



The

# Lodger

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NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE LODGE AT OLD TRAIL

## Gazette Editor Opines on Newspapers' Future

Thousands of local newspapers have gone out of business, and many counties in the U.S. do not have a single news source. Charlottesville's Daily Progress plans a reduced work force. Crozet's Bulletin disappeared in 1994 and the bi-weekly Crozet Today ceased online publication last year. Thanks to the tenacious efforts of editor Mike Marshall, the monthly Crozet Gazette has provided western Albemarle residents with community news coverage since 2006.

We asked Mr. Marshall to give us his thoughts on the future of community newspapers.

**Q: Do you think the Internet is the culprit of newspaper demise? Is the end of local newspaper coverage inevitable?**

A: Not inevitable, but possible. Local papers should have a future if they provide good honest content. The internet is conspicuously susceptible to fraud. Print media makes a declaration of fact, and when they are put out wrong, they can't be disavowed or disappeared. Print is also more egalitarian in its distribution. It's on the sidewalk for anyone to get. Readers have to choose where to go on the internet. It's great when they think to choose you, but what if they don't? Advertisers have a lingering mistrust about whether their ads on websites will actually be seen.

**Q: Can local newspapers guard against the use of conspiracy theory stories that prevail on the Internet?**

A: A wise editor never doubts the intelligence or common

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Editor Mike Marshall with Gazette staff members (from left) Clover Carroll, Heidi Brown, Allie Pesch, Theresa Curry, Lisa Martin, and Mary Cunningham. Courtesy Crozet Gazette

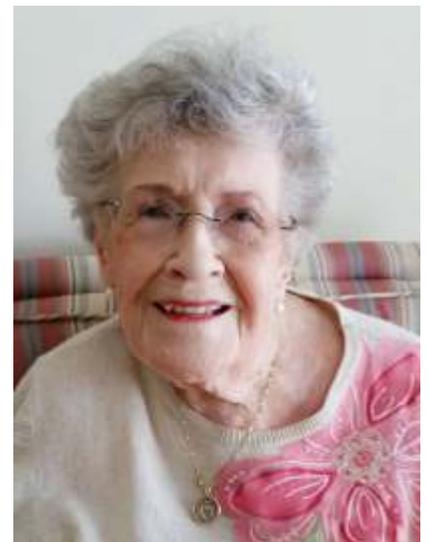
## RESIDENT FOCUS

"Politics is nothing like it used to be. People were always so nice." Those are the words of Lodge resident Julie McCall based on the 22 years she worked for Republican and Democratic lawmakers at the end of World War II. Born, schooled, married, and employed in Washington, D.C., Julie spent more than half of her 95 years in the nation's capital before moving with her husband to Shallotte, North Carolina. Urged by her son to move closer to him in Crozet after her husband's death, Julie relocated to The Lodge in 2016. She says that her friends are convinced she chooses towns to live in only if they are hard to spell.

After her son and daughter attained school age, Julie dreamed of working a 9 to 3 job while they were at school. Advised that the U.S. Congress was hiring, she was directed to the office of Representative William Bates, a Republican from Massachusetts, who personally interviewed her for a 9 to 3 part-time job. Departing the interview unsure of the results, Julie had a phone call when she returned home, asking when she could start her new job. For 11 years, she performed clerical duties and arranged constituent tours for the congressman.

Bates served 19 years in the Congress from 1950 to 1969. A U.S. Navy veteran, he was a staunch supporter of the U.S. military and an advocate of civil rights legislation including the 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that prohibited poll taxes as a prerequisite for voting. Like his father whom he

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Courtesy The Lodge

## Resident Focus (cont'd)

replaced, Bates died while in office in 1969. Julie and her devoted co-workers attended his funeral, making the trip by flying in Air Force Two to Salem, Massachusetts.

Familiar with the workings of congressional offices, Julie was hired to work in the Capital Hill office of New York Democratic House member James Hanley. Hanley was re-elected to the House seven times by a decidedly Republican constituency, and he was an early supporter of Medicare. After working eleven years for Hanley, Julie retired from government service to return to home life.

Julie's father was a naval non-commissioned officer who taught gunnery practice at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. Retiring after 20 years as Chief Petty Officer with the U.S. Navy, he became a civilian employee at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C.

Her parents met and married in Scotland when her father was on active duty during World War I. "They had to elope because my mother's Scottish mother objected to her marrying an American sailor," says Julie. When the war was over, her father and mother settled in Washington, D.C. She regrets not knowing much about her mother's family. Julie said she never talked about them, nor did she collect any family photographs.

A trip she and her husband took to her mother's home town of Inverness, Scotland, helped to fill the void. "I was glad to at least see where my mother spent her youth, and never saw so many sheep in all my life" says Julie. Their other travels included cruises to Alaska, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal.

Julie met her husband Neal at a party she was invited to by his brother. "I never knew why, but Neal was always called Bob by his family and friends." A telephone company worker, Bob had enlisted in the Naval Air Corps during World War II and married Julie four years after their first meeting. Honorably discharged as an Ensign, he returned to the telephone

company for 45 years before retiring. They moved to North Carolina in 1988, where they both enjoyed swinging their clubs at the local golf course. Bob died in 2013. They were married for 67 years.

Julie has a son and daughter. Son Ron is a retired school teacher living in Crozet. After bringing his tools to perform house repairs for his mother in North Carolina for three years, he suggested it was time for her to move closer. At The Lodge, Julie is within minutes of Ron and his wife Lee Ann, their daughter Ashley and her husband, and their three children, all residents of Old Trail. "Four generations of McCalls right here in Old Trail," says Julie.

Julie's retired school teacher daughter Leslie and her husband live in Texas. They have two children and three grandchildren. Grandson David lives in Maryland with his wife and daughter.

So what is Julie's secret for remaining a super active 95-year old. Maybe it has something to do with her affinity for Canasta and bridge and for bowling and golf, her enthusiasm for the former Washington Redskins "when they were good," and having a large loving family.



*Clockwise from upper left, Bob with his two-seat Piper that he flew as a private pilot in the 1950s, the McCalls at their marriage in 1946, and Julie's 1943 high school graduation picture.*

## Legit or Just a Pipe Dream?

Behind a gated entrance to 33 acres in western Albemarle near Greenwood stands one building. It is the centerpiece in a system designed to catch and treat contaminated groundwater before it reaches nearby residential water wells.

Millions of gallons of groundwater pumped for 20 years from a series of extraction wells have been decontaminated and discharged into a nearby stream, with no end in sight. The treatment facility is the only evidence of a disastrous chemical company explosion in 1985. A massive cleanup by the federal government Superfund program removed the plant remnants and tons of toxic contamination. Over 700 **cont'd last pg.**



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# Cause of 1959 Airplane Crash Remains a Mystery

The popular Washington to Roanoke Piedmont flight 349 left Washington National Airport at eight p.m. on its way to an intermediate stop in Charlottesville. The 24 seats were filled with passengers destined to Charlottesville and the Shenandoah Valley. Philip Bradley of Clifton Forge, a standby, got the last seat. Less than one hour after takeoff on October 30, 1959, the twin engine DC-3 was a mass of wreckage on the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Bradley was the sole survivor, despite having to wait 36 hours for rescuers to find the wreck. The cause of the accident in October sixty-one years ago is still in dispute.

Without radar or GPS to know where the Piedmont airliner crashed, rescuers had to survey huge areas of mountainous, forested terrain in search of the missing plane. Only a glint of a reflection spotted by a state trooper two days later from a helicopter was enough to guide ground searchers to the gory spot. The shortest route to a waiting ambulance was up the steep mountain to the Skyline Drive. Bradley was whisked to the UVA Hospital where a badly displaced hip was put back in place, and he was released two months later, finally completing his trip home to Clifton Forge. The other 23 passengers and three crew members were transported to a temporary morgue in Charlottesville.



Phillip Bradley at the hospital in Charlottesville.

A pilot navigation error was the reason given for the accident in the report of the investigation by the Civil Aeronautics Board. The report said a failure to make a turn went undetected by the crew and remained uncorrected. A possible contributing factor was "preoccupation of the captain with mental stress."

A separate independent study by the Airline Pilots Association takes issue with that assessment, claiming its tests showed the pilots were possibly led astray by the radio beacon from Charlottesville being overridden by one from Hagerstown, Maryland.

They theorized a flight path passing by Charlottesville before heading west to the crash site, jibing with a report of the sound of an errant airplane heard overhead by a reporter at an Albemarle High School football game just before the crash.

*A jewel in the county park system, Mint Springs is two miles west of Crozet via Railroad Avenue. The name changes to Mint Springs Road before arriving at the park on the left. Take the gravel road to the right of the park gatehouse for monument access.*

While the cause remains a mystery, a collision course with the 3,100-foot Bucks Elbow Mountain within sight of The Lodge was not. Through low-hanging clouds with landing gear down, and preparing for a landing cleared by the Charlottesville airport, the plane impacted the mountain some 600 feet below the summit.

Phil Bradley was a native of Clifton Forge and followed in his father's footsteps by going to work for the town's biggest employer, the C&O railroad, until he enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After college, Bradley went to work as a union organizer and was returning from a union meeting on the day of the crash. He continued his union work, never hesitated flying again on Piedmont, and even earned his own private pilot's license.

Obsessed by his ordeal, Bradley spoke frequently to groups and co-authored a book about it, living with the constant memory that 26 others were not as lucky. To honor the non-survivors, Bradley, with the help of his son and the permission of Albemarle County, designed and erected a monument at his own expense in honor of the passengers and crew of flight 349. The memorial was constructed in 1999 at Mint Springs Valley Park at the foot of the mountain where the crash occurred.

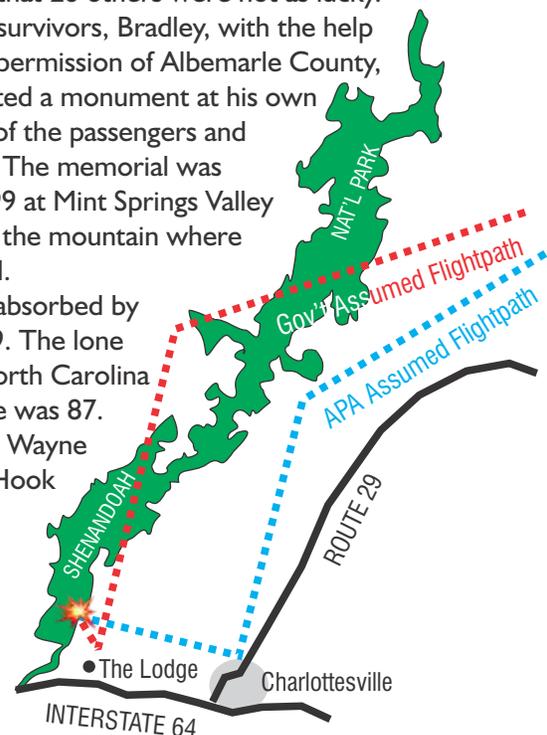
Piedmont was absorbed by USAirways in 1989. The lone survivor died in North Carolina in August 2014. He was 87. The pilot's son, Wayne Lavrinc, told The Hook newspaper he was shocked that the Pilots Association document did not get greater attention. "They always blame the pilot," said Lavrinc.

Based on graphic by The Hook

Some say the Douglas DC-3 was the greatest airliner of all time. Piedmont Airlines began with its entire fleet consisting of DC-3s. In the 1940s, DC-3s represented nearly 90 percent of all airliners operating in the United States. A total of 16,000 were built for commercial and military use.



©Piedmont Aviation Historical Society



Based on graphic by The Hook

**LIGHT IS AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL** for the first time in 70 years. Two massive 14-foot-thick concrete barriers that plugged the 150-year-old Blue Ridge Tunnel have been removed as part of the six-year project to rehabilitate the former railroad tunnel for recreation use. Nelson County expects the new attraction to be open for public use as a hiking trail in October. The plugs were installed in the 1950s to store propane in a plan aborted before being finished.



*West portal courtesy Jack Looney.*

The pre-Civil War tunnel was donated to the county in 2006 by CSX Corporation, the last of four railroads that owned the 4,273 foot-long structure through the top of the Blue Ridge at Rockfish Gap. The historic artifact, engineered by Colonel Claudius Crozet, was hand drilled during the 1850s at an average pace of little more than 26 feet per month. It was used by steam trains hauling passengers and freight from the Piedmont to the Shenandoah Valley for 86 years and was abandoned and replaced in 1944 by a parallel tunnel built for larger rail cars that still remains in use.

Parking and entrance trails have been constructed at both ends of the tunnel. Parking in Afton on Afton Depot Lane includes handicapped reserved spaces and is connected by a level six-tenths mile long trail leading to the tunnel east portal.

A new parking entrance road to access the west portal is located one-half mile west of I-64 interchange 99 on the left side of U.S. Route 250. The trail leading to the west portal is about three-quarters mile long with steep inclines ranging up to 19 percent.

The width of the entrance and tunnel trails is 10 feet. Both hiking and biking will be permitted. The tunnel is unlit and wet in spots.

Be alert for opening announcements of this civil engineering marvel that should appear later this year. Until the official opening, trespassers are being prosecuted for illegal entry.

### **Legit or Pipe Dream? (cont'd)**

Superfund sites nationwide have been rehabilitated into useful purposes.

A 2018 newspaper article promised a new life for Albemarle's Superfund site. A training center and startup incubator space dedicated to training workers for renewable energy jobs were to be built on the site in partnership with the local renewable energy industry. The developer, a manufacturer of wind turbines in Japan and a resident of Crozet, was reported to be on the verge of purchasing the Superfund site. Making the site accessible with nature trails for community use was part of the proposal. To date the groundwater treatment facility remains the sole activity

Repeated requests for current information on the proposed project to the developer were unsuccessful. EPA, administrators of the Superfund, says it has no knowledge of any redevelopment plans. Proposed industry partners were non-committal. Albemarle County Community Development Department reports no planning, zoning, or permit applications for reuse of the property.



*Water treatment facility.*

We are left wondering whether the fanfare given this promising project was legitimate or just a pipe dream.

### **Newspapers' Future(cont'd)**

sense of readers, nor does one risk the credibility of the paper. Papers should run only stories that they produce, not stuff pitched to them from unclear motives. Having original content is what makes a paper attractive.

**Q: What motivated you to start publishing The Crozet Gazette newspaper?**

A: I was laid off in 2006. I had to make up a job for myself. I was in a meeting where county officials were announcing a fait accompli and I said to a friend next to me, "They'd never do that if there was a newspaper here."

**Q: Which version of The Crozet Gazette, print or digital, is the most popular among your readers and do you think print will eventually succumb to the lower production cost of digital?**

A: Our print run normally disappears within a week. We estimate our print readership at 12K to 15K. It has remained constant despite local population growth. Over the last 10 years our digital readership has gone from about 1,300 distinct readers a month to now 18,200, according to Google Analytics. We believe our total readership is in the 25,000-30,000 range. Print is still the foundation that digital rests on. News sources that are only digital have to advertise themselves to get readers' notice.

**Q: Is free distribution necessary for the future success of local newspapers?**

A: Free distribution is too dependent on advertising. When a pandemic strikes and companies don't advertise because they expect to be closed, the paper has weak income and could expire. Advertisers can also be offended by coverage and withdraw. The traditional business model was 50 percent subscriptions, 50 percent ad income. In my opinion, papers will have to move toward subscription, first because they need the money to hire reporters and second to reduce the leverage of advertisers. The market has been resisting this. People want their news to come to them free. But someone trustworthy has to go get the news and bring it home alive and well.

**Q: Instead of relying solely on advertising or subscription income, what do you think about promoting philanthropic efforts to create non-profit organizations that help finance struggling local newspapers?**

A: Non-profits owning newspapers is being tried out now. Non-profits have governing boards. The likely problem would be whether the board or the editor calls the news content. Small papers should be factual and politically neutral. People can figure out for themselves what their politics should be. I worry about a tendency to partisanship in non-profit boards.

**Q: Any other ideas for the salvation of local newspapers?**

A: The public faces an enormous risk in the loss of local reporting. County government is a constituency to itself that has motives to enlarge and protect itself. When government is left unobserved, it becomes vulnerable to corruption. Readers need to face the likelihood that if they won't pay to get news, they won't have news. A community is a group of people who all possess the same set of information; thus, a properly run newspaper can build a community.