

The Emmitsburg Dispatch

Vol III, No.1

news and opinion in the service of truth

December/January 2004

Emmitsburg Fire Chief steps down

By Richard D. L. Fulton
Staff Writer

Frank Davis, Emmitsburg's veteran fire chief, is stepping down. He has decided to take a break, and will leave his post as chief of the Vigilant Hose Company at the end of this year. "After 13 years it's good to have a change at the top," Davis told The Emmitsburg Dispatch. As Davis put it, "We have always had a great department and the other chiefs (he served under) were an inspiration. I was (as chief) just trying to follow a tradition."

Davis has been with the Vigilant Hose Company for 25 years and served as chief since 1990. In addition he has worked as a full-time firefighter at Fort Detrick since 1994, presently holding the rank of Captain. From 1979 to 1994 Davis worked at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, starting in the mailroom and ultimately working as a safety and security specialist.

"All my working years have been involved in firefighting," Davis said. "I'm tired. It takes about forty to fifty hours a week to serve as chief in the local fire service, plus seventy-two hours a week working at Fort Detrick. The hours (invested) make for some long weeks."

—Continued on page 3



—RAYMOND BUCHHEISTER / THE EMMITSBURG DISPATCH

Emmitsburg soon to be a two traffic light Town

By Raymond Buchheister
Editor & Publisher

Initial work has begun on installing a flashing traffic signal at the intersection of Rt. 140 and Silo Hill Rd. on the east side of Town. The crew poured

concrete footers for the poles and according to Steve Haag, a project manager for Benfield Electric traffic signal division, are on schedule to erect the poles in mid-January. Then they will run the underground conduit and

—Continued on page 5

Town to hold hearing on Bollinger's request to annex 20-acres into Town for a 50-home subdivision. Jan. 21 at 8:30 p.m. at the Sleep Inn hotel.

—see related story on p. 8 about Senior Housing.

Town to discuss Managed Growth Plan and Home Fire Sprinkler ordinance at it's Jan. 5 town meeting. The meeting will be held at the Sleep Inn at 7:30 p.m. —see two letters on p. 2 concerning the residential sprinkler legislation.

Horses help Humans —see story on page 17.

Emmitsburg's Santa Claus —see story on page 15.

Inside

Letters to the Editor	-----2
Editorial	-----4
Town News	-----5-9
Religion	-----10
Obituaries	-----11
Education	-----12
The Retired Ecologist	---14
Sports and Recreation	---16
Quilters	-----18

Emmitsburg Dedicates Early Warning System

By Joyce M. Demmitt
Copy Editor

Maryland Governor, Robert Ehrlich, Jr., joined Emmitsburg Mayor James Hoover, county, state and federal officials for the dedication of the Town's new early warning system on

Dec. 9 at the Vigilant Hose Company. After an 11 month planning process, initiated by the Mayor, Emmitsburg now has an emergency warning system which is the first of its type anywhere in Frederick or surrounding counties. The system has

—Continued on page 6

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Emmitsburg Dispatch encourages its readers to express their thoughts and opinions about issues that appear in this publication or affect the community. Letters must be exclusive to the Dispatch and should be no longer than 300 words in length. They must be signed and include the writer's address and phone number to be used for verification. The Dispatch reserves the right to edit for content and space. Deadline for letters is the 15th of each month.

"Grandfather's Tree" Remembered Fondly

This is in effect a thank you note to *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* (Nov. 2003) for the sensitive report of an event that brought great sadness to me and my family. The loss of the lovely old Norway Spruce in the cemetery of St. Joseph's Church brings to a close part of our family's history. For generations it has been known as "Grandfather's tree."

Kudos to Mr. Milbocker— for he was very close to the age of the tree. It was planted in 1861. My grandfather, James Maurice Kerrigan, 1855-1924, held the tree erect during its planting, as a 6 year old child. The legend tells us that the child so honored was expected to grow tall and strong along with the tree. The tree certainly fulfilled its part and went on to shade his grave for nearly 80 years.

It is unfortunate that we do not, and may never, know why the tree was planted. Perhaps it was meant to be merely ornamental, but most probably was a memorial.

My grandmother, Margaret Rosensteel Kerrigan, 1858-1943, who was a daily visitor to the cemetery, often would contemplate the height of the tree and would say "Just think, Papa held that tree when he was just a little boy."

Becky Chrismer Brown and I share happy memories of time spent on the bench under the tree, where I collected many grocery bags full of cones which I proudly conveyed to my grandmother to use as kindling in her kitchen wood stove.

Forty years ago I duplicated the tree planting in my own backyard with my youngest son doing the honors. Like the older tree, this one "has a tilt" but it now towers over the house. And I marveled at its resilience during the recent wind storms. I hope it will be enjoyed for another century, plus a few years.

—Frances S. Bittle
Gettysburg, PA

Former Commissioner urges home sprinkler legislation

Last February, the Planning and Zoning Commission listened to a presentation given by the Frederick County Fire Marshal's office on the importance of including fire safety provisions in the town's building codes. The focus of the meeting was to educate the board on the efficacy of fire suppression systems, such as sprinklers, in single family residences.

After that meeting, Emmitsburg's Town Attorney, John Clapp, and I worked on a draft ordinance that would require that all newly constructed single family homes in Emmitsburg have sprinklers installed during construction. It was even suggested that incentives for putting these life-saving systems in older homes be provided in the text.

Such ordinances already exist in Prince Georges County and parts of

Montgomery County. Recently, Carroll Valley in PA has begun working on its own ordinances that will require such systems be installed.

After losing my seat on the Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Board, I was no longer in a position to further develop this important legislation. However, I have been working with the Mayor, Commissioner Cliff Sweeney and the Vigilant Hose Company to push this legislation forward.

Despite the hard work, progress has been slow. I am glad to see that many remain committed to seeing this through. I strongly urge the Mayor, the Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to enact this life saving proposal.

—Ted Brennan
Emmitsburg

Thanks for Thanksgiving dinner

I'd like to say "thanks" to Mr. Richard Caudell, owner of The Main Street Grill, and to his help for the gift of a Thanksgiving dinner my husband and I enjoyed on that day. We were planning to go out of town to join our children but due to unfortunate circumstances on my part, I was physically unable to make the two-hour trip. We were not prepared for a holiday meal at

home but I remembered that Mr. Caudell was offering Thanksgiving dinner to all who in any way had some need. My day seemed to be a bit of a downer at that point so I suggested The Main Street Grill to my husband. The food was delicious and I thank you for your generous gift.

—Shirley Steo
Emmitsburg

Residential Sprinkler Ordinance Will Save Lives

The men and women of the Vigilant Hose Company, your community-based fire and rescue department, need your immediate action on a vital issue. Your support for a mandatory residential fire sprinkler ordinance for all new local construction is critical. Although our membership is neither for nor against growth, more new homes will continue to stretch the limits of our volunteer service. Residential sprinklers will ensure that we can arrive in time to save lives from fire - yours and ours.

Town officials have been actively considering this idea for several months. Earlier this year, the Planning and Zoning Commission drafted such an ordinance. Commission members have also discussed incentives to encourage owners of existing homes to retrofit with sprinklers. These are both courageous and meaningful steps. But Town officials need community input.

There are no fees associated with your fire service. The response area served by the VHC is exempt from a countywide fire tax - yours is the only Frederick County fire department whose entire district is exempt from this tax! Every resident and business benefits.

Without sprinklers, be assured that your taxes will be raised - this is the reality in hundreds of communities of all sizes across the nation. Growth will guarantee the need for salaried personnel and 95% of a paid fire department's budget is salaries.

The VHC web site has information, resources and links on the importance of residential sprinklers: http://www.vigilanthose.org/fire_prevention/residential_fire_sprinklers.htm.

The site also includes comprehensive information about our work with town officials and others to enact the ordinance.

Many Maryland communities are adopting sprinkler mandates. The

Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office, the Frederick County Department of Fire Emergency Services, the Frederick County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association, and dozens of fire safety organizations nationally join us in these efforts.

Newly arrived developers and builders have made commitments to assure our quality of life. They are certain to be among the most enthusiastic supporters of life-saving residential sprinklers.

Lastly, a note from our families is in order. While neither they nor we dwell on it, firefighting is an inherently dangerous business. With sprinklers in place in your homes, our personnel have a far greater chance of not being hurt or worse. We hope you'll excuse this somewhat self-serving pitch, but we know you do not expect your firefighters to make the ultimate sacrifice when we know there are ways to prevent it.

In the October 2003 issue of *The Emmitsburg Dispatch*, Mayor Jim Hoover called for input to the community's Comprehensive Plan, and you've just read ours. With sprinklers in place your all-volunteer fire department can exist for many years to come.

The VHC enjoys a great reputation that speaks highly of our efforts and your support. We've remained silent on the impact of growth, but it will affect our mission of saving lives and property. We need your help - please start by reviewing our web site. If you need print copies or additional technical information, just stop by the fire station or call 301-447-2728.

Residential sprinklers save lives, and the lives saved may just be in your own family.

—Timothy M. Clarke
President, Vigilant Hose Company

—Frank Davis
Chief, Vigilant Hose Company

Fire Chief

—Continued from page 1

However, Davis' decision not to run for chief in the December election was "not a retirement and was primarily due to a change of responsibility."

Nine-year-old daughter Katie plays soccer and softball and Davis wants to attend her games. Juggling family events with attending department meetings and events "had a little bit to do with the decision." Now Davis won't have to juggle quite as much.

He doesn't rule out "the possibility of running for chief in the future. Could be a couple of years down the road, I would come back." Davis noted that demands on county volunteer fire chiefs have changed a lot. Chiefs now need to stay on top of county politics and that means a lot of meetings. Before county financing of local fire efforts and programs, local fire companies established their own rules. "Now, with county involvement, all the standards and guidelines have to be the same," he said, adding, "There's good and bad to that."

Many town fire departments receive money through local fire taxes. "Emmitsburg is the only area in Frederick County without a fire tax due to local support," Davis told The Emmitsburg Dispatch. He went on to say, "We couldn't do it (keep the town fire-tax free) without this community."

Asked about his most difficult fire-fighting-related incident as chief, Davis shared that it was the "line-of-duty death of a fellow firefighter and very close friend, Terry Myers." Myers died from a heart attack suffered while fighting a fire. "You hope to get through as a chief without a line-of-duty death and you will always ask yourself, 'what could I have done to prevent it?'"

Julie Davis, the chief's wife of 23 years, said her husband would still be responding with the Vigilant Hose Company. "Fire service is in his blood. He will still be very active going on fire calls, driving the fire engine."

Apparently, fire service is in her blood as well. Not only does she work as a training specialist at the Emmitsburg National Fire Academy, but Mrs. Davis is also active in the Vigilant Hose Company Auxiliary. She helps with fund-raising events, and assists with the fire-scene "canteen," which serves the firefighters when they are on a call.

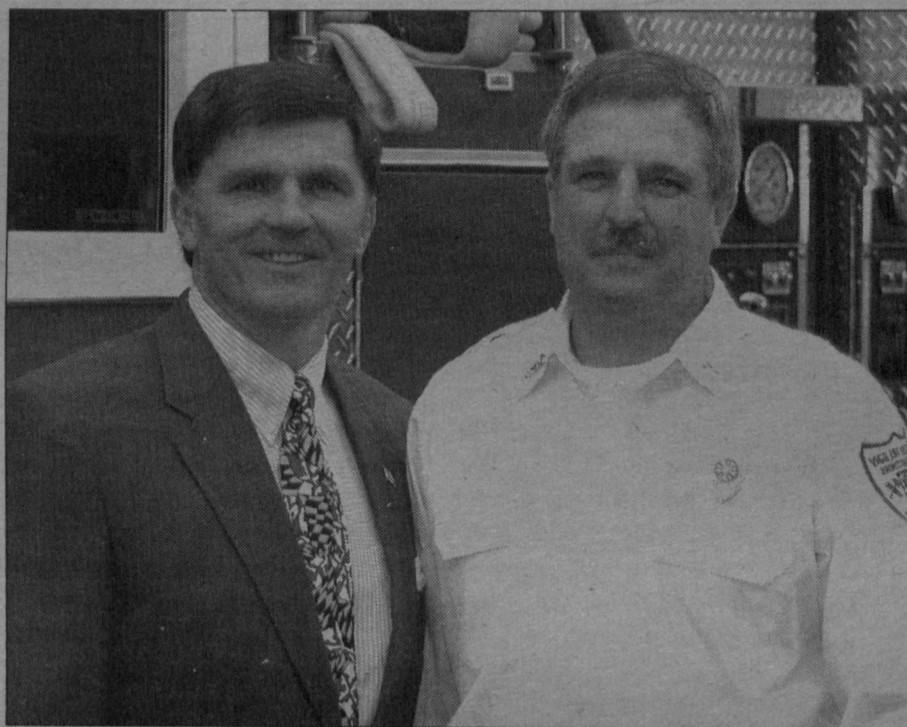
Davis' wife said her husband "felt like he needs a break after having served as the chief for 13 years." She said that serving as both the Vigilant fire chief and working full-time at Fort Detrick has been "very time consuming." She added, "He arrived at the decision a couple of months ago (to not run for chief again for 2004) and I support whatever he decides to do."

When told of Davis' decision, National Fire Academy Superintendent Dr. Denis Onieal said, "I'm saddened to learn he is stepping down. He is the kind of chief I wish I had had: he is the kind of son I wish I had had." Onieal served in the Jersey City, NJ fire department for 25 years. He is presently an honorary member of the Emmitsburg fire company.

Greenwood Fire Chief Todd Green, who has known Davis for 30 years, said, "I've learned a lot from Frank. He's a heck of a guy to work with." Green commented that it was "wonderful working for him, and he has done a lot for the Emmitsburg fire company. He (Davis) is very well informed."

Fort Detrick Fire Chief David Eskildsen remarked that Davis "is very knowledgeable and good to work with. He has good people skills and is easy to talk to. All of the firefighters and staff respect him."

New Fire Chief. Robert Rosensteel, Jr., 39, will become Vigilant Hose Company chief on Jan. 1. Rosensteel joined the company in 1982, and has served as lieutenant, captain and assistant fire chief. Since 1990, he has worked for the Frederick County Dept. of Fire and Rescue, Citizens Truck Company #4, based in Frederick. He is



—RAYMOND BUCHHEISTER / THE EMMITSBURG DISPATCH

In a rare photo opportunity, Chief Frank Davis (R) poses with MD Gov. Robert Ehrlich at a dedication of Emmitsburg's new emergency warning system. Davis played a major role in helping Mayor Jim Hoover realize his proposal that the Town be equipped to assist residents during an emergency.

also a part-time sales representative for Potomac Fire Equipment, Williamsport, selling Pierce fire trucks. A 1982 graduate of St. Joseph's High School, Rosensteel is the single father of three children: Robert III, 17; Ashleigh, 10; and Derek, 9.

As the new fire chief, Rosensteel told The Dispatch he would "try and maintain the quality of service that had been maintained by Frank (Davis) through the years," adding, "That's a pair of big shoes to have to fill."

Frank Rauschenberg will become president of the Vigilant Hose Company on Jan. 1. He has been with the fire company for 10 years, having served on the company's board of directors, and as vice-president. Rauschenberg is retired from the MD State Fire Marshall's Office, where he worked primarily as a fire investigator. He also served for 3 years as the assistant commander of the Office's K-9 Unit. Rauschenberg has three children: Alisia, 34; Caitlin, 23; and Kurt, 21.

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EDITORIAL

God came as a baby, and Jesus became great by staying small

On the first Christmas, Christians believe, God came into the world as a baby although He could have come as a grown-up. Humans begin life as helpless babies and God conformed to that fact when He became human. He was true to the human nature He adopted. That teaches a lesson at odds with the secular gospel.

The world's masters keep telling us to become something different — richer, slimmer, better dressed, with more stuff today and still more stuff tomorrow. Generally, they entice us to be materially, psychologically, and spiritually fat. They bloat our desires for

things and experiences and status. They try to engorge us with self-satisfaction — do what you want; there's no sin. But on Christmas day God preached by example that it's good to be small and insignificant — if that's the way to be yourself. When Jesus went public, he still lived small, in obscurity, a wandering preacher with "no place to lay his head." He never was a "big shot." When he finally entered Jerusalem, he was hailed as the wrong kind of king and he rode someone else's donkey. He lived a lowly life to the end. Can anyone be less important in the eyes of the world than

someone unjustly convicted, abandoned by friends, and tortured to death?

God could have come full-grown, marching into Jerusalem in power with legions of angels. He came as a human baby, born of a poor couple in a tiny village about 4 miles from that central city of Israel. From the moment God adopted human nature, He was true to it.


Jesus later worked miracles, being true to His reality as God. Well, then, why did He not surround Himself with wealth and honor? Why did He live true to his created reality, as a human baby and child, as a carpenter's son and a homeless preacher?

The Bible's answer, I think, is that the weakness of Jesus shows that humanity is saved ultimately by the power of God. In any case his weakness at that first Christmas offers an additional lesson that may light your path as it does mine.

I should not strive anxiously to live like others who may be rich, famous, young/grown-up, healthy, good-looking or something else that advertisers suggest. I should live according to who and what I really am — small or insignificant — if that's my real stature. Jesus lived a lowly life from beginning to end, and yet became the greatest of all.

— Bill Steo
Emmitsburg

Editor's note: 1. Our language has no pronoun adequate for God, who is personal but has no gender. So, relying on the language of the Bible, and because there is no sensible alternative, the writer used "He." But God is not a "he" or a "she" and least of all an "it." 2. I beg your indulgence for pointing out the striking relevance of the lesson above to the place where we live — You can be great by staying small, O little Town of Emmitsburg.



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The health of your town newspaper

By Raymond Buchheister
Editor & Publisher

When I began this publication in June 2002, I did so partly to test the viability of a real newspaper in this small town. I had neither the funds nor the staff to operate it. Volunteers and persons willing to work for little compensation helped me keep *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* alive. But your town's newspaper almost became extinct last August.

At that point I decided we needed to grow or die. So I took a risk and increased the circulation of *The Emmitsburg Dispatch*, and then increased it again. I did this to attract more advertising which provides the revenue to operate the newspaper, but I have also, sincerely, wanted the people of Emmitsburg and this area to learn more news of importance to them than was, or has been, available to them. In fact, it never will be profitable for other newspapers in the region to provide the news that readers can obtain in *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* as it develops as planned.

This newspaper's circulation now totals 7,000, which is 4,200 more than its circulation of 2,800 when it was first published a year-and-a-half ago. I intend to increase it to 10,000 in the near future. But its potential circulation, according to

the business model I am following, is very much greater.

One obstacle to progress has diminished. Recently, I have been able to assemble a good team of editors, writers, and publishing personnel to put the newspaper together. It is the right mix and we now can publish *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* more than once a month.

The Emmitsburg region needs a newspaper published a minimum of 24 issues a year — every other week — and *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* needs this frequency to obtain adequate advertising revenue. The increased frequency of publication would also allow our newspaper to join the Maryland Press Association, and this would have benefits for our readers.

But we are at another crossroads. The new employees, though few, have made our expenses exceed our income. To keep their services and to keep the newspaper going, we must obtain additional revenue from advertising, or foundation grants or from other sources. It is my intention to continue to bring this 'news and opinion in the service of truth' to the community, but without an immediate increase in revenue through advertising or some other means, this newspaper may not publish more than another 2 or 3 issues.

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Neither the publisher nor the editor will be liable for misinformation, misprinting, or typographical errors. The publisher reserve the right to edit any submitted material.

Traffic signal

—Continued from page 1

set hand boxes. Haag estimates the lights will be in service by spring.

Haag told The Emmitsburg Dispatch that although only a flashing light will be installed, the system will have mast arms with a regular controller and be able to function as a full traffic light. Only the 3 section signals would need to be added.

The Town required Hess Hotels group to hold an \$80,000 bond for improvements to the intersection. According to Haag the field crew hit rock, and had to bring in a special production digger to break it up. Because of the rock, he estimates construction costs alone to be \$90,000.

No justification for full traffic light. Traffic on Rt. 140 meets or exceeds the traffic count criteria for a full traffic signal, but the traffic count on Silo Hill Rd. does not.

According to traffic engineer Khursheed Bilgrami of the MD State Highway Administration, several traffic impact studies conducted from June to July 2001 indicated that a full traffic signal was not warranted for the Rt. 140 - Silo Hill intersection. He reported, at that time, that a final decision had not been made for the type of improvement they might adopt.

In a recent inquiry to the MD State Highway Administration, Neil Parrott told The Emmitsburg Dispatch that a July 2002 study again determined that a full traffic signal was not warranted. He said the decision was made to use an intersection control beacon (ICB) that could be upgraded to a full traffic signal later if needed. The signals at the intersection will be 12" red and yellow flashing beacons. Their purpose is primarily to slow down westbound traffic coming into Town on Rt. 140. Parrott said designers had considered a traffic circle, but rejected the idea.

According to Parrott, the strongest warrant for a full traffic signal showed up in an 8 hour justification study during which volumes on the main road are the same as side street volumes. That combination interrupts continuous traffic flow. But during the study

only 3 of 8 hours met the criteria.

The latest study of the intersection was conducted on Jan 21, 2003. It was a 13-hour traffic count, from 6 a.m. until 7 p.m., and yielded the same results as previous studies.

Other traffic pattern changes. As early as summer 2004, another change may occur which will inconvenience residents living north of the Town square. In an effort to improve safety at the intersection of N. Seton Ave, U.S. Rt. 15 and Welty Rd., traffic will not be permitted to turn left onto north bound US Rt. 15 or to travel straight through the intersection to Welty Rd. Traffic will only be allowed to turn right onto southbound U.S. Rt. 15.

Designers had considered restricting traffic from both sides, but Parrott pointed out that all the accidents in the intersection have come from the N. Seton Ave. side. Traffic coming from the PA side will still be able to turn left onto southbound U.S. Rt. 15 and to come through the intersection to N. Seton Ave.

This change was scheduled to coincide with the reopening of the welcome center but will probably occur sooner, according to Parrott. The State Highway Administration expects additional traffic at the intersection when northbound cars on U.S. Rt. 15 make a U-turn to visit the welcome center.

Residents living north of the square will be forced to take an alternate route through town. The change will cause additional traffic through the intersection at Rt. 140 and Silo Hill as cars access the northbound ramp to U.S. Rt. 15.

A traffic count at the N. Seton Ave. - U.S. Rt. 15 intersection conducted on Dec 3, 2002 from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. showed that a total of 590 cars turned left or went straight through the intersection. Parrott said that even taking these additional trips into account still doesn't warrant a full traffic signal at the Rt. 140 - Silo Hill intersection.

Town officials have asked the State Highway Administration to conduct another study after both traffic control changes have been made. This follow-up study will most likely be done in the fall of 2004.

TOWN NEWS



Town Founding date to remain 1757 on new seal, flag

Welcome signs to be restored by EBPA

By Raymond Buchheister
Editor & Publisher

At the Nov. meeting, Town Commissioners approved an updated design for the Town's official seal and flag. They will include a town founding date of 1757 along with an incorporation date of 1825. The town has been without an updated seal and flag since May when Commissioners voted 'to add' Emmitsburg's incorporation date. According to Mayor Jim Hoover, new seals for the Town's trucks and new Town flags have been ordered and should arrive in mid-January.

Argument over Town founding date. The design change arose from an issue that "polarized the Town" begin-

ning with the Feb. town meeting. Michael Hillman, Emmitsburg Historical Society and webmaster of Emmitsburg.net, offered documentation that the founding date, which appears on the Town's seal, welcome signs, and elsewhere, is not 1757. Linda Junker, Director of Intuition Research at Mount St. Mary's College, asked for a definition of the term "founding," and questioned why Hillman's date was the only right one. Eleven other individuals commented about whether or not Emmitsburg should recognize a different founding date.

Debate on the issue continued for the next 3 months with staunch sup-

—Continued from page 6



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Warning system

—Continued from page 1

both a siren and the capability of voice announcements. Known as a Mass Notification High-Power Voice and Siren System, it uses 3 outdoor warning speakers to provide pre-recorded messages, live instructions and/or sound alert sirens telling citizens what to do in case of emergencies.

Mayor Hoover remarked, "Along with Town Commissioners Patrick Boyle, Clifford Sweeney, Joyce Rosensteel, and Arthur Elder, Town Staff, and the Vigilant Hose Company,

we all are proud of this most significant safety advancement in Town history."

More than 200 people heard Governor Ehrlich's keynote address and watched as he and the Mayor tested the new system. Ehrlich noted, "The No. 1 job of government is to protect us, to protect its citizens." He credited Mayor Hoover for his initiative. "It's easy to respond. It's easy to react. But real leadership is anticipating danger, anticipating events," he said.

Many students from Emmitsburg Elementary and Mother Seton schools attended the dedication. Speaking to the children in the audience, Ehrlich said, "... You should understand what a great

thing this is for your town, your community, and understand a lot of people are fighting around the world for this thing never to go off."

The project was a joint effort involving the Town, Mount St. Mary's, the National Emergency Training Center (NETC), the Vigilant Hose Company and the Emmitsburg Ambulance Company. U. S. Fire Administrator R. David Paulison said, "We had been looking for such an opportunity and given our role in helping communities and the nation prepare for major emergencies we were delighted to join with Mayor Hoover and the Town of Emmitsburg in installing a part of the system at the National Emergency Training Center."

"Mount Saint Mary's College President Thomas H. Powell is actively seeking to learn what it would take to have the Mount campus included with the Town and NETC perhaps as early as next year," said Tom Kiniry, Director of Public Safety for the Mount.

According to Mayor Hoover, "... the complete system in Emmitsburg is cost-

ing the Town about \$102,000 while the portion of the system being installed at NETC is on the order of \$30,000, identical to what the Mount is considering. NETC requires only a single site, as would the Mount, to cover their respective campuses while 3 separate sites were needed to assure coverage of the entire Town." Money for the Emmitsburg system came from the town's budget fund balance. An additional impact fee on all new homes will help cover ongoing costs.

Emmitsburg is only the third municipality in the state to have an early warning system. La Plata has both sirens and public address warnings; College Park has sirens. The Emmitsburg system will be tested weekly by means of a non-audible "paper test." The Mayor also plans periodic audible tests as a public reminder.

Other elected officials attending the dedication included Del. Paul S. Stull (R-Dist. 4A), County Commissioners Bruce Reeder (D) and Michael L. Cady (R), Brunswick Mayor Carroll Jones and Myersville Mayor Wayne Creadick Jr.



—RAYMOND BUCHHEISTER / THE EMMITSBURG DISPATCH

Maryland Governor, Robert Ehrlich, Jr. (R), presses the buttons to sound off the alarm of Emmitsburg's new emergency warning system at its dedication on Dec. 9.

Founding Date

—Continued from page 5

porters on both sides. Hillman maintains that the first written mention of a town, or the name, "Emmitsburg," is in an Aug. 12, 1785 deed, conveying 35 acres from Samuel Emmit to his son William, "...wherein lots of a new town of Emmitsburg are laid out." According to him 1785, not 1757, is the Town's correct founding date. Junker pointed out that 1785, the year the town was laid out, was not a new revelation. Citizens had chose 1757 as the founding year knowing that settlers were in the area as early as 1733, that the town was laid out in 1785, and incorporated in 1825. The founding date has been the choice of citizens for at least a century.

Town passes on opportunity to avoid argument. The issue before the Town commissioners paralyzed the board at first. In an effort to avoid debate, then Commissioner Ted Brennan proposed a change to the Town seal and flag in March. He recommended that the government stay within its jurisdiction on the issue and use the date the government was established. He moved 'to change' references to the Founding date and replace them with the Town's incorporation date of 1825. There is no possible argument about this date and Brennan felt it should be on the government's seal. He said that historians could debate the founding date. He encouraged those interested in the matter to keep researching to learn about the past.

Brennan's motioned passed. Commissioner Pat Boyle, who did not understand the motion when it was voted on, called it back for clarification in April. Boyle, a vocal supporter of keeping the 1757 founding date, and at

times leading the opposition to Hillman, used Roberts Rules as his ammunition. He motioned to revise the March meeting minutes to change the language of Brennan's motion, which by the board's vote had already become a ruling. Boyle wanted to add the incorporation date to the seal, but didn't want the founding date removed. Mayor Hoover disapproved of the action saying, "The minutes are a record of what was said, and if correct, could not be changed." Hoover suggested that the board put it back on the Town agenda for a revote. Boyle insisted on his action and Sweeney agreed, but the vote to make the change failed when Rosensteel and Brennan abstained.

Brennan lost his seat on the board to Art Elder in the Town's April election. Boyle brought his failed motion back to the new board in May. The board voted unanimously to revise the language of Brennan's motion. They voted 'to add' incorporation 1825 to the seal, leaving the founding date 1757 intact.

When *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* recently asked about this issue, Pat Boyle wanted to know why we had to bring the matter up in the newspaper, "The issue has been settled." He doesn't want to aggravate a situation that has been quiet since the board's vote in May. He wants to let sleeping dogs lie. But the dog isn't asleep.

Concerned about the truth? Michael Hillman is concerned that "the town is going to replace the welcome signs and put the wrong date on them." Hillman told *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* that, "unlike the town council, the Historical Society is interested in the real truth." He claims the Greater Emmitsburg Area Historical Society and both Gettysburg College and Mount St. Mary's College history departments stand behind his founding

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Governor Ehrlich (R) and Mayor Hoover 'clown around' with students from Emmitsburg Elementary School while waiting for photographers to round them up for a group photo.

-RAYMOND BUCHHEISTER / THE EMMITSBURG DISPATCH

Founding Date

—Continued from page 6

date research. Hillman intends to "print the real history of the Town" in a book due out in 2006. He also intends to print "the history of how a few folks came together in 1957 and fabricated a lie to justify a party ...and how this year, when offered irrefutable facts ...the town council ...voted to choose a lie over the truth."

When *The Dispatch* asked Mayor Hoover about the issue, he said, "The Town has taken a position on the issue, whether it's right or wrong. The Commissioners made a decision on the (founding) date and it's remaining the same date (1757)." When asked about the debated date, he said, "In my opinion everything we've seen largely points to 1785 as when Emmitsburg was formally established, but none of us were here 200 years ago so there is no way to know without doubt how it came about."

Town's Founding Father disputed. Traditionally the Town has recognized its founding father to be Samuel Emmit. Hillman claims that because Samuel deeded land to his son for the purpose of establishing a town, that William, not Samuel is the Town's founder.

When asked who he thought was the Town's founder, Hoover said, "How do we know whether the plan for the town was the father's or the son's? How do we know if the son was executing his own plan or his father's?" Hoover felt the Town's founder was Samuel by a "contractual agreement." "Samuel would be the Founding Father because he purchased the tract and gave it to his son to create a town. He gave the tract of ground to his son on the condition that he form a town. Here's this land, but only on this condition."

Frustrated and aggravated with the whole situation Hoover added, "How do you, I, Mike Hillman, or anyone else know whose dream it was?" What we do know is that the Town was named after the Emmits; documentation proves Samuel Emmit purchased ground in 1757; and houses were built on a tract of that land by his son William Emmit to form a Town in 1785."

Old flags to be destroyed. Mayor Hoover told *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* that all but 2 of the flags with the old design will be destroyed. One of the remaining flags has been framed and will hang in the new Town office. The other will be kept for a historical record.

The seals and flags will be destroyed in the annual flag burning

ceremony on Flag Day, June 14. Hoover said that 10 flags will be destroyed: 4 old flags and 6 flags ordered incorrectly, containing only the Town's incorporation date.

Welcome signs to be restored. The white hand painted signs that welcome motorists entering Emmitsburg will possibly be restored in the spring. They are worn and need repair, but their ownership is another topic of dispute.

The signs were created at the request of Robert Gauss, now deceased, in conjunction with Emmitsburg's listing in the Register of Historic Places in 1992. The Emmitsburg Business and

Professional Association (EBPA) paid for their construction.

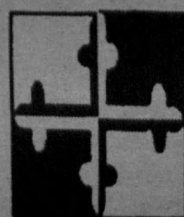
At first it appeared the Town owned the signs. The streets committee took up the matter of repainting them last year, but did nothing more than obtain estimates. Earlier this year, one of the signs was severely damaged when a truck from Foundry Service and Supply hit it. The destroyed sign was housed in the Town garage until just a few weeks ago.

The damaged sign was recently delivered to Don Briggs, president of the EBPA. In December Mayor Hoover received a \$1000 insurance check to cover the damage. He sent the check to Foundry Service and Supply because he wants Foundry to work directly with the EBPA. He sent a letter to this effect to both parties.

Asked if the EBPA did in fact own the signs, Don Briggs said, "Every indication that I've gotten indicates the EBPA owns them. They (Town officials) are looking to us to be responsible and we want to contribute to the Town."

Briggs told *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* that the EBPA won't deviate from what the Town has mandated regarding the founding date. "The signs aren't going to say anything but what the Town has approved. It's not up to the EBPA to determine the Town's founding date. We just want to contribute to the character of the Town."

It is Briggs' intention to refurbish the signs that need maintenance and replace the damaged one missing from the East end of Town since Feb. He has obtained estimates and is waiting for the insurance check from the trucking company. Asked when work on the welcome signs would be complete, he said, "hopefully in the spring."



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TOWN NEWS

Town Council Approves 48 Senior Housing Units

By Richard D. L. Fulton
Staff Writer

The Emmitsburg Town Council unanimously approved a zoning change Nov. 20, paving the way for a 48-unit age restricted (55 plus) senior townhouse complex on the 9-acre Bollinger property on Irishtown Rd.

Josh Bollinger, Bollinger Properties, LLC, had requested a zoning change from R-1 to R-3. An R-1 zone permits low density, single-family detached homes; an R-3 zone allows for high-density, multi-family dwellings.

The development will include four 12-unit buildings. Each unit will contain approximately 1200 to 1500 square feet. According to Bollinger the townhouses will sell for around \$140,000 to \$160,000, although the prices are "preliminary and still being assessed." He said the Emmitsburg population is rapidly growing older and the proposed senior housing complex will help keep seniors in the community.

As Bollinger put it, "The elderly are often forced to leave when they cannot continue to maintain their

properties. We feel there is a real need for senior housing in this community. These units are all handicapped-accessible and are equipped with elevators (to facilitate access by the intended elderly occupants)."

Michael Battern, engineer with Fox and Associates, Hagerstown, told the council, "the comprehensive plan encourages mixed use for this area and there are no dwellings of this type currently in Emmitsburg."

James Gugal, principal planner, Frederick County Planning Dept., told council members that the senior complex would have "no impact on school enrollments." He also confirmed that there is sufficient water and sewer capacity available to support the development.

Gugal said the town's comprehensive plan, adopted in 1974 and updated in 1998, indicates medium density is appropriate for the area in question. "R-3 is the same density as 'medium density,'" he said, adding that the proposed development is "also consistent with existing development" in the immediate vicinity of the property.

Emmit Court will serve as the development's sole public entrance,

with emergency access planned from North Ave. Applicant representatives and town officials agreed that it was not possible to have main access to the development off North Ave.

Michael H. Lucas, Emmitsburg town planner, said, "The feasibility of bringing (a North Ave. access area) up to standards is almost impossible, certainly impractical." Town Manager David Haller noted that the North Ave. topography "will not allow for the design of a public access."

At its August meeting the Emmitsburg Planning Commission had drafted conditions for the approval of Bollinger's request. The development must be limited to seniors only, with a maximum of 48 units; no more than 25 units can be constructed before town well 4 is on-line; Emmit Court will serve as the main public access; an emergency access

must be established on North Avenue, there must be suitable internal traffic controls; and there must be pedestrian access to the town's central business district.

The Town Council unanimously approved the Bollinger property zoning change, with the Planning Commission's stipulations. Bruce Dean, the attorney representing Bollinger Properties, said that construction will probably not begin for one or two years.

On Jan. 21 the Town Council will consider the Bollinger Properties request to build a 50-home, upscale subdivision on an adjoining 20-acre tract. The financial feasibility of building the senior housing could be linked to that project. Mr. Dean stated that at this point it is unclear whether the senior project is financially viable by itself.

Town Council Rejects Brookfield Townhouse Request

By Richard D. L. Fulton
Staff Writer

At the Nov. 20 meeting the Emmitsburg Town Council rejected a re-zoning request from RJD Development Corp. to permit construction of 30 townhomes on approximately 10 acres in the Brookfield subdivision and eliminate an existing commercial area.

In August, the Planning and Zoning board had voted unanimously against the re-zoning, citing the uncertainty of the number of townhouses to be built and the need to retain commercial property.

The applicant requested rezoning one acre of existing R-3 (high-density residential) to open space; 2.8 acres of existing B-2 (general business) to R-3; and 7.1 acres currently zoned R-1 (low-density residential) to R-3. Current zoning would restrict construction to no more than 15 housing units. The proposed re-zoning would have permitted a maximum of 30 housing units.

James Gugal, principal planner, Frederick County Planning Department, told council members that the bulk of the property is zoned R-1. The R-3 re-zoning would permit ten acres of high-density residential, multiple-family housing units, such as townhouses and duplexes.

Since the original zoning change request was filed, the Planning Department determined that various easements and flood plain issues significantly reduced the developable portion of the tract to six acres. As a result RJD Development reduced the number of proposed units from 50 to 30.

Gugal said, according to the town's comprehensive plan, adopted in 1974 and updated in 1998, "most of the site is regarded as medium residential,"

and that "R-3 zoning (high-density residential) would be consistent with medium development" as defined in the comprehensive plan.

When asked about potential impact on local schools if the zoning were changed, Gugal said, "Based on 30 units, the development should not generate more than an average of seven elementary school students, three middle school students, and three high school students."

Michael H. Lucas, Emmitsburg town planner, said, "I would find it very difficult to distinguish between this property and the Bollinger (tract)." The council had earlier approved the Bollinger re-zoning application for senior townhouse units. (See Town Council approves 48 Senior Housing Units, page 8 of this issue)

Lucas told the council that both tracts are "contiguous and surrounded by the same developments. That does not, however, mean you are obligated to grant the zoning change."

Attorney Krista A. McGowan, representing RJD Development, said that the townhouses would meet a need for affordable housing and would provide a buffer between the single family homes in Brookfield and the businesses along W. Main St.

She went on to say, "I believe the existing commercial zoning (on the property) is a mistake." After a portion of the land was re-zoned B-1 in 1988, "nothing has happened on that (commercial) property." The commercially zoned section of the Brookfield site "is not appropriate for commercial development, plus the R-1 further restricts the type of commercial use," she said.

McGowan also pointed out that R-1 was inappropriate because the town's land use policy encourages the creation of a variety of housing types. "There is

—Continued on page 9

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A word from the Mayor Sewer Problems: What is our Goal?

Over the past several weeks there have been many local newspaper articles and letters received from MD Department of the Environment (MDE) about Emmitsburg spilling raw sewage. Unfortunately, some of these articles and letters are correct. Like many other MD municipalities, Emmitsburg has had some sewage spills. As most residents know, Emmitsburg has been troubled with several very old sewer (and water) lines with a considerable amount of damage to them. This damage allows "wild water" to get into the sanitary sewer system. Wild water is rainwater, melting snow or water from flooded streams flowing over their banks.

The letter sent to MDE by a resident stated that the Town had eleven (11) sewage spills in Sept. That statement is not correct. We know that one Town official may have been aware of this letter before it was sent to MDE. We know for certain that he was aware of it soon after. However, in either case, it seems that he made no attempt to correct the error with the complainant. MDE responded to the resident in writing and the Town official shared a copy of MDE's response with his fellow commissioners at the Nov. 20 workshop meeting. MDE also made a site visit to the Town's sewer plant. They interviewed the Town's sewer and water superintendent and reviewed the Town's records. Although the Town's sewer and water superintendent was able to provide MDE with all the proper reports and documentation to show that the alleged spills did not happen as the complaint stated, it appears that MDE is still somewhat suspicious about these alleged spills.

The complaint letter was written after the Oct. Town meeting where the town manager reported that the sewer

plant exceeded its designed operating capacity eleven (11) days in the month of Sept. Operating above designed operating capacity does not mean that the Town suffered a sewage spill. And he did not report that the Town had eleven (11) sewage spills in Sept. After the town manager reads his report, the council president always asks if anyone from the council has any questions. No one from the town council at the meeting, or after the meeting, questioned the report or verified that they had correctly understood the sewer problem as reported. That fact alone raises a serious question for me. If an elected official believed that there were eleven (11) spills in one month, but he was not told until the following month, shouldn't the question at that time have been, "Why weren't we told about this sooner?"

There is no doubt that the Town has sewer and water line problems. This issue troubles every municipality in the state. Not working together as a group and discussing town issues openly prevents us from accomplishing our goals in a timely and professional manner. This type of behind the scenes decision-making has no positive effect on the Town. In fact, it has a very poor effect on the town and its employees. Filing this erroneous complaint with MDE may have jeopardized the operator's license and the reputation of the Town's sewer and water plant superintendent.

As I have said in many of my previous reports and articles, as long as the information is correct, I have no problem with anyone reporting what the Town and its elected officials are doing. However, it is disturbing to receive letters and read newspaper articles written with erroneous information. This complaint alone has wasted several hours of the town staff's man-

power in an effort to address and follow up on MDE's inquiries. When a resident files a complaint, he/she is not always expected to get all the facts correct. When a town official, elected to serve the Town to the best of his ability is aware of (or partially aware of) a complaint written with erroneous information, you have to question his understanding of "to the best of his ability."

The town has been working on several issues to improve problems with our sewer system. About three years ago, the town re-lined a section of sewer line on the east side of N. Seton Ave. Just recently Provincial House and FEMA re-lined a sewer line between their two facilities. Currently the town is advertising for bids to replace the sewer line that runs from the old Rutters store to N. Seton Ave. We have also done some preventive maintenance to the pumps and valves at the Creamery Rd. pump station. So, it is not like the Town has just thrown its hands in the air or said, "Well, it only happens when it rains. There's nothing we can do." We are working on improvements; we still have a very long way to go. The sewer and water lines have been allowed to deteriorate to such poor condition over the years that we cannot fix all of them overnight. It will take several years of working together to complete the much-needed repairs.

In closing, I have listed every date the Town had and reported a raw

sewage spill in 2003.

Jan. 2	— 1,000,000 gallons
Jan. 3	— 200,000 gallons
Feb. 5	— 200 gallons
Feb. 22-24	— 50,000 gallons
April 8-9	— 15,000 gallons
May 16	— less than 1,000 gallons
Sept. 3-4	— 157,000 gallons
Sept. 23	— 300,000 gallons
Dec. 12	— 171,000 gallons

There were a total of nine (9) spills for the entire year. The Feb. 5 spill was caused by a blocked sewer line on N. Seton Ave. Every other spill was caused by heavy rains and melting snow, "wild water," getting into damaged sewer system lines.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any Town matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

-James Hoover
Mayor of Emmitsburg

Editor's note: The newspaper articles to which Mayor Hoover refers appeared in the Gazette. Several recent articles were published over a span of 2 months, the latest "Emmitsburg suffers another sewage spill," on Dec. 25. Art Elder was the Town Commissioner that presented the MDE letter to the board at the Nov. 20 meeting. When Mayor Hoover was asked to comment further he would not mention any names but said, "The newspaper was being provided inaccurate or incomplete information."

Town houses

—Continued from page 8

a need for more moderately-priced housing as opposed to single houses." The projected sale price per townhouse is \$150,000 to \$170,000.

William B. O'Neil, Jr., president of Citizens Organized to Preserve Emmitsburg, Inc. (COPE), said the town needs to focus on things other than continuous residential development. "The town really needs to build a sidewalk. You need to provide recreation," he said, adding, "The town needs to focus on the infrastructure."

Regarding the potential loss of commercial space, O'Neil added, "Let's not doom Emmitsburg to forever being a bedroom community. COPE supports commercial development."


Commissioner Art Elder said he was opposed to townhouses and urged

the council to "keep the commercial zoning as it is." Both Commissioner Clifford L. Sweeney and Commissioner Joyce A. Rosensteel agreed that they wanted the commercial zone to remain on that side of town.

Council President Patrick B. Boyle pointed out, "There is no way a small business could live off the 210 units (proposed in the Brookfield development). They (Brookfield residents) are not going to come to your business and spend the majority of their money there." I would like to see it (the commercial zoning) left there, but I can't see anything but a pizza shop making it."

The council subsequently voted 3-1 to reject the proposed zoning change, primarily driven by concerns about eliminating the commercial zone. Council President Boyle dissented.

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RELIGION

Pastor Ben Jones: Artist, Thinker, Seeker

By Joyce M. Demmitt
Copy Editor

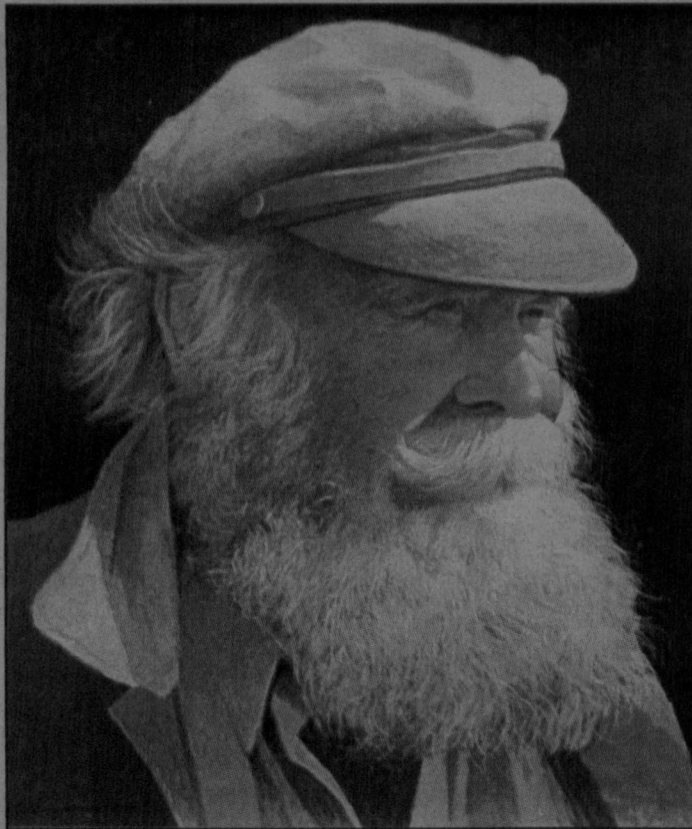
the MD Institute of Fine Arts in Baltimore, the University of MD and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He has been painting full time since 1979. Ben

R. Benjamin Jones, Pastor of Emmitsburg Presbyterian Church for 22 years, paints pictures with words and acrylics. To experience one of Jones' paintings is to understand the uniqueness he finds in people, in the beauty of a rose, in the charm of farm animals. To hear him lecture or listen to one of his sermons is to understand the connectedness he sees in all of life.

On Nov. 21 and 22, Hagerstown Community College Foundation hosted an Art Benefit, exhibiting 70 of Jones' paintings in the Kepler Theatre.

He included an audiotape with each piece, describing the painting, the process, and his feelings about the work. A percentage of the painting sales, combined with proceeds from the raffle of two paintings and note card sales netted the Foundation Scholarship Fund nearly \$27,000. This was Jones' fourth exhibit to benefit HCC. According to Lieba J. Cohen, Director of Institutional Advancement for HCC, the scholarship money will likely be used to create a second fund in Ben and Becky Jones' names.

Ben studied at



Captain



Morning



Simple Pleasures

eries. His paintings were included in a special Smithsonian touring exhibit from 1981-1984. Describing his work, Ben wrote, "There is beauty in simple things. The painter's task, it seems, is to see and feel that beauty and capture it in paint so that others may share the experience. There is fulfillment in being able to do the picture and the added joy of having people share it with you."

The McBride Gallery in Annapolis says this of Jones' work: "He is an accomplished painter, portraying scenes of rural Maryland that few of us have experienced. For many of his collectors, to experience a Jones painting, is to experience rural life in Maryland." Throughout his diverse subject matter: the Amish of Lancaster county, Chesapeake Bay watermen and skip-jacks, rural farm animals, Tiffany roses, "Ben Jones is an artist who paints the beauty around us that we often overlook."

Jones has also taught as an adjunct faculty member at Hagerstown Community College for 25 years. Three

couples from the Emmitsburg Presbyterian Church attended his last offering this fall of Humanities 201, "Arts: A Creative Synthesis." Jean and Bo Cadle were two of those students. Jean described the course as "art and the human spirit through literature, music and painting." For 15 weeks, nearly 3 hours each Thurs. evening, Jones took the class on a journey from Greek and Roman art up to the 20th century. According to Mrs. Cadle, the class was geared to young people who work. Ben was "whetting their appetites for the arts."

The six shared supper with Jones after each class, talking for another hour about what they had learned. Mrs. Cadle said that Jones has a "gift for words."

That same gift shines through in his Sunday messages. When Ben was pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Hagerstown, the congregation grew from 75 people to 500. "The attendance was higher than the membership," said Jones, "which is kind of unusual. Many people came as seekers, people who didn't want to do the conventional thing."

Ben sees the common thread that unites people's lives and insights with art, psychology, philosophy, music, drama and religion. "Every human being wants to find meaning in life, a reason to get out of bed in the morning, a reason to get a job, raise a family, in the midst of the chaos and the unpredictable tragedies that come our way. Why do we keep on going? What I see on a Sunday morning is that there is a reason to go on, the motive being that we have this gift of life, with talents and opportunities to realize and to use those talents to create, in the first instance, a good life for ourselves, and then in concert with others (family, neighbors, job, church) it is a chance to be with others and to encourage one another to realize our gifts and to find meaning."

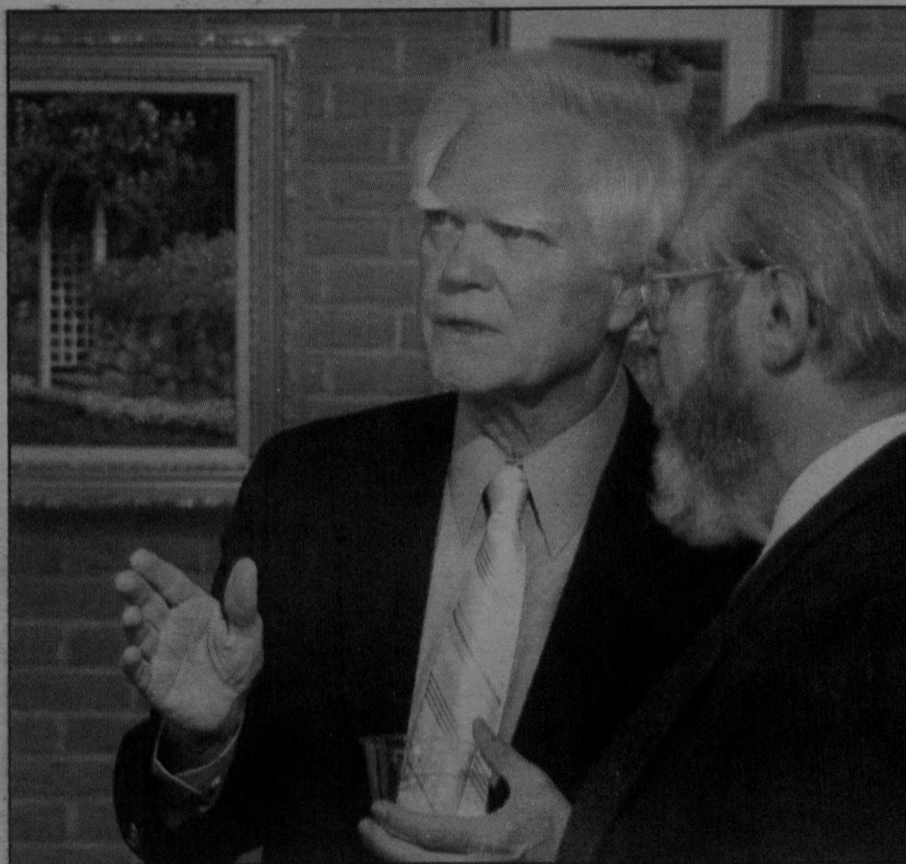
Jones sees Beauty as a kind of a Truth. "I thought to myself, wouldn't it be wonderful to take the best of philosophy, the best of

psychology, the best of theology, and of art and literature, and in combination with my Christian faith, have a wonderful wedding of Truth? In my heart and soul I carry around with me the scriptures, so when I see a movie or read a book, it might remind me of something Paul said, or Jesus said, or sometimes I might even perceive human resurrection in a short story or a novel or a play, even a comic strip, or music. And so, every

Sunday morning, God has to be incarnated again as he became incarnated in Jesus, into everyday flesh, which means everyday language and everyday people."

Through his art and through his words, Ben Jones strives to serve as a conduit of Truth..

-Christine Maccabee
contributed to this article.



-RAYMOND BUCHHEISTER / THE EMMITSBURG DISPATCH

Ben Jones, Pastor of Emmitsburg Presbyterian Church and Artist, speaks with Bill Meredith about painting composition at a recent art benefit exhibiting 70 of Jones' paintings.



Savoy

A word from the pulpit

And the angel said, "Be not afraid."

By Ben Jones

Pastor

Emmitsburg Presbyterian Church

Some years ago everybody seemed to be using the word "fantastic" to describe most any thing, person or experience. This was a case of overstatement, of course, because if everything is fantastic then eventually nothing is. In an effort to encourage clear thinking, writing, and speaking, one of the "language police" suggests that such overstatements as "terrific" (when there is no idea of terror) or "dreadful" (when there is no idea of dread) or "horrible" (when there is no idea of horror) or "fantastic" (when there is no idea of fantasy) be limited or eliminated. One such writer, indulging in some entertaining overstatement of his own, calls such words "atomic fly swatters."

Now, I am not at all in favor of running around correcting grammar and usage, even if I were knowledgeable enough to do so. There is, however, one such overstatement presenting in such wide use that I must comment. It is a word (more a concept) that has something to do with my field - that is, theology and religion. I am speaking of the now much abused and degraded "awesome."

The dictionary says of the noun form awe that it is "an emotion of mingled reverence, dread and wonder inspired by something majestic or sublime and tinged with fear." By this definition, when was the last time any of us saw or experienced anything we can call awesome. The recent hurricane might begin to qualify. And some things fill us with a sense of wonder - at least a cousin of awe. A surprise, an eclipse, a piece of music, a work of art, the sight and smell of a newborn baby give us a sense of wonder. When we feel that our hair is standing on end, we are at least moving in the direction of awe.

Perhaps what inspires awe needs to be something so overwhelming that it is nearly heart stopping. I recall reading someplace some numbers having to do with the earth and with our bodies. We are told that as we go about our business, our earth is revolving at 1000 miles per hour, while at the same time orbiting our nearest star, the sun, at 66,000 miles per hour. And ever as I

am being moved around at such a pace (not being sea sick nor holding on for dear life), and as I attempt to think about this incomprehensible place where I live, equally astonishing things are happening in the small world of my body. As I write these words, I am told, as I am breathing in and out, one hundred trillion cells in my body are humming with life. Further, I am told that in each of these cells are tens of thousands of genes coiled on every molecule of DNA. A feeling of awe begins to creep over me.

The deepest roots of the idea of awe lead in a different direction. In the Old Testament awe is reserved for God and all that is associated with the deity. Moses takes off his shoes before the burning bush and appearances of the deity always bring fear. (That is why the first words from angels are "be not afraid.")

We have all heard the biblical quotation, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Proverbs 1:7) This is not the fear that comes with being caught with your hand in the cookie jar. Rather, the fear is awe, and it is awe in the face of the eternal. It tells me who I am in the order of things; it gives real and true humility without which I cannot begin to have wisdom.

Now it is December and Christians all over the world will be celebrating the birth of Christ. From years of doing all the rituals and customs of the season, it is possible to be a bit numbed to the heart of the thing. This heart may best be found I believe, in John's gospel, Chapter 1, verses 1-14. We have read and read and read this passage Christmas after Christmas. One year (and I know the people, perhaps with good reason, thought I was crazy) I read these verses aloud in the service in Greek, Latin and German as well as English. I wanted to hear anew this crescendo toward the climatic verse 14, this outrageous, spine-tingling, hair-raising picture of something of God tumbling and careening into flesh in Bethlehem! "And the word became flesh and dwelt among, full of grace and truth."

And now, and now, with hearts filling with hope, with tears and laughter of joy, with the deepest and most honest humility, we see the gift. And it is awesome.

EDUCATION

Emmitsburg Elementary at Capacity

By Susan Allen
Joyce M. Demmitt

Emmitsburg Elementary School (EES) opened in August with a nearly full house. Local citizens have expressed concern about the use of portable classrooms at the school, fearing that the building is overcrowded. With a nearly 40-year-old building, open classroom design, the move to full day kindergarten, and rapid development in the Emmitsburg area, EES faces multiple challenges.

The building's state-rated capacity is 314 students. The school has a current total enrollment of 329. However, 40 students are pre-kindergartners who only attend school for a half-day. Since the same classroom is used for both the morning and afternoon classes, those 40 pre-k students equate to 20 full time students. The actual number of "full time equivalency" students is 309.

Wanda Severance, principal at EES, and Ray Barnes, director of facilities management for Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS), agree that early implementation of an upcoming change in state law contributes to this apparent jump in total enrollment. By 2007-08 Maryland law requires that all public elementary schools establish full-day kindergarten. Frederick County's Board of Education is phasing in the change. Emmitsburg Elementary is one of 8 county schools to begin full-day kindergarten this year.

The new state law requiring full-day kindergarten will force many schools to find additional classroom

space. In the past, with kindergarten only a half-day, 2 classrooms were sufficient for 3-4 kindergarten classes. With the switch to full-day kindergarten, schools will need 1 room per class. Frederick County wants those classes to have a maximum of 20 students. In addition, since pre-k is not mandatory, the number of children registered for kindergarten each year continues to be larger than the number enrolled in pre-k the previous year.

EES currently has 55 kindergarten students. There are 16 students in a room converted from a teachers' lounge and mailroom. Two other classrooms hold 19 and 20 students.

Two portable classrooms have been used for a number of years. A third was added this year because kindergarten needed another classroom. For safety and hygiene reasons, classrooms for the younger students are located inside the main building. The three portables serve as second grade classrooms. Both Mr. Barnes and Mrs. Severance state that the school is not overcrowded at this time.

State formula for determining school capacity. Mr. Barnes explained that the state determines elementary school capacity by using 25 pupils as the standard class size for grades 1-5. The school multiplies its number of "general purpose" classrooms by 25. For kindergarten, 22 pupils is the standard class size. For pre-kindergarten the number is 20. The formula does not count computer labs, art and music rooms, or rooms used for small groups and special instruction as regular class-

rooms. The formula was last updated in 1993, long before the decision was made to institute full-day kindergarten.

However, FCPS does not staff its primary grades by the state 25 student per classroom number. The county standard for first and second grades is 20-21 pupils per classroom. Mrs. Severance noted that most classes at EES have 20 or fewer students this year. Because FCPS anticipated that full-day kindergarten classes would probably bring EES to capacity, they closed the school to out-of-district enrollment.

Planned capital improvements. Several underlying problems face Emmitsburg and other elementary schools constructed in the 1970s using the open-classroom design. Over the years installing modular dividers has helped reconfigure interior space to create more traditional classrooms. But the dividers do not contain classroom noise and they impede heat and air conditioning circulation throughout the building. The 3 level building design itself, with stairs and ramps, also

reduces available floor space and limits interior flexibility.

Mr. Barnes said that Emmitsburg is one of 6 county elementary schools slated for a building addition in FCPS' 6-year capital improvement plan (CIP). The CIP includes EES in the "pre-design phase" in fiscal year (FY) 2005, the "design phase" in FY 2006, with construction to begin in FY 2007. The pre-design phase will determine educational specifications for the main building and the addition. Shortcomings related to the open-classroom design might include the lack of adequate bathrooms; proper heating, lighting, and air conditioning control; library space and adequate storage. EES will be more than 40 years old before any of these decisions are made.

The state has not yet approved the CIP. Both state and county fiscal issues could delay the plan. Faster population growth and consequent school overcrowding in other areas of Frederick County could "bump" EES from its current spot on the school addition/renovation list.

St. Joseph's College Alumnae Association Reunion

Nearly 30 area women who are alumnae of St. Joseph's College gathered at the Carriage House on Nov. 8 for their annual luncheon. Father David Shaum celebrated Mass at the Glass Chapel at the Grotto of Lourdes prior to lunch.

Even though St. Joseph's College closed over 30 years ago (1973), the Alumnae Association remains very active. There are more than 2,500 members, more than 1200 of whom are active dues paying members. During the last 5 years, active membership has nearly doubled, something almost unheard of for a college that no longer exists. The Association holds an annual weekend reunion, always the weekend after Easter. The reunion at the Eisenhower Inn includes a picnic on the old campus at Toms Creek, campus tours, tea at the home of the President of Mount St. Mary's, a memorial Mass at the Basilica of Elizabeth Ann Seton and a banquet. In 2004 the weekend will include a full day of activities Friday, designated as "Heritage Day." Plans include Mass at the old campus chapel, lunch in the former campus dining hall, and tea at the Provincial House with the Sisters associated with the college. Plans are already underway for 2009, the year of the college's bi-centennial.

Mother Elizabeth Bayley Seton founded St. Joseph's school in 1809. With encouragement from John Carroll, the first Bishop of Baltimore, and additional financial backing, she

relocated her school for girls from Paca St. in Baltimore to Emmitsburg. The first site of St. Joseph's Academy was the Stone House near Toms Creek. Young women studied rhetoric, philosophy, chemistry, botany, algebra and astronomy. St. Joseph's charter was changed in 1902 and the school became known as St. Joseph's College. Degrees conferred were equivalent to those granted by today's junior colleges. By 1914 the college was able to grant 4-year bachelor's degrees.

Despite a cooperative agreement with the Mount, and educational and cultural exchanges, St. Joseph's Board of Trustees decided to close the college in June 1973. They cited financial difficulties and the lack of vocations to the Daughters of Charity, the school's sister faculty members. Although many of the College's original buildings were destroyed in the 1960s, the Alumnae Association, founded in 1897 has continued to flourish. There are at least 23 alumnae clubs throughout the country.

St. Joseph's College alumnae have long ties with the Emmitsburg newspaper. From 1922 until 1931 a column with college and alumnae news titled "Valley Echoes" appeared in the *Emmitsburg Chronicle*, the predecessor of *The Dispatch*. St. Joseph's senior journalism class was responsible for content for the weekly column. *The Emmitsburg Dispatch* hopes to feature additional articles about St. Joseph's College in future issues.



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Local photographer receives January at the Library scholarship

Staff Report

Emmitsburg photographer Robert Rosensteel recently received the annual Milt Techner Memorial Scholarship from the Mid-Atlantic Regional School of Professional Photography (MARS). According to Rosensteel, "The amount of the scholarship award was basically for \$1,200, but the final amount actually depends on what I use it on." He plans to attend photographic courses at the 2004 MARS workshops in Cape May, NJ.

MARS awards one Milt Techner Memorial Scholarship annually, along with several partial scholarships. James Bastinck, director of MARS, told the The Emmitsburg Dispatch that, although the award is primarily based on a photographer's qualifications and need for continuing education, "Rosensteel's community service would also have been one of the elements (MARS) considered."

Rosensteel started the Tribute to a Friend Scholarship in Emmitsburg. Through the sale of a photo memorializing local firefighters who died between Oct. 1997 and Feb. 1998, he raised \$1400. Rosensteel invested the money and in 2000 sponsored the first annual scholarship dance held at Mount St. Mary's College.

"The money raised at the dance is actually given to the Frederick Scholarship Foundation, over which Mount St. Mary's serves as the governing body. There is presently



-PHOTO COURTESY OF MARS

Emmitsburg photographer Robert Rosensteel (R) recently received the annual Milt Techner Memorial Scholarship from the Mid-Atlantic Regional School of Professional Photography (MARS).

\$20,000 in the scholarship funds raised by the dances, and it is still growing," according to the photographer. Rosensteel Studio sponsors the dances, with assistance from various co-sponsors. The next dance is scheduled for March 13, 2004.

Rosensteel has served in the Emmitsburg Fire Company for 40 years, including three years on its board of directors. He is also an honorary member of the Emmitsburg Volunteer Ambulance Company. Heavily involved with the Boy Scouts of America, he has served many roles including 7 years as scoutmaster in Emmitsburg and 5 years as district commissioner.

For Rosensteel, "Personal involvement in the community is the life blood of the community. If you're not involved, you should have no reason to complain."

The Milt Techner Memorial Scholarship is named in memory of MARS co-founder, Milt Techner, a Delaware Valley photographer.

Storytimes

Babies with Books (birth- 24 months with an adult) Every 4th Tuesday, January 27 at 10:30 a.m.

Two Terrific! (age 2 with an adult) Tuesdays, January 6, 13, 20 and 27 at 10:30 a.m.

Family Storytime (ages 3-5 with an adult) Wednesdays at 7 p.m. and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.

There will not be a storytime on January 1.

Registration is required by contacting ThorpeWood directly at 301-271-2823 by the third Tuesday of the month. **Registration required.***

Book Discussion Groups

Evening Club: 2nd Tuesdays, January 13 at 7:30 p.m. Selection: *Blue Shoe* by Anne Lamott.

Afternoon Club: 2nd Fridays, January 9 at 1:00 p.m. Selection: *Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd.

Special Programs

Third Thursdays at ThorpeWood (ages 3-5 with an adult) Thursday, January 15 at 1 p.m. Emmitsburg and Thurmont Branch Libraries host a storytime in coordination with ThorpeWood Environmental Center. Families can enjoy a nature themed storytime, craft, and snack.

Programs are held at the Emmitsburg Library at 101 Silo Hill Road unless designated by an asterisk. Those programs will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church, 313 West Main Street (or other noted locations). For registration or information call 301-447-2682.

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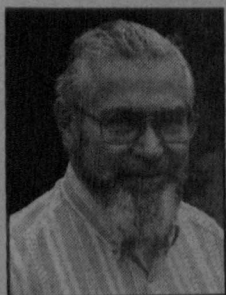
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The (retired) Ecologist Nuts to 2003



Bill Meredith
Dispatch Writer

Legend has it that during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, a U. S. battalion was surrounded by German forces, and the German commandant sent a communiqué asking if the Americans wished to surrender. The American commander, Gen. Tony McAuliffe, sent back a one-word answer: "Nuts!" Unable to interpret this American idiom, the baffled Germans sent a second message asking, "Does your reply

signify affirmative or negative?" Needless to say, McAuliffe did not surrender; he survived the battle, and took his place in the historical pantheon of things that may or may not really have happened.

It is the essence of a living language like English that words pass in and out of fashion. New words are invented (nowadays mostly by computer geeks and people in California) and old terms and expressions that once were useful disappear. Mention the word "mast," for example, and most people will think you are referring to the pole that holds up the sails on a ship. But a couple of generations ago, mast had another meaning. It came from an ancient Germanic word that meant "meat," and it was handed down through Old English as a term for the crop of nuts that fall to the ground and are available as food to animals. A reminder of the old Germanic root is found in the vocabulary of my genera-

tion even today; we older folk still refer to the edible part inside the shell as the meat of a nut.

Botanists classify nuts as a type of fruit. Technically, the nut is the hard shell, which we usually discard; the edible part, which we mistakenly call the nut, is actually a seed. This seed consists of two parts: an embryo, which will grow into a new tree, and a food supply for the embryo to live on until it can make its own food. When we eat a "nut," in effect we are stealing that supply of food.

The food reserve in the seed is a rich source of energy, and animals of various kinds have come to depend on eating nuts as their means of survival in wintertime. This has been a dilemma for trees ever since they appeared on earth. On one hand, the best way to ensure that a seed will germinate successfully is to bury it in the ground, and animals such as squirrels, other rodents and some birds do that when they hide their winter stashes. On the other hand, if these animals eat all of their hidden supplies, there will be none left to germinate.

Fortunately, because they have such a long life span, trees do not have to reproduce successfully every year in order to perpetuate their species; and therein lies the solution to their dilemma. As a survival mechanism, they have developed a pattern of producing "normal" crops of nuts in most years, while they store food reserves in their roots. The populations of nut-eaters will adjust to this "normal" food supply. Then, when a year with good growing conditions comes along, the trees will mobilize their stored reserves and produce an extraordinary crop of nuts... more than the animals can possibly consume. Thus, every few years, it is inevitable that some of the hidden nuts will not be eaten, and a new generation of trees will be ensured. Ecologists call these special times "mast years."

Mast years are among my earliest memories. There was a big hickory tree in our yard, and at age 3 or 4 I discovered that the shells would float. A quarter of a shell made a very fine canoe, and I spent hours imagining I was Hiawatha and floating it in the catch-basin of the pump at my grandmother's well. One year there was an extraordinary crop of nuts, and I had enough canoes for battles between Indian tribes. That year we also had a glut of walnuts, which we gathered in burlap bags and dumped in front of the garage, where the car would run over them and remove the outer shells. Our shoes, clothes and hands took on a brownish-yellow stain that lasted for weeks, and throughout the fall evenings were spent sitting in front of the fireplace cracking nuts. Until well after Christmas, the cakes and cookies that appeared every

week on baking day were rich with nuts.

In my father's time, mast years were important. In those days the dominant forest tree was the American Chestnut, and each fall the whole family spent days in the woods collecting chestnuts for winter storage. Quantities of them were eaten... "roasted on an open fire" and otherwise... but the bulk of them were fed to pigs. In fact, many farmers simply turned their pigs loose in the woods for a month or so to fatten them on chestnuts. In mast years the pigs... and soon thereafter, the whole family... ate especially well. This practice ended in the late 1920's when the chestnut trees were all killed by blight, but 60 years later my father still wistfully recalled the taste of pork from pigs fattened on chestnuts.

Our forests have changed so much that it is hard to realize now how important the mast crop was. Before the end of the 19th Century, the most abundant bird in North America was the Passenger Pigeon; its numbers were estimated to be in the hundreds of millions. During migration season, flocks flew so dense that they blocked out the sun flew over for days. These enormous populations fueled their fall migrations by gorging on mast, particularly acorns and chestnuts. Incredibly, they were hunted to extinction... the last one died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1916. Perhaps they were doomed anyway; whether they would have survived after the chestnut blight destroyed their main food source is an unanswerable question. Likewise, the primeval populations of deer, bear, ruffed grouse and wild turkeys that lived here in pre-colonial times were dependant on mast for their winter survival. All of these nearly became extinct in the mid-20th Century because of hunting and habitat destruction. They have made comebacks in recent years, but their future is by no means certain; gypsy moths now threaten the oak trees, and the entire forest ecosystem is under attack by the twin scourges of air pollution and development.

2003 is a mast year. After a series of dry years, we had an unusually wet summer with relatively moderate temperatures. The result has been a bumper crop of acorns, hickory nuts, beechnuts and walnuts. For the squirrels in my yard, this fall was a time to play; it didn't take long to store all the nuts they can possibly use, and next spring I expect to find oak and walnut seedlings popping up in my flower beds. Hunters tramping through the local woods will feel acorns under foot on every step, and the venison may taste a bit nuttier than usual. Perhaps Mel Torme's "Christmas Song" will have a little extra meaning this year.

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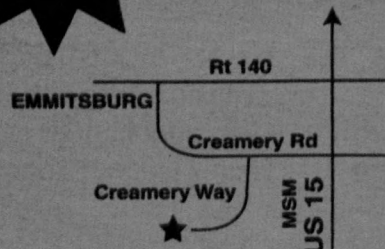
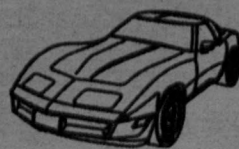


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Emmitsburg's Santa Claus

By Raymond Buchheister
Editor & Publisher

Gene Rosensteel, whose photograph appears on the front page, understands the true meaning of Christmas. An Emmitsburg resident, Rosensteel has been portraying Santa Claus for 5 years. One of his stops is St. Joseph's Catholic Church.

Dressed as Santa, Rosensteel comes in on Christmas Eve just after the children's mass ends. Children don't expect to see Santa Claus at church. Their eyes light up. Their expressions defy description. Before he interacts with anyone, he makes his way up the center aisle, right up to the altar. He stands in front of the manger and pays his respects. He draws the children's attention to the true reason for celebrating Christmas. Then he faces everyone and greets them in a jolly voice, "Merry Christmas!" He tells everyone about the origins of Santa Claus - Saint Nicholas.

Rosensteel takes his role seriously; his whiskers and long hair are real. He says nothing else convinces the children more than tugging his whiskers. "It's real! It's real! It's really Santa Claus! It's really him!" Rosensteel's greatest satisfaction comes from those painful tugs. The children exclaim over and over. "They believe." He paused, and added, "Everyone around shares in that joy."

Rosensteel took over as Santa Claus for the Emmitsburg Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Post #6658, after their previous Santa, a volunteer fireman, died. Initially he wore the VFW's suit along with the fake hair and beard. But Rosensteel knew the children could tell.

Since then he has embraced the role. A woman who worked part time at the

local library gave him her husband's hand made Santa suit. "The suit is beautiful. I was overwhelmed by the gift," he said. Rosensteel bought boots, a pair of antique glasses, and has his hair whitened and curled.

When he's in his suit, he's Santa Claus. He doesn't touch a drop of alcohol, he's mindful about his actions, language, and enters and exits unseen. He doesn't even want the children to see him use a bathroom. He wants the children to believe.

Rosensteel's schedule begins a week or 2 before Christmas. It's a grueling one. He greets over 2000 children by Christmas Eve. "And that's not just a wave," he said. He holds the children and speaks with every single one. Children ask him different things, but most of the time they ask for gifts. It's hardest for Santa to respond when children want him to bring their mommy and daddy back together. Rosensteel feels the children's pain and can only say, "Santa will try hard."

His regular rounds include a visit to a Walkersville florist, a restaurant in Woodsboro, a Frederick dance studio where his daughter teaches, and Biglerville Elementary school where his niece is a teacher. In Emmitsburg he visits the Palms restaurant, Seton Center day care, and Up-County pre-school Head Start. Over 700 children from Emmitsburg Elementary School and Mother Seton School sit on his lap during one day. He visits both these schools on behalf of the VFW. The post purchases over 1000 lbs. of candy and 1000 oranges for Santa to distribute.

Rosensteel, age 66, hopes to continue as Santa Claus for years to come. He began in 1998, the year after his appen-



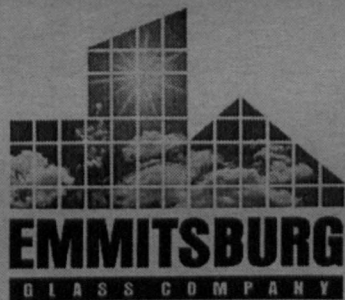
-RAYMOND BUCHHEISTER / THE EMMITSBURG DISPATCH

Santa Claus listens intently at the request of one of Mother Seton School's 1st graders. Portraying Santa is Emmitsburg resident Gene Rosensteel, who has over 700 children from MSS and Emmitsburg Elementary School sit on his lap during one day. He visits both these schools on behalf of the Emmitsburg VFW. The post purchases over 1000 lbs. of candy and 1000 oranges for Santa to distribute.

dix ruptured on Christmas Eve. Doctors found gangrene in his stomach and kept him in the hospital for 8 days. His family waited until he got home to celebrate Christmas that year. Rosensteel said, "There has to be a reason I didn't die." He believes his Santa Claus role is one reason.

Already thinking of next year, Santa hopes Mrs. Claus will join him. His wife, Joyce Rosensteel, is one of Emmitsburg's Town Commissioners. She is considering it, and has already priced a suit. But she isn't totally convinced yet. Whitening her hair may be a roadblock.

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SPORTS AND RECREATION

Outside the Game

How much is enough?

By A.J. Russo
Editor
Sports & Recreation

Tampa Bay Buccaneers wide receiver Keyshawn Johnson has been deactivated for the rest of the NFL season. The controversial Johnson caught 45 balls for 600 yards and three touchdowns in 10 games this season for the struggling, reigning Super Bowl Champs (4-6).

The past two seasons the Pro Bowler has had a shaky relationship with head coach Jon Gruden, mostly because of the number of balls thrown his way-or what he perceives to be the lack thereof.

With the move, the team is likely to trade Johnson at the end of the season. The NFL trading deadline for the 2003 campaign passed in October.

"I'll just say that, for whatever reason, he did not want to be here. He let me know that sometime after one of our earlier games," said Bucs' coach John Gruden, 40, the youngest coach in the NFL. "We worked hard to try and

get him the football, obviously, and win games. We want our players to be happy, but unfortunately it has festered for a while. I believe it has affected him."

Johnson, who recently published an autobiography titled, "Just Throw Me the Damn Ball," has told the Bucs on several occasions that he felt he was not being used properly and that the team needed to figure out how to get the ball into his hands more often.

Some call Johnson an egomaniac, only concerned about his own well-being. Others say he has the confidence of a guy you want to go to, especially when the going gets tough. No matter. The real question is whether the Bucs were correct in letting him go. And the answer is emphatically, yes.

Sure, it was a tough decision. The receiver is an All-Star (although he sincerely thinks he's better than he really is) and although at 4-6 the team would need help from Mother Theresa to make the playoffs, they're technically not out of the hunt.

So, why let him go? I don't buy the

argument that the decision created a distraction from the dismal season the Bucs are having. Most appreciate the fact that Keyshawn's play is only a piece in the dismal puzzle (probably a small piece at that). No, the answer is attitude.

Okay, I'm Old School, but I'm still convinced that there is an unwritten code of behavior for players and coaches who participate in team competition. And these rules have a purpose.

Player rule number one-thou shalt not be demeaning to a fellow teammate. Instead, be encouraging. Reason-team success is often dependent upon players' support for one another.

Player rule number two-thou shalt not criticize or demean the coach. Reason-see rule number one. The coach is part of the team. Also, without effective management, there is chaos.

There are many other rules (for another time), but Johnson broke both

of these. Coach Gruden, and the rest of the franchise, knew this and to maintain the integrity of the team, sacrificed one lamb: Keyshawn.

Actually, I admire the Bucs organization for doing this. They knew that Keyshawn wouldn't go quietly and risked not having a big playmaker down the stretch. But they sent a loud message to the masses. Johnson had said enough. The team is more important than any individual.

A.J. Russo is a professor at Mount Saint Mary's College in Emmitsburg, MD, and the author of seven novels and more than 30 scientific papers. He is the former head men's coach of lacrosse at RIT and Mount Saint Mary's College and is the current head coach of Hood College's men's lacrosse team, which will begin its first season in 2005. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of Mount Saint Mary's College or Hood College.

Emmitsburg Little League Introduces "Code of Conduct"

By Megan Zimmerman
Dispatch Intern

Strategies to resolve the problem of overly aggressive Emmitsburg Little League coaches are in place for the 2004 season. In response to numerous complaints about unruly coaching behavior (including a report on page 20 of Oct. issue of *The Emmitsburg Dispatch*), Mary Topper, the new president of Emmitsburg Baseball and Softball, has introduced a "Code of Conduct."

In recent years some Emmitsburg Little League coaches have been abrasive with players. Children have wanted to quit the team to avoid confrontation. Action was necessary to restore the love of the game. The League has apologized saying, "The last thing anyone in Little League wants is to make a child unhappy."

Topper acknowledges that "It isn't always easy for coaches to spend eight hours or more a day at work and still have enough energy and patience to have practice or games a couple of nights a week." But she agreed steps

were needed to eliminate difficulties this coming spring. "I am hoping that implementing the conduct rules for coaches and players and establishing the new bylaws will eliminate many problems this season."

Following the expected approval of the bylaws, signs listing the Code of Conduct will be posted at every local field. Topper stresses that the rules are not only for coaches, but also for the players. "My objective as the new president will be to implant ideals of good sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty, courage and respect for authority so that players can be well-adjusted, stronger and happier children and teenagers and will grow to be good, decent trustworthy citizens."

Upcoming League meetings will be held in the Emmitsburg ambulance building, Dec. 2, 2003 at 7 p.m. and Jan. 6, 2004 at 7 p.m. The general public, and anyone interested in volunteering, are welcome to attend.

The League hopes that these open forums, along with the new Code of Conduct, will help the new 2004 season get off to a successful start.

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Horses Help Humans at Breezy Hill Stables

By Christine O'Connor
Staff Writer

It may be impossible to quantify all the positive effects of the *Life Horse* program at Breezy Hill Stables in Emmitsburg. But Joe Topper, Breezy Hill owner, can clearly articulate its impact on him. He remembers a young girl diagnosed with leukemia. She approached him during a visit and declared, "Mr. Joe, you *must* be an angel." When he asked her why, she replied, "Because only an angel would let us do something like this at their farm."

That was a turning point for "Mr. Joe," as the children call him. "That was pretty touching," he said. "When you have little kids who don't have a future, don't have the life that you and I have...when you see what some of the kids have been through... seeing them smile on that horse, all their worries go away." *Life Horse* combines equine-based therapy and a caring volunteer staff with people of all ages challenged by illness or loss.

Margaret Hadley started *Life Horse* at *Covenant Farm* in 1996. She offered riding camps and lessons to terminally ill children. Mr. Topper was a volunteer there for two years. "They were going to shut it down," explaining the transition of *Life Horse* to his farm. "They needed too many horses and didn't have anywhere to keep them. I thought about it for a year before I decided to take over."

Life Horse activities aren't limited to sick children. The program is available to individuals or groups of all ages who face a variety of difficulties. "Basically our motto is anyone who's been affected by illness or loss is welcome to ride here," said Mr. Topper. Some people join in the horses' care and riding; others simply enjoy a visit with a particular equine friend. "One lady just comes to play with the horses. She doesn't even ride."

A young girl who suffers from extreme allergies seems unaffected by the horses. She is especially fond of a horse named Granny. "Granny has one speed... and that's slow." Mr. Joe smiles. "The little girl took to Granny and Granny took to her."

A group of inner city youth visited the farm recently for two hours of riding. "Some of the kids had never seen a horse. We had to start from the ground up," Mr. Topper said. "They loved every second they were here. The horses just seem to sense something about children."

Most of the horses used in the program are certified as having quiet temperaments suitable for children. More of the horses will be certified next year. Each horse must pass a variety of tests including one where objects are thrown

at it to see if it is easily frightened. "We don't have to do it," Mr. Topper confirms, but considers it an intelligent precaution. Other safeguards include helmets for the riders and volunteers who walk on either side of each horse during rides.

The program is also offered free of charge for church fundraisers. Volunteers donate their time and offer pony rides, which are a big draw for children. Topper stated, "We did one last fall in Detour. It was a big success."

Volunteers play a vital role in *Life Horse*. "One reason we moved the program to Breezy Hill is because Mount St. Mary's and Hood College Division 1 equestrian teams ride here." In a mutually beneficial arrangement, the students must donate a number of hours to the stable, which helps the program.

The college equestrian team members give more than their required hours. According to Topper, "A lot do it on their own time because it's such a great thing. And they love working with the horses. It's worked out well."

On Sept. 20 the first *Life Horse* Open House attracted about 200 people. Volunteers and their families helped the Toppers organize the child-friendly event. They were expecting about 300 people, but many were deterred because of Tropical Storm Isabel. "People couldn't make it up from D.C. because that's where they were hit the hardest. But that Saturday was beautiful."

The little girl who thought Mr. Joe must be an angel has passed away. She, like many others, renewed his determination to sustain and expand *Life Horse*. He prefers to think of the individuals

who have been able to put aside their demanding medical regimens or their less than nurturing environments, if only for an hour or two.

He might state the obvious about the expenses of running an all-volunteer organization. Then there is the pesky detail of horses that require daily care and feeding. He might go on and on about their funding needs. He could elaborate on the invaluable role the volunteers play in the success of *Life Horse*, and the fact that no one involved gets paid a salary.

But to hear Joe Topper tell it, he is compensated with a more valuable currency. "Never have I gotten so much satisfaction from anything." He is paid in children's smiles.

Information: Breezy Hill, (301) 447-1774.

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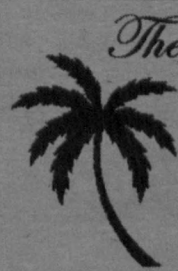
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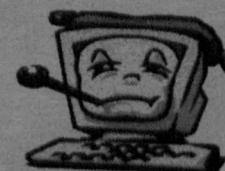
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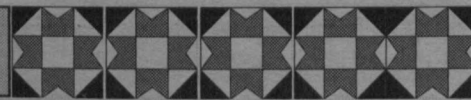
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QUILTERS



Planning a piece-filled year

By Mary Ellen Cummings
Dispatch Writer

I am not a great big fan of winter, but January has always been a magical month for me. There were always New Year's Eve parties, dinners and dances. It was a time for sleighing, ice-skating and wiener roasts at the frozen pond or creek. My mother and my daughter had birthdays in January, so there were surprises to plan.

Seed catalogs began to arrive and brought much amusement—planning all the wonderful flowerbeds, herb gardens and vegetable patches. Of course, planning was much more extensive than the planting. During my youth, my father thought females should not have to do "that kind of work." He was a master at gardening, so my mother and I sat back and let him rule over the plow. However, we still dreamed and drooled over the "seed" catalogs.

Now, in the sedentary stage of my life, I still enjoy the "seed" catalogs, but only dream of landscaping and planting. Now, I settle for a few pots of geraniums and begonias. My main winter reading is quilting magazines and books, AND planning my yearly projects. By the end of January I have all the pre-work done and projects ready to go.

I carefully study the patterns and, if my interest grows, I put pattern, fabrics and templates in a box (usually a large pizza box) and set it aside to work on later. A detailed label is attached to the box so I can easily see

what project is in that particular box. In fact, I just checked one of the three closets dedicated to future projects. Sure enough! There they are - labeled and ready to go - Winter '92-'93, '95' and '2000-2001!' Probably back to the eighties, if I wanted to investigate further. In one closet is a pattern marked "12 Days." The box holds fabric, pattern and embellishments for a quilt called "Twelve Days of Christmas." This quilt was to be made in '94-'95' and entered in the Community Show in 1995.

The February 2004 issue of McCall's Quilting features springy-summery quilts with names like "Robert's Floral Garden," "Pieceful Peonies," "Lavender Thyme," and "Daisy Dance." None of these patterns appealed to me. My favorite was an "old fashioned" quilt made with new (reproduction) fabrics, but looking like my grandmother had made it. The name - not a seed catalog wanna-be, but "The Comforts of Home."

I still have closet space for a couple more years' work, and have yards and yards of fabric. I guess I'll spend the next few weeks studying all of the magazines I've laid back because I might want to make a quilt shown in them. Of course, I could finish some of the work already started. Some quilters call them UFOs - Unfinished Objects.

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