women, removing tomatoes from boiling water in order to remove the skins in preparation for the canning process. “They were doing 30,000 to 40,000 cases a year,” Cowart said. The finished product made its way down to the steamboat dock on the Coan River and shipped to markets beyond the Northern Neck.

It wasn’t just tomatoes, they also canned herring and herring roe. “You would shuck oysters in the fall and winter, can herring and roe in the spring, and tomatoes in the summer,” Cowart said.

With The Great Depression and the death of A.B. Headley, the cannery closed until 1948. When the business reopened with Headley’s son Sewell Headley, and William’s son Lake Cowart Sr., Lake Packing Company again began canning tomatoes, herring and herring roe, benefitting from government shipments of canned goods to Europe after World War II. When that program ended in 1951, so did the canned herring and herring roe business.

While canned herring is no longer part of the product line, they have been packaging herring roe every spring under the brand name Tidewater since 1987. What sets the brand apart is the use of river herring, which spawns in the freshwater of East Coast rivers. It is a hard-to-get item due to its seasonal nature and the fact that many rivers are closed to harvest in order to replenish stock.

They also can and market a Southern classic, hominy, under the brand name Manning’s, which they purchased in 1995. The brand has now been around for over 100 years.

As tomato crops and canneries declined, Lake Packing, as the last cannery in the Northern Neck, hit its peak in the early 1990s, canning up to 400,000 cases in a year. However, by 1997 “you couldn’t make money doing it,” Cowart said. They began looking for other businesses, trying sweet corn and soft shell crabs, but neither ended up successful. Cowart took the loss on the soft shells particularly hard because “people tried talking me out of it.”

But out of the missteps came something better. In 2001, they partnered with Bevans Oyster Company in Kinsale to create Mid Atlantic Bait.



Founders William John Cowart and A.B. Headley. Photo courtesy Lake Cowart

“You would shuck oysters in the fall and winter, can herring and roe in the spring, and tomatoes in the summer.”

—Lake Cowart



A bucket conveyor system continually provides shuckers with oysters. Photo by Jackie Nunnery



The dock at Lake Packing where steamboats loaded canned goods to sell at the market. While shorter, the current dock is in the same location. Photo courtesy Lake Cowart



Lake Packing circa 1948, trucks full of tomatoes unload for canning. Photo courtesy Lake Cowart

Together they produce and market Tournament Master Chum for saltwater sport fishing. The menhaden is caught with a spotter plane and boat, then brought by a specialized tanker to Cowart to be ground up and packaged. Nearly all is sent to Florida where it is tossed overboard to lure Atlantic Ocean fish like yellowtail, tarpon and sailfish.

A legacy of oysters

While the canning side of the business had its challenges, nothing is quite as challenging as dealing with what Mother Nature can throw at you. Cowart Seafood has been selling shucked oysters, packaged within days of their harvest, since its beginnings. It is now sold under brand names like WH Sparrer, Chesapeake Pride, and Sea Mist and available in chain grocery stores like Harris Teeter, Wegmans and Kroger.

But in between, there were lean years “like in ’86 when dermo hit. We had a nearly 90% die-off” of oysters, Cowart said. “We survived by the grace of God and the help of local banks.”

Prior to the 1980s when a new, more lethal form emerged along the mid-Atlantic Coast, dermo was a parasitic disease that would typically kill off 30% of oysters, mostly older ones that had been exposed to the parasite for some time. In addition to the continued threat of dermo, there is MSX, another parasitic disease of the lower Chesapeake Bay.

“We struggled from ’86 until around 2007,” Cowart said, “Which is why we hired A.J.”

A.J. Erskine is vice-president of Cowart Seafood and general manager of the KCB Oysters, which stands for the original partners in the hatchery, all well-known names around here when it comes to seafood: Kellum, Cowart and Bevans. Kellum has since bowed out, but the name remains the same. Started in 2009 and located in one of the original oyster shucking houses, the focus is on spawning and raising larvae and seed oysters as a complement to the harvesting of wild oysters on the York, Nomini, Lower Machodoc, Great Wicomico, and Rappahannock rivers. All of the oyster leases, with the exception of those in the Coan River are jointly owned by Bevans and Cowart.

“With Ronnie Bevans, we could not have a better partner in the many businesses we share,” Cowart said.

Over time, they have developed a vertically integrated system, growing larvae smaller than a grain of sand, to a full sized oyster in about two years. The sterile triploid oysters they raise have a distinct advantage over the naturally



Still incredibly small, the tiny brown specks are oysters, now known as spat because they have attached to a surface to continue growing. Photo by Jackie Nunnery

“We have customers relying on us for product” in addition to keeping the shuckers, hatchery employees, packagers, watermen and office staff employed in the three businesses. Cowart currently helms Cowart Seafood as well as Lake Packing Company and Mid Atlantic Bait, two complementary businesses.

There were lean years “like in ’86 when dermo hit. We had a nearly 90% die-off” of oysters. “We survived by the grace of God and the help of local banks.”

—Lake Cowart

occurring diploid oysters: they remain plump and full year-round since they are not expending energy reproducing. As a result, they have an opportunity to use the hatchery raised oysters in summer months when the wild oysters are busy making more oysters. Triploids can also grow somewhat faster, also because they are not reproducing. As a result, they spend less time in the water, making them less susceptible to dermo and MSX.

Raising oysters in this environment, while controlled, is labor intensive and as a result, it is still a smaller portion of their oyster business. After they induce spawning, the resulting larvae start their life in large tanks where they are continually fed a special algae, grown in a laboratory-like setting at the hatchery.

“It’s a mix of CO₂, seawater, air, sunlight and nutrients,” Erskine said.

At this stage, the water is changed and the tanks are cleaned every couple of days, he said. This process will continue for 2-3 weeks until they reach a certain stage the larvae will want to attach themselves to a surface to grow. Most larvae are moved to larger tanks lined with cleaned, reused oyster shells.

The larvae will strike or attach to the shells, creating “spat-on-shells.”

They will spend a few weeks growing in the tanks before being planted loose on leased oyster ground located outside in the Coan River.

Other larvae are moved into a controlled setting system that uses shell shavings for the larvae to attach, filtered seawater and cultured algae. Small seed oysters are moved to the upweller, located outside in the Coan. Here, river water is pushed through the oysters with a paddle wheel to increase the amount of water and nutrients that they filter. They will spend another couple of weeks growing and getting acclimated before being put into cages and placed in Cowart’s leased oyster beds in the Coan.

“That whole process is about six to eight weeks to that stage,” Erskine said.

While the cages can help protect the oysters from predation, they are still at risk. Erskine said the storms of 2018 and the resulting influx of freshwater was detrimental to the oysters which need salt to survive and thrive. “Normally the Coan is about 13 to 16 parts per thousand in salinity. Then, it was 5-7 parts per thousand,” he said.

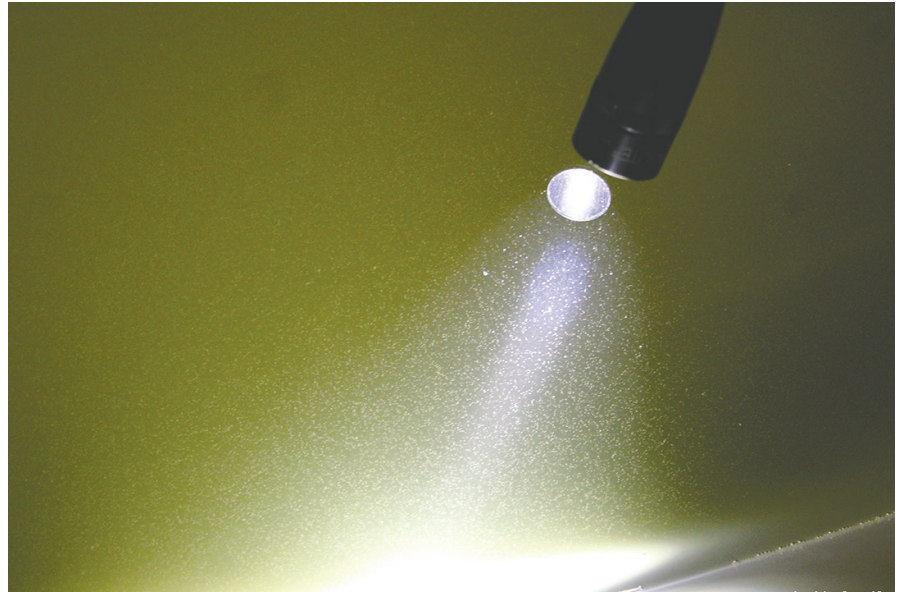
The work does not end when the cages are set just off the river bottom.

“Typically we plant in the summer and split in the fall,” meaning that as the oysters grow, they split the group into more cages to give them room to further develop. “We’ll leave them until spring of the next year when we’ll put them into a larger cage,” Erskine said.

Depending on size or market conditions, they could harvest as early as that fall, roughly 16-18 months after they were first put into cages. And when it’s time for harvesting, the cages make it easier than tonging or dredging. It is just a matter of hauling the cage into the boat.

Shucking usually takes place within a day or two of harvesting. On a typical day, they will have 30-40 shuckers, nearly all of them guest workers

Fresh, shucked oysters
on ice, ready to ship.
Photo by Jackie Nunnery



At the beginning of their life cycle, countless oyster larvae float in an algae-rich tank. Photo by Jackie Nunnery



Two-year-old oysters, fresh from the river, waiting to be shucked. Detailed records are kept to track the oyster lots during the entire growing, harvesting and packaging process. Photo by Jackie Nunnery





A crew readies the oyster cages for the boat where they will be taken to a nearby oyster ground to continue growing. Photo by Jackie Nunnery

on the H-2B visa program. “We used to have mostly locals, but they’ve aged out.” The day starts around 4 a.m., after the boat has returned and the oysters are unloaded into a bucket conveyor system that continually delivers oysters to each shucking station. Shuckers, whose hands never seem to stop, will go through “several hundred bushels” in a seven-hour shift. During the holiday peak, they will more than double the number of shuckers to meet demand.

While most of their oysters are shucked, destined for soups, stuffing or fritters, they have a small line of individually quick frozen half-shells that can be used for baking, broiling or defrosted and eaten raw.

“This is a highly sought-after product that is more convenient for consumers because it is pre-shucked and very easy to handle,” Erskine said.

Restoring the waters

All this attention to aquaculture is not just for the benefit of Cowart’s bottom line. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation estimates that one adult oyster can filter 50 gallons of water in a day as it feeds. As a result, the introduction of more oysters benefits the waters they are planted in and ultimately the bay.

Cowart said he is “doing more than I can stand right now,” but if the phone calls and interruptions are any indication, Cowart is truly a busy man. When another Lake, his grandson, stopped by to see “Pop Pop,” the question about the next generation came up.

“None of my daughters had an interest,” he said. “They saw how much I worked and didn’t want to do that for a living,” he said.

“Our future is with A.J. and Jason,” Cowart said. Erskine and Jason Kenner, president, both have a stake in the business, so even though the next generation may not have the Cowart name, there’s still a dedication to the business and finding a way to do things differently.

“Then there’s Lake...hopefully,” Cowart said.



Lahey takes a welcome break with grandson Lake, one of soon-to-be seven grandchildren. Photo by Jackie Nunnery

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The John Andrew Twigg Bridge across the Piankatank River was completed in 1953. This photo was taken when the bridge was near completion and the car ferry was still running. Photo courtesy of Dick Murray

BH | What's in a name?

Alfonso, Lancaster County: Named for Alfonso Barrack, the first postmaster, who was named for King Alfonso of Spain. The name first appeared with the establishment of a post office there in 1893. Barracks still populate the area.

Callao, Northumberland County: Named for first postmaster John Callaway in 1893. There already was a Callaway in Franklin County, thus the variation.

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Entering Residential Section, Irvington. Date unknown. Photo courtesy of the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society



Main Street, Kilmarnock. Photo courtesy of Kilmarnock Museum

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Local means being a locally-owned and operated business, owned and run by a "Come Here" (Katherine Keith) who fell in love with and moved to the Northern Neck twelve years ago. Local means that Katherine has gotten to know our community inside and out through volunteering in our local organizations, and serving on local boards. It means providing meaningful jobs for local caregivers that pay a living wage—regardless of profit margins. And it means knowing and understanding the needs of our community's elders through hard work and listening for the last five years, and meeting those needs through Right at Home.



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While successfully providing care for seniors in their homes for the last five years, Katherine and everyone at our local Right at Home discovered a real need in our community for a program that provides socialization and comradery outside of the home, as well.

In The Clubhouse behind our office at 87 N. Main in Kilmarnock, we are now offering **The Memory Circle** therapeutic enrichment program for those experiencing cognitive decline and mild-to-moderate dementia. This research-based and heart-focused program is designed to improve the

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The **Memory Circle** is from 9:30-2:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays. The program features a small-group environment with experienced, dementia-certified staff. Places are limited. Accepting applications now.

We are also hosting **Friendship Fridays**, a drop-in social program from 1:00-2:30 on most Fridays **free** for **any** senior in the community, offering games, movies, presentations, and socializing.

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