

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 2, 2023

Undergrounding Utilities Eyed for Richmond Highway

Dominion customers might pay a few cents more each month to cover it.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

As spring season approaches, so does the project timeline for the expansion of Richmond Highway, so officials are looking at the possibility of putting the power lines underground as well. Virginia Senator Scott Surovell (D-36) included this change in the latest bill passed in Richmond.

The issue now goes up to the Governor's office, and then onto the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors who would decide on this project since it is a local project vs a state project. Overhead power line poles are not only unsightly, they are a hazard too.

"Every week I get a call when somebody hits one of the utility poles," said Surovell, who has been working on this idea for over six years. "The community strongly supports it," he added.

In Surovell's bill, SB 1370, it says "the primary need of the project is for purposes of grid reliability or grid resiliency or to support economic development priorities of the Commonwealth, including the economic development priorities and the comprehensive plan of the governing body of the locality in which at least a portion of line will be placed, and not to address aging assets that would have otherwise been replaced in due course."

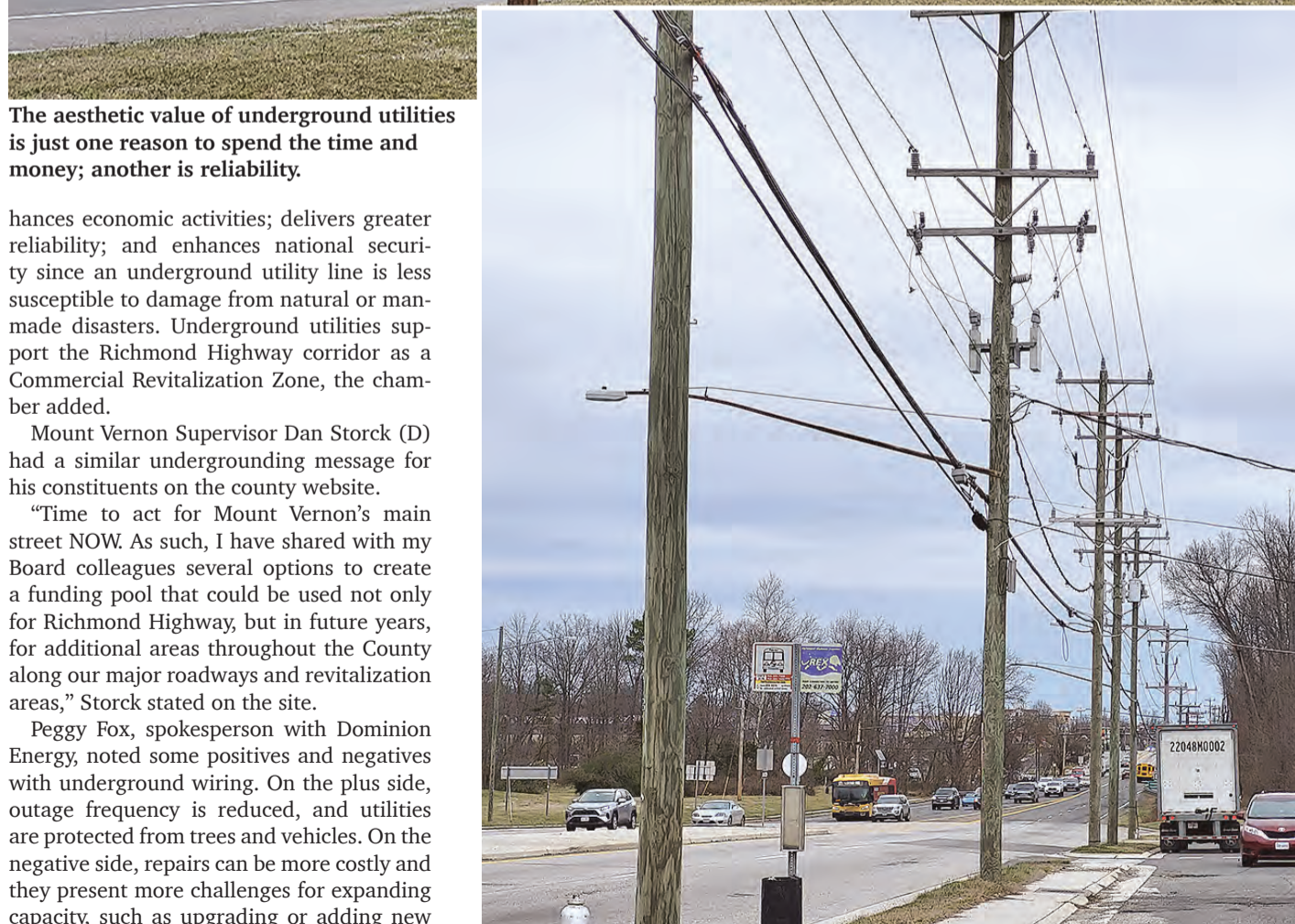
"Appearance is one of the reasons," Surovell said. "In 20-30 years, Richmond Highway will look a lot different, density and mixed use will be spread." Presently, there are wires strung between buildings but by undergrounding it, the corridor will be "a more urban streetscape," he said.

Surovell said the funding would come through Dominion Power, and therefore, the customers would ultimately pay more but he said it would only be "penny's more," on the monthly bills for each customer. When the trenches for the lines are created, room for Verizon fiber network would be included.

Community Communications

In 2018, the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce produced a letter of support for the undergrounding of utilities. "The Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce, representing approximately 300 businesses, together with the local business leaders co-signing this letter, urge the Board of Supervisors to ensure that all utility cabling is undergrounded when Richmond Highway is widened between Jeff Todd Way and Napper Road," the letter stated.

Reasons for their support included minimizing disruptions by piggy backing it with a road project; it's for the "public good," so government funding is appropriate; it en-



The aesthetic value of underground utilities is just one reason to spend the time and money; another is reliability.

hances economic activities; delivers greater reliability; and enhances national security since an underground utility line is less susceptible to damage from natural or man-made disasters. Underground utilities support the Richmond Highway corridor as a Commercial Revitalization Zone, the chamber added.

Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck (D) had a similar undergrounding message for his constituents on the county website.

"Time to act for Mount Vernon's main street NOW. As such, I have shared with my Board colleagues several options to create a funding pool that could be used not only for Richmond Highway, but in future years, for additional areas throughout the County along our major roadways and revitalization areas," Storck stated on the site.

Peggy Fox, spokesperson with Dominion Energy, noted some positives and negatives with underground wiring. On the plus side, outage frequency is reduced, and utilities are protected from trees and vehicles. On the negative side, repairs can be more costly and they present more challenges for expanding capacity, such as upgrading or adding new circuits, she said.

In some places, the utility poles go right up to the road.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

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NEWS

Bill to Protect Students Awaits Governor's Signature

Current process has allowed felons to work in public elementary and secondary schools.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

On the Virginia Governor's desk is a bill that could have prevented a convicted sex offender from working as a middle school counselor for Fairfax County Public Schools.

On Saturday, Feb. 25, the Virginia House and Senate unanimously passed proposed legislation to strengthen conviction notification requirements for felony offenses, including sex offenses and facilitation of prostitution, by elementary and secondary public school employees. On the final day of the 2023 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly, the Senate, and House unanimously approved a conference report to SB 821/HB 1704 | 2023.

The safety of the Commonwealth's elementary and secondary students, including those who may be solicited for sex by felon on public school employees in Virginia, depends on the signature of Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who has yet to sign the 2023 bipartisan legislation.

"I think we all wish legislation like this was not necessary," said Sen. Scott A. Surovell (D-36), who represents parts of Fairfax, Prince William, and Stafford counties. "But we need to be sure that proper notification gets to the right person when certain convictions are handed down and when arrests are made.

Surovell is the chief patron of SB 821, while HB 1704's primary sponsor is Del. Rob Bell (R-Albemarle). Each introduced legislation to amend and reinstate sections of the Virginia Code.

According to Surovell's office, the bill modifies existing Virginia law as follows:

Requires each school division to name a School Safety Officer to receive notices of arrests and convictions.

Requires notification to schools for arrests of all felonies. Existing state law requires notification upon arrest only for sex offenses and Class 1 Misdemeanors.

Requires arresting authority to conduct employment check if access is available to avoid the defendant providing misleading employment as occurred in the Fairfax County/Chesterfield County case.

Requires schools to annually provide contact info for School Safety Officer(s) as part of annual safety audit to the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety who must publish a public list of School Safety Officers online.

Requires notifications of arrests, convictions, and discoveries by probation officers to be made in writing with a verifiable paper trail.

Requires probation officers to notify school systems of convictions upon discovery.

In 2021, Surovell and Charniele Herring (D-42) worked together to modernize the criminal conviction and reporting system, SB1339/HB1283. Employers who request criminal background checks would be notified of any changes to their criminal records in a fully automated manner. This system is powered by "RAP Back," the Next Generation Identification Record of Arrest and Prosecution Back service of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"The Virginia State Police is slated to begin utilizing that service upon deployment of their new criminal recordkeeping system on July 1, 2025, and additional legislation was passed this session (2023) to conform Virginia's record system to federal RAP Back standards. SB821 and HB1704 serve as a transition to the RAP Back system," according to a release by Surovell's office.

Notification of Convicted Sex Offender Falls Through the System; the Fairfax County (Public School) /Chesterfield County case

Three correspondences provide insight into the Fairfax County (Public School) /Chesterfield County case. The first is an August 18, 2022, online letter from Dr. Michelle C. Reid, Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, to FCPS families.

"As a result of being notified of a serious situation at Glasgow Middle School regarding a counselor who continued to be employed despite being convicted — outside of Fairfax County — of "solicitation of prostitution from a minor," I want to assure you that as soon as the School Board and I knew of the situation, we took immediate steps to dismiss the employee. I can confirm that the employee has been terminated and FCPS is petitioning the state to revoke his license." wrote Reid.

The second correspondence is a Facebook post by Chesterfield County Police Chief Col. Jeffrey S. Katz on Aug. 23, 2022. It sheds light on how the FCPS counselor slipped through the notification cracks. Katz posts that on Nov. 19, 2020, the department con-



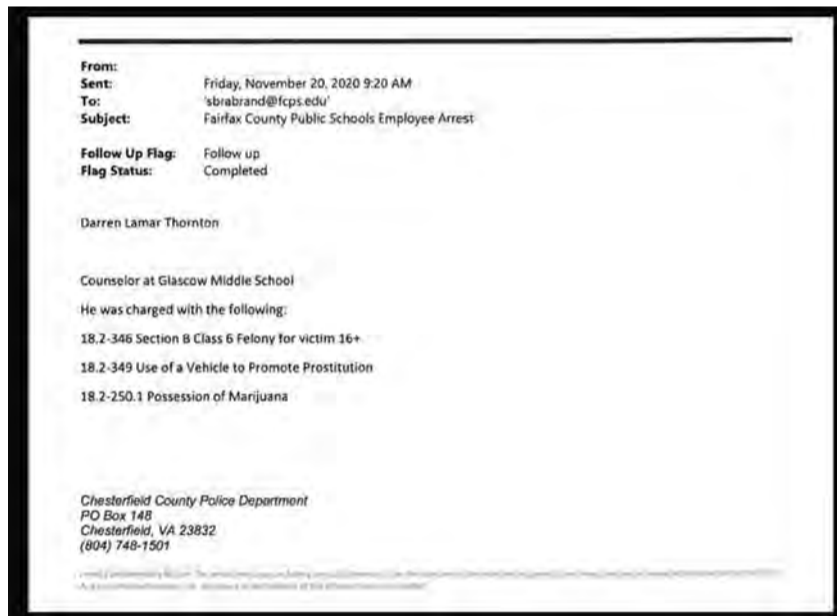
SCREENSHOT

Sen. Scott A. Surovell (D-36)



SCREENSHOT VIA FCPS

Dr. Michelle C. Reid, superintendent of FCPS



SCREENSHOT VIA FACEBOOK

Email by Chesterfield County Police Department; Sent: Feb. 20, 2020, Subject: FCPS Employee Arrest

On June 9, 2022, another sting, general prostitution / human trafficking comes upon Thornton again and arrests him. Katz posts, "We recognized him, and I looked up his name on the internet. I was surprised to see that he was still listed on Fairfax County School's webpage as a school counselor and inquired of our staff how that could be possible." Katz writes that the next day its special victims unit supervisor makes "a second phone notification to Fairfax County Schools, whereupon the matter appears to have been addressed administratively with his firing in August (2022)."

ducted a sting operation and arrested Darren Lamar Thornton, an FCPS middle school counselor. Among the charges: "Felony solicitation of a minor, 16 years of age or older."

Thornton was later convicted in Chesterfield County Courts and ordered to register as a sexual offender with the Virginia State Police. Katz writes, "During the registration process, Thornton lied about his employment, indicating that he was "self-employed." Upon making the arrest, the department learned Katz is a counselor at an FCPS Middle School. The department calls FCPS to determine the best way to notify the superintendent of Thornton's arrest. They are given two email addresses to make notifications to Superintendent Scott Brand. They do so.

On Aug. 22, 2022, the department learns that the emails sent in November 2020, following their original phone call, "did not go through the Fairfax County School Server to the intended recipient, Superintendent Brand."

"Given the reality that the former superintendent had multiple email addresses during his tenure, it is possible we were provided invalid or out-of-date addresses when we asked how to make this notification. The technical nuances of the email delivery failure are still unknown," posts Katz.

Katz points out that the department caught Thornton twice and made "good faith efforts (twice) to ensure he was appropriately dealt with by the criminal justice system and his employer."

The Virginia Way

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

After an incredibly busy couple of months, the 2023 General Assembly session gaveled out on Saturday, Feb. 25. In total, my colleagues and I in the House and Senate introduced an astounding 2,200 bills, of which 867 are on their way to the Governor's desk for consideration. As this session was a shorter session of just 46 days, House members were limited to 15 or fewer bills. I am pleased to announce that eight of my legislative measures are included in that successful number. The most popular topic for introduced bills this year were matters related to criminal and civil justice, closely followed by education and health-care.

The least popular topic of the session was legislation related to communications and technology, of which no bills passed both chambers. As of today, there is still work to do on the final budget amendments package. The budget conferees are still in negotiation, which will require us to return to the Capitol for a final vote. However, before session ended, we all agreed to plug a \$200

million funding error from the Department of Education with a stop-gap funding measure to make sure our local public schools receive the state funding they expected.

This funding package also makes a deposit into the state "rainy day fund" and provides some funding for existing construction projects. Yet, despite this bipartisan and bicameral funding success, the House and Senate are very far apart in taxes and spending priorities. The biggest issue is whether to provide corporate tax relief that the Governor wants or increased state funding for public education that the Democrats like me support.

The Virginia legislature stands at the precipice of extraordinary and unprecedented turnover in the upcoming November election. Perhaps 25-35% of the body will change in the next cycle. In fact, the last time this level of turnover occurred in modern history was during the Reconstruction era. Following the enactment of the Virginia Constitution of 1869 and until 1890, about 100 African



Krizek

American men served in the General Assembly of Virginia. Unfortunately, from 1890 to 1968, Blacks were not represented at all in the Virginia General Assembly until 1967 when William Ferguson Reid, a Richmond doctor and community leader, became the first African American in the 20th Century elected to the Virginia House of Delegates.

Indeed, many of my colleagues have announced their impending retirements, including our senior-most delegate, my friend Ken Plum of Reston, who has served Virginia as delegate consecutively since 1982. Also retiring: Del. Rob Bell, Del. Roxann Robinson, and Delegates Jeff Bourne and Kathleen Murphy, my wonderful seatmates on the House floor. Still, others are leaving the House to run for seats in the Virginia Senate.

In the Senate, we are losing Majority Leader Dick Saslaw, Sen. Tommy Norment, Sen. Janet Howell, and Sen. John Edwards. A special election will be held on March 28 for the seat vacated by Jennifer McClellan who was elected to Congress last week.

In total, 16 legislators have already formally announced their retirements to pursue other opportunities and spend more time with their families, and I expect several more will announce in the coming months as we finish our work on the budget and return to Richmond for the Reconvene session in April. I thank them all for their many years of service to the people of the Commonwealth, and I will miss them in the General Assembly.

As we gain so many new members from all walks of life in the next session, the seniority and experience that remains among me and my colleagues will become all the more important to guide these new legislators in service to their constituents. Many who are leaving us hold positions of leadership, including committee chairmanships. While we can welcome the change to come, it will be up to us to ensure that the decades of institutional knowledge is not lost and that the legislature can continue to serve in the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth without allowing special interests to gain too much influence over the process.

\$100 Million for Undergrounding U.S. 1 Utilities; General Assembly Session Ends

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

We have completed the 2023 Session of the General Assembly, but our work is not done. Legislating has ended for now, but we did not finalize the state budget and will likely return for a special session to complete that work.

Of my 31 bills, 19 are with the Governor and one additional bill could be considered in a special session. All of my bills passed with bipartisan support and I am hopeful that the Governor will sign them.

Most importantly, we made significant progress in obtaining funding for undergrounding utilities on U.S. 1. Del. Paul Krizek, Sen. Adam Ebbin and I amended a bill addressing a new Fauquier County transmission line to add a first-ever pilot program for an underground electric distribution line on the U.S. 1 corridor if Fairfax County requests the funding as

part of the U.S 1 widening and bus rapid transit project. The bill is now on the Governor's desk.

Dominion Power would fund and build the infrastructure and the cost would be recovered over time from all Dominion ratepayers through rates subject to Dominion's standard ratemaking process. This would cost ratepayers about \$0.20 per month for every \$100 million expended. Del. Krizek and I previously secured a commitment from Verizon to fund the installation of buried Verizon fiber optic cables provided that the duct bank was expanded to include conduit for Verizon's lines. Coupled with the standard contribution from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), this should fund the lion's share of cost for burying all lines.

We will now work with Fairfax



Surovell

County and VDOT to make this happens assuming the Governor signs the bill. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) confirmed to Krizek and me that a project delay relating to adding underground utilities would not jeopardize its \$460 million

FTA grant to construct bus rapid transit. Adding underground utilities to this project would require updated environmental assessments, engineering and a longer construction period which could drive project costs up and require additional funding. Since the Dulles Corridor has seen \$6.8 billion of investment in the Metro Silver Line project, \$1.4 billion for the I-495 HOT Lanes, \$3.7 billion for the I-66 HOT Lanes, we hope that some increases to this \$900 million project can be accommodated.

Both chambers passed my legislation to revitalize our Commis-

sion on Utility Regulation (CUR) to help oversee our transition to clean energy. My bill requires the CUR to have regular meetings, receive updates regarding implementation of legislation and hire at least four full-time, nonpartisan policy staffers to advise us on utility policy. This will make future legislation less reliant on industry lobbyists and interest groups, which can only mean better results for Virginians.

Fairness for Local Dealers

My bill to rebalance the relationship between Virginia's locally-owned vehicle dealerships and vehicle manufacturers passed unanimously. Manufacturers have sought to exert increased control over vehicle sale processes like mandating significant investments to gain access to electric vehicle inventories. Ensuring dealers' independence means more variety in

SEE \$100 MILLION, PAGE 10

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A Connection Newspaper





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Local Bike Group Expands to Meet Bicycling Demand

FABB brings on a variety of volunteer directors.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

To meet the growing demand for bicycling facilities in Northern Virginia, the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling recently brought on three directors to expand FABB's impact for bicycling as a form of exercise and commuting.

The three new directors are Kevin Romance, Joy Faunce and Taylor Jones.

Romance started his biking career as a newspaper delivery person in this area before moving to California, where he continued biking in a few mountainous rides. He now lives in the Herndon area and rides the trail along the Fairfax County Parkway and the Washington and Old Dominion trail. As part of FABB, he wants to focus on accessibility for underserved communities and on cycling infrastructure. "Cycling safety, and how we can keep cars, bicycles, and pedestrians functioning safely alongside each other is an important part of where I hope to make an impact," Romance said.

Faunce is a native of Fairfax County and has been riding the trails around the county for years. She would like to see the biking infrastructure around the county continue to improve. Faunce lives in North Springfield and likes the trail around Lake Accotink and the W&OD trail as well. "It has been nice to see how much the biking infrastructure has grown in the last couple of decades. Being on the board gives me an opportunity to give back," she said.

Jones works in Rockville, Maryland, as the Executive Director of Bikes for the World, which rescues unused bikes and rehabilitates them for others who want to bike. He also has experience in bikeshare organizations. Jones is a Maryland resident but has been involved in the area's biking infrastructure before with Capital Bike-share. He looks forward to improving the biking infrastructure and connectivity. "FABB has become a

respected voice advocating for a more connected County and I want to be a part of creating more connections and getting more people engaged in their surroundings," he said.

With the advent of E-Bikes, FABB has seen the number of bicyclists in the area increase, and they are meeting the increased numbers with more emphasis on bikes as a form of transportation. "Given the size of our county and the increase in biking, the FABB board felt it was necessary to increase our board membership from 8 to 11 directors," said FABB president Bruce Wright.

Biking Options Expand

A significant part of biking in the eastern part of the county is the Mount Vernon Trail along the Potomac River. FABB Board member Jeff Gauger, commented on some recent actions on the Mt Vernon Trail: "Arlington and the City of Alexandria successfully applied for SMART SCALE funding to improve and reconstruct approximately 6.5 miles of the northern section of the MVT, from Roosevelt Island to near Jones Point Park. In the not-too-distant future, this section of the trail will be repaved and widened to 11 feet, where feasible," he said.

The southern portion of the trail has received funding for specific projects. For example, bridge 12 near Waynewood was recently replaced thanks to a \$2 million Transportation Alternative Program grant. And just this month, the National Park Service announced a contract to replace bridge 23 that goes over Dyke Marsh and bridge 24. Still, we're going to end up with a nice, new northern MVT in Arlington and Alexandria, and possibly continuing with a narrower and bumpy southern MVT in Fairfax County.

FABB is part of a coalition to advocate for funding for the southern section of the MVT. The coalition includes the East Coast Greenway, the Capital Trails Coalition, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, and the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail.

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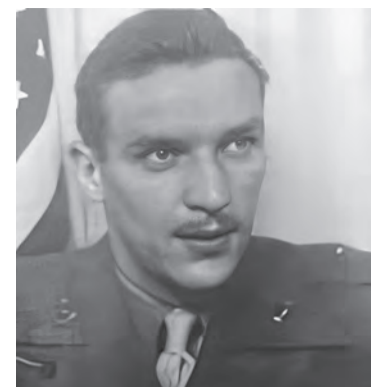


IWO JIMA SURVIVORS

'They Will Never Be Forgotten'

"The Greatest Generation may be getting smaller, but we need to make sure they will never be forgotten."

— Marine Corps Commandant, Gen. David Berger



Louis Bourgault



Dale Faughn



Roy Earle



Ivan Hammond



Marion Noel

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



PHOTO BY FRED LASH

Members of the Arlington County police department pose for a photo with survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima Feb. 17 at the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington. The officers provided a motorcycle escort for the veterans during their visit to the memorial, which marked the 78th anniversary of the battle.

Survivors gather to mark 78th anniversary of Iwo Jima.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
THE GAZETTE

The morning of Feb. 19, 1945, dawned eerily quiet as Dale Faughn made his way toward the shores of the remote Japanese island of Iwo Jima. But in an instant, the 20-millimeter dual purpose guns buried in the side of Mount Suribachi exploded, erupting into one of the bloodiest battles in U.S. history.

Faughn, just 18 years old, was one of the first Marines to land on the tiny Pacific Island, where he would remain until the battle ended in late March. Trained as a Scout sniper, he served with the 5th Division, 26th Regiment.

"We expected the battle to last five or six days," Faughn said. "Instead it went on for weeks. I wish I could tell you some hero stories but I was not a hero. The most memorable thing about Iwo Jima was not what I did there but what being there did for me."

Faughn was one of eight survivors to gather in Arlington over



PHOTO BY JOHN BORDNER/THE CONNECTION

Dale Faughn, right, recounts his experiences in the Battle of Iwo Jima as fellow survivors Juan Montano and Mathias "Matt" Gutman look on. The veterans panel discussion took place Feb. 18 at the Crystal City National Landing Hilton marking the 78th anniversary of the battle.

vors to gather in Arlington over President's Day weekend to mark the 78th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima.

"Three years ago we had more than 50 Iwo Jima survivors gath-

er at the 75th reunion," said David Fields, a board member of the Iwo Jima Association of America that sponsored the gathering. "This year only eight veterans were able

SEE SURVIVORS, PAGE 11



PHOTO BY FRED LASH



PHOTO BY JOHN BORDNER/THE GAZETTE

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger, center left, gathers with survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima Feb. 18 at the Crystal City National Landing Hilton. Shown are Dale Faughn, Mathias "Matt" Gutman, Ivan Montano, past Marine Commandant Alfred M. Gray, Commandant Berger, Marine Corps Sgt. Major Troy Black, Ivan Hammond, Marion Noel, Roy Earle and Louis Bourgault.

'We Are in Their Debt'

Iwo Jima veterans have shaped my life.

By DEAN LAUBACH
SPECIAL TO THE CONNECTION

Feb. 19 marked a solemn and historic day. Seventy-eight years ago, nearly 80,000 brave American souls began a 36-day saga to capture the island of Iwo Jima. The anniversary was marked with a reunion which eight survivors were able to attend. Five Marines. Three sailors. All in their mid- or late-90s, they gathered to share memories of that life-changing event. They recollect with each other, and with the younger generations in whose hands is placed the task of honoring their legacy.

I am 26 years old. At minimum, I am 6-8 years older than the average Marine infantryman at Iwo Jima. Many, if not most, were in their late teens, with a 23-year-old considered an old man. They faced a tenacious enemy in the entrenched Japanese defenders, but they conquered Iwo's volcanic sands with a perseverance that comes from within.

My great-uncle was a Colonel in the 5th Amphibious Corps, which was comprised of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions. He died at age 100, three years before I was born. In 2016, I found myself attending this reunion in his memory. Because of someone I never met, I was blessed be-

yond measure to be befriended by kind, witty, tremendously enjoyable men who have shaped me during the most formative time in my life. Without knowing it, they filled a void which came when my grandfather passed away when I was 13. By their convictions, conduct, and their forthright strength of character, they have passed on wisdom only they can impart.

I have made and lost many dear friends since that first reunion. With tears in my eyes I remember the memories I have made with members of "The Old Breed." E. B. Sledge's prolific nickname rings true. The accounts of a combat few can fathom still boggles my mind. We are in their debt for the life we live today, with all its modern conveniences and the air of freedom. My life has been forever changed because of them, for having shared their company.

Nearly 7,000 Americans gave their lives to conquer Iwo. Let us bow our heads and give thanks. To the Marines and Corpsmen especially, Semper Fidelis.

Dean Laubach is a 26-year-old graduate student now serving as web developer for the 5th Marine Division Association. He traveled five hours from his home in Pennsylvania to attend the reunion of Iwo Jima veterans.

Survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima pose for a photo following a wreath laying Feb. 17 at the Marine Corps War Memorial to mark the 78th anniversary of the battle. Flanking MGSgt Roger Roll, holding the wreath, are veterans Dale Faughn, Juan Montano, Ivan Hammond and Louis Bourgault.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE AND CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA



In the 8620 Richmond Highway, a new 7-11 takes shape to give shoppers in that part quick-shop option.



In the Hybla Valley part of town, new apartments offer an affordable option for many.



The Revolution consignment store in Penn Daw is going down and will be replaced by townhouses and another building.

Progress and Improvements Underway in Mount Vernon

This winter, the Mount Vernon area has been busy with ribbon cuttings, groundbreakings and construction crews, changing the face of this busy area one block at a time.

— MIKE SALMON



Slightly out of the corridor, another ribbon was cut on Jan. 12 at "Only Bathrooms," over in the Fullerton Industrial Park.



Officials are on hand on Jan. 13 to cut the ribbon on the Arden, a new multifamily community in the Huntington area that will provide safe, quality, affordable housing for households with low to moderate income.



On Jan. 20, the ribbon was cut at a lighting store in the Belle View Shopping Center. This new store is called Light By Alexandria Electric, and the brainstorm of owners Kevin and Elizabeth Collins.



On Feb. 22, officials gathered to cut the ribbon on the long awaited opening of South Alex Apartments, a community at 2803 Poag St, Alexandria, that features 400 apartments with 54 affordable units.



On Jan. 18, officials gathered to break the ground for the renovation of Mount Vernon Recreation center. Although this recreation center will be closed for two years while the work is going on, the new center will grow to 75,000 square feet of recreation space which includes a second ice rink.

ENTERTAINMENT

3 Dates to Circle in March

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

From music-filled afternoons at the brewery to celebrating springtime with cherry blossom drinks and freshly decorated sugar cookies, March always brings the fun. (And we're not even getting into the festivities around St. Patrick's Day!) Here are some of the month's best bets.

The Almost Spring Fling at Port City Brewing, March 11

Come listen to local music, sip a brew or two and support the Alexandria Music Makers Scholarship Fund all in one spot. Port City Brewing will play host to the Almost Spring Fling on this mid-March Saturday afternoon, welcoming artists such as 38-2-Base, The Hip Replacements and Lindsay Collette for a day of tunes and good times. The event is free, but bring some cash for donation purposes if you'd like to support the scholarship. 3950 Wheeler Ave. 2-6 p.m.

Purry Blossom Weekend at Mount Purrnon, March 25-26

Think the cherry blossoms will make it

to the Cherry Blossom Festival this year, or will they bloom early? No matter either way – the adoptable cats at Mount Purrnon Cat Café and Wine Bar will be happy to see you regardless. And we've got it on good authority that despite the trees' bloom schedule, the good folks at Mount Purrnon will have plenty of cherry blossom-themed food and drink specials to make the weekend even more festive. Reservations recommended. 109 S. Alfred St.

APPETITE

Spring Cookie Decorating Class at Lost Boy Cider, March 28

Get into the spring spirit with some fun cookies – and learn a thing or two along the way. The experts from Sugarcoated Bakery will lead a 90-minute step-by-step class so you can learn everything you need to know about how to up your cookie-decorating game. Need a little boost to your inspiration? Your ticket also covers a sampling of Lost Boy's Cider. 317 Hooffs Run Drive. 6:30-8 p.m. \$65.

Hope Nelson is the author of "Classic Restaurants of Alexandria" and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

THEATRE



PHOTO BY MATT LIPTAK

Curtain Up

Lettice and Lovage, a comical and satirical play by Peter Shaffer, is playing now through March 18 at the Little Theatre of Alexandria. Written for Dame Maggie Smith, who originated the title role of Lettice Douffet, the play centers on a flamboyant tour guide who loves to embellish the history behind an English country house and who butts heads with a fact-conscious official at the house. Pictured are Colin Davies as Mr. Bardolph and Pat Nicklin as Lettice Douffet. For tickets or more information, visit www.thelittletheatre.com

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NEWS

\$100 Million

FROM PAGE 4

selection, lower prices through competition and the survival of thriving community businesses. I was proud to work with them to craft nation-leading legislation.

I also passed legislation that will authorize Virginians to recover damages against local governments that bring enforcement actions that violate state laws or local ordinances and recover their attorney's fees. It is often currently impractical for Virginians to challenge enforcement actions that localities bring in violation of state laws or local ordinances. My bill passed the House of Delegates unanimously and the Senate 39-1.

Unlike other states, Virginia does not have recall elections, but instead authorizes legal actions to remove local elected officials under a voter petition process. State elected officials can only be removed by impeachment or the legislative body in which they serve. Recently, many local elected officials have been subjected to frivolous removal actions under this old Virginia law. Nearly all actions have been dismissed without an evidentiary hearing. I carried legislation drafted by the Boyd-Graves Commission, a group that recommended changes to reflect five state Supreme Court opinions back through the 1920s that clarify the law's meaning. My bill will reduce confusion. It passed unanimously.

Next week, I will write about more bills I authored, other bills we passed and the status of the state budget. Please share your views with me at scott@scottsur-ovell.org.

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IWO JIMA SURVIVORS



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/THE CONNECTION

Marine Lt. Gen. Norman Smith (ret), center, visits with Ivan Hammond, and Juan Montano at a gathering of survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima Feb. 17 at the Crystal City National Landing Hilton.

Survivors Gather to Mark 78th Anniversary of Iwo Jima

FROM PAGE 6
to return.”

The Battle of Iwo Jima was an intense, 36-day battle that became one of the major turning points in WWII. The raising of the American flag on Feb. 23, 1945, atop Mount Suribachi was immortalized in a Pulitzer-Prize winning photograph by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal.

“We don’t call them the Greatest Generation for nothing,” said Marine Corps Commandant David Berger. “They have done so much more after they fought against a determined foe.

They have inspired generations of Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen. They forged the spirit of this nation and today they embody the American spirit.”

Approximately one-third of all Marines killed in action during World War II were killed on Iwo Jima. More than 100,000 Americans fought there and 6,821 died as a result — 5,931 of them Marines.

Former Marine Corps Commandant Alfred Gray was presented with the IJAA’s Woody Williams Award, named in honor of Herschel Woodrow “Woody” Williams, a Marine survivor of Iwo Jima and the last living Medal of Honor recipient from WWII prior to his death in 2022.

The four-day series of events for the reunion included a veterans panel, a visit to the National Museum of the Army at Fort Belvoir and wreath-laying ceremonies at the WWII Memorial and the Marine Corps War Memorial.

Iwo Jima veterans attending the reunion at the Crystal City National Landing Hilton included Ivan Hammond, Louis Bourgault, Juan Montano, Marion Noel, Dale Faughn, Roy Earle, Mathias “Matt” Gutman and Ted Below.

“I took in the third wave of Marines, when the Japanese opened fire,” said Montano, who piloted one of the landing vehicles. “Marines were dying getting off my boat. Then I turned around and took our casualties back to the hospital ships.”

Marion Noel, 98, was on LST 779 which provided the flag raised on Mount Suribachi. Theodore “Ted” Below came ashore in the first wave on Iwo Jima, where he was pinned down on the beach before eventually working to destroy the elaborate cave system built by the Japanese.

Mathias “Matt” Gutman served 22 years in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Navy Reserves beginning with World War II where he served in six invasions including Iwo Jima.

Preston White, a Plebe at the U.S. Naval Academy, traveled from Annapolis to meet the Iwo Jima veterans.

“I saw this was happening and wanted to come be a part of it,” White said. “Hearing the stories from Iwo Jima, Okinawa and other Pacific battles gives you a sense of the personal cost of war. It drives home how important it is to remember their sacrifice.”

Seeing the flag raising inspired Faughn to embark on a writing career, which included poetry and his being named as the Poet Laureate of Kentucky in 1986. He closed the veterans panel with a reading of his poem “I Met the Flag on Iwo Jima.”

“I was so moved by what I saw it became the genesis of my poetry writing,” Faughn said.

“While we know who these men are here tonight, we need to make sure our children and grandchildren know their stories,” Berger said. “We need to talk more about it and not just on Memorial Day or Veterans Day. These stories can’t stop with them.”

Berger recognized and praised the younger veterans in the room as he closed out his remarks at the reunion gathering.

“From the beaches of Iwo Jima all the way to Afghanistan — every story has the power to inspire the young people who will lead us into the future,” Berger said. “The Greatest Generation may be getting smaller, but we need to make sure they will never be forgotten. Thank you for courage, sacrifice and ideals of freedom. We will make it our mission to make sure that your legacy doesn’t stop here.”

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Each local newspaper's mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before Federal PPP funding arrived, and both made our survival possible. We now await a decision for a grant from Rebuild Virginia in early February that we hope will help us in 2022 and beyond. But we need help to survive the first quarter, always a brutal time for cash flow in weekly newspapers. Thank you.

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The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyper-local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

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“Burton” For Certain



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

“Burton” is the name we gave the new golden retriever puppy that my wife, Dina surprised me with, on Sat. Oct 8, 2022. And ‘certain’ is the fact that had I not had a puppy to monitor – and take out, constantly, I likely would have wallowed to an unfamiliar depth after my brother died on Dec. 3. If puppies need anything, especially when they’re not yet house-broken, it is constant supervision. If you allow them an inch, they will create a mile of misbehaving damage. And remember, dogs, puppies, particularly golden retrievers because they’re smart, need guidance and lots of positive reinforcement – and most of all: consistency. Had Burton arrived during the 10 weeks or so when I was visiting my brother daily in the hospital and/or rehab center, he wouldn’t have received the hands-on (literally) training he has from me and my wife, Dina. But because of the timing of his arrival, a few weeks after my brother was discharged from the rehab center, he did. It gave the three of us (Burton, Dina, and me) ample opportunity to live and learn – and love together. And the love you give a dog is returned 100-fold.

Having established the context of Burton’s arrival; the addition and minute-by-minute awareness of a puppy in the house, and that same puppy outside the house without a fenced-in yard focusing your attention and energy 100% of the time, leaves very little time for non-puppy considerations. And so, unintentionally, but most fortuitously, having Burton in my life has enabled me to reduce/manage (not minimize though) the emotional loss that my brother’s passing has caused me to carry. Looking into Burton’s dog eyes and then having him shake on command – with both paws, doesn’t exactly make me forget the tremendous loss I’ve suffered (It’s not just me. It’s worse for Vanessa, Richard’s wife/now widow.) But Burton does force me to get up and at ‘em and out of the house every morning. Otherwise, I might simply remain in bed flipping the cable searching for something, anything, that might motivate me to want to live long and hopefully prosper. Richard may not exactly have been the reason for my living, but he sure was the reason for a lot of other things I need in my life. Moreover, he sort of represented a kind of order/predictability in my life that has now disappeared. I didn’t exactly take it for granted that I would outlive him, but I figured once I was diagnosed with a terminal form of lung cancer in Feb. 2009 (non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV), all bets were off, especially for anyone who took the over. And yet, here I am.

Though Burton’s addition to the family (Richard referred to Burton as his nephew; they met once on Oct. 28, Richard’s 73rd birthday) wasn’t intended for emotional support (he was secretly purchased by Dina in mid-June 2022, way before my brother’s July 16th admission to the hospital), he has been all that and more, especially from Dec. 3rd on, the day of my brother’s death. It’s no accident that golden retrievers are often selected and trained for this very situation: emotional support. You often see them advertised on television as “support” dogs; as an example, for veterans suffering from P.T.S.D., “battle buddies” as one veteran describes his companion. And you’ll see programs where the golden retrievers are visiting patients in hospitals and residents in nursing homes, and they’re even used by ski patrol for avalanche rescue. There’s nothing quite like a cold nose and a friendly paw to lift you up when you’re down. And I sure was. Now being the sole survivor in my immediate family is a role, oddly enough, that I never envisioned for myself.

I wouldn’t say Burton has saved my life, or made everything OKAY, but I would say, he did just about everything else. He gave me renewed purpose and responsibility for another life when I was at one of the lowest points in mine.

It’s impossible not to smile when greeted by your dog. Their exuberance and excitement at seeing you, after any kind of separation, along with the affection they exhibit almost makes everything all right. Well, for a few minutes it does. Still, my life will never be the same without my brother in it. He was my ‘battle buddy.’ I imagine now he’s looking out for me from a different, more permanent place. I guess there’s some solace in that. And let’s not forget the healing power of dog saliva.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.



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